

**2005 - 2007 Annual Report
by the President of the HRK
Professor Dr.
Margret Wintermantel**

Presented to the 2nd General Meeting of the
German Rectors' Conference on 27 November
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Editor-in-charge:
Dr. Ulrich Meyer-Doeringhaus
Translation: Guy Moore

Ahrstr. 39, D-53175 Bonn
Phone: +49 (0) 228 887 0
Fax: +49 (0) 228 887 110
www.hrk.de

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Preliminary Remarks

Change is the real constant of higher education policy. Expanding the higher education sector, redefining the relationship between university and state, and changing the academic structure have preoccupied the HRK intensively over many years. However, developments do not advance at a constant pace, positive changes necessitate further action, while action competencies have to be developed and frameworks defined.

The pattern of these change processes will repeatedly become clear in the course of this report. The greater financial autonomy for the universities and the associated decision to abandon the cameralistic (cash-flow analysis) system of fiscal accounting have made double-entry accounting, controlling, target agreements and fundraising necessary. Targets and guidelines at European level (full cost calculation of research activities) have again and in particular accelerated this process. The Excellence Initiative has substantially raised the pace of the differentiation process within the higher education landscape, and partly, too, to a great extent between the different kinds of universities. The challenge of drawing positive impulses from this for the whole German higher education system still needs to be mastered.

Finally, and right in the middle of a trend towards the Europeanisation and globalisation of higher education, an opposite trend is to be seen in Germany in which the Federal States' competence for higher education has been strengthened, on the one hand, while, on the other, Federal Government has completely withdrawn as a central authority.

1. Federalism Reforms – Reorganising the Federal Responsibilities in Education and Research

Recent, incisive changes to the frameworks for the universities occurred in summer 2006. Following the formation of a grand coalition, the negotiations between Federal Government and the Federal States that had failed towards the end of 2004 on redistributing competencies in the federal system were taken up again and brought to a conclusion. The result was that the Federal Government's competence for framework legislation in the field of higher education policy was abandoned. All governing areas of higher education policy will, in the future, fall under the competing legislation of the Federal States. Only university admissions and university degrees can now be governed on a nationwide basis. However, the Federal States also have the right to adopt alternative legislation here. Where they do not agree with a foreseeable Federal Government regulation, they can also choose to create their own state legislation in the field of university admissions and academic degrees. The joint responsibility for university construction is also being abolished. Previously, this had secured a 50% contribution by Federal Government to the financing and maintenance of university buildings, large-scale facilities and major instrumentation as well as the planning coordination performed by the German Council for Science and Humanities¹.

2003 and 2004 heard the HRK, together with the other science and research organisations, clearly voice their opposition to the Federal Government's withdrawal from higher education policy, above all because the "federal" brace is of such great importance, and especially so in the transitional phase to the new degree programmes with the many associated changes that this involves. The HRK also called for the

¹ Wissenschaftsrat

joint task of university construction to be continued, because it feared that a gap would develop in the competitive conditions between the universities in the financially weak states and those in the financially strong states, thereby seeing disadvantages for the whole system when the German Council for Science and Humanities is no longer responsible for coordinating projects and plans across the Federal States.

Despite all the opposition on the part of science and research, the preliminary decision to abolish the Federal Government's framework competence and to abandon the joint tasks had already been reached when the Federalism Reform negotiations were taken up again, because consensus had already been reached between Federal Government and the Federal States. In the final phase of the parliamentary consultations, the HRK then focused all its efforts on preventing the "prohibition of cooperation" between Federal Government and the Federal States that had been included in the draft bill. In the statement made by the Executive Board at the hearing of the Federal Parliament² and the Upper House³ on 29 May 2006, the HRK demanded that "Federal Government and the Federal States must by mutual agreement also be able in the case of important tasks and responsibilities to institutionally support these. It is not the prohibition of joint financing, but rather its express facilitation that is the objectively correct and absolutely necessary path to take."

Indeed, we succeeded at the very last minute in still managing to amend Article 91 b of the Basic Law⁴. In the future, Federal Government and the Federal States will also be able to continue working together, and not only in research, but also in "science and research" projects. Hence, the door remained open for collaborative programmes at federal and state level – namely, in cases of national importance and when all the Federal States agree. That it was still possible to achieve this amendment to the draft bill must be seen as a great success.

² Bundestag

³ Bundesrat

⁴ Grundgesetz

However, other demands made by the HRK in the final phase of the debate, namely for the Federal States to dispense with their right to adopt alternative legislation and to bring about a voluntary commitment to continue financing higher education construction to the same extent as before in the long term failed to produce a result.

The universities have accepted that a broad political majority exists for a shift of competence in higher education policy towards and into the Federal States. They now see their responsibility as standing up for a degree of commonality that is absolutely essential in the interest of teachers and learners and for being able to act at European level. Hence, even more importance attaches to collaboration with the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs⁵ than in the past. The German Rectors' Conference⁶ will continue to work towards ensuring that the increase in competencies does not lead to closer control by the Federal States, but can rather – in accordance with the positive trend seen over the past 10 to 15 years – be converted into greater autonomy for each university. Whether the states are indeed also able to support the increase in competence in financial policy terms, i.e. whether they will be able to make the sufficient resources available that are needed for mastering the coming challenges and maintaining our national and international competitiveness remains to be seen.

The negotiations on the Higher Education Pact⁷ have shown how difficult it is under changing conditions to balance out the various interests and to reach common solutions. To a certain extent, getting the Higher Education Pact represented an acid test for further developments. The question of whether we can tap into the required talent reserves in the future and can again strengthen German science and research depends on this. However, it also remains to be seen how willing the Federal States are to work together, given their own consolidated competence.

⁵ Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK)

⁶ Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK)

⁷ Hochschulpakt 2020

2. Higher Education Pact

During the negotiations on the federal distribution of competencies, it became apparent that the universities face a new quantitative challenge that can only be mastered by Federal Government and the Federal States working together.

The KMK expects the number of school-leavers holding a university entrance qualification to increase by around 30% in the coming six to eight years. This development can be attributed to a trend towards higher qualifications, resulting from years with higher birth rates in the early 1990s and by a reduction in the length of schooling in some of the Federal States. In fact, this represents a great opportunity. At present, the proportion of undergraduates among the respective age group in Germany lies at around 36%, far below the average for OECD countries. Due to the high attrition rates, only around 20% of an age group in Germany gain an academic degree. This means that the rate lies around 15% below the average for OECD countries. Given the longer term demographic development and the age structure of people working in academia, it must be expected that it will no longer be possible to train enough young academics in Germany in the foreseeable future to fill the gaps that appear, and it is also possible to foresee that these are the last strong age groups that will crowd into the universities. As from 2020, we will be dealing with much smaller numbers. The foreseeable deficit in well-trained young professionals is a frightening prospect for a country whose only natural resource is, as stated, the development of knowledge. If we could succeed in indeed providing the large number of university entrance qualification holders with a study place, German science and research would again be given a boost – with a positive impact on the job market.

To achieve this, the capacity of the universities has to be expanded, at least for the time being. In response to this, the HRK, just after the KMK Forecast had been published, called for a "Higher Education Pact", to be introduced in cooperation between Federal Government, the Federal States and the Universities ("Opportunity not Burden, Recommendations

for a Higher Education Pact to handle the expected increase in student numbers", Resolution by the 209th Plenary Assembly of 14 November 2006). This should be made up of two components: Firstly, to create additional study places and, secondly, to this end to fill those professorships that become vacant, especially as from 2015, sooner than planned, so that the vacant positions can be taken by two professors to help handle the particularly strong student onslaught. In addition, we proposed further measures to raise the teaching capacity that the universities can make flexible use of.

The HRK explained that efforts need to be made by Federal Government and the Federal States to achieve the goals of the Higher Education Pact, and that this also includes providing substantial financial resources. The HRK has calculated that, compared with 2005, an additional financial requirement of 3.4 billion euros will be needed when the demand for study places peaks in 2013. 2007 will already need additional spending of 600 million euros. And even in 2020, there will still be an additional financial requirement of 1.8 billion euros. The HRK calculated the average annual financial requirement for the Higher Education Pact from 2007 to 2020 to run to 2.3 billion euros. This sum includes modest improvements to the student-teacher ratio necessitated by changes to the academic structure. (Key Points on a Higher Education Pact, Resolution by the 102nd Senate on 10 October 2006).

Regrettably, Federal Government and the Federal States failed to take up the HRK's offer to work together on drawing up the Higher Education Pact, but rather chose to negotiate behind closed doors. This then resulted in a much smaller solution. They agreed on a programme – initially for the period up to 2010 – that provides for a planned magnitude of 1.13 billion euros in total to be 50% financed by Federal Government. Within the scope of this Pact, 91,000 additional study places are to be created. A sum of 5,500 euros per year (up to 2010) has been calculated for each additional undergraduate student. With the Pact, Federal Government and the Federal States not only lag behind the KMK forecast in respect of the demand for study places, but also fall clearly short of the previous average costs for a study place, namely 7,300 euros. The improved student-teacher ratio that the new academic

structure actually provides for cannot be financed. But that's not all, since some Federal States have placed the burden of the costs for achieving the starting level – as per the agreed number of study places in 2005 – on the universities. So, here or there, the implementation of the Higher Education Pact has resulted in an increase in the teaching load for academic staff and a reduction in the "Curricularnormwerte"⁸ for degree programmes offered by Universities of Applied Sciences⁹. Hence, it must be feared that the deterioration in the study conditions is leading to a falling willingness to study. This in turn means that the goal of leading more young people to an academic degree has been missed, and the potential that lies in the strong age groups has been wasted.

The particular difficulty that the universities face is that the Higher Education Pact has not been conceived with a demand-orientated approach. Rather, the universities are expected to create an additional range of programmes whose success will have to be measured by whether the study places meet with sufficient demand. If the target is failed, the universities are threatened by repayment demands. Not least, the Higher Education Pact lacks an appropriate timeframe. Only a few Federal States have so far been prepared to commit themselves to the continuing financing of the undergraduates enrolled up until 2010 and for the following years. The HRK will call on Federal Government and the Federal States to enter into negotiations on the continuation of the Higher Education Pact beyond 2010 in good time, so that it can continue seamlessly. In addition, the HRK will observe the implementation of the Higher Education Pact in the Federal States and its impact on the development of undergraduate numbers and student flows in order to be able to influence the proper and orderly continuation of this instrument.

The limits of Federal-State action have been made clear to us with the Higher Education Pact. An expansion of the capacities is possible within its scope, but improvements to the teacher-student ratio are not. But it is exactly this that the undergraduates were supposed to experience within the scope of the reformed academic structure. Neither do the Federal

⁸ Hours per semester and week that an individual teaching staff member is supposed to commit per individual student (differs from subject to subject).

⁹ Fachhochschule

States sufficiently consider this responsibility in view of the tight budget for science and education. Politics and universities must understand that improvements to the study conditions are of key importance if we are to succeed in qualifying enough young people at our universities, young people who are so essential for our job market and our international competitiveness.

3. Reforming Studies and Teaching – The Bologna Process

3.1. Bologna Process

The Bologna Process provides occasion for further-reaching academic reform in Germany that politicians have commissioned us with and which must be viewed as an opportunity for revising, reviewing and modernising the study opportunities so that they continue developing in a direction that has long been needed. The HRK played a role in shaping these reforms right from the very beginning. The HRK exerts its influence on the European process and on the national reform agenda by taking part in European and national summits and workgroups and by keeping in contact with the political players. And the HRK supports the member universities in their strategic and operational work by making recommendations, providing information, organising events, and offering advice. Specifically this covers the following:

On the one hand, the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Higher Education convened in London in the period under report, providing an occasion to take stock of how the implementation of the Bologna Process is proceeding and to define the remaining tasks. Above all, however, it instilled a new spirit into the participants. On the other hand, overarching qualification frameworks were launched at European and national level that place the reforms in the context of the educational landscape as a whole.

In the run up to the Conference of Ministers, the HRK assessed the reform process to date from the perspective of the German universities and drew up prospects for the further work. These are included in the "Recommendation on the Continuing Development of the Bologna Process" (1st General Meeting of 4 May 2007), which contains a commitment to the academic reforms and calls for a return to the key objectives of the process, namely international and national mobility as well as focusing degree programmes in line with the competencies and

outcomes and giving them a clear structure. Above all, however, it clearly shows that the key frameworks have to be improved if the reforms are to be successful. The Bologna Process is based on the assumption of stronger, more autonomous and more strategically-capable universities. To be able to meet this requirement, however, Germany's universities need more financial resources for a better student-teacher ratio and for the quality of teaching as well as freedoms for organising and arranging studies and teaching, which the capacity legislation, in particular, narrows down, for example, by preventing innovative forms of courses and more intensive advice and support services.

A key result of the Ministerial Meeting in May 2007 was the new spirit that this instilled into this Europe-wide reform process, because, contrary to the common perception in Germany, great enthusiasm could be felt in London for the common reform work. The London Communiqué issued by the ministers also shows that key elements of our concerns had been heard, such as the central role for autonomous and sufficiently resourced universities, developing and maintaining a wide variety of doctoral programmes or the emphasis on mobility funding for all university members. However, it must be stated that, at national level, the specified central demands for better resources for the reforms remain open.

The European Qualification Framework (EQF) is an initiative of the European Union that aims to create transparency between the national education systems so that they become more interchangeable and efficient. Working within the scope of the Lisbon Strategy, the EQF is intended to contribute to enhancing the competitiveness of the European Union in the global context. In Germany, the EQF provides an opportunity to draw up a trans-sectoral German Qualification Framework (GQF). The 103rd Senate of the HRK issued a statement on the Commission's proposal (Statement of 13 February 2007 "On the European Qualification Framework and On the Future Development of a National Qualification Framework") and, at the same time, defined a position for the work to start on the GQF. It welcomed the qualification frameworks as instruments of transparency which, for example, support academic recognition and crediting processes. However, the draft version of the EQF, on the one hand, gives grounds for concern to the effect that

insufficient consideration has been given to the lead conceptions and standards of academic training. Comparison with the qualification framework for the European Higher Education Area (Bergen 2005) provides proof of the downward development of the standards at each level, for example, simply by the fact that the research orientation or independent research and development work are no longer a part of the level descriptions. The HRK has advised the European Commission directly of this assessment, as well as indirectly via the EUA. On the other hand, qualification frameworks must not be allowed to become a vehicle for introducing admissions rules that neither meet the requirements of quality nor the standards of academic degree programmes nor the interests of the learners. The HRK has presented both these concerns in numerous discussion rounds held in preparation for the work on the GQF. In the meantime, the HRK has been invited by the coordinating group made up of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research¹⁰ BMBF and KMK to join a working group of representative bodies from the education system (schools, vocational education and training, universities, employers and trade unions) that will play decisive role in drawing up the GQF.

The expectation that transparency instruments – which are indispensable in an increasingly international education system – will lead to automatic recognition and credit is a common misunderstanding found in many discussions on the Bologna Process and on mobility, in general. In the higher education sector, it is the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) that is, on the one hand, overburdened with excessively high expectations, while, on the other, insufficient use is made of its actual potential which, in itself, can only unfold fully in the context of other reform elements. The Senate of the HRK adopted a recommendation on "ECTS in Context: Goals, Experience and Fields of Application" (104th Senate on 12 June 2007) that presents these interactions. In particular, this refers to how the recognition processes at universities are organised which, since the Federal Republic of Germany ratified the "Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region," have had to follow the so-called Lisbon Convention.

¹⁰ Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF)

In our opinion, excessive expectations are also made in respect of the credit points system that is being developed in vocational education and training under the heading of ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training), and especially so in terms of the interchangeability with the higher education system, just as in the ECTS. In this respect, the HRK expressed its views in a statement made by the President in the European Commission consultation process on the ECVET.

After the state examination degree programmes were not initially included in the Bologna academic reforms, at least the teacher training reforms became both broader and more dynamic. The HRK deemed it to be necessary to understand these reforms not solely as an implementation of the Bologna structures, but rather to use these to achieve urgent reform goals on which the teacher training experts have long agreed. The new degree programmes seem to offer an opportunity for focusing the courses from differing faculties and departments consistently on a common goal, namely on the professionalism of future teachers, which must then be matured in the probationary training and, after graduating, in the subsequent in-service and continuing training. In its recommendation "On the Future of Teacher Training at Universities" of 13 February 2006, the Plenary Assembly of the HRK clearly stated what contentual and structural reforms are needed at the universities, which frameworks the Federal States have to create, and where they have to redefine their own role in the field of teacher training.

3.2. Bologna Centre of Excellence

With financial resources provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the HRK is supporting the Bologna implementation process at its member universities through a broad range of advisory and consulting services. In 2004, the HRK established the Bologna Service Centre to this end, followed up in 2005 with the Bologna Centre of Excellence. Both measures ended in June 2007. With the HRK Bologna Centre, which is still under construction, and is also financed by BMBF,

the HRK is continuing to support its member universities in the introduction of a multi-cycle academic structure.

Within the scope of the "Bologna Advisers at Germany's Universities" funding programme, the HRK supported the activities of 22 selected universities between 2006 and 2007 in their implementation strategies (13 universities, 7 universities of applied sciences and 2 colleges of art) in open competition. With its detailed reporting system, the project provides a unique, focused insight into the concrete measures taking place at the various levels of the internal decision-making process, the curriculum development process, and the administrative implementation process at universities which preoccupied themselves with the challenges of the Bologna Process at an early stage.

Thus, it was possible to identify clear trends in the universities and to select examples of good practice for a number of topic fields relating to implementing the reforms. Building on the regularly and systematically analysed reports from the 26 Bologna advisers at the "HRK pilot universities" and the everyday consultancy work at the Service Centre, it was possible to draw a positive conclusion. The assistance provided by delegating HRK advisers to the participating universities supported the implementation of the academic reforms at the universities very effectively. The advisers and consultants, in their capacity as preferred contacts, contributed decisively to the success in implementing the reforms at the partner universities and, at the same time, ensured that close experience exchange took place in a nationwide and HRK chaired network of Bologna Coordinators. After the start-up funding had come to its scheduled end, regional consultant networks financed by the project were additionally developed, above all in the Federal States of Thuringia, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Hessen, which continue to be self-sustaining, even after the end of the project.

The reform topics identified at the pilot universities essentially resemble those found at the other German universities that are also proceeding through the implementation process. Hence, focusing the degree programmes, the curricula and the modules in line with the unequivocal qualification goal, learning outcomes and target skills and competencies

continues to be an important desiderata as does the automatic issue of the Diploma Supplement, the implementation of ECTS and the simpler recognition process for academic achievements gained abroad as defined in the meanwhile ratified Lisbon Convention. These continue to stand in the way of more student mobility as does the lack of mobility windows in the new Bachelor's programmes that do not always make full use of the flexibility and organisational freedoms that are open to them, and the still unfinished nationwide reform of the state examinations, especially in law, medicine and teaching, that, after all, account for 40% of all academic degrees.

To assure the quality of the existing range of services and to identify future demand, the Bologna Service Centre carried out its first user survey in summer 2006. Besides classical advice and consultancy, users asked for more networking between the Bologna players and a flanking commentary on the current state of the implementation results. In addition, stimuli were to be given for the continuing development of the academic reforms by preparing and presenting examples of good practice from universities that are worth emulating and by taking on further coordinating tasks. Through its close links with the university executives and the various operational levels at the universities, the Service Centre succeeded in recognising developments and trends in the implementation of the Bologna Process at an early stage and in communicating these to the various HRK decision-making bodies and committees.

4. Excellence Initiative

The agreement between Federal Government and the Federal States on the "Excellence Initiative by Federal Government and the Federal States on Promoting Science and Research at German Universities" was signed in June 2005. Under this programme, a total of 1.9 billion euros was made available up to 2011. The Excellence Initiative was developed with the goal of creating beacons in the academic landscape that are internationally visible and competitive, and whose concepts should also provide orientation for other national institutions. The consensus was preceded by months of long discussions and argument between Federal Government and the Federal States. The HRK repeatedly spoke in favour of the Excellence Initiative. However, promoting excellence is necessary, not least in the interest of developing profiles and differentiating the higher education system which, at the end of the day, serve the competition for quality. However, promoting excellence with the aspiration of achieving long-term effects can only be achieved with a competitive procedure which not solely supports individual research projects, the formation of cooperative networks with non-university research institutions or the training of young researchers, but also the ability of the universities to place a strategic focus on Excellence. Only if the university focuses all its decision-making processes on promoting creativity and a willingness to perform will it be able to secure internationally visible Excellence beyond the financial term of individual research project. (Resolutions of the 98th Senate of 10 February 2004, of the 99th Senate of 5 October 2004, and of the 100th Senate of 16 February 2005).

October 2006 saw the funding decision for the 1st round announced, just a few weeks before the 2nd round. All in all, 39 Graduate Schools, 37 Clusters of Excellence and 9 Institutional Strategies were approved. The HRK congratulated the selected universities and encouraged the universities whose proposals had not been successful to use the extensive preliminary work and the new ideas and concepts as a basis for new projects. The HRK thanked the Wissenschaftsrat and the German

Research Foundation DFG¹¹ for the outstanding, strictly science and quality-led selection. The HRK emphasised that the selection process at all stages of the Excellence Initiative must also be purely science-led in the future. The competition must remain concentrated on top-level research. It needs to be consolidated to sustainably strengthen the higher education system as the centre of German science and research. Special measures are needed to make excellence visible in other fields as well, commented the HRK. Particular importance in this respect attaches to improving the teaching of students and the student advice and support services.

In respect of the humanities, which only played a subordinate role in the first funding decisions, the HRK recommended that measures are taken to determine whether the instruments of the Initiative for Promoting Excellence are equally suitable for all disciplines. It is absolutely essential that the Excellence Initiative is perpetuated beyond 2011 so that the aspired qualitative surge is sustained. The HRK welcomes the fact Federal Government has stated its willingness to do this. ("On the Future of the Excellence Initiative", Recommendation of the 209th Plenary Assembly of 14 November 2006).

Besides the intended effect of stimulating excellent concepts, the excellence discussion and competition triggered a process of differentiation in Germany's academic landscape whose outcome cannot yet be seen. While universities were all held to be the same for many decades, the aim now is to show each other through competition that they are better or at least not worse than the others. The large number of universities that took part in the competition shows that there is great ambition to be one of the proven research universities. Equally, however, there is also a fear of not being among these beacons, and so of having to carry out the conceived research projects with fewer resources. The Excellence Initiative will result in the competitive edge of the chosen universities being extended because they are funded with substantial resources over a longer period of time.

¹¹ Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

The recommendations made by the Wissenschaftsrat in January 2006, namely to concentrate the training of young academics on the strong research universities raises a new challenge. It remains to be seen to what extent this process will lead to a partial decoupling of research and teaching – at least in the sense of shifting the emphasis, with the result that some universities will strongly focus primarily on research while others will still do research, but will prioritise teaching. The differentiation process naturally also affects the relationship between universities and universities of applied sciences. While the differences between universities and universities of applied sciences are tending to become weaker as a result of the new academic structure and the new academic degrees, the Excellence Initiative intensifies the differences between these two kinds of higher education institutions. On account of their lower proportion of research and their strong focus on applications, the universities of applied sciences are only marginally involved in this competition and hence in the funding opportunities. They can, however, contribute as partners to the Clusters of Excellence of the universities. The question of how the process of differentiation within as well as across the various types of higher education institutions turns out will be of decisive importance for the competitiveness of the higher education system.

5. Promoting Women

In the early 1990s, the HRK carried out its first comprehensive survey on the situation of women at universities and adopted recommendations on promoting women that were largely also implemented by the universities and were then included in the special higher education programmes launched at Federal Government and Federal State level. Since then, the participation by women in science and research has seen a pronounced increase. The result of more than 15 years of equal opportunity policies remains unsatisfactory, however, despite the successes that have undoubtedly been achieved, because there continues to be a lack of women in the higher levels of the science and research system, both among professors as well as in the executive positions at universities and research institutions.

While women still account for around half the undergraduates and half the university graduates, they only account for a 39% share of the doctorates, 27.7% of the postdoctoral habilitations, 13.6% of the professorships, and 9.2% of the C4 professors. These figures point to the asymmetrical participation of women in the field of science and research. Indeed, this is not only a problem for women, but is also a quality and modernisation deficit for the universities and research institutions themselves. Successfully positioning universities and research institutions in international competition means launching measures that are capable of overcoming these deficits. The foreign experts who took part in the Excellence Initiative also drew attention to this.

In the period under report, the HRK consequently decided to undertake a critical analysis of the various instruments and to initiate a new discussion on equal opportunity in science and research. It set up a project working party made up of numerous experts from universities, science and research organisations, and research institutes and ministries who contributed their valuable experience and their previous work to these activities.

The recommendations drawn up by the project working party and adopted by the 209th Plenary Assembly on 14 November 2006 ("Promoting women") targeted various addressees. Primarily, these were directed towards the universities themselves, namely at various levels of the university executive via the faculties and departments and through to the individual institute. They have to promote women more decisively than in the past, must create an internal system of incentives and ensure that working conditions are in place that enable women to take part in the process of scientific qualification in the same way that their male colleagues do.

However, the recommendations also address the Federal States in their capacity as the institutional and financial sponsors of the universities that are able to define the steps that have to be taken to achieve more equal opportunity in target agreements reached with the universities. They are also directed towards the legislator with the aim of creating suitable conditions the field of employment law provisions and salary scales as well as addressing Federal Government and the Federal States with the demand for purposefully continuing the past efforts to raise the proportion of women entering careers in science and research within the scope of the joint action lines. Last, but not least, the research funding organisations and agencies are also called upon to review the award of funds in respect of a possible "gender bias" and, perhaps, are called upon to initiate steps to make the funding award process more objective.

After the recommendation on "Promoting women" had been adopted, the HRK also signed the joint appeal by the science and research organisations issued under the heading "Campaign for Equal Opportunity" of 29 November 2006. This represents a commitment by all the signatory science and research organisations to clearly increase the number of women scientists in decision-making and executive positions as well as the proportion of women in the committees and review groups, to support the compatibility of family and career, to inform the public of the contribution made by women scientists and researchers to their structures and processes, and to subject the equal opportunity successes in their organisations to a further evaluation in five years' time. The HRK will take part in this task.

6. Capacity Law

The HRK has on several occasions drawn attention to the fact that although the applicable capacity law indeed objectively suggests that training capacities are set on the basis of objective parameters, in reality, however, it is a system whose roots lie in the government's financial policy decisions. The applicable Curriculannormwerte are not based on the support and advice work that is actually necessary (teacher-student ratio) for high-quality teaching, but rather merely express how much money the government wants to make available for training a student.

Furthermore, this capacity law is a system that focuses on uniformity and equality and is no longer appropriate to the new frameworks, namely the complete differentiation of the higher education system (a competition-oriented and managed higher education system), the new academic structures (Bachelor's/ Master's) and the development of postgraduate and continuing training programmes. This is why the HRK called for a fundamental change of system in October 2006 with its "Key Points for a New Capacity Law in a Growing Higher Education System" (Recommendation of the 102nd Senate of 10 October 2006). According to this, the previous system based on a Curriculannormwert is to be replaced with an agreement-based model. This will then openly present the financial policy dimension of the education and training capacity. The agreement between Federal State and University is to be confirmed by parliament in order to restrict the extent of legal control in individual cases as to whether a study place is available or not. Higher quality standards can be achieved by using additional resources (in particular tuition fees). This means that the teaching improvements financed by tuition fees have no capacity implication, i.e. are neutral, and do not count as an "improper development of standards". In respect of the capacity neutrality of the courses financed by tuition fees and other external funds, the KMK and HRK largely agree. A workgroup appointed at the behest of the HRK / KMK-AG on the "Continuing Development of the Structure of the Higher Education System" initially produced a joint report that was presented to the 105th Senate on 16 October 2007. It was agreed that the legislative provisions in the respective Federal States

are unequivocal in this respect and do not open any doors with which courts could, in individual cases, come to a different verdict.

The "agreement model" proposed by the HRK has so far only been implemented in the State of Hamburg. The other states favour the so-called "bandwidth model". The HRK Executive Board has consequently decided to promote the implementation of the agreement model in a renewed initiative and to view the bandwidth model solely as an interim step towards this goal.

As far as the changes to the frameworks are concerned, the HRK is responsible for explaining the necessity for changes to the capacity law to the politicians, and especially, on the one hand, the relationship between setting capacities, the quality of research (Excellence Initiative) and the quality of teaching, and thus presenting the future prospects for student applicants and students, and, on the other, of reminding them that new control instruments on target agreements and competition call for greater university autonomy and a different capacity law.

Interacting with the "inner circle" of experts is not in itself sufficient, the general public needs to be reached. In so doing, it must be made clear that the universities are not pursuing a policy of reducing the number of study places, but rather aim to achieve a higher quality of teaching by improving the student support and advice services through better teacher-student ratios.

7. University Admissions

In the past two decades the HRK has continuously advocated that the universities must be given a much stronger role to play in the field of student admissions. Because a central admissions process based on uniform criteria such as the grade point average of the Abitur school-leaving certificate and the waiting period is no longer compatible with a competition orientated higher education system.

Following the 7th amendment of the Higher Education Act in 2004, the "University Selection Quotas" both in the nationwide Central Admissions Service ZVS¹² for degree programmes and in the local, federal state governed admissions restrictions (NC)¹³ system has seen a pronounced increase across practically all federal states (up to 60% and more). In this respect, the universities get the opportunity not only to use the Abitur grade point average, but can also consider other selection criteria. To this extent, the efforts of the HRK have been successful. There can be no doubt that a decentralised system of awarding study places must also present a functional option and must, at the same time, minimise the administrative workload, both for the universities and the applicants. Uncoordinated multiple applications or admissions decisions lead (as the study place award methods used prior to the introduction of the centralised ZVS system) resulted in intransparency, a waste of resources and time, superfluous extra work for all involved, and, in the worst case scenario, in the whole system becoming inoperative.

The HRK Executive Board and the Plenary Assembly therefore already called for the creation of an application and admissions service centre of the universities as early as in May respectively June 2005 that would be able to take on parts of the procedural administration. This would reduce the workload for applicants and universities alike. Setting the application and selection criteria as well as the material admissions decision based on these would, according to this model, remain with each participating university. The internal procedures at universities would remain

¹² Zentralstelle für die Vergabe von Studienplätzen

¹³ Numerus clausus

unaffected – subject to the necessarily uniform time framework for the whole procedure.

This service would have to be mandatory for the nationwide admissions restricted (NC) degree programmes, while they could be used optionally by the universities for degree programmes subject to local admissions restrictions. Finally, an option also had to be made available to the universities to use the new service centre for "aptitude tests" for degree programmes with no admissions restrictions.

The KMK took up this idea in 2005, albeit representing the opinion that the ZVS could be converted into a universities admission service in line with the HRK concept without calling for the need of a new institution. The present ZVS staff could thus continue to be employed and the costs for the universities could be clearly reduced by drawing on the ZVS infrastructure.

Since July 2005, KMK and HRK have been negotiating on the frameworks and principles (legal form, financing, right of the Federal States and the universities to be heard) as well as on the scope and form of the potential services to be offered. However, important questions have still not been answered yet. This is why the HRK Executive Board has not yet been able to encourage the universities to make a binding commitment to contribute to the new admissions service centre. On the one hand, these questions relate to how high the costs would be for the universities and, on the other, to the influence that the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Finance (FMK)¹⁴ would have on the whole budget of the new centre, and finally, to the question of whether and with whom a modern, dialogue-orientated application and service process could be put into practice.

However, a solution is urgently needed, since the number of applications is generally seeing substantial increases, and with an additional flood of applicants to be expected in the wake of the school reforms.

¹⁴ Finanzministerkonferenz

The HRK Executive Board is currently endeavouring to find an answer to this situation.

8. Quality Assurance and Accreditation

8.1. Quality Assurance Project (Project Q)

At the end of 2006, the HRK completed the Quality Assurance Project¹⁵ (Project Q) that had been continuously financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) for almost 10 years. The final project phase concentrated primarily on questions of university management and planning. The discussions were essentially reflected in the contributions to and results of a series of conferences called "From Quality Assurance in Teaching to Quality Development as the Principle of University Management", whose success was essentially based on the contribution made by the member universities. It became clear that this was not merely about adding together the quality assurance methods in the various activity fields of the universities, but rather mainly about understanding and embedding quality assurance as an interlinking, lead university management principle, instead of pursuing sectoral quality assurance in all university fields of action.

The end of 2006 also saw the pilot project on "Process Quality for Teaching and Studies – Conception and Implementation of a Process Accreditation Method", also funded by BMBF, come to its scheduled end. This pilot had been carried out by Project Q from 2004 to 2006 in collaboration with an accreditation agency (ACQUIN e.V.) and four member universities (Universities of Bayreuth and Bremen, Universities of Applied Sciences in Erfurt and Münster). The project results were presented at a major completion conference held in October 2006 that led to the introduction of system accreditation.

The beginning of 2007 saw the new "Quality Management Project"¹⁶ commence its work. This was made possible through further financial support on the part of BMBF and the approval of the Federal States.

¹⁵ Projekt Qualitätssicherung (Projekt Q)

¹⁶ Projekt Qualitätsmanagement

Firstly, this focuses on continuing the networking activities and the information platform that had previously been run by Project Q. Secondly, the project was linked-up with a research project whose scope included a survey on the processes of quality assurance and quality management and the respective conditions and effects that these have at universities. At the end of the day, this serves to package the previously largely unconnected and isolated quality assurance activities into trans-sectoral quality management systems for the university as a whole. Subsequently, the project aims to develop methods and structures that have proved useful when establishing integrated quality management systems at universities, so that appropriate concepts can be made available to the HRK member universities.

The project is additionally integrated into international initiatives. In its capacity as an Associate Member of ENQA, the project engages in intensive exchange with European quality assurance bodies. Together with the HRK International Department, the project ran a DIES Conference on quality development in non-European regions.

8.2. Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

At the Bologna follow-up conference in Bergen, the ministers responsible for higher education accepted the "European Standards and Guidelines" as a basis for internal and external quality assurance and made its implementation into a component of the national reporting activities. The Accreditation Council¹⁷ consequently revised its resolutions in order to harmonise these with the Guidelines.

These Guidelines are of particular significance for the universities, because their first section details the need for internal quality management at universities (including external review). To this extent,

¹⁷ Akkreditierungsrat

the continuing development of accreditation in Germany will always also refer back to the Guidelines.

The 102nd Senate of the HRK adopted a recommendation on 13 February 2007 on the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" which underlines their significance and recognises the efforts of Germany's universities in establishing quality assurance methods in research, teaching and studies and, in so doing, implemented a number of measures that had been recommended at European level.

8.3. Accreditation

Based on the results of the Process Accreditation pilot project, the 103rd HRK Senate supported a further trial for the process on 13 February 2007 ("Recommendation on the Further Testing and Trialling of the Process Accreditation Method"), whereby system accreditation (as process accreditation is now known) is not a substitute but is rather to be offered as an option to programme accreditation. Its value lies above all in the fact that it makes decision-making structures and responsibilities within the university transparent and supports the universities in their management activities. Savings vis-à-vis programme accreditation are not to be expected, however. In addition, some controversy still exists over the fact that programme accreditation, too, will with respect to the international recognition of degrees at many universities – and probably differing from one discipline to the next – continue to be of great significance within the German accreditation system. This is why programme accreditation must continue to be consistently developed; this includes a critical review and stocktake of the effectiveness and efficiency of the previous method. This position was underlined in a further resolution ("Continuing Development of System Accreditation", 104th Senate on 12 June 2007), which additionally emphasises that the coordinating role played by the Accreditation Council must be consolidated.

The resolution adopted by the Accreditation Council in May 2007 and that of the KMK in June 2007 led to the trial introduction of System Accreditation at the start of 2008. The Accreditation Council was commissioned to draw up the criteria and procedural rules for system accreditation in the course of 2007.

The Accreditation Council took on this assignment in the workgroup on the "Continuing Development of the Accreditation System", in which the HRK is also involved. The workgroup drew up the draft proposals for the Accreditation Council, which were accepted on 29 October 2007 and were passed on to the KMK, which aims to reach a decision at the start of 2008.

After being transformed into a foundation, the Accreditation Council continued its work. The HRK actively monitored and supported this work in the Foundation Council and at public events. Its sustainable funding continues to be a problem. Part-financing for the Accreditation Council via fees for the agencies was rejected by the HRK to prevent increases in the process costs for the universities.

In agreement with the KMK, the HRK prepared the external evaluation of the Accreditation Council and appointed the review team to commence its work in the last quarter of 2007.

The HRK called on the Standing Conference of the Ministers of the Interior (IMK)¹⁸ to discontinue the special procedure of accepting holders of university of applied sciences Master's degrees for higher service positions in the accreditation process. The Standing Conference of the Ministers of the Interior indicated its willingness to concur. A corresponding revision of the agreement between the Standing Conference of the Ministers of the Interior and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs is to be reached in the course of 2007.

¹⁸ Innenministerkonferenz

9. Fringe Subjects

The development of the so-called Fringe Subjects was not only the focus of public discussion during the Year of the Humanities (2007), but also formed an important focus for the HRK's activities. September 2005 saw the HRK organise a public hearing of experts on this topic. As a result, it convened a workgroup to draw up recommendations on the future development of the fringe subjects and prepared concrete measures. These recommendations by the workgroup were considered by the 103rd Senate of the HRK on 13 February 2007 ("The Future of the Fringe Subjects – Potentials, Challenges, Prospects") and were broadly and positively welcomed by the general public.

On the one hand, these recommendations saw themselves as an answer to growing concern over the future of the fringe subjects. Nevertheless, they highlighted the particular strengths of the fringe subjects which have made them a specific feature of Germany's higher education landscape. They often stand out through their high international reputation and contribute significantly to the scientific profile and international competitiveness of those universities where these subjects are represented. Given this background, the HRK called upon the subject representatives, the heads of the universities, and those responsible in the state ministries to develop strategies that are able to secure and strengthen the potential of these disciplines for the higher education landscape and their presence in Germany in the long term. It is of decisive importance that adequate working conditions are created for the fringe subjects. This includes, in particular, the purposeful setting of core areas in the spectrum of disciplines at the respective university or universities, an appropriate academic environment with opportunities for cooperation and collaboration in teaching and research at local and national level, appropriate human resources and staffing structures as well as sufficient financial resources to be able to meet the tasks and responsibilities that have to be performed.

At the same time, the recommendation sets high standards for the fringe subjects themselves to meet. By guaranteeing high quality standards in

research, teaching, training and knowledge transfer, they must make their own contribution to their sustainable integration into the German higher education system. This includes an obligation to account themselves for their results and achievements, to actively play their part in new organisational forms of cooperation and interdisciplinarity and to engage in the scientific competition for excellence and efficiency. In so doing, the evaluation parameters must be appropriate to the subject, structure and working methods of the fringe subjects.

Finally, the recommendation specifies that the fringe subjects are reviewed (mapped), that a service centre is established to support and coordinate planning decisions, and that a funding initiative is launched in the form of a quality-orientated competition.

Shortly afterwards, the HRK was itself able to take the lead in the first of these measures. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) provided financial resources for carrying out the project "Mapping the Fringe Subjects". This project aims to take systematic stock of the fringe subjects at Germany's universities by collecting key data on them (locations, number of professorships, degree programmes, etc. in a comparison between 1997 and 2007) and to present and illustrate these in the form of maps. Management responsibility for the project was transferred to the Fringe Subject Unit at the University of Potsdam, headed by Professor Dr. Norbert P. Franz. Results can be expected by the end of November.

10. Earlier Session Dates for Semesters and Lecture Periods

Once again in the period under report, the HRK preoccupied itself with the topic of restructuring and harmonising the semester and session dates with those around the world. While the 1970s saw priority given to spreading the teaching more equally across the academic year in order to manage the higher student numbers, the goal now is – as in the initiatives of 1999, 2000 and 2005 – to internationally harmonise these as a means of facilitating student mobility.

Despite the earlier attempts that failed as a result of the ambivalent opinions of the universities, the HRK Executive Board once again took the initiative at the start of 2006 – not only because of the EUA Declaration in Glasgow on "Synchronising the Academic Calendar", but also given the background that several universities had meanwhile decided or at least thought about moving the session dates for semesters and lectures forward for reasons of international compatibility. Switzerland's experience with this was encouraging, where the rectors' conference had negotiated uniform dates with the universities and with other players to apply as from the winter semester 2007/2008. Germany's universities, too, are prepared to take this step: The HRK General Meeting decided on 4 May 2007 ("Recommendation on Harmonising the Session Dates at German Universities in the European Higher Education Area") to introduce an earlier semester start and, in particular, an earlier start to the lecture period as from September 2010.

The autumn/winter semester will cover the period from 1 September to 28 February of the following year, with the result that the session (the core period for lectures and courses) will begin on the first Monday of September and will end by the latest in the middle or end of January of the following year. In the spring/summer semester, which covers the period from 1 March to 21 August, the session will begin on the first Monday in March and end at the latest at the end of June.

The advantages are just as obvious as are the problems that still need to be overcome. Plus points are to be seen in facilitating stays abroad without suffering any time losses, the abandonment of the session break caused by the Christmas holidays, the improved coordination opportunities between universities and universities of applied sciences as well as university-wide study opportunities. The challenges lie in retaining enough freedoms for carrying out certain school and pre-study internships as well as for the admissions processes. These obstacles should, both inside the universities themselves, as well as in interaction with the federal states and the affected scientific subject societies (in respect of organising scientific conferences) have been overcome by September 2010. The HRK Executive Board, together with the KMK, intends to establish a workgroup to draw up the necessary solutions with the participation of all the other players involved. There are also intentions to regularly discuss this topic in the Senate and in the General Meetings in order to provide information on the progress of the measures being carried out in the universities themselves.

11. International Relations

11.1. European Union

At the beginning of the period under report, EU research policy was dominated by preparations for the start of the 7th Research Framework Programme (FP7) that included a number of important new developments for Germany's universities. The European Commission had succeeded in achieving a significant increase in the research budget for the financial period from 2007 to 2013. This mirrored the increasing importance that Europe's governments attach to research as the driving force for the success of the EU Lisbon Strategy. Research, development and innovation are to make Europe into the world's most competitive and most dynamic knowledge-based economic area by 2010. The universities also benefited from this reassessment and so moved to the centre of attention in the European Council meeting held in Hampton Court in October 2005. In the subsequent Commission communication to the Council on "Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Education, Research and Innovation" (May 2006) their key significance for the global-based industry was recognised for the very first time.

At the same time, the EU also really entered new territory with the creation of the European Research Council (ERC), thereby creating the basis for the science-led financing of basic research at European level. The HRK had at all times supported the concept of Europeanising the funding of basic research. It had drawn the attention of its members to the new opportunities of and requirements for the strategic orientation of the universities and had supported the ERC with a list of outstanding peer reviewers, who had been nominated by the German universities. Germany's universities have every reason to expect the ERC to result in greater European competition and better funding and support for top-flight research at the same level as that of the global competitors. The HRK will continue to work towards a continual increase in the still relatively limited ERC budget.

However, the EU's 7th Framework Research Programme (FP7) that started in 1 January 2007 also brought a number of new developments with it for cooperation between universities and non-university research institutions, on the one hand, and industry, on the other. At the invitation of the Commission, European Technology Platforms (ETPs) had already been formed from 2004 onwards under the lead responsibility of industry, which had also drawn up a research agenda for the future in important fields of innovation. On the one hand, these agendas aim to make it easier for the European Commission to select the current topics for its research funding calls for proposals, and, on the other, also prepare the ground for a new form of coordinated research programmes, the so-called Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs). In these, European business and industry, the Commission, and the interested member states create a joint funding programme in order to provide additional resources for the field of pre-competitive industrial research. The HRK placed this development at the centre of its EU-related conference for university executives held in Bonn in January 2007. This meeting is generally held in Brussels at around this time of year. The HRK will closely observe this development and will report to its members, since the JTIs will begin with their own calls for proposals as from the end of 2007.

The EU Commission's intention, and here, in particular, that of President José Manuel Barroso, to overcome Europe's innovative weakness by intensifying cooperation between industry and universities, also supported the proposal of creating a European Institute of Technology (EIT). This initiative, announced by Barroso in February 2005, triggered an intensive European discussion on a successful European innovation strategy. The HRK played an intensive role here, since the Commission's proposal contained certain dangers for the German universities' endeavours to gain autonomy and to build their profiles. This new institute was intended, from the perspective of the Commission, to create a European EIT umbrella by cutting out the "fillets" of European university research and attracting its best scientists and researchers, and by uniting these with appropriate industry institutions. In a statement to the Plenary Assembly "On the Statement by the European Commission to the European Council on a European Institute of Technology (EIT), 207th HRK Plenary Assembly on 21 March 2006) the HRK decisively rejected the

associated weakening of the institution of the "University" that this would lead to. Furthermore, and in cooperation with the DFG, BMBF, and Federal Government, it consolidated its critical stance towards this proposal and drew up alternative implementation opportunities. The compromise proposal reached by the German EU Presidency now gives the EIT the more modest dimension of a pilot project that promotes a number of longer-term, close forms of partnership between companies and research institutions in a specific research field, without calling into question the institution "University" and its profile building. In view of these developments, the German university will play an active part in this pilot project, since the emphasis on the training element in the planned EIT partnerships together with research and innovation affect the universities' Unique Selling Proposition (USP), which has to be protected and expanded.

The universities claim this USP, in particular, in respect of the training of young researchers and scientists in the doctoral phase. In its capacity as a so-called third cycle of the Bologna Process, the doctorate was, in the period under report, the subject of intensive discussion in the run up to the Bologna Conference of Ministers Responsible for Higher Education held in London in May 2007. The European University Association (EUA), on whose council the HRK collectively represents the interests of the German universities, plays a special role here. At the previous ministerial conference in Bergen, the EUA had been commissioned with presenting a report on the basic principles of doctoral programmes. The President of the HRK herself took part in the final EUA Conference on the doctoral phase held in Nice in December 2006 and subsequently wrote to the President of the EUA to clearly state the position of the German universities, namely that a proven and documented independent research achievement must remain at the heart of the third cycle. Further structuring of the doctoral phase and consideration of non-university labour markets by delivering key qualifications need not necessarily contradict this objective. Rather, from the perspective of the HRK, such an approach actually represents a necessary complement.

Parallel to this, the HRK, at a major international conference held in Bonn in June 2006 under the heading of "Quo Vadis Promotion", including a

workshop of experts that was jointly organised with UNESCO-CEPES in November 2006 at the University of Frankfurt, held intensive discussions on the European and North American structure of the "third cycle" in order to be able to present Germany's universities with the experience and results that most interest Germany.

In the discussions held within the EUA on a new sets of Statutes, the HRK urged consideration to be given to the matured depth of research at the universities of applied sciences and is also endeavouring to open up this key European lobby in Brussels for the research strong universities of applied sciences. Despite the expected heated discussions, the signs for redefining the membership criteria in this direction are good. This would make it possible for the EUA to play an even more decisive and persuasive role as the voice of the European universities, and so prevent it from becoming an amorphous lobbying association that is completely incapable of reaching any decisions, because its members pursue completely different interests.

11.2. Rest of the World

The HRK was intensively involved in the preparations for the BMBF Launch Event "Research Marketing in South Korea" (end of October/ beginning of November 2006), which was also attended by Federal Minister Schavan. The HRK delegation presented the central role that the universities play in the German science and research system. In Asia, the HRK was additionally represented at the Asia Link-Symposium and at the European Higher Education Fair in Bangkok, as well as at the APAIE Annual Conference in Singapore. In the field of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, traditionally one of the core areas for the HRK's international activities, the prime focus last year was on project work, along with the attendance of several specialist conferences, such as the EUA's SEE Conference in Vienna in March 2006 as well as the EU Conference on Cooperation with Europe in Helsinki in September 2006. Furthermore, "fact-finding missions" were carried out in Moldova and Ukraine to determine the potential for future cooperation and collaboration in the field of higher education. A further core activity area

lay in cooperation with the Central American University Supreme Council and the Accreditation Council – a long-term, sustainable project that the HRK runs together with the DAAD. In North America, the HRK was represented at the European Career Fair at MIT in Boston; at the same time, the HRK coordinated the participation of 21 German universities at this fair under the joint heading of "Germany – Land of Ideas". And the HRK was also present at the world's largest international education fair, "NAFSA", held in Minneapolis in May.

The HRK is in close contact with science, research and partner organisations in many countries around the world. Particular emphasis in the period under report included the working meetings held with the Korean Council for University Education in Seoul, the exchange with Chinese university and science representatives within the scope of a delegation visit to China and the organisation of higher education policy seminars by the HRK Executive Board together with the Council of Chancellors of Chilean Universities CRUCH and the Central American University Superior Council CSUCA. The annual exchange with the Swiss and Austrian Rectors' conferences, respectively, is also very active. In addition, the HRK was involved in the international cultural consultations with the German-Turkish Cultural Council in Ankara in April 2006, and, within the scope of the Petersburg Dialogue, supported the Bologna Process in Russia. Further meetings involving the HRK Executive Board with held, inter alia, with the Nordic University Association and the Association of American Universities.

By planning, organising and holding meetings and conferences, the HRK International Department enables Germany's universities to exchange experience on international higher education policy topics. The following are particularly important in the period under report. The conference on rankings and typologies, organised in cooperation with the OECD; the workshop of experts run together with UNESCO-CEPES on comparing the current developments in the doctoral phase in North America and Europe; a DIES workshop on the status of development cooperation at Germany's universities; a quality assurance seminar with Turkish partners, and a networking conference in Montenegro. Furthermore, high-ranking

delegation visits involving Germany's universities were initiated and organised, including, not least, visitors from Chile and Central America.

12. Internal Affairs

12.1. Staff Changes

The German Rectors' Conference¹⁹ itself also saw a number of changes. I was elected as the President of the German Rectors' Conference in March 2006. I took over office from Professor Dr. Burkhard Rauhut, who had held the office of Acting President for six months. I am grateful to him for his willingness to act as Vice-President for a further two years after my election. He became Vice-President for Research, Young Academics and Scientists, the position that I had previously held. Professor Dr. Klaus Dicke was newly elected into the Executive Board in June 2006, taking over the office of Vice-President for Research and Organisation from Burkhard Rauhut, and Professor Dr. Beate Rennen-Allhoff. She became Vice-President for New Media and Knowledge Transfer, taking over from Professor Dr. Andreas Geiger, who replaced Professor Dr. Erhard Mielenhausen and was elected onto the Executive Board as the Speaker of the Members' Group Fachhochschulen (universities of applied sciences). Erhard Mielenhausen, who had been the Speaker of the Fachhochschulen for six years and so, as defined in the statutes, could no longer stand for this office, must, at this point, be sincerely thanked once again for his untiring commitment and work. In June 2007, Professor Dr. Dieter Lenzen was newly elected onto the Executive Board of the German Rectors' Conference as Vice-President for International Relations, as was Professor Dr. Wilfried Müller, namely as Vice-President for Teaching, Studies and Student Affairs. They replaced Professor Dr. Stefan Hormuth, who had also served his full term of office, and Professor Dr. Helmut Ruppert, who, after serving as Vice-President for Teaching, Studies and Student Affairs for four years, no longer stood for election. Both are herewith expressly thanked for their many years of commitment and dedication on the Executive Board. I am pleased to say that Stefan Hormuth has meanwhile been elected as President of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and will take up his office on 1

¹⁹ Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK)

January 2008. I look forward to a continuation of the good cooperation and wish him every success in his new office.

12.2. Changes to the HRK Statutes

The member universities were and are unanimous in their view that the HRK has, in its capacity as the nationwide representation of the German universities, become more important as a result of the federalism reforms and in view of the advancing reforms in the field of higher education. To be able to meet these tasks, the HRK redefined its operational and organisational structures. On the one hand, this led to a new set of statutes, the "HRK-Ordnung", being adopted by the HRK Plenary Assembly on 11 November 2006. This means that all members will be able to play a stronger role than in the past in the opinion-forming processes and in discussing the various standpoints. On the other hand, the HRK's capacity for action, in particular in respect of day-to-day politics, is to be improved, thereby consolidating the coordination process with the State Rectors' Conferences. The Plenary Assembly has been replaced by the General Meeting²⁰, with each member having the right to attend and vote. The voting rights are weighted by the size of the higher education institution in question. The role of the HRK Senate has been strengthened. To a greater extent than in the past, it will act both as a decision-making body and as a venue for strategy discussions, and will consult on topics from the State Rectors' Conferences. The role of the Executive Board in its capacity as the HRK's "lead authority" that is headed by the President has been defined in greater detail. The position of the President has been strengthened, because responsibility for setting the general policy guidelines now expressly lies with the President. In addition, the HRK has also opened up membership for foreign universities that are recognised in Germany and operate under German law. The first General Meeting was held in Giessen in May this year on the topic of University and Industry.

²⁰ Mitgliederversammlung

13. Outlook

In the past, the German Rectors' Conference unfailingly called for more resources to be provided for science and research as "investments in the future". It sees the fact that the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation²¹ has agreed on a continual increase in the resources for the non-university research institutions and for the DFG as the research funding organisation as a great success. However, the HRK is filled with concern in view of the fact that, within this process, the field of teaching has significantly lost importance vis-à-vis research. This is shown by the discussion on the Higher Education Pact and its inadequate budget as well as the politicians' lack of willingness to improve the student-teacher ratios as a prerequisite for reaching the goals of the Bologna Process. This is perhaps also demonstrated by the results of the federalism reforms, which left the financing of research in the competence of Federal Government, while teaching was transferred to the competence of the Federal States. This is not least shown by the fact that performance-inspiring competition is more strongly anchored in the field of research, while the field of teaching continues to be dominated by the concept of the applicable capacity law and its prohibition of any "improper development of standards".

An urgent need for action in the near future can be derived from this. Teaching and training at universities must be shifted more into the focus of attention at all times. Society's recognition of teaching needs to be re-established. It must be given a status equal to that of research. The realisation of the need acceptable financing – both in respect of the growing number of students who hold university entrance qualifications as well as in respect of better teacher-student ratios – must no longer be denied. Additional resources and changes to the frameworks are therefore prime goals for the HRK.

The shift of emphasis between research and teaching not least also affects the status of the universities in the science and research system. While non-university research can plan with continuously rising grants,

²¹ Pakt für Forschung und Innovation

the flow of funds into higher education is falling. Increases in the field of external (third party) funds for research cover up the overall impact of the actual extent of the cutbacks to the core budgets. The year under review also saw a significant reduction in the number of professorships over the past decade parallel to a reduction in the number of study places and an increase in the number of admissions restricted degree programmes. And so a proportion of the research funds flows again into the suffering teaching, with the result that working as equals with non-university research institutions and their budgetary levels becomes ever more difficult. This is why it must also be the responsibility of the HRK to convince the politicians once again of the key role that the universities play in the science and research system and that they must provide teaching with the same competitive elements as those available to non-university research.

Not least, the universities must not only call for more autonomy, but must also, albeit that this also requires the approval of the Federal States, continue to develop their own range of instruments so that they can operate efficiently under the changing competitive frameworks. This applies, for example, to the accounting system for the universities, namely a double-entry accounting system that includes all the costs accrued and classifies these accordingly as an absolutely essential element. Here, too, the universities need to move forward in the coming years.