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**HRK President on European University Networks:
Great potential, but insufficient support**

At today's strategy talk of university leaders with the EU Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Education and Youth, Mariya Gabriel, the President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Prof Dr Peter-André Alt, underlined the importance of the European University Networks for German universities:

"There is enormous potential for universities in cross-border cooperation. It helps to strengthen the international competitiveness of German universities, secure academic freedoms in Europe and develop a European identity.

However, implementing and establishing the European University Networks with common rules and structures for smooth cooperation in research and teaching remains a challenge for universities. The HRK believes that the German states, the federal government and the European Union must work closely together in establishing the networks if they are to be successful.

At the EU level, there is a need for adequate and long-term funding as well as creative freedom for universities. Existing networks should not be overburdened by requirements to accept additional members, as it is important to give existing alliances the opportunity to consolidate to maintain the current momentum. New networks should also be given the chance to put their ideas into practice sooner rather than later.. In the future, all types of universities should be included and integrated.

The universities can look forward to additional funding from the federal government, which is awarded through the national support programme of the German Academic Exchange Service.

However, an HRK analysis of the support provided by the federal states has revealed a mixed picture. While in states such as Baden-Württemberg, Thuringia and Lower Saxony obstacles to cooperation have already been removed in a targeted manner and universities have been prepared for cross-border cooperation, there are few or no support activities in some other German states. It is very regrettable that the potential of strategic cooperation in research and development, of European integrated degree programmes and of new formats of mobility and digital cooperation is not yet recognised everywhere.

In this context, German universities hope for timely change. The successful design of the European University Networks throughout Germany will depend on support and cooperation at all three administrative levels."