

9 May 2022

HRK Annual Assembly in Leipzig today

The Annual Assembly of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) began this afternoon in Leipzig. HRK President Prof. Dr Peter-André Alt welcomed the around 240 guests to the Paulinum at Leipzig University and warmly thanked both the University and the University of Applied Sciences for their joint invitation to Leipzig. Following today's discussions of the Executive Board and HRK member groups, the General Assembly will follow tomorrow.

Due to the pandemic, the HRK had to forego its annual meetings, to which not only university leaders but also numerous guests from politics, science, business and the media are traditionally invited, for the past two years.

In his welcome address, President Alt referred to the current challenges facing the higher education sector. In particular, he addressed the Federal Minister of Education and Research, Bettina Stark-Watzinger, who will give a presentation and hold a discussion with the audience. Especially in view of the war in Ukraine and its far-reaching consequences, he noted that it was of utmost importance to invest in the sustainability of universities and the education system. He added that the universities expect priorities to be set accordingly, but they are also prepared to do everything in their power to support the Federal Ministry in implementing the plans.

As priority tasks that urgently need federal support, Alt named the long-term support of universities through the Future Contract for Strengthening Studying and Teaching in Higher Education, the establishment of a digitisation programme and adequate funding for the Innovation in Higher Education Teaching Foundation.

The Agency for Transfer and Innovation DATI announced in the coalition agreement is also considered to be of central importance for the universities, as it recognises the priority of research as a driver of innovation. It is important that universities can take the role of leaders in this programme and that the agency and its project are generally open to all universities.

The HRK President also referred to the importance of science communication, which has been convincingly demonstrated during the pandemic. In terms of their social mission, he noted that the universities make a significant contribution to information-sharing and to coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, he warned against exaggerated expectations. Research and its dissemination of research results through teaching and learning must be the focus for universities.