

4 November 2022**HRK welcomes decisions by the federal government and the federal states on the Future Contract and the Excellence Strategy**

The President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Prof Dr Peter-André Alt, has just commented in Berlin on the decisions of the Joint Science Conference (GWK), in particular on the Future Contract for Strengthening Studying and Teaching in Higher Education and on the continuation of the Excellence Strategy:

"With today's decision to dynamise the Future Contract, the GWK has implemented a key point of the coalition agreement of the governing parties in the federal government for the research system. The HRK expressly welcomes this groundbreaking decision. As a result of the continuous increase that has now been agreed upon, it is certain that universities will receive significantly more funds to design modern teaching and learning in the medium to long term while being able to plan for the future with confidence. Furthermore, the dynamisation of the Future Contract takes into account the importance of our universities to the research system as a whole, because it reduces the structural disadvantage faced by universities in comparison with the steadily growing budgets of research institutions. Through this decision, the federal government and the federal states are strengthening Germany's future viability."

Alt also explained that the GWK's decision to continue the Excellence Strategy after 2026 was of great importance for the further development of the German higher education landscape. The agreement between the federal government and federal states on the sustainable strengthening of top-level research and the international competitiveness of German universities is to provide funding for more large research alliances in the coming round. Currently, 57 clusters of excellence are being funded within the framework of the first funding line of the Excellence Strategy; in the future, it will support up to 70. "This increase in the total number of clusters of excellence ensures that both established and new clusters have adequate chances of success in the next round of applications. Overall, this provides an opportunity to place German top-level research on an even broader foundation and to support it in a targeted manner. The HRK regards this decision as an acknowledgement of the key role of university research in terms of acquiring new fundamental knowledge and addressing current societal challenges," Alt continued.

The HRK President also welcomed the decision to continue the programme for female professors: "Gender equality remains a priority issue on the higher education agenda. The shared goal is to increase the proportion of women in professorships. Today's decision will enable the seamless continuation of the current funding phase and provides planning confidence. The term of the government-state agreement, which has been extended to eight years for the first time, also expands the opportunities for participation."

In view of the strained situation of public budgets, Alt also assessed today's decisions as a good and important signal for the upcoming adoption of the 2023 federal budget. He added that the HRK expects that the other projects announced in the coalition agreement in the area of higher education will also be tackled with determination. This applies, for example, to the support offered for digitalisation and international academic cooperation.