

**21 November 2022****HRK: Need for ongoing consistent approach to energy price alleviation measures for universities – General Assembly acknowledges first measures**

The current price increases for natural gas, district heating and electricity continue to pose enormous challenges for German universities, despite ambitious energy-saving measures of their own and politicians' first additional promises of assistance. The General Assembly of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) therefore welcomed and acknowledged the support measures already taken at federal and state level, but at the same time, at its meeting last Tuesday in Jena, made an urgent appeal to those with political responsibility at federal and state level to follow up with further steps to relieve the burden on universities and to quickly provide reliability in this regard. In particular, the extension of planned hardship regulations to universities that are particularly burdened by the price increases, extreme at times, is indispensable.

In Berlin today, HRK President Peter-André Alt stated: "The federal and state governments have agreed on a general 'December emergency aid' for the purchase of natural gas and district heating as well as on a gas and electricity price cap linked to threshold values that will take effect in spring 2023. I expressly welcome the fact that universities and scientific research are also to benefit from this. It is very pleasing and an important signal of recognition that the 'December emergency aid' will benefit all universities regardless of their size or profile. Now the members of the Bundestag are called upon to take into account the role and special needs of universities also in the legislative determination of further measures."

The HRK General Assembly made it emphatically clear that universities necessarily have a high energy consumption in the fulfilment of their core tasks because many branches of science in teaching, research and transfer require specific technical facilities, laboratories and digital infrastructures, and electricity-intensive computer centres at all universities ensure basic scientific operations. In addition, particularly energy-intensive research is carried out at universities. The maintenance of, for example, high-performance computers, laser laboratories, plasma accelerators, mass spectrometers, temperature-sensitive environments in animal and plant research or other specially equipped research buildings and facilities has a sometimes dramatic effect on university budgets in view of the current price increases for energy.

"Of course, it is first and foremost the responsibility of the federal states to equip their universities in such a way that they can continue to fulfil their core tasks in the quality that is justifiably demanded, even in times of crisis," continued HRK President Alt. "The relief programmes announced by the federal states must therefore now also be implemented quickly. The regulations already in place in Berlin and Brandenburg, for example, serve as models in our view. However, in view of the challenges, it is clear that the universities need

versatile support and financial relief, both from the federal states and – especially in view of the planned hardship regulation – from the federal government."

The students also needed clarity as soon as possible about the specific details of the one-off energy price payment of €200, which was introduced by the Federal Cabinet on Friday. "It is now important to ensure that the envisaged state application and disbursement procedure is efficient so that the aid can actually reach the students in the near future. Time is pressing because the price increases are hitting them particularly hard as a group. The universities have therefore already offered at an early stage to provide their students with suitable proof of entitlement, for example in the form of an individual identification code," Alt said emphatically and went on to explain: "Keeping the universities open in winter and ensuring the best possible study, teaching and research conditions despite the crisis is a declared joint priority of universities, the federal government and the federal states. Now the first good steps must be followed by further needs-based solutions to give the universities and all university members the necessary planning security."