

**15 November 2023****HRK: Federal "Digital University" programme still necessary - leveraging the strengths of cooperation and alliances in the field of digital infrastructures**

In view of the continuing strong momentum in the digitalisation of teaching and learning at universities, the General Assembly of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) yesterday reaffirmed its demands for systematic and strategic support from the federal and state governments. "For the comprehensive, sustainable digitalisation of universities and the further development of digital teaching and teaching infrastructures, we need a stronger overall commitment from the federal states and substantial support from the federal government, despite some good steps. On the part of the universities, we also want to increase the potential of cooperation and alliances in this area," commented HRK President Professor Dr Walter Rosenthal on the [resolution adopted in Berlin: "Digital University': Challenges and Opportunities for Co-operation"](#).

Specifically, the position paper, which contains recommendations for prioritising the fields of action, lists increasing the bandwidth of internet and data connections, a highly available server and storage infrastructure, teaching skills in dealing with artificial intelligence (AI), personnel for computer emergency response teams to increase cyber security, legally compliant online examinations and the establishment and operation of media technology and higher education didactic service centres as important needs.

"Where it makes sense to do so, we will make use of opportunities for cooperation between universities," explains Professor Ulrike Tippe, the HRK Vice-President responsible for digitalisation. However, further funding is needed, especially for local measures, in order to be able to connect to co-operative structures in the first place. This applies in particular to learning and campus management systems, digitally equipped studios and learning spaces as well as a network infrastructure suitable for research and teaching. "And we need to consider clever forms of cooperation and competition between the federal states and universities if we want to make successful progress."

The Commission of Experts for Research and Innovation (EFI) and the HRK had called for an annual digitalisation allowance of 92 euros per student in 2019 and 2021 respectively. The coalition agreement between the coalition parties provides for a federal "Digital University" programme, but this has not yet been implemented. HRK President Rosenthal commented: "The structural deficits and current challenges such as teaching skills in dealing with AI or the urgent need to strengthen cyber security require decisive action. The universities cannot wait much longer for federal support, which has long been recognised as necessary by policymakers. Any further delay will jeopardise the teaching infrastructure and the international connectivity of German universities in the long term."