

15 November 2023**Universities as cultural institutions: HRK adopts recommendation on the cultural dimension of universities**

"Universities are cultural players: They document, research, develop and communicate a wide range of cultural phenomena, concepts and competences. They communicate with each other and society in theory and practice about art, design and culture. In this way, they make a significant contribution to preserving humanity's cultural heritage and enabling cultural diversity," says Professor Dr Walter Rosenthal, President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), outlining the core ideas of a paper on the cultural dimension of universities adopted yesterday by the HRK General Assembly.

The recommendation consistently places universities in their entirety not only as educational, research and innovation institutions, but also explicitly as cultural institutions. This completes the image of the university in society, explains Rosenthal. To this end, the perspectives and expertise of a wide range of disciplines and all types of higher education institution have been concisely brought together. The adoption was preceded by intensive consultations with an interdisciplinary group of experts and various bodies within the HRK.

HRK President Walter Rosenthal: "I am delighted that this landmark paper is now available. Universities are genuinely cultural institutions. It is very important to us to emphasise the central role of universities as actors in the cultural processes of modern societies and to provide impetus for further exploration of the potential of the cultural dimension of universities. Universities, with their open spaces for discourse, especially in art, design and culture, are guarantors of critical thinking and creativity and thus of living democracy and civil liberties."

Pressing social challenges such as maintaining social cohesion, securing peace, combating poverty or the ecological crisis do not only require social or technological innovation, adds Professor Dr Susanne Rode-Breymann, HRK Vice-President for Cooperation and Diversity within the Higher Education System, concerns of the universities of the arts: "Cultural knowledge and cultural practices that familiarise people with different interpretations of their living environment are also key to promoting responsible action and initiating new social structures or technological developments."

The recommendation adopted yesterday is intended to encourage universities to formulate and further develop cultural aspects in governance and university strategies in line with their respective profiles and needs. On the other hand, it is a challenge to higher education policy and funding organisations to take better account of the cultural dimension of universities in existing funding formats and also to develop new funding formats – for example in the area of artistic research.

[Text of the recommendation](#)