



Press release

First networking meeting of university officers against anti-Semitism

This afternoon, the Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish Life and the Fight against anti-Semitism, Dr Felix Klein, and the President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Professor Dr Walter Rosenthal, have jointly invited the university officers against anti-Semitism to a first networking meeting.

Following the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, the German universities that are members of the HRK were very clear in their condemnation of the atrocities committed by this terrorist organisation and in their support for Israeli science. In the course of the subsequent Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip, however, there were also anti-Israeli and clearly antisemitic incidents at several universities.

The aim of the networking meeting is therefore to exchange information with university officers against anti-Semitism about their tasks and the need for action. The university-specific understanding of the role of these officers will also be a topic. Professor Dr Rosenthal and Dr Klein agree that efforts should be made to establish the network of university officers against anti-Semitism on a long-term basis. The dialogue on different ways of organising their work will lead to forms and models of good practice that could be used at other universities. At present, the role of the officers installed at universities often covers different forms

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of discrimination. Some universities have officers who are solely responsible for combating anti-Semitism.

The Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish Life and the Fight against anti-Semitism, Dr Felix Klein, said in advance of the meeting: *"The intimidation of Jewish and Israeli students and teaching staff is completely unacceptable. The same applies to attacks on students and staff who show solidarity with Israel and campaign against anti-Semitism. Freedom of opinion is a valuable asset that must be protected. But it must apply to everyone, and this must be ensured. That is why I am committed to creating structures that counteract such polarisation. This includes, in particular, the expansion of the network of university officers against anti-Semitism and the permanent establishment of networking and dialogue between them. At the same time, I am committed to ensuring that these officers have opportunities for training and continuing education. It is important that they are given a strong mandate. This should include an advisory function for the university leadership on the one hand and an ombudsman function on the other. The officers must also enjoy the trust of Jewish students and teaching staff. I am delighted that today's meeting is laying an important foundation for this."*

Quote from the President of the German Rectors' Conference, Professor Dr Walter Rosenthal:

"It is a good signal that the universities are continuing along the path already taken in our resolution 'No place for anti-Semitism'. Jewish students, teaching staff, researchers and employees must be able to feel safe at German universities. This also means that in the event of antisemitic incidents, contact persons are easy to find and can support and advise those affected. I am pleased that the diversity of German universities is also reflected here and that many different models have been found to tackle the task with vigour. The valuable work of appropriately aware and awareness-raising officers in everyday university life is a further building block in the fight against anti-Semitism."