

28 November 2025**HRK President welcomes GWK decision to increase the DFG overhead**

At a meeting of the Joint Science Conference (GWK) today, the federal and state governments agreed on increasing the programme overhead for DFG-funded research from 22% to 25%. The President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Prof Dr Walter Rosenthal, expressly welcomed this decision. At the same time, he noted that the universities' needs, which are recognised by all sides, require a significantly higher overhead.

"The universities are grateful to the federal and state governments that this important agreement has now been reached. Against the backdrop of tight public budgets, the increase in the overhead to 25% is an important success and a step in the right direction," said Rosenthal. "However, given the increase to 30% that had been announced in the coalition agreement at federal level, this cannot be the final say. As a study commissioned by the BMFTR [Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space] in 2024 found, a 45% raise would actually be required. The German Council of Science and Humanities already emphasised in 2023 that the overhead, which has long been structurally too low, restricts universities in their strategic capacity." The HRK President warned against making cuts in other areas of universities in order to cross-finance the agreement that has now been reached. "The HRK will closely monitor the design of the arrangement and insist that the slight increase in the overhead is not offset by a deterioration in other areas." In Rosenthal's view, the problem of inadequate basic funding for universities is particularly evident in the overhead. Universities, he adds, were far too dependent on third-party funding regarding their research.

Background: Overhead

The DFG overhead, introduced in 2007, is a grant for additional expenses of universities in for the implementation and administration of third-party funded projects that are not covered by the funding itself. It was increased from 20% to 22% in 2016. The overhead is intended to prevent universities from having to cover these so-called indirect costs with their basic funding. The need to cover indirect costs leads to the paradoxical situation that universities are the more limited in their scope of action the more successful they are in acquiring research funding.