

7 April 2026**Strengthening research and education as the foundations of Europe's innovative capacity and competitiveness**

In a joint statement, the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and its partner organisations from Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain call on their respective governments and the European Commission to significantly expand European cooperation in research and higher education. And they ask to allocate sufficient funding for this purpose in the next EU financial framework from 2028 onwards. According to the statement, the economic and geopolitical situation requires even stronger investment in research and education at European level than previously planned.

HRK President Prof Dr Walter Rosenthal said in Berlin today:

"The European Union relies on its innovative capacity and competitiveness to remain capable of acting autonomously in an increasingly politically fragmented and uncertain world. Research and education are strategic resources and provide essential foundations for economic strength, technological autonomy, democratic stability and social cohesion. It is essential that the next multi-annual financial framework and the future EU programmes for research and education are designed with a view to the future.

Against this background, we support the European Parliament's emerging call for a budget of €220 billion for the 10th Framework Programme and €60 billion for Erasmus+. Cooperation in research, technological development and innovation, the mobility of researchers, lecturers and students, and the free exchange of ideas, knowledge and competencies should be ensured and sustainably strengthened at European level, even as financial resources become increasingly scarce. No Member State can tackle the challenges of our time on its own.

In future, European research and education policies must be considered in an even more systematic way if want to remain successful. Through their diverse, cross-border partnerships in research and teaching, universities make an active contribution to this. Not least the European University Networks offer great potential for strategic cooperation in the field of academia. Such networks should, therefore, receive longer-term EU support. And, as recently proposed by the DFG, the HRK, and the German Science and Humanities Council, they should be complemented by a new format of thematically focused networks of excellence for institutions with a particularly strong research profile."