

11 May 2016**New balance needed in accreditation system**

In Berlin yesterday, the General Meeting of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) seized the opportunity of the Federal Constitutional Court's recent ruling on programme accreditation to pass an initial recommendation which responds to the essential points of the decision and formulates key points as to how the system now should and can be adapted. It emphasises the responsibility of higher education institutions for the quality of their study programmes and the willingness to give account of it in a science-led process. The HRK is also warning against the over-hasty introduction of new laws in Germany's federal states, stressing that it is essential not to create isolated solutions that hamper national and international recognition.

In February the Federal Constitutional Court had ruled that programme accreditation required a more concrete legal basis and that the academic community should play a bigger role in the accreditation system to satisfy the principle of academic freedom. The court did not call into question the possibility of external quality assurance in a general sense.

"The court has cleared the way for a nationwide modification of the quality assurance system," said HRK President Professor Dr Horst Hippler, commenting on the ruling. "We intend to use this opportunity to achieve a new balance in the system in partnership with the federal states."

"We regard it as a matter of course that students and professional practice are involved in external quality assurance, but the focus must be on the concerns of the academic community," said Professor Dr Holger Burckhart, HRK Vice-President for Teaching, Learning, Teacher Training, Lifelong Learning. "We started promoting this a number of years ago with the concept of the Institutional Quality Audit. The Federal Constitutional Court has now reinforced the principles on which this perspective is based."

Higher education institutions will discuss the consequences of the court's ruling with the federal states, as the responsible bodies of the accreditation system. "This provides an opportunity to develop the accreditation system and the procedures in the interest of higher education institutions. In recent years there has been a series of initiatives enabling higher education institutions to implement innovative models. We can learn from these pilot projects to create an improved system," said Burckhart. He announced that the HRK would issue a detailed statement in November.

[View text of the resolution](#)