

3 December 2019**HRK President on the next EU finance ministers' meeting:
Future-oriented European cooperation should be of greater value to us!**

"It's time for the Federal Government to strongly advocate the investments in research and education planned by the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen," said today the President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Professor Peter-André Alt, in the run-up to the Council of European finance ministers on the EU Financial Framework. The meeting will take place in Brussels on Thursday (5/12/2019). "In light of the enormous challenges and uncertainties that Germany and Europe are facing, it would be unjustifiable to cut the budget for these sectors that shape our future. However, finance ministers and government leaders have tended to do exactly that."

By contrast, the EU Commission is planning to strengthen Europe in the global competition of knowledge-based societies, to triple funding for the Erasmus+ programme for mobility and education to more than €45 billion and to increase funding for research and innovation, in spite of Brexit, from almost €80 billion to €94.1 billion for the Financial Framework from 2021 to 2027. Contrary to this ambition, the discussions among European heads of state and governments are aiming to significantly reduce such investments into our future, in favour of keeping the EU budget as low as possible and of traditional funding lines for agriculture and regional development.

"In the next financial framework, German universities would lose about half a billion euros for research and innovation alone," said Alt. "It is incomprehensible that the German government is not advocating more strongly for a meaningful distribution of European funds. German society benefits strongly from the exchange of ideas and experiences among scientists and students in Europe. Europe needs long-term investments in education, innovation and cross-border cooperation."

Alt emphasised the role of universities in tackling future societal challenges: "We should not only continue to research climate change, but also identify ways of reducing greenhouse gases. We need young people who are not only fit for work, but also aware of the values of a liberal European society."

Alt expressed his approval of the restructuring of the directorates of the European Commission. For the first time in almost twenty years, one European Commissioner will be jointly responsible for the policy areas of education, research, innovation and culture: the former Bulgarian digital commissioner Mariya Gabriel. "With this structure, Ms von der Leyen will make it easier for universities to contribute to a strong European community of knowledge and values," said Alt. "An important element will be the European University Alliances, which are accurately

described in the Commission President's mandate letter to Gabriel as a crucial instrument for the future of Europe."