

17 November 2016**HRK calls for European Education, Science and Innovation Community**

"The European Union's current crisis demands new political thinking and action," says the President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Prof Dr Horst Hippler. "Europe is looking for supports to shore up the ailing unification process. It must confront the enormous challenges evident not only in the fields of business, research and innovation, but also, and especially, in the area of education and culture. This is shown by the political tensions in Europe connected with the influx of refugees, the rise of populist parties and Brexit."

The HRK General Assembly made a statement last week calling for European strategy for innovation, science, education and culture worthy of that name. The HRK Vice-President for Research and Early Career Researchers, Prof Dr Ulrich Rüdiger, says: "To date, European universities have not been sufficiently recognised for their significance as conveyors of the European spirit. Their mobile students and academics are a living example of European integration. Their ability to think critically and their skills in dealing with other cultures will be highly significant for the cohesion of European societies in the future. The role of universities in the modern knowledge-based society and the knowledge triangle of research, education and innovation are equally pivotal. We therefore call for stronger political and financial support for universities at the European level." Given the fragmentation of responsibilities within the EU Commission and between the EU level, the member states' level and the states and regions at European level, the HRK believes that this requires a facilitation process that does not seek to impose European standardisation, but instead masters complex political processes and implements them for the benefit of the universities.

The occasion for the HRK resolution was a statement on the interim evaluation of EU funding programmes for the 2014-2020 budget periods, which the European Commission had invited. Traditionally, this is also the start of the preliminary political deliberations on funding policies in the area of research and innovation after 2020. In the statement, the HRK asks for a redefinition of European added value and a focus on funding collaborative research between universities or between science and industry through small and medium-sized projects that are flexible and involve all partners on an equal footing. The HRK is strongly in favour of the retention of the principle of excellence as the decisive approval criterion for funding projects. The HRK is also calling for a diminution of the EU's policy requirement to link research, the results of which by its nature cannot ever be specified in advance, with detailed impact requirements. This, the HRK points out, ultimately merely promotes "lyrical applications" but not the research results.

"We need a European education, research and innovation community that receives stimulus and funding at the European level, but that respects the diversity of the European member

states, regions/Länder and cultures," says HRK President Hippler. "What better time than now, in a period of crisis, to enter into a debate about this and take the initiative?"

[View text of the resolution](#)