

**26 June 2019****HRK President on European higher education alliances:  
a success for Germany, a win for Europe and a major feat for the universities**

Following today's announcement of the first 17 European higher education alliances funded by the EU, the President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Prof Dr Peter-André Alt, commented: "German universities are represented in 14 of the 17 European networks chosen. This is an impressive achievement. It bears testament to the fact that German universities see themselves as engines of the European ideal and are collaborating creatively to develop new forms of partnership. A great variety of approaches has been selected in order to bring the idea of the European higher education alliances to life."

From the outset, the German Rectors' Conference has been a strong supporter of the concept of the European higher education alliances. "We were particularly keen to see the joint development of the strategies and profile for these alliances," Alt said. "It is also vital that the Directorate-General for Education include the widest possible range of university activities in its funding decisions. After all, the alliances are to develop shared concepts not just for education – that is, studying and teaching – but also for research and transfer. The universities aim to use all their potential to help actively shape Europe, as befits their understanding of their own role as open-minded, networked institutions. Hence, there was enormous interest on the universities' part – 300 universities across Europe in 54 alliances applied for the first call."

Each of the 17 university networks will receive funding in the amount of five million euros over three years. Joint study programmes are to be developed and the mobility of researchers and students promoted as part of each individual strategy. The German Academic Exchange Service will provide additional funding to German universities as part of the initiative.

The universities that were not yet successful in the first round can apply again at the end of the year. The European Commission will significantly increase the funding amount for the second round to 120 million euros.

"The increase must be used to establish a more permanent foundation for the networks," said HRK President Alt. "At present, participating universities receive European funding of around €300,000 per year. The huge gap between the major political aspiration to create European higher education alliances and this very modest funding could seriously endanger the long-term success of the project, and hence a significant additional foundation for putting the ideal of the European Community into practice. The networks are actually intended to be sustainable in the long term and to enjoy a high profile. Policy-makers need to realistically estimate the considerable costs necessary to achieve this, and to account for them in future planning. Establishing strong cooperation and a shared identity is a major feat for the universities and a challenging goal that requires the appropriate funding."