

10 November 2015**HRK General Meeting:****Do not leave universities stranded on the issue of integrating refugees**

Universities are concerned that they will not get sufficient political support when it comes to integrating refugees. "Without substantial financial support, universities cannot guarantee that they can offer refugees academic integration, particularly in terms of the required study preparation, given the numbers we are expecting," said Prof. Dr. Horst Hippler, President of the German Rectors' Conference, after discussions on the topic in the HRK General Meeting in Kiel today.

For months, German higher education institutions have been actively working for the integration of the large number of refugees currently entering the country. To date, they have financed most measures from their own tight budgets. Staff are volunteering. Many tasks are completed on a voluntary basis with students helping out. We would like to thank them in particular for their great commitment. However, the situation cannot continue like this for much longer. Funding needs to be supplied soon to meet growing demand," warned Hippler.

The General Meeting emphasised that they believed there to be three crucial steps for access to university and successful study: firstly, early careers advice, secondly, prompt general and subject-specific language tuition, the conveyance of cultural skills and thirdly, subject-related study preparation. Hippler warned of underestimating subject-specific language preparation when he said: "General knowledge of the German language is insufficient for university study and we certainly cannot rely on English-language courses alone."

"Our country needs to invest in study preparation. Integration will be at risk if cost-cutting measures are used on these courses. The courses form the basis for choosing the right educational path and enable successful study," said Hippler. "Expanding the relevant infrastructures at universities is a task that requires appropriate support from politics. The costs for language training and preparatory courses alone amount to approximately €4,000 per person per year for each component. An ample amount of the €6 million provided by federal government and the federal states for the refugee issue must be allocated to education because education is a vital key for integration."