

31 March 2017**HRK surveys universities about the integration of refugees:
Notable successes and new challenges**

Refugees have accessed German universities in significantly increased numbers over recent months. According to a survey conducted by the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), 1,140 refugees are currently enrolled in a course of study. That is five times as many as six months ago. Almost 24,000 individual consultations were reported by the universities for the current winter semester – more than double the number of the previous semester.

Universities are actively working to support the academic integration of refugees, in particular through measures to facilitate the acquisition of language and specialist skills in preparation for study. With financial support from the Federal and state governments, they are providing special preparatory programmes for refugees who aspire to and are able to study. The positive impact of these measures is demonstrated by the figures from the third HRK survey of its member universities on the status of the academic integration of refugees who are either aspiring or current students.

It is not simply the number of regular enrolments that provides a clear sign. In the current 2016/17 winter semester, around 5,700 refugees are registered for language and specialised courses that prepare them directly for study – around 80 per cent more than in the preceding summer semester. Almost 70 per cent of this group wish to pursue a bachelor's degree, and just short of 20 per cent a master's degree. Around two-thirds of those wishing to study or studying are from Syria, with other large groups coming from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq.

In Berlin today, HRK President Prof. Dr. Horst Hippler said: "With the significant increase in enrolments, establishing additional support programmes to accompany courses of study is now gaining in importance. It is just as significant for student success as academic and social counselling in the lead-up to studying, and requires just as much resourcing in terms of staff and time."

Another task will also be the focus of increased attention: according to a study by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in November 2016, almost 13 per cent of refugees already hold a university degree. Horst Hippler: "It is to be expected that degrees from the countries of origin will not automatically equip refugees for the German employment market. This is where the universities – as well as other stakeholders on the training and employer side – need to make an appropriate range of further training available."

On classification methods: The HRK surveys are not statistical censuses, since refugee status is not automatically recorded at universities. The information base is diverse, and partly based on estimates. The response rate of surveyed member universities was 59 per cent (157 universities).