

17 June 2016**HRK President expresses relief at decision on new funding programmes**

The President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Prof. Dr. Horst Hippler, has expressed relief at yesterday's agreement between the Prime Ministers of the Federal States and the Federal Chancellor on the Excellence Strategy, Early Career Pact and "Innovative University" funding programmes.

"The universities are ready to take on the challenges of the three competitive programmes," he said in Berlin today. "In spite of the criticism levelled at some of the arrangements, they see it as an opportunity to make the German higher education system stronger and more internationally competitive. A postponement of the decision or even a failure would have been a huge disappointment. Now, an approach which is acceptable to everyone has been found. The universities will be able to leverage the greater accessibility of the second pillar in the Excellence Strategy.

The universities would have been baffled if, after waiting for the expertise of the Imboden Commission and the intense negotiations between the federal and state governments, the Excellence Strategy had not come about. For the other two programmes (the Early Career Pact and "Innovative University"), some very important additional tasks are now being addressed. Where there are still unresolved questions as to the specific design and implementation, the expertise of the academic community should certainly be called on.

Those involved within the federal and state governments deserve our thanks for this decision. We hope that they see the three programmes as building blocks with which to strengthen our higher education sector. These will only have long-term impact if they are integrated into a wider strategy. This includes measures to encourage research and development at universities of applied sciences, as called for by the HRK Senate on Wednesday. This includes, above all, reasonable basic funding."