

13 June 2019**Rare, diverse, vital: Rare Disciplines weeks at German universities**

The "Rare Disciplines Weeks" were officially launched by the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) today. Seventeen projects are being funded to showcase and network their Rare Disciplines in the coming winter semester.

"The joint initiative is designed to strengthen these disciplines, which play an important role in the German higher education landscape but seldom receive the attention they deserve. The goal is to raise the profile of scientific achievements in the Rare Disciplines, provide information about courses of study and career prospects, and give a real taste of the relevance of these disciplines to our everyday lives," said HRK President Prof Dr Peter-André Alt. The HRK and BMBF want to enthuse students and early career researchers for the Rare Disciplines. "The value of the Rare Disciplines in Germany needs to become more visible in order to demonstrate the entire cultural spectrum spanned by science and the humanities," Federal Minister of Education and Research Anja Karliczek said.

The universities were able to set their own priorities in their concepts for the Rare Disciplines weeks. The projects selected by an independent committee of reviewers are wide-ranging, including the engineering and natural sciences as well as the humanities and social sciences. The spectrum ranges from music therapy to bioinformatics, and from mathematics to Eastern European Studies. Exhibitions, events with school classes, lectures, discussions and encounters are planned – offering perspectives beyond the walls of the individual universities and including debates with members of the public.

The Rare Disciplines number among the particular strengths of the German higher education landscape, and their diversity is especially impressive by international standards. They are the guardians of cultural heritage, enjoy high academic standing and are invaluable in interdisciplinary networks.

The BMBF has been promoting the Rare Disciplines for many years. With its "Rare Disciplines – Great potential" funding guidelines published in 2016, the BMBF will enable over 40 outstanding early career researchers from the Rare Disciplines to research innovative projects up to the year 2021. The BMBF will publish new funding guidelines this coming autumn to further strengthen interdisciplinary and international cooperation in the Rare Disciplines. The German Rectors' Conference has been actively promoting the preservation and strengthening of the Rare Disciplines for many years. For example, the HRK initiated the systematic indexing of the disciplines – an important foundation for situation analysis and systematic funding (www.kleinefaecher.de (in German)).

Further information with regular project reports: www.kleine-faecher-wochen.de.