

20 May 2016**Early career pact and "Innovative University" programme not adequate to meet universities' needs**

The President of the German Rector's Conference (HRK), Prof. Dr. Horst Hippler, has responded to the resolutions passed today by the Joint Science Conference (GWK) on an "early career pact" and the "Innovative University" funding initiative.

"In reaching these decisions, the federal and state governments are jointly addressing two tasks of crucial importance to the future of universities and the entire research system. There is no doubt that this is good news. In particular, the funding offered will make it possible to strengthen the strategic capabilities of the universities. However, we do see weaknesses in both programs, which the HRK has pointed out a number of times in the lead-up to the resolutions.

The targeted 1,000 tenure-track professorships to be created with the **early career pact** cannot be adequately resourced with the proposed funding. Given the total budget of €1 billion and a funding period of six to eight years per tenure-track position (grade W1/W2) plus 15% strategic funding, it is already obvious that resources will fall far short of what is required. In this scenario it will not be possible to carry out research activities on a significant scale. Hence there is a risk that attractive candidates will be lost to national and international competition, or else jobs will have to be funded by the universities at their own expense. Fewer – but better paid – positions would achieve more, and offer a more long-term solution.

Delivering on the agreed increase in positions will be an important task for the federal government and the GWK. If these positions merely enable appointments to be made earlier, no long-term increase in staffing will be achieved. We certainly welcome the fact that early career researchers who have successfully trained as part of the Excellence Initiative will have access to the new program.

It should also be said that many universities have a need not so much for additional professorships as for other positions, which also open up interesting career paths to researchers. The staff development concepts previously presented by the universities in their Orientation Framework point in the right direction.

The **"Innovative University" programme** could make a noticeable difference, despite the fact that its annual budget of around €55 million is too small in view of the systemic underfunding of universities. The focus in favour of universities of applied sciences is right, but could have been even stronger.

That the programme defines 'innovation' not just in purely technological terms, but also to include all forms of collaboration with business, culture and society, and all academic disciplines, is certainly a very promising approach and one that is appropriate to the diverse range of the universities' offerings."