

11 December 2020**HRK President:****Accompany new peak in student numbers with a programme for digital infrastructures**

The Federal Statistical Office has just reported that over 2.9 million students and 489,000 new students are enrolled at German universities for the current winter semester. The President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Professor Dr Peter-André Alt, commented in Berlin:

"The number of students is even higher than last year's record level, with the number of newly enrolled students continuing to approach half a million. The sustained high demand for study places is an expression of confidence in our universities and the long-term prospects offered by higher education, a confidence which has not been lessened by the coronavirus pandemic. This reflects not least the extraordinary efforts of university staff, who have worked extremely hard to ensure in a short space of time that teaching can continue smoothly. They are all aware of the responsibility of giving young people academic educational prospects and making sure that new students can commence their studies successfully in spite of the difficult circumstances.

The opportunities offered by the continued high number of students must be utilised in Germany's best economic interests. The Future Contract for Strengthening Studying and Teaching in Higher Education agreed by the federal government and the federal states makes a significant contribution in this regard, because an assured financial framework in place of the currently time-limited Higher Education Pacts is exceedingly important.

If we want to make good use of current experience with digital learning and enable a real leap in innovation in this field, it would be extremely worthwhile to introduce a federal/state government programme for digital infrastructures and staff. We must be able to transfer short-term measures to digitise teaching in response to the pandemic into future-oriented mechanisms. The goal must be high-quality education adapted to the times, to enable us to turn the unprecedented experience of teaching under pandemic conditions into positive prospects."