

27 November 2018**Student numbers at new record high: successor to Higher Education Pact more vital than ever before**

In response to the latest figures issued by the Federal Statistical Office concerning students at German universities, the President of the German Rectors' Conference, Professor Dr Peter-André Alt, has just commented in Berlin:

"Student numbers have been breaking records for more than ten years. This year, a new record high has been reached with almost 2.9 million students. Once again it is clear that the growth in student numbers was not a one-off effect of the doubling of the number of young people achieving the Abitur qualification; instead it is largely attributable to the greater participation in education.

The design of the Higher Education Pact as a fixed-term special programme has thus become obsolete. Consequently, the Federal Government's Coalition Agreement envisages a perpetuation of Higher Education Pact funds. Universities expect that federal and state governments will soon reach an agreement in this regard, particularly against the backdrop of the new figures. Anyone who wants a demand-driven programme of study must provide universities with guarantees for their plans.

Current new student numbers also remain at a very high level. With almost 509,000 new students, German universities have once again exceeded the projection of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK). As the KMK values are the foundation for ongoing higher education funding and cost trends are overlooked anyway, a structural underfunding of the Higher Education Pact that increases over time has developed. This imbalance must be resolved with the successor to the Higher Education Pact.

What's more, the issue of quality development must finally be tackled beyond the long-term recruitment of top talent for teaching. We need better student/teaching staff ratios. Only then can teachers better cater to students attending universities who now hail from a wide variety of backgrounds. As a result, the HRK not only calls for the necessary capacities to be secured in the long term, it also insists on a dynamic financing component combined with a law regarding capacity that provides scope for such quality enhancement."