

25 November 2016**Student numbers at record high: HRK calls for consolidation of Higher Education Pact**

Responding to the record student figures just released, the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) has called for improved financing of studies, including the period beyond the current Higher Education Pact. The figure of 2.8 million students for the current winter semester, as reported by the Federal Statistical Office, is the highest ever. The number of newly enrolled students has also passed the half-million mark once again this year. With 505,910 new students in their first semester at university, the number once more exceeds the forecast by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK).

HRK President Prof Dr Horst Hippler said: "The figures document the continued readiness of universities to offer a study place to as many young people as possible. Time and again, the Higher Education Pact has made a crucial contribution to the universities' ability to create the necessary capacities in recent years.

The stabilisation of the figures at this high level demonstrates that we are dealing with a long-term change in studying behaviour. A programme with a limited duration is no longer the right response to this. The Federal and State Governments must finally put aside once and for all the notion that the high demand for study places is an interim, temporary phenomenon. They must arrive at appropriate funding established on a permanent basis.

We see stronger and stronger evidence at universities of the problems that arise due to the limited duration of Higher Education Pact funds: A growing proportion of the costs for teaching is met from temporary programme funding instead of basic funding. As a consequence, more and more teaching duties are performed by staff employed on a fixed-term basis. This is an untenable position, both for employees and universities."

Hippler called for a permanent funding solution for the period following the expiration of the Higher Education Pact in 2020: "The Federal and State Governments must take steps now to resolve how funding for teaching at the level provided by the Higher Education Pact can be secured beyond 2020. The KMK should update the forecast dating from 2014 as soon as possible, in order to have an appropriate basis for planning."