

4 November 2020**30 years of the HRK: Strong representation for universities throughout Germany**

On 5 November 1990, just one month after German reunification, the plenary assembly of the former West German Rectors' Conference (WRK) welcomed 21 universities from the five new federal states and the former East Berlin. From then on, it regarded itself as the representative body for all universities in Germany and accordingly changed its name to "Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (German Rectors' Conference, HRK)".

In Berlin today, HRK President Prof Dr Peter-André Alt paid tribute to the date: "It was an extraordinarily important step towards firmly representing the interests of universities. We are proud that the universities have formed a community so quickly. This date marks a historical milestone in higher education. Autonomous, democratically constituted universities were finally able to establish themselves in the territory of the former GDR, free research and teaching could finally thrive there, and there was finally unhindered exchange between universities throughout Germany and far beyond."

In February 1990, the first plenary assembly of the West German Rectors' Conference after the fall of the wall addressed the cooperation and funding of GDR universities, with rectors from the GDR in attendance as guests. In the years that followed, the HRK dedicated itself to developing universities in the eastern federal states on the basis of mutual exchange of information and advice. Many resolutions and recommendations were drawn up in this regard, partly driven by concerns about equipment that would ensure that universities in the territory of the former GDR could be competitive in terms of academic performance.

President Alt: "Today, there is no longer a question of East and West in the cooperation between universities within the HRK. Having said that, we must question whether there is an equal and fair distribution of opportunities in higher education, whether academics still hold on to stereotypes, and why East Germans are markedly under-represented in top positions in academia. Yesterday we organised a video conference with over 40 participants to address these issues. We will carefully evaluate the results. I believe it is also important that universities make a substantial contribution towards resolving any lingering social conflicts, and bridging the gaps between East and West by means of research and teaching."