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One month today until the Bundestag election: HRK surveys the parties

The German Rectors' Conference (HRK) has documented the higher education policy positions of the parties in the Bundestag election on its website. The answers to ten election touchstone questions have been placed side by side with each other to enable direction comparison between them. The HRK surveyed all the parties that have a realistic chance of gaining representation in the next Bundestag.

Last October, the HRK formulated its expectations concerning the future role of the Federal Government in higher education policy in the **paper** "Universities as key players in science and society". Then, in spring, it presented a concrete funding concept for the universities from 2020 in its "Zwei-Säulen-plus" (Two pillars plus) model.

HRK President Prof Dr Horst Hippler provided this comment on the parties' answers:

"If one measures the parties' responses against the concept presented by the HRK, they are very disappointing in many areas. Indications are that adequate, ongoing and hence reliable funding growth for the universities does not appear likely even after the election. The statements about funding plans are vague on many issues, or the participation of the Federal Government in basic funding is completely rejected. That is a bitter disappointment. While non-university institutions have been profiting from considerable regular increases for years, for the most part the Federal parties still fail to provide universities with any genuinely encouraging prospects.

The Parliament and the Government must, however, come to grips with the issue as a matter of urgency, and eliminate the imbalance between the trends in higher education funds and new student numbers, and basic and third-party funding. This cannot succeed without the participation of the Federal Government. However, for this purpose the Government needs a reliable partnership with the states, which have disappointed over and over again on this matter in the past.

I find the parties' meagre ideas on strengthening academic digital infrastructure to be particularly worrying, especially given that this is a collective national task of the first order, for which the Federal Government bears considerable shared responsibility. On this issue we cannot afford delay, if we are to prevent patchwork solutions from being adopted by universities or individual states, with correspondingly high costs when compatibility has to be created later on. Crucially important systems are at stake here, for example in relation to campus management, the long-term archiving of data and publications, and research data management. Investment in data and information security and the strengthening of information competence in the universities are also at stake."

Go to the election touchstones