

20 November 2019**Early career researchers: Future Contract improves prospects**

In the coming months, universities intend to intensify their efforts to advance the careers of early career researchers. Parallel to the pending evaluation of the Academic Fixed-Term Contract Act, a working group of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) is to submit reports and recommendations on the topic. This was resolved by the HRK General Assembly yesterday in Hamburg.

The conclusion of the 'Future Contract' and the Federal Government's commitment to providing ongoing co-funding for higher education teaching mark a significant step towards ensuring the reliability of higher education funding. In view of this, universities can now review and enhance their measures to advance early career researchers and their system of temporary contracts. The planning security afforded by the ongoing funding starting in 2021 is expected to allow universities to improve the quality of studying and teaching, predominantly through the recruitment of permanent university staff.

"The HRK recommended university-specific guidelines for early career researchers in the post-doctoral phase in 2015. If the Federal and State Governments implement the 'Future Contract' as planned, we will finally be in a position to continue along this path," HRK President Prof Dr Peter-André Alt told the press today in Berlin. "We will then be able to strike a more suitable balance in the ratio of permanent to fixed-term academic positions. There will be suitable fixed-term contracts for qualification positions, as stipulated by the Academic Fixed-Term Contract Act."

He explained that it is important to understand that permanent employment in qualifying positions would not only be infeasible but also damaging. "Not blocking qualification pathways for early career researchers is a matter of generational equity," said the HRK President. "The HRK also advocates for more consulting and training options, as well as for the further development of partnerships in the advancement of early career researchers."

Universities have difficulty preserving successful training options in the long term, as there is a high level of dependency on third-party funding and short-term Federal and State Government funding as well as specifications in agreed targets. New cooperations with other universities or non-university partners offer a solution. They could contribute towards consolidating measures and creating new options that open up further career prospects for researchers with doctorates.

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