

3 March 2020**European University Networks:
universities highlight framework conditions for success**

"If the programme to create European university networks is to be a success, the European Union must see and support the participating universities in their entirety as educational, research, innovation and cultural institutions," said the President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Prof Dr Peter-André Alt, at an HRK conference in Bonn.

The creation of European University Networks is an important initiative that has considerable potential for the forward-looking development of European higher education systems, he added. "At the same time, it is vital to preserve the variety of other cooperation models," stressed Alt. "All these initiatives can help to foster a positive perception of Europe and sustainable networking in the European Higher Education Area in times of growing nationalism. With their multilateral relations, universities contribute to productive interaction within Europe, including in places where cooperation has become more challenging at the political level. Universities are well aware of the societal significance and the economic relevance that their European activities have."

In view of the current EU initiative, the German Rectors' Conference is concerned that the individual networks may not have the necessary framework conditions. It is therefore calling for the creation of fewer but properly equipped networks. Furthermore, universities can only fully contribute to society if they are given sufficient room to manoeuvre. This includes being able to join forces with suitable partners, without proportional geographical requirements that are too narrowly defined.

"At the moment, you almost get the impression that the initiative is already overburdened with plans, expectations and requirements, no sooner than funding has started," said Alt. "However, the participating universities must be able to build on their strengths. Overly specific requirements of the Directorates-General for Education and Research would be counterproductive. Strong and productive networks can only be created with institutions that can act freely and creatively."