

24 June 2016

HRK President on Brexit: Profound impact extends to universities

"Universities will also be profoundly affected by Brexit," said Prof. Dr. Horst Hippler, President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), in Berlin today, responding to yesterday's vote in Great Britain to withdraw from the European Union.

"The consequences will hit British universities hard, and with them the entire European Higher Education and Research Area. We need to brace ourselves for a difficult transition period, given the extensive negotiations that lie ahead on the conditions for including the United Kingdom in the European funding and exchange programmes.

For German universities and the German Rectors' Conference in particular, Brexit marks a painful turning point. We maintain particularly close relationships with Great Britain in every respect, and share many fundamental principles – such as the belief that European research funding must be guided by quality criteria alone. Our research partnerships and exchanges of students and researchers are very active, and have positive and long-lasting effects on our national economies and mutual understanding. We will do all we can to continue the collaboration between universities in Great Britain, Germany and the rest of the EU without any disruptions.

Our hope is that agreements will be reached between the EU and Great Britain in the near future to allow the funding needed for research collaborations and student exchange to continue. We urge political decision-makers to come to viable agreements, despite the anti-European result, in order to limit the damage to the European Higher Education Area as much as possible."

The British Rectors' Conference Universities UK and the HRK had vehemently opposed Brexit when their executive boards met on 2 June.