

HRK

2017 Activity Report by the President of the German Rectors' Conference

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HRK German Rectors' Conference
The Voice of the Universities

2017 Activity Report

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Financial and Legal Framework Conditions

Decisions of crucial importance to the future development of universities were awaited in the 2017 election year. Significant changes were approaching, each of them necessitating the redesign of higher education funding – the Higher Education Pact will end in 2020, as will the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation. The funds from the federal government made available for the construction of university facilities in the previous decade will run out in 2019; the ban on net borrowing in the federal states will come into effect in 2019/2020, as will the planned reformulation of federal–state funding arrangements.

The universities were waiting for a clear sign in their favour; after all, the high demand for university courses remains unabated: more than half a million new students commenced higher education courses in 2017. In fact, the total number of students has reached 2.8 million – a new record high. This is, firstly, an expression of the continued demand for university courses, and, secondly, partly a result of the ongoing efforts of universities to make study accessible to a large number of young people.

For ten years now, the universities have received financial support to create study places through the Higher Education Pact. The provision of over 38 billion euros from 2007 to 2020 by the federal and state governments is still very much acknowledged by the HRK as an impressive commitment.

However, the funding logic of the Higher Education Pact that ends in 2020 has led to a situation where universities were scarcely able to create any permanent positions, and instead have used teaching staff on short-term contracts. Meanwhile, both trends to date and forecasts indicate that student numbers do not constitute a one-off peak, but rather an elevated plateau. In other words, the new student numbers will continue at this high level even after 2020.

Higher education funding after 2020: "Zwei-Säulen-plus" (Two Pillars plus) model

Fixed-term funding provided for specific purposes has increased sharply in recent years, particularly through the Higher Education Pact. On average, this now constitutes almost one-quarter of university budgets, which has, in turn, given rise to considerable structural problems. In recent years, the focus of the state and federal governments' funding efforts has been on making adequate numbers of student places available. In the process, they have neglected to secure forward-looking funding over the long term for teaching and research, which would, in particular, have enabled removal of the time limit on professorships and other academic positions. What is more, high demands have arisen in the areas of construction, equipment, digitalisation, transfer, national licences and social infrastructure. These developments jeopardise the universities' future viability. For this reason, remedial action is now required, most importantly for the purpose of massively strengthening basic funding.

The HRK is therefore calling for a "Pillar 1" of higher education funding, the core of which is ongoing funding for teaching and research and that permits additional permanent positions to be established, among other objectives. At all events, as a minimum this "pillar" must be designed to permanently safeguard staff numbers and facility capacities to meet the demand for higher education and the requirements of internationally competitive research.

Universities ought to receive additional funding under "Pillar 2", in some cases on a programme basis, that serves to ensure both quality and future viability. The HRK stresses that programme funding must also support the

competitiveness of small universities and a range of profiles/specialisations. However, it is intended to be significantly more limited in scope compared to the future "Pillar 1".

The "plus" element provides for a Pact for Education, Research and Innovation that safeguards an annual three percent growth in funds, especially for "Pillar 1".

Extensive dialogue with government and society

The German Rectors' Conference endorsed a paper formulating key considerations for the further development of the higher education sector at the end of 2016. The paper was informed by the coming 2017 federal elections and deliberations on how the federal and state governments are to work together to fund higher education after the amendment of Art. 91 b of the Basic Law, and what is to be done about the various funding programmes for higher education and research ("pacts") that will come to an end over the next few years. In the paper, the HRK attempted to elucidate the role and significance of the "universities as key players in society" – to quote the title of the paper – and their special place in today's research system and to derive important demands from that position. That paper was sent to members of parliament and to governments, both federal and state, research organisations, political foundations and social partners with the aim of entering into a broad dialogue on its contents. Shortly thereafter, the HRK despatched ten election touchstones to all major parties fielding candidates for the German Bundestag. The document surveyed the parties' positions on the role of the federal government in the future funding of universities and the development of student financing, on digitisation, on European higher education and research policy, and on current issues such as copyright law. The answers were made public on the HRK website and in a special issue of DUZ, a German higher education magazine, and fed into broader discussion with government.

The campaign of dialogue stimulated by the position paper had its desired effect. Numerous discussions took place throughout the year at federal and state level which provided the opportunity to communicate the role of the universities as organisational hubs of our research system. The election touchstones, and even more the resolution on higher education funding after 2020, likewise played an increasingly important role during this exchange of ideas. The HRK was able to communicate its policy positions to a broad group of higher education and research policy stakeholders at both federal and state level in this manner. A number of ongoing and highly politically effective contacts were developed through these activities, which can be employed in discussions on a wide range of higher education and research policy issues and which ensured opportunities for influence beyond 2017.

Copyright law: first step towards improvements for research and teaching

Science-friendly, forward-looking copyright legislation was one of the HRK's key concerns last year, both at the national and the European level. Following an intense struggle to ensure the passage of a science-friendly reform of copyright law, the "Gesetz zur Angleichung des Urheberrechts an die aktuellen Erfordernisse der Wissensgesellschaft" (Act to Align Copyright Law with the Current Demands of the Knowledge-based Society, UrhWissG) was passed at the end of the last legislative period. The HRK engaged actively in this process and mobilised stakeholders in academia and research for support. The legislation was published in the Federal Gazette in September 2017 and comes into effect on 1 March 2018. The HRK welcomes the solution that has been arrived at, which ensures clarity and therefore also certainty in application. The exception provisions for the use of texts, including digitised texts, in research and teaching are designed for the present day, are practical and result in a marked degree of simplification. The act therefore fulfils the requirements of research and teaching in the age of digitisation, and is hence of decisive importance for the long-term competitiveness of German scholarship and the quality of teaching and courses of study.

Unfortunately, however, the legislature decided in part on a time limit for the new legislation; the conditions governing statutorily permitted uses will initially only be valid until the end of February 2023, and will be

evaluated by the federal government after four years. The HRK will campaign for the legislature to remove the time limit on the newly introduced rules as soon as possible.

Along with national copyright law reform, copyright law has also been examined by the European legislature. The HRK is campaigning to prevent the German copyright law that has just been passed from being undermined. The text and data mining provisions, the education and science exception and an exclusion of scientific publications from the ancillary copyright laws are the focus of efforts here. The Directive is expected to be passed in 2018.

Digital reserved reading shelf: negotiations with VG Wort

The HRK participated as a guest in negotiations between the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) and copyright collection agency VG Wort on the question of legally permissible uses of copyright-protected works in digital reserved reading shelves. The KMK and VG Wort have agreed that in the transition period until the new legislation enters into force on 1 March 2018, remuneration should occur on a lump sum basis, as previously, until the end of February 2018.

With the entry into force of the copyright law reform, the KMK and VG Wort must now agree on a system for the period after 1 March 2018 in order to determine the appropriate remuneration to be paid for legally permitted uses in classes, and for research and institutions. It should be noted here that lump-sum remuneration or a representative sample of use is sufficient for the usage-dependent calculation of the appropriate remuneration. The HRK will now press for an appropriate solution, but – also given the time limit in the new act – will insist that the establishment of a system for recording usage must not significantly exceed the effort required to date.

In the course of their negotiations, the KMK and VG Wort have already expressly confirmed that, for the period from 1 March 2018, the higher education institutions are legally permitted to use the digital reserved reading shelves under Sections 60 a, c of the Copyright Act (UrhG) (new), even if agreement has not yet been reached between VG Wort and the KMK at this time about remuneration arrangements.

Law on student intake numbers ("capacity law")

The current law regarding capacity, that is, student intake numbers, is subject to innumerable points of criticism and deficits, since it is neither appropriate to the present day nor adequate to meet the demands of the paradigm shift in higher education policy. The HRK is therefore pursuing a reform of capacity law. Following an initial consultation with experts on the various capacity determination models in December 2017, a reform proposal is to be developed.

Project DEAL

The goal of Project DEAL, commissioned by the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany – represented by the HRK – was to conclude nationwide licensing agreements for the entire portfolio of electronic journals (E-journals) from major academic publishers, starting with the 2017 licence year. The intention is also to achieve significant change to the current situation in relation to negotiations, content and pricing in the process. The effects of a consortium agreement at the national level should relieve the financial burden on individual institutions and bring wide-scale, lasting improvements in access to scholarly literature for researchers. The transformation to open access is also to be supported. The negotiations with publisher Elsevier, which have been under way since the summer of 2016, again proved very difficult in 2017. In view of the slow pace of negotiations, by the end of 2016 more than 60 academic institutions had already terminated their contracts with Elsevier in order to underline their intention to enter into an agreement on a DEAL licence. As of the end of 2017, around 200 institutions had terminated their contracts.

By contrast, it was possible to reach transition agreements with publishers Springer Nature and Wiley for 2018 so that negotiations for a DEAL agreement, which were already well advanced, could continue without time pressure and be brought to a successful conclusion as soon as possible.

Digitalisation of higher education teaching

The HRK participates in a variety of forums on the topic of digitalisation. The HRK Standing Committee on Digital Infrastructures deals both with fundamental and topical issues in this area that play a crucial role in teaching, research, and infrastructure. Given that the EU General Data Protection Regulation will come into effect in May 2018, the focus is currently on "information security", a concept that extends beyond the scope of the concept of IT security and takes adequate account of issues specific to higher education. Following on from a hearing of experts held in October 2017, the committee is currently compiling recommendations not only for management level but also the operational level.

The digitalisation of teaching is another key area. The project "Higher Education Forum on Digitalisation" is creating significant momentum in this area (see p. 88 for project profile). Another forum through which the HRK addresses digitalisation is the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany. One example of its involvement in this area is the two-day conclave at board level held in October 2017, in which the individual activities of the research organisations were examined and key demands were formulated in relation to the current negotiations in the Joint Science Conference on a national research data infrastructure (NFDI). The HRK also takes part in the Alliance initiative "Digital Information 2018-2022" – as well as participating on the steering committee, the HRK makes a significant contribution to the newly constituted working group "Digital learning, teaching and networking". Beyond these activities, the HRK also takes an active part in the working groups on Legislation for Science in the Digital Age, which deals with issues including copyright, and Scientific Practice.

Research and Early Career Researchers

The structure and quality assurance of the doctoral phase continued to be an area of great importance for the HRK's activities in 2017. The focus was on two aspects in particular: the establishment of three pilot projects as part of the newly created "Max Planck Schools – a joint initiative between German universities and the German research organisations" and measures to improve quality assurance for doctoral degrees with an external employment contract.

Max Planck Schools

The Max Planck Schools (MPS) are an instrument for the further development of cooperation between universities and non-university research institutions in the doctoral phase. The objective of the schools is to bring together elite researchers in a specific research area from across Germany to establish a joint doctoral training programme. The BMBF is providing funding of around nine million euros to the university members of the Schools for a five-year pilot phase. An intensive process of discussion within the HRK and with non-university partners enabled a number of important improvements to be made to the concept to take account of the universities' suggestions. Following the "Joint Resolution of the HRK Executive Board, the Spokespersons of the Universities Member Group and the HRK concept group 'Max Planck Schools'" on 2 August 2017, three schools can now commence their work in the research fields of "Photonics", "Physics, Chemistry and the Construction of Life" and "Cognition" (cf. p. 48). The pilot phase, at the end of which an evaluation will determine whether the MPS will be continued and further developed as an instrument, is being overseen by a steering committee chaired jointly by the HRK President and the President of the Max Planck Society.

Quality assurance for doctoral training with an external employment contract

In 2017, HRK member universities criticised deficiencies in doctoral training in cases where the doctoral candidate is not directly employed at the university entitled to confer doctoral degrees or is not connected to the latter as part of a structured doctoral training programme. A number of major companies, in particular, advertise doctoral training opportunities without sufficiently clarifying the primary responsibility of the universities for every doctoral procedure.

Many universities complained that they are expected to accept topics set by industry and the employees selected by them and to oversee the award of a doctoral degree. The HRK General Assembly responded to this problem with its paper "Key points on quality assurance for doctoral training with an external employment contract", adopted in November, which clearly states the roles, rights and duties of the various stakeholders within and outside the university in the doctoral process (cf. p. 56f.). Based on these key points, the HRK is now working closely with the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, the Federation of German Industries and the Stifterverband on a joint declaration. The HRK has already alerted a number of major companies to the inappropriate statements in descriptions of doctoral opportunities featured on their websites. Some initial progress has been made.

However, the criticism of problematic trends in collaboration with industry does not cast doubt on the continued desire of universities to work closely with industry and society. Intensive debate within the HRK has demonstrated that the universities do not regard this task as a "third mission", completely divorced from their key competencies in teaching and research. On the contrary, cooperation with external stakeholders and mutual exchange have a direct connection to research and teaching. This positioning was made clear by the HRK in its resolution "Transfer and cooperation as tasks of the universities" (cf. p. 58ff.). The latter resolution also describes various dimensions and trends relating to cooperation with industry and civil society.

Tax incentives for research and development

The HRK President has taken a very definite stance on tax incentives for research and development for companies in relation to universities and business: In several letters to parties, federal ministries and the Office of the Federal Chancellor, the HRK pointed out that the introduction of these kinds of incentives could have a negative impact on universities and collaboration between science and industry. This could be the case, for example, if this funding instrument were to come about at the expense of project funding. Conditions were outlined with a view to limiting potential unfavourable effects and specific solutions were suggested, with these being met with a great deal of interest at the Federal Ministry of Finance in particular.

European politics in the knowledge triangle of research, innovation and education

In the resolution of its General Assembly in November 2016, the HRK departed for the first time from its practice of commenting only on developments in individual predefined policy areas, such as research policy, within the course of the European political cycle. The resolution entitled "Creation of a European education, research and innovation community" put the knowledge triangle at the centre of deliberations and called on policy-makers to increasingly think and act across a range of policy areas (cf. HRK Activity Report 2016, p. 82ff.). In light of the worsening crisis facing the EU as a whole before the French presidential election in spring 2017, the presidents of the HRK and its French partner organisation, the CPU, published a joint declaration and coordinated articles in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Les Échos* in March 2017 demanding that greater attention be given to education as the foundation of European culture. At the same time, they pointed to the successes of the Erasmus Programme and the European Research Council, which they said should be highlighted and held up by governments as European successes.

As part of the Franco-German-Polish cooperation between rectors' conferences, the HRK subsequently went on to develop specific ideas for new funding programmes at the European level, for example "Territorial Connections".

Within such a programme, universities sharing the same strategic profile that wish to create European networks could be funded as the engines for regional innovation systems (innovative ecosystems).

These three rectors' conferences forming the "Weimar Triangle" also reacted jointly to the positive fact that the European Council, as the summit meeting of heads of government, addressed the topic of "Education and Culture" in December 2017. A trilateral declaration by the HRK, the Polish CRASP and the French CPU underlining the role of the universities in research and innovation as well as education and culture was sent to the President of the Council, Donald Tusk, and the three governments in mid-December 2017. In connection with discussion on the creation of "European Universities", the three conferences made the case for actively supporting those universities in the EU that intend to jointly develop their strategies and their management structures within the framework of the knowledge triangle and develop them in a coordinated manner.

The importance of cooperation between the three levels of EU, federal and state governments in solving tasks that cross policy areas was also emphasised. In June 2017, the HRK Senate vigorously debated the question of the federal states' innovation strategies and the European Structural Funds and gauged the opportunities and contributions of the universities. The importance of involving the universities in the development of the federal states' innovation strategies, and of also supporting EU member states with fewer innovation capabilities at the European level, was also underlined. This was also the focus of a joint discussion paper disseminated by the German and Polish rectors' conferences on the topic of "Distributed Excellence" in November 2017, in which the necessary conditions for the design of national excellence competitions with European funding for universities is discussed, in particular for member states with fewer innovation capabilities. This would enable them to make a successful contribution to European research collaboration in the medium term. The impact of these multilateral papers and statements has already been felt, and will continue to develop in 2018. The annual EU Strategy Conference held by the HRK for university leaders in January 2018 in Brussels with the participation of the EU Commissioner for Research and Innovation Carlos Moedas also contributed to this effect.

Rare disciplines

The HRK has been an advocate for the rare disciplines and their visibility for many years. In 2007, the HRK provided the impetus for the establishment of an Office for Research on Rare Disciplines, which was based first at the University of Potsdam and from 2012 at the University of Mainz, and which mapped out the location and resources of the rare disciplines nation-wide. A joint conference of the HRK and BMBF in March 2017 offered the opportunity to hold a broad discussion on the opportunities and possibilities represented by the rare disciplines. HRK President Hippler underlined the growing relevance of the rare disciplines in answering questions about the future. He also pointed out that recruiting and retaining their early career researchers was a challenge for these disciplines.

In the course of a joint meeting of the executive boards of the HRK and the KMK, both bodies emphasised the significance of the rare disciplines for the preservation of our cultural heritage and the transmission of culturally and socially relevant competences. In a joint declaration by the HRK and KMK, agreement was reached on ensuring the survival of these disciplines and doing even more in future to promote their development in mutual dialogue.

The HRK is active in the "Zukunftsrat" (Think Tank) for Rare Disciplines which is part of an initiative by the State of Baden-Württemberg. That state's Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts has set up the "Rare Disciplines Structural Fund" to encourage representatives of these disciplines to transfer their competences and research results to wider academia and society." The HRK President is a member of the commission of experts for the Think Tank, which meets twice a year. Within the state initiative, the Think Tank functions as a platform for coordination and facilitation, and evaluates the projects funded through the structural fund.

Very active dialogue continues with the Office for Research on Rare Disciplines in Mainz. At the European level, the HRK is collaborating with the French (CPU) and Polish (CRASP) rectors' conferences on the topic of rare disciplines.

Studying and Teaching

European higher education projects

From 2014, the HRK took part in the Erasmus Plus project Mastermind Europe, which is designed to support universities in the selection of foreign applicants for their master's programmes. As part of the project, a focus group meeting was held in May 2017 at the Technical University of Munich, which focussed on "Master's programmes in the engineering sciences". Mastermind Europe was concluded in autumn, as scheduled.

The HRK is also involved in the Erasmus Plus project EFFECT (European Forum for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching), which is coordinated by the European University Association (EUA) and which examines options for a more active exchange between European universities on the topics of "professionalisation of university teaching" and "institutional strategies for teaching". The HRK also supported the First European Teaching and Learning Forum held in Paris in September, organised by the EUA in cooperation with the French rectors' conference, CPU.

Project nexus: focus on skills development during courses of study

During the period under review, the project "nexus – Forming Transitions, Promoting Student Success" focussed on measures for skills development relating to graduate transition to the job market (for project profile, see p. 86). The four Round Tables (RTs) in the project discussed appropriate curricular and extracurricular measures to improve student and job success and ensured the transfer of project results into faculties and departments with the assistance of cross-project conferences.

- The Economic and Business Sciences RT worked with the Recognition RT to draw up guidelines on the foundations of, and key questions relating to, the quality-assured recognition of competences acquired outside the higher education system.
- The guidelines by the Engineering Sciences RT centred around the concept of approaches and measures for structuring curricular teaching that can be implemented within an existing curriculum. The latter were discussed both at small "peer review" regional meetings and at the main annual meeting of the project at the Ruhr University Bochum.
- The Healthcare/Medical Sciences RT developed guidelines on its principal topic: interprofessional teaching and learning in healthcare professions with higher education qualifications and in medicine. Early practical experience at selected universities is showing how the first interprofessional study modules can be developed by linking curricula from the cultures of disciplines with very different traditions of academisation.
- The Recognition RT combined its guidelines on "Recognition at higher education institutions: Organisation – Implementation – Quality Assurance" with advisory and training services for the development of a university-specific culture of recognition, which is in particularly high demand at small universities.

Moreover, nexus initiated a very well-attended conference at the University of Bonn on data-based course monitoring as an approach for improving student success, and continued the debate on quality standards for placements and practical components at a conference at the University of Frankfurt.

Ars Legendi Prize for Excellence in Higher Education Teaching: placements and practical course components

In November, the Stifterverband and the HRK awarded the Ars Legendi Prize 2017 on the topic of "Placements and practical course components". The prize in the Researcher category was awarded to Prof Dr Klaus Meier of the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. In the Project category, a team headed by Dr Henrike Rieken at the

Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development was awarded the prize for the development of the module "Project Study Partners Organic Farms". The prize of €50,000 is awarded jointly by the Stifterverband and the HRK.

Qualifications Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

In 2016, the 20th General Assembly of the HRK approved the draft presented by an internal HRK working group of a revised Qualifications Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. In February 2017, the draft was also endorsed by the KMK. The Qualifications Framework for Higher Education Qualifications establishes a detailed description of the competences that need to have been acquired upon the completion of a bachelor's or master's degree or a doctoral degree.

A new feature, the detailed representation of artistic qualifications at the doctoral level (master classes, solo classes), has now been added. The adoption of the Qualifications Framework for Higher Education Qualifications represents the culmination of a number of years of intense discussion. This created a basis for the work which is now commencing on the subject-specific qualification frameworks.

Quality assurance

In 2016, the HRK monitored the development of the course accreditation treaty between the federal states through its ongoing consultation with the KMK. This enabled numerous demands by the universities for science-driven quality assurance to be incorporated in the draft of a treaty between the federal states. The implementation of the tasks allocated to the HRK in the treaty between the federal states – the development of a procedure for the appointment of reviewers in accreditation procedures (Art 3 para. 3) and the appointment of members to the Accreditation Council (Art. 9 para. 2) – followed in 2017.

After deliberations in the Executive Board and Senate, a first draft of the "Guidelines on the Appointment of Reviewers and the Composition of Review Groups for Accreditation Procedures" was adopted by the 23rd General Assembly of the HRK on 14 November 2017 in Potsdam.

In order to be able to identify higher education teachers with the appropriate personal and professional skills from the broadest possible pool to participate in the Accreditation Council, the 22nd General Assembly of the HRK adopted a procedure on 9 May 2017 in which each of the (state) rectors' conferences represented in the HRK and also the six member universities not represented therein could submit the names of two people to the HRK Executive Board.

The Student Accreditation Pool as well as the General Conference of Faculties and the Conference of Departments were also invited to participate by submitting suggestions relating to the appointment procedure. Using these suggestions as a starting point, the HRK Executive Board decided, given the respective personal and professional suitability of the higher education teachers, on a scenario that fulfils requirements for the representation of academics and creates a pool of expertise that anchors the academic perspective as comprehensively as possible in the new accreditation system. On the Executive Board's part, this was tied to a further eight representatives being selected in a second cohort along with the eight academic members, ensuring a sufficient quantity of expertise in the future system. In addition, the HRK Executive Board proposed to the KMK that the option of Permanent Guests in the Accreditation Council be used in order to include additional important academic perspectives with advisory expertise, and also provided proposed names for that purpose. The four areas of scientific research (including the creative arts courses) that must be represented under the course accreditation treaty between the states as well as the different types of higher education institution have been taken into account appropriately in the suggestions as a whole. Student representatives, international members and the HRK representative in the Accreditation Council were also appointed. The work of the newly appointed body commences at the inaugural meeting on 19/20 February 2018.

Academisation of healthcare professions

A number of years ago, a position was created on the HRK Executive Board with specific responsibility for medicine and the health sciences. This was done with the intention of more closely examining the problems of university medicine and the cooperation between universities and university hospitals. At the same time, the intention was to look into the field of the health sciences in more detail, a field which is increasingly gaining significance primarily – but not exclusively – at universities of applied sciences. Following on from recommendations that had already been made in recent years on “University medicine as an integral part of the university”, and on doctorates in medicine, a working group addressed the academisation of healthcare professions, in particular developments in the nursing, therapeutic and midwifery sciences. In relation to a portion of those employed in the healthcare professions, the general belief (including that of the German Council of Science and Humanities) is that higher education training is necessary because developments in healthcare are creating increasingly high requirements for qualifications. The corresponding courses were also developed in this area, which are, however, often still lacking an academic context at higher education institutions and which must comply with a range of mandatory requirements (e. g., practical components) due to existing vocational training law, the fulfilment of which is prerequisite to graduates gaining the entitlement to use the relevant professional titles.

In the recommendation on “Primary qualifying degree programmes in nursing, therapeutic and midwifery sciences”, the HRK is calling for higher education institutions to have exclusive responsibility for designing and implementing primary qualifying degree programmes in order to ensure their scientific basis. A reform of vocational training law, which dates from the 1970s and is tailored to training at vocational schools, is also being called for.

The main concern is the structure of the practical vocational training components: these must often be carried out in cooperation with vocational schools, and, in the existing degree programmes with training components, often fail to meet higher education standards, in part because the staff lack academic qualifications.

The HRK also believes that it is necessary for independent academic disciplines to develop in parallel with the establishment of the degree programmes, and that these disciplines should be supported by systematic research funding. In the case of clinically-based degree programmes, a cooperation arrangement with university hospitals and academic teaching hospitals should be a matter of course.

International Affairs

Key areas of interest: differentiation of higher education institutions and internationalisation of curricula

The consequences of the trend towards academisation and dangers to academic freedom were key issues at the Hamburg Transnational University Leaders Council, which the HRK hosted jointly with the Körber Foundation and the University of Hamburg for the second time in June. In their joint final declaration, “The Hamburg Declaration: Organising Higher Education for the 21st Century”, the presidents of around 50 research universities on six continents endorsed a clear division of responsibilities among the different types of higher education institutions as an important foundation for an effective differentiation of the higher education landscape worldwide. University leaders also made public statements warning against restrictions on academic freedom and penned an open letter calling for the protection of the Central European University in Budapest. In the lead-up to the Council, the three organisers invited national stakeholders to a dialogue in Berlin in February, at which the study commissioned in preparation for the Council, “Responding to Massification: Differentiation in Post-Secondary Education Worldwide” by the Boston College Center for International Higher Education, was presented.

A further issue highlighted during the period under review was the internationalisation of teaching; the HRK General Assembly adopted a recommendation on the internationalisation of curricula in May (cf. p. 32ff.). In that position paper, the HRK calls for the systematic internationalisation of curricula in all subject areas in order to enable all students to continuously explore international and intercultural teaching content over the course of their higher education studies in Germany.

Cooperation with foreign partner organisations: expansion of cooperation and strategic coordination

As the representative of the interests of German universities at a political level, the HRK presented its views in exchanges with international partners, in national and inter-governmental bodies and in international platforms. In addition to regular exchange within the bodies of the European University Association (EUA), consultations occurred with the UK, French, Austrian, Polish, Russian and Swiss rectors' conferences. Strategic coordination with the French and Polish rectors' conferences also resulted in a joint statement on the resolutions of the Leaders Agenda of the European Council on the subject of education and culture (see p. 14). In addition, a strategy paper was developed together with the Polish rectors' conference, CRASP, calling for Excellence Initiatives in those EU member states that are currently catching up.

In view of the UK's impending exit from the European Union in March 2019, the HRK also continued its active dialogue with UK partners on the future of higher education and research relationships. To sustain German-Russian university relationships over the long term, the HRK, together with the Russian Association of Leading Universities, established a German-Russian expert group, which will formulate recommendations for the development of joint master's degree courses and joint doctoral procedures. This activity is part of the planned German-Russian Roadmap for Education, Science, Research and Innovation, on which the HRK and the Russian Association approved a joint statement. The HRK also maintained its dialogue with partners outside Europe. In spring, a delegation headed by the HRK President conducted policy discussions in Australia; the delegation also participated in the annual conference of Universities Australia, the HRK's Australian partner organisation, amongst other activities. In view of political rapprochement, academic cooperation with Iran was a further priority for the HRK. Drawing on the results of an exchange with its member universities, the HRK, together with its Iranian partners, conducted a seminar on the internationalisation of universities in Tehran. The HRK participated in the sixth ASEM rectors' conference, which took place in Singapore in October. This was a multilateral platform of Asian and European rectors' conferences and universities. In addition, the HRK once again attended the annual conference of the GAIN network, which took place in San Francisco.

The HRK continued its commitment to development policy through the Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies (DIES), a joint DAAD and HRK initiative, firstly through joint events with partners in South-east Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, and secondly through participation in measures to enlarge capacity in university management across regional boundaries. The management of universities in developing and emerging countries was also the focus of a DIES conference held in November, marking the ten-year anniversary of the founding of the training programme DIES International Deans' Course. The initial results of an evaluation of the training programme commissioned for this purpose were presented in the course of the conference, as was a study carried out on behalf of the DIES by the Boston College Center for International Higher Education, which for the first time provided an insight into comparable training courses worldwide.

The social responsibility of universities: integration of refugee students and at-risk researchers and a global understanding on the protection of academic freedom

The integration of prospective and current refugee students presents new challenges to the universities, which they once again tackled with great commitment this year, drawing on their many years of experience with the integration of international students. The HRK supported the universities in this process and continued its monitoring in relation to refugees interested in studying and those who have already enrolled on a course of

study. It also took part in numerous conferences and workshops on the issue. This provided the opportunity to campaign for closer coordination between educational policy-makers on the provision of advice to refugees at an early stage, and to highlight the demand for supplementary qualification options for refugees with a first academic degree.

A further focus of work was the protection of at-risk researchers. In the period under review, as previously, political unrest in a number of nations was accompanied by threats to academic freedom. Developments in Turkey, in particular, led the HRK President to make a series of statements in which he expressed sharp criticism of the continuing and systematic repression of university members. The HRK continued its close collaboration with the international network Scholars at Risk and fulfilled its responsibilities on the management board of the network's German section. The Philipp Schwartz Initiative for the protection of at-risk researchers conducted by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation was also supported by the HRK through its involvement in the selection committee.

HRK EXPERTISE Internationalisation: project launch, new formats on offer for advisory services and links with the established portfolio of services

The new project HRK EXPERTISE Internationalisation was successfully launched in the period under review. The key objective of the project, which is being funded by the BMBF until the end of 2020, is to further advance the internationalisation of universities while maintaining a focus on quality, and to establish internationalisation as an integral component of all dimensions of higher education activities. With the help of the newly developed formats Topic Workshop, Process Workshop, Round Table and Peer to Peer, which are free of charge to HRK member institutions, diverse processes, aspects and topics relating to internationalisation can be examined and worked through in depth in consultation with relevant stakeholders from the institution in question. In the lead-up to the project, the HRK hosted a conference in May in Berlin on the topic of "Who Owns Internationalisation? Promoting broad-based, quality-driven internationalisation". A total of 120 representatives from universities, science organisations and science ministries at federal and state level exchanged ideas and perspectives on the integration of internationality as a self-evident guiding principle in the day-to-day activities of universities.

The first calls for proposals for the four new formats named above were published in the period under review. In the first pass, a total of two process workshops and nine topic workshops were selected from among the universities' expressions of interest. Of these, eight events have already been successfully organised at universities in the period under review, and three further events will take place at the beginning of 2018. Key areas of interest that have emerged in the workshops held to date are linking internationalisation and digitalisation, the mainstreaming of internationalisation and measures for providing advisory services to, and the recruiting of, international students.

In addition, in order to provide consultation services at the institutional level and support for strategic internationalisation of the universities, the established formats of the Audit, Audit Kompakt and Re-Audit "Internationalisation of Universities" were continued on a user-pays basis. The HRK also developed the Audit Strategy Workshop, a new instrument that allows the audit concept – which is a consultation-focused process geared towards the individual institutional profile – to be offered to very small institutions with fewer than 1,000 students. In this way, the strategic approach of institutional internationalisation can be supported in a targeted manner as part of a further differentiation of services across the breadth of the German higher education landscape. A call for proposals to participate in the Audit, the Audit Kompakt and the Audit Strategy Workshop was published in autumn.

A total of four universities successfully completed the Audit or the Audit Kompakt in the year under review. During the year under review, final Re-Audit visits were also undertaken at three universities. The Re-Audit builds on the results of the Audit and guarantees the transition from development of strategy to actual implementation. The focus of the process, which runs for over three years, is the monitoring of the internationalisation process. In the

year under review, a total of 18 universities were in the process of completing the Re-Audit "Internationalisation of Universities".

In addition, HRK EXPERTISE Internationalisation promotes the identification and passing on of examples of good practice, the transfer of knowledge and experience and also networking and cooperation within the entire higher education system. In the period under review, the website of the HRK EXPERTISE Internationalisation project was completed, meaning that since January 2018 interested universities have been able to access a comprehensive overview of the range of services in the project, information on the prerequisites for participation in the various formats and other news on the project.

International positioning of German universities: strategic coordination and monitoring

The international visibility of the individual universities is an important precondition for the global networking of research and teaching. The HRK therefore addressed the question of how the international visibility of German universities can be strengthened, thus contributing to the improved international positioning of the entire German higher education system. Despite widely acknowledged weaknesses in content and also technical reservations, international university rankings generate considerable attention worldwide. In view of this situation, the HRK Universities Member Group discussed the measures required and options for future action.

In recent years, a number of universities and university alliances have established offices abroad in order to strengthen their international visibility and networking. In the period under review the HRK also promoted discussion within its membership on this issue and published an overview of the universities' existing representative offices abroad on its website. The HRK also took part in consultation on the strategic further development of the five German Houses for Research and Innovation within the framework of the consultation structures newly established for that purpose (advisory board and programme committee).

The high degree of international networking by German universities is documented by the new HRK information portal "International University Partnerships", which was transferred out of the Higher Education Compass onto its own website. A further optimisation of the search function and the output of the information available there will occur in 2018. To create the foundation for a realistic assessment of its own performance in important aspects of internationalisation, the HRK – together with the DAAD and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation – also continued its work on the project for the development of profile data on the internationality of German universities.

Finally, a study on international marketing was published as part of GATE-Germany, the consortium for international higher education marketing supported jointly by the DAAD and the HRK. In order to support the strategic future development of marketing, the study records the structural and organisational conditions of international higher education marketing at universities and identifies examples of good practice. In the period under review, GATE-Germany also offered its member universities the opportunity to take part in a new round of the International Student Barometer survey at reduced rates. At mid-year, the HRK concluded its participation in the GATE-Germany Consortium for International Higher Education Marketing.

Public Relations / Communication and Staffing

"German Universities. Open to the World. Against Racism and Chauvinism" campaign

The campaign initiated by the HRK President at the end of 2015, which attracted a great response, gave the universities a shared motto by which they could demonstrate their opposition to xenophobia and nationalism and actively advocate open-mindedness. The campaign was continued and expanded over the past year. The trigger

for its inception in 2015 was the series of racially motivated incidents, including in some German university towns. These were initially the focus of the campaign. In view of troubling international developments, for example in Turkey, the USA, Poland and Hungary, the message was expanded on the specially created website www.hrk.de/weltoffene-hochschulen. The HRK President called for the voicing of protest over the massive intimidation of critical researchers, their sacking or even arrest, discriminatory travel restrictions and the disadvantaging of unpopular fields of research, and active opposition to a climate that is inimical to science. The "German Universities. Open to the World. Against Racism and Chauvinism" campaign is to be part of wider and resolute public advocacy by the German universities. It signals that they are aware of their responsibility in, and for, democratically constituted societies and intend to fulfil it. An English version has been circulated for use in the international context and to promote improved visibility for the campaign.

Prize for Higher Education Communication

In 2017, the HRK awarded this prize together with publisher ZEIT Verlag and the Robert Bosch Foundation for the 7th time. This year's topic was "Knowledge for society: communicating current university research". The award recognises the best concept by a university for transmitting the expertise and results of research from its own institution to target groups outside of scholarship and research, and hence introducing them into public dialogue. The three organisers had selected this topic in consultation with the Bundesverband Hochschulkommunikation, the German federal association for higher education communication, especially in view of an increasing rejection of discriminating, fact-based debate that is facilitated and in part deliberately promoted through social media. The universities must confront these challenges when communicating their research in order to stimulate public discussion and to enable people to participate in public debate in an informed fashion. The prize money of EUR 25,000, donated by the Robert Bosch Foundation, was awarded to the University of Cologne's application. The formal presentation of the prize took place on the eve of the HRK General Assembly on 13 November 2017 in Potsdam.

Staffing

2017 was a year of continuity in respect of staffing. The composition of the Executive Board remained unchanged. Prof Dr Holger Burckhart and Prof Dr Ulrike Beisiegel were re-elected in November for a further one-year period of office.

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