

**9 October 2014****German-Japanese conference on the role of universities in the future:  
science and business experts draw up a joint vision**

What can and should be the role of universities in Japan and Germany in the future? Around 250 experts met on the invitation of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), the German Research and Innovation Forum Tokyo and the University of Tokyo in Tokyo yesterday for talks on this issue.

Their aim was to identify the similarities between the higher education systems in Japan and in Germany and their prospects for the future against the background of globalisation and to explore ways in which the two countries could work more closely together. They held in-depth discussions about the knowledge and skills which should be fostered in university graduates including the significance of the "*Bildung durch Wissenschaft*" (education through science) ideal in current social and higher education policy. The delegates voiced criticism of the constantly diminishing basic funding of universities by the state. The Japanese and German experts also shared the concern that the universities' performance in research and teaching is being assessed more and more on the basis of purely quantitative indicators and that this was becoming increasingly crucial for the distribution of funding.

Together they drew up a list of ideas to guide development at Japanese and German universities in the future. These included

- the autonomy of the university as an institution and the freedom of researchers as individuals as a fundamental element of all higher education activity;
- the universities' mandate to educate, in the form of making a contribution to the personal development of students;
- the social responsibility of the universities reflected in an ongoing consideration of the aims of teaching and learning and of the learning process;
- permanent dialogue between universities, business and society;
- an orientation towards quality as the guiding principle for further internationalisation at universities and
- universities as multilingual institutions.

"Our talks today have shown that the Japanese and the German universities need to approach the effects of globalisation in a similar way. We will only succeed in this if we jointly formulate guiding principles on the role and mandate of the universities and advocate their implementation on a global scale," said HRK Vice-President Professor Dr. Dieter Lenzen in Tokyo.

The Japanese and German experts agreed to continue their talks at a further meeting in Germany.