

13 May 2015**HRK General Meeting Calls for Further Development of the Excellence Initiative**

On Tuesday, the General Meeting of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) in Kaiserslautern emphatically argued the case for the Excellence Initiative being continued on a permanent basis and organized as a competition for funds. It outlined the basics for a successor programme to the current programme (which will run until 2017) after politicians had already reached a basic consensus that the Excellence Initiative should be extended for another ten years with a €4 billion investment.

HRK President Hippler made the following statement: "The Excellence Initiative as an open competition that aims to fund outstanding research projects run by universities has been a huge success. It generated enormous leverage with average annual funding of just €385 million and created institutional and regional key research areas across a broad spectrum of subjects. It also sparked a spiral of academic performance which is worth maintaining. We need to stay on track with and develop this important contribution to Germany's competitiveness in the global knowledge-based society. As emphasised in our General Meeting, the central concept of only granting projects with a promise of scientific excellence needs to be upheld. The key factor here is having the best researchers in the world on board for the peer reviewing of the proposals."

The HRK believes that the competition only needs slight modification. For instance, being able to link new proposals in a useful, practical way to previous projects and giving projects that started receiving funding in or after 2012 the opportunity to apply for a continuation of funding. The HRK also considers the 'cluster of excellence' funding scheme to be the core of the programme and its success. As a result, it should take centre stage in further development but gain more organisational leeway and be complemented with specific measures for staff development. The latter basically also applies to doctoral and postdoctoral candidates who are included in the funding application. The biggest innovation in the HRK's approach is in reforming the "future concepts" funding scheme. Funds for institutional framework conditions to reinforce a research profile or the capacity for cooperation should have the same significance as subject-related proposals which should no longer be a prerequisite for approval of the institution-related proposals. In other words, the latter should not be understood as an elitist pinnacle of the programme.

"Incidentally, excellence cannot only be found in certain research projects that have been awarded this title through appropriate assessment and with good reason. In actual fact, we see excellent work in all areas of every university that deserves acclaim as excellent academic work," said HRK President Hippler.

Text of the resolution