

03 September 2015**HRK Vice-President Rüdiger on the new Funding Atlas:
Good news for the Excellence Initiative, bad news for basic funding**

"The Excellence Initiative has helped to highlight the institutional strengths of the German higher education system internationally," said Prof. Ulrich Rüdiger, the Vice-President for Research and Young Researchers of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), regarding today's unveiling in Berlin of the new DFG Funding Atlas. "The information in the Funding Atlas shows that the Excellence Initiative sustainably promotes interdisciplinary research and regional cooperation." He added that the Excellence Initiative evidently does not affect the polycentric research system in Germany, nor does it restrict the promotion of such subjects which are not the focus of projects funded through the initiative.

"These are positive findings. We are counting on the continuation of the Excellence Initiative, which must persist in promoting projects which satisfy the demand for excellence at the highest international level. This requires the decisive judgement of internationally respected reviewers," said Prof. Rüdiger.

"However, the new Funding Atlas also unfortunately confirms the diagnosis that the basic funding of universities is deteriorating," added the HRK Vice-President and Rector of the University of Konstanz. He appealed to the federal government to help enable universities to maintain and develop their position in the centre of the national research system and as centres of the research regions: "A significant improvement in basic funding has become a vital issue for universities."

Prof. Rüdiger addressed the consequences of underfunding: "Competition for third-party funding will be disastrous if the infrastructural assets are continually strained with every project. Such competition also leads to researchers feeling demotivated and overloaded because they need to incessantly attempt to apply for third-party funding, as evidence of their research skills, and be increasingly available as a reviewer in various processes - all this at a time when the strain on teaching is constantly rising. It is a case of trying to achieve the impossible." What is more, he said that the prospects for postdoctoral candidates would diminish if personal development was hampered as a result of there being too many temporary projects.

Vice-President Rüdiger also pointed out that the importance of third-party funding from the private sector for research in universities is decreasing in comparison to public third-party funding at federal, state and EU level: "This is not a good sign. We need a wide social consensus that cooperation between science and business is essential in a knowledge-based society - of course as equals and in recognition of the respective roles."