

14 May 2014**HRK formulates a framework for the evaluation of research performance**

Yesterday in Frankfurt am Main, the General Meeting of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) positively acknowledged the procedure developed by the German Council of Science and Humanities for the evaluation of research performance. The "Research Rating System" documents the results of a comparative evaluation of the research performance in results categories. In the view of the universities, the methodology employed by this science-led procedure meets the requirements of comparative research evaluation better than any other hitherto.

The universities therefore welcome in principle the proposal from the German Council of Science and Humanities to extend the research rating to all subjects, in turn, and to establish it permanently in Germany, provided some important conditions are met.

HRK President Hippler told the press today in Berlin: "In order to produce a meaningful comparison, it is essential that every institution – universities and non-university research institutions – are included. Appropriate procedures need to be selected for the different subject cultures. Additional funding must be provided for the necessary central and local measures; it is impossible for this to be financed from the universities' budgets, which are already extremely stretched. When policy-makers evaluate the results, they must take into account the initial financial and legal position of the institution in question. Organisational input must be kept to a reasonable level with a standardised core data set. Sufficient numbers of suitable reviewers need be found and their work should not adversely affect other evaluation procedures. Finally, because the HRK wishes to be certain that the quality of the procedure itself is assured, the research rating system should be supervised by the German Council of Science and Humanities itself and under no circumstances by a commercial agency."

The universities will be able to use the results of the rating procedure for their management decisions. However, in the view of the HRK members, the evaluation of research performance in the past is of only limited usefulness. Forecasts are more important. Therefore the concept should be supplemented with a prognostic element.

With a view of its management decisions, the HRK furthermore recommends that two issues are considered at a local level: firstly, evaluated and unevaluated subjects should be viewed relative to each other at a set time and, secondly, a rating system organised by subject is only indirectly helpful for interdisciplinary challenges.

Professor Hippler said: "With increasing differentiation, scientific findings are based more and more on collaboration, and partners in a collaboration can easily assess the other. Joint research effort should be encouraged rather than hindered by performance evaluations. The universities will only participate in the research rating exercise if it leads to funding measures and not to budget costs."

Text of the recommendation