

18 March 2014**HRK Senate:****Keep election promises – improve basic funding for higher education**

In Berlin today, the Senate of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) called on the German federal and state governments to finally develop a long-term solution for better basic funding of higher education. The Senate referred to the unanimous promises of the governing parties before the national elections to the Bundestag.

Its appeal was supported by the chair of the Commission of Experts for Research and Innovation (EFI), Prof. Dietmar Harhoff, who presented the Commission of Experts' latest report to the HRK. The right course must be set in the next few months for the improvement of the higher education system and basic funding must be improved, said Harhoff, adding that higher education is extremely important to Germany both as a business location and a centre of innovation.

"The situation has become steadily worse, with record numbers of students enrolling in higher education and currently studying," said HRK President Prof. Dr. Horst Hippler after the Senate meeting. Between 2000 and 2011, ongoing basic funding per student fell from €6130 to €5770*. In real price terms the drop was over €1000, from €7050 to €6004**.

"Three months after the formation of the new federal government, the higher education sector is waiting to find out how it plans to make more money available for basic higher education funding – as promised in the coalition agreement," said Hippler.

"Negotiations are already underway on a continuation of the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation, which mainly benefits non-university research, but no solution has yet been offered for higher education. The federal government must now work with the state governments to develop a sustainable basic funding model for higher education that enables it to fulfil its wide-ranging mandate in teaching, research, further education, knowledge and technology transfer, internationalisation and more."

The HRK Senate called on the federal and state governments to reopen the dialogue on a change to the Basic Law as soon as possible to allow more effective cooperation between federal and state levels in relation to higher education funding. Drastic economising measures in some financially weaker states have shown how important it is that a joint solution be found soon, it was added. Prof. Harhoff voiced his support for an amendment to Article 91b of the Basic Law (the German constitution). Only a constitutional change, he stated, can create a sound framework for the future.

"When you look at the condition of university buildings or the obsolete IT equipment in large areas of the country, you realise what damage has already been done by the shortage of funding. This trend can only be halted with co-financing at federal level," said Hippler. He added that the fast-growing field of third-party-funded research is not in fact fully funded, with the result that it is vital to increase so-called overhead funding and sustain it in the long term.

** universities not including medicine; latest available figures*

*** 2010 prices*