

9 May 2014**HRK President's response to revised forecast for first-year student numbers: collapse threatens if no help is forthcoming from the federal government and the federal states**

Speaking in Karlsruhe, the President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) responded today to the new projection of first-year student numbers which was published yesterday by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK):

"These high figures for first-year students definitely do not represent a one-off peak but a high-level plateau. This warning from the HRK has now been underpinned by the KMK's new projection. To prevent drastic consequences for young people planning to study and a collapse of the higher education institutions, the federal states and the federal government must put an end to the ongoing dispute over their respective areas of responsibility and work together.

1. The ban on cooperation included in the coalition agreement must be implemented with immediate effect.
2. As the current Higher Education Pact II is not sufficient, it must be increased immediately.
3. Estimates for the Higher Education Pact III, which has been approved, must be set significantly higher.
4. The higher education institutions can only be financed sustainably if the federal government contributes to basic funding. Cuts in the federal states to compensate must be avoided.

The new KMK figures are much higher than previously forecast: the KMK had previously assumed that the numbers of first-year students would peak at just over 500,000 and then fall to around 450,000 by 2020. According to the new calculations, this figure will still be close to 500,000.

This means that for the total duration of the current Higher Education Pact II, more than 700,000 new students are expected rather than 625,000. The financial requirement will rise in line with this by €600 million by 2015 and by another billion by 2018.

Instead of 500,000 additional first-year students under the approved Higher Education Pact III, considerably more than 650,000 must be expected. This increases the financing required to 2020 by €3 billion, and by more than €1 billion up to 2023.

The government parties in the coalition agreement have acknowledged the key significance of the universities for the research system and the future of the country. "Politicians must act!"