

21 April 2015**Early career researchers: "Career planning needs reliable framework conditions"
HRK President calls for start-up funding from the federal government for new posts**

Last week, the federal government and the federal states in the Joint Science Conference (GWK) agreed the implementation of an initiative for early career researchers with the aim of improving their career prospects by making career paths more certain and easier to plan.

The President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Horst Hippler welcomed the initiative, and drew attention to the **Guidelines** agreed last year by the HRK's member universities. Amongst other things, the recommendation describes how the universities can offer early career researchers advice and concepts for personal development to help them with their careers. Speaking in Berlin, Horst Hippler also said that appropriate and long-term financing was essential to allow the universities to offer posts to qualified researchers.

"The universities have taken a step in the right direction with their university-specific Guidelines," explained Hippler. "The federal government and the federal states must now provide the funding for its implementation. Start-up financing from the government would be particularly helpful in order to support long-term funding by the federal states – from the BAföG funds that have just been freed up, for example."

He also pointed out that, however, in substantiating their project, the GWK should also consider that a professorship cannot be the only career goal for early career researchers. "Currently the ratio of doctoral degrees and vacant professorships is 20:1. Even besides professorship, universities, business and society also have a huge requirement for highly qualified scientists," the HRK President said emphatically.

The posts in the universities include permanent academic positions in research, on the teaching staff and in research administration, which represent attractive prospects to early career researchers. If additional professorships were to be created, the federal states would have to ensure that they contribute to a genuine improvement of the supervision ratio. Up to now, universities have been obliged to admit more students each time a new professorship is created. This means that the supervision ratio does not change.

The staffing situation in the higher education system in Germany is currently characterised by many researchers who have come into the system in fixed term posts as the result of funding programmes in recent years, in addition to the existing posts. The number of permanent posts and professorships has not grown proportionally in relation to the number of qualified early career researchers, which has greatly reduced their chances of remaining or gaining promotion in an academic post.

Further Information: "Guidelines for the advancement of early career researchers in the post-doctoral phase and for the development of academic career paths in addition to that of a professorship", recommendation by the 16th HRK General Meeting on 13 May 2014