

13 May 2015**HRK General Meeting: Core Theses and Concepts for Promoting Early Career Researchers**

The promotion of early career researchers is still on the agenda for the German Rectors' Conference (HRK). After adopting guidelines on this topic in May last year, the HRK General Meeting introduced core theses for promoting early career researchers in Kaiserslautern on Tuesday. They were presented with new initial concepts formulated by universities for the advancement of early career researchers and for the development of academic career paths in addition to that of a professorship.

The member universities are also aiming to see a revision in the Academic Fixed-Term Contract Law (Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz) with the adopted core theses. This revision would include doctoral positions financed by budgetary resources having a fixed term of no less than 24 months with an option to extend this period by 12 months. For the phase directly after the doctoral degree and the following two post-doc phases, contracts funded using the university's budget should usually be concluded for a period of at least 24 months and should be related to the researcher's career goals. If academics are employed in third-party funded positions, their employment term should be based on the duration of the project. Third-party funding bodies are being asked to review their approval procedures to allow the researchers' qualification goals to be achieved.

"The universities in the German Rectors' Conference have once again made a commitment to supporting their researchers' career plans through mentoring, coaching, and systematic staff development. The concepts presented show that the universities are setting themselves the task of promoting early career researchers," said HRK President Prof. Dr. Horst Hippler. "We hope that the adopted concepts are made generally accessible. They provide guidance for early career researchers and are proof of the attractiveness of a university as an employer."

In previous concepts by universities there were considerations concerning staffing structures and permanent positions, as well as models for financial support during bridging phases and independent research after doctoral training. Universities are providing a wide range of additional qualifications, in particular in non-university institutions. By making positions fixed-term, they are demonstrating that they can act responsibly and are striving to raise lecturers' awareness of their early career researchers and their responsibility as leaders, supervisors, and advisors.

"No concept will create a 'miraculous increase in the number of positions' which is currently called for by politicians and the public. This means that it is also our responsibility to point out that this increase is impossible without additional budgetary resources for permanent positions," added Hippler.

Text of the recommendation