

8 September 2014**HRK President Prof. Dr. Hippler calls for an increase in the programme allowance to finance research projects fully**

HRK President Professor Dr. Horst Hippler has today issued a strongly worded statement ahead of the negotiations between the federal government and the federal states on how the Higher Education Pact should be designed for the future. These negotiations will also include the future of the programme allowance, the third pillar included in the Higher Education Pact and a step towards full cost financing of research funding. Hippler stated unequivocally: "An excess of spending over income leads to ruin! Subsidising every research project from basic resources is damaging and necessitates the suspension of certain benefits in the mid-term. That is precisely the situation in which the universities find themselves! The government and the states must change this without delay and allow them the full costs of their research projects."

The background to the HRK President's statement is that the Bundesrechnungshof (Federal Audit Office) has stipulated that programme allowances will only be retained after 2015 if the federal states contribute to their financing. Up to now, the federal government has provided the money to cover the overhead costs of research projects on its own; should it not be possible for it and the federal states to agree on the financing issue, the programme allowance is at risk of being eliminated completely.

"Any research project will incur extra costs, for energy, administration and for premises in which to conduct the project, for example," said Hippler. "These 'overheads' require additional funding for which as a rule the universities have to reckon at least half as much again of the project costs. Currently, the universities are receiving a flat rate of 20% for overheads, which is too little anyway. As the HRK has repeatedly asked, the federal government and the federal states have to come to an agreement over increasing the overhead payment and not risk its abolition. Universities obtain funding for research projects because it is part of their mandate to access through research new knowledge that will benefit social and technological progress. Because third-party research funding has had a positive impact, for example in improving international visibility and competitiveness, more than half of university research is now commonly funded via this route. However, this increases pressure on the basic budget because up to now third party funding has not covered all the costs. If a university must cover the running costs of its research projects from its basic funding, then it will be increasingly less able to meet its responsibility to research and teaching. It is the universities with a major research capability and particularly those which have prevailed in the Excellence Initiative which are doomed to fail more quickly due to their success at attracting third party funding: a Pyrrhic victory that in the long term will damage more than it benefits. In the mid-term, the only possible strategy for the universities is to carry out fewer but fully financed projects, rather than a larger number of partially funded ones. In this respect, it makes little sense to participate in bids for third party funding if this exacerbates the haemorrhaging of basic resources.

I therefore urge the federal government and the federal states to come to an agreement immediately on covering all the costs of research projects in the universities and to approve the DFG's budget and an appropriate fixed rate for overhead costs without delay!"