

## Press Release

### **Students with disabilities: universities, trade unions, student unions and those affected call for national regulations**

- **The federal government is to reform integration assistance for disabled students**
- **The German Rectors' Conference, the Confederation of German Trade Unions, the German Disability Council and the German National Association for Student Affairs make a joint statement**
- **The most important demand is for services to be allocated consistently across the country and to be regulated in line with needs**
- **Universities are not responsible for the services**
- **Associations react to the report by federal government on the "Federal Integration Act (Bundesteilhabegesetz)"**

**Berlin, 24 July 2015.** In order for students with disabilities to have the same access to technical support, help from staff and mobility aids at all universities across Germany, these services must continue to be standardised and regulated under federal law. These demands are being made in a joint statement by the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), the Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB), the German Disability Council (DBR) and the German National Association for Student Affairs (DSW).

The reason for the common stance by these four associations is the report published by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) in mid-July 2015 discussing the future arrangement of so-called integration assistance for disabled people as part of a "Federal Integration Act".

"People with disabilities need individually tailored support throughout their entire educational pathway and professional life," said Elke Hannack, Deputy Chair of the DGB. "Anything other than this would adversely affect our inclusive education system and job market. Support must be extended to include all chosen education and qualification stages and must be regulated at national level."

Universities, trade unions, student unions and those personally affected vehemently oppose the option of shifting responsibility for the services provided for students with disabilities to the universities, which was also proposed in the BMAS report.

HRK Secretary-General Dr. Thomas Kathöfer said: "Support services for students with disabilities must be guaranteed on the basis of national regulations stipulated by the relevant competent institutions. A university's mission does not incorporate this in any way. In this respect, the demand is clear: do not transfer administration tasks outside of their remit to the universities."

"This could lead to a patchwork of solutions at federal-state level or even individual university solutions," said DSW Secretary-General Achim Meyer auf der Heyde with apprehension. "Regulations under federal law are the best way to enforce legal

rights and create consistent standards for service allocation irrespective of the financial resources available to individual federal states or even individual universities."

The associations also stipulate that the federal government's planned revision of integration assistance for disabled people needs to adapt the services to modern educational pathways and to remove existing restrictions on access to the services.

As Dr. Ilja Seifert, spokesperson for the German Disability Council explains: "Technical aids, assistance or sign language interpreters need to be made available to students in line with their needs and without red tape." Seifert added that under no circumstances should a deaf student be refused financing for a sign language interpreter because he or she has already completed vocational training.

7% of students have a disability. These students can apply for "integration assistance for disabled people" as per Book XII of the German Social Security Code (SGB XII) in order to access technical support, help from staff or mobility aids. This application is currently processed via the welfare authorities.

To view the joint statement by the HRK, DGB, DBR and DSW (available in German only), visit:

<https://www.studentenwerke.de/de/content/anforderungen-eine-reform-der-bisherigen>

For more information on the final report by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs on the work of the Federal Integration Act working group dated 14 July 2015, visit:

[http://www.gemeinsam-einfach-machen.de/BRK/DE/StdS/Bundesteilhabegesetz/Abschlussbericht/Abschlussbericht\\_node.html](http://www.gemeinsam-einfach-machen.de/BRK/DE/StdS/Bundesteilhabegesetz/Abschlussbericht/Abschlussbericht_node.html)

Media contacts:

At the German Rectors' Conference:

Susanne Schilden, Tel. +49 (0) 228 887 152, [presse@hrk.de](mailto:presse@hrk.de)

At the Confederation of German Trade Unions:

Jan Piegsa, Tel. +49 (0) 30 24060 216, Mobile +49 (0) 171 228 9996, [jan.piegsa@dgb.de](mailto:jan.piegsa@dgb.de)

At the German Disability Council:

Dr. Ilja Seifert, Tel. +49 (0) 30 280 95 4269, [dbr@abid-ev.de](mailto:dbr@abid-ev.de)

At the German National Association for Student Affairs:

Stefan Grob, Tel. +49 (0) 30 29 77 27 20, Mobile +49 (0) 163 29 77 272, [stefan.grob@studentenwerke.de](mailto:stefan.grob@studentenwerke.de)