

"Germany's Universities
in the World
and for the World"

**International Strategy of
the German Rectors'
Conference (HRK) –
Principles and Guidelines**

**Resolution by the
4th General Assembly
of 18 November 2008**

HRK Hochschulrektorenkonferenz

Die Stimme der Hochschulen

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Summary

The spread of global networks and knowledge systems is associated with growing uncertainties as well as opportunities, both for each society as well as for each individual. However, the opportunities provided by globalisation are essentially only open to holders of qualified knowledge and extensive competence. Hence, the education system is the key to enabling the individual as well as society to strike a balance between the opportunities and risks of globalisation.

While, in view of this background, the universities have a role to play as "agents of change", they are themselves simultaneously influenced by developments in the economy and politics. The flexibility and competitiveness of the national higher education systems will be decisive to whether they are able to keep pace with international developments while also being able to maintain the quality of research and teaching. Simply defining internationalisation as the mere exchange of students and teachers and participation in international research projects will not in itself suffice. Rather, it will be essential that each and every university, building on its mission and its profile, develops a comprehensive internationalisation strategy that aims to achieve the transnationality of the university as a whole.

The German Rectors' Conference (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz - HRK*) will fulfil its two responsibilities – namely to deliver operational services and to safeguard its members' interests – by advising and supporting its member higher education institutions in the process of internationalisation and by developing norms and standards in the course of the formation of a world higher education system that aim to secure a realistic opportunity for Germany's universities as they engage in the global competition. Hence, it will represent the interests of Germany's universities and will provide them with services in respect of the German universities' core internationalisation objectives.

1. Forming Global Citizens and Doing Research for Society: Responsibilities of the Universities

The education and training of the following generation at Germany's universities not only aims to make young people ready for their professions but also strives to qualify them so that they can meet the requirements of global citizenship. Along with the rationality of the methodology and the logic of the sciences in the choice of topics, **research** commits itself to the values of a civil society and to generating new knowledge for society on the basis of this knowledge. Hence, the universities of the future are universities in the world and for the world. This orientation of the university of the future is a consequence of the challenges that arise as a result of globalisation, including in the field of scientific teaching and research. They productively address these challenges of globalisation by grasping the opportunities that it offers and by simultaneously endeavouring to overcome and master the risks associated with this process, such as have been seen, for example, in the commercialisation of the tertiary sector to the detriment of those in the world who have been denied access to higher education.

2. The Challenges of Globalisation for Society

Globalisation is a process which, starting from the economic and political level, has far-reaching implications, including for academic teaching and research. Globalisation in the economic sector involves the internationalisation of markets with varying values, social standards and productivity rates. In the field of politics, globalisation is, just like in the field of economy, shaped by growing competition accompanied by processes of deregulation, privatisation and liberalisation. Due to the ever increasing interdependence of the markets, economic and political decisions often trigger global effects (crises and economic cycles). The spread of global networks and knowledge systems via new information media facilitates and accelerates the globalisation process. This acceleration then affects the innovation of economic and social change as well as market developments and conditions, together with increasing volatility. This is why globalisation is associated with massively increasing uncertainties, but also with newly forming opportunities, both for the individual society itself, as well as for the individual as such.

This development makes it necessary to deal with uncertainties, to restructure social conditions and the private living environment more often, and to show greater flexibility. It becomes increasingly difficult to make rational decisions, because the rapidly changing conditions mean that long-term decisions, such as starting a family, wanting children, a career or education, bear substantial risks for individuals that lead to the instability of partnership, family and everyday welfare and well-being.

Conversely, the clear opportunities that present themselves in the globalisation process lie in increased productivity, in higher living standards, including in societies beyond the west, and in improved employment conditions and opportunities. These have to be grasped. However, they only essentially present themselves to the holders of qualified knowledge and extensive competence and skills, including in non-specialised sectors. A risk of growing social injustice is associated with this, because the protection afforded by the family and the welfare state is dwindling, while those are full of opportunity who are able to deal comparatively better with the uncertainties as a result of their education and training, for example. While career entrants, mothers re-entering the labour market, and the poorly-trained tend to be left facing these uncertainties more as victims than as beneficiaries.

To strengthen the positive consequences of globalisation and to avert its negative consequences, social systems have institutional filters at their disposal, such as the employment system, the social system and, within certain bounds, also the family system. Particular importance attaches to the education system, above all in the field of higher education. It is, as it were, the key to enabling the individual, as well as society, to strike a balance between the risks and the opportunities of globalisation.

3. The Challenges of Globalisation for Universities

Developments in industry, the economy, politics, in communication and information technology, with their consequences, develop in the higher education system through

- extensive competition across and beyond national borders,
- phenomena of high cultural diversity as a result of educational migrants,
- demographically associated conflicts between the older and the younger generation over access to (academic/scientific) educational resources,
- the state's difficulties in financing the higher education system when access is broadened, and
- the users' expectations of the training they receive in the sense of marketable vocational and professional training.

Addressing and mastering these challenges is either easy or difficult for societies, as the case may be. A new divide will form between the educationally poor and educationally rich nations if, as expected, some 250 million students worldwide all crowd into the tertiary sector at one and the same time.

4. The Transnationality of Modern Universities as a Consequence of Globalisation

If the German higher education system attentively addresses the globalisation process and its implications, it will, bearing the frameworks that exist in Germany in mind, (demographic development, financing, "grand" tradition), have to develop its self-concept (or identity) in a globalised sense, and not only at so-called "Excellence Universities". A university that ignores the globalisation processes and the associated challenges, does not stand a chance in the medium term, and probably not even in the short term. This applies to the individual university as well as to the German higher education system as a whole.

A world higher education system will develop in the next few years, largely uncontrolled, naturally and organically, due to market mechanisms. Leaving this process to its own resources may mean that the outcome hardly corresponds at all with the ethical and political conceptions of the European or even the German higher education tradition. This is why a "delimitation" of Germany's universities cannot merely be restricted to meeting Bologna and Lisbon standards in teaching, to raising research funding in Brussels, or to expanding the international exchange of students or academics within the scope of national or European programmes. It would be a fundamental misunderstanding to conceive of "Internationalisation" in isolation as an – albeit important – element within the scope of a higher education strategy. What is important today is not internationality in such a superficial sense, but rather the transnationality of each and every university as a whole.

This means that a university must, in all the conceivable elements of its work and business, perceive of itself as a creative part of a world higher education system that is in the process of forming. It will be decisive that Germany's universities not only define their place in a world higher education system now, but that they also themselves become active and contribute responsibly to the definition of this system.

Internationalisation aims to achieve the transnationality of the university. This is why a sustainable and forward-looking university will define itself via its transnationality within the scope of the globalisation process.

Just as the profile and mission of each university differ in the light of an increasingly differentiated and diversified higher education system, a university's internationalisation strategy is also "tailor-made" and differentiated, embedded in the institution's Mission Statement. Building on the basis of a vision of internationalisation that is borne by all the higher education institutions, the key is for each university to develop its own internationalisation strategy that appropriately considers the specific features of that university as well as the regional and national context in which it is embedded.

As far as internationalisation within the scope of the globalisation process is concerned, Germany's universities have a set of instruments at their disposal that has already proven itself in the some international settings, a repertoire of measures that must be made use of. It can be taken as certain that the quality of German and foreign universities will, in the future, also be assessed in respect of how they achieve internationalisation standards like these.

5. The Tasks and Frameworks for Germany's Universities and the Opportunities and Risks of Globalisation

In their capacity as the world's "future workshops", the universities face a highly responsible task in the interplay between the opportunities and risks of globalisation. Germany's universities will not be able to keep pace with international developments without

- **Making the Higher Education System Autonomous of the State:** To the extent that the state is withdrawing from its responsibility for the financing of the tertiary sector, it loses its claim to and opportunity for controlling this.

It will be essential that the universities responsibly establish forms of governance in the universities that justify autonomy ranging from curriculum design through to HR recruitment and development.

- **Providing New Forms of Financing:** Unhindered access to the higher education system for large numbers of students cannot even be easily managed by educationally rich countries. It must be assumed that in the medium term only part of the costs for the higher education system can be covered by the state. This will inevitably lead to initiatives in the free market.

One of the tasks will be to counter "uncontrolled privatisation" by means of exemplary private public partnerships.

- **Promoting Enterprising Universities:** The chronic public underfunding provided by the state for the higher education system calls for new legal forms and structures and new enterprising models for the universities.

It will be essential to harmonise the university's academic role with its entrepreneurial control and management.

- **Introducing New Forms of Learning:** The great demand for information and instruction can result in high social selectivity that presents societies with the difficulty of not being able to produce enough adequately trained staff for their future.

This is why it will be essential to facilitate access to open centres of learning, to virtual organisational formats and to freely accessible courses and programmes (open educational resources).

- **Strengthening the Position of General Studies:** The great demand for scientific/academic education and training can retrospectively affect the school system all the way through to the higher levels to the detriment of elements of general

education. The political pressure on the state might imply neglecting the humanities and social sciences in the funding to the benefit of engineering and natural sciences, thereby jeopardising the normative, cultural foundations and traditions of societies.

It will be essential that the universities themselves give their sustained support to these subjects.

- **Delivering Cross-disciplinary Skills and Competence:** Students not only expect an academically high quality education and training, but also the delivery of key qualifications, such as an innovative capacity, an entrepreneurial spirit and teambuilding and teamworking skills.

It will be essential that the universities do not reject this delivery of competence and skill because they believe it to be "below their level", but rather subject-specifically integrate this into their curricula, for only they are able to deliver these competencies in the appropriate quality.

- **Establishing the Freedom of Research as a Basis for the Modern Knowledge Society:** The knowledge society calls for broadly pursued basic research that is alone able to open up new scientific horizons and to prepare young people for the associated challenges. Research also aims to promote knowledge-based companies from which it, in return, draws valuable ideas and suggestions.

It will be essential to protect the autonomy of researchers so that they are free in their choice of research topics and methods. In turn, this privilege commits the researchers to appropriately place their knowledge at the disposal of society.

Furthermore, the universities will have to respond to the consequences of the globalisation of teaching, learning and research. Meeting and mastering the coming challenges that face the national higher education systems will not be possible without

- **Differentiating the Higher Education System:** The globalisation process will inevitably lead to a high degree of diversity and variety in the types of higher education institutions found worldwide.

It will not only be essential to make the quality assessable, but must also assign a key role within this system to those institutions that are not internationally active. In particular, this will involve meeting regional values, interests and needs that will inevitably develop as regionalisation processes.

- **Setting Educational Standards in the Higher Education System:** The opportunity to operate freely in the markets of the tertiary sector bears the substantial risk of intransparent quality differences arising that the users of the system will only become aware of too late or not at all.

It will be essential to establish a world-scale quality assurance system that secures educational standards all the way through to the actual classroom.

- **Promoting the Comparability of Degrees and Qualifications:** The mobility expectations of consumers and academic staff will exert substantial pressure on the national higher education systems to converge. The Europeanisation of the higher education area with the implied standardisation will have to be followed very quickly by an analogous global process.
In so doing, it will be essential that the European elements of the higher education system as well as its transferrable traditions are safeguarded in the globalisation process.
- **Dealing with Uncertainty:** The globalisation process with its risks and opportunities calls for a fundamental mental change of attitude by (global) citizens towards their education processes.
It will be essential to enable them to deal productively with uncertainties and to derive opportunities from the changes that are appropriate to their educational status.
- **Solving Questions of Educational Migration:** Even under conditions of easier access to information and means of transport, a concentration of universities in western societies creates social selectivity on a global scale.
It will be essential that established universities facilitate access to the education and training they offer, including in developing countries and countries in transition, by establishing spin-offs.
- **Assuming International Responsibility:** By cooperating with foreign partner universities, Germany's higher education institutions strengthen these centres of research, education and training for specialists and professionals and so promote development in other parts of the world.
It will be essential in these activities that the interests and goals of all participating higher education institutions are harmonised to create a win-win situation.
- **Exporting Higher Education:** The obligation to create access to higher education for as much of the world as possible calls for new forms of provision worldwide: non-collaborative arrangements, branch campuses, off-shore institutions, flying faculty, as well as collaborative arrangements extending from the recognition of external courses without case-by-case verification via the authorisation of externally-developed degree programmes (franchising) through to twinning (double degree programmes).
It will be essential that such diverse and varied forms of courses and programmes are also accepted at German universities, besides the traditional concepts.
- **Dealing with the Impact of Teaching, Learning and Research in the Intercultural Context:** The delivery and exchange of knowledge must be adapted in line with the growing interculturality within which these take place. Globalisation in science, research and academia calls for greater flexibility vis-à-vis diverging expectations in respect of the

collaboration between students and/or scientists and researchers at a university.

It will be essential that teachers and learners are interculturally sensitised with the help of specific continuing training programmes and are made aware of the fact that teaching, learning and research in intercultural contexts makes high demands on all involved.

6. The HRK's Tasks in the Globalisation of the Higher Education System

Acting on behalf of its member institutions, the German Rectors' Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz – HRK) takes on the task of representing its members' interests and of providing appropriate services. Within the scope of representing the members' interests, the German Rectors' Conference will, wherever decisions are made (e.g. German education policy, European education policy, partner organisations, pressure groups, ...) pursue a strategy of exerting specifically targeted influence on the formation of a world higher education system and, in so doing, will, in the medium term, also provide its member universities with a realistic chance of securing themselves a place in this system.

Germany's universities will only be able to take their place in the globalisation process when they have also been strategically equipped for this process. This includes the fact that they must initiate measures and establish structures that enable them to be successful in the coming competition. The HRK is developing such a set of instruments, is maintaining and upgrading this, is providing advisory and consulting services as well as training courses for the universities and is drawing up new strategies, where necessary and appropriate, together with other internationally active partner organisations.

In line with the universities' mission to educate and train their students as global citizens and to perform research for the continuing development and advancement of societies (cf. 1.) the HRK will fulfil its two tasks, namely of **representing the interests of its members** and of **providing these with operational services**. In the formation of a world higher education system, in the development of national higher education concepts, and in the provision of concrete support, the HRK will develop norms and standards, will implement these, and so will ensure that a world higher education system gives its participating higher education institutions a fair chance, that it trains the coming generation for a socially just world and that it, simultaneously, acts competitively and with a commitment to quality.

The HRK supports the Internationalisation Goals of Germany's Universities						
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The Universities' Internationalisation Goals		Key Tasks for the HRK International Department (C+B4)				
		Having an international voice / Asserting German interests	Political frameworks / Internationalisation know-how	Giving studies and teaching an even stronger international focus	Networking international research even more strongly	Presenting Germany's universities worldwide as attractive centres of studies and research
IZ 1	Asserting the interests of Germany's universities in the development of international standards					
IZ 2	Shaping the European Higher Education Area					
IZ 3	Shaping the European Research Area					
IZ 4	Representing the German universities' interests at key strategic locations abroad and establishing German study programmes und universities abroad					
IZ 5	Improving the mobility and interculturality of students, researchers and scientists					
IZ 6	Publicising opportunities for doing studies, doctorates or research at Germany's universities					
IZ 7	Providing professional advice and support for foreign students, doctoral candidates and researchers					
IZ 8	Making internationality transparent, benchmarking and comparing it, and setting university-internal incentives for the internationalisation process					
IZ 9	Managing internationalisation professionally at executive level and developing an institution-own internationalisation strategy					
IZ 10	Making foreign universities into strong partners of Germany's universities and taking on international responsibility					