

9 September 2024**Sustainability at Universities audit: HRK launches pilot phase with four universities**

Sustainable development is increasingly taking centre stage in the strategic orientation of universities. They are setting up sustainability competence centres, appointing sustainability officers and committing to sustainability in their mission statements.

In this context, the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) now launches the pilot phase for the Sustainability at Universities audit. The new advisory service is intended to systematically support universities in the further development of their sustainability strategies, goals and activities. The approach focuses on the institution as a whole and takes into account the specific profiles, paths of transformation and individual structural as well as regional characteristics of the universities to ensure customised, independent and voluntary advice.

Chemnitz University of Technology, Fachhochschule Dortmund – University of Applied Sciences and Arts, the University of Hamburg and Philipps-Universität Marburg were selected for the pilot phase. These universities will be supported in the further development of their sustainability strategies and activities for one year, starting in autumn 2024. More than 60 HRK member universities had previously applied to take part in the piloting phase of the audit. The lessons learned during the pilot phase will be incorporated into the further development of the audit. From 2026 on, the advisory service will be gradually opened up to all HRK member universities.

"Universities are society's workshops for the future", explained Prof Dr Dorit Schumann, HRK Vice-President for Transfer and Sustainability, in Berlin today. "In this respect, they develop and test innovative solutions for the major challenges facing society in all their areas of activity. This also applies to the implementation of sustainability goals in teaching and learning, research, transfer, operations and infrastructure. The audit will systematically support the universities in this process. The high level of interest in participating in the pilot phase is impressive proof of our universities' commitment to a 'culture of sustainability'." The Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Dr. Jens Brandenburg, explained: "Universities are facing up to their responsibility for ecological, social and economic sustainability. They are innovation drivers, places where solutions for a sustainable future are developed. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research is supporting the German Rectors' Conference in developing an audit with the Sustainability in Science initiative. This enables universities to strengthen their strategies for sustainable development in a targeted manner and expand their innovative strength.

I am very pleased about the start of the pilot phase. After all, universities should remain drivers of innovation and progress."

Background

The Sustainability at Universities audit is being developed as part of the Transformation Pathways for Sustainable Universities (traNHSform) project by the German Rectors' Conference (HRK). The project is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as part of the Sustainability in Science initiative until March 2026.

www.hrk.de/tranhsform (Information in German)