

Press release

Environmental protection and sustainability: future issues for all university curricula

At the Global University Leaders Council Hamburg, university leaders from all over the world have adopted recommendations on the commitment of universities to global sustainability and against climate change.

Hamburg, 04 June 2021.

All students should be educated about the challenges of climate change and sustainability issues in their studies. This is one of the goals agreed upon by 45 university leaders from 27 countries at the Global University Leaders Council Hamburg (GUC). At the forum held every two years by the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), the Körber-Stiftung and the Universität Hamburg, university leaders come together to discuss global challenges facing international higher education systems.

The theme of this year's meeting, which was held virtually, was the contribution of universities to tackling climate change and making society more sustainable. In the final declaration, the university leaders commit their institutions to taking a holistic approach to climate protection and sustainability. In it, they stressed the importance of global solidarity. Despite scientific competition and, at times, competing national priorities, it is important to strengthen opportunities for joint action by the institutions.

"Universities around the world are in a key position to help address the consequences of climate change," says **HRK President Prof Dr Peter-André Alt**, explaining one of the GUC's outcomes. "They influence the actions of future society by responding to the issues of environmental protection and sustainability, which are emphatically advocated by the younger generation in particular, and basing their actions on these issues." In this respect, the participants of the GUC called for aspects of environmental protection and sustainability to be integrated into the curricula of all study programmes.

"Universities must be able to act freely so that they can unleash their poten-

tial to support climate impact management through research and innovation, as well as in studying and teaching," says **Prof Dr Dr h.c. Dieter Lenzen, President of the Universität Hamburg**. He went on to explain that sufficient and reliable public funding clearly earmarked for the sustainability of universities as institutions is essential for this. "Universities must not be overly dependent on third-party funding that is subordinate to particular goals, such as those of industry," says Lenzen.

"Not least because of their central position in public discourse, universities are indispensable when it comes to successfully tackling global climate change and are key to finding solutions," says **Tatjana König, Member of the Executive Board of the Körber-Stiftung**. "Through their close connection to their environment, universities support evidence-based exchange in society," says König.

Materials

- [Hamburg Declaration](#) "Facing the Grand Challenges of Climate Change and Sustainability" (PDF, 4 pages)
- [Study](#) "Universities facing Climate Change and Sustainability" (PDF, 155 pages)
- [German summary](#) of the study (PDF, 11 pages)

Further information www.guc-hamburg.de

About the Global University Leaders Council Hamburg

The Global University Leaders Council Hamburg brings together university leaders from major universities around the world in Hamburg. The Council is a joint initiative of the German Rectors' Conference, the Körber-Stiftung and the Universität Hamburg. Its central objective is to actively shape the process of global higher education development.

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