

Strong, Autonomous and International: New Tasks for the Universities in the 21st Century

Following a joint conference "Higher Education Reform in Japan and Germany: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead" on 28 February 2006, the Japan Committee of Universities for International Exchange (JACUIE) and the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) held a joint higher education policy forum to exchange information and opinions concerning recent developments in higher education in both countries. In conclusion, they agreed on the following statement:

Universities - as centres of research and teaching - have a central role to play in the development of a knowledge society. This must be reflected in the plan of action that national governments adopt. The current higher education reforms in both countries, Japan and Germany, will shape the profile of research, teaching and learning in both countries for years to come. At the same time, expectations from business and the society towards universities are rising. JACUIE and HRK consider it of paramount importance that the funding and legal frameworks support, not hinder universities in fulfilling their teaching and research missions.

Autonomy of higher education institutions, a changing relationship between universities and government, quality assurance and internationalization are central issues for Japanese and German institutions of higher education.

Autonomy is a key instrument for the sustainable and successful development of institutions of higher education, taking into account institutional and personal responsibility and diversity. Output-oriented **quality management** systems, within the direct responsibility of the individual institutions, should be implemented to assure transparency and accountability towards all stakeholders, thereby guaranteeing the qualification of graduates. Higher education institutions should be free to define their individual strategy, mission and profile, depending on the individual discipline and the various levels of training and research.

Universities act as international institutions, based on the principle of transmitting and exchanging ideas and knowledge at a local, regional, national and international level. **Internationalization** is targeted towards interaction (students, scientists, graduates) across borders. Geographical and sector mobility at all levels – from undergraduate students to graduate students, from young researchers to senior scientists – is the fundamental requirement for the generation, transfer, sharing and dissemination of knowledge and technological development and the pathway towards academic excellence. Flexible funding instruments, open to all disciplines, should be further developed on both sides to support mobility.

At the same time, **cultural and linguistic diversity** in higher education is a central element of university culture, both within and between countries. The decision on the language of instruction depends on the strategy of the institution. Cultural diversity should be sustained and mobility be supported by bilateral recognition rather than by global accreditation.

The Japan Committee of Universities for International Exchange and the German Rectors' Conference agree to continue their dialogue to follow up on issues of common interest and to support mobility of students and researchers between both countries.

Tokyo, 1 March 2006