

Statement of the LandesASTenKonferenz Hamburg on the Hamburg Aid Fund for Students

***As the Landesastenkonferenz Hamburg, we currently see massive social and financial problems affecting students due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many students live under precarious conditions and are therefore particularly affected by the crisis. We call upon the City of Hamburg and especially the financial authorities and the BWFGB to limit the financial impact on students and to specifically address their needs in the new edition of the Hamburg Aid Fund for Students.***

The Hamburg Aid Fund for Students in Financial Need as a result of the pandemic was initiated for the first time in April 2020 by the Department of Science, Research, Equality and Districts. With the expiration of the federal interim aid for students in September 2020, a new edition of the aid fund will be launched, from which students will be able to apply for 400€ per month from October 28th 2020.

Generally, we appreciate the prompt action of the BWFGB both with regard to the original initiation of the aid fund and the new edition of the fund from October 2020. Nevertheless, we see the following aspects concerning the distribution criteria and loan conditions as particularly problematic:

We criticize the fact that the monthly amount provided by the aid fund is still a loan. The financial situation of Hamburg students will not improve to such an extent, even with the abating of the pandemic and its effects, that they will be able to manage an additional financial burden through the repayment rates. Even if a return to normal employment is possible, the repayment is an unacceptable burden for students. We demand that the loan is converted into a full grant.

Furthermore, the monthly amount of 400€ is disproportionate to the average costs of living of 1000€ that students have to cope with in Hamburg. We therefore demand an increase of the amount up to 850€.

When examining the applications, students have to prove that they suffer corona-related losses. In addition, the current account balance of the students will be consulted. The application will only be approved if the account balance is below 300€. We consider this to be an absolute impertinence. It denies students the right to have minimal savings to cover the cost of living for the coming months. We demand that the limit for savings is removed or raised to at least 1000€. The Hamburg loan in its current form even falls short of the original demands of the science policy spokespersons of the governing parties.

In total, an account balance of less than 300€ and a loan amount of 400€ does not even cover the cost of living for one month. Students in financial need without BAföG entitlement cannot receive any further social benefits and are therefore forced to

discontinue their studies. Considering this background, the Hamburg aid fund completely ignores the reality of life and immediate need of the students.

Finally, we would like to point out that the social security of students in immediate need is basically the responsibility of the Federal Minister of Education and Research, Anja Karliczek. Opening up BAföG therefore remains an irreplaceable step.

Until then, at least the BWFGB and the Hamburg Financial Authority should take the students' state of emergency seriously and adjust their aid program accordingly.

***Landesastenkonzferenz (LAK) Hamburg***

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Hamburg University of Applied Sciences  
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