

Making a virtue out of necessity.

The case of Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences

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The Hessian HE-Pact 2026-2031

Political background and negotiation process

Late 2024: state HEIs asked to transfer €474 Mio. in reserves to the state budget

July 2025: new pact 2026-2031 with at least €180 Mio. real-term cuts

Deficit forecast: up to €1 billion over six years – 10% of the personnel budget

14 HEIs signed the pact under protest – biting the bullet in the name of predictability! (CHE)



The shock wave for Frankfurt

A university built for growth in line with political objectives until now

Germany's 4th largest UAS:

15,000+ students

- 60 additional professorships established 2021-25
- Rented office and learning spaces, growing facility and digital infrastructure costs
- All funded from the lump-sum budget

Budget Cuts:
University budgets face an initial €30 million reduction in 2026.

Uncovered Pay Raises: Collective wage increases for staff are only partially covered by the state, leaving universities to pay the rest.

Growth Limits: State funding increases are capped (up to 2.5% in 2027), which falls short of actual cost growth.

No Inflation Help: Rising material and operating costs driven by inflation receive no state compensation.

Quo Vadis Frankfurt UAS

Goals towards a strategy for resilience



Adapting the university's structures to the changed financial conditions



Ensuring high-quality performance in all areas of the university, particularly in academic studies and teaching, research, and knowledge transfer



Strategic and visionary direction for the university's future

Know your numbers

- 80% of ressources go to labour costs -> no way around personnel
- But: civil servants and state employees cannot be dismissed
- February 2025 by resolution of the Presidential Board: suspension of professorship appointments and hiring freeze in administration

Consequence: no new or vacant professorship fillable during the pact period



Track the money

- All non-labour expenses under review
- Working groups across the institution
- Renegotiated contracts for campus security and cleaning – considerably reduced scope of services
- Suspended rented office space; administrative units to move to the main campus
- Introducing rigorous desk-sharing of offices



Communicate with the community

- Transparent, direct, clear and intentional messaging is the key
- The governing bodies actively engaged
- New communication tools:
 - „The Wednesday Talk“ – monthly online town hall
 - Concise and thorough FAQ document

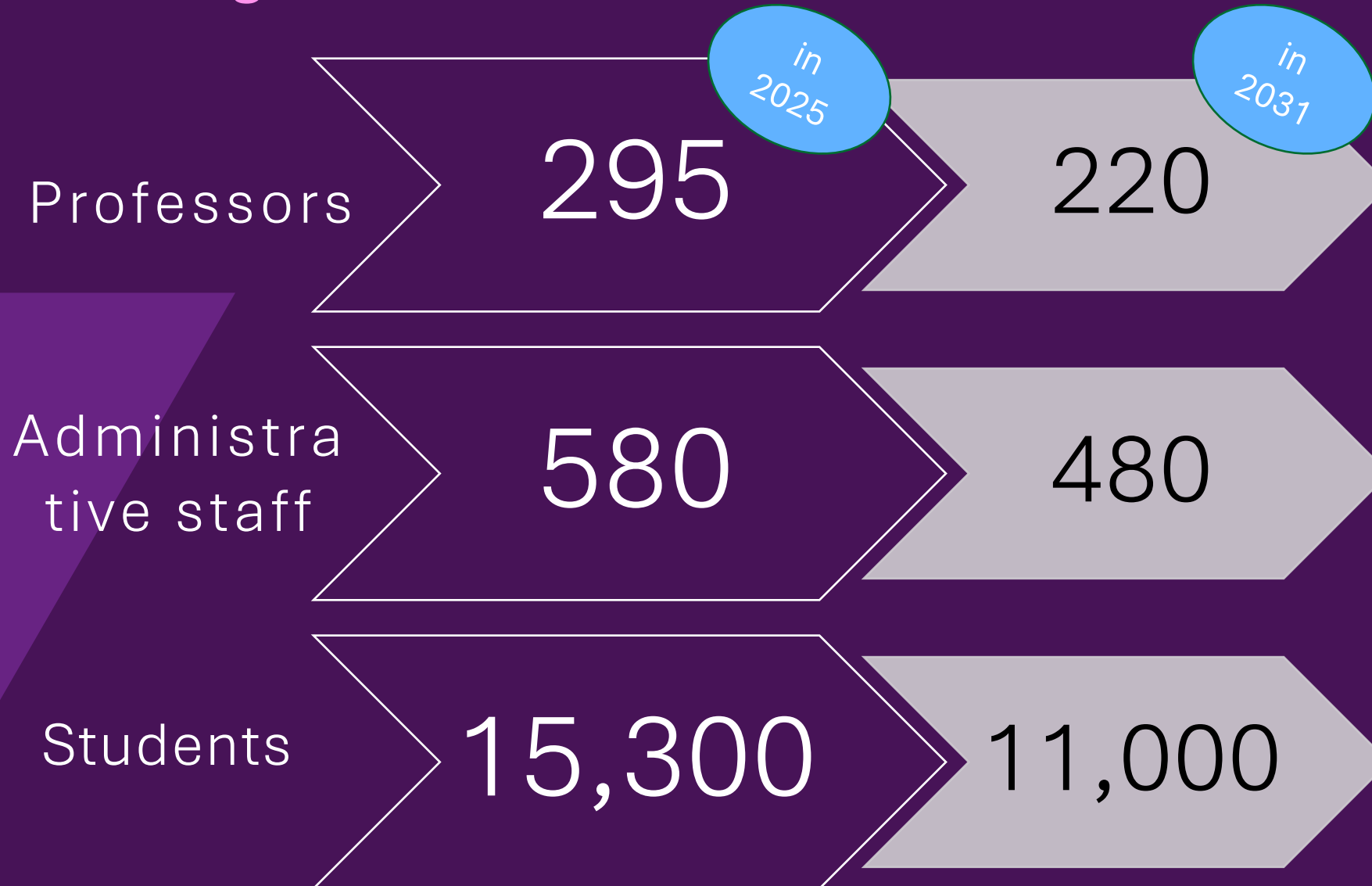


Plan for the future and look beyond the short-term cuts

- The quality of teaching, research and high-knowledge transfer is and stays a non-negotiable
- Initiating an overarching strategy process focussing on
 - Evaluating the entire student programme portfolio
 - Developing scenarios for adapting to the declining teaching capacity



Less teaching and administrative staff -> Less students



2026-2031: Zukunft Hochschule

Act and lead with strength and unity

Strong, adaptable leadership – with an understanding of what is and isn't necessary and the courage to make difficult decisions.

Deciding where to cut resources or deprioritize a field is painful – **Inaction causes far greater damage**

An informed, strategic, albeit imperfect, approach beats paralysis

Let's keep trying.

Five lessons from Frankfurt



Know your numbers



Track the money



Communicate with the community



Plan for the future and look beyond the short-term cuts



Act and lead with strength and unity



Thank you - I look forward to your questions.

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