

To:
The press,
the student body of the University of Erfurt,
the members and affiliates of the University of Erfurt,
the general public

Sign:
SVDate:
11/06/2020

Press release

Condemn sexualized violence anywhere and anytime!

Student representation demands appeal in the disciplinary proceeding on sexual assault by professor

Erfurt. After the verdict of the Meiningen Administrative Court was announced on Tuesday, the student body of the University of Erfurt is in turmoil. A professor at the University of Erfurt has been on leave of absence since 2017 due to accusations of sexual harassment. Now he is to retain his civil servant status and return to the university. It causes incomprehension and anger that the professor has only been sentenced to a reduction in salary and thus also retains his professorship at the university until further notice. The Student Council (StuRa), as the elected representative of the students, discussed the topic at its public meeting on Wednesday. For the first time, the president of the university, Prof. Dr. Walter Bauer-Wabnegg, was invited to a StuRa meeting. The Student Council as a result of the meeting calls on the responsible ministry to appeal in the disciplinary proceeding against the professor!

A professor had promised female students better grades for sexual favors in return. After the affected students had contacted the university's equal opportunities office, the university informed the responsible Ministry of Economics, Science and Digital Society (TMWWDG), whereupon disciplinary proceedings were initiated in 2017. The professor has been suspended since then.

The press release of the Meiningen Administrative Court on the ruling states that the professor can now return to the university and will only have to forego 20 percent of his salary for a period of 30 months. His civil servant status will not be affected, the only possibility now remaining is an appeal by the TMWWDG. The University of Erfurt, as the place of employment, but not the employer of the professor, as well as the student body is in a position of powerlessness.

The Student Council is deeply disturbed by the verdict and cannot comprehend the reasoning given in the press release of the Administrative Court. The StuRa is of the opinion that in this case there can be no talk of a mere "search for sexual contacts", as the court's press release states: Students are always in a relationship of dependency on the teachers who grade them. Professors are standing above the students not only in the social structure of the university, but also in committees and decision-making structures. The hurdle to actually defend oneself in such a case is very high. Even at a

"university of short distances" like the University of Erfurt, this dependency relationship is not overridden.

The Student Council therefore considers it inappropriate to speak here of attempts at rapprochement as "conceivable behavior", as the court does - in the opinion of the StuRa it is irrelevant whether students are "subjects of protection" or "merely" adult students. Dependencies know no age limit. The administrative court argues, among other things, that the fine is sufficient and that the reputation of the civil service is preserved. "We would like to respond to this: The reputation and above all the confidence in this professor are lastingly destroyed on the students' side! We consider it absolutely unacceptable that the professor in question should be reinstated in teaching and that students should thereby be put back into a relationship of dependence on him. The verdict of the Meiningen Administrative Court shows that such behavior is still tolerated," emphasizes Marieke Petersen, board member and anti-discrimination officer of the StuRa. The publicity of the 2017 incident was one of the main reasons for founding the StuRa's anti-discrimination office.

On Wednesday evening, the president of the university was for the first time invited to a StuRa meeting to discuss further joint action and the positions within the university. His visit means a lot to the committee - the cohesion within the university is strong and the promised support of the president shows that the university as a whole is aware of its responsibility for the well-being of its members. "We are pleased about the promise of the university management to examine possibilities to keep the professor away from teaching, should the ministry not see any chance of success in an appeal proceeding," emphasizes board member Jonas Hofmann. "We would like to join the university on this point and urge the ministry to thoroughly examine this possibility," the StuRa member continued. In addition to the call to the ministry, the Student Council also addresses the student body, the entire university and society with the plea to show unrestricted and universal solidarity with those affected by sexism and sexual violence and not to trivialize such incidents lightly. Sexualized violence must be reported and condemned everywhere and at all times until a change in society as a whole towards an open and truly equal community has taken place.

Information

The university offers various contact points to help defend against discrimination and (sexual) harassment. The contact points and possible steps are listed in the *directive on protection against discrimination, harassment and violence*. The Student Council would like to point out its [Anti-Discrimination Office](#), which is one such contact point. The department offers an opportunity to communicate and to advise on further steps. It is networked with all relevant offices inside and outside the university and contributes to an open and emancipatory campus.