

**18 April 2018****"Fundamental misunderstanding":****HRK President on the DIHK higher education policy guidelines**

"The idea that the objective of a study programme is to seamlessly integrate graduates into operations in the workplace reveals a fundamental misunderstanding." In Berlin today, the President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Professor Horst Hippler, voiced clear criticism of the higher education policy guidelines recently published by the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK).

"Preparation for the job market is an important function of university courses," Hippler said. "But it is not the only one. The transmission of specialist knowledge and methodology, personal development and the capacity for civic engagement – all these things are part of a study programme. We re-affirmed this tenet together with the social partners as recently as 2016. Those who are reinterpreting preparation for employment during study as vocational training are breaking with a consensus that has held sway in Germany for decades."

"Universities must equip their graduates to deal with diffuse and complex sets of problems and to cope well with new situations – in short, to master uncertainty," Hippler added. "This meets the demands of today's labour market, where new challenges are emerging in ever shorter cycles. The chambers are not serving themselves or their businesses well if they ignore this situation and demand that study programmes be oriented to the short-term requirements of the job market. Preparation for specific operational procedures in businesses must be provided there."

Hippler emphasised the value of vocational and higher education, each with its own strengths and profiles. He said this was the reason why the HRK opposes the creation of new "hybrid" formats, such as those named in the Federal Government's coalition agreement, and now also being called for by the DIHK. "We emphatically support the demand contained in the guidelines to provide young people with comprehensive career guidance and to inform them about the equal value of vocational education and higher education. Permeability between the sectors in both directions is also vital and worthy of support. However, we do not need new hybrid forms above and beyond the existing dual work study programmes, which are yet to be optimised."