

**12 April 2016****HRK President Comments on Recommendations by the Stifterverband:  
A Useful Contribution to the Discussion on Transparency Regulations**

The President of the German Rectors' Conference has said that the recommendations by the Stifterverband on transparency in the collaboration between universities and businesses are a "useful contribution to the ongoing discussion between universities, businesses and policy makers". Last week, the Stifterverband proposed measures to ensure a balance between the public's entitlement to information, research freedom and business interests.

Professor Hippler said: "This proposal is worthy of discussion. It addresses key issues and offers the right approach. The creation of an orientation framework based on shared principles regarding the many different aspects of collaboration is a useful objective."

This would include, he said, the recommendation to develop national guidelines under which the universities would have autonomy in honouring their obligation to inform. In his view, it was also correct that special organisational units in the universities and businesses could be helpful in developing a professional approach to managing collaboration.

HRK President Hippler continued: "Furthermore, the suggestion of regularly documenting financial and editorial connections to companies in publications and reviews is a useful one.

"Where theses for Bachelor and Master's degrees and dissertations are concerned, it is essential that the universities always give priority to scientific rules. Even if these papers are written in a corporate environment, the supervisors and examiners at the universities must agree in advance to the subject, its treatment and any provisions of confidentiality that apply. The businesses must also be bound by these agreements."

All in all, a dialogue between everyone involved could develop which could give this important topic new impetus, said Professor Hippler. "However, we must bear two things in mind: firstly, the universities have already developed a number of instruments in their collaborations with businesses, such as cooperation agreements, which have proven to be a suitable basis for joint activities; any new discussion concerning transparency must be founded on what has already been achieved. Secondly, the justifiable question about the transparency of the collaboration must not overshadow the question of the framework conditions. For example, important aspects of funding the work of the universities, for commissioned research for example, have not yet been satisfactorily resolved. If the collaboration models change, the conditions governing documentation and transparency and the expectations made of them will also be different. Both discussions must therefore continue."