

Resolution by the 27th
General Assembly of the
German Rectors'
Conference (HRK)
on 19 November 2019
in Hamburg

Amendment of the Vocational Training Act

HRK German Rectors' Conference

The Voice of the Universities

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The General Assembly and Senate of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) have clearly spoken out several times against the planned new vocational training terms 'Bachelor Professional' and 'Master Professional', in agreement with the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany and a number of associations in the areas of business, academia and society. The universities consider the following factors to be crucial:

- The new terms are unsuitable in practice. The titles of qualifications must be transparent and unambiguous; the proposed terms are exactly the opposite because completely different educational pathways are given almost identical titles. The new terms would create confusion in professional orientation for young people, and in job advertisements and in the course of staff recruitment by businesses. This also notably applies in the European context because the titles Bachelor and Master are clearly perceived as university degrees and are awarded only by higher education institutions in Europe.
- The amendment that has been tabled is directed against the achievements of the Bologna Process. The introduction of 'Bachelor Professional' and 'Master Professional' would endanger one of the most important European reform projects of recent decades. The use of these terms undermines the significant joint efforts of the Federal Government, the federal states and universities to establish a transferable system accepted throughout Europe for comparable academic qualifications aimed at fostering exchange and mobility.
- The proposed amendment infringes the distribution of powers in the federal system of Germany. The Bachelor and Master titles constitute higher education qualification degrees that fall within the power of the federal states. A legal opinion obtained by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany places special emphasis on this conclusion.

German universities take the view that deliberately blurring the difference between higher education and vocational training and thus permanently weakening the profile of both academic education and vocational training is a completely wrong approach.

The universities therefore welcome the recommendation made by the Bundestag's Committee on Cultural Affairs to the Bundesrat on 11 November 2019 to call upon the Conciliation Committee to formulate uniform and autonomous qualification terms together with social partners and universities which, on the one hand, convey the equal value of vocational and academic qualifications and, on the other, avoid confusion with academic qualifications.

The universities urgently appeal to the Prime Ministers of the federal states to follow this recommendation and are prepared to collaborate on the constructive solution proposed by the Committee on Cultural Affairs.