



11 July 2016

**Joint declaration by the HRK, BDA and DGB:
Further improving employability of graduates**

Universities, trade unions and employers consider graduate employability to be a key topic for the future of our country. Together with other stakeholders, representatives of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA) and the Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB) have now come to an agreement on what this means and which skills and key qualifications graduates must obtain to succeed in Labour Market 4.0. In a joint declaration, they emphasise their commitment to fulfilling their respective duties in dialogue with all partners concerned:

HRK Vice-President Prof. Dr. Holger Burckhart says: "By exchanging ideas with professional practice, universities refine their courses on an ongoing basis and provide support to students in building up scientific skills relevant to their future professions. Scientific problem-solving skills are and will remain the central characteristic of academic education. We do not train students for a specific place of work. But in the same way that we provide young people with a general university entrance qualification in the form of the "Abitur", we wish to give them a "general qualification for the workplace" in the form of Bachelor and Master degrees, in other words the scientific abilities needed to pursue careers at and outside of universities."

Dr. Gerhard F. Braun, Vice-President of the BDA, notes: "Half of all graduates from universities of applied sciences and two-thirds of all university graduates are dissatisfied with the practical relevance of their studies and the way the universities prepares them for employment. For this reason, we wish to further reinforce cooperation between universities and businesses. Similarly, digitalisation of the working world necessitates closer cooperation by both sides. Theory and practice are not mutually exclusive during studies but complement each other. Practical relevance – just as much as relevance to research – is an essential element of studying, prepares students for their professional life and can reduce the drop-out rate."

Elke Hannack, Deputy Chair of the DGB, adds: "It is not least the rapid technological developments that are driving the changes in the demands of the workplace. It is up to universities to support students in acquiring the skills they require to be able to cope with these changes, actively shape the working world and assume responsibility in the employment system and society in general. A course of studies should always open up a wide range of potential fields of employment. It must not be tailored too closely to individual businesses or specific positions. In this broader sense, a course of studies is also vocational training of a scientific nature."

To the joint declaration

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