

24 June 2014**Higher education institutions demand: do not make work placements more difficult to obtain****The HRK Senate on the planned minimum wage**

The draft legislation on an across-the-board statutory minimum wage must not put useful work placements for students and university graduates at risk. The Senate of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) therefore called today in Bonn for changes to the draft. It is urging the Bundestag to exclude work placements with a duration of up to three months from the minimum wage legislation, even if they are not an obligatory part of the course. This should also apply to work placements undertaken before the course of study starts and which are taken into account when admitting students to a course. Furthermore, there should be an exception in the legislation for students from foreign universities who are undertake a work placement as part of an international exchange programme in Germany.

"The higher education institutions fear that with the plans for tighter regulation, it could become much more difficult to find useful work placements," explained HRK President Prof. Dr. Horst Hippler after the meeting of the Senate. "Students need the option of familiarising themselves with the labour market with work placements, of finding out where their interests lie and of acquiring their first experiences in the world of work. Particularly for arts students, this must go beyond mandatory work placements because the range of careers is particularly wide.

Work placements can make it much easier to get started in a career. The universities must fear that the minimum wage will reduce the range of companies, associations, cultural facilities etc offering work placements significantly. Many employers are not prepared to nor are able to bear these costs. A duration of six weeks is not sufficiently helpful to either side, employer and student, or career beginner. We do not want a "work placement generation" but the tried and tested options for acquiring the first experiences of work must not be put out of reach.

Finally, the legislation must not put international exchanges at risk. It is doubtful that the current plans for legislation would be legal under European law. They would furthermore be an obstacle to international exchanges - in both directions, because it would become more difficult to find work placements for German students in other countries."

The draft of the "stronger autonomy for tariff-setting legislation" only allows for exceptions for work placements as a mandatory part of the course or for less than six weeks for familiarisation before a course starts or when they accompany a university education.

Text of the resolution