



Statement by the Max Planck Society on the use and recognition of academic titles acquired abroad in the Federal Republic of Germany:

The Max Planck Society's international orientation is essential for safeguarding its scientific excellence and competitiveness. A substantial proportion of staff members at the Max Planck Institutes come from abroad: about one quarter of all Institute directors and scientific staff are individuals of non-German nationality. Among Ph.D. students, this figure is even higher, amounting to roughly 50%. Considering this, it is of paramount importance to ensure that top scientists are offered excellent research and working conditions in Germany. It is equally important to ensure non-bureaucratic recognition of the scientific achievements and titles they have acquired in their respective homelands.

In recent weeks, there has been intense public debate in Germany regarding the use of academic titles acquired from universities abroad. This was in response to the fact that criminal charges had been brought against individual Scientific Members of the Max Planck Society on suspicion of the unauthorized use of academic titles. These cases have now been largely dismissed. No charges were brought forward with regard to § 132a of the German Criminal Code. Such proceedings, however, have raised public awareness of this issue in Germany.

In Germany, just as in all other states of the world, the legal provisions on the use of academic degrees from foreign universities are specifically regulated. However, due to the federal structures of the German education system, the variety of official procedures is quite complex. In general, the legal regulations of that Federal State apply in which the individual in question resides (State Law of Higher Education). In addition, there are resolutions by the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, agreements and treaties entered into by the Federal Republic of Germany with other states regarding equivalences in the field of university education, as well as bilateral declarations with various states which partially overlap in their scope of application.

As the law stands, there are currently three possible ways for the use of foreign doctoral titles in Germany. Depending on the state in which the doctorate was awarded, degree holders may use the abbreviated German title "Dr.", the abbreviated German title "Dr." with an addendum designating its origin, or "only" the original degree (for example, Ph.D.), again with an addendum designating its origin. This may lead to a situation where specific scientists, although possessing comparable qualifications, may not use the same titles.

In addition, in the case of scientists who have obtained their titles under United States law, some may use the "Dr." title, others that of "Ph.D.", depending on the university that awarded the doctorate.

After the Max Planck Society once again addressed issue of the recognition of foreign titles and degrees in Germany, the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs swiftly and non-bureaucratically agreed that holders of PhDs ("Doctor of Philosophy") conferred

by universities from the so-called "Carnegie" list of U.S. institutions, may use the German "Dr." title without an addendum designating its origin and subject, instead of having to use the generally accepted abbreviation permitted in the country of origin. The Conference already announced consideration of an analogous recognition for individuals who acquired their doctoral degrees from institutions in Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, and Russia. Currently, degree holders with titles from universities in the above states may use the German title "Dr.", but with designation of origin.

Through such swift actions on the part of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, it was possible to significantly simplify regulations with regard to the use of foreign titles in Germany. However, a total abolition of all such regulations cannot be expected in Germany or in any other state.