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**Abstract**

The German and Italian Higher Education Systems (henceforth HES) are similar in many ways: both systems belong to the 'continental' model, where the main actors are the state and the corporation of the academics. Between the two systems, however, there lies a big difference: the German higher education system is characterized by a federal governance structure, so that a huge part of the activities governing the HES are decentralized from the state to the regions, the Länders. The Italian HES is, on the contrary, traditionally centralized. This difference is at the center of this paper. This paper describes the ongoing decentralization process within the German HES, looks into the interactions among the main stakeholders in the system, and speculates on potential lessons to be

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given to the Italian system. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

**Signature**

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