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Abstract

Since the UOG (= Universitätsorganisationsgesetz, i.e. the University Organisations and Studies Act) of 1993 the Austrian universities have been increasingly seen to remodel themselves as independent 'educational enterprises'. This progress based on the deregulation and decentralization of university procedural parameters reached its temporary culmination with the transformation of the universities into entities with complete independent legal status which took place in accordance with the UG (= Universitätsgesetz, i.e. Universities Act) of 2002. The abiding function of the state as a protector and furthermore, a financer of the universities has led to a relationship between the state, society and the universities based on academic achievement and responsibility. It must be added that the legislative intention of creating independent sites of academic research and teaching have increasingly been forced to take economic principles of commercial enterprise into consideration. The last step, up until now, in the intended all embracing 'cultural change' within the universities came into being with the University Organisation Amendment Act of 2009 which contains a radical amendment to the legal

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situation which was valid until then. This change in the basic guidelines has played an essential part in the change of emphasis within the executive bodies of the universities, in a tendentious weakening of the democratically elected senate, an intensification of direct and indirect influence on the business of the university as well as to the relativization of the traditionally free university entrance in Austria. Developments that do not always seem to create an appropriate balance between academic freedom, state responsibility and social requirements.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)