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Papers of the National Associations of E.C.C.O. - Ensuring high quality in safeguarding Cultural Heritage. The vital importance of protecting the title and regulating the profession of Conservation-Restoration in Europe



ΣΧΟΛΟΣ ΣΥΝΤΗΡΗΤΩΝ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΤΗΤΩΝ  
& ΕΡΓΩΝ ΤΕΧΝΗΣ ΤΡΙΤΟΒΑΘΜΙΑΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ

ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΩΝ/ΗΜΕΡΙΔΩΝ

ACAWA-GR CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Papers of the National Associations of E.C.C.O.

### Ensuring high quality in safeguarding Cultural Heritage

The vital importance of protecting the title  
and regulating the profession of  
Conservation-Restoration in Europe

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### On the regulation of the Conservation-Restoration profession in Germany

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# On the regulation of the Conservation-Restoration profession in Germany

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## ABSTRACT

The VDR was founded in 2001. The main concerns of the VDR are the protection and proper preservation of art and cultural assets while respecting their material, art-historical and aesthetic significance. The restorer`s association is both a trade association and a professional association as well. It thus stands for the professional interests of its members in all disciplines throughout Germany. As a professional association, we are concerned with raising awareness of the profession of "restorer" in politics and the public, drawing a clear picture of the profession and informing the public about the need for responsible cultural property protection.

We are committed to the recognition of the achievements of restorers with scientific training – nationally and internationally through our membership in E.C.C.O.

The VDR Presidium and the Executive Board endeavour to protect the professional title „Restaurator“ and „Restauratorin“ in Germany.

We fight for better pay for salaried and self-employed freelancers, who were and still are, fixed on 50-year-old remuneration models for far too long and in some cases still are. Successes in the struggle for higher groupings in the last three years give reason to hope that steady improvements will be achieved for the employed restorers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The German Association of Conservator-Restorers - VDR for short - currently represents the professional and technical interests of around 3.000 conservator-restorers of all disciplines in Germany, from which are almost 2.000 full members.

VDR | a specialists-pool.

VDR Verband der Restauratoren

VDR-Präsidium



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Präsident



**DIPL.-REST. GISELA GULBINS**  
Vizepräsidentin und



**REST. DIRK STURMFELS**  
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**DIPL.-REST. NADINE THIEL**  
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Archaeological heritage  
ethnographic objects  
Photography/Film/Audiovisual Heritage  
Painting  
stained glass  
Graphics, archive and library material  
industrial heritage  
heritage of modernity  
handcraft objects  
Leather and related materials

Metal  
furniture and wooden objects  
modern and contemporary art  
musical instruments  
polychrome sculptures  
preventive conservation  
stone preservation  
Textile  
Theory and history of conservation and restoration  
Mural painting and architectural surfaces

Image 1; The VDR – a specialists pool, board and specialist groups (photos: 1-4 VDR, 5 A. Berger)



The VDR is also the central contact partner for politics, science, teaching and the public in all questions of conservation and restoration.

**VDR | reliable partner.**

**VDR** Verband der Restauratoren



Image 4 The VDR – a reliable partner in society and among professionals

Well – let’s go ahead starting some important questions about the situation in Germany concerning the regulation of the profession:

## 2. IS THE PROFESSION OF CONSERVATION-RESTORATION REGULATED IN YOUR COUNTRY?

The profession of conservator-restorers is not regulated by law in Germany - except for 2 out of a total of 16 federal states: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern since 1999 and Sachsen-Anhalt since 2011.

Nevertheless, this is a huge problem - currently with no vision of a solution. The fact that solid training opportunities exist seems contradictory to this.

### **Academic education:**

Studying conservation-restoration in Germany started 50 years ago. In 2018 the VDR celebrated its anniversary in Berlin.

Graduates acquire the academic degrees “Bachelor of Arts”, “Master of Arts” or “Diploma” which is equivalent to a consecutive Master. Still, a few years ago, 7 universities offered a 5-year university degree. As a result of the lack of young applicants and fewer students in the fields of conservation-restoration, two university locations have already been closed or restructured and one specialization area has been rationalized away. There is also a tendency for more and more students to finish their bachelor’s degree without a master’s upgrade.

Another reality in Germany is ...

### **Training based on craftsmanship:**

Due to high demand since the mid-1980s there has been a state-recognized qualification course for master craftsmen to become “restorers in the crafts” in the field of monument preservation. It takes place as additional professional training for the master

craftsmen at so-called “Academies”. The final certificate here is called: “Restorer in the crafts”. A name suffix designates the specialization – for instance “master craftsman-restorer in the painting trade” or “master craftsman-restorer in carpentry trade” et cetera. There are a total of 19 specializations in the handicraft sector. Here, too, there have been closures of training centres during the recent 10 years.

In general, one could say: The training of academics and state-recognized “restorers in crafts” ensures a certain protection of the profession through the qualifications acquired. Beyond this academic and technical training, however, everyone in Germany can in principle call themselves a “restorer” and work as such, so that highly qualified and non-qualified actors can be found side by side in the field of work.



Image 5 (left): restorers in crafts / carpenders (photo: S. Taubert)

Image 6 (right): academic restorer-conservators / spec. mural painting (photo: S. Fundel)

### 3. IS THE PROFESSIONAL TITLE “CONSERVATOR-RESTORER” PROTECTED IN YOUR COUNTRY?

In Germany, the academic title of conservator-restorer is “Diplom-Restaurator” or “Bachelor of Arts (BA)” and “Master of Arts (MA)”. These are protected academic titles in Germany.

“Restaurator”, means “conservator-restorer”, on the other hand, is still not a legally protected professional title.

We are very happy that professional title protection by law is now existing in two German federal states since 1999. Further advances in other federal states have been made in the meantime - but so far without success.

#### **4. IS CONSERVATION-RESTORATION MENTIONED IN THE LAW FOR THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE?**

Fußnoten sollten In Germany there is not a single law for the protection of monuments and cultural assets. Instead of this, there are a total of 16 laws for the protection of cultural property, because cultural sovereignty lies with each of the 16 Federal states of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Conservation-restoration is not explicitly taken into account in individual state laws. Rather, the law only regulates in general that the monument owner has to ensure the preservation and “professional repair, salvage and documentation” of the monument. The legislature does not provide any further specifications.

#### **5. WHAT ARE THE STEPS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SAFEGUARDING CULTURAL HERITAGE AND WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CONSERVATION-RESTORATION TO ACCOMPLISH THIS IN YOUR COUNTRY?**

In general, the laws on the protection of cultural assets in Germany provide a high degree of protection for cultural heritage. We can be proud of that. Of course, you can always do everything better, regulate and qualify more and once more. Conservator-restorers can make an essential contribution to this:

With their expertise they help to influence important decisions on the preservation of cultural assets. With their knowledge and experience they can ensure that the right means and methods are used to protect cultural assets. Finally, they are able to work together with other scientific disciplines on an interdisciplinary basis and can reinforce a holistic view and assessment.

However, conservator-restorers are also able to work in the field of planning and consulting. Here they are going to become important partners in the preservation of monuments, in museum planning or in disaster management concerning cultural objects and sites.

#### **6. WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR REGULATING THE PROFESSION**

An important task during the coming years will be to convince politicians that the protection of the professional title “conservator-restorer” should not only serve to privilege a single professional group within society. Rather, a law to protect the title of conservator-restorer should ensure and improve the professional quality of the preservation of cultural assets for society. Certification, qualification and regulation are important instruments for that.

Further efforts are needed to strengthen the image of conservator-restorers in society. This includes equating academically trained conservator-restorers with other scientific disciplines, such as historians, art historians, natural and social scientists, representatives of the engineering professions and cultural managers.

This goes hand in hand with the performance-related tariff classification and payment in the public sector as well as appropriate remuneration for the self-employed conservator-restorers.

So far – so good. I hope my remarks gave some impressions and deeper information about the special situation in Germany.

**VDR | together to the goal.**

**VDR** Verband  
der Restauratoren

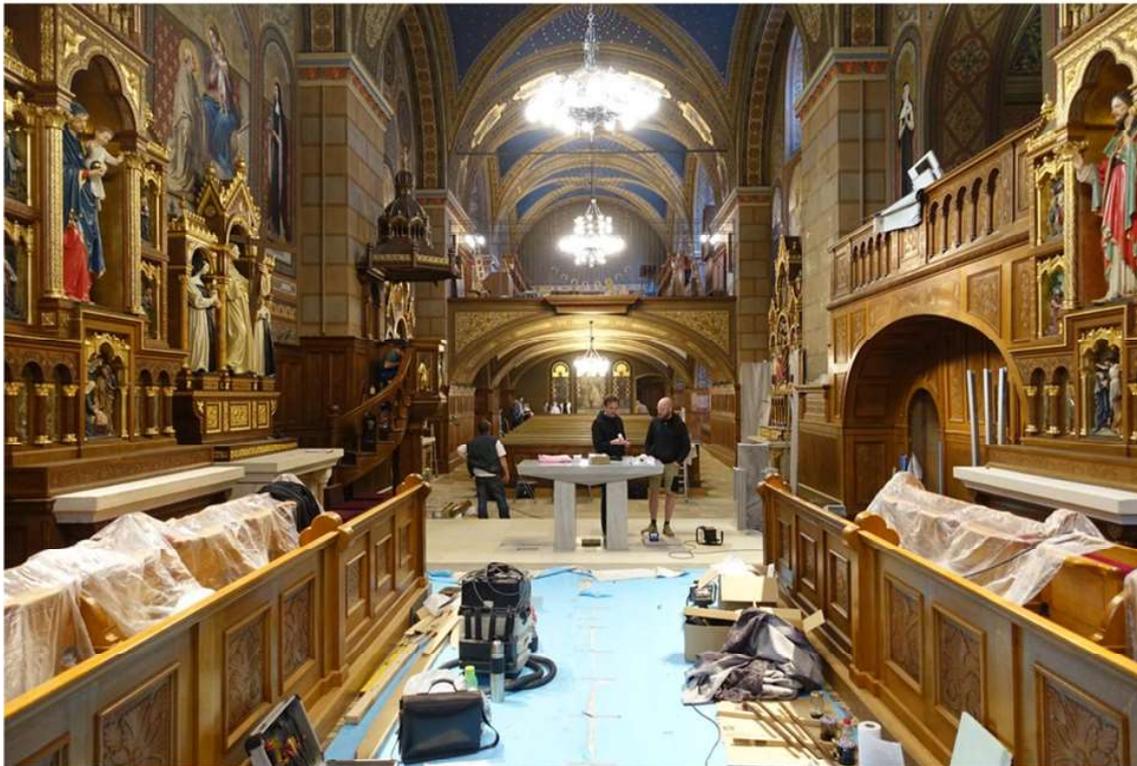


Image 8: VDR – Reaching the goal together (photo: S. Taubert)