

Honorary Doctorate

The degree Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*)

Katharina Renate Susanne Dorothee
Boele-Woelki

Prof Katharina Boele-Woelki completed her undergraduate law studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, in 1979, and obtained her doctoral degree from the same university in 1982.

Prof Boele-Woelki was a Professor at the University of Utrecht until 2015, whereafter she became Dean of Bucerius Law School in Hamburg, the top-ranked Law Faculty in Germany.

Prof Boele-Woelki is internationally recognised as a leading scholarly authority in Comparative Law, Family Law and Private International Law.

She is the first woman to be elected President of the prestigious International Academy of Comparative Law (IACL). The Academy, which was founded in The Hague in 1924, is built on the firm belief that the comparative study of legal systems is key to the harmonisation, unification and development of laws and legal institutions. Furthermore, it is crucial to the peaceful and efficient regulation of human movement, commercial interaction, environmental issues, sustainability goals and human rights across vast areas of municipal and international law.

In her inaugural presidential address, Prof Boele-Woelki declared her mission to reach out to and advance the study of comparative law in South Africa and the greater African continent. To this end, the University of Pretoria has been nominated to host the 2020 IACL Congress on *Diversity and Plurality in Law*.

Prof Boele-Woelki also established the Commission on European Family Law (CEFL) in 2001. The Commission has consistently produced high-quality research on family law matters in a rapidly changing social environment. Its most recent publication on “*De facto unions*” responds to empirical data from a vast number of countries, showing the high incidence of children born into informal unions. The principles formulated by the Commission set an international benchmark for law reform, also in South Africa.

True to her altruistic and self-effacing nature, Prof Boele-Woelki’s focus is intent on making a positive and enduring contribution to the comparative study of different legal systems on the African continent and beyond. She has decided to invest a significant amount of time and effort in Africa, as well as making available her considerable scholarly expertise and international research networks to the University of Pretoria.