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## “Wissenschaft weltoffen 2024”

Since 2001, the DAAD has been analysing data on the internationalisation of studies, research and higher education from Germany as well as from particularly relevant countries and regions such as the USA, the United Kingdom or Asia. The current edition presents the most important results and graphics.

These include figures on international students in Germany, data on mobility behaviour, an overview of students' countries of origin and host countries as well as developments in the field of doctorates. Special data analyses shed light on the status quo and trends at universities and research institutes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study integrates international data from OECD and UNESCO as well as national data from the Federal Statistical Office in Germany. In combination with other indicators, it provides a valid basis for long-term analyses.

### PUBLICATION DETAILS

#### Publisher

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service  
Kennedyallee 50, D-53175 Bonn



The DAAD is an association of German universities and their student bodies. It is institutionally funded by the Federal Foreign Office.

Strategic Planning – S1

Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und  
Wissenschaftsforschung GmbH  
German Centre for Higher Education Research and  
Science Studies  
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#### Translation

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#### Overall production

wbv Publikation  
A division of wbv Media GmbH & Co. KG,  
Postfach 10 06 33, D-33506 Bielefeld

ISBN: 978-3-7639-7804-5

DOI: 10.3278/9783763978045

DOI: 10.3278/7004002wew002

Order no. 7004002wew

#### Photo credits

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#### Data preparation

Configuration and evaluation of the *Wissenschaft weltoffen* web information system:  
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#### Bibliographical information of the German National Library

The German National Library catalogues this publication in the German National Bibliography; detailed bibliographical data are available online at [https://www.dnb.de/EN/Home/home\\_node.html](https://www.dnb.de/EN/Home/home_node.html).

SPONSORED BY



Federal Ministry  
of Education  
and Research



Federal Foreign Office

The project on which this brochure is based and the publication thereof were funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Federal Foreign Office.

## A guest article by Susanne Jaudzims and Axel Oberschelp



**Dr. Susanne Jaudzims** is the research director of the InWiDeHo project. She works at the German Centre for Research on Higher Education and Science Studies (DZHW) in Hannover, Research Area Governance in Higher Education and Science.



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International academics experience the transition from the postdoc phase to professorship at German universities very differently. The project's findings show that international academics regard universities' support as vital when transitioning to permanent employment as professors and, in most cases, also rate it positively. First and foremost, they single out the graduate organisations and research funding administrations as beneficial for their career advancement. They also report excellent feedback on the international offices at universities. For example, they point out that welcome centres assist foreign candidates every step of the way, from applying for visas to promptly obtaining work permits and resolving any communication problems related to the German language. The support provided by academic supervisors during and after the doctoral phase is also rated positively. Not only do they advise international academics on the German science system, career aspirations and career paths, they also identify opportunities for obtaining third-party funding. Services provided by non-university institutions such as the DAAD, the German Research Foundation and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation with regard to financial support, free language courses and general information on qualifications and career paths are also lauded.

The language barrier represents the greatest obstacle for international academics. This barrier is evident in everyday work settings, when carrying out teaching duties or participating in academic self-administration. Particularly in these areas, universities only accommodate international colleagues to a lesser extent and German language skills are required to be able to carry out these tasks in full. In comparison, research is scarcely restricted due to communication difficulties as English is often used as the working language. On the other hand, language barriers play a significant role in application and appointment processes, for example, where important documents are not available in several languages or when appointment lectures and trial sessions must be held in German. According to the respondents, one of the difficulties in learning the language is because the language courses offered by universities tend not to be tailored to the specific needs of academics at an advanced stage in their career.

The special structures of the higher education and science system in Germany (e.g. habilitation, the *Lehrstuhlprinzip* or faculty chair principle, the ban on internal appointments, the low number of

## Database

The research project "International Academics at German Universities: From Postdoc to Professorship (InWiDeHo)" was carried out by the DZHW in collaboration with the DAAD and funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The project focused on the incentives and obstacles encountered by young researchers from abroad in the transition from postdoc to professorship at German universities. In the framework of this exploratory study in 2022/23, intensive interviews were conducted with twelve international postdocs and nine newly appointed international professors. Respondents come from all regions of the world and are engaged in the fields of natural sciences, economics, social sciences and engineering. In addition, six members of university management were interviewed and three group discussions held with university staff.

permanent posts available) are challenging for all junior researchers. For academics from non-EU countries, the situation is exacerbated by the fact that they can lose their right of residence in Germany when a fixed-term employment contract expires.

Respondents also cite further obstacles: the pressure to adapt to a different culture and sub-conscious discriminatory behaviour lead to a feeling of "not belonging". To some extent, there is also a lack of support and multicultural skills on the part of universities, for example in internal administrative processes (when appointing international academics) or recognising qualifications that were obtained abroad. Many of the international academics interviewed would like more information on career opportunities in Germany. In some cases, appointment procedures are regarded as non-transparent and incomprehensible with regard to the qualification profiles and structure of professorship posts. For example, it is often unclear what qualification certificates applicants require, what tasks the post involves and what remuneration is offered.

Respondents evaluate the non-academic environment in Germany very differently. Positive ratings in terms of infrastructure, personal environment and quality of life must be weighed against negative

DS7 Feedback from international academics and researchers on universities' internal environment

|                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Positive ratings                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Information and advisory services</b> (graduate organisations, international offices)</li> <li>• <b>Research support</b> (academic environment, research infrastructure and facilities, mentoring programmes)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                              |
| Both positive and negative ratings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dual-career couples</b> (service centres, support for partner's career)</li> <li>• <b>Family-friendly services</b> (child care, flexible working time models)</li> <li>• <b>Social and academic integration</b> (social environment, integration in social networks, involvement and participation in academic self-administration boards)</li> </ul> |
| Negative ratings                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Non-transparent appointment procedure</b> (vacancy notices, review process, appointment negotiations)</li> <li>• <b>Language in university life</b> (absence of multilingualism in teaching, inadequate cultural awareness of university staff, language courses are often not tailored to researchers' specific needs)</li> </ul>                    |

Source: DAAD/DZHW, InWiDeHo project

DS8 Feedback from international academics and researchers on the non-academic environment

|                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Positive ratings                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructure</b> (social, education and health system, transport, security)</li> <li>• <b>Personal environment</b> (family and partner, friendships, relationships with colleagues)</li> <li>• <b>Quality of life</b> (cultural and leisure activities, remuneration, reputation)</li> </ul> |
| Both positive and negative ratings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hospitality/xenophobia</b> (culture of welcome vs. experienced discrimination, pressure to integrate, racism)</li> <li>• <b>Other non-academic areas</b> (e.g. bureaucracy and administration, equal opportunities and diversity)</li> </ul>                                                   |
| Negative ratings                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accommodation</b> (availability, discrimination experienced)</li> <li>• <b>Integration and language in everyday life</b> (language barriers, negative sentiments)</li> <li>• <b>Immigration office</b> (discrimination, no service orientation and inadequate cultural awareness)</li> </ul>   |

Source: DAAD/DZHW, InWiDeHo project

assessments in other areas. Child care and the education system in Germany are particularly commended. On the other hand, discrimination is reported when looking for accommodation, in dealings with the immigration office and in everyday situations. This is particularly true for people from countries of the Global South. As far as hospitality in Germany is concerned, responses are ambivalent.

Experiences of international academics

“ For example, I received help in preparing my scholarship (funding programme for junior researchers). Moreover, there is a department at the university that assists with preparation and checks whether your application is in order. It's very useful, very constructive, and I think that's part of establishing yourself as a professor. So this is an enormous help.”  
(Postdoc, natural science)

“ [...] Even if you have communication problems, there are always people around you who can help. For example, we have the International Office at the university and they are actually pretty accommodating for those postdocs and academics who don't speak German. [...] In general, I think most services are on offer and quite easy to find.”  
(Postdoc, engineering)

“ My professor was extremely supportive and he wanted me to become a professor, [...] he gave me tips and so on. [...] The thing was, I never expected to get this job. To be honest, I mainly applied to gain experience. [...] I think he handled everything extremely well. Very correctly, very transparently. And he helped me tremendously. All things considered, I would say he helped me a great deal.”  
(Newly appointed professor, economics and social sciences)

“ I understand German but I don't speak it very well. I can understand some texts, more or less, but this is very specific jargon. Virtually all the documents were in German. And I felt like I couldn't ask for them in English. [...] I mean, the dean, the head of department, these people speak English but not everyone in the dean's office speaks English.”  
(Newly appointed professor, economics and social sciences)

From the perspective of university management, internationalising professorships is paramount. Overall, they believe that Germany has an extremely high standing as a centre of science. However, they also highlight critical aspects that are impeding the internationalisation of teaching staff. University locations with international profiles are few and far between; moreover, communication of the system's high potential could be improved. Criticism also centres on the career prospects of international academics after completing their doctorate and the definition of professorships. Specifically, the requirement to collaborate in academic self-administration and the enormous teaching obligations in Germany by international standards reduce the attractiveness of university chairs for international academics.