WR

WISSENSCHAFTSRAT

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Recommendations on the Internationalisation of Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences

Executive Summary

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The internationalisation of German research and higher education institutions, understood as a process of increasing cross-border activities and cooperation, has advanced considerably in the past years. Causes are global developments on the one hand and changes within the German system of research and higher education on the other hand, in particular growing expectations placed on scientific institutions with regard to profile-building. The increasing formation of institutional profiles is associated with a rising prevalence of internationalisation strategies as well.

Simultaneously, worldwide tendencies to curtail academic freedom and to impede cross-border exchange and international cooperation become apparent. These tendencies include restrictions on scientific freedom in countries outside Europe and within, a rising scepticism towards science or politically inconvenient research results, and, in some places, cuts in public research funding.

In a global system of research and higher education with a rising number of active states and academic institutions, it is a challenge for German scientific and political actors to point out and maintain the strengths of the German system of research and higher education with its federal structure, its diverse higher education landscape as well as a variety of different career paths. Internationalisation of science always has a political dimension. Special attention should be given to partners in newly arising research societies, who, to some extent, pursue different goals with respect to internationalisation of science than Germany does, and also to countries restricting scientific freedom.

The Wissenschaftsrat (WR, German Council of Science and Humanities) develops the following recommendations predominantly from a systemic perspective, focussing on institutions:

On **Internationalisation of science and higher education institutions under new global political circumstances**, the WR recommends,

_ that political actors together with scientific institutions and funding bodies develop suitable instruments for improving the external perception and knowledge of the German system of research and higher education abroad.

The existing German science representations abroad, such as the Deutsche Wissenschafts- und Innovationshäuser (DWIH, German Centres for Research and Innovation) and the Transnational Education initiatives (TNE initiatives) offered by German universities and universities of applied sciences should be used more intensively to extend networking activities and raise awareness of the entire German research and higher education landscape, specifically of the universities of applied sciences;

_ to create a central advisory service, e. g. at the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (DAAD, German Academic Exchange Service) or the Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK, German Rectors' Conference), jointly informing and advising scientific institutions on the design of international cooperation agreements and on risks specific to research and higher education and research-relevant legal matters, in particular with regard to new partner states;

_ that the Auswärtige Amt (AA, Federal Foreign Office), the DAAD and the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ, Association for International Cooperation) approach scientific institutions proactively with consulting and training opportunities and, in conjunction with the HRK, systematically inform them and their members on topics relevant to science diplomacy, on security policy issues and risks in partner countries;

_ that scientific institutions and their members should consider the long-term systemic and institutional effects when devising their cooperation with old and new partners;

_ that German higher education institutions and research institutions assert their own values and quality standards in international cooperation and conclude clear agreements with their partners, e. g. with regard to the freedom of science, the publication of research results, freedom of speech as well as the principles of scientific integrity and of protection of intellectual property. To this end, they should have access to an advisory support service at the DAAD or the HRK (see above).

The European Union (EU) has grown into a significant mainstay for the internationalisation of German science. The European Research Area (ERA) and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) stand for the freedom of science as well as for the autonomy and democratic nature of higher education institutions. Moreover, close collaboration within the EU and a high level of performance of all EU member states are the prerequisites for the continued competitiveness of the European system of research and higher education worldwide. To make even better use of the opportunities of **European cooperation** and to uphold the joint values and achievements, the WR issues the following recommendations:

_ The federal government and the *Länder* (federal states) should engage in deepening European cooperation in science and science policy to enhance the coordination of national strategies in foreign science policy and to expand joint European initiatives.

_ The federal government and the *Länder* should contribute to eliminating the remaining legal, administrative and fiscal constraints on scientific cooperation, mobility and international professional biographies in Europe.

_ The WR welcomes national and European funding programmes which can help create attractive research environments in European countries whose systems of research and higher education are less performing or less well funded. Target regions could be alerted more specifically to the existing option of allocating resources from the European Structural Funds to projects in the area of research and higher education institutions. Moreover, the EU Research Framework Programme could be used more intensively to jointly implement European research and infrastructure projects with emerging and developing countries.

_ Higher education institutions with a specifically European profile are a very suitable instrument for students and faculty to experience Europe. A broad spectrum ranging from bi-national or international study programmes to joint faculties with European partner institutions to bi-national cooperation in teaching and research is conceivable.

_ The WR presents the idea of European Universities and European Universities of Applied Sciences, to which higher education institutions of any kind can direct their development. These European Universities are characterised by their European orientation, which can apply to any performance dimension (teaching, research, transfer or infrastructure). Each institution may define its own focus and implement the European profile gradually. A European University should maintain strategic partnerships with other European Universities and it can build a network of European Universities with them. It should offer its students a scientific inquiry into the history and culture of Europe in a global context and the students should be able to learn at least two foreign languages and acquire in-depth knowledge of two European countries. Moreover, stays abroad should be an integral part of every study programme. The WR's recommendations take a broad approach as European integration can be promoted particularly well through these European Universities and European Universities of Applied Sciences.

The idea of a European University (of Applied Sciences) is *one* development option for German higher education institutions. However, other forms of international profile-building with a different regional focuses are also conceivable.

The manifold representations and activities of German academic institutions abroad are well suited to promoting the German higher education and research landscape and to connect individual institutions with partners abroad. The WR welcomes that the AA and the German science organisations are currently elaborating a concept on how to promote academic exchange by building additional representations, e. g. DWIH, in selected partner countries and the potential effects of these activities. To **use the representations and activities of German science abroad more effectively**, the WR recommends the following measures, among others:

_ Other countries and academic institutions abroad show a particular interest in the German model of universities of applied sciences. Therefore, the strengths of this type of higher education institution should be made more well-known internationally. To this end, central advisory capacities should be established, e. g. at the DAAD.

_ German universities and universities of applied sciences should increase their efforts to create TNE initiatives in interested countries. Current and future TNE programmes should be tied in with existing national strategies and they should maintain and protect fundamental European values, such as the freedom of science, autonomy for higher education institutions, freedom of expression, responsibility, tolerance and solidarity.

_ The federal government, the *Länder* and the German funding bodies should aim at longer-term support and financing of successful TNE initiatives.

The scientific institutions have continually advanced their internationalisation in the past decades using a large variety of instruments, institutions and programmes tried and tested over the years. By now they have achieved a considerable level of internationalisation. However, many institutions are still in the process of integrating the existing individual measures into an overarching and comprehensive concept. The WR's recommendations to those institutions planning to further enhance their international orientation are as follows:

_ The universities and universities of applies sciences should make use of the international wealth and experience as well as the cultural diversity of their students and their faculty to establish themselves partly or comprehensively as international institutions.

_ They should base their concepts on existing country- and regional-level strategies, adapt them to new global developments and support them with a long-term and sustainable financing concept.

All universities and universities of applied sciences are called upon to reflect the question of their internationalisation. They can choose certain elements of internationalisation as especially significant or they can take a conscious decision

against a broad internationalisation and focus on regional ties or bi-national partnerships instead.

Institutions embracing a broad internationalisation should consider the "**internationalisation at home**" as a central element, allowing their students and their faculty to gain a certain amount of international experiences within their home country. "Internationalisation at home" also concerns the capacity of the institution to apply the diversity of international perspectives usefully. Attention to essential values such as tolerance, responsibility, solidarity, cultural diversity and freedom of expression is a prerequisite and creates an open atmosphere. The WR recommends:

_ When setting up learning groups, universities and universities of applied sciences should ensure that students of different nationalities and cultures are represented. They should internationalise the curricula and offer a sufficient number of courses teaching foreign languages and intercultural competences. They should strategically apply and develop the international experiences and language skills of their faculty and staff and increasingly focus on these qualifications when selecting new personnel.

The **development of an institutional language policy** is an important aspect of internationalisation. It serves in the education of multilingual and interculturally competent domestic and foreign graduates, prepares them for an increasingly international employment market and contributes to the visibility and attractiveness of a higher education institution. Multilingualism also reflects the international nature of science, particularly in Europe. The following recommendations are addressed to universities and universities of applied sciences:

_ Institutions that decide to establish an international profile should develop a language concept as part of their internationalisation strategy. This concept should distinguish between the language of instruction, the language of examination, the scientific language and the language of communication. It should take into account the requirements of the various disciplines and embrace the institution's teaching, research and (self-) administration departments. Multilingualism does not mean offering all study programmes in English. Instead, the language of instruction should be chosen in accordance with the subject area. Administrative staff should have a good command of the English language.

_ Universities and universities of applied sciences should extend their general and scientific language course programmes in line with their language policy. Such language courses should be creditable within the elective elements of the study programmes.

_ Universities and universities of applied sciences seeking to recruit more international students and to offer their graduates access to international pro-

fessional opportunities should increase the number of study programmes taught in a foreign language as well as the number of Joint or Double Degree programmes in cooperation with partner universities abroad.

_ Universities and universities of applied sciences should provide support to their faculty to enable them to teach in two languages and also to international faculty to enable them to teach in German. Introducing passive multilingualism into committee work facilitates the rapid integration of international faculty into the academic self-administration.

_ Universities and universities of applied sciences with a language concept should professionalise their language training and have a high-performing language centre at their disposal. This requires qualified staff who should generally be in permanent employment.

The **internationalisation of universities of applied sciences** proceeds according to different framework conditions compared to the universities. The WR welcomes the projected federal funding programme for the universities of applied sciences. In addition, the WR recommends the following to enhance the internationalisation of the universities of applied sciences:

_ Suitable incentives and support instruments should assure that more faculty and staff members of universities of applied sciences complete teaching-, research-, or transfer-related stays abroad. To increase the mobility of professors at universities of applied sciences, funding bodies as well as the federal government and the *Länder* should adapt existing funding formats so that they are more easily accessible for applicants, or alternatively create specific funding programmes.

_ The universities of applied sciences should focus increasingly on taking on more guest lecturers from abroad in order to internationalise their study programmes and to initiate international cooperation in teaching and research. When recruiting faculty and staff, they should put an increased focus on international experience, knowledge of foreign languages and intercultural competence.

_ The universities of applied sciences should encourage student mobility by integrating time-slots for stays abroad into the curricula and informing more thoroughly about financing options.

_ To promote networking activities between the universities of applied sciences and domestic and foreign partners from science, industry and the health and social sectors, forums and networks should be established to facilitate the search for partners in the implementation of cooperation ideas. German TNE initiatives can also be used to increase student mobility at the universities of

applied sciences and to further the internationalisation of this type of higher education institution.

Concerning **mobility**, German universities and universities of applied sciences feature a great "global variety": German students and faculty visit different countries, especially in Europe, during their stays abroad, and German universities attract students and faculty from a wide range of different countries in and outside of Europe. This is a strength of the German system of research and higher education that helps nurture relations with many countries of the world and should be maintained as such. And yet, without jeopardising this strength, there is still potential for quantitative and qualitative improvement of mobility into and out of foreign countries. The WR issues the following recommendations:

_ To increase the mobility of German students: universities and universities of applied sciences should include stays abroad as compulsory elements of the curricula, conclude agreements with foreign partner universities on the full recognition of completed courses and provide more information and consulting services on existing funding options. To support mobility into certain target countries, universities and universities of applied sciences should strengthen their cooperation with local partner institutions. The federal government could specifically look for partners outside of Europe to develop national Erasmus-like programmes and thus contribute to creating a new generation of Erasmus programmes.

_ To increase the mobility of faculty and staff: remaining obstacles for the transferability of academic career trajectories should be removed, e. g. concerning salary scale classification or retirement benefits. The federal government should aim at allowing the cross-border transfer of acquired third-party funds based on reciprocity among states and at simplifying funding for cross-border projects. For the non-scientific staff, adapted mobility programmes should be implemented.

_ On the recruitment of foreign students: universities and universities of applied sciences should use their scope of action in selecting foreign students more strategically for their profile-building, e. g. by continually observing and analysing the influx of students and by using targeted marketing for student recruitment or by developing joint study programmes with desired partner institutions.

_ On the recruitment of foreign faculty and staff: higher education institutions should further increase their attractiveness for foreign researchers, e. g. by creating reliable career trajectories, offering a flexible duration of research and teaching visits as well as dual career opportunities. Employment offers

should always be advertised internationally; this applies also to non-scientific staff, when appropriate.

_ On refugee students and scientists: the integration of these groups in Germany should continue to be supported. The federal government, the *Länder* and higher education institutions should also contribute to increasing support measures for refugee students or students at risk as well as researchers in areas of conflict – if possible, in cooperation with local higher education institutions and civil society organisations.

Digitalisation can be used **as a strategic instrument for the internationalisation** of teaching, research, transfer and infrastructure services. The WR issues the following recommendations:

_ Universities and universities of applied sciences intending to develop an international profile in teaching and learning can employ blended learning programmes more broadly or implement digital teaching formats in order to implement the "international classroom", e. g. by connecting domestic and foreign student groups through virtual networks.

_ Digital teaching programmes can be used in development cooperation projects for capacity-building abroad. In the framework of these new types of education programmes, they can, for example, offer refugee students access to tertiary education independent of their location.

_ The German funding bodies should develop programmes and financially support the implementation of innovative ideas for connecting and mutually reinforcing virtual offers for internationalisation and physical mobility.

_ The federal government and the *Länder* should provide the required resources for the required digital infrastructure and sustainably support its operation. The *Länder* should also equip the universities and universities of applied sciences with the financial means allowing them to develop and implement digital teaching programmes and examination formats.

Tasks of and expectations toward the higher education institutions with regard to internationalisation have increased in the past years and the institutions have already largely satisfied these new exigencies. Hence, their internationalisation has reached a new dimension both quantitatively and qualitatively. At the same time, the financial leeway of universities and universities of applied sciences for this important cross-sectional task is severely limited. Activities of internationalisation are frequently financed through project funds, endangering the sustainability of many measures. The WR sees the need for an adaptation of existing funding structures in order for universities to meet the increased demands and issues the following recommendations on **financing the internationalisation**:

_ Strategies of internationalisation require long-term funding and cannot rely solely on fixed-term projects. The *Länder* should assure adequate basic funding for the universities and universities of applied sciences to make this possible. Internationalisation should, if it has not been done yet, be integrated as a performance area into the target agreements between the *Länder* and the universities and universities of applied sciences respectively.

_ Well-established funding bodies, such as the DAAD and the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation (AvH) should be better equipped. Other funding bodies should provide additional funds for international activities if such measures are foreseen in project proposals.

_ The federal government should aim at ensuring that the announced increase in funds for the 9th EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and Erasmus+ be implemented. The German higher education institutions should use the European funding programmes more intensively, e. g. to develop TNE initiatives.

_ Professional services in the area of internationalisation are increasingly exigent and require an adequate compensation for the scientific and non-scientific staff involved. This should be taken into consideration for the allocation of funds by the Länder to the universities and universities of applied sciences as well as in the programmes of the funding bodies.

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