

Refugee students: DAAD funding for integration



Preparatory college at FU Berlin: Margret Wintermantel meets with course participants

Around 50,000 refugees in Germany who are qualified to study represent a big opportunity as well as an immense challenge: “The language is still the biggest hurdle at the moment, making courses at preparatory colleges vital for successful commencement of university studies,” says DAAD President Prof. Margret Wintermantel. Together with Cornelia Quennet-Thielen, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Wintermantel visited a preparatory college at the Freie Universität Berlin funded within the scope of the DAAD programme “Integra”.

The terminology written on the board at the preparatory college of the Freie Universität (FU) Berlin is an indication of the high standard of teaching, conveying the German equivalents of mathematical terms such as “family of functions”, “turning points”, “sufficient condition” or “substitution”. The course participants at the FU’s preparatory college understand them at any rate, explains the maths lecturer: “Very good proficiency in German and some very good maths skills,” confirms Hannelore Harmsen with regard to the 20 students taking the preparatory course for refugees at the FU Berlin. The course is one of many offered within the scope of the DAAD’s “Integra” programme at 34 other preparatory colleges and 119 universities. The programme is just one component of a comprehensive package of measures that the DAAD has developed to support refugees, which is funded by the BMBF. State Secretary Cornelia Quennet-Thielen emphasised the scale of commitment: a total of €100 million are to be invested in “university-related measures” for refugees by 2019.

Smooth transition

The FU Berlin held its first information event for refugees interested in studying in October 2015. The first 60 participants started language courses in four groups in November, and by March, the first 20 had attained Level B1. These transferred directly to the preparatory college course now funded within the scope of INTEGRA, which is short for “Integrating Refugees in Degree Programmes”. This support programme is designed to help prospective students possessing a qualification for admission to higher education to prepare themselves with regard to language and subject throughout Germany. “We know that there are around 50,000 refugees interested in studying and qualified to do so residing in Germany,” explained DAAD President Prof. Margret Wintermantel in Berlin, “the better we are able to offer them the right course of study, the better their integration in the labour market will be.”



An open ear to the concerns of preparatory college participants: Cornelia Quennet-Thielen, Peter-André Alt and Margret Wintermantel

The fact that some questions are still open also became evident during the visit. Things could hardly be better in terms of both language skills and subject-specific knowledge – the core “Integra” topics. Course participants study together 25 hours per week (15 hours of German and 10 hours of maths and sciences). The level of language proficiency among participants is good, as is their goal orientation. A great deal has been achieved. FU President Professor Peter-André Alt said that he is “very grateful that there are such excellent funding opportunities for exceptionally important programmes”. A high demand for counselling with regard to numerous issues has at the same time emerged in Berlin thanks to the intelligent and self-confident students at the preparatory college: Why can’t I register for a Master’s programme if I don’t have my language certificate yet? Where can I get funding if I am not yet entitled to BAföG? Why am I not allowed to work? And in general: Why is there no Germany-wide academic course guidance service? Beside bureaucratic hurdles, the complexity of the higher education system has once again become evident. According to DAAD President Wintermantel, there are 17,000 study programmes in Germany: “Some find this confusing. Many find it good.” However, “You certainly have to find your way, that’s true!”

Universities as social role models

To support refugees, the DAAD is offering another programme financed by the BMBF as part of its package of measures. Available since November 2015, the “Welcome – Students Helping Refugees” programme supports student initiatives at 152 universities. These involve a variety of easily accessible projects such as language cafés, buddy programmes or refugee law clinics. Margret Wintermantel

praised the commitment of all those involved at the universities: “It would be great if so much happened in all areas of society.”

Jeannette Goddar (31 May 2016)

MORE INFORMATION

[Press release: Creating new perspectives](https://www.daad.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/2016/en/43457-creating-new-perspectives/)

[\[https://www.daad.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/2016/en/43457-creating-new-perspectives/\]](https://www.daad.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/2016/en/43457-creating-new-perspectives/)

[DAAD website: Refugees at universities - Programmes and measures](https://www.daad.de/der-daad/fluechtlinge/en/)

[\[https://www.daad.de/der-daad/fluechtlinge/en/\]](https://www.daad.de/der-daad/fluechtlinge/en/)