

Press Release

Joint press release by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Research Foundation (DFG)

Attracting young academics to Germany

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At the 16th annual GAIN conference in Washington D.C. leading representatives from the German academic sector will be discussing current science policy decisions in Germany with German junior researchers in the USA and Canada.

Bonn/Washington, 31 August 2016. The Junior Researcher Pact, the Fixed-term Employment in Higher Education and Research Act and the Excellence Strategy – these three academic policy measures aim to increase the attractiveness and viability of Germany in the coming years. But how do German junior researchers in the USA and Canada view these developments and how will they influence their future careers paths? The questions will be the focus of discussion at the 16th annual GAIN conference in Washington D.C. from 9 to 11 September 2016. The conference will bring representatives from German academic and scientific organisations, government ministries and businesses together with some 300 German researchers who are currently working in the United States and Canada.

The conference by the German Academic International Network (GAIN) is the largest academic career fair for German researchers outside of Europe.

Germany is an attractive location for those pursuing a scientific career. This was the tenet expressed by all three presidents of Germany's leading academic funding organisations which support GAIN in the USA: the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH). Ahead of the conference, they named the Excellence Strategy, the Pact for Research and Innovation, the Higher Education Pact 2020 and joint strategies at German federal and state levels as reasons behind this positive development. All the more important to rigorously promote German research and make prudent use of these recent science policy decisions.

“The current political frameworks offer a wide array of opportunities – the form they eventually take is naturally something the universities must decide on as well,” said DFG President Prof. Peter Strohschneider who is convinced that the Excellence Strategy, for example, “will facilitate competition that benefits the academic system.” With respect to the career perspectives of junior researchers, he pointed out the results of a symposium in the early summer which revealed a systematic difference between Germany and the USA: “While the postdoc phase

elicits more questions in Germany, the problems in the United States appear to mainly occur at the doctoral level.” However, according to a study presented by DFG Secretary General Dorothee Dzwonnek in Washington, the prospects of young academics in Germany are generally positive on the whole: “The statistical evaluation for the Emmy Noether Programme and the DFG Heisenberg Scholarship shows that a comparatively high number of recipients receive tenure.”

DAAD President Prof. Margret Wintermantel emphasised: “What distinguishes Germany from other academic locations is its flexible and diverse scientific landscape, its interdisciplinary and intersectoral research associations which offer suitable platforms for implementing new research ideas. In order to make Germany more attractive as a place of innovation, we need more permeability and networking between the science and economic sectors. Companies offer interesting and calculable career opportunities to young researchers as alternatives to university career paths.” The DAAD supports junior researchers and establishes contacts which enable them to gain academic and professional experience worldwide. In this way, the DAAD contributes to internationalising German higher education and research institutions.

The President of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Prof. Helmut Schwarz explained: “Germany invests a billion euros to support the careers of its young researchers. The Early Career Researcher Pact or “Nachwuchspakt” is bringing the tenure-track professorship to Germany. For talented German academics in the USA, it’s one more reason to think about returning. Especially as the number of tenure-track positions in the US is declining while competition is increasing. This makes Germany more attractive. However, it doesn’t mean that the future prospects for postdocs have suddenly become paradisiacal here and are in immediate danger across the Atlantic. In both countries even the best candidates have to fight for opportunities and decide whether to pursue careers in academia or outside of it. Determining what conditions are important in this respect and how they differ in Germany and the USA is something we want to discuss at the GAIN conference.”

About GAIN:

GAIN was established in 2003 as a joint project by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Research Foundation (DFG). With support from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and in cooperation with all German research organisations, GAIN strives to build and cultivate a network between German researchers in the USA and Canada and their counterparts in Germany. In order to encourage them to return to Germany, GAIN provides researchers with information about new developments in Germany and promotes transatlantic collaborations.

For more information, visit www.gain-network.org [<http://www.gain-network.org>]

Please contact us if you would like to arrange a meeting with German postdocs in the United States.

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