

Press Release

IHES study

Connecting internationalisation and social responsibility

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[« Back to overview \[/presse/pressemitteilungen/?page=3&\]](#)

In recent years, Germany has made great progress in internationalising higher education. But how can internationalisation contribute towards solving urgent problems in society such as the integration of refugees, radicalisation, populism or safeguarding democracy? A recent study by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) presents a number of initial solutions and gathers examples of good practice.

They are called Making Heimat, SMiLE and FameLab and deal with such diverse topics as science communication, foreign language teaching and feelings of home. What all the projects have in common is that they take advantage of the internationalisation of higher education to initiate or drive forward social change beyond the higher education institutions themselves. A total of 26 examples are brought together in the recent study entitled “Internationalisation in Higher Education for Society (IHES) – Concept, Current Research and Examples of Good Practice”, commissioned by the DAAD in 2019 and authored by the renowned international experts Uwe Brandenburg, Hans de Wit, Elspeth Jones and Betty Leask. The aim of the study is to highlight the social responsibility of higher education institutions and take this topic further forward in research and in practice.

“All of the internationalisation projects funded at our member institutions have a social impact, either in Germany or in the projects’ partner countries,” said DAAD President Prof. Dr Joybrato Mukherjee in Bonn. However, he continued, up to now there had been a lack of a conceptual approach which considered impacts and stakeholders outside the higher education institutions as an integral part of internationalisation measures and involved them directly in implementation.

...towards enabling the systematisation of the concept of international higher education for society (IHES). It is particularly important to us to collect good approaches and examples from the real world which help our member institutions learn from each other and thus drive IHES forward,” said DAAD Secretary General Dr Dorothea Rüländ.

The study showed that those higher education institutions which intensively promoted their internationalisation were also able to make important contributions to the positive development of the regional environment of their higher education institutions and of the respective partner institutions abroad, said Dr Rüländ. Up to now, this potential had all too often remained untapped, with a lack of structured funding measures among other things. “In future, we will therefore provide more targeted support for the inclusion of non-higher education institution stakeholders and impacts as part of our funding measures and integrate the corresponding components into current and new programmes,” said Dr Rüländ.

IHES Conference

The DAAD will present the findings of the study at the first IHES Conference on 22–24 April in Prague.

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