

Press Release

Further measures have been decided

DAAD President on the coronavirus crisis

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DAAD President Prof. Joybrato Mukherjee has commented on current developments in the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus and its impact on international academic cooperation.

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“The coronavirus pandemic has now become a global challenge, and, according to the World Health Organisation, Europe is one of its new epicentres,” says DAAD President Prof. Joybrato Mukherjee. “The measures that have been taken, such as border closures and the reduction of flights, are imposing major restrictions on all international academic exchange. However, we believe that, both in the short and medium term, they are the right thing to do in order to slow down the spread of the virus.

The restrictions are having a direct effect on the DAAD, its member higher education institutions and student bodies. Our mission “Change through Exchange” can only work if an exchange is actually possible. However, over the next few weeks and months, we are expecting to see continued and substantial restrictions in worldwide exchange, in our provision of funding and in the organisation of events. We are therefore supporting our member higher education institutions in their endeavours to prevent the virus from spreading quickly. In addition to the measures that have already been decided, such as cancelling all events and imposing limits on travelling, we have now decided to take a number of further measures:

Any scholarship holders from Germany who are in other countries at the moment can return home and have their trips reimbursed. The DAAD will do its best to find fair options for anyone with a scholarship. Furthermore, we will continue to accept and process applications for the current call for

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applications for the winter semester. Committee meetings will sometimes take the form of video conferences, while other decisions will be based on the relevant written documents. Some programmes where international scholarships would start during this summer semester (higher education summer courses, RISE research internships, IAESTE etc.) will be suspended for this period.

Also, we have cancelled all group trips to Germany and other countries for the next few weeks. Moreover, we are in close contact with our member higher education institutions and discussing flexible solutions for approved projects, including, in particular, the postponement of planned projects and the use of digital media.

Special circumstances apply to some scholarship holders who are now unable to travel back to their home countries. Their scholarships are being extended to make sure they can stay for as long as necessary.

For Erasmus students, the EU Commission says that if they need to change their plans concerning countries with coronavirus cases (either to return early or to cancel), their costs will be reimbursed up to the previously agreed total scholarship amount. As most higher education institutions in the Erasmus countries are closed, we would ask all Erasmus scholarship holders to contact their home higher education institutions.

In addition, the DAAD will not be making any business trips within or outside Germany until further notice. At the same time, we are making every effort to prepare for a situation where we can sustain the most important operations through home working.

Yet during these difficult times, it is also a remarkable sign that the insights and recommendations of epidemiologists and virologists – scientists at the regional, national and EU-wide levels – as well as of so many other responsible persons throughout the world are being taken very seriously. All of mankind is sharing the same challenges, and this common destiny should create unity between us, as we can only meet our challenges by working together.

It is encouraging to see scientists working together throughout the world in an endeavour to find new therapies and a new vaccine for SARS CoV-2 as quickly as possible. They are setting a good example in realising such a global responsibility.”