



CONFERENCE

18TH – 19TH JUNE 2019
BERLIN



WELCOME SPEECH FROM PROF DR WINTERMANTEL – CONFERENCE “THE OTHER 1 PERCENT” WITH EXHIBITION OPENING; 19/06/2019, WELTSAAL/CONFERENCE CENTRE AT THE FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE IN BERLIN

Dear Members of the Bundestag,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Guests and Scholarship Holders from around the world,

On behalf of the DAAD I am very pleased to welcome you to the conference “The Other 1 Percent – Refugee Students at higher education institutions worldwide” in Berlin today.

Tomorrow, 20 June, is World Refugee Day. The United Nations Refugee Agency UNHCR has been holding this day of action since 2001 to highlight the fate of the millions of people fleeing conflict, persecution and human rights violations. According to the UNHCR, there were 68.5 million refugees worldwide at the end of 2017, among them 40 million internally displaced persons – more than at any time since the end of the Second World War. A depressing record, because every refugee represents an individual fate and a personal – often tragic – story. On average, 44,400 people flee their homes every day to escape conflict and persecution.

And what is especially concerning: almost half of all refugees worldwide are minors under the age of 18. These young people, who bravely take their lives into their own hands and endure significant risks and privations in search of a better future, are especially important to us. We are holding this event in cooperation with the other organisers of this conference – the Federal Foreign Office and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) – to examine the situation of refugees and the importance of education for refugees.

The Other 1 Percent are the around one percent of refugees worldwide who are studying at higher education institutions. Just one percent, it must be said. The demand and the potential are far greater. Education is a crucial component of personal development and participation in society. Access to education, high-quality training and opportunities for life-long learning is not only a Sustainable Development Goal; for refugees, education is the key to successful integration – on a linguistic, professional and personal level – and a gateway to the labour market. This is why the DAAD, funded by the federal government, has for many years been working to make it easier for refugees to access higher education and integrate into degree programmes – abroad, and in recent years increasingly also in Germany itself.



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Higher education institutions play an especially important role in this process of integration through education. Not least because they have long fostered a cosmopolitan welcoming culture. Foreign students are nothing new at higher education institutions in Germany or abroad, and higher education institutions have many years of experience in working with them. Refugees are generally eligible to attend higher education institutions in Germany. When they enrol, they are treated just like other foreign students.

There are more than 320,000 foreign students in Germany today. What made this achievement possible is the fact that the federal government, the federal states and the higher education institutions promote internationalisation and believe it adds value in teaching and research.

So higher education institutions have the necessary intercultural experience and infrastructure to also integrate students from refugee backgrounds. Some universities and higher education institutions have expanded and adapted their structures; others have responded quickly to the changing requirements and designed specific programmes. The packages of measures developed by Germany and its higher education institutions to facilitate access to higher education and better integrate refugees into degree programmes build on these efforts, focusing on good advisory services, language and subject-specific preparation and accompanying support. Allow me to name a few of the programmes and initiatives designed to integrate refugees at higher education institutions:

The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI), a scholarship programme funded by the Federal Foreign Office, enables refugee students to pursue an undergraduate degree in their country of asylum outside Germany. Over 14,000 refugees have benefited from the programme since it was launched in 1992; numbers have increased especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, where around 41% of all current DAFI scholarship holders are studying. I am pleased to welcome a group of DAFI students and alumni here today. We are very happy to have you here! Despite displacement and persecution, you have managed to study successfully. Your stories and your example encourage others!

The DAAD acts as a consortium leader for HOPES (Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians), a project supported by the European Union's Madad Fund that provides scholarships for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq and Turkey who would like to begin or continue a degree programme. HOPES scholarship holders are also with us here today. We welcome you and invite you to share your experiences with us.

Within Germany the DAAD has launched an extensive set of measures on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), which has provided 100 million euros in funding for the period from 2016 to 2019 for programmes designed to help refugees integrate into German higher education programmes.

The INTEGRA programme provides subject-specific and language assistance to refugees preparing to study at German higher education institutions. Integra currently supports 166 projects at 59 universities of applied sciences, 68 universities, teacher training colleges and art academies, and 39 preparatory colleges.



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“Students helping refugees” is the tagline of the Welcome programme. The DAAD is currently funding 162 Welcome projects that support over 1,000 refugee students through 600 funded initiatives.

When the DAAD launched its special scholarship programme “Leadership for Syria” in 2014 there was still hope that the highly qualified leaders it sponsored would be able to return to Syria after the end of the war in order to rebuild their home country. Fortunately, alumni of the programme have meanwhile embarked on careers in Germany or are themselves working in programmes and initiatives to help integrate refugees.

The higher education report published by the Donors' Association for the Promotion of Science and Humanities in Germany predicts that by 2020, around 40,000 refugees will be enrolled at German higher education institutions. The perhaps best evidence that the package of measures is aiding integration is the fact that many students who themselves came to Germany as refugees are now volunteering for WELCOME and other programmes.

So, integration is succeeding: we have many excellent examples, and we will also see so at the conference today. Higher education institutions, partner countries and international organisations have accomplished much in recent years. That is something we can be proud of, but it should also encourage us to do even more.

You will have the opportunity at the conference today to discover many projects, programmes and initiatives to integrate refugees at higher education institutions around the world. Workshops, world cafés and poster sessions invite you to interact, learn from each other and be inspired by others' work. Personal encounters are an important factor: the conference is a wonderful opportunity to speak with so many dedicated people from so many different countries and regions about what we can do to ensure that “The Other 1 Percent” soon become more. Let us work together to see that ever greater numbers of refugees are offered the unique chance to embark on a degree programme and thus shape their own future.

On behalf of the DAAD I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved for helping to prepare this conference and for their support. Thank you to our funding providers, the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and other sponsors. And a special thank you to the higher education institutions in Germany and around the world that keep their doors open to refugees and work actively and with great dedication to provide access to higher education and deliver integration programmes, especially those in Sub-Saharan countries that reserve additional contingents for refugees although they are already faced with large numbers of university applicants due to their countries' demographics.

Dear students, whatever path you choose, I wish you all the best in your further academic careers and professional futures, and I hope you will pay forward the support you have received.

And now I would like to wish us all an interesting conference, good discussions and fruitful conversations.

Thank you very much for your attention!