

Science across borders: a German view

In 2009 the German Foreign Ministry launched its Research and Academic Relations Initiative. It is part of the Federal Government's Strategy for the Internationalization of Science and Research and defines a foreign policy objective aimed at connecting worlds of knowledge. With this initiative we step up our efforts to tap new resources and enhance Germany's contacts in the global scientific and academic network - and Australia is a major partner in this endeavour.

Why should the internationalization of science and research be a foreign policy goal? Because we are facing a series of cross-border and trans-regional challenges: Terrorism, climate change and energy security, migration and the protection of human rights, none of these challenges can be tackled by any one country alone. These global questions require a global response and academic exchange is an important step towards achieving that goal.

Of course, the exchange of knowledge, experiences and ideas is also an important prerequisite for increasing know-how and driving innovation. Cross-border knowledge transfer guarantees growth and jobs and is especially relevant for countries relying on exports like Germany and Australia. In addition to increasing shared knowledge, academic exchange also fosters greater understanding between societies and cultures. Indeed, creating a global network of academics and researchers is a reliable way to win friends and partners all over the world.

The Research and Academic Relations Initiative is not a new area for our foreign policy but a commitment which has long been an integral part of the German Foreign Services Cultural Relations and Education Policy. By developing existing policy instruments and implementing new ones the German Government is pursuing a number of objectives which include:

- promoting Germany as an attractive research location by awarding young academics from all over the world, including Australia, receive scholarships for short or longer periods of study and research in Germany, and in some cases also in their home countries or in third countries. In this way we increase mobility and intensify person-to-person exchanges;
- building collaborative structures by forging close and stable partnerships between German and foreign research institutions;
- establishing long-term partnerships with foreign scientists which can be nurtured in global alumni networks for different disciplines.

The basis for academic exchange is a shared language, and while English is the now internationally accepted language of scientific endeavour, the German Government is committed to the teaching of German abroad. This has also important implications for a deeper cross-cultural understanding.

In Australia, the German Embassy in Canberra, together with its Consulate's General in Sydney and Melbourne, is actively promoting this initiative and is supporting its aims with various activities. For example, the Consulate-General in Sydney recently won the support of Fred Watson and Matthias Steinmetz, two leading astrophysicists, who highlighted the excellence in Australian-German astronomical research cooperation with an event at the Sir Thomas Brisbane Planetarium, celebrating the International Year of Astronomy 2009.

In another example, the Consul-General in Melbourne, Dr Anne-Marie Schleich, together with the Governor of Victoria, Professor David

de Kretzer, opened a German-Australian science symposium about the influence of the German Antarctic explorer, meteorologist and oceanographer Georg von Neumayer.

By planning and implementing these measures, also in close cooperation with our partner organizations such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German Research Council (DFG) or the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH), we aim to support the already vibrant and diverse scientific links between Germany and



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Australia. This bilateral relationship in the field of academic and scientific research cooperation received further important impulses with the visit of Senator Kim Carr to Germany last year. The same applies to the visiting of delegations of the German Research Council (DFG) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) to Australia. In 2010, the German Academic Exchange Service will organise a meeting of alumni from all over Australia in cooperation with the University of Sydney. Other important measures include:

- About 230 academic exchanges of scientists and researchers on the basis of MoU's, framework or single agreements currently under way.
- The outstanding cooperation of German universities with the Group of Eight (Go8) universities, coordinated by a Berlin office. In this context, the renewal of the DAAD-Go8-mobility program needs to be mentioned with the aim to also include other Australian universities under the leadership of the Australian Research Council.
- Green-Tech cooperation, especially via international initiatives like the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA/German initiative) and the Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute (GCCSI/Australian initiative).
- Cooperation at the regional (state) level, like the research cooperation agreement between German North Rhine-Westphalia and Australian QLD and NSW in the field of energy-efficiency. As far as student exchanges are concerned, the Baden-Wuerttemberg and South Australia have developed close ties.

Germany and Australia are both knowledge-based societies. They face identical challenges in a world where education and know-how are universally available and instantly accessible. In this global framework ongoing international networking is a must for both countries.

This opens promising new prospects for a continuing expansion of German-Australian research and academic relations.

** The lead ministries are the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Federal Foreign Office (AA).*