

Keynotes

Alumni Activities of the DAAD

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Excellencies, Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Alumni,

it is not only a great honor but also a great pleasure of mine to be able to welcome you on behalf of the German Academic Exchange Service to the international symposium „Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development in Egypt“.

This is my very first visit to your country and I am very pleased that it coincides with this significant event. I am also very glad that I shall be able to learn more about your country and its splendid and rich culture.

The German Academic Exchange Service or DAAD - as it is called in the english speaking world - is a joint organisation of German institutions of higher education as well as a semi-official organisation of German federal, cultural and academic policy. DAAD supports and promotes the academic exchange of students, graduates and scholars with more than 100 programs. A central element of our activities is the close co-operation with developing countries. We are very proud that in 1998 alone DAAD supported 276 students, graduates and scholars from Egypt.

Recently the Alumni-activities have become more and more important We hold more than 200.000 alumni on our records with aproximately 60 % coming outside from Germany (out of these more than 4200 are from Egypt). However, only a small number are valid addresses.

With a range of different programs DAAD is striving to keep in touch with its former scholarship holders.

Our aims are as follows:

Implementation and support of university-based alumni-activities, pursuing own alumni-projects

Maintaining contact

Contributing to international academic exchange

Building a pool of experience and knowledge (Advise and information to students and scholars)

There are more than 100 associations worldwide of former DAAD fellows and other scholars educated in Germany. They are a „cornerstone“ within the framework of our alumni policy and in the global DAAD network. They ensure that former scholarship holders keep in touch with each other, with German academic institutions and, last but not least, with the DAAD itself.

A close co-operation of German and international institutions of Higher education and DAAD is increasingly becoming more important - especially in an ever shrinking world.

The first long spell spent in a foreign country is a forming experience - so they say. This is a lesson I learned myself and I am sure this applies to many amongst you gathered here as well when you went to Germany in order to study or to do research. The encounter with another country, its people and its culture broadens one's horizon and also creates a deeper understanding of one's own individuality and history. The bonds that are formed often keep throughout an entire life although it is not always easy to keep in contact with friends and colleagues from former students days.

Up until last year most of our programs were restricted to genuine DAAD- fellows. As a consequence, many of those academics who were educated in the Federal Republic without the support of a German institution were left out from DAAD-Alumni activities. Since January 1999, however, a new scheme funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development has closed this gap. This program specifically aims to care for those Alumni in developing countries who funded themselves or were financed by their home government as indeed is the case for many amongst you. The overall objective of this initiative is to include those self- funded scholars in the worldwide network of international academic and economic co-operation. For this program it is vital that Alumni get in touch with their host institutions in Germany because applications for this program can only be submitted by them, so as occurred now.

Within the framework of this new program the Universities of Göttingen and Kassel are going to initiate the forming of a regional and specialised network of Egyptian and German universities which will have its foundation and starting- point in this country. The inclusion of Alumni from neighbouring Arab countries is envisaged for the not-too- distant future.

Experts and specialists from various disciplines have gathered here in Cairo to discuss their research projects and findings for sustainable agricultural and rural development. It is the pronounced objective of this conference to found GEAR, "The international Alumni Net - Germany- Egypt and Arab Region" - a very appropriate acronym indeed if you ask me. I think the interest of the Egyptian scholars in this network is impressively demonstrated by the overwhelming number of participants that we can see here today.

Let me take the opportunity to thank all those who contribute to the organisation of this event.

I am very much looking forward to the days to come and I am very pleased to be able to talk about the DAAD- Alumni- programmes at somewhat more length on Monday. I shall be very happy to meet many of you during the course of this conference and to get to know you on an individual level.

I wish you, the participants of this conference, many opportunities for fruitful discussions and every success.

Anke Stahl, DAAD, Bonn, Germany