Caps in the air and a broad smile on their faces: this is what real joy looks like. Still, the Afghan graduates in the RUB Master’s programme “Management and Economics” had been assigned a concrete and serious task. They are supposed to establish Bachelor’s degree programmes in economics at their universities at home. Having completed their degree in the last semester, the twenty-six men and two women from Afghanistan were women from Afghanistan – gained the necessary linguistic, technical and soft skills that would be applicable in practice.

The LSI celebrates its 40th anniversary. The very first Russian language course was offered at the LSI-Russicum in 1973. Since then, the Landesspracheninstitut (LSI) at the RUB has helped more than 40,000 people acquire the necessary language skills to live and work abroad. On the 30th of September, the institute commemorates “40 years of LSI” with an anniversary celebration.

“Intercultural understanding”. The German language has coined the perfect term for this phenomenon: “Völker-Verständigung” – literally “understanding between peoples” – describes the state of being on speaking terms with other nations, linguistically and culturally. Motivated by more than just higher education-related considerations, the wish to achieve intercultural understanding was the driving force behind the inception of the LSI in Bochum 40 years ago. Founded by Johannes Rau, then-Minister of Science and later Federal President of Germany, the Russicum was the first institute and thus the direct precursor of the LSI. It had dedicated itself to communicating Russian language skills that would be applicable in practice. A child of the policy of détente at a time when it was still impossible to actively acquire and apply Russian and to interact with people in the then Soviet Union, the Russicum constituted a unique island in a sea of people from all walks of life – from diplomats and business executives to students – gained the necessary linguistic know-how that would enable them to live and work in the USSR.

Today, the Russicum’s alumni circle boasts 17,000 members. In the 1980s, similar institutes for the Russicum constituted a unique island. In it, people from all walks of life – from diplomats and business executives to students – gained the necessary linguistic know-how that would enable them to live and work in the USSR. Today, the Russicum’s alumni circle boasts 17,000 members. In the 1980s, similar institutes for Russia and later Federal President of Germany, the Russicum was the first institute and thus the direct precursor of the LSI. It had dedicated itself to communicating Russian language skills that would be applicable in practice. A child of the policy of détente at a time when it was still impossible to actively acquire and apply Russian and to interact with people in the then Soviet Union, the Russicum constituted a unique island in a sea of people from all walks of life – from diplomats and business executives to students – gained the necessary linguistic know-how that would enable them to live and work in the USSR. Today, the Russicum’s alumni circle boasts 17,000 members. In the 1980s, similar institutes for

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FINISH YOUR STUDIES IN FOREIGN LANDS

A new trend: writing your final thesis abroad

Studying abroad? Has long become standard. Internship abroad? Nothing unusual, either. Writing one’s bachelor or master thesis abroad, however, and spending up to six months in Chile or Russia for that purpose— that is still something out of the ordinary. Stefania Parnici interviewed four RUB students who are doing exactly that. She asked them the following three questions: (1) What gives you the idea of writing your final thesis abroad? (2) Which aspects about your stay abroad did you find particularly exciting, which ones did you find difficult? (3) What does that mean for you and your future?

Evah (Master International Humanitarian Action) is writing her master thesis on “Women working in humanitarian assistance – a study on factors that support and hinder women taking leadership roles with in UN agencies” at the Columbia University in New York (three months).

(1) Following the Erasmus Mundus programme, an exchange has been established between our Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict and the School of International and Public Affairs at the Columbia University. Considering the subject matter of my thesis, spending some time abroad was the logical choice. I had previously already been abroad and have established contacts at a university in another country. The tutor abroad plays a very important role once there. I consider this factor to be the most important one.

(2) As I was already familiar with the country and its people, I had no problems to settle in. Still, travelling across a distance of 16,000 km to the desert in north of Chile, the villages were difficult to get to, and transport and the organisation of the visits were complicated. What I did like a lot was the assistance on the part of the university. My guest lecturer took good care of me, we met up almost every week to discuss the progress of my thesis. The lecturer’s discipline was sociol ogy, he was able to give me useful advice and bibliographic lists regarding empirical research that my Master of Education degree had not provided.

(3) I have improved my Russian language skills, of course. Unfortunately, I can’t yet counteract any problems. I very much enjoyed the new surroundings and new conditions. My experience has clearly shown that, having spent a period of time abroad, you are able to face new challenges and to adjust to new surroundings and new conditions. The trip has also helped me along on a personal level: in the USA, I met many people from different nations and cultures all over the world. I am now more open when meeting strangers.

Eva is writing her master thesis in New York

Students who wish to write their bachelor or master thesis abroad may apply for financial support through grant programmes such as PROMOS. The programme is backed by the DAAD and finances residencies abroad with partial scholarships and travel allowances. “You can apply for financial backing for a period of up to six months, both in and outside Europe,” explains Uta Baier, the liaison officer in the International Office responsible for handling applications of RUB students wishing to spend time abroad. “Often, it is students who have already been abroad and have established contacts at a university in another country who are interested.” Students who have never before been abroad benefit from a residence abroad, too: “Once you work full time, going abroad will become much more difficult,” says Uta Baier. “There are other reasons why this form of academic exchange is so attractive: you will improve your foreign language proficiency and may gain access to a global job.”

Finding a tutor at the RUB is the first concrete step that interested students have to take. “This is most relevant, and often, it is the teachers who suggest you should write your thesis abroad, because they have contacts to colleagues or because writing your thesis abroad makes sense considering the subject matter. The tutor already plays a crucial part, as he or she provides a job and may help to gain access to labs and libraries.” This is very important, because the tutor is your contact person abroad. “The International Office helps students prepare for their residence abroad—starting six months prior to leaving for the respective country—and provides information about additional funding programmes that are available for the host country.”

Last but not least, Uta Baier advises not to shy away from the project one wishes to embark upon. “It is very important to have the courage to try to apply for a grant programme. Many students think it’s not worth trying. I can only advise everyone to give it a go.” Stefania Parnici

Photo: International Office

Skyline included: Eva is writing her master thesis in New York

In the centre of society: Sandra with the students of a village school in the Atacama Desert

Uta Baier (International Office) assists RUB student who is about to go abroad

FUNDING OF EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

A green oasis: Stephan in front of the University of California

The Bailer (International Office) assists RUB student who is about to go abroad

East-South-East: Ibrahim in Jagannath in south Russia

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Link: http://international.nb.de

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In the centre of society: Sandra with the students of a village school in the Atacama Desert

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Erika Niino takes the panorama of the Suita Campus from the Convention Center

A PASSION FOR THINKING

Graham Priest is a guest of the Department of Philosophy

When he saw the Rup-Universitats cam- pus for the first time, Graham Priest not- ed the buildings. “Architects in the 1960s and 70s had a love affair with concrete. It’s not everyone’s taste,” says the philosopher. “But a university is about people rather than about buildings.” The Australian Humboldt Prize winner has been a guest of Prof Hein- rich Wansing at the Department of Philosophy in Bochum, since January 2014. Ines Eckermann

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Ines Eckermann
SECOND HOME GERMANY

Fei He from China does her PhD on Germany's economic relations

Fei He, who is doing her PhD at the Institute for Economic and Corporate History, clearly enjoys studying at the Ruhr University Bochum (RUB). In the second term of her studies, she has been on a student exchange programme at the RUB Institute for Economic and Corporate History. Fei was born and raised in Changchun, a city with a population of three million people. After leaving school, she decided to go to Germany to learn about the country's culture, history, and society. She was impressed by the RUB's strong research capabilities and the opportunity to work with international colleagues.

Fei has been able to experience the German language and culture firsthand. She has studied at the RUB Institute for Economic and Corporate History and has had the chance to actually speak German with local students and researchers. Fei has also had the opportunity to participate in cultural events and activities, such as concerts and festivals, which have helped her to better understand the German way of life.

Fei He came from Changchun. The city in Northeast China has a population of three million people. Fei wrote her bachelor's thesis on "International Employment Strategies" at the RUB Institute for Economic and Corporate History. For her PhD, she is working on a research project on "Germany's economic relations during the Cold War." This project is supervised by Prof. Dieter Ziegler, a leading expert on German history and society.

Fei He is currently completing a special training programme, the "Ruhr Fellows Programme," which is organized by the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. The programme aims to attract young people from outside Germany to study and work in the Ruhr Area. It is the vision of the programme managers to use the Ruhr Fellows to promote the region as a location for scientific and economic collaborations between the Ruhr Area and the participating American universities.

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