

Prof. Dr. Christiane Jost
Vice-president



(Vizepräsidentin Prof. Dr. Christiane Jost (S.v.l.) mit den Gästen der Namibia University of Science And Technology in Windhoek/Namibia, der University of Wisconsin-River Falls in River Falls/USA, der Fuzhou University, China, und der German Jordanian University in Amman/Jordanien, dem Büro für Internationales und Auslandsbeauftragten einzelner Studiengänge)

Opening Speech of the Staff Week
27th of November 2017
Hochschule RheinMain

Dear Guests from China, Jordan, Namibia and the US,

We are glad to have you here in Wiesbaden on our main campus. As you might be aware, we have various campuses in Wiesbaden and one in Rüsselsheim. It is wonderful that you travelled from afar to meet up with us and to discuss plans for the future. Thank you!

I also welcome my colleagues from different faculties and administration, especially from international office. Thanks to their efforts we succeeded in the fierce competition for funding in the ERASMUS+ program. That is of major importance since it allows us also funding for our partner institutions.

A warm welcome to you all. Without your efforts and your activities we would have no exchange programs. So thank you all for working together to give the students the important opportunity to go abroad.

It is my special pleasure to open the first international staff week here at our university, the year we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Erasmus program.

30 years of Erasmus – please allow me a short detour to the history of the program:

In a nutshell: Erasmus is a success story for international education and international exchange in Europe:

From a small program which started in 1987 with 3.224 students and eleven participating countries it developed to a huge program which supported in 2014 around 255.000 students in 33 different participating countries. In total, in the last 30 years of the Erasmus program, around 4.4 Million students experienced a stay in another European country with the support of the Erasmus program. Of this 4,4 Mio. young people around 651.000 students were from Germany.

What are the effects of exchanges? Here are a few numbers:

- *The chances to find an adequate job shortly after graduation are twice as high for students with exchange experiences, compared to their fellow students who stayed at home*

- *A third of all Erasmus interns get a job offer for a permanent position during their internships*
- *80% of Erasmus students think that they won independence and enhanced their capability to solve problems and improved their soft skills and intercultural competences*

The vast majority find themselves more interested in international affairs and in different cultures and ways of live, and with a better understanding for cultural differences – these are qualities important for an open-minded international teaching and learning atmosphere on our campuses. International mobility in higher education gives us the wonderful opportunity to expose individuals to different ideas and mind-sets which hopefully helps to foster an appreciation for diversity and create an attitude where complexity is seen as a challenge and an opportunity and not as a threat. From my point of view this is a major initiative for peace and against racial discrimination. When people from different cultures know each other and are friends, they will find it a lot harder to judge someone just by the color of his or her skin or his or her belief. While this is not necessary and sufficient for peace, it is at least necessary.

But apart from the sociopolitical effects, let's not forget, that most of the students have a wonderful time, make great memories and connect with people from all over the world. Outcomes of Exchange are even marriages and families.¹

In 2015 the Erasmus program finally was extended worldwide, with the aim to foster international cooperation worldwide and strengthen the ties of the European Higher Education Area with Institutes of Higher Education in all parts of the world.

At HSRM we are honored to cooperate in the frame of the Erasmus+ program from the very beginning with Fuzhou University and the German-Jordanian University and we are more than happy, that as of this year we managed to extend this cooperation to the Namibia University of Science and Technology and the University of Wisconsin – River Falls.

Looking back on two years of experience with the Erasmus+ -International Dimension, I am proud to say, that we received very positive feedback from the outgoing and incoming students, faculty and staff who participated in this program: all of them had

¹ <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/bildung/bilanz-zum-austauschprogramm-fuer-studenten-eine-million-erasmus-babys-1.2141763>

to take a survey after their exchange and 100% of them rated their exchange experience as "very satisfactory" and would recommend an exchange to others. Also the vast majority indicated that they felt an improvement of their soft skills, especially intercultural competences. Also quite a few mentioned that they felt more interested in world affairs in general and all highlighted an international network of friends and or colleagues they could establish due to their Erasmus exchange. This is also a compliment to our international partners!

These positive results motivate us, to strengthen our Erasmus+ network together with you. This staff week is intended to help building strong partnerships and creating further opportunities for our students, faculty and staff to grow and develop in an international environment.

That said I wish you all a wonderful staff week, with interesting discussions, positive results to continue our joint work here and abroad. Also, I wish you all a good time here at Hochschule RheinMain, enjoy the excursion to Frankfurt, the visit to the Wiesbaden Christmas Market and last, but not least, the encounters and chats with my colleagues here from Hochschule RheinMain, so that you too, will bring back pleasant memories from your Erasmus exchange with us.

Thank you again for visiting us and I wish you all a successful and pleasant staff week.

Prof. Dr. Christiane Jost