

Bavaria-Wide Africa Network Meets in Würzburg

To optimize joint activities and to plan further initiatives: That was the aim of the meeting in Würzburg held by the Directory Board of the Bavaria-wide Africa initiative BRIAS, which started in 2014, chaired by Prof. Ibrizimow (Bayreuth).

In this network, the Bavarian Research Institute of African Studies (BRIAS), the University of Würzburg and three further Bavarian institutions participate for now: the University of Bayreuth, which is in charge of the management of the initiative, the University of Applied Sciences Neu-Ulm, and the *Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt*. In the future, further Bavarian institutions with Africa-related fields of research are to be included.

Strong Africa Research in Würzburg

In his welcoming speech to the participants, the President of the University of Würzburg, Professor Alfred Forchel, emphasized the traditionally strong role of research in Africa and with Africans by the University of Würzburg, united in the *Forum Afrikazentrum* (Forum Africa Center) as part of the university. This network, with the climatologist Professor Heiko Paeth as the speaker, consists of about 50 members from all ten faculties. It comprises Africa-related projects from the fields of tropical medicine, geography, egyptology, international law, romance languages and literature, tropical ecology, and natural products chemistry. The center originated from the *Afrikakreis* (Africa Circle) at the University of Würzburg, whose founding speaker was Professor Gerhard Bringmann.

Unique in Würzburg is the excellence scholarship program BEBUC, Forchel said. It was initiated by Bringmann in collaboration with his Congolese colleague Professor Virima Mudogo. BEBUC at present accompanies ca. 180 outstanding scholars from 24 partner institutions in the Congo on their way to the professorship.



*BRIAS Meeting at the University of Würzburg (from the left): Dr. Franz Kogelmann, Prof. Horst Beinlich, Prof. Gerhard Bringmann, President of the University of Würzburg Alfred Forchel, Prof. Dymitr Ibrizimow (chairman), Prof. Thomas Bayer, Dr. Christoph Trinkl, and Prof. Wilfried Zörner (vice chairman).
(photo: Robert Emmerich)*

The BRIAS Participants

Within the BRIAS Directory Board, Würzburg is represented by the Forum Africa Center (delegate: Professor Horst Beinlich from Egyptology), and by the scholarship program BEBUC (delegate: Gerhard Bringmann from chemistry).

With its Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies and with the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies, Bayreuth has been pursuing, for many years already, an interdisciplinary Africa-related research with most of the faculties participating.

In Ingolstadt, the Africa-related activities are concentrated on renewable energies and in Neu-Ulm, the field of health management is in the focus.

Topics of the Meeting in Würzburg

Main issues of the meeting were the establishment of an advisory council and the planning of joint proposals for projects and activities. Other topics were the new logo, an information brochure, and the design of the web appearance of the network. In addition, joint fields of subjects and competence for future projects were discussed aiming at possibly resulting joint proposals. Furthermore, possibilities for collaborations in the context of the Africa Festival of Würzburg were discussed. Of special interest for BRIAS was the platform for young academics in Würzburg called *Junges Afrikazentrum* (Young Africa Center), which was presented by its co-organizer Julien Bobineau from the department of romance languages and literatures.

The next meeting of the BRIAS Directory Board will take place in Neu-Ulm at the end of June.

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