

**German Association for
International Education
Deutsche Assoziation für
Internationalen BildungsAustausch e.V.
(DAIA)**

The Situation

The German institutions of higher education founded the German Academic Exchange Service – DAAD – to enhance international exchange and to cover a widespread field of activities, such as professional meetings and training sessions for international officers. These possibilities prove to be an excellent forum for the directors of international offices,

What did not exist – up till now – in Germany is a self-organisation of individuals working in international offices or in other fields of higher education concerned with international activities. The foundation of a new organisation based on individual membership to represent the interests of internationally active people in higher education is necessary.

Mission and Objectives of DAIA

1. Networking and dissemination of information among its members
2. Lobbying in the field of internationalisation of higher education on the national level; looking after professional interests in international education
3. Reduction of unnecessary obstacles and hierarchies in decision- and opinion-making in international relations
4. Training in relevant fields of international education
5. Development of a professional profile
6. Creation of a transparent job market for international education
7. Development of standards for professional profiles and accreditation

The objectives 1 – 6 are to be realised in the next 2 years, no. 7 is a longer term project.

Networking

Building and maintenance of networks is DAIA's main and basic activity. Existing local or regional networks in international education are based on personal relationships and initiatives. A lot of individuals working in the field of international education do not have the possibility to participate and be active outside their own institution. Their access to institutionalised representation of their interest is limited.

Even if local or regional networks between international offices, faculty and staff and other institutions exist, they are not being developed efficiently on a national level. Important synergies are lost.

The involvement of different players, like students, teachers, researchers, international officers and industrial liaison officers, means more transparency, cooperation and efficiency in our daily tasks. Networking and cooperation leads to a higher professional standing and in the long run to a better qualification of all involved. Networking brings motivated and innovative people together. While NAFSA and EAIE take care of the international and intercontinental aspect of our profession, DAIA is the representation on a national level.

Lobbying

While the institutional interest is met by the activities of the DAAD, DAIA meets the needs of the individual professional, offers assistance in day to day work, supports local or regional initiatives and develops a representation of interests on a national level. DAAD, the German Rectors Conference and other institutions are important partners, but DAIA will always be an institution oriented towards its members' needs.

Reduction of unnecessary hierarchies and obstacles

The traditional hierarchical structure of German universities have a negative influence on new initiatives and "grass-root" movements from lower parts of the hierarchy. New ideas and incentives coming from rank-and-file staff are not taken up and developed because they do not find the interest of the head of department. Information is not disseminated properly, decision making is often not the result of an open and democratically structured process.

As an organisation with an orientation towards efficiency, networking and a more "horizontal" way to do things, DAIA will be a platform for the reduction of unnecessary command structures and obstacles in decision-making in the field of international education. This includes the single institution, decision-making and policy planning on a national level, as well as on the European and international levels.

Training in relevant fields of international education

In Germany, training in the field of international education is still mostly underdeveloped. The activities of the DAAD –e.g. the yearly seminars for foreign student advisers- are excellent but do not cover all aspects and necessities of our profession. Compared to the wide variety of workshops and sessions covering all possible aspects of international education at the NAFSA Conference, Germany has a long way to go.

Development of a professional profile

No director of an international office or foreign student adviser has been trained professionally to do what she or he does in his work. Mostly, we have trained ourselves on the job, learning by doing, copying from colleagues, trying and erring. Nobody has been trained to lead and motivate subordinates or student assistants. Nobody has been trained in fund raising or planning and controlling international relations. We are very well informed and highly motivated dilettants. There is no structured way of collecting professional experience and pass it on to newcomers in the field.

The development of a professional profile, design of efficient training methods and programmes and laying the basis for a structured training on the job for old hands and newcomers is one of the most important objectives of DAIA.

Creation of a transparent job market for international education

The "international office" job market has not really been discovered yet. There is no exchange for work placements or internships in this field. Through EAIE, we all now about openings in the UK or Maastricht, but nothing about the vacant position at the university across the street.

DAIA will be an excellent forum for all involved in international education to inform themselves on job openings, internships and offers the possibility to look actively for a vacancy.

Development of standards for professional profiles and accreditation

In the long run – say 5 to 10 years – DAIA should participate in the development of standards valid for the professional profiles of people working in international education. DAIA could develop into an accreditation institution for the efficiency, quality and organisation of international offices, for instance. The accreditation procedure will, of course, always be voluntary, but it will help to start a process making DAIA an important player in international education in future.

Practical issues

Organisation:

DAIA was founded August 28 1999 in Berlin. It is registered with the magistrate court in Karlsruhe and has been approved the status of a non-profit institution. Members of the board are: Uwe Brandenburg (Humboldt-Universität, Berlin), Edmund Zirra (University of Applied Science, Karlsruhe), Magdalena Müller-Klumpp (University Karlsruhe), John-Andrew Skillen (Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main), Matthias Borgmann (Technische Universität Berlin).

The executive office is at the moment in Berlin but will rotate between members. Membership fee for 1999 and 2000 is 50 Euro.

Activities:

Central activity is the annual conference with workshops, seminars and an exchange for jobs and internships in combination with appropriate social events. The conference will change its venue every year and be financed by fees and sponsors. The first annual conference will be at Karlsruhe from 18 to 20 February 2000.

Next steps are a mailing list, a newsletter, informative webpages and training sessions and seminars. DAIA will establish formalised contacts with DAAD, EAIE, and NAFSA.

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