



Erkenntnisse und perspektivische Fragen aus der Studie «Nachhaltigkeit und Wirkung von Förderinitiativen für international mobile Postdoktorierende – Auswirkungen auf Personen, Institutionen und Gesellschaft»

WIM Q-Online Expertengespräch «Zukunft der Mobilität in Wissenschaft und Forschung», 13. 01. 2022

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Reason for the study

Die Internationalisierung der Wissenschaft ist kein selbstverständliches Prinzip mehr. Zunehmend bedürfe es der Erläuterung von Internationalisierung. Zweck und Ziele müssten mehr als je zuvor definiert und erklärt werden.

Quelle: Deutscher Bundestag (2017). URL:

<https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2017/kw13-pa-bildung-498400>

Internationalization has been presented as a universal good, as if to create a cross-border, cross-cultural or global connection is to automatically trigger a flow of all-around benefits (...). The claim is made often enough about benefits to the common good (...) but the claim has mostly been couched in very general terms.

Source: Simon Marginson (2019)



Study design

Two foundations

- Volkswagen Foundation (VWS)
- Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH)

Three programme modes

- Incoming
- Outgoing
- Capacity-building

Two target groups

- Fellows (alumnae / alumni)
- Hosts

Levels of analysis

- Individual
- Working group
- Institutional – university and non-university research institutions (host and return)
- Societal – a) research system and b) societal life (politics, economy and culture), in Germany as well as in developing countries



Examples of most often perceived impacts on ...

Fellow himself / herself

I advanced my career in research.

The research stay meant a lot for my personal development.

I increased my visibility in international research.

Working group

(PhD) students in the working group benefited from my advice.

My cooperation with the working group (members of it) lasts until today.

I introduced new techniques, methods, or theories to the working group.

Host institution

I helped improve the institution`s publication performance.

The institution benefited from a continued collaboration with me.

I taught or advised (PhD) students at the institution.



Most often perceived impacts on ... (continued)

Research system in Germany

I maintained my contact with Germany.

The research project strengthened international research networks in Germany.

The research project increased the international visibility of research conducted in Germany.

Societal life in Germany (such as culture, politics, or economics)

I conveyed my favourable impressions of Germany to friends, colleagues or family.

I encouraged young researchers in my home country to learn German.

I continued to pay taxes and social insurance in Germany because I stayed or returned there.



General observations at the different levels of analysis

- **The majority of impacts** were reported **at the individual level**. As the levels become more distant from the fellow (the working group, the institution, the research system, society), a decreasing tendency to report impacts was observed. The fellows in the capacity building mode were more likely to report on the societal impact than the fellows in the other modes (and this is more the case for the VWS than the AvH).
- Some impact items were **reported only seldom or not at all** by the fellows. They have either **socio-economic** (industrial outreach, establishing a start-up or spin-off company, collaborations between research and the private sector, generating jobs in the private sector, improved products or processes) or **socio-political** (influence on national policy-making, founding of an NGO, science policy discussions) character.
- Another group of least reported **impact items** were the **negative ones** (e. g. finding a job after the end of the fellowship).



First perspective question: Improving the design of funding programmes?

At what levels does the foundation want to pursue objectives within a funding programme?

Should the focus be just on the individual level, arguing that the individual funding is what is provided?

Or, should the focus remain on the individual level but spill-over effects (to the working group, institution and society) should be considered as well?

Or, does the foundation want explicitly to pursue goals at the individual, working group, institutional and societal level (i.e. research system and other aspects of societal life)?

Concrete proposals:

- Design of intervention logics (ILs) for each funding programme.
- Operationalisation of the ILs (indicators, target values, monitoring).
- Quasi-experiments and modern data technology (e.g. propensity score matching), should be used to establish a causal relationship between funding and observed effects.



Second perspective question: Analysis of socio-economic impacts?

The fellows reported **socio-economic impacts** rather rarely. To learn more about socio-economic impacts of the funding initiatives for internationally mobile postdocs, one could, for example, analyse the **Integrated Employment Biographies (IEB)** of the Institute for Employment Research (IAB). With the help of IEB, it is possible to trace employment biographies of employees subject to social security contributions – consisting of periods of employment, periods of unemployment, periods of job search, and participation in active labour market programmes.

Examples for research questions:

- How long would former fellowship holders from abroad have to work in Germany until all costs incurred by the fellowship are amortized?
- How do the employment histories of former outgoing fellows compare to internationally non-mobile postdocs in Germany?



Third perspective question: internationalisation@home?

Only 10 to 20 percent of the incoming fellows said that they helped internationalise teaching at the host institution in Germany (e.g. organised a journal club, study group).

Less than 50 per cent reported that they contributed to the internationalisation of teaching at German universities.

- Should international mobile postdocs coming to Germany for a longer research stay be more involved in the internationalisation of (research-based) teaching @home?



Cited references

Deutscher Bundestag (2017). URL: <https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2017/kw13-pa-bildung-498400>

Marginson, S. (2019). Evidencing higher education for the common good. *University World News*, 27 July 2019. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190722152235317>