

FINAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION OF THE GERMAN CHANCELLOR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME OF THE ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT FOUNDATION (AVH)

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The German Chancellor Fellowship Programme and the goal of the evaluation

The German Chancellor Fellowship Programme (Bundeskanzler-Stipendienprogramm, BUKA programme) granted by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) under the patronage of the Federal Chancellor is designed to promote promising prospective leaders from the United States, Russia, China, India and Brazil. It targets young professionals from a broad range of academic backgrounds and working fields, reaching from politics, public administration, industry, society and culture. The BUKA fellowship provides the opportunity to spend a year in Germany working on a project in cooperation with a German host while learning the German language and establishing a professional network including BUKA fellows.

Since its establishment in 1990 the BUKA programme has constantly evolved. It has transformed from a bilateral programme promoting the relations of young American future leaders to Germany into a multilateral fellowship programme for young professionals from leading nations of the world. In 2002, the programme was extended to Russia and, in 2006, expanded to include China. Since 2014, also fellows from India and Brazil are being supported by the BUKA programme. The programme was further developed throughout its existence, i.e. selection criteria as well as the selection process were adapted and new marketing measures were taken. A first evaluation of the programme took place in 2008.

Kienbaum Consultants International GmbH (Kienbaum) was commissioned by the AvH in April 2017 to evaluate the BUKA programme. The overarching question of the evaluation is, *“whether prospective decision makers, multipliers and thought leaders from a broad field of studies including politics, public administration, industry, society and culture are reached by the programme, and who then serve as intermediaries and bridge builders between Germany and their countries of origin. Furthermore, it shall be analysed, in how far the Humboldt-network is strengthened by the networks of BUKA fellows and alumni.”* The evaluation covered the years between 1990 and 2016.

The evaluation uses a theory-based design, following the programme logic and analyses how the programme works, whether and how the envisaged outcomes and impacts are achieved and whether unexpected effects have emerged. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was applied. Based on the findings of explorative interviews, an observing participation at the selection meeting 2017 and desk research (i.e. analyses of programme documents, programme statistics provided by the AvH), online surveys were conceived and carried out amongst BUKA alumni (cohort 1: 1990–2013; cohort 2: 2014–2016) and hosts (2008–2016). The data collection was complemented by case studies on the professional development of twelve BUKA alumni and by a number of expert interviews. The evaluation work was carried out in close coordination with the evaluation team at the AvH (kick off meeting, workshop discussing first findings, feedback to the draft final report in the summer of 2018). Kienbaum’s work was supported by the DLR Projektträger GmbH as subcontractor. The central findings of the evaluation, its conclusions and recommendations are summarised in the following.

Majority of BUKA's act in leading positions

The evaluation's findings show that BUKA alumni (also referred to as "BUKAs") predominantly understand themselves as being in leading positions which allow them to take part in societal discourse. They act as experts and opinion leaders and incorporate a strong international orientation. This applies in particular to the more recent generation of BUKA alumni (since 2014). Thus, the majority of BUKA fellows have grown to be internationally connected leaders. The BUKA scholarship has significantly determined the professional career of the alumni.

Cohort 2 – a new BUKA generation?

The evaluation identified differences between the older (cohort 1) and younger cohort (cohort 2) of the alumni in terms of their professional development: Firstly, the networks of the younger cohort embody a higher degree of internationality. Secondly, the change of the programme's focus (from the support of future leaders with strongly academic backgrounds to potential leaders from diverse professional backgrounds such as media, economy, non-governmental organizations, industry, society, culture) is also reflected in the career paths of the younger alumni. Approximately half of cohort 1 (1990–2013) is currently working in the scientific area whereas only 30 percent of cohort 2 work in this field. Thirdly, the professional fields alumni of the cohort 2 are operating in, are marked by a larger degree of diversity. Furthermore, the share of alumni who perceive themselves as leaders, is higher in cohort 2 than in cohort 1. And the evaluation results suggest that professional mobility is higher among the younger alumni. Cohort 2 alumni changed their professional fields and employers more frequently than cohort 1. Thus, cohort 2 shows a higher willingness to take risks in their professional development. Case studies underline the diversity and individuality of the younger BUKAs' professional development. The shift of non-working (including training and further education) and working periods is often part of this development. It can be concluded that the BUKA programme manages to interconnect young prospective leaders from a wide variety of working fields. The younger alumni are in positions from which they can act as ambassadors and bridge builders between their countries and Germany.

Close relationships to Germany

The BUKA fellowship is key for the development of the alumni's sustainable professional and private relationships to Germany. At present, 20 percent of cohort 1 and 38 percent of cohort 2 are working in Germany. The case studies show that the alumni employed in Germany generally keep close professional ties to their home countries. Overall, BUKA alumni have managed to establish a professional network in Germany. The BUKA fellowship has had a significant and valuable impact on the alumni's professional development. Two thirds of the respondents in the online survey maintain close or loose occupational relations to Germany. More than half of the alumni are still in contact with their hosts. Three quarters of BUKAs communicate experiences and knowledge acquired in Germany within their professional and private environment.

BUKAs as bridge builders between their home country and Germany

The BUKA alumni network creates and feeds essential communication channels in a variety of thematic areas between Germany and the alumni's home countries. These networks have also diversified corresponding to the diversity of areas alumni are working in. The majority of them stay in contact with their hosts for a long period of time. Case studies and an expert interview show that communication stays also intact despite of political tensions (i.e. relations between Germany and Russia). It can be concluded from the evaluation that sustainable relations have been established which allow for interpersonal exchange regarding societal issues. Media used for exchange constitute publications, research visits/stays and other means for initiating scientific and public debates.

BUKA-networks and the Humboldt-network

The BUKA programme facilitated the evolution of a vivid, international alumni network. Country-specific alumni networks are part of a broad and informal BUKA network (maintaining contact mainly via social networks). These are incorporated in the Humboldt network to different degrees. In the USA, former BUKA fellows constitute a smaller network within the much larger Humboldt-network, but BUKA-alumni are overproportionately engaged in relation to all 'Humboldtians'. In Russia, the "BUKA alumni club" acts as part of the Humboldt network and in China a smaller BUKA network exists within the large network of the 'Humboldtians'. In India, the foundation of a club of BUKAs is planned. In Brazil, hardly any ties exist between the Brazilian BUKA alumni and the Humboldt network. Commitment and support of BUKAs to the Humboldt network vary from country to country. Nevertheless, the relevance of the Humboldt-network should not be underestimated when it comes to build up BUKA alumni clubs. Furthermore, most BUKAs working as researchers and scientists perceive themselves primarily as 'Humboldtians'.

Profiling of BUKA networks: creation of a central platform for information and communication

Due to their shared experience under the stay in Germany, BUKA fellows develop a strong sense of community. The diversity of professional backgrounds and occupations is increasing and the BUKA network is constantly expanding and becoming more international. Especially the younger BUKA alumni are active in networks. BUKA alumni are resources which should be used more deliberately for attracting potential candidates particularly from non-academic sectors to the programme. Additional measures should be taken in order to make use of these potentials by improving the profile and prominence of the BUKA network. BUKA alumni serve as essential multipliers for the programme who draw attention to the programme. Personal talks are often a starting point to raise interest in the programme which then leads to targeted individual research by interested potential applicants. Both online and personal information as well as communication are essential for advertising the BUKA programme. In this respect, the present BUKA website should be further developed into a central information platform for all actors involved or interested in the BUKA programme (information hub). The information hub should contain information about alumni activities as well as about the programme itself. It should be linked to the AvH website and the respective websites of the BUKA and Humboldt networks in the BUKA countries. In this way, information about the BUKA programme will be consolidated and be made easily accessible. Via interactive settings, the dialogue between hosts, alumni and fellows as well as the BUKA alumni activities in the countries will be facilitated. A BUKA information hub will contribute to sustain relations and communication in the long run. It allows to involve hosts in the work and networks of BUKA. Information for them should be easily available and accessible. By these measures the reach of the programme in the BUKA countries should be improved and thus the recruitment of qualified applicants be supported.

Fellowship – the BUKA year in Germany

The way the fellowship stay is being implemented (language course, project implementation and organisational framework) proves to be effective for reaching the BUKA programme's general objectives. At an individual level, alumni report that the stay has helped them to further develop their expertise and methodological competencies. The hosts confirm this and underline the fellows' development during the stay. The majority of hosts affirm the fellows' leadership qualities and expect that their career will further develop into this direction. Most BUKA fellows made valuable contacts in the course of their stay which facilitates their role as intermediaries. The study tour and events provided by the programme are predominantly perceived positively by the alumni and should be continued in this form. These parts of the programme support the BUKA fellows' international networking and their intercultural competencies. Visits to the German institutions support the understanding of German society and politics. The intensive language course is viewed as helpful by the BUKA fellows and German language skills develop well during the stay. The alumni communicate the projects' results into the public and thus into societal dialogue. The evaluation identified only minor points for improving the organisation and the process of the stay in Germany.

More flexibility in the structure of the scholarship stay?

Individual interests and needs cannot always be satisfied by a fixed schedule of a fellowship. Some alumni wish to extend the general timeframe of the BUKA programme. More time would be required in order to ensure proper project implementation while getting to know the German society and culture and learning the language. In other cases, it was difficult to fit project implementation into the programme's time schedule. Also a stronger flexibility of the programme schedule was proposed as some fellows would need to interrupt their stay due to other professional obligations during the fellowship. From the viewpoint of the evaluation the wishes for more flexibility in programme implementation are comprehensible. However, these wishes should be outweighed against the finding that the programme's schedule, its structure, events and contents are essential for creating a common bond amongst the BUKAs, which is constitutive for developing the international BUKA network. The communication opportunities offered by the structure of the programme should be maintained in any case.

Timely completion of projects

Fellows have generally felt well supported by the hosts, even though most of them report that they worked in large parts "isolatedly" on their projects. Almost all fellows assert that they finalised their project and communicated its results in time. Hosts have a slightly different view and perceive the completion of the project not equally as positive as the fellows do. Hosts also indicate that projects are partially overly-ambitious. Therefore, it should be taken into consideration how BUKA fellows can be better supported in planning and implementing realisable projects. This applies both when developing the project (in the application phase) and during the actual stay. Thus, the AvH should put more emphasis on the issues of practicable project development and implementation in the BUKA information material and in their support services. Additionally, realisable and timely project implementation should also be assessed under the selection process. Another measure would be to organise a "halftime conference" for all fellows and hosts in each BUKA year, where fellows could present the status of their projects

and discuss them in a semi-public setting. The halftime conference would also provide another opportunity for networking among BUKA fellows and hosts. In addition, projects could also be communicated via the proposed central BUKA communication platform/hub.

Involvement of hosts

A stronger inclusion of hosts in programme implementation is recommended. Hosts request more specific information about the programme. This refers particularly to information about the expectations and tasks associated with the role of a BUKA host. Also the above recommended "halftime conference" can be used to reflect the role of hosts and to provide assistance if needed. Alternatively a joint "final meeting" for fellows and hosts could be organized in order to present the results of one year BUKA. This event could serve as a counterpart to the opening meeting and would set a frame around every BUKA year while contributing to a wider spreading of the projects' results. Furthermore, hosts can play a stronger part in marketing the programme. They should be involved in alumni activities more systematically.

Reaching the target group: number of applications and fellowships

Despite its success, the BUKA programme constitutes no 'sure-fire success'. A central challenge is to acquire qualified applicants for the programme. This challenge touches upon public relation and marketing of the programme, which again is closely related to networking of multipliers and alumni activities. Since the establishment of the BUKA programme 3.346 applications have been submitted and 546 fellowships were granted. The stepwise extension of the programme to more countries is reflected by the distribution of the fellows' nationalities: approximately half of them come from the USA, a quarter from China and 18 percent from Russia. Five percent of all BUKA-fellows are from India and another four percent from Brazil; the latter being included as target countries only since 2014. The annual average application numbers from the respective BUKA countries exceed the benchmark set by the AvH of 30 applications per country to be submitted to the selection committee (formally permissible and meeting the content-related criteria). However, not every year this target is met. The maximum of ten scholarships per country and year is not awarded fully. This concerns especially Russia, China India and Brazil.

Socio-demographic characteristics of BUKA fellows

With respect to socio-demographic characteristics, the BUKA programme reaches its target group. BUKA fellows are predominantly around 30 years old. Gender distribution is almost balanced. The large majority (about 90 percent) graduated from a humanistic or social scientific field of study. A previous relationship to Germany (e.g. private, job related, high school exchange) plays a major role for the decision to apply for the BUKA fellowship. The younger BUKA generation (cohort 2, 2014–2016) exhibits longer previous professional experience than cohort 1 (1990–2013). Their academic and professional backgrounds are more diverse than the older generation's, whose fellows were predominantly scientists and researchers. The increased degree of professional experience in the cohort 2 should however be interpreted with caution. This finding is based on self-assessments of alumni, who might relate to different individual interpretations of the term "professional experience".

Access to the programme – PR and marketing

The broad variety of PR measures applied by the AvH should be continued. Only this variety ensures that different, country-specific needs can be met. There is no one universal solution to best market the BUKA programme. It is rather the variety of communication channels and PR-instruments that support each other. Personal communication (i.e. via colleagues, Humboldtians, hosts) in combination with internet information and research play an important role in raising awareness of the programme and for acquiring applicants. On-site information events, as for example the BUKA "road shows" in the US, Brazil and India, are important for engaging additional multipliers who can address potential applicants in various fields. Although country-specific marketing strategies should be applied, the profile of the BUKA programme (aims, given opportunities for decision makers, multipliers) needs to be communicated consistently. In this respect the BUKA website/ information hub should play a central role in marketing the BUKA programme. It should form the central point of reference for prospects, (potential) applicants, fellows, alumni, (potential) hosts and multipliers for information and exchange on the BUKA programme. The further development of the BUKA website into an interactive communication platform (hub) is essential also in this regard.

Challenges in the application and selection process

The application and selection process in general is well established and suited. Nevertheless, some critical points were identified. It is difficult for applicants to determine whether they meet the profile of a "prospective decision maker and multiplier". In this respect, it is suggested to critically assess and specify the formulation of the requirements in the programme

documents. Regarding the timeframe of the application process, it is recommended that the application deadline for the scholarship should be moved to October as the search for hosts proves to be especially difficult in the summer due to vacation absences in Germany.

Hosts as key to the programme

One key requirement for the acceptance of an application is to present a host who will mentor the fellow. Difficulties in finding hosts result mainly from a lack of information about potential host organisations in Germany or a lack of interest in those organisations to act as a host. However, it should be considered that the search for a host constitutes a decisive and deliberate filter in the selection process for the BUKA fellowship. Nevertheless, the AvH should continue their efforts to support interested applicants in searching a host. Qualified applicants should not fail only because they were not able to find a host. Thus, the AvH should strengthen their efforts in supporting the recruitment of hosts and provide targeted information about the BUKA programme. At present, especially staff from universities and research institutes serve as hosts. They host half (cohort 1) respectively a quarter (cohort 2) of all BUKA fellows during their stay in Germany. The AvH and the role of a host is well known in the academic area, this might facilitate finding a host in this area rather than in other sectors. Therefore, the BUKA programme should particularly be promoted to NGOs, associations, administration and the private sector, taking also account of their increasing role in the programme.
