Networked university: higher education global player

International networking is a must for universities. If they want to keep up with the globalisation of higher education, they have to cultivate and strengthen contacts worldwide. One example: Justus Liebig University Giessen

**PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS**

JLU partnerships with foreign universities are interdisciplinary and open to students of all departments. Universities in Izmir, Kazan und Łódź are also members of the Giessen Center for Eastern European Studies (GiZo).

This is top international management: Justus Liebig University (JLU) maintains approximately 100 contractual partnerships on all continents. Relations are cultivated from Seattle to Sydney, from St Petersburg to Sri Lanka. The university cooperates with veterinarians in Tennessee and with agricultural scientists in Ukraine. The international exchange of students and professors is a perfectly normal part of academic life in Giessen whether it involves partners in China, Mozambique or Trinidad and Tobago. Important themes are examined in multinational networks – for example, when German experts work with specialists from six other countries on the subject of Cultural Contact and Conflict Zones in Eastern Europe.

One thing is clear: you won’t find any ivory towers in Giessen. Instead, as in numerous other German higher education institutions, you will find a dynamic network with ever more nodes and branches that is truly global in scope. In mid-June 2016, the Higher Education Compass of the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK) counted over 31,500 international partnerships at 299 German higher education institutions with no fewer than 5,205 foreign universities and colleges in 153 countries. The “global player” from Giessen, a town with just 85,000 inhabitants, is a perfect example of what a strong influence internationalisation is having in education and research.

*Internationalisation is neither an end in itself nor a disconnected goal of purely intrinsic value. It represents >
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Nearly one tenth of the roughly 28,000 students at Justus Liebig University (JLU) are from outside Germany. 2,500 international students from 121 countries are studying at the JLU. Roughly 33% of all students are studying in English. Many also take part in the study modules at the JLU enabling students to be taught in a foreign language, generally English.

COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

The JLU cooperation network is also a springboard for further growth. For example, a trilateral memorandum of understanding was signed in April 2016 with the Namib University of Science and Technology and the North-West University Potchefstroom in South Africa.

International networking is not a luxury for a modern university, but a must. The JLU Giessen has long had the expertise needed to internationalise not only through its various cooperation agreements, but also through its own internationalisation strategy. The JLU has internalised the connection of local or regional responsibility and international networking, and embedding JLU President Joybrato Mukherjee’s “driving forces” of internationalisation are the global competition between higher education institutions and higher education systems, new centres in the international research system, as well as demographic change and the resulting “search for talent”. Other decisive factors for the university president are the responsibility of higher education institutions in the face of future challenges, such as climate change, the energy crisis and migration – and last, but not least the goal of preparing young people for globalised occupations.