

# Experience Report:

## Research Fellowship from DFG - Going abroad as a postdoc -

Bork Berghoff  
Institute of Microbiology and Molecular Biology

16 February 2017

# My way into and through academia

**I am...**

Microbiologist / Molecular Biologist

Research Associate at the Institute for Microbiology and Molecular Biology (JLU)

"Junior Research Group Leader" (JLU)

**Scientist**

# My way into and through academia

Researchers discussed early career challenges at the DFG symposium in Bonn on 30 May 2016.

An academic career in Germany is:

” HAZARD ”

” EXTRAORDINARILY RISKY ”

” NO FORTUNE AT ALL ”

What do you need to overcome these challenges?

” PASSION FOR SCIENCE ”

**Good CV**

# My way into and through academia

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Studied Biology at JLU	2001 – 2007
Doctoral thesis at JLU (Member of GGL)	2007 – 2011
Post-doc at JLU	2011 – 2012
Post-doc in Uppsala	2013 – 2015
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# Step 1: Doctoral thesis

My thesis:

"Small regulatory RNAs in phototrophic bacteria"

## **What should you expect from your thesis:**

- ✓ Learn different methods/ techniques
- ✓ Learn how to present (progress reports)
- ✓ Learn how to supervise students
- ✓ Learn how to publish (and actually publish)
- ✓ Start networking (seminars, conferences, GGL)



## Step 2: Writing the proposal

### DFG research fellowship

#### **Who is allowed to apply?**

Scientists that are integrated in the German science system for at least three years during the doctoral and/ or postdoctoral phase directly prior to submission of the proposal.

#### **What do you need?**

- ✓ Host institute
- ✓ PhD thesis (finished or submitted)
- ✓ Proposal (project description)
- ✓ Letter(s) of Reference (optional)

## Step 2: Writing the proposal

### DFG research fellowship

#### Host institute

Which country do you want to choose?

You need to feel comfortable!

English speaking country might be a benefit.

Which University?

High ranking University.

University with international students and researchers.

Which group?

Supervisor should be known in the field of research.

Young supervisors should be outstanding.

## Step 2: Writing the proposal

### DFG research fellowship

#### **Proposal**

##### Project

Is the applicant qualified to pursue the project based on his/ her experience?

##### Methods

Ideally one should learn NEW methods/ techniques during the planned project!

##### Coaching

An experienced person (e.g. supervisor from host institute) should correct and improve the proposal!

## Step 2: Writing the proposal

### DFG research fellowship

#### **Decision**

At least one external review (from a specialist in the field)

Decision by DFG boards in < 6 months

#### **What is important for a positive decision?**

At least one good publication (first author)

Promising and realistic project

Reputation of host institute

## Step 3: Being abroad

### DFG research fellowship

Enjoy being partly independent !!!

Interact with other researchers.

Stay in contact with researchers from Germany.

New country = new way of thinking/ approaching research  
→ compare to Germany and draw your own conclusions...



## Step 4: Coming back

### DFG research fellowship

The fellowship is granted for a maximum of 24 months.

But: If you have a child (younger than 12) or if your child is born during the duration of the fellowship, you can extend for up to 12 months.

(In my case: 3 years of funding)

### DFG return grant

For reintegration into the German research system, fellows may submit a proposal for a return grant.

Funding for up to 6 months.

# Funding volume

## DFG research fellowship (calculated for Sweden)

Basic fellowship	1750.00 €
Allowance for direct project costs	250.00 €
Foreign allowance	840.00 €
<u>Cost of living allowance</u>	<u>77.70 €</u>
Total	2917.70 €

## What is not covered?

- ✓ Lab work/ consumables → host institute
- ✓ Health insurance
- ✓ Social insurance
- ✓ Retirement provision

# Acknowledgement

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