

III. Executive Summary

Object and context of the evaluation

The object of the evaluation project is the programme Promoting German Studies in the UK (PGS). The program was offered a total of three times (in 2009, 2011/2012, and 2014), each time with a funding period of approximately two years. Within the framework of the PGS program, researcher groups at universities in the United Kingdom could apply for project funding of up to €37,500 per annum. Funding was allocated to projects addressing issues related to contemporary Germany, aspects of German culture, Germany's role in the EU, Germany's relationship to other European countries, and its role in the world.

After the projects funded in the 2014 project round concluded at the end of 2016, the PGS programme has now been evaluated for the first time. The evaluation will primarily review whether objectives as well as the programme's efficacy have been achieved. Based on the evaluation of the individual projects, this evaluation aims to review whether the programme overall has reached its objectives. Furthermore, the evaluation involved a review of whether, how, and under what conditions the programme can be expanded to other regions of the world.

The goal of the PGS programme is to contribute to the development and expansion of academic potential within German studies. This should include a contribution to the political and cultural dialogue between the UK and Germany. Further goals include fostering cooperation between existing institutions in the field of German studies and effectively tapping funded and related initiatives for researchers at universities in the UK and at centres for German and European studies abroad. Finally, the programme should inspire universities in the UK to develop their own academic and financial contributions to the field of German studies.

A total of 37 project applications were submitted in the three project rounds. Of these, 16 were selected. With a grant quota of about forty-four percent, the programme offers applicants good chances of success and a low threshold for access to PGS funds. At the same time, however, the programme ensures the competitive principle of choosing the best on the basis of academic excellence and appropriate involvement of the holding institution.

Programme continuation

The evaluation committee attests to the high, in some cases outstanding academic quality of the funded projects. It strongly recommends the continuation of the PGS programme in the UK and the preparation of the next application round. During the inspection, academic excellence was emphasized as an important criterion for the decision to fund proposals, although it was also stressed that the projects' potential should not be recognized in hindsight only but evaluated beforehand for their strengths.

German studies as a discipline

The projects' academic heterogeneity raises the question as to the prospects for and future of German studies, as well as to what direction future PGS funding should take.

The field of German studies in the UK finds itself in a contradictory situation. The level of research has probably never been as high as it is today; and yet the subject is struggling with the consequences of the drastic decrease of German language teaching in the schools, which on GCSE level ("Mittlere Reife") has dropped by 60% between 2002 and 2016. The inevitably weak position on the A-level German language teaching ("Oberstufe"), a bald contradiction to the increasing public interest in Germany, makes it difficult to attract young researchers.

Taken together, however, the centres funded by the DAAD in North America, Brazil, China, Japan, Korea, the Russian Federation, France, the Netherlands, Poland and Israel along with the British institutions

(U Birmingham, U Cambridge) and projects provide an impressive range of topics and methods. They form a very innovative and dynamic network. Due to their international variety and connections, German and European studies are substantial enough to exploit fruitfully the discussion about the objectives, methods, and integration of sub-disciplines, thereby furthering the subject. The strengthening of the DAAD-funded network contributes to ensuring the relevance, acceptance, and visibility of German and European studies as an autonomous discipline internationally and in the UK.

Positive experiences regarding international diversity in German and European studies provide compelling arguments for geographically expanding the PGS programme to include further countries and regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe. If diversity is seen as integral to the discipline, then expanding the program can make a significant contribution to its breadth, depth and stability.

Institutional vs. project funding

Initially, the PGS programme was recognizably a follow-up programme to safeguard achieved standards once institutional DAAD centre funding ended, as the funding is linked to established academic and organizational structures. Thus, when allocating funds, not only are overhead costs exempted from funding but the applicant is expected to pledge contributing matching funds for a sustainable, cooperative commitment. The programme's significance within the framework of the Federal Foreign Office's cultural relations and education policies (AKBP) further distinguishes the structure and allocation procedures of PGS project funding compared to other programmes.

With regard to the Institute for German Studies (IGS) in Birmingham, which has long received funding from the DAAD, the principle outlined above has had a notable knock-on effect. As the University of Birmingham, which serves as the holding institution for the IGS, only provides minimal

annual funding, grants for PGS projects have become a matter of survival. If the IGS is to continue to exist as one of the leading centres for German studies in Great Britain, alternative funding paths must be taken into consideration.

The principle of matching funds as a basis for sustainable commitment on the part of the holding institution is endorsed by the evaluation committee and should continue to apply. This endorsement must take into consideration that the universities calculate their own resources using very different models. The DAAD should continue to abstain from paying funds to cover the universities' overhead or administrative costs. As PGS funding depends upon highly effective academic and organizational infrastructure, applications for innovative projects from smaller institutions seeking support in the form of seedcorn funding and attempting to lay the groundwork for larger-scale projects continue to face hurdles. It needs to be clarified what other measures might be applied to compensate for this.

Looking at the work of the newly established DAAD centre for German studies at the University of Cambridge (Research Hub for German Studies), the question arises as to whether this kind of project receiving substantial longitudinal funding from the DAAD should be eligible to submit applications in the upcoming PGS funding rounds. The evaluation committee does not consider this double funding expedient.

Support for young researchers and infra-structural development

Support for young researchers was named as an additional criterion in approximately two-thirds of the project applications. The measures, however, predominantly focused on doctoral students. In the interests of broader impact, it would be desirable if the thematic and methodological diversity of PGS projects more strongly influenced graduate study curricula too.

The annual German studies summer school has proven a viable institution of support for young researchers. However, a higher

degree of standardization and structuring would benefit sustainability and visibility. Generally, it needs to be assessed whether additional administrative and legal resources and competencies should be demonstrated for structurally ambitious projects as early as during the application phase.

Reporting and controlling

On the basis of the materials examined from the three PGS programme rounds, the use of funds in funded projects can be deemed as thoroughly appropriate and generally efficient with regard to the achievement of objectives. In the future, fundamental guidelines from the DAAD for structuring the documents that need to be submitted throughout the project cycle including basic information listing as well as clarifying the appropriate use of funds would be helpful.

Recommendations from the evaluation committee: an overview

Recommendation 1:

The committee recommends that the PGS programme be continued and that academic excellence continues to form a major criterion for allocating funding. Excellence should be determined based on both past achievements and on potential. The committee further recommends taking into account additional criteria and secondary focus areas such as knowledge transfer and efficacy, support for young researchers, networking, etc. as further distinctive qualities that lend a prospective project a special profile.

Recommendation 2:

The committee recommends further strengthening of international connections among the DAAD-funded players in the field of German and European studies (centres, projects) both institutionally and personally. It sees networking as a significant engine of thematic and methodological diversity within the subject and thus as a basis for its further fruitful development.

Recommendation 3:

The committee recommends incrementally expanding the PGS programme to other countries and regions while incorporating the experiences of existing centres and projects. It sees the geographical expansion of the programme as an instrument for securing the subject's thematic and methodological diversity and thus as a requirement for the development of German and European studies as a whole. Furthermore, the committee recommends integrating the Republic of Ireland for future application calls.

Recommendation 4:

The commission recommends reviewing and adjusting future PGS rounds such that the funding makes it possible, on the one hand, to further secure and expand upon achieved standards and structures in German studies without, on the other hand, precluding strategic, thematic, and methodological innovation and the incorporation of new institutions.

Recommendation 5:

The commission recommends continuing to work towards a pledge by the applicant in the application phase to contribute matching funds. It further recommends continuing to abstain in the future from paying overhead costs in the United Kingdom. Moreover, it recommends excluding institutions funded through the DAAD Centres programme from applying to the PGS programme in order to prevent double funding.

Recommendation 6:

The committee recommends explicitly including support for young researchers as a criterion in future application calls. The applicant should explain how respective measures will affect not only young researchers but also graduate students.

Recommendation 7:

The committee recommends that for projects with an explicit structure-building component, applicants should demonstrate in the application phase — over and beyond the academic requirements — to what extent they can integrate university-related legal and administrative competencies. It further recommends that, in the future, German studies summer schools once again be taken into account as independent funding lines in application calls in order to strengthen these measures long-term. Moreover, it recommends a review to determine whether the DAAD can provide additional support to structurally especially ambitious projects with a view to resources in university and knowledge management as well as scientific communication.

Recommendation 8:

The committee recommends positively taking into account activities related to knowledge transfer, scientific communication, policy advising, cooperation with schools, and other appropriate forms of university outreach providing these have a recognizable and qualitatively significant academic purpose.

Recommendation 9:

The committee recommends retaining for future application calls the funding sum of up to €40,000 per annum. It further recommends expanding the funding period to up to three years in cases in which the applicant plausibly integrates one or several doctoral projects as an element fundamental to achieving the overall project's academic objectives.

Recommendation 10:

The committee recommends providing to a reasonable extent a structural plan and an appropriate method of presentation for the documents that the project team must submit throughout the project cycle (project

proposal, budget plan, project report, statement of usage). Moreover, it recommends working towards keeping the time between the initial funding pledge and the sending of the official grant notification to a minimum to enable those responsible for the projects to tap funding as planned. Additionally, a review is recommended to determine to what extent the disposal of funds can be permitted over the course of several years. The committee further recommends providing projects with a guideline for appropriate use of funds. Finally, the committee recommends that DAAD receive a brief list of actual publications at the latest three years after funding ends.