

## **Researchers on the Move. Intercultural Dimensions in Sciences and Humanities**

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### **Practical background**

“Researchers on the Move. Intercultural Dimensions in Sciences and Humanities” is a project which facilitates critical discourse about interculturality in sciences and humanities and at the same time creates an opportunity for students/researchers from industrialized and developing countries with different backgrounds and nationalities to meet and exchange their views. The project started with an online forum where students/researchers from Kenya, Nigeria, Palestine, Eritrea and Austria have been invited to contribute articles in a personal weblog as part of a wider network of social media. Radio programs with interviews, reports and public opinion surveys constitute another activity of this work with the intention to address intercultural and development matters to a broader public. Finally, two workshops further developed and addressed challenges on intercultural relations in international cooperation. Researchers from Uganda, Bulgaria, India, Austria and Argentina were invited to share their personal experiences with interculturality during their studies or work abroad. Not the least their experiences are imbedded into a historical gap between the so called “North-South” in particular facing unlike challenges in (higher) education and research.

As part of this project, students/researchers and partners from KEF worked together on developing a better method for understanding interculturality and development matters from examples of international cooperation.

### **Research background**

Communication between members of different cultures is a global-historical inevitability and a challenge of every day life and therefore a significant concern in our today’s world. However we still have need of substantial insights into conditions of inter- or transcultural communication work. Power relations due to “(under)development” such as the gap between “North-South” in (higher) education and research particularly are often neglected. The questions discussed in our platforms are not only about respect for

different cultures and in particular between students/researchers from the so called South. But also with focus on questions on development issues and their ties to a better understanding for the living or working conditions in particular of student/researchers from developing countries. Development matters such as development aid and cooperation, poverty, corruption, mobility in and for (higher) education and research and at the same time this working together for solutions with respect to the knowledge of the people from these concerned regions as a strengthening of intercultural relations.

### **Aims**

The project intends to offer virtual and real spaces for critical discourse about interculturality in sciences and humanities for students/researchers from the so called “North-South” with different backgrounds and nationalities to meet and exchange their views and to build networks. Examples of how intercultural dialogue and development matters in particular in (higher) education and research between students/researchers from industrialized and developing countries can work are to support groups and subject matters which may otherwise not gain much publicity and which are until now under-represented or not at all represented in the mainstream. Further too definitely and purposely prohibit power relations which are historically narrowed in international development but go far beyond for example in colonization, such as racist, sexist, fascist subject matters subject matters which violate human dignity to raise awareness and to sensitise a broader public.

### **Main contribution**

It has become the norm that students/researchers travel and work internationally. However, Austria has not proven to be the best example in Europe in terms of its treatment of and policies towards people from different backgrounds and nationalities. Considering this apparent contradiction one might ask: Can Austria be considered as an attractive place for scientific cooperation? What are the living and working conditions for students/researchers in Austria? The past few years have shown that there is only a very limited level of dialogue possible in Austria about some of its most pressing issues. How and where might science and research position itself with respect to students/researchers from Africa, Asia or Latin America and to development matters as a ground for the so called gap between North and South?

### **Implications**

In the course of this project two workshops and four radio broadcasts were organized. The workshops were an opportunity for representatives from different scientific disciplines as well as from different countries and backgrounds to meet and discuss prejudices, stereotypes, and barriers from their very personal experiences and to discuss potential solutions towards a more respectful way of life in our society. These events facilitated an exchange of experiences and networking among invited participants representing different stakeholder groups about intercultural dialogue and questions of western and non western ways of approaching for example (higher) education and research. Respect and understanding of each other were also topics and how individuals can connect voluntarily to such "idealistic" projects to open new horizons of tolerance.

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## **Internet:**

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<http://www.forscherinnen-unterwegs.net>

Radio ORANGE 94.0 <http://o94.at>

KEF Commission for Development Studies <http://www.kef-online.at>