Grußwort anlässlich des Trainings „Career Development and Social Integration for Refugee Researchers“ im Rahmen des Projektes BRiDGE

19.07.2019, 9.00 Uhr
Universität Bielefeld, X-E0-222

Dear participating scholars, dear speakers, dear organizers,

please let me give you a very warm welcome to the training “Career Development and Social Integration for Refugee Researchers” as an integral part of the “Bridge for Researchers in Danger Going to Europe” project – the “BRiDGE-project” at Bielefeld University!

I understand that this course today is the 4th one after similar workshops in Sofia, Bulgaria in November 2018, Thessaloniki, Greece in February 2019, Ankara, Turkey, in May 2019 – and finally today in Bielefeld, Germany.

You may know that Bielefeld University is acting as coordinator for the BRIDGE-project. We are working together with strong partners across Europe and are being supported by the funding of the European Union. And I would like to point out that we take pride in doing so. Promoting diversity and defending values of an open-minded society is what Bielefeld University stands for, and our active participation in the BRiDGE-project as well as the network “scholars at risks” is an important part of
our mission as a signatory institution of the Magna Charta Universitatum.

BRiDGE gives – in a nutshell - “an all-in-one solution for the localized guidance of refugee researchers […] in the European Research Area”. BRiDGe facilitates the efforts of the European Union to help refugee researchers settle into their host country of residence and prepare them for the highly competitive and highly skilled EU job market.

So far, 200 refugee researchers have been supported by BRiDGE, particularly those in their early and late stages as post doc researchers and professors of all ages. A pilot training course like this one today is thus only one small part of several large and interrelated work packages of which the BRiDGE project consists. Being just a small part or not, in my eyes, a day like this provides us with an excellent opportunity to also reflect our work as researchers in an intercultural and politically sensitive setting – and to discuss our own hopes and expectations as well as how we perceive the necessities of the European academic job market.

Dear participating refugee researchers: some of you are based in Germany, and some of you had long ways to travel across Europe from your host country to this event at Bielefeld University. But all of you bring with you some history of making the hard decision to leave your country of origin and to embark on the thorny way to find a new home.

I can only imagine – and I am sure that it is impossible to truly understand until one makes a similar experience – what this means, for both your personal life and family life, but – and this is why we are here today – also for your research and your desire to peacefully pursue your studies and to carry forward your research projects.

To support you in doing so as our colleagues in the world wide net of researchers is our utmost concern today.

And meeting all of you today reminds me of how I listened to Mr Ali Malohdji recently, who came to Germany as a refugee with his parents, then first dropped out of school and seemingly led a life with more downs than ups at first - only to become a successful entrepreneur and highly respected life-long EU-ambassador for the youth. He talked about contemporary requirements of the ever-changing job market, where flexibility,
mobility, adaptability, multilingualism and intercultural competence is all needed, next to other things. And, he concluded – who would better embody such qualities, but high-skilled people with refugee backgrounds?

Thus, please let me invite you to optimism, and I sincerely hope that this workshop today will serve you well in order to have you succeed as academic colleagues in the societies you came to live in.

The organizers of our workshop today, Eleni Andrianopulu, BRiDGE Project Coordinator and acting Director of our International Office, her team from the Welcome Centre of Bielefeld University, as well as cooperating partners such as Svetlana Dimitrova from Sofia University, have devoted much of their energy to offer to you a program with plenty of input and opportunities for practically testing how to apply for a job and one to one consultation as well. A day with lots of valuable information is waiting for you, and I sincerely hope that investing this high level of energy – both for the participants as well as the organizers and trainers – will fully pay off with a good outcome.

However, as the Vice Rector for international affairs and diversity I represent Bielefeld University here, and therefore I would like to also invite you to know more about the place you came to on this sunny day – please allow me to shortly introduce to you our university as well.

Thank you.