

# Searching for Collaborators in Germany

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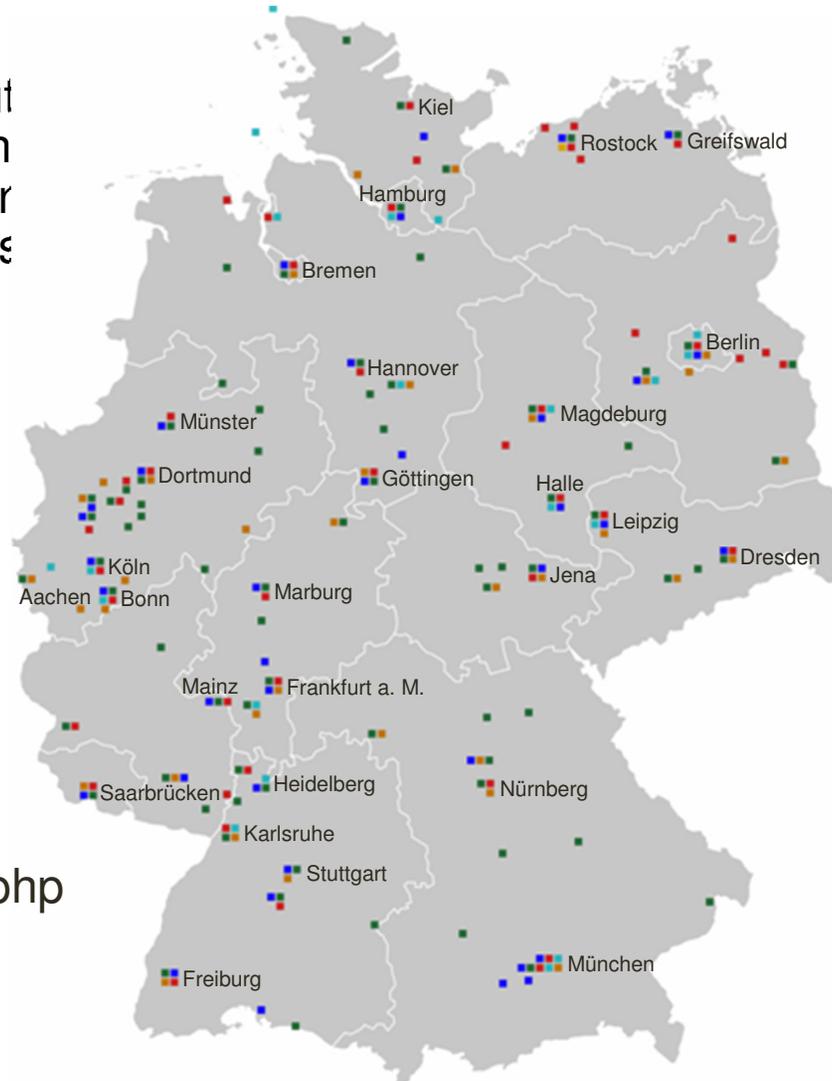
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# Where do I start?

- <http://www.humboldt-foundation.de>
  - <http://nairobi.daad.de>

# Research location Germany

- Universities
- Leibniz Institut
- Max Planck In
- Helmholtz Cer
- Fraunhofer Ins



<http://www.bmbf.de/en/5355.php>

# Research institutions

- approximately 100 universities: research in all disciplines
- 81 Max Planck Institutes: basic research, especially in the natural and biosciences but also in the humanities and social sciences
- 60 Fraunhofer Institutes: applied research
- 18 Helmholtz Centres: technical-scientific and biomedical research
- 86 Leibniz Institutes: research ranging from knowledge-oriented basic research to applied research



# How to find your Supervisor

- [www.campus-germany.de](http://www.campus-germany.de)
- [www.daad.de/ipp](http://www.daad.de/ipp)
- [www.daad.de/research-explorer](http://www.daad.de/research-explorer)
- [www.phdgermany.de](http://www.phdgermany.de)
- [www.dfg.de/gepris](http://www.dfg.de/gepris)

# The Dr Verweyen way

- There are some hidden keywords in google:
- You are looking for a German website: `*site:.de*`
- The URL should contain the word "uni" as most of all German university sites do: `*inurl:uni*`
- Then you are probably looking for a Professor so add the abbreviation `*Prof.*`
- Then you look for some keywords that describe your research topic and that you'd expect in a text on your topic. Let's say `*Microbial Ecology*`
- Put all this into one line:
  - `*site:.de inurl:uni Prof. Microbial Ecology*`
  - `*site:.de inurl:uni Prof. African languages*`
  - `*site:.de inurl:uni Prof. Physical Chemistry*`

# Exercise

- Go online and perform a search

# Ask your Supervisor

- Ask your supervisors or colleagues if they have any relevant contacts
- May have existing contacts
- If you are in Physics ask someone in Physics please!
  - Humboldtians
  - DAAD Scholars

# Tips on communication with the Professor

Professors in Germany, as is the case anywhere in the world, are very busy people. They receive many e-mails every day from all over the world, from people who are looking for the same thing you desire. So make sure that your e-mail will catch their attention.

This is my idea of a bad letter (via e-mail):

Hello Dr. B,

I am writing in response to your conversation with Prof. Hamadi  
Thanks for accepting to host me for a DAAD scholarship.

I have looked at your lab work and I am very pleased to inform you  
that I am interested in pursuing a PhD in quorum sensing.

Please let me know which topic of quorum sensing research that you  
could like me to pursue in your lab.

I will be very pleased if the topic encompassed the genetics,  
biochemistry and physiology aspects of bacteria.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

M.

Dear Prof.....,

**REF: SEEKING FOR A PHD SUPERVISOR**

My names are HMM from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), Kenya. I was given your contacts by Prof. Hamadi Boga who was my supervisor for MSc. I hold a Masters of Science in Biotechnology from the same University. My MSc work focused on the Impact of Bt toxin on soil microbial diversity with special emphasis on *Rhizobium*. Currently, I am seeking support from DAAD for PhD studies in Germany and for my application I need the consent of a Professor in Germany who would be my PhD supervisor and also offer a laboratory space for my PhD research. I talked to Prof. Hamadi Boga who indicated that he had talked to you and you had indicated willingness to host me.

Following discussions with Prof. Boga, I have keen interest on working on cellulases from termites because of their potential uses and possible wide industrial applications. I am proposing to work on "Metagenomic mining of cellulase genes from wood and grass feeding termites and their guts symbionts". I have attached a copy of my concept note so that you may have a brief overview of my ideas. I am very willingly to develop the research proposal as soon as I get your consent and guidance on the topic and objectives.

Find attached a copy of my curriculum vitae for your perusal. I am looking forward to your favorable response.

Thank you in advance.

Yours Sincerely,

MH

# ...The reply from the prof.

Dear.....

Thank you very much for your well written application and concept note for a PhD thesis project. Please excuse the delayed reply to your messages, but I was traveling with only limited internet access.

Professor Boga already informed me a while ago that you might send such an application. We do indeed have a research team in my department which is performing research in the field of cellulase discovery (from fungi) for bioethanol production, and as you might know from Prof. Boga, a metagenomics project is about to start in one of the other research teams at DSMZ. Therefore the proposal for which you outlined a concept note would nicely fit into the research environment at DSMZ. Please feel free to go ahead and develop a research proposal following the concept which you outlined, I shall be available to co-supervise your PhD work in case you will receive funding for such a project at though DAAD.

To strengthen your proposal, I can already inform you that we are presently about to describe novel families of cellulases as the outcome of comparative genomics studies from a large scale genome sequencing project, which we are running here together with an American research institution. Since these protein families are rather new and unknown to other researchers in the field, we could use the knowledge about these cellulase families to strengthen the screening part of your research proposal.

Sincerely yours,

HPK

# More Tips

- The fact that we communicate via e-mail does not remove from us the obligation to communicate formally and professionally. Put some soul into the letter and do not write casually or hurriedly as if you are writing to a friend. It should be formal as you would write if you were applying for employment. In a way you are. Here are some tips:
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  - (i) Subject: make sure that the subject describes exactly what your intention is – which is: Seeking for research collaboration or seek for a postdoctoral research position or seeking for a short research visits whichever the case maybe.
  - 
  - (ii) Do not forget to mention the foundation from which funds are being sought to facilitate your stay in Germany, and if you are a DAAD or Humboldt scholar, say it!
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  - (iii) If you are seeking support from DAAD and you need a Professor to host you, make sure that it comes out clearly. It helps sometimes to copy the letter to the contact person at DAAD or any other foundation whose support you are seeking.
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# More Tips

- (iv) Make sure to attach your updated CV. Let it be your main selling document as it is supposed to be.
- (v) Be open about the research topic, because most research groups have their research interests and they hate diverting resources to projects that are of no interest to them. Flexibility is an asset.
- (vi) Please remember to add a rider in your letter saying that if the desired person is unable to host you he should kindly suggest names of Professors in the same or related area who you may contact.
- (vii) Don't attach an entire research proposal! The first mail is supposed to generate interest. Attach at most a 1-page abstract, but offer to send and discuss the available proposal anytime! Once the other side shows interest in you and your research, the discussion about the collaboration can begin.
- (viii) Before you send your mail, check for spelling mistakes. Nothing is more embarrassing and it decreases your chances of a reply when you present yourself as not thorough enough and without care and eye for the detail.

# Conclusion

- With the internet, all else is possible
- Polite Logical Communication is the key
- Follow the tips provided here.
- Be creative
- On a different note, you may do everything like I propose here and still not get a response, in which case, send a reminder to the professor or contact person after one week or 10 days latest. You have nothing to lose.
- On average if you write to ten professors, 3 might reply and 1 will be positive.
- Good Luck