

Reutlingen is Germany's International University of the Year 2010

The results of a competition to find Germany's International University of the Year 2010 were announced on 23rd February. The winner is Reutlingen University of Applied Sciences. The 26 participating universities included the WHU School of Management, the strongest competitor in the field.

This prestigious competition, which was held for the first time by the Stifterverband for the promotion of German science and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), is now due to take place annually. 26 universities competed under the motto "Success Strategies for the International Mobility of German students". The jurors selected the best five finalists from the Who's Who of German Universities: Humbolt University in Berlin, University of Constance, Viadrina European University in Frankfurt on the Oder, the WHU Otto Beisheim School of Management, and, of course, Reutlingen University of Applied Sciences. "Just getting to the finals as the only university of applied sciences among the more traditional universities, was, in itself, a great honour and a tribute to our efforts in promoting internationalisation," said President of Reutlingen University, Professor Peter Niess.

The award ceremony was held in Berlin on 23rd February 2010 during the conference "Bologna macht mobil" (Mobility after Bologna; innovative ideas and models for international studies). In addition to its prestige, the prize also includes an award of 50,000 euros, which Reutlingen will find very useful in the present climate of budget cuts and savings.

Each university had to give a presentation and answer questions from the jury. Reutlingen's turn came after Humbolt University and Viadrina University. In a ten minute presentation, President Peter Niess outlined Reutlingen's achievements, after which he, Vice President Gerhard Gruhler, and the director of Reutlingen's International office, Baldur Veit, faced a twenty-minute session of questions from the jury, with the best possible results. WHU Business School followed Reutlingen as the last of the finalists.

The results were announced at 7 pm: first place was awarded to Reutlingen. In his acceptance speech, Peter Niess said that this award to Reutlingen University of Applied Sciences was a very significant step in German higher education by a jury consisting mainly of representatives of the traditional universities, with only one representative from a university of applied sciences. Professor Niess said the award was a tribute to the achievements of his whole team: the international coordinators in the individual departments and study programmes, the professors who work to build up and promote international partnerships, and all the staff who support both incoming and outgoing students. The efforts of all of these people over the years have led to this very good result. Without people such as Professor Baldur Veit, whose work in establishing and maintaining contacts with international partner universities and securing external funding has provided much of the basis for Reutlingen University's present leading position in international student exchange programmes, Reutlingen would not be receiving this award today. He also prepared the application documents for this competition.

As the first official International University of the Year, Reutlingen will continue to promote internationalization. At the foothills of the Swabian Alb, Reutlingen, often referred to as the “Swabian Harvard”, is no newcomer to extensive international engagement. Professor Max Huber, Vice President of the German Academic Exchange Service and chairman of the jury, described Reutlingen, with its five faculties (Applied Chemistry, ESB Business School, Informatics, Technology, and Textiles and Design), as “A model for living internationalism covering all aspects of academic life. The clear strategic objective of producing graduates to be leaders is closely geared to the practical orientation of the studies. Reutlingen University is, with its typical enthusiasm, but awareness of practicality, extending the models that have proved so successful in its business areas to the technical disciplines.”

For the five faculties and for the students of Reutlingen University, this award is a significant contribution to the image of the institution, and a further spur to continue to develop and improve study programmes imbued with a sense of responsibility in a constructive international context.