

No. 169 • 8 September 2017  
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PRESS RELEASE

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## Equality and Diversity in Higher Education

**ArbeiterKind.de and the University of Giessen are hosting the 26th Annual Conference of the European Access Network (EAN) from 20 to 22 September 2017 – Register by 13 September**

ArbeiterKind.de (“Working-Class Child, Germany”) – Germany’s largest non-profit organisation for first-generation students – in cooperation with Justus Liebig University Giessen, where the organisation was founded, will be hosting the 26th Annual Conference of the European Access Network (EAN) from 20 to 22 September 2017. Under the title of *“Sharing stories of empowerment: Creating new strategies for diversity and inclusion in higher education”* the conference is inviting international practitioners, academics and other interested participants to attend workshops, lectures, plenums and open spaces to discuss equality and diversity in higher education. Guests not only from Europe, but also from the USA, Canada and Australia, will be attending.

One of the keynote speakers will be Professor Eileen Drew of Trinity College Dublin. Taking gender as her main focus, she will speak on “Turning gaps into GEPs (gender equality plans): Lessons for equality and diversity from Trinity College Dublin”. Kees Smit, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, will focus on migration in his talk on “Equal access to higher education in immigrant societies”. The Kiron organisation will also take a similar focus. At the EAN Conference, the organisers will report on their programme, which offers refugees the opportunity to study in Germany.

The conference will also be attended by Prof. Dr. Andrea Bührmann, who since autumn 2013 has been Director of the recently established Göttingen Diversity Research Institute and since 2015 has been Vice President responsible for studies and teaching at Georg-August-Universität in Göttingen. Her talk on “Making diversity happen” will address the challenges faced by under-represented target groups with respect to access to university education and during their studies. Professor Bührmann will present problem-solving strategies illustrated by examples from practical experience.

A highlight of the interactive conference programme will be a plenum and accompanying workshop on the central role of personal empowerment in education. Under the motto “Start sharing your stories and best practices”, the ArbeiterKind.de staff and volunteers will invite the participants to relate their own experience of their student days. This follows the tradition of EAN Annual Conferences offering an international platform for exchange with practical examples and the opportunity to make personal contact.

## European Access Network (EAN)

Although today far more young people study than in the past, access to studying is still strongly dependent on social background and many other factors which have nothing to do with individual achievement. Since 1991, various actors in education have joined forces to work towards broader access to higher education. Around 130 members in Europe and the USA are currently involved.

Katja Urbatsch, founder of ArbeiterKind.de, has been on the board of the European Access Network since 2011. "Whoever wishes to study should receive the opportunity," Urbatsch stresses. That is the vision of ArbeiterKind.de and that is why I am actively involved in EAN. It is a great honour to host this year's conference in order to foreground the crucially important topic of diversity and inclusion in higher education."

JLU is the cooperation partner for the EAN Annual Conference 2017. JLU President Prof. Dr. Joybrato Mukherjee says: "Promoting access to higher education for disadvantaged groups is a major goal for us at Justus Liebig University Giessen. We believe that social background should not dictate educational and career opportunities." Prof. Mukherjee will officiate at the opening ceremony on 20 September to welcome the participants.

The 26th EAN Annual Conference is funded by the "Bildungsgerechtigkeitsfonds der Studienförderung der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung" (the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Education Equity Fund for the Promotion of Students), "Bildungs- und Förderungswerk der GEW im DGB e.V." (Registered Society: Education and Funding Foundation of the Union of Education and Science's in the German Trades Union), the ZEIT Foundation and "Sparkasse Giessen" as well as other sponsors.

### About ArbeiterKind.de

ArbeiterKind.de is Germany's largest non-profit organisation supporting those who are the first in their family to study. Throughout Germany, approximately 6,000 volunteers are involved in 75 local groups. Their job is to inform young people about studying, encourage and support first-generation students on their path from enrolling in their first year to graduating and embarking on a career. About 38,000 school students were reached in 2016 by ArbeiterKind.de information events.

The organisation has received many awards and won the IQ prize in spring 2016 presented by Mensa in Germany in category 3 "Hochbegabung in der Öffentlichkeit" ("High-giftedness in public"). ArbeiterKind.de in North Rhine-Westphalia was named the "Place of Progress" in May 2017. The success of the organisation's concept has been recognised by a long-term study conducted by the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) and the WZB Berlin Social Science Center, proving that children from non-academic families more frequently decide to study having attended an ArbeiterKind.de event.

### Date

26th EAN Annual Conference 20 to 22 September 2017

Venue: JLU Giessen, Main Hall, University Main Building, Ludwigstrasse 23, 35390 Giessen, Germany

**Further information**

[www.arbeiterkind.de](http://www.arbeiterkind.de)

[www.ersteanderuni.de](http://www.ersteanderuni.de)

[www.ean-edu.org/annual-conference-2017.html](http://www.ean-edu.org/annual-conference-2017.html)

Please register by 15 September 2017 to participate in the 26th EAN Annual Conference.

<http://www.arbeiterkind.de/ean>

**Contact**

ulia Dolscheid

ArbeiterKind.de Office at Justus Liebig University Giessen

Tel.: (+49) (0)641 - 9912097

E-Mail: [dolscheid@arbeiterkind.de](mailto:dolscheid@arbeiterkind.de)

Julia Kreuziger

Tel.: (+49) (0)30 68320430

E-Mail: [presse@arbeiterkind.de](mailto:presse@arbeiterkind.de)

Founded in 1607, Justus Liebig University Giessen (JLU) is a research university with a long-standing tradition which attracts around 28,000 students. Apart from the wide range of subjects on offer – extending from classical natural sciences, law and economics, social and educational sciences to linguistics and cultural studies it offers a selection of life science subjects that is unique not only in Hesse: human and veterinary medicine, agricultural, environmental and nutritional sciences and food chemistry. The leading personae who carried out research and taught at JLU include a number of Nobel prizewinners, such as Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen (Nobel Prize for Physics in 1901) and Wangari Maathai (Nobel Peace Prize in 2004). Since 2006 JLU has been receiving financial support under both the first and the second Excellence Initiative promotional schemes (Excellence Cluster Cardio-Pulmonary System – ECCPS; International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture – GCSC).