



Ecologist Rebecca Scott tags turtles in Gabon.

12 years. The federal science ministry promotes the introduction of US-style tenure-track programmes that would give young scientists more career security. A government-funded €1-billion programme launched this year aims to create 1,000 tenure-track positions over the next 15 years. But currently, these positions are still rare.

Ziad Hafed, a neuroscientist previously at the Salk Institute for Biological Sciences in La Jolla, California, was reluctant to accept a financially and scientifically attractive junior group leader position he was offered in 2009 by the Centre for Integrative Neuroscience in Tübingen, another excellence cluster. But the centre eventually agreed that he would be promoted to a faculty position after a successful evaluation of his group's progress. He passed that hurdle in 2015, and is now determined to stay in Germany.

Hafed, a citizen of Egypt and Canada who grew up in Bahrain, studies how the brain handles visual perception. "I had never really thought about going to Europe," he says. "And I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the Excellence Initiative."

Before he took up his job in Germany, Hafed had convinced himself that research conditions in Tübingen, a hotspot for brain research at all fronts, would leave nothing to be desired. But issues cropped up. One is the "shocking" amount of paperwork associated with animal experiments, he says. Another is the level of public hostility to animal testing that in 2015 caused one prominent scientist in Tübingen to throw in the towel.

In Germany, says Hafed, brain researchers need to take a proactive approach to explaining their science to the wider public. "I'm fairly happy as long as we're able to do our experiments," he says. "But I do realize that we must work hard to demonstrate that what we're doing is beneficial and justified."

Germany was not at the top of Xiaoxiang

Zhu's list in 2005 when she — then an undergraduate student in her native China — decided that it was time to gather international experience. But when she learnt from a Chinese cartographer in Germany that the Technical University of Munich (TUM) had launched an international master's course for Earth-oriented space science and technology, she opted for the Bavarian capital.

It was a good decision, she says. Dividing her time between the TUM and the German Aerospace Agency (DLR), Zhu is now an assistant professor in a rare tenure-track position. At a DLR centre outside Munich, she has access to global Earth-observation data sets, including high-quality data from a pair of German radar satellites. Her idea of using satellite imagery to make 3D maps of the world's major cities — and using social-media content to determine the function of urban infrastructures — secured her a €1.5-million ERC starting grant last year and made her a poster child for the TUM's efforts to attract foreign talent.

Foreign scientists are usually not expected to teach courses in German. Many, such as Zhu, are able to negotiate a light teaching load. But German-language skills and a certain instinct for cultural idiosyncrasies — deciding whom to address formally, and whom to offer the informal 'Du', requires some sensitivity, for example — are advantageous when dealing with university administrations, tax offices and in everyday life (see 'Settle in Deutschland').

"Language is not a barrier in the lab — but it helps to speak German when you are dealing with local ethics or regulatory authorities over research permits and the like," says Pierre-Yves Lozach, a French-born virologist with CellNetworks, an excellence cluster of

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cell-biology institutes in Heidelberg. Lozach took a career risk in 2013 when he quit his tenure-track position at the INRS-Institute Armand-Frappier in Laval, Canada, for a fixed-term group leader job at the University of Heidelberg, which had offered dual-career positions to him and his wife. Any newcomer to the country should take pains to learn German, he says, adding with a chuckle that he was a bit idle himself in that regard.

But language aside, Lozach sees no roadblocks to doing competitive science in Germany. "If I don't make it here, it will be my own fault," he says. Heidelberg, home also to the European Molecular Biology Laboratory and the German Cancer Research Center, is an unfailing source of talent and ideas. "If I can secure a permanent science job in the region," he says, "I'm quite determined to stay." ■

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GRANT SUPPORT

Workshops for women

Female researchers in the United States who participate in grant-writing 'bootcamp' workshops report greater subsequent funding success, according to a study published in June (J. L. Smith *et al. BioScience* 67, 638–645; 2017). Participants attended one of three 6-week bootcamps over an 18-month period in the past 5 years at Montana State University in Bozeman. A year later, they had submitted a significantly higher number of grants than those who did not attend a bootcamp. They had also won more grants, increased the number of proposals on which they were principal investigator and raised their overall funding. The authors attribute the outcomes to the high quality of the proposals submitted after training, rather than only to an increase in the number of submissions. The bootcamp was designed to support female researchers' feelings of autonomy, competence and connection. The authors say that dissatisfaction with research support is a major reason that women leave university research careers, and suggest that grant-writing bootcamps might help to retain and advance female academic researchers.

PHD TRAINING

Fast track to industry

Australia is introducing a pilot industry-PhD programme, dubbed iPhD, to encourage innovative research in energy and engineering. The programme is a joint venture between the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, the University of New South Wales in Sydney and industry partners in computer science, electrical engineering, materials engineering and energy. Successful candidates will receive a scholarship of Aus\$40,000 (US\$31,700) per year for 4 years to conduct an industry-focused project and a 6-month internship at a partner company. iPhD students will receive instruction in intellectual property and commercial-product development; start-up business practices; project management; and team-building and interpersonal skills. Participants will be matched with an industry mentor and two research supervisors on the basis of their chosen research area. The programme is expected to expand to include more universities and all disciplines in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Applications close on 15 September (see go.nature.com/2xvs4ws). The first iPhD candidates will start in 2018.