

BEBUC: New Evaluations in the Congo

Again new candidates and prolongers have been examined within the Excellence Scholarship Program BEBUC in the East, North, South, and Center of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at 16 out of 24 partner institutions of the University of Würzburg. Presently BEBUC supports 179 outstanding young Congolese.



The master student Blaise Zirimwabagabo presents his research plan in the field of International Law
(Photo: A. Bapolisi)



After their successful evaluation: The new or the prolonged BEBUC scholars from Bukavu
(Photo: P. Irengé)



Proud of his BEBUC Award: The bachelor student of geology Espoir Mushagalusa from Bukavu
(Photo: A. Bapolisi)

The last BEBUC evaluation had taken place in July 2015 in Kinshasa, with candidates from there, but also from Kikwit and Mbanza Ngungu, all in the West of the country. Now, in December, the remaining BEBUC institutions were examined; in total 135 selection interviews were done. In each of the involved places, the evaluations were followed by the traditional certificate ceremony in the presence of dignitaries from academia, church, and politics. Now, after the evaluation journey, there are 103 scholars in their bachelor studies, 23 in their master studies, and 14 in their PhD studies, as well as 39 at schools. To the delight of BEBUC, this time a particularly high percentage of excellent female candidates succeeded.

Evaluation in the East of the Country

The evaluation started in Bukavu, capital of South Kivu, where, since 2012, the Université Officielle de Bukavu and the Université Catholique de Bukavu have been participating in the scholarship program, like also the high school Collège Alfajiri. The Evaluation Committee then traveled across Lake Kivu to Goma, capital of North Kivu, where, likewise since 2012, the Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs and, since last year, the high school Metanoïa have been part of BEBUC. Scholars and new candidates from the Université de Kisangani in the North, which has only recently been affiliated, were evaluated in Goma, too.

The journey then continued to Butembo, where the Université Catholique du Graben has been a partner in the scholarship program since 2010. Since then, the Université Officielle de Ruwenzori and the Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs (a spin-off of the university of the same name in Goma), as well as the Institut Kambali, and the primary school Nyuki have joined. In total there are now 71 BEBUC scholars in the East and two in the North.

Journey to the Center and to the South

After evaluating the candidates in the East, the team proceeded to Mbuji-Mayi, capital of the province of East Kasai in the Center of the country. The Université Officielle de Mbuji-Mayi has been participating in the scholarship program since 2012. There were also candidates from the high schools Mpokolo (in English: "water source") and Kristo Mfumu (translated: "Christ the King"). In Mbuji-Mayi there are now ten scholars.

The next stop was in Lubumbashi, capital of the province of Katanga. For some years already the Université de Lubumbashi



BEBUC is already active in nine university cities of the Congo: in Kinshasa, Mbanza-Ngungu, Kisangani, Kikwit, Butembo, Goma, Bukavu, Mbuji-Mayi, and Lubumbashi (Graphic: D. Tshitenge, J. Habel)

has been a strong component of the Excellence Scholarship Program, too. Likewise, the girls' high school Tuendelee (in English: "Let's start out") was evaluated. In BEBUC, Lubumbashi is now represented with twelve scholars.

The Objective: New Professors for the Congo

The Excellence Scholarship Program BEBUC wants to break the vicious circle of sinking quality, over-aging, and hopelessness of the academic staff in the Congo. For this purpose, BEBUC selects the best candidates from essentially all subjects, supports them on their way to an academic career, and accompanies them by financial support, by professional and organizational advice – and, not least, by the annual examinations. For the Evaluation Committee, but also for the scholars themselves, excellence does not only mean outstanding study results, but also social, ethical, and linguistic competence. This also includes establishing democratic structures and active participation of the advanced scholars in the evaluations. Thus, already six professors have emerged from BEBUC, who are now supporting the scholarship program, two of them have been appointed by the Ministry just a few days ago. For 2016, several new 'BEBUC professors' are expected.

The Evaluation Committee

The Members of the Evaluation Committee were, as in previous years, Prof. Gerhard Bringmann, Chair of Organic Chemistry I of the University of Würzburg and, at the same time, President of the Committee, and his deputy, Prof. Virima Mudogo from the University of Kinshasa (alumnus of the University of Würzburg), as well as Hypolite Mavoko, who is about to complete his PhD studies in the field of tropical medicine, and Damien Tshibangu, tutor for many years in the scholarship program. This time, also Prof. Vikandy Mambo, the previous rector of an affiliated university in Butembo, joined them. He had already participated in several earlier evaluations, both in Butembo and in Kinshasa.



The participation from Würzburg by Skype gave G. Bringmann (right) the opportunity to invite personal sponsors (here Prof. U. Fischer) to the evaluation of 'their' students (in this case V. Nakundi, on the screen). The BEBUC secretary, J. Habel, was there, too (Photo A. Zillenbiller)

As also in previous evaluations, delegates from BEBUC institutions that were not involved this time, were present. In the East, it was Tania Bishola, master student of biology, former vice-speaker of the scholars in Kinshasa, and now BEBUC scholar in Nairobi. She does her research in the field of tropical diseases and plans to do her PhD studies in Würzburg. In Mbuji-Mayi and Lubumbashi, Freddy Bangelesa, master student of geology, was the delegate from Kinshasa, where he had been, until recently, the main speaker of the scholars. Both of the delegates contributed to the evaluations with their professional expertise and long-lasting experience, and gained, for their part, an impression of how the evaluation procedure functions in the other places. This ensures transparency within the scholarship program – and thus traceability of the criteria of excellence of BEBUC. As also in the last evaluation, the President of the Committee, G. Bringmann, could, for health reasons, not attend personally but participated by video conference.



At Pharmakina (from the left): Alain Bapolisi, speaker of the BEBUC scholars in Bukavu, and Tania Bishola, BEBUC scholar and delegate for the scholars from the West, with cell cultures of cinchona (Photo: E. Mugisho)



Happy about their certificates: The BEBUC scholars from Goma and Kisangani (Photo: T. Bishola)

An Important Component of BEBUC: Personal Sponsorships

For some of the personal sponsors from Germany, this provided, despite the large distance, the unique opportunity to attend such evaluations directly and to see their scholars in action. "These personal sponsorships are – besides the financial support – of a great sentimental value for the scholarship program: The scholars know that a kind-hearted person accompanies them on their way to their professorship. The contact also offers the opportunity to get to know the respective other culture – an enrichment for both sides. Thus, frequently, good friendships develop", explains Bringmann. Presently there are more than 60 such personal sponsorships.

Organization

The scholarship program is being organized by the German NGO *fUNIKIN (Förderverein Uni Kinshasa e.V. = "Non-Profit Organization for the Support of the University of Kinshasa")*, of which G. Bringmann is the chairman. The University of Würzburg closely collaborates with the program and maintains cooperation agreements with all of the 24 'BEBUC institutions' in the Congo, among them 16 universities, six secondary schools, and two primary schools. The NGO, founded in 2009, counts already more than 1,700 members in 50 countries and has an office in Würzburg and another one in Kinshasa.



The high-school student Eve Kavira from Butembo convinces the Evaluation Committee (Photo: G. Kasay)

Part of the infrastructure are, besides the secretary's office in Kinshasa, the – partly existing, partly planned – seminar rooms. They serve for joint events, but also for evaluations and examinations, and for the exchange of ideas – and, thus, constitute a place of identity of BEBUC. Eventually, each 'BEBUC town' shall have at least one such room, with computer equipment, internet, and appropriate furniture.

Cooperations

As on previous occasions, the Committee took the opportunity to build and intensify scientific and medical cooperations. Thus, there are cooperations with the famous clinics Hôpital Panzi in Bukavu and HEAL Africa in Goma. They offer the BEBUC scholars valuable training courses, generously supported by the German foundation Holger-Pöhlmann-Stiftung from Margetshöchheim near Würzburg. For the first time, the company Pharmakina in Bukavu was visited, which produces quinine from cinchona. Quinine is the classical remedy for the treatment of malaria.



The scholars from even five institutions in Butembo (Photo: K. Mutuka)

BEBUC Awards

A highlight during the ceremonies is always the awarding of the BEBUC prize for exceptional performance in connection with a remarkable social commitment. The prize is remunerated with a watch as a symbol for future-oriented, time-efficient planning and as a motivation for continuous excellent study results. This year there were two awardees: Espoir Mushagalusa Murhula is a student of agronomy in Bukavu. Patient Kubuya Binwa studies engineering in Goma. Both are BEBUC vice-speakers. Among the previous awardees were, as an example, the two delegates from Kinshasa, Tania Bishola, the only one who had received the prize



Kubuya Patient from Goma, bachelor student of engineering, with his BEBUC award (Photo: K. Mutuka)



Succeeded! The scholars from Mbuji-Mayi after the solemn ceremony (Photo: F. Bangelesa)

already even twice, and Freddy Bangelesa.

"It is nice to accompany these outstanding scholars during their academic career. I am very grateful to the Selection Committee, to the entire staff, to all fUNIKIN members, to the University of Würzburg, and especially to the German foundation Else-Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung for their reliable support of our project", says Bringmann.

Contact

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Gerhard Bringmann
Institute of Organic Chemistry at the University of Würzburg,
T +49 931 31-85323,
bringman@chemie.uni-wuerzburg.de



The evaluation committee, here in Lubumbashi (from the left): V. Mudogo, H. Mavoko, and D. Tshibangu, and the BEBUC delegate from Kinshasa, F. Bangelesa (Photo: P. Tshama)

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Virima Mudogo
Université de Kinshasa, Faculté des Sciences,
T +243 99 99 30 963,
mudogov@gmail.com

Dr. Karine Ndjoko Ioset
Institute of Organic Chemistry at the University of Würzburg,
T +41 787 044 725,
karine.ndjoko@uni-wuerzburg.de

On the Scholarship Program BEBUC and the NGO Förderverein Uni Kinshasa e.V.:
www.foerderverein-uni-kinshasa.de



The twelve scholars from Lubumbashi with the traditional blue folders (Photo: F. Bangelesa)