

HUMER FOUNDATION

FOR ACADEMIC TALENT



FIELD STUDIES!

Dr Franz B. Humer, Chairman of the Foundation Board

In theory, it all sounds perfectly simple: "A thesis (...)", says the matter-of-fact voice of Wikipedia [translated from German], "is an independent academic or scientific piece of work written to achieve a doctorate from a higher-education institution (...)". As a general rule, it is expected to demonstrate new knowledge acquired through research. But the Wikipedia definition does not go into what the scale of this new knowledge should be. And with good reason. Even ten or twenty years ago, it was not unusual for a thesis to take the form of a summary of existing knowledge, backed up with numerous – albeit, as we now know, not always transparently identified – quotes from other academic or scientific works.

The new knowledge gained was rarely proportionate to the scope of the thesis and was frequently rather limited. It is one area where, for once, the old adage doesn't quite work: the good old days were not, in fact, as good as they seemed. When I read a thesis today that has been written in Salzburg or Basel with the support of our Foundation, I am impressed time and again by the level of independent scientific thought that regularly leads to surprising results.

Of course, when the candidates start their work, it is still the case that they have a theory in mind that they want to prove or disprove. And, of course, these modern theses still contain numerous references to previous investigations, statistics and findings made by other researchers. What has changed, however, is the quality of the field studies that have become an essential component of every modern thesis.

Both the Salzburg Centre of European Union Studies and the University of Basel's key research topic "Africa" place great importance on comprehensive field studies during candidates' doctoral programmes, which generally last three years. This sees them leave their desks behind for several semesters and test themselves and their work against the real-life situation "in the field". They not only visit the places their work concerns but also carry out multiple interviews. Not just with others who are carrying out other scientific work, but predominantly with people who deal with the topic on a practical level and can therefore assess the academic or scientific theory in question from a completely different perspective than is possible within the confines of the candidate's home university.

A key factor in the success of these field studies, and something that is brought home to me whenever I read these individual theses, is the readiness of the authors to enter into conversations and investigations without prejudice and to rethink and, if necessary, reformulate their original theories. If this willingness is there, the thesis can generate scientifically sound findings that can inject new momentum into the respective subject – momentum that in some cases is urgently needed.

Considering the above, it is not surprising either that "our" doctoral candidates should quickly find highly interesting roles all over Europe and Africa and are set up on a very good footing for their future professional careers.



PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022

Urs Lauffer, executive member of the Foundation Board

Our Foundation, set up in spring 2007, aims to fund talented young scholars in Switzerland, Austria and other European countries, on an exclusively non-profit basis. This is done in close cooperation with the universities in Salzburg and Basel.

As stated in previous performance reports, our Foundation will be ceasing its activities at the end of 2024. Until then, it will be using the full amount of its capital to support more than 70 doctoral candidates. By the time its activities cease, the Foundation will have awarded funding totalling more than CHF 9 million.

In 2022, the University of Salzburg received a sum of EUR 330 000. This support enabled six candidates to continue their doctoral work at the Salzburg Centre of European Union Studies during the year under review and one candidate to complete their doctoral work. Our Foundation has also once again supported the University of Basel with a grant of CHF 100 000 for the key research topic "Africa". This sum was used to fund two doctoral candidates.

We deeply value the intensive collaboration with the relevant staff at these universities. This is the best way to ensure the quality of the individual research projects, which is regularly monitored by the professors involved. As a basic principle, therefore, the Humer Foundation does not consider applications sent directly to it by doctoral candidates.

During the year under review, the Foundation Board met in two sessions, in Erlenbach and Salzburg. The main focus was the evaluation and approval of requests for financial support for doctoral candidates, which was undertaken on the basis of thorough, balanced assessments made by the two universities. In addition, the Foundation's statutory business (annual accounts, yearly review, auditor's report, elections) was dealt with.

Furthermore, the Foundation Board periodically reviews the success of funding activities. In doing so, we assess both the effectiveness and efficiency of our work, thus measuring the usefulness and the economic efficiency of the allocation of our Foundation's resources. Based on this, and using specific individual cases as templates, we then define our Foundation's goals for the new financial year. And finally, we also deal with all financial issues and risks (including investment principles, which are regularly reviewed and adjusted), and oversee the work of our office.

At the end of 2022, the organisation's capital totalled around CHF 836 000. Despite the extremely difficult market environment, our Foundation was able to limit its financial losses to around 6 percent and thus performed considerably better than the benchmarks. Taking all of these factors into consideration, the Foundation Board was able to confirm its previous decision to continue the Foundation's activities in their current volumes in 2023 and 2024.

The office is managed by Lauffer & Frischknecht, a communication management consultancy, on a consultative basis. Stéphanie Ramel takes care of the administration, and Fritz Frischknecht, MA Econ., is responsible for the accounts department. Swiss GAAP FER 21 is used for the annual financial statements.

CURRENT THESES

At present the Humer Foundation is supporting the following doctoral students:

UNIVERSITY OF SALZBURG EUROPEAN UNION STUDIES

SARAH DEISL

Effect of the Member States' Rule of Law crisis on the division of competences among EU organs

LÉO GOTARDA

The Mainstreaming of Climate Change into all EU Policies

KLAUDIA KOXHA

Populism in the Western Balkans: Effects on EU Conditionality Compliance

BIRGIT CAROLIN MITTER

European Cultural Policy: Awarding, Effects, and Sustainability of European Cultural Subsidies

NICO PETZ

Modelling Non-linear Macroeconomic Dynamics Using Gaussian Processes

UNIVERSITY OF BASEL AFRICA

CLAUDINE RAKOMANANA

Transnational union between Malagasy women and non-Malagasy men: compelling attraction on sex, affect, money and power

KAUE FELIPE NOGAROTTO CRIMA BELLINI

Queer Migration in Europe: Racialized experiences and embodied spaces

COMPLETED THESES

In 2022, the following dissertations made possible by our Foundation were completed:

UNIVERSITY OF SALZBURG EUROPEAN UNION STUDIES

ANNA STELZER

Heterogeneous effects of monetary policy in the euro area

UNIVERSITY OF BASEL AFRICA

JULIA RENSING

Namibia-Germany: A Post-Colonial Heterotopia? Narratives and Negotiations of Colonial Legacies in Namibia and Germany

RAJA DAOUAH

Emerging Trends, Developments and Opportunities of Islamic Finance: The Moroccan Case

KEY FINANCIAL DATA 31 December 2022

in CHF

	2022	2021	2020
Financial support	439 000	377 000	365 000
Annual result	-478 000	-340 000	-375 000

Since it was established in 2007, the Foundation has provided financial support totalling around CHF 8.7 million.

FOUNDATION BOARD

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Dr Franz B. Humer (Erlenbach)
Businessman

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Fritz Gerber Foundation for talented young people

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Management Consultants for Communication

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