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Visiting Professorship in Hanoi for LIKAT Chemist - Paths to Sustainable Growth in Southeast Asia

Esteban Mejía from the Leibniz Institute for Catalysis in Rostock has been appointed visiting professor at Hanoi University of Science and Technology. The chemist accepted the certificate of appointment in Hanoi at the end of last year. Prof. Dr. Mejía teaches the basics of catalysis in one course per year and supports the research activities at the Faculty of Chemistry and Biosciences as a consultant.

With a GDP growth rate of eight percent in 2022, Vietnam is one of the fastest growing countries in the world. Prof. Dr. Mejía: "New catalytic technologies should ensure that this happens in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals." The United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs for short, in 2015.

The visiting professorship secures the continuation and results to date of the RoHan Catalysis SDG Graduate School cooperation program, which has linked LIKAT and the universities in Rostock and Hanoi since 2016. "Vietnam is focusing on green growth," says Prof. Mejía, "our program helps the country to acquire the necessary know-how and, above all, to implement it with sufficient experts." RoHan will run until 2025, funded by the DAAD and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development with a total of 4.5 million euros.



Attracts students from all over Southeast Asia: Esteban Mejía with students at the Hanoi University of Science and Technology. Picture: RoHan

Master's Double Degree Possible

Under the coordination of Esteban Mejía at LIKAT and Dirk Hollmann at the University of Rostock, the RoHan program has supported more than 100 Vietnamese Master's and doctoral students. Prof. Mejía: "The highlight is a new Master's degree with a double degree that is recognized both in Germany and in Vietnam." So far, five students have been awarded the double degree.

Two laboratories were initially set up at the TU Hanoi and the Vietnamese National University in Hanoi to provide practical training. For two years now, the TU Hanoi has also had a new large 300 square meter laboratory: the German-Vietnamese Catalysis Center. "We use state-of-the-art technology there for specific research projects, including a scanning electron microscope," says Esteban Mejia.

Students from all over Southeast Asia

The center attracts young experts from all over Southeast Asia. "We select suitable candidates who then come from their universities in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur or Bangkok to Hanoi for three to six months to work on their topics scientifically." This creates an invaluable network among catalysis researchers in this region.

For Esteban Mejia, the award of the visiting professorship is also a sign of the Vietnamese partners' appreciation of the RoHan program. His colleague Le Minh Thang, Professor of Chemistry at Hanoi University of Technology, says that this exchange between lecturers and students "gives new impetus to the topic of sustainability in Vietnam". "The exchange brings us up to date with international research," she emphasizes. The program also secures contacts with companies in Vietnam and Germany that are developing technologies for water and air purification, for hydrogen production and storage, for the use of renewable raw materials and for reducing waste.

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