

Press release

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**Career prospects for graduates of Islamic Theological Studies
New study by Goethe University's Academy for Islam in Research and Society
(AIWG) on the career entry of graduates of Islamic Theology and Religious
Education Studies.**

Frankfurt am Main. What profession do graduates of the recently established academic degree on Islamic Theological Studies at German Universities take up after having completed their studies? Within the German context, that question has now been addressed in a study prepared by Goethe University's Academy for Islam in Research and Society (AIWG), in collaboration with the Universities of Giessen and Mainz. The results of the study, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, were recently published in the Academy's "WiFo paper" publication series.

Up to 2,500 young people study Islamic Theology or religious education at German universities. Where do they work once they have completed their studies: in schools, as imams, as social workers, in the media? An interdisciplinary team from the universities of Giessen, Mainz and Frankfurt took a closer look at precisely this question, and the AIWG just published the qualitative and quantitative results of the study "Berufsfeld Islam" ("Islam as an occupational field") in its publication format "WiFo paper".

More than 200 graduates of Islamic Theological Studies at universities in five German states were interviewed for the study: What professions did they pursue after studying Islam? How well do they feel their studies prepared them for the working world? What are the factors that favor career entry? The results show for which professions the Islamic Theological Studies introduced at German universities in 2011 primarily qualify students.

Social work and teaching as important fields of employment

The central findings of the "Berufsfeld Islam" study: Almost half the graduates are employed in social work or related professional fields. Another 40 percent work in educational

professions. By contrast, hardly any participants in the study work full-time as imams. In retrospect, most respondents see the study of Islamic theology or religious education as a phase of intellectual and personal development. However, feedback also showed that many wished their studies would have better prepared them for their later activities.

Two-thirds of those who have completed a teaching degree program would choose this path again. After completing their studies, they have a relatively clear career profile in mind and a regulated transition into the teaching profession. However, many report increased structural hurdles and burdens, since Islamic religious education is still in the process of being established.

By contrast, less than half would choose the theological focus again. After completing their studies, these graduates have to explore their own careers, and, in the first few years, are usually only employed on a temporary basis. It is worth noting, however, that the employment rate here is at the same level as that for other humanities.

In general, the study shows that graduates make an above-average contribution to society. More than half of them are involved in voluntary work. In particular, those with a theology major often take on responsibility in religious and social institutions.

"With the follow-up study of graduates, we now have important, systematically collected information on students' career entry for the first time. In addition, the results of the study can help students and prospective students get a clearer picture of the opportunities the degree programs offer and what additional key competencies are important for a successful career entry, especially in the humanities," comments AIWG Director Prof. Bekim Agai on the study results. "The study suggests that practice-oriented study programs, such as part-time master's degrees, should also be offered. Internships, volunteer work or semesters abroad are also helpful for a successful career start," says Prof. Naime Çakir-Mattner from the University of Giessen, who led the research project together with Prof. Constantin Wagner from the University of Mainz. The survey was conducted among graduates who had obtained a bachelor's degree or a state examination in Islamic theology or religious education at universities in Frankfurt, Erlangen-Nuremberg, Giessen, Münster, Osnabrück or Tübingen between 2016 and 2019. More than 200 of the total of some 570 graduates from this period took part in the study.

The study (in German) can be downloaded from the AIWG website: <https://aiwg.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/WiFo-paper-Berufsfeld-Islam.pdf>

About the project leadership

Naime Çakir-Mattner is a professor of Islamic theology, with a focus on Muslim lifestyles, at Justus Liebig University Giessen. Her research interests include migration, gender and religion, islamophobia and racism, Islam and Muslims in the European context.

Constantin Wagner is Professor of Educational Science, with a focus on heterogeneity, at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz. His research interests include heterogeneity and social inequality in post-migrant society and Islam (understandings) in postcolonial Europe. He is the author of the AIWG expertise "Who Studies Islamic Theology? An Overview of the Subject and its Students." The key findings of Prof. Constantin Wagner's expertise "Who Studies Islamic Theology? An Overview of the Subject and its Students" is available online and includes an English summary on pages 7-9.

About the AIWG "WiFo paper"

The WiFo papers series publishes project reports, position papers, and exploratory contributions from AIWG's scientific project groups. They take up Islamic-theological topics from inter-university projects and thus contribute to specialist discourses and interdisciplinary exchange.

About the AIWG

The Academy for Islam in Research and Society (AIWG) at the Goethe University in Frankfurt conducts interdisciplinary research and transfer activities with a focus on Islamic-theological studies and Muslim life in Germany. It connects all faculties for Islamic Theological Studies or Islamic religious pedagogy located in a University in Germany. The academy addresses issues of social participation by including perspectives related to religion. The AIWG is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and by the Stiftung Mercator foundation.



Press contact

Stefanie Golla

Coordinator Science Communication and Public Relations

Tel.: +49 (0)69-798 22459

E-Mail: golla@aiwg.de