

Visiting Journalist Programme

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Munich page 16 / Bavaria page 16 / Germany page 16

So close, but yet so far.

Academic exchange with New Zealand is going to be easier.

New Zealand is small. And more than 18,000 kilometres away. Which is probably the reason why Germany and New Zealand do not yet recognise each other's tertiary qualifications, although since November 2004 an agreement on this has been reached. Back then, a delegation from the 'Association of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions in Germany (HRK)' paid a visit to the capital, Wellington. Since then the HRK has awaited the counter visit of its equivalent, the Vice-Chancellors Committee (VCC).



Photo: University of Auckland

Well, it won't be too much longer – later this year the 'New Zealand German Academic Links Agreement' will be signed. Even though the agreement is not yet official, the VCC is already acting on it. German Students will benefit from the agreement: a German graduate with a good or very good 'Diplom' will be able to enrol in a New Zealand PhD-programme. So far, German 'Diplom'-degrees have generally been equated to Bachelor-degrees.

Students who finish a tertiary qualification in New Zealand may apply for a six -month residence and work permit, meaning they are well placed to get a foot into the New Zealand employment market. In terms of immigrants, New

Zealand is particularly after architects, CAD-designers, medical doctors, engineers and IT-specialists, as each year thousands of young New Zealanders go abroad, predominately to Australia.

Important Sector of the Economy

The fact that the New Zealand University Chancellors weren't in a hurry with their counter visit is somewhat surprising, given the fact that they are very keen to attract foreign students, and German students are amongst the biggest group. Up to this point only PhD students from France and Germany have been charged the lower domestic student fees. From 1 January this policy applies to all international students who enrol for a PhD course in New Zealand. This means the fees are somewhere between 1800 to 2300 euros annually, as compared to four to five times this amount previously.

However, New Zealand is not only interested in attracting PhD students, but even more so in exchange students. Below the PhD-level, international students have to pay the full amount of fees. Depending on the course these are between 8500 to 17000 euros a year. Most foreign students also travel extensively throughout the country, further contributing roughly 1 Billion euros annually to the New Zealand economy. This figure is predicted to increase even further.

Education is regarded as an important sector of the economy. With Education New Zealand (ENZ) there even exists a Trust, which has the sole task of promoting education in New Zealand abroad. Almost all of the country's universities are members of ENZ.

In return for their fees, students generally receive high academic standards and a wide range of qualifications to choose from. Especially in the areas of Biotechnology, Engineering, Environmental and Agricultural Sciences, New Zealand tertiary institutions are a good choice by international standards.

New Zealand Educated The education portal of New Zealand education www.newzealandeducated.com

Immigration New Zealand For those who may want to visit for a long time
www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/stream/study

The Ranke-Heinemann-Institute Service for studying in New Zealand
www.ranke-heinemann.de/neuseeland/index.php

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Munich page 9 / Bavaria page 9 / Germany page 9

Ministers “as you like it”

In New Zealand, Prime Minister Helen Clark rules with a precarious alliance

The whole debacle began by taking a leaf out of Germany’s book. In the early 1990s, the New Zealanders were sick and tired of the “democratic dictatorship” (Finance Minister, Michael Cullen) of the first-past-the-post voting system they had inherited from Britain.

The Executive was too powerful for them and Parliament too weak. So in 1993, following a referendum, they introduced a mixed member proportional voting system that is almost a copy of the German system. Elections have been held under this system since 1996 and there have been up to eight parties in Parliament at any one time. The consequence of all this is that, with one exception, only minority governments have since been formed.

On 17 September the New Zealand election produced a similar outcome to that of Germany. Instead of a large coalition, a quadruple alliance has since been governing in Wellington, and it is hard to tell whether it is actually a majority or a minority government. Officially, the Labour Party of Prime Minister Helen Clark only formed a coalition with Jim Anderton’s Progressives, the one-man party of an ex-Labour MP. Clark signed written agreements with two other parties, who have pledged to vote with her on matters of confidence, supply and major reforms. In doing so, Clark has entrusted the Foreign Affairs Ministry to Winston Peters, the leader of the nationalist-populist party, and the Inland Revenue Ministry to Peter Dunne of the family party. In total, the constellation adds up to 61 seats – the smallest possible majority in a 121-seat Parliament.

Peters and Dunne place a great deal of emphasis on their designation as Ministers outside Cabinet. In New Zealand the Cabinet always makes unanimous decisions. This collective responsibility is something the two only want to be bound by for their portfolio. Peters, in particular, reserves the right of New Zealand First to vote against the government on other matters. This makes Peters and Dunne “sometime ministers”, who by and large have the government’s interests at heart and will vote for it if it seriously challenged. To Defence Minister Phil Goff (Labour) this constellation reminds him of his relationship with his now deceased mother-in-law: “When she lived in our house, there was tension. Once we built her a house of her own, we each had our own space. That allowed us to get on well with each other again. That’s exactly how it is between us and New Zealand First.”

Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Gerry Brownlee of the conservative National Party accuses Clark of giving Peters and Dunne carte blanche to criticise the government and sees it as a constitutional breach. Labour Finance Minister, Michael Cullen counters this by saying that the country has frequently revised its understanding of constitutional arrangements: "The government is, by its very nature, influenced more by agreements than rules". Cullen does not see the instability of these majority relationships as a problem. The new electoral laws ensure Parliament is growing in significance and the Government is losing power: "Now it is no longer as clear which way draft legislation will go and how it will look at the end of the process". In fact, Labour, which has been leading the Government since 1999, has managed to get all its major reforms passed through Parliament.

The first serious test came last Wednesday. The Opposition proposed a motion of No Confidence, which was defeated by 67 votes to 50, with four abstentions. The Greens, who have agreed to tolerate the government, were among those voting against the motion. It will not be the only time that Labour has to rely on their votes. After all, Clark is clever enough to have thought about emergency insurance.

Bernd Oswald

[photo caption] WHERE IS THE PHOTO?

Head of Government on difficult ground: Helen Clark Photo: Reuters

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WHERE?

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