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## 12<sup>th</sup> Diplomatenkolleg

21<sup>st</sup> August – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2017

1<sup>st</sup> row, from left to right:

Ornela Alickaj (Albania), Chloé Goupille (France), Hanna Mohn (Programme Assistant), Mustafa Songür (Turkey), Alena Gavrilenko (Russian Federation), Tristan terry (Belgium), Laura Rajaniemi (Finland), Stefan Ionkov (Bulgaria)

2<sup>nd</sup> row, from left to right:

Anete Krieva (Latvia), Marko Stevanović (Montenegro), Stefan Biedermann (Head of Training for International Diplomats), Esther Neuhaus (Switzerland), Oscar Buvalič (Slovakia), Ivana Karanušić (Croatia), Ambassador (ret.) Dr Otto Lampe (Programme Director), Sophia Azara (Programme Manager), John Zachau (Sweden), Dr Rauf Jafarov (Azerbaijan), Dr Dauren Akberdiyev (Kazakhstan), Kubat Choroev (Kyrgyzstan), Björn Piibur (Estonia)

Absent: Angela Kennedy (Ireland), Dr Zsófia Lipták (Hungary), Johan Løøv (Norway)



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# »Is it, diplomatically speaking, part of ›good etiquette‹ to have water trickle out of your patent-leather shoes?«

The German and the Norwegian languages share the same figure of speech, namely “nicht trocken hinter den Ohren sein” (literally translates as “not dry behind the ears” and denotes someone who is still young and inexperienced). In my case, this expression rang true in two ways. I had barely got off the plane – which came via Norway from the Indian capital New Delhi – when I found myself at the Federal Foreign Office’s International Club on an August evening for the first meeting of the Diplomatenkolleg. Inexperienced and so far spared from the treacherous Berlin weather, I had decided to cycle from our flat to Kurstraße – in traditional Scandinavian style only in my suit and helmet (safety first). Gliding through the historic Brandenburg Gate is normally one of the joys of everyday life in Berlin. However, on this particular occasion the heavens opened, just before the Gate, unexpectedly and suddenly in a way that was reminiscent of Indian monsoon rain. I got *soaked to the skin*.

My first encounter with the German authorities – indeed my very first assignment as embassy secretary in Berlin – was to begin in just a few minutes. What now? What would Protocol have to say about an embassy secretary who was soaked to the skin? Is it, diplomatically speaking, part of “good etiquette” to have water trickle out of your patent-leather shoes? How formal is the atmosphere at the Federal Foreign Office?

Fortunately for me, I didn’t have a book on etiquette to hand. I just made my way without further ado to the Federal Foreign Office and found out straight away that I wasn’t the only one to have met such a fate. Not only that, but

the atmosphere was informal and relaxed from the word go. All in all, the Kolleg was characterised by an open and friendly tone, by participants from Dublin to Bishkek and an exchange of views with various representatives from German society and the European policy field.

After my first meeting, I was dry behind the ears in the literal sense, but as a new diplomat in the German capital, I was not as “dry” in the figurative sense of the expression. For every newly arrived diplomat, the first step in a new post is to gain an overview, forge contacts and, if you have enough time on your hands, find a roof over your head (I was fortunate enough to meet with success in this last matter). In a nutshell, the Diplomatenkolleg offered me and the other new arrivals a unique opportunity to enjoy an ideal start to our time in Berlin. Above all, I am grateful to our excellent companions from the Federal Foreign Office for this.

Be it in discussions with Minister of State Roth, when visiting the Permanent Delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany to NATO in Brussels or at the ARD’s Tagesschau studios in Hamburg, it is virtually impossible to conceive of a better introduction to Germany’s diverse society. The networking among us young diplomats and with various German interlocutors is, of course, an advantage of the Diplomatenkolleg that shouldn’t be underestimated. This is the very definition of getting off to a flying start.

After just over two months in Berlin, I may still be inexperienced, but my point of departure is much better than I could ever have imagined.

Johan Løøvn (Norway)  
Participant of DK 12