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## A fascinating country: Vietnam

Vietnam is one of the most interesting countries in Southeast Asia, not only for travelers but also for investors. The country is one of the fastest growing economies in the region. The transition from a centrally managed economy to a socialist market economy has resulted in a per capita income that is now seven times higher than it was 20 years ago. Vietnam is not only a popular tourist destination, but also an increasingly attractive production location.

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INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

# Research full of HaMoNee

**VIETNAM IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY ATTRACTIVE FOR INVESTORS. ITS INDUSTRY IS GROWING FAST, ALSO BECAUSE A GROWING NUMBER OF COMPANIES SEE THE COUNTRY AS AN ALTERNATIVE LOCATION TO CHINA. HAW HAMBURG COOPERATES WITH FOUR VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITIES TO PROMOTE THE INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN THE ENGINEERING SCIENCES OF BOTH COUNTRIES. ALWAYS IN VIEW: ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY SOLUTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL TRANSPORTATION. →**



Thanks to the opening and modernization of the economy, the urban population is growing by about one million people every year.

TEXT: MARGARITA ILIEVA

The international exchange of knowledge and skills moves our world forward and helps us solve humanity's problems. HAW Hamburg is therefore determined to further strengthen its profile in this respect. HaMoNee is one of 14 cooperation projects at universities of applied sciences throughout Germany that the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is funding from 2021 to 2024 as part of the HAW International program.

HaMoNee (pronounced very much like "harmony") stands for Hamburg/Hanoi Mobile Engineers. HAW Hamburg cooperates with a number of industry partners, and with four renowned Vietnamese universities: Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST), University of Transport Technology (UTT), Phenikaa University in Hanoi, and Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology (HCMUT). In addition, new application-oriented, English-language study programs are to promote the international mobility of students and teachers in the engineering sciences in both countries. For HAW Hamburg, this is the start of a sustainable strategic partnership in Asia.

The aim is to intensify contacts not only with Vietnamese universities but also with local industry partners. In addition to Beiersdorf affiliate Tesa, these include the two Vietnamese car manufacturers, VinFast and Thaco. Tesa is currently building a new plant in the port city of Haiphong. From 2023, the company plans to move production to this location for the entire Asian region.

In addition to teaching and practical semesters in cooperation with industry partners, digital, internationally oriented courses are to be devised and implemented in hybrid learning and teaching spaces. Teaching (in English) is to take place synchronously in German and Vietnamese real-time. In the context of summer schools and short courses, even more insights into teaching and practice are to be offered to give students from both regions the opportunity for professional and intercultural exchange.

The initiator of the cooperation is Prof. Dr. Dirk Engel. A Professor of Mechatronic Systems in Chassis Technology in the Department of Automotive and Aeronautical Engineering, he is the one who successfully submitted the DAAD application for the project with the support of the International Office.

He sees a particular success for HAW Hamburg in the fact that the project is being promoted with a country as a cooperation partner and not, as is usually the case, with an entire region. For Engel, the Shanghai-Hamburg College, which was founded jointly by HAW Hamburg and the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology (USST) in 1998, is a role model. "I see the partnership stabilizing to the point where either an equivalent of the Shanghai-Hamburg College is established or some kind of 'Asia structure' is created to intensify cooperation with North and South Asia. This would also provide the opportunity to support this industrial Southeast Asia aspect," he says, explaining the long-term perspective.

#### ST. PAULI OR HSV?

The project started with a personal contact, which Engel established in 2005 and has since intensified.

In 2016, the idea of long-term cooperation between Vietnamese and German teaching was born. When he met the local partners in 2019, Engel was surprised to be greeted with a friendly "Moin!" in Ho Chi Minh City and was asked whether he was a fan of St. Pauli or HSV, referring to the notorious rivalry between the two Hamburg soccer clubs.

The German-Vietnamese partnership has a long tradition. Even in the days of the GDR, there was a lively exchange of labor and knowledge under various programs. "At that time, many Vietnamese came to the GDR. They learned German and worked there. That's why there is a high level of attachment, especially among the slightly older generation," Engel says. Even today, a German university degree opens the doors to their dream jobs for many Vietnamese. HAW Hamburg is extremely popular among Vietnamese students. There is hardly any other country from which so many international students come.

Hoang Long Nguyen is studying automotive engineering and is about to start his master's degree at HAW Hamburg. "We don't have many companies in this field in



→ Further information on the project:



#### Vietnam:

- Population: 96.4 million
- Capital: Hanoi
- Largest city: Ho Chi Minh City
- Population of Ho Chi Minh City: 8.9 million
- Coastline: 3,444 km
- Area: 331,120 km<sup>2</sup>
- Universities: 237
- Students: 1.7 million
- Currency: đồng (1€ ≈ 27.000 đồng)





→ Prof. Dr. Dirk Engel holds a professorship for Mechatronic Systems in Chassis Technology. Tel +49.40.428 75-7902 [dirk.engel@haw-hamburg.de](mailto:dirk.engel@haw-hamburg.de)

→ International Office Studierendenzentrum Stiftstr. 69 | Room 214 20099 Hamburg Tel +49.40.428 75-9180 [martina.schulze@haw-hamburg.de](mailto:martina.schulze@haw-hamburg.de)

Vietnam. That's why it's often difficult for Vietnamese engineering students to find a good internship," he says. Hoang Nguyen has already completed an internship at the Fraunhofer Institute in Berlin while enrolled at HAW Hamburg. "There are things students can't learn in Vietnam. For engineers, practical experience is essential. With more practical experience, you can improve your knowledge and find a good job more easily," says Nguyen about his hopes to participate in the HaMoNee project.

For Engel, the reason for HAW Hamburg's popularity with Vietnamese students is apparent: "The structure of our university offers something different from what is known in Vietnam. We offer a strong practical component. We are application-oriented and not as theory-loaded as a traditional university. That is something that appeals to many in Germany as well."

Prof. Dr. Thomas Clemen, Vice-Dean for International Affairs at the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science, confirms this experience. In addition to the attractive location of Hamburg, he sees the strength of the university in its long-standing international positioning through summer schools, English-language lectures, the project-based approach, and the internationally networked research groups. Of all the universities in Hamburg, HAW Hamburg is, in his opinion, the one that lives internationalization the most. "Notwithstanding the corona restrictions, one could hear up to 90 languages on campus. That's fascinating," says Thomas Clemen.

### VERY GOAL-ORIENTED IN EDUCATION

Stefan Hase-Bergen is head of the DAAD field office in Hanoi. He sees another reason for the attractiveness of German universities of applied sciences in Vietnam's culture and high economic growth, which has been between five and seven percent for 20 years: "A rapidly growing middle class is emerging here, in which Confucian ethics provide for a very high educational ideal." Entire families are willing to invest large sums in education. "The family bonds together so that one day the children can do better and learn something worthwhile. It makes the Vietnamese very goal-oriented in education."

The government and the Communist Party of Vietnam, which controls everything in the one-party state, always emphasize the importance of education and research for the country's socio-economic progress. But there is a lot of unmet demand for application orientation and practical relevance in →

**“We offer a strong practical component. We are application-oriented and not as theory-loaded as a traditional university.”**

PROF. DR. DIRK ENGEL



Hoang Long Nguyen is studying automotive engineering at HAW Hamburg. He is one of over 7,600 Vietnamese who have chosen to study in Germany.

degree programs so that the content can be adapted to the needs of the labor market. "There's truly a gap there, and that's where German universities can play a very important role," he adds on the background of the HAW.International project.

## EFFICIENT, BUT INFLEXIBLE

As different as the countries may be, the challenge is the same: transitioning to sustainable mobility. In many cities in Southeast Asia, scooters and motorcycles dominate the street scene. In Hanoi, as in Bangkok, Jakarta, or Kuala Lumpur, two-wheelers are essential for millions of people. "The streets are bustling, it's noisy and stuffy, and they burn fossil fuels. So if you can solve the mobility problem there, you can solve it here, for sure," Engel describes his experience.

A shift to renewable energy and electric mobility could help solve the metropolitan environmental problems in this region, reduce the resulting health problems, and improve people's quality of life. In projects such as HaMoNee, such solutions are to be jointly designed and developed by combining German and Vietnamese know-how.

The COVID 19 pandemic and the recent flood disaster show that this is not a one-way street. "What we were able to learn in Germany, especially with the pandemic, is first and foremost how to deal with such situations in a relatively flexible way. The lack of flexibility is also something the Vietnamese complain



→ Prof. Dr. Thomas Clemen, Professor of Databases and Artificial Intelligence and Vice-Dean for International Affairs and Digitalization. Phone +49.40.428 75-8003 [thomas.clemen@haw-hamburg.de](mailto:thomas.clemen@haw-hamburg.de)

→ You can find information on the Automotive Engineering course here:



→ Two-wheelers dominate the street scene. In Vietnam, for every 1,000 residents there are 450 motorcycles, but only seven cars. The potential to improve the air and quality of life in cities through electromobility is significant.

## International Office

**The HAW Hamburg International Office team supports the internationalisation of the university, both internally and externally. We provide assistance to degree-seeking international students and visiting exchange students (incomings) as well as to HAW Hamburg students and professors who want to study or teach abroad (outgoings).**

about when they are in Germany, as much as they love the country. So, there's certainly something to that," says Hase-Bergen. Adaptability is crucial in a time of rapid change, he says. Vietnam has long been affected by similar severe weather disasters caused by climate change, and according to Hase-Bergen, "It's not even just about fighting the effects of climate change, but developing and adapting to the changes that are coming."

Many Vietnamese students associate qualities such as reliability and discipline with Germany. The high value placed on education at German universities is also reflected in a recent DAAD publication. It was published in 2020 on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries. It is entitled "Alumni careers – made in Germany" and profiles 14 Vietnamese who talk about their experiences in Germany and what they learned and brought back to Vietnam. What one often reads there are terms like efficiency, reality, transparency, goal orientation, intrinsic motivation, and critical faculty.

"These are partly typical Western values that don't exist here to the same extent. Intrinsic motivation, for example, is something that is sometimes less common here. When collaborations arise, people often first ask where their personal advantage is," explains Stefan Hase-Bergen.

It is precisely the combination of the strengths of the two regions' cultures that makes cooperation under the HaMoNee project so promising. According to Clemen, it is Vietnam's increasing attractiveness and its potential as an investment location of the future that will benefit all project partners. In addition, "Vietnam's role as a moderating partner in dealing with China is very relevant in terms of security policy. That also plays a role in research and teaching. So I'm pretty sure that our faculty will be much more involved in Vietnam in the future." ■