

## DAAD Prize 2021 goes to Blerta Kastrioti

Sylke Schumann

**The prize of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for outstanding achievements of foreign students goes this year to Blerta Kastrioti from Albania.**

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This is the 15th time that the prize of 1,000 euros has been awarded at the HWR Berlin. It is intended to make foreign students visible as an enrichment for our university and recognises personalities who stand out due to their achievements and social commitment.

The 2021 award winner, Blerta Kastrioti, has been studying in the Accounting and Controlling Master's degree programme at the HWR Berlin since the winter semester 2020/21. The jury was impressed by her excellent academic achievements, her goal orientation and her "hands on" commitment to the Red Cross and the environmental protection organisation "Green Line Albania", among others.

In the following interview, the award winner talks about her path to the HWR Berlin, her motivation to volunteer and her plans for the future.

### **How does it feel to receive the DAAD Prize 2021?**

Receiving the DAAD prize for 2021 surely makes me very happy. In a way, it affirms my efforts toward achieving my prior objective when I started this academic year: to perceive as much knowledge as possible from this ongoing academic experience. Adding to that the fact that this Master's degree programme, this year, due to the pandemic, was solely virtually taught, this prize actually confirms me that even during challenges if we actually put the efforts then we can overcome all difficulties and achieve our goals. Thus, yes, I am very very pleased and grateful for receiving the DAAD prize for 2021.

### **Why did you choose the HWR Berlin in general, why Accounting and Controlling in specific?**

Well, I would like to start from the second part of the question. As I had Finance and Accounting as a major in my Bachelor's degree studies in Albania, I found myself really attached to Finance and Accounting related topics rather than other areas of studies. Thus I wanted to continue and gather some more in depth knowledge about it and subsequently pursue a career as a professional in this area as well. Having this clear, I focused my search only on institutions which would provide a relevant study programme and I have to admit that there were quite a few that I was revising. I decided about HWR Berlin as it convinced me in various aspects: firstly the Master's degree programme it offers for Accounting and Controlling blends so nicely the theoretical part with practice. Additionally, the fact that in the 3rd semester it offers a mandatory/voluntary internship was of high interest to me, as it definitely enables students to directly apply into practice what they are learning. Furthermore, the professors are highly experienced not only as professors but also as professionals in Accounting and Controlling positions, which is important as they bring a different mindset in the teaching sessions this way.

**You have volunteered at the Red Cross and Green Line Albania. What was your motivation?**

Whenever I choose to volunteer what motivates me is very simple: the fact that I am providing needed support and help. And that is sufficient for me. Also, in Albania there are many issues that need society's higher awareness, and health related topics and environment protection can be mentioned here. Thus every single hand that offers help is highly appreciated and contributes to the efforts aiming for a positive change and that is exactly what keeps volunteers going and should indeed motivate everyone to join. If we really aim for change, would be best if we get ourselves into the process as well.

**Looking back on your voluntary commitment: Which experience has shaped you the most?**

I wouldn't be able to choose one actually, as they all contribute. And in my opinion, not solely the voluntary ones but every experience we have had impacts us in a way or another. But if I had to choose only one characteristic that I have had the chance to work on and improve through voluntary activities, then I would definitely say the ability to empathize, which I consider of great importance.

**What are your plans after graduation?**

I wouldn't say I am 100% sure of what I will do right after I graduate, but what I can mention is that I have two primary goals on my mind as of now: firstly - as I am still in the very first steps toward building a successful career in Finance and Accounting area, I would like to continue with this process and progress as much as I can in this direction. Secondly, in the long term I would like to initiate a project which concerns Financial Education in my country, Albania.

**HWR Berlin has been awarding the DAAD Prize since 2006**

With the DAAD Prize, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) has been offering the HWR Berlin the opportunity to honour exceptional achievements of its international students since 2006. The stated aim of the prize is to put faces to the international students at German universities. The HWR Berlin is proud of its approximately 1500 foreign students who enrich our university.