



Dr Susanne Nonnen and Dr Michael Blank



## New Executive Director Dr Susanne Nonnen hands over the reins to Dr Michael Blank

The SES GmbH appointed a new Executive Director in April. Dr Michael Blank – who has served as representative of German trade and industry in Ghana and Nigeria during his career – has now taken over from Dr Susanne Nonnen. After leading the SES for so many years, Dr Nonnen will be taking up retirement and spending her time doing some voluntary work. From now on, she will be taking care of the activity of the SES Foundation.

The official handover was conducted at the SES headquarters in Bonn on 31 March. Officiated by Dr Franz Schoser, Chairman of the Executive Board of the SES Foundation, and attended by only a few, the ceremony was carried out in strict compliance with hygiene regulations.

“Of course, I have very mixed feelings about leaving”, admitted Dr Nonnen during her farewell speech. “But I’m not leaving completely. I’m looking forward to taking on my new role with our partner, the SES Foundation. But more importantly, I am delighted that Dr Blank has returned to Germany to lead the SES. I cannot imagine a better person to take over the reins.”

Dr Blank, former head of the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Accra and Lagos and former vice president of the German American Chambers of Commerce in New York, is very much at home in the international arena. He also served in several managerial roles for the German Association of Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK) in Berlin. During this time, he specialised in supporting German companies with their international expansion and introducing the dual training course system abroad.

“My whole career has revolved around foreign trade promotion, international cooperation and vocational training”, Dr Blank emphasised during his handover speech. “I am delighted to be bringing my expertise in these areas to the SES.”

### Dear readers,

*I am delighted to be writing to you for the first time today. About two months ago, I swapped my desk in Accra for one in Bonn as I took up the position of Executive Director at the SES GmbH.*

*In this short space of time, I have realised two things. Firstly, I am definitely going to enjoy my new job, and secondly, the work of the SES will become increasingly important over the next few years. I am absolutely convinced that the demand for professional experience and specialist knowledge will grow, as will people’s interest in volunteering their services in this area.*

*Added to this, the fact that several areas that are key for the SES are on the political agenda, including a development partnership with the business world, the promotion of vocational training, initiatives to help combat the problem of skill shortages, and international cooperation, especially with (but not restricted to) the neighbouring African continent. In my opinion, the SES is ideally positioned to successfully assume a leading role here.*

*The coronavirus has put a stop to personal encounters, and we’re not sure when this will change. However, there is life after the coronavirus – a life that will allow personal contact and discussions to regain their original magnitude.*

*I look forward to working together with the whole SES team and getting to know you as soon as possible.*

Dr Michael Blank  
Executive Director, SES GmbH



## Dr Michael Blank

### Professional experience

<b>since April 2021</b>	Executive Director SES GmbH
<b>2018 – 2021</b>	Head of the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce Ghana, Accra
<b>2016 – 2018</b>	Head of the AHK Membership, Economy & Start-ups department Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK), Berlin
<b>2015 – 2016</b>	Head of the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce Nigeria, Lagos
<b>2014 – 2015</b>	Project manager at the German Chambers worldwide network for cooperative, work-based Vocational Education & Training (VETnet) DIHK, Berlin
<b>2008 – 2014</b>	Vice president and treasurer German American Chambers of Commerce, New York
<b>2004 – 2008</b>	Head of the DEinternational department DIHK, Berlin
<b>2002 – 2004</b>	Head of the Africa/Development Cooperation department DIHK, Berlin
<b>2001 – 2002</b>	Project manager of public/private partnership projects German Association for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Berlin
<b>1997 – 2001</b>	Regional manager for southern Africa Afrika-Verein der deutschen Wirtschaft (African association of the German economy), Hamburg

### Education

<b>1990 – 1997</b>	Freie Universität Berlin, doctoral thesis
<b>1985 – 1990</b>	Technische Universität Berlin, degree in business studies
<b>1983 – 1985</b>	Deutsche Bank, Mülheim an der Ruhr, training as a banker

## Good news!

# Over 300 new experts have registered – more than 1800 international assignments on the horizon!

We've got to be honest, it will be a while until the SES can recover its former strength. At the moment though, the coronavirus is still calling the shots. However, we're ready to get going again as soon as the situation eases. In the meantime, there are two pieces of good news.

Firstly, during the first three months of 2021, 304 experts registered with us. Eighty-seven of these are currently in employment and are interested in getting involved in our junior division, Weltdienst 30+. This brings our pool of experts up to a total of 11,887 specialists – we're getting very close to the 12,000 mark!

Secondly, over 1,800 international assignments are already organised and ready for the off. All we need to do is finalise the start date!

Last but not least, more than 600 of our experts are already in touch with the people who they'll meet later on assignment, by using video conferencing facilities, for example.

## Sponsors' association

# North Rhine-Westphalia funding enables the building of a school library in Malawi

North Rhine-Westphalia has provided €6,200 of funding for the construction of a school library in Kasoba, in the north of Malawi. The sponsors' association has also donated €800 for this construction project. The partners in Malawi included the Open Learning Centre (OLC) and the municipality of Kasoba, while the Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) Authority looked after the actual construction work.

Thanks to the significant help of the local team with the construction, the library could be commissioned as early as the end of February. Today, 79 girls and 60 boys benefit from the school library, having previously had no quiet area in which to read. The TEVET Authority also came out winning. The organisation took advantage of the construction project to set up an apprenticeship building site for its trainees.

The idea to build the school library first came about during an SES assignment at the Open Learning Centre (OLC) in summer 2019. At this time, Gabriele Brinkmann and Claus Vollrath-Rödiger were on assignment at the non-governmental organisation. The OLC selected them as project partners primarily due to their training in project management and accounting.

Both experts accompanied OLC throughout the construction phase using digital technology: so far, the coronavirus has prevented a planned follow-up operation. If luck is on their side, Gabriele Brinkmann and Claus Vollrath-Rödiger will be able to be there when the library is officially handed over to the town of Lilongwe, in association with the German Embassy. Sadly, we do not have a date for this yet.

The SES sponsors' association is run by volunteers with minimum administration costs. Membership fees and donations are exclusively and directly injected into charitable causes. New members, as well as donations – however large or small – are always welcome.

### Bank account for donations

Verein zur Förderung des Senior Experten Service e.V.  
(SES sponsors' association)  
Volksbank Köln Bonn eG  
IBAN: DE50 3806 0186 2005 8200 17  
BIC: GENODED1BRS

### Further information

[www.ses-bonn.de](http://www.ses-bonn.de) > Sponsors' association



Malawi: Images of the construction of the school library in Kasoba



## Miscellaneous

### Sector Knowledge

Agriculture
Automotive engineering
Banking and insurance
Building industry
Charitable institutions
Chemistry
Communication technology
Economic and professional organisations
Education
Electrical engineering
Energy
Environmental protection
Food industry
Foundry and forging
Glass and ceramics
Hydraulics and pneumatics
Information technology
Law and taxes
Leather processing
Measurement, control & regulation technology
Mechanical engineering
Media, arts and culture
Metal production
Metalworking
Mining
Optics
Packaging for final consumers
Pharmaceuticals and cosmetics
Plant and apparatus engineering
Plastic products (manufacture & processing)
Precision mechanics
Printing and graphics
Public health
Public sector
Pulp and paper
Rubber processing
Sciences
Services
Textiles
Tools and machine tools
Trade
Traffic, tourism and leisure
Wood processing

### Facebook and LinkedIn

You may have already noticed that the SES has become active on social media recently. We now have our own Facebook and LinkedIn pages. Why not have a look? We're always keen to have new followers and likes. We look forward to reading your comments, too!

Curious? Then check our pages out now at  
[www.facebook.com/SeniorExpertenService/](http://www.facebook.com/SeniorExpertenService/)  
[www.linkedin.com/company/senior-experten-service/](http://www.linkedin.com/company/senior-experten-service/)

### New points of contact

The SES has welcomed a new volunteer on board, working as a new point of contact for Germany. Based in Halle and Magdeburg, Steffen Petzold is the new point of contact for Saxony-Anhalt. If you're based in Kassel, Jens Hansen is the right person to call, while Peter Krieger is your contact if you're in Lower Bavaria or the eastern part of Upper Bavaria.

The SES would like to thank two regional representatives in Franconia, who have given the organisation so many years of their valuable support. Christian Halangk and Harald Mieth took their well-deserved 'second retirement' at the end of April. We wish both of you all the best!

### Inspired from VerA

Since 2019, the SES has been supporting the EvolYou project (European Senior Volunteering through Mentoring for the Social Inclusion of Young People in Difficulties), in association with eight other organisations. The aim of the project is to set up programmes for young people, based on the same format as the SES VerA initiative outside Germany. The initial steps in France, Finland, Italy and Spain have brought a promising outcome. EvolYou is funded by the EU programme Erasmus+ and coordinated by Turin-based Vol.To.

**evolyou**

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