

Bern, 10. Dezember 2020

## Austausch SNF – *actionuni* der Schweizer Mittelbau, 23.11.2020

Liebe Mitglieder von actionuni

Nachfolgend findet Ihr die besprochenen Punkte während des Treffens zwischen actionuni und SNF-Vertretern mit den daraus hervorgegangenen Statements.

### Themen SNF

- 1. Gibt es Reaktionen zu den neuen Reglementen der Karriereförderung (z.B. DORA-Implementierung, Mobilitätsanforderungen, net academic age etc.)?**  
*Are there any reactions to the new regulations on career promotion (e.g. DORA implementation, mobility requirements, net academic age etc.)?*

Dora-Implementierung, Änderungen bei Mobilitätsanforderungen und Berücksichtigung des net academic age sind alles positive Entwicklungen, die die Chancengleichheit verbessern. Es bleibt zu beobachten, was die Auswirkungen sein werden auf die Verteilung der Forschungsgelder und zu hoffen, dass es die akademische Welt integrativer und vielfältiger machen kann.

*«We are very happy to hear DORA and not academic age are now implemented and look forward to see its effect on distribution of research funds and hope it can make the academic world more inclusive and diverse»*

Bei der Mobilität ist vielleicht zukünftig auch vermehrt an internationalen Austausch ohne physische Anwesenheit zu denken. Das ergibt Sinn aufgrund von Digitalisierung und ist auch ökologischer.

SNF informed that the DORA implementation is currently applied to career grants. For its implementation, **three levels** of training is foreseen by the SNF. 1. New mandate – part of training is DORA. 2. Science evolve (one day workshops in August and December, Theory of research and role models on video) 3. Policy paper for evaluators with do's and don'ts. SNF plans to conduct webinars with important points for all panel members. External reviewers will receive guidance for evaluation as per DORA. SNF plans to make the training material (<https://scienceval.ch/>) available to the public such that universities can use this material and conduct further workshops.

Actionuni welcomed this step of SNF and acknowledged that if the panel members are sensitised, this will automatically trickle down in the larger landscape.

**Regarding mobility**, PRIMA has no formal mobility requirements. For other career grants, when an applicant does not fulfil mobility at the time of submission, it can be implemented within grant. With the new measures, mobility is not only restricted to geographical cases, but extended to sector mobility and international collaborations. The relaxation of mobility measures saw a significant increase of applications from 400 to 480.

2. **Was denken Sie insbesondere über die neue Positionierung von PRIMA bezüglich Mindestanforderungen an die Anstellung (Gruppenleiterin resp. Assistenzprofessorin)?**  
*What do you think in particular about the new positioning of PRIMA with regard to minimum requirements for employment (group leader or assistant professor)?*

Die Universität Bern hat berichtet, dass dieser Schritt in die richtige Richtung geht und herzlich begrüsst wird. In ihrer Antwort stellen sie die Frage, ob der SNF über die Mittel verfügt, das Gehalt der PRIMA-Stipendiaten entsprechend zu erhöhen.

Die gesammelten Rückmeldungen unterstützen in hohem Masse, dass der SNF klar Stellung bezieht und eine Kategorie für die PRIMA-Stipendiaten vorschlägt. Angesichts der weit gefassten Anspruchsberechtigung von "2 bis 10 Jahre nach dem Doktorat" gibt es jedoch viele Fälle, in denen die PRIMA-Grantees viel besser qualifiziert sind als die Eccellenza-Kandidaten. Auf der anderen Seite sind einige der PRIMA-Stipendiaten in ihrer frühen Karrierephase (2-5 Jahre nach dem PhD) möglicherweise nicht erfahren genug, um als Professor berechtigt zu sein.

Unter Berücksichtigung aller Inputs schlägt actionuni vor, dass der SNF die jeweilige Universität/Fakultät/Institut ermächtigt, die Ernennungen der PRIMA-Stipendiaten strukturell zu ändern, wenn alle Bestimmungen für einen Assoziierten/Assistenzprofessor erfüllt sind. Diese Ernennung und Einstufung der PRIMA grantees müssen sich indes im PRIMA-Reglement widerspiegeln, damit eine reibungslose Annahme und Umsetzung an allen Universitäten gewährleistet und betrachtet werden kann.

*Collected inputs highly support that SNSF clearly takes a stand and suggest a category for the PRIMA grantees. However, given the broad eligibility of "2 to 10 years after PhD" there are many cases where the PRIMA grantees are much better qualified than the Eccellenza candidates. On the other hand, some the PRIMA grantees in their early career stages (2-5 years after PhD) may not be experienced enough to be entitled as a professor.*

*Considering all inputs, actionuni, suggests that SNF should empower the respective Faculty/Institute to structurally change the appointments of PRIMA grantees, if all regulations are fulfilled of a Associate/assistant professor. This appointment and classification of the PRIMA grantees has to reflected in the PRIMA regulations for smooth adoption and implementation at all Universities.*

**Actionuni:** PRIMA grantee (first cohort) reported that it deals with candidates between 2 and 10 years of experiences. This includes PRIMA candidates who are eligible for Ambizione too. There is also a discrimination in terms of title. Eccellenza grantees win the title of Prof and have access to project grants. More importantly, Universities have issues recognising the schemes and in differentiating the Eccellenza and PRIMA grantee positions. In addition to this, the "Group Leader" category is not a valid HR category at universities.

**SNF:** SNF mentioned that after a change of regulations, all Swiss universities (and other stakeholders) were informed of a possibility to get an Asst Prof. position. Trickling down is not a SNF problem. Some of the Universities are ready to provide Asst Prof while some others do not. Hence, the working group will reconsider this, and there will be no changes until 2022.

SNF informs that PRIMA was never stable and always evolving. Recently the Ambizione option with PRIMA has been cancelled and other standalone features have become obsolete. Hence the working group needs to be given time to find an optimal solution for the future. The presiding board is also very keen to find a solution.

SNF also mentioned that the PRIMA grantees were underfunded in the past. An Asst. Prof will cost more money. The original idea of PRIMA, however, was to fund 10 additional female candidates. The SNF did not specify to which scheme these 10 additional women would have belonged.

**3. Wie sind die Covid-19 Sondermassnahmen 2020 des SNF aufgenommen worden? Haben Mittelbauangehörige durch COVID-19 weiterhin Schwierigkeiten bei der Umsetzung ihrer Karrierepläne? Wie gehen die Hochschulen dieses Thema an?**

*How have the Covid-19 Special Measures 2020 of the SNSF been received? Do mid-level staff still have difficulties in implementing their career plans due to COVID-19? How are universities Tackling this issue?*

Die Universität Zürich berichtet, dass der ETH-Schulrat ihnen geholfen hat, die Massnahmen des SNF COVID zu verbreiten. Sie sind dem SNF sehr dankbar dafür, dass er dies angeboten hat, und unserer Universität, die uns dabei unterstützt und begleitet hat.

Einige der Meinungen von Mittelbau der Universität Bern stimmen mit der Universitätsleitung überein, dass die Auswirkungen der Corona-Pandemie noch lange spürbar sein werden und viele Konsequenzen zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt noch gar nicht abgeschätzt werden können. Einige andere befürchten, dass durch die Verlängerung bestehender Projekte die Konkurrenz um neue Projektbeiträge beim SNF härter wird. Darüber hinaus erscheint die Reaktion der Universitäten häufig zögerlich (Z.B. Verlängerung von Anstellungen, aber nur budgetneutral).

*University of Geneva reports that they are currently collecting narratives of how people are trying to extend their contract. One of the Sinergia grant employee mentioned that they never received any intimation from SNF regarding the request for extension. Our concern here is if the SNSF has contacted people individually or just the PI's? Are the employees of the grantees informed and has the request for extension taken place?*

*Several of actionuni's meeting with Swiss Universities has concluded that it is not possible to find a ONE FIT solution that fits all universities. This diversity makes it impossible to find consensus on a policy for extension of contracts. Hence, every University is tackling it within their own capacities.*

The actionuni president's meeting with A. Kalt (in June 2020) reflected SNF's intention to contact employees and not only the PI regarding the COVID measures. Usually, every employee in a SNF project receives an intimation (by email) to subscribe to the SNF newsletter. With this, SNF ensures to have disseminated this information to larger crowds. SNF confirmed in this exchange that they have contacted and informed the COVID measures to all employees on SNF grants.

Overall, SNF has not received any extra money to tackle this situation. In addition, they do not expect any growth of the budget in the next few years (the 2021-24 Botschaft is approved and will not be amended). SNF advises grantees with ongoing projects to try the best they can to get to reasonable results as they do not foresee to extend the measures into next years.

**4. Doc.CH: In der MJP 2021-24 plant der SNF eine Erweiterung des Instruments für Frauen in STEM-Disziplinen. Gibt es dazu Inputs von actionuni?**

*Mixed reactions here. Some universities have welcomed this new Doc.CH for STEM and are looking forward to the exact requirements and application process. Some other universities have concerns especially the social scientist's, if the total budget remains making it a tougher competition to get the funding.*

Summarising all inputs, actionuni would like to clarify the following:

- What is the need for this new action at a conceptual level?
- Why is this new STEM action targeted to females?
- Are there not enough female PhD candidates in STEM discipline?
- What are the statistics and inputs for this Doc.CH to be extended to STEM?
- Will there be more budget allocated to Doc.CH to include a new discipline or the same budget distributed (so reduced for grantees)?

**SNF:** The number of (established) female researchers in STEM discipline is alarmingly less compared to other disciplines. Data shows that the problems start at an earlier stage in STEM and cannot withhold the numbers. Originally this was a problem in both STEM and Life sciences. Currently, there are enough females in the life science field. Unlike the social sciences and humanities, STEM discipline is heavily dependent on the Lab and hence Independency is difficult. Wishful thinking is that the support provided with DOC.CH for STEM at the PhD level will then graduate into the PRIMA stream.

**Actionuni:** On a general level, there is more funding for STEM compared to social sciences, so why is need for extending funding for STEM Doc.CH?

**SNF:** It is true that the highest numbers of PhDs are hired within STEM disciplines. However, this additional funding should have a signalling effect for women. An additional 4.5 million is put into the funding scheme of Doc.CH and will not affect or reduce the funding for social sciences Doc.CH.

**Actionuni:** How is data from Scandinavian reality comparing to swiss reality? Women tend to choose disciplines from the social sciences when given a free choice. Is there a need to promote women in a discipline which is statistically not prioritized by them?

**SNF:** Yes, important point for further consideration.

**5. Wie sieht man die Abschaffung der Eccellenza Grants (nicht Fellowships)?**

*How do you see the abolition of Eccellenza grants (not fellowships)?*

Wir wären daran interessiert, mehr darüber zu erfahren, warum die Eccellenza-Grants abgeschafft wurden, da dies für uns etwas unklar war.

Erstens, was war die Idee, die Eccellenza Grant ursprünglich geschaffen zu haben?  
 Es gibt das Projekt Förderprogramm für jemanden, der bereits eine Stelle an der Universität hat.  
 Was sind die Statistiken/Motivation dafür, dieses Schema nach einigen Jahren abzuschaffen?  
 Wohin lenken Sie dieses Budget?  
 Wird es mehr Eccellenza-Stipendien geben?

*We are interested to know, the need/idea behind having the Eccellenza-Grants previously? There is the project funding scheme for someone who already has a position in the University. What are the statistics/motivation behind discontinuing this scheme after a few years?  
 Where will the budget resource of Grants directed to? Will there be more Eccellenza fellowships? Given the pandemic and stretched budgets, how is the redistribution planned?*

SNF explained the background for creating Eccellenza grants as the landscape of Asst prof in Switzerland. A decade ago, not many universities were offering Asst prof (expect EPFL and ETH). Hence SNF started this as an incentive for universities to create and promote APTT positions. However, in the initial years of its introduction, the evaluators mixed up the evaluations. Unfortunately, the mandate and budget for this scheme has been withdrawn (SERI) even before enough results were collected for its evaluation.

### Themen actionuni

1. **DORA Umsetzung:** Wie werden Gutachter/innen für die neuen DORA-Kriterien sensibilisiert und wie kann diese neue Begrüßungsmaßnahme an Universitäten umgesetzt werden?

Die Anpassungen von DORA im Bereich der Laufbahnförderungsinstrumente sind sehr positiv (Berücksichtigung des akademischen Nettoalters, neue Formen der Mobilität usw.). Der SNF übernimmt die Vorbild- und Pionierrolle für die Hochschulen. Wie werden die neuen Regeln konkret umgesetzt? Ist eine spezifische Ausbildung für die Gutachterinnen und Gutachter geplant, damit sie für diese neuen Regelungen sensibilisiert werden? Wie können und sollen die Hochschulen aus Sicht des SNF das neue Reglement übernehmen und umsetzen?

*The adjustments to DORA in the area of the career funding instruments is very positive (net academic age, new forms of mobility taken into account, etc.). SNSF takes on the role as model and pioneer for the universities. How are the new rules implemented in concrete terms? Is there a specific training for the reviewers planned, so that they are sensitised for these new regulations? How can and should the universities adopt and implement the new rules in the eyes of the SNSF?*

This topic was covered in the list of topics sent by SNF.

2. **Auswirkungen von COVID auf weibliche Forscherinnen:** Hat/Will der SNF die systematische Auswirkung der Betreuungspflichten während der Pandemie auf die Beitragsgesuche untersucht. Gibt es Massnahmen zum Transfer dieses Wissens an die Universitäten?

Was gedenkt der SNF zu tun, wenn die Zahl der Frauen, die Beitragsgesuche einreichen, aufgrund der Auswirkungen von COVID/Betreuungsaufgaben, weiter abnimmt? Ist es im Sinn des SNF diese Entwicklungen systematisch zu verfolgen? Plant der SNF spezifische Massnahmen den Wissenstransfer an die Hochschulen zum Übergeben, damit diese Massnahmen ergreifen können?

*What does the SNSF plan to do if the numbers of women submitting grant applications is continuing to decrease because of COVID/care duties? Does SNSF plan to monitor these developments systematically? Does SNSF plan specific measures or transfer the knowledge to the universities, so that they can take measures?*

*Care duties (school close, sickness) which normally lie on the shoulders of female researchers are leading to gender disparity. Hence, quantitative measures are needed at the Swiss University level to measure and correct this.*

*ActionUni suggests that the Equal Opportunities at the University level should start a project to assess the impact of COVID on female researchers (funding, publication)? In this regard, ActionUni asks if the SNF can mandate the university equal opportunity officers to help SNF gather and maintain scientific data on this important issue.*

SNF has its own equal opportunity officer. This equal opportunity team has actively followed this topic and analysed existing SNF data on grant submissions during the pandemic seasons. No statistical differences were seen from the submission history. SNF has also analysed data for grant prolongation requests and plans to publish all results in future.

Actionuni questioned if the research output has been followed and also informed the SNF that VAUZ has launched a large survey on the topic of covid19 impact on research activities and is looking forward to the results.

It was agreed that the equal opportunity offices (local/universities) are in the pulse of the situation and have first-hand information regarding their ECRs. Hence, SNF suggests that the equal opportunity offices are in a better position in terms evaluating the impact and it is better to conduct this university level. SNF mentions that this should be financed and launched by the Swiss Universities. However, the SNF's own gender equality unit is working on this topic and plans to publish a report.

3. **Mobilität und Pandemie:** Wie geht der SNF mit Fällen um, in denen Doc-, Early- und Advanced Postdoc-Mobilitätsstipendiaten von annullierten Flügen, geschlossenen Labors und auslaufenden Mobilitätsverträgen betroffen sind?

SNF reported that there are totally 800 Postdocs on the mobility program with approx. 200 who will start their mobility project soon. Of the 800, 300 postdocs have received prolongations (2 months) because of the pandemic. Some of the Postdocs abroad who returned during the pandemic were encouraged to look for a solution (finding another lab in Switzerland).

SNF has not yet considered the repercussions of the unprecedented situation on lack of publications during the mobility phase.

4. **Kommunikation des SNF:** Bei den vielen Änderungen an den Reglementen sollten die Antragstellenden sogleich sehen, was sich geändert hat. Denn diese Änderungen haben teilweise grossen Einfluss auf ihre mittelfristige Karriereplanung.

SNF: In the past, SNF has worked hard on changing career schemes for the benefit of applicants and had to act fast towards its implementation. In future, SNF will try to inform the changes/restriction much ahead of its implementation. News on upcoming changes and



implementations will be updated on their website. Whoever is interested in such information, can sign up on the website and receive this to their inboxes.

5. **Kostenneutralen Verlängerungen in Fällen von Mutterschaftsurlaub:** Doktorierende, die in Mutterschaftsurlaub gehen, sich zwischen einer bezahlten Verlängerung oder der Ausgabe des Geldes für HiWis, Konferenzreisen etc. entscheiden müssen.

*The cost-neutral extensions in cases of maternity leave: This means that PhD students which go on maternity leave have to choose between getting a paid extension or spending the money on HiWis, conference travel etc. which is not really fair. Additionally, it means PhD students have strong incentives to start working as soon as possible after the child is born, since any time not spent working might mean having to finish the thesis without a salary.*

**SNF:** According to current regulations, grantees can choose between prolongation of maternity leave or hire a support person to carry out the work. SNF does not see any valid point here as the PhD duration is extended by the duration of the maternity leave.

6. **Grant application – PI / Co-Proposer:**

Derzeit können Sie nicht als Co-Antragsteller auf einen Förderantrag, wenn sie als Mitarbeiter auf dem gleichen aufgeführt sind. Da viele der Projekt Antrag tatsächlich (teilweise) von Doktoranden/Postdoktoranden geschrieben werden, wäre es zu begrüßen, wenn die Namen als Co-Antragsteller aufgenommen werden könnten, auch wenn das Stipendium später möglicherweise einen Teil ihrer Gehälter bezahlen soll. Da sie einen großen Teil des Schreibens und der Einrichtung geleistet haben, ist es für uns sinnvoll, dies anzuerkennen.

*Currently, you cannot be a co-proposer on a grant application when you are listed as an employee on the same grant application. Many at times, the grants are partly or fully written by doctoral students/post-docs. Hence it would be appreciated if the names involved in writing can be included as co-proposers, even if they are listed as employees to receive their salaries through the same grant. As they did a major part of the writing and set-up, to us it makes sense to acknowledge this.*

**SNF:** Project grants can have more than one co-applicant, but only one applicant can be listed as the corresponding applicant. Listed collaborators do not receive any funding from the SNF proposed project. SNF thinks that the quality of the Project grant cannot reach the standards required (scientific and content) if a PhD candidate or PhD student writes it.

SNF will consider our request of acknowledging co-authors who have contributed to scientific input and writing in a similar fashion to co-authors in a publication. However, SNF thinks that listing these co-authors may impact the evaluation process.

SNF will up bring this as two different issues and discuss it internally. 1) Co-authors who contribute to scientific input; 2) balancing project employees as collaborators or co-applicants.

7. **Grant application – Evaluation Duration:**

Bei der Projektevaluierung dauert dieser Prozess derzeit mehr als ein halbes Jahr, was als sehr lang angesehen wird, da viele Postdoc-Stellen auf zwei oder manchmal sogar nur ein Jahr befristet sind. Es wäre sehr zu begrüßen, wenn dieser Prozess im Durchschnitt etwas schneller vorstättgehen könnte. Was bereits helfen würde, wäre ein Einblick in die Zwischenevaluierungen (zum Beispiel nach dem mündlichen Interview und vor der Veröffentlichung der Endergebnisse).

*Project evaluation, this process takes current more than half a year, which is considered very long as many postdoc positions are limited to two or sometimes even just one year. It would be very much appreciated if this process could go a bit faster on average. Something that would already help is get insight into the intermediate evaluations (for example after the oral interview and before the final results are published)*

**SNF:** The project evaluations run over a period of 6 months and is a multi-step process. However, the final decision is only released after the last round of evaluation. This is to maintain equal dissemination of information. SNF will shorten the project evaluation process in the near future but cannot guarantee if intermediate results will be disseminated.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Prabitha Urwyler, Vertreterin actionuni im Stiftungsrat SNF  
actionuni der Schweizer Mittelbau