

Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting held on 19 May 2020

Location: Virtual meeting via Zoom

Time: 12:45 pm – 2 pm

Present: Tizian Troxler, Eva Schnider, Patricia Hertel, Butrint Aliu, Ulrike Unterhofer, Nathalie Schicktanz, Ann-Kathrin Hess, Camila Plaza

Absent: Nesina Grütter

Minutes: Patricia Eiche

Agenda:

1. **Approval of the minutes of the executive board meeting held on 20 January 2020**
2. **avuba barbeque evening**
3. **VPOD (trade union for public service employees)**
4. **Advice services at the University of Basel**
5. **Topics for the meeting with the President's Office on 18 June 2020**
6. **Next avuba executive board meeting**

Item 1: Approval of the minutes of the executive board meeting held on 20 January 2020

The minutes of the executive board meeting held on 20 January 2020 are approved and thanks are expressed.

Item 2: avuba barbeque evening

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 measures implemented by the Swiss Federal Council, the fifth avuba barbeque evening with preceding city tours will have to be cancelled this year. In addition, avuba has not been able to hold any happy hours since February 2020. These events would have cost around CHF 10,000. The avuba executive board has decided to spend this money on online courses for assistants on topics not covered by current Transferable Skills courses. Patricia Eiche is tasked with finding courses and presenters.

Item 3: VPOD (trade union for public service employees)

The "Schweizerische Verband des Personals öffentlicher Dienste" (VPOD) is a trade union for public service employees. Ann-Kathrin Hess has contacted Kerstin Wenk, the union secretary for the VPOD team in the Basel region, for information about the opportunities and benefits offered by VPOD membership.

In addition to supporting salary negotiations and fighting for good working conditions – something avuba already does for its members – VPOD's benefits include advice services for employment references and pension issues. VPOD members are also eligible for one 30-minute consultation per calendar year with a specialized, trusted lawyer on a topic of their choice (comment: assistants can use the [free legal advice service offered by the skuba clinic](#)). VPOD also offers its members one free training course per year with www.movendo.ch and – in collaboration with Coop – private legal protection insurance currently costing CHF 138 per year. (Comment: avuba members can access combined legal protection (private and motor vehicle) with <https://akademis.ch/versicherungen/rechtsschutz/> from CHF 24.50 per month).

An association agreement between avuba and VPOD would mean that avuba would become a VPOD member and would have to pay a contribution for each individual member. The agreement would define which services VPOD would provide for avuba. On the one hand, this option would be much too expensive; on the other hand, it would not be practical for VPOD because avuba has too many members – according to VPOD, “association agreements” are designed for smaller industry segments. Assistants at the University of Basel can join as individuals; in this case, monthly membership fees depend on a person's salary. At the moment, a person earning CHF 47,000 per year would pay an annual VPOD membership fee of CHF 570. All details of VPOD's benefits and services are provided on its [homepage](#) (not available in English).

Kerstin Wenk has suggested that VPOD could meet with avuba once a year to discuss current topics. This would allow them to identify concerns shared by avuba and VPOD members at the university and tackle these issues together where necessary. The avuba executive board believes that avuba should wait until a topic arises that it believes to be worthy of discussion with VPOD.

Item 4: Advice services at the University of Basel

In the coming months, avuba and the Personal Integrity department shall write an email to assistants reminding them of all the advice services available at the University of Basel and informing them that avuba (i.e. general manager Patricia Eiche and current avuba co-presidents Ann-Kathrin Hess and Camila Plaza) is an independent point of contact for any concerns they may have.

Item 5: Topics for the meeting with the President's Office on 18 June 2020

On 18 June 2020, avuba will meet with the President's Office of the University of Basel for 30 minutes. The topic – “desire for transparency regarding differences between the two employment categories for assistants at the University of Basel” – is still pending because the HR website is currently being redesigned and there are plans for a university intranet. Among other things, avuba has told central HR that it is important for assistants to receive information on the following topics: a) All details of the employment relationship, including documents on the recruitment process; b) transparency regarding the term “assistant”, i.e. an explanation of the differences between the personnel categories “assistant with master's” and “assistant with doctorate” and the differences between the two roles for assistants at the University of Basel (employment contract according to private law/non-structural or public law/structural); c) specifications on the time available for a person's own research, demands of teaching, department duties and self-government; d) transparency regarding procedures and rights

for maternity leave/military service/civilian service; e) information on visas/residence permits including procedures, points of contact, documents and deadlines.

In the opinion of the executive board, avuba cannot take any action at the moment on the “duration of postdoc employment” because the university does not want to extend the maximum duration of 6 years (or 6+1 in justified cases), even for postdocs working part-time. The university’s main argument is that postdoc positions are for qualification purposes and academic/non-academic career opportunities do not increase the longer someone remains a postdoc.

The avuba executive board would like a concept to be drawn up for a possible avuba postdoc survey, including questions, before the next executive board meeting. The President’s Office will be asked for its opinions on this idea and potential topics. While doctoral students are to be regularly surveyed on “employment, supervision, career planning, administration and central services, personal integrity, health and continuing education” from 2021 by the Quality Development department at the University of Basel, nothing of this nature is currently planned for postdocs.

Item 6: Next avuba executive board meeting

The next meeting is expected to take place in September 2020.

Basel, 25 May 2020



Ann-Kathrin Hess



Camila Plaza