

Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting held on 28 May 2021

Location: Virtual meeting via Zoom
Time: 12:15 – 1:30 pm

Present: Tizian Troxler, Eva Schnider, Séveric Yersin, Butrint Aliu, Ulrike Unterhofer, Ali Darudi, Camila Plaza

Absent: Nesina Grütter, Eva Maria Meyer, Nathalie Schicktzanz

Minutes: Patricia Eiche

Agenda:

1. **Approval of the minutes of the executive board meeting held on 20 January 2021**
2. **COVID-19 and current work/research conditions**
3. **avuba funding**
4. **Measures based on the avuba postdoc survey 2020**
5. **Evaluation of “Academic Editing”**
6. **avuba social media accounts**
7. **Social event 2021**
8. **Information on “family-friendly university”**
9. **Next avuba executive board meeting**

Item 1: Approval of the minutes of the executive board meeting held on 20 January 2021

The minutes of the executive board meeting held on 20 January 2021 are approved and thanks are expressed.

Item 2: COVID-19 and work/research conditions

The avuba executive board members report from their respective faculties. In the life sciences, most areas are organized in such a way that anyone who needs to visit their laboratory or office is able to do so. The requirement to work from home is enforced more strictly in the humanities and social sciences. The following groups of assistants – particularly in the humanities and social sciences – are currently experiencing difficulties:

- a) Assistants who have lost research time (e.g. due to an increased teaching workload and/or cancelled research stays, aborted experiments, data access problems) and whose employment contract and/or funding has expired. Most are attempting to find additional funding, in some cases with help from their professors. However, this is a resource-intensive and stressful process that is filled with uncertainty and requires patience.
- b) Assistants who have received contract extensions but whose workload has increased, for example with regard to teaching.

c) Assistants who do not have a social network in Switzerland and find themselves in a difficult position due to lack of social contact, fewer prospects and greater uncertainty. avuba will discuss these issues with the President's Office.

Item 3: avuba funding

Tizian Troxler has worked with Camila Plaza and Patricia Eiche to compose a memorandum entitled "Restructuring avuba's finances: fixed amount instead of deficit guarantee" that explains the benefits and drawbacks of each form of funding. Currently, at the end of the year, the University offsets any expenses that exceed avuba's income from membership fees. This means that since 2013 avuba's annual profit has always been CHF 0. The current form of funding creates disincentives, restricts the scope of action, and avuba finds it to be questionable both conceptually and legally. avuba would therefore like to be allocated a fixed amount from the University's global budget. The avuba executive board thanks for the comprehensive document and votes unanimously to pass it on to the President's Office. The proposal is expected to be discussed with the President's Office in the coming weeks.

Item 4: Measures based on the avuba postdoc survey 2020

On 22 March 2021, avuba members received an email with a link to the results of the "[avuba postdoc survey 2020](#)". avuba discussed the most important findings with the President's Office in mid-February and the university management published a [President's Office resolution](#) on 8 March 2021. avuba would like further measures to be introduced for assistants, particularly with regard to "supervision and career path" and "career prospects" (see page 2 of this [document](#)). The avuba executive board asks the co-presidents and general manager to contact the President's Office again in June to ask whether any further measures are planned/possible.

Item 5: Evaluation of "Academic Editing"

In June 2019, at the request of avuba and the Office of Early Career Researchers' Development, the President's Office of the University of Basel conducted a two-year "Academic editing incentive" pilot project for doctoral students. Money was allocated from the dissertation fund for this project. Over the last two years, doctoral students have been able to obtain a one-off contribution of up to CHF 500 toward the cost of editing their own research for publication in English. Contrary to expectations, very few people have applied for funding. As part of the evaluation of the "Academic editing incentive", avuba told the Office of Early Career Researchers' Development that, in avuba's opinion, extending this service to postdocs and expanding the languages eligible for editing would likely increase application numbers significantly. The President's Office will decide in the fall whether this service will continue and what form it will take. The Language Center, GRACE, avuba and others will be supporting the possible continuation of this service.

Item 6: avuba social media accounts

The co-presidents have proposed that avuba could boost its visibility by setting up and maintaining Twitter and LinkedIn accounts. The avuba executive board agrees in principle, but would like to discuss the details in a separate meeting. Butrint Aliu, Group III Senate representative for the Faculty of Science, has previously worked in a project team responsible for creating social media accounts. He recommends that avuba develop a detailed social media concept and then decide whether its existing resources are sufficient for this project. This meeting is expected to take place in August.

Item 7: Social event 2021

The avuba executive board agrees that – if possible – avuba should organize a late summer event in the form of a barbecue evening. Unfortunately, association events are currently restricted to a maximum of 50 people. According to the Swiss Federal Council, there will be “one further round of reopening” before the summer. Decisions about the next set of steps in easing restrictions, which will then apply from 1 July 2021, are expected to be announced at the Federal Council media conference on 23 June 2021. The avuba executive board will vote on this matter at the end of June via circular resolution.

Item 8: Information on “family-friendly university”

In May, avuba (representing Group III) took part in two “family friendliness” workshops organized by the Diversity Office at the University of Basel. This was another opportunity to highlight the problem areas identified by the last two avuba surveys. Tizian Troxler also had an idea that he, Camila Plaza and Patricia Eiche have outlined in a memorandum entitled “Measure to boost family friendliness: more flexible employment contracts for assistants with family responsibilities”. The avuba executive board approved this document for submission to the President’s Office in mid-May via circular resolution. avuba’s idea is as follows: To make the University of Basel more family-friendly for Group III assistants with family responsibilities, the University could – if desired by the assistant in question – convert their fixed-term employment contract into a financial pledge equivalent to the costs of their remaining years as an assistant for the duration of their contract. This would give them more flexibility to design their workload or to determine the length of their contract. The University would first have to examine whether and how this proposal could be implemented and how equal treatment could be secured for assistants with external funding, which is often tied to the duration of a project. A working group has been set up for this purpose. This issue is the responsibility of the new “Vice President for People and Culture”, Professor Nicole Schaeren-Wiemers, who will assume her role on 1 August 2021. Therefore, final discussions of this proposal will probably have to wait until August or September.

Item 9: Next avuba executive board meeting

The next meeting is expected to be held in September 2021.

Basel, 16 June 2021



Tizian Troxler
avuba co-president



Camila Plaza
avuba co-president