

Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting held on 1 February 2022

Location: Virtual meeting via Zoom

Time: 4:00 – 5:45 pm

Present: Esther Maria Meyer, Marga Burri, Anna Viola Bleichenbacher, Tolga Daniel Dittrich, Galya Iseli, Séveric Yersin, Butrint Aliu, Ali Darudi, Elena Pauli, Sven Kraus, Lars Fluri, Thomas Messerli

Absent: Nesina Grütter

Minutes: Patricia Eiche

Agenda:

1. Approval of the minutes of the executive board meeting held on 23 November 2021
2. Personnel: General manager
3. Working and research conditions during Covid-19
4. Request to the President's Office to improve working conditions for assistants
5. Working conditions at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences: What next?
6. Family-friendly university
7. Collaboration between avuba and Group III representatives on university committees
8. Better Science Initiative
9. Next avuba executive board meeting

Item 1: Approval of the minutes of the executive board meeting held on 23 November 2021

The minutes of the executive board meeting held on 23 November 2021 are approved and thanks are expressed.

Item 2: Personnel: General manager

Patricia Eiche has been managing avuba since 2013, when she and the then co-presidents founded the association. She leaves at the end of February 2022 of her own volition. On behalf of the avuba executive board and all assistants, Sven Kraus expresses his heartfelt thanks for her outstanding commitment.

The avuba executive board decides to pay Patricia Eiche in full for the overtime she performs up to the end of February 2022 based on her hourly rate of CHF 41.66 plus an overtime premium of 25% in accordance with the Swiss Code of Obligations.

Addendum to the executive board meeting: On 10 February 2022, the avuba executive board decides by circular resolution to appoint Amancaya Formica as Patricia Eiche's successor with a 50% workload as of 15 February 2022.

Item 3: Working and research conditions during Covid-19

Although the avuba executive board assumes that the Swiss Federal Council will gradually reverse the measures implemented during the pandemic, it should be noted that the last two years have proven challenging for many assistants for two reasons in particular: Some research could not be conducted as planned due to lockdowns, etc. (issue of contract extension) and many people have experienced problems with their physical and mental health while working from home. The assistants of the Faculty of Law on the avuba executive board will clarify assistants' rights relating to home office equipment/infrastructure in time for the next meeting. As future lockdown measures cannot be ruled out, the co-presidium is asked to discuss the topic with the President's Office during the next bilateral meeting. It would be good if the University were to evaluate what researchers feel has worked well in the last two years and what could be done better if similar situations were to arise in the future.

Item 4: Request to the President's Office to improve working conditions for assistants

Following the decision by the avuba executive board not to sign the Petition Academia, the avuba executive board decided at its meeting on 14 September 2021 to put a proposal to the President's Board by the end of 2021 that additional posts be created between postdoctoral research positions and professorships in order to relieve professors and assistants of some of their workload and, at the same time, to introduce a permanent job category for highly qualified research associates. Due to the resignation of Tizian Troxler, avuba co-president for 2021, and Patricia Eiche, avuba general manager, the avuba executive board decided on 23 November 2021 to postpone this matter until 2022 and to submit a request to the President's Office instead. A working group of avuba executive board members led by Sven Kraus, avuba co-president for 2022, will draw up a proposal and present its content at the upcoming executive board meeting. This special meeting is expected to take place end of February or early March 2022.

Item 5: Working conditions at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences: What next?

Sven Kraus informs the meeting that a group of assistants has been formed within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences that aims to improve working conditions for assistants. The group has invited Séveric Yersin and Sven Kraus to a discussion at the end of February. In this context, the avuba co-presidium suggests to the avuba executive board that a two-hour special meeting be held on avuba's stance on "working conditions, research conditions and higher education policy". This discussion meeting is expected to take place mid of March 2022.

Item 6: Family-friendly university

In May 2021, during two internal workshops relating to “berufundfamilie” certification, avuba suggested potential improvements to make the university more family-friendly for assistants. The Vice President’s Office for Education and the HR Office consequently set up a working group to analyze family-friendliness at doctorate/postdoctorate level and commissioned GRACE to run the group. Following various discussions, a paper was drawn up that provided an overview both of existing options and services to promote family-friendliness at the university and of specific potential measures for the future. avuba will provide GRACE with feedback on this paper by 7 February 2022.

Item 7: Collaboration between avuba and Group III representatives on university committees

In October 2021, avuba submitted a proposal to the President’s Office to simplify the exchange of information between avuba and assistant representatives on university committees. The proposal for a “non-disclosure agreement” aimed to allow Group III representatives to share documents, decisions and important information – excluding personal information – with the avuba executive board members, co-presidium and general manager without breaching committee confidentiality or any other confidentiality obligations. Danielle Kaufmann, Data Protection Officer, responded in December 2021: Moving away from the principle of confidentiality for committee and board work toward general (but restricted) openness would likely incur a disproportionate amount of effort. avuba is therefore asked to continue with the existing procedure, i.e. asking a specific committee to disclose the information desired in an individual case.

This agenda item also includes a query from assistants who represent Group III within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences on a committee that also exists as cross-faculty committee (Equal Opportunity Committee and Diversity Committee): Could avuba envisage regular meetings with representatives on faculty-specific committees on this issue? Patricia Eiche explains that, due to limited resources, avuba has previously only been able to hold regular discussions with [assistant representatives on cross-faculty committees](#). As the designated meeting time has already been exceeded, this topic will be deferred until the upcoming regular executive board meeting.

Item 8: Better Science Initiative

Lars Fluri explains the working assumptions on which the initiative is based: The working atmosphere at universities is often characterized by stress and mental strain. / When research findings are published, quantity and journal impact factors are often more important than quality. / The increasing challenges of supervision and team leadership are causing people to resign.

The Better Science Initiative has formulated [10 calls to action](#) for Switzerland's academic culture. The initiative aims to promote academic excellence/quality, in particular sustainable, diverse scholarship with equal opportunities for all.

For time reasons, the avuba executive board will wait until its next regular meeting to discuss whether avuba wishes to add its name to this initiative and/or whether avuba wishes to inform assistants that they can sign as individuals.

Item 9: Next avuba executive board meeting

The next regular meeting is expected to take place in April 2022.

Basel, 19 February 2022



Sven Kraus
avuba co-president



Lars Fluri
avuba co-president