

Minutes of the of the Board meeting of 17 February 2025

Venue: Kollegienhaus, meeting room 206

Time: 12:15 - 13:45

Present: Kathrin Schwarz, Anna Viola Bleichenbacher, Felix André Erb, Boris Ševarika, Raul Hochuli, Fabio Carbone, Antonia Vogler, Tomás Sousa, Amancaya Formica, Patricia Eiche

Absent: Meret Cajacob, Sepideh Alassi, Sergej Maul, Sophie Reckels

Total: 10 present, of which entitled to vote: 8

Minutes: Patricia Eiche

Agenda items:

1. Approval of the agenda of the Board meeting of 17 February 2025
2. Election of the person taking the minutes and election of the person counting the votes
3. Approval of the minutes of 30 September 2024
4. Personnel
5. Finances
 - a) End of year results 2024
 - b) Budget 2025
 - c) Financial controls 2025
6. Current status of ongoing avuba activities
 - a) Representation and participation of assistants
 - b) Anti-austerity measures
 - c) Reform of employment and working conditions of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers
 - d) Sexual abuse / power abuse
 - e) Mental health initiatives
 - f) Other events
7. Varia
8. Next avuba Board meeting at the end of May / beginning of June

Agenda item 1: Approval of the agenda of the Board meeting of 17 February 2025

The agenda of the Board meeting is approved unanimously.

Agenda item 2: Election of the person taking the minutes and election of the person counting the votes

Patricia Eiche is unanimously elected as secretary. Amancaya Formica is unanimously elected as vote counter.

Agenda item 3: Approval of the minutes of 30 September 2024

The minutes of the Board meeting of 30 September 2024 are approved unanimously.

Agenda item 4: Personnel

One of the tasks of the current avuba Co-Presidium is to monitor overtime and ensure that the Co-General Managers reduce all their accumulated overtime hours and holidays that have not yet been taken. It is also their responsibility to draw up a working strategy such that no more hours are accumulated. The following measures have been implemented to date:

- Introduction of Notion as a collaborative platform: Notion is an online tool for project management and collaboration. Among other things, it improves the transparency of task distribution, enables a standardised level of knowledge in multi-person projects thanks to its note function and serves as a central tool for the preparation, follow-up and documentation of our weekly team meetings.
- Work organisation: The avuba Co-Presidium coordinates the distribution of tasks within the team and decides, if necessary, which task should be prioritized.
- Overtime and holiday management (as at 15.2.2025): The Co-Presidium monitors overtime and holiday entitlement on a weekly basis with the aim of reducing them over the course of the year:

	Amancaya Formica	Patricia Eiche
Overtime 31.12.24 in hours	85.5	147.4
Sick days 2024	0	0
Holidays not taken until 31.12.2024 in days	8.5	9.2
Overtime hours paid out		
in November 2024	0	50
in December 2024	0	72
in January 2025 (cost-effective in 2024)	85	23
Total hours paid out	85	145
<u>As of 15.2.2025</u>		
Overtime accumulated (in hours)	12.2	3.3
Holidays for the full year 2025 (in days)	33.5	29.2

- University policy often requires a quick response to current developments. This makes it difficult to plan the workload in the long term, as certain work should be done promptly due to its topicality and/or urgency. In addition, the workload is subject to seasonal fluctuations: During the summer months, there is relative calm due to university administrative breaks, whereas a phase of intensive activity sets in from September until the end of the year.
- Events for members: Despite the popularity of avuba events, avuba currently focuses on events that cover unique topics and are not offered elsewhere at the university. These include workshops on mental health, writing retreats and happy hours.

Agenda item 5: Finances a) End of year results 2024, b) Budget 2025, c) Financial controls 2025**a) End of year results 2024**

As at 31 December 2024, avuba reported an annual result of CHF -13,462.

The balance sheet total as at 31 December 2024 is as follows:

Annual result 2022: CHF +15,554

Annual result 2023: CHF +33,821

Annual result 2024: CHF -13,462

Total accumulated reserves as at 31 December 2024: CHF +35,913

b) Budget 2025

On 2 December 2024, the avuba General Meeting approved a budget based on the forecast available at that time (data available). The forecast assumed an annual result of CHF -4,400 as at 31 December 2024. In reality, avuba reported an annual result of CHF -13,462, which corresponds to a CHF 9,063 higher deficit.

Reasons:

- avuba's main objective in 2024 was not to generate a surplus, as this would have been added to the existing reserves as at 31 December 2023. If avuba had exceeded this amount, the university would have reduced its annual contribution of CHF 79,000. The performance agreement with the Rectorate states: "The President's Office reserves the right to reduce the annual fixed amount, should avuba's reserves resulting from the transfer of unused University funds exceed the amount of CHF 50,000." Therefore, avuba used the additional resources for events in 2024 that would benefit members in either 2024 or 2025. avuba paid for three writing retreats and a COMPASS-organised workshop on mental health in 2024 in advance for 2025.
- In addition, Amancaya Formica informed the Co-Presidium Antonia Vogler and Lars Fluri shortly before Christmas that she would like to have her overtime from 2024 paid out so that she can start again in 2025. A circular resolution was sent to the avuba Board with the proposal to pay out 23 hours of overtime for Patricia Eiche and 85 hours for Amancaya Formica at the end of 2024. This resulted in additional costs of CHF 5,900 for 2024.

The avuba Executive Board is asked whether - as things stand today - expenditure should be planned as budgeted by the avuba General Meeting (option 1) or whether the avuba Executive Board would like to reduce expenditure today (options 2-4) so that the expected avuba reserves at the end of 2025 will be higher. If expenditure is spent as planned, the expected reserves as at 31 December 2025 would amount to around CHF 18,400 instead of CHF 27,500.

2025	Budget	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
<i>in Swiss francs</i>	as approved	Keep costs	Do not pay	AF & PE reduce their	no honoraria
	by the General	as approved	any	workload from July	plus workload
	Meeting	by the GM	honoraria	from 50% to 45%	reduction AF & PE
Personnel costs	160'000	160'000	160'000	154'000	154'000
Optional: Honoraria	10'000	10'000	0	10'000	0
Operational costs	30'500	30'500	30'500	30'500	30'500
Optional: project(s) "power abuse" to support assistants	10'000	10'000	10'000	10'000	10'000
Total Expenses	210'500	210'500	200'500	204'500	194'500
Income from membership fees	114'000	114'000	114'000	114'000	114'000
Result before Unibas contribution	-96'500	-96'500	-86'500	-90'500	-80'500
University's contribution	79'000	79'000	79'000	79'000	79'000
Year-end result	-17'500	-17'500	-7'500	-11'500	-1'500
Accumulated reserves 2022-2024	44'976	35'913	35'913	35'913	35'913
Reserves expected as of 31.12.2025	27'476	18'413	28'413	24'413	34'413

The avuba board decides to continue with the expenses approved by the avuba members' meeting for the time being. The board votes in favour of "Option 1" for the following reasons:

- The necessity of expenses for honoraria remains uncertain for the time being, i.e. these budgeted expenses of CHF 10,000 are optional. According to the financial regulations, compensation for extraordinary work requires prior approval of the Board. The decision on this optional expenditure is therefore the responsibility of the avuba Board of Directors.
- The budgeted expenditure on the topic of "abuse of power" totalling a maximum of CHF 10,000 is also optional. The specific use of the funds for projects on the topic of "abuse of power" has not yet been defined. The avuba Board reserves the right to release funds for one or more projects in this area during the course of the year.
- A discussion about reducing the workload of the avuba managing directors does not appear to be expedient at the present time, as both still have overtime and holiday entitlements.
- In 2024, avuba was faced with the challenge of almost exceeding the maximum permissible reserves of CHF 50,000.
- In future, the aim is not to make any more changes to the planned expenditure after the General Meeting. This is in contrast to the practice of the previous year, when it was decided to pay out further overtime shortly before Christmas.

c) Financial controls 2025

In accordance with avuba's financial regulations, a member of the Executive Board who is not on the Co-Presidium monitors compliance with the budget and the compliance of the use of funds once a quarter. This person notifies the Board of Directors immediately in the event of any irregularities:

- The budget has been exceeded;
- A liquidity shortage is imminent;
- avuba is at risk of excessive indebtedness;
- Other unplanned events have occurred that will affect avuba's finances.

If no new Board member comes forward to take on this additional office, Raul Hochuli will carry out the Q1 financial audit at the end of March or beginning of April, although he would like to step down from this voluntary office, which he took on in 2024.

Agenda item 6: Current status of ongoing avuba activities a) Representation and participation of assistants, b) Anti-austerity measures, c) Reform of employment and working conditions of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, d) Sexual abuse / abuse of power, e) Mental health initiatives, f) Other events

a) Representation and participation of assistants

- Mission, vision, values: This document is intended to serve as a guide for avuba employees in achieving their goals and as a decision-making aid. It should also be used to clearly communicate the purpose and objectives of the organisation. The avuba Executive Board will review and amend the draft. Once finalised, the document will be published.
- Over the past few weeks, Antonia Vogler has compiled an overview of the various graduate schools and assistants' associations within the university. When starting a doctorate or a postdoc, it is advisable to find out about the informal communication channels of the respective doctoral school. These channels are often valuable sources of important information and exchange.

- avuba flyer: In order to contact the assistants not only digitally, avuba will create and print a flyer that can be displayed at the various university campuses.
- The communication concept will be revised for the next avuba Board meeting in order to define all relevant avuba communication channels, including the frequency with which they should be used.

b) Anti-austerity measures

On 29 January 2025, the Federal Council opened the consultation on "relief package 27". It proposes cost-cutting measures in education, research and innovation (ERI) of more than 460 million Swiss francs per year (2027 and 2028). This would affect vocational education and training, all higher education institutions, and research and innovation promotion institutions.

The Federal Council plans to cut the SNSF budget by around ten percent in both 2027 and 2028, with reductions potentially starting as early as 2026. Unlike other cost-cutting measures, cuts to the SNSF budget do not require amendments to the law. The planned cuts of 400 million Swiss francs to the SNSF from 2026 to 2028 would mark an unprecedented setback for Swiss science.

- Research funding: 700 excellent research projects and 2,000 jobs for young researchers could be lost.
- Innovation funding: 240 innovative joint projects between industry and research in key areas are under threat.

avuba is part of an actionuni working group and was involved in the development of the actionuni [press release](#) (published on 26 February 2025). A flyer will be produced by the beginning of March, which can be handed out at local universities. avuba has already contacted skuba representatives and will also contact the other groups at the university to consider what measures could be used to draw attention to this key issue.

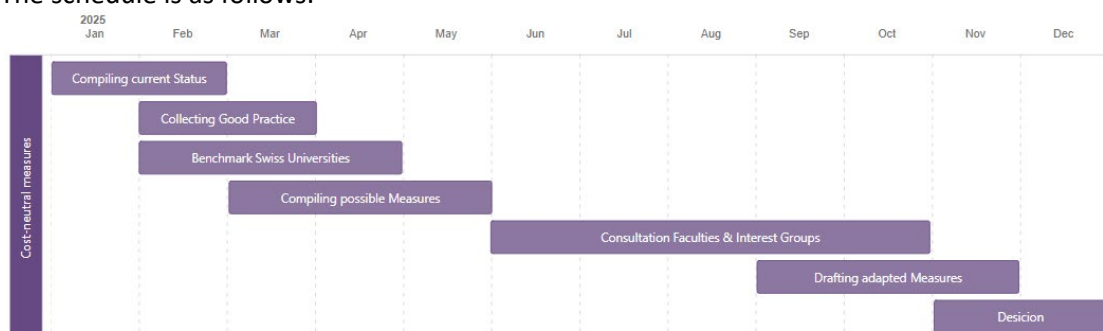
The following media releases have already been published on this topic:

- [Swissuniversities](#): Statement from swissuniversities on the 2027 relief package (in German only)
- [Swiss National Science Foundation](#): SNSF and ERI partners reject savings package of over CHF 460 million per year
- [Association of the Swiss Student Body](#): VSS is objecting to the irresponsible cost-cutting measures in the education sector (in German only)

c) Reform of employment and working conditions of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers

Patricia Zweifel, coordinator of the project joins for this agenda item. She explains that the project in 2025 will initially focus on cost-neutral measures and is primarily aimed at optimising the situation of employed assistants.

The schedule is as follows:



Patricia Zweifel will continuously involve the avuba Executive Board in the project in order to integrate feedback from assistants in all seven faculties. Given the faculty-specific framework conditions, it is crucial that improvements are implemented without penalising certain groups.

At regular avuba lunches, to which all assistants are invited - the next one will take place on [20 March 2025](#) - everyone can join in the discussion. Information on the project is also available to all employees on the [intranet](#).

Whether it will also be possible to implement measures in a second phase, which would entail costs for the university, depends on the commitment of additional funding for the reform by the sponsoring cantons as part of the 2026-2029 global contributions. A decision on this issue is expected in autumn 2025.

A member of the Executive Board suggests conducting a survey of former assistants. The aim is to determine which aspects were perceived as particularly valuable and where there is an urgent need for improvement at a distance from the assistantship period at the university. The findings from this survey could provide valuable information on which topics should be prioritised in the upcoming reform. avuba will contact [Alumni Basel](#) for this matter.

d) Sexual abuse / power abuse

Following the Kassensturz report of 5 November 2024, the avuba Executive Board and the skuba Executive Board wrote a letter to the Rectorate requesting measures to prevent abuse of power and sexualised violence and to strengthen victim protection. Representatives of avuba and skuba were then invited to two bilateral dialogue meetings with members of the Rectorate. The Vice-Rector People & Culture will hold further talks on this topic in the coming weeks and then submit a proposal to the Rectorate, which will be followed by an official response to the letter from the Boards of skuba and avuba. The dialogue between avuba and skuba representatives and the Rectorate will continue as required.

Complementary information:

- [Code of Conduct at the University of Basel](#): We ensure that our relationships remain professional and are open in addressing conflicts of interest. We value our relationships with one another and recognize that they play a role in the success of our institution. We disclose in advance any bias that could result from a personal relationship and work out a solution that is fair to all involved. In the case of a sexual, intimate and/or romantic relationship, we behave professionally and do not abuse positions of power. We acknowledge bias, abstain or take other necessary measures to avoid conflicts of interest and protect those involved.
- In order to ensure the protection of personal integrity, the [Personal Integrity Office](#) acts as a low-threshold, confidential and personal point of contact, counselling and support for university members and students whose personal integrity has been violated.
- Patricia Eiche and Amancaya Formica (Co-General Managers) as well as the avuba [Co-Presidents](#) are available for individual consultations on issues specific to mid-level academia. A discreet and, if necessary, anonymous referral to further authorities in case of labor law or ethical questions is guaranteed. Write to us at avuba@unibas.ch.

e) Mental health initiatives

- Compass: COMPASS Mind Switzerland is an initiative of students, assistants as well as academic and non-academic staff dedicated to promoting mental health and raising awareness of neurodiversity in the academic environment. The organisation provides information and resources to support people who see themselves as neurodiverse, or who want to learn more about neurodiversity and mental health in general. COMPASS Mind organises events such as workshops or talks with experts and those affected, held over lunch, as well as a regular Wellness Café open to all interested individuals. People interested can also actively participate in the realisation of the goals by volunteering. In 2024, several joint events on mental health topics were held in collaboration with avuba. Further joint events are planned for 2025, in which skuba will also be involved. The avuba Executive Board proposes formulating a cooperation agreement with COMPASS Mind, in which the framework conditions for the collaboration are defined. Among other things, this could stipulate that avuba contributes around CHF 150 to the costs of the [COMPASS Mind website](#) for one year or CHF 240 for two years.
- Swiss-wide Mental Health Survey: Around 2,500 people across Switzerland took part in this survey, which was conducted in 2024, a quarter of whom came from the University of Basel. In spring 2025, the actionuni Executive Board will meet to discuss the strategic direction for the publication of the survey results. The aim is to plan the presentation and communication of the results in such a way that maximum impact can be achieved. A specific report is planned for summer 2025, which will include a methodological description of the survey and graphical comparisons between the University of Basel and other universities.

f) Other events

Thanks to the [Benefit Foundation](#), avuba has been able to offer its members free financial seminars in German and English in recent years. The foundation will not be offering webinars until at least summer 2025 as it is undergoing a reorganisation.

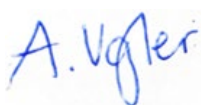
Agenda item 7: Varia

Following the annual avuba General Meeting, the Co-General Managers have a lot of work to do until the end of the year. In order to better distribute this work, the next avuba General Meeting, which was previously held at the end of November or beginning of December, will be brought forward by around two weeks. The date will be finalised shortly.

Agenda item 8: Next avuba Board meeting

The next Board meeting will take place between mid-May and early June 2025.

Basel, 26 February 2025



Antonia Vogler
avuba Co-President



Tomás Sousa
avuba Co-President