Minutes of the Board Meeting of March 9, 2026

Location: Kollegienhaus, Meeting Room 206
Time: 12:15 – 1:45 p.m.

Attendees: Claartje Ille, Anna Sophia Roth, Micha Bigler, Sepideh Alassi, Nadia Bellardi, Valentin Waibl, Sergej Maul, Carlo Tschopp, Tomás Sousa, Antonia Vogler, Alexandra Campana, Patricia Eiche

Absent: Kathrin Knapp, Felix André Erb, Alexander Wiese, Fabio Carbone

Total: 12 present, of whom 9 are eligible to vote

Minutes: Patricia Eiche

Agenda:

1. Approval of the agenda for the board meeting on March 9, 2026
2. Election of the minute-taker and election of the vote-counter
3. Approval of the minutes of the last board meeting on September 18, 2025
4. Introduction to and collaboration with VPOD
5. Personnel
6. Finances
   a) 2025 Annual Report
   b) Quarterly audits by an avuba board member
   c) Funding for events in 2026
7. Current status of ongoing avuba business
   a) Reform of employment and working conditions for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers
   b) Personal integrity / Prevention of abuse of power
   c) Cost-cutting measures
   d) Swiss-wide Mental Health Survey
   e) Participation in university self-governance
   f) Brands for Students / Cashyou
   g) Language courses for postdoctoral researchers at the Language Center
   h) avuba social media channels
8. Miscellaneous
9. Next avuba board meeting

Agenda Item 1: Approval of the agenda for the board meeting on March 9, 2026

The agenda for the board meeting is approved unanimously.

Agenda Item 2: Election of the minute-taker and election of the vote-counter

Patricia Eiche is unanimously elected as both the minute-taker and the vote-counter.

Agenda Item 3: Approval of the minutes of the last board meeting held on September 18, 2025

The minutes of the board meeting of September 18, 2025, are approved unanimously.

Agenda Item 4: Introduction to and collaboration with VPOD

The avuba board invited representatives from the VPOD mid-level faculty group for a discussion. Maria Tranter (postdoc in history) attended as a representative. She explained that in 2020/2021, a loose group of teaching assistants decided to join the VPOD and have since met regularly as the VPOD mid-level faculty working group. One of the reasons for this was the decision by the then avuba board not to sign the "Akademia" petition (see minutes of the board meeting of September 14, 2021, Agenda Item 4).
By joining the VPOD, the group gains organizational infrastructure, union expertise, access to labor law advice, and networking opportunities with other employee groups. Furthermore, being part of a union lends greater institutional weight to their concerns and facilitates public and political advocacy.
Both avuba and the VPOD mid-level faculty working group represent similar concerns. These include, in particular, the improvement of working and employment conditions for mid-level academic staff. However, due to their different roles, structures, and capabilities, their working methods and scope of action differ.
avuba is the official representative body for academic mid-level faculty at the University of Basel and part of the University's self-governing body. It prioritizes internal university matters and seeks to address issues within the University and contribute to developing solutions. avuba represents assistants through its membership in actionuni, the umbrella organization of official mid-level faculty representatives at Swiss universities. In its approach, avuba is politically and religiously neutral and seeks to advance issues primarily through dialogue, consensus, and projects within the University's structures.
The VPOD mid-level faculty working group, on the other hand, is a trade union organization within the VPOD and independent of the University. Its approach is more trade union-oriented and includes mobilization, public statements, and political demands; accordingly, the tone of its communication is at times more confrontational and strongly political.
Both sides acknowledge that both organizations have their place and pursue different strategies to achieve goals that are, in part, similar. They agree to stay in touch and keep each other informed about activities, as well as to assess on a case-by-case basis whether mutual support is both sensible and feasible for specific issues or projects. The VPOD mid-level faculty group meets on the first Monday of every month at 5:00 p.m. at Petersgraben (Department of Sociology). Maria Tranter notes that interested assistants are warmly invited to attend these meetings. Tomás Sousa (Co-President of avuba) intends to attend one of the upcoming meetings.

Agenda Item 5: Personnel

Tomás Sousa explains that Patricia Eiche took her 2025 vacation days in January 2026 and that Alexandra Campana's onboarding is proceeding as planned. However, this has meant that Patricia Eiche has not yet been able to reduce her 2025 overtime hours. The goal is to continue carefully monitoring the division of labor and the development of overtime and to make adjustments to the distribution of tasks as needed. In addition, work is underway to develop materials for long-term team management as well as clear procedures for sustainable institutional knowledge transfer and the onboarding of new team members.

Agenda Item 6: Finances, a) 2025 Annual Report, b) Quarterly audits by an avuba board member, c) Funding for events in 2026

a) 2025 Annual Report
- avuba's net income for 2025 amounts to 2,711 Swiss francs, resulting in reserves of 38,624 Swiss francs as of December 31, 2025.
- Revenue, at 193,620 Swiss francs, is in line with expectations.
- Personnel expenses amount to 163,201 Swiss francs, accounting for 85% of total expenditures, while operating expenses amount to 27,208 Swiss francs, or 15% of total expenditures.
- The financial report will be submitted to the Rectorate for information in April, as required by the service agreement with the Rectorate.

b) Quarterly audits by an avuba board member
As stipulated in the Financial Regulations, Art. 14, the quarterly audit of budget compliance and the use of funds must be conducted by a board member who is not part of the Co-Presidency. Carlo Tschopp has now volunteered for this task. He takes over the role from Micha Bigler, who has been avuba Co-President since January 1, 2026.

c) Funding for events in 2026
- Alexandra Campana presents the plan for the scheduled avuba events in 2026 and the associated costs to the Board. The budget for 2026 events (events, lunches, happy hours, social events, meeting refreshments, and writing retreats) in the amount of 15,000 Swiss francs, approved by the avuba General Assembly on November 25, 2025, has thus already been nearly exhausted.
- The Executive Board therefore decides to approve the request for co-funding of the Café International event on an exceptional basis. The planned event, "Beyond the Scholar: Well-Being in International Relocations – a family affair?", will take place on April 29 at the Theater Foyer Basel. The event is aimed at international researchers and addresses a topic that is relevant to international assistants and has not yet been discussed at either the University or at avuba events.
- The application from COMPASS for funding the workshop "The Smart Body, Sharp Mind," however, will not be funded through the avuba budget. COMPASS is asked to submit the project application via the mid-level faculty funding channel, as avuba can generally only provide financial support for events organized in collaboration with avuba.

Agenda Item 7: Current status of ongoing avuba matters: a) Reform of employment and working conditions for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, b) Personal integrity / Prevention of abuse of power, c) Cost-cutting measures, d) Swiss-wide Mental Health Survey, e) Participation in university self-governance, f) Brands for Students / Cashyou, g) Language courses for postdoctoral researchers at the Language Center, h) avuba social media channels

a) Reform of employment and working conditions for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers
Since the last board meeting, the following has taken place in the project:
- On November 6, 2025, the process was presented to the University Council.
- On November 7, 2025, the "status report" and an online form for submitting comments were published on the intranet.
- On November 13, 2025, avuba organized a lunchtime meeting on the mid-level faculty reform, featuring input from project leader Patricia Zweifel and a discussion on expectations, past experiences, and possible measures.

- In parallel, avuba conducted three separate surveys among assistants in November 2026, allowing each of the three groups to evaluate the measures relevant to them. A total of 90 enrolled doctoral researchers without employment, 116 employed doctoral researchers, and 62 employed postdocs participated.
- On January 9, 2026, avuba submitted a 36-page avuba response to the consultation paper "Auslegeordnung", in which each individual measure was evaluated in detail.

Since January 11, 2026, Patricia Zweifel, project coordinator, who has been invited to the avuba board meeting to discuss this agenda item, has been reviewing all the feedback. In addition to faculties, institutes, avuba, and the social partners, several representatives of Group III at the departmental or faculty level, as well as individual persons, participated in the consultation.

Overall, the feedback received shows broad support for the reform efforts, while there are differing assessments regarding the added value and feasibility of individual measures. Some faculties expressed concerns about additional bureaucracy, while some representatives of the mid-level faculty called for more far-reaching measures.

There is relatively broad agreement, in particular, on proposals to improve transparency and information, to strengthen bilingual communication, on onboarding measures, leadership skills development, the discussion regarding Protected Research Time, and measures to promote family-friendliness.

The comments received are currently being evaluated and compiled into a consolidated catalog of measures. This will be submitted to the Rectorate for a decision by April. As a reminder: According to the project, measures should be adopted that provide added value and are feasible. The report will include a proposal for the second phase of the project which could evaluate cost-effective measures, provided the Rectorate agrees. The governments of the cantons of Basel-Landschaft and Basel-Stadt have approved the performance mandate and the global contribution to the University for the years 2026–2029 (in German only). Within this budget, CHF 14.9 million is earmarked for strategic developments. However, these funds are not specifically reserved for the reform but are part of a general pool for the University's strategic projects. Which University projects will receive funding and how much remains to be determined.

The Rectorate's decision and the announcement of the decision are expected by the end of the spring semester at the latest.

avuba reiterates to Patricia Zweifel that it views the current reform as a starting point for further developments. Patricia Zweifel agrees. She signals her willingness to continue supporting the University of Basel in the design, implementation, and evaluation of further reform steps. Additionally, avuba would like the Rectorate to provide a transparent and clearly reasoned decision regarding which of the proposed measures should be implemented and which should not. From avuba's perspective, the measures adopted should be implemented university-wide to prevent further unequal treatment of assistants and to hold the faculties accountable accordingly. Should individual measures not be introduced across the board, avuba expects this to be communicated transparently and justified.

The next avuba lunch meeting, "Reform of employment and working conditions of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers," will take place on April 16, 2026, in Room HS 114 of the Kollegienhaus from 12:15–1:30 p.m. Register here.

b) Personal Integrity / Prevention of Abuse of Power

Following discussions between avuba and skuba representatives and the Vice Rector for People & Culture last year, the University of Basel introduced the previously announced online training course on the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse of power for employees in Groups I–IV in December 2025.

The course is available in German and English and is to be repeated regularly in the future. In addition, the Personal Integrity Office has been staffed with additional personnel, and its information and awareness-raising efforts have been expanded. From the perspective of avuba and skuba, there is still room for improvement regarding the visibility and clarity of existing support structures. Therefore, another meeting will take place at the end of May 2026, which will also be attended by the Head of Communications, Matthias Geering.

c) Cost-cutting measures

Relief Package 27 (EP27), which the Federal Council sent out for public consultation on January 29, 2025, called for the federal government to save several billion francs per year starting in 2027 in order to comply with the debt brake requirements; this would have also affected the education, research, and innovation sector. Various stakeholders mounted opposition to these measures. In Basel, avuba campaigned against the proposed austerity measures in 2025, including during the consultation process in April 2025 and through informational and mobilization events throughout the year. Through political pressure and mobilization, individual proposals were watered down during the political process. The planned cuts in the area of education, research, and innovation were halved compared to the Federal Council's proposal. For cantonal universities, cuts amounting to 60 million francs annually (7.9%) are planned, and for the SNSF, cuts totaling 65 million francs annually (5%) are scheduled.
Despite these adjustments, various organizations remained dissatisfied with the 27th Relief Package. This package consists of amendments to several federal laws and budget provisions through which the federal government aims to reduce spending starting in 2027. In early February 2026, the Green Party and organizations such as the VSS (Umbrella Association of Students) and actionuni (Umbrella Association of Assistants) discussed the possibility of launching a referendum. This would have required collecting 50,000 valid signatures within 100 days. If the signatures had been successfully collected, the law would have been put to a popular vote.
At the time of the avuba board meeting on March 9, 2026, the avuba board therefore decided to wait and see whether the referendum would actually be initiated. If that had been the case, avuba would have participated in the mobilization with as little organizational effort as possible, for example through a joint event in Basel with skuba and dozuba, where information about the bill could be provided and signatures collected at the same time.

Update: On March 17, 2026, the Greens announced that they would not launch a referendum against the 2027 budget relief package. They cited as their reason that the threat of a referendum had already had an effect: during the parliamentary process, several of the originally planned austerity measures were watered down, resulting in a package that was significantly smaller than the Federal Council's version. Furthermore, some of the cuts that continue to be criticized affect areas that cannot be directly challenged via a referendum.

d) Swiss-wide Mental Health Survey

Since the last board meeting, the following has happened in the project:

- The results of the Swiss-wide Mental Health Survey 2024 were published by actionuni in December 2025.
- At the same time, avuba published the 2024 Mental Health Report of the University of Basel on its website.
- The survey results show that assistants at the University of Basel – regardless of age, gender, research discipline, or position type – are under significant stress. Poor mental health among researchers can have negative consequences for the academic system, including:
  – Loss of innovative capacity

– Decline in research quality and productivity
– Increase in sick leave
– Deterioration in the quality of teaching and supervision

- The summary of the UNIBAS Mental Health Survey report therefore highlights areas where targeted measures to improve mental health could be particularly effective. The measures proposed in this report have been incorporated into avuba's feedback on the 30 measures to improve working and employment conditions.
- avuba plans to continue addressing the issue of mental health in 2026. The results of the SWiMS survey at the University of Basel are to be disseminated both bottom-up and top-down so that mental health and its improvement are addressed more strongly in all departments and faculties. In addition, potential measures are to be discussed with the Rectorate.

e) Participation in university self-governance

Regarding participation in university self-governance, avuba has not yet been able to take concrete steps due to resource constraints. However, this issue will be addressed next, with the goal of strengthening the involvement of assistants in university self-governance. Plans include, among other things, an inventory of all bodies, commissions, and committees with assistant representation, the establishment of regular communication between representatives, and the development of election procedures and avuba election regulations. Furthermore, internal university collaboration with skuba and dozuba, as well as nationwide collaboration with actionuni and other mid-level faculty organizations, will be continued and expanded.

f) Brands for Students / Cashyou

Due to time constraints, this topic was postponed from the board meeting on September 18, 2025, to the present meeting. At that time, the discussion centered on whether avuba wished to enter into a commercial partnership with providers such as "Brands for Students" or "Cashyou". Cashyou collaborates with skuba, among others, and provides goodie bags for events there.
In the meantime, the University of Basel has introduced the "Brands for Employees" program for its staff, through which university members already have access to various discounts. Against this backdrop, the avuba board considers additional cooperation with a similar provider unnecessary. The avuba board therefore resolves not to pursue the project further.

g) Language courses for postdoctoral researchers at the Language Center

Due to time constraints, the topic of the Language Center could not be addressed at this meeting and has been postponed to the next board meeting. This decision stems from a request made by Sepideh Alassi in July 2025, who, following a meeting with a representative of the Language Center, noted that language courses are relatively underattended by postdocs. Pricing was cited as one possible reason. When pricing is considered relative to staff (100%), students pay about 75% for German courses, staff and postdocs pay 100%, and external participants pay around 133% of the course fee. The Language Center is partially funded by the University. Sepideh Alassi would like to discuss with the avuba board whether it would be worthwhile to conduct a survey among postdocs (approx. 500 people) to establish a solid basis for discussions with the Language Center. Further discussion on this topic will continue at the next meeting.

h) avuba social media channels
To improve the visibility of avuba and more effectively reach assistants, the board has decided to discontinue the existing X channel (formerly Twitter) and instead launch and actively manage an Instagram account. Various university offices as well as skuba already use Instagram as a central communication channel, creating synergies. At the same time, the younger generation of students is primarily active on Instagram and can be reached more effectively there. The existing LinkedIn account of avuba will be maintained.

Agenda Item 8: Miscellaneous

The Board is informed that avuba is still seeking two auditors to review the accounting records and receipts for the 2025 fiscal year in the spring of 2026. The time commitment is estimated at about one hour. Board members are asked to inquire among their contacts for potential candidates.
As soon as two people have expressed their willingness to serve, avuba will send out the official invitation to the extraordinary general meeting; this must be done at least 30 days in advance. As that extraordinary general meeting will only take approximately 10 minutes, it makes sense for it to take place, if possible, immediately before one of the next board meetings.

In addition, please note that the regular avuba General Assembly will take place on Monday, November 23, 2026 (Save the Date).

Agenda Item 9: Next avuba board meeting

It was proposed that future meetings be scheduled before the Faculty Council meetings (Thursdays, 3:15 p.m.), since many faculty representatives must come to the Kollegienhaus for those meetings anyway. However, the proposal was rejected because several board members have classes on Thursday afternoon. Instead, dates will continue to be set via a Doodle poll. The next board meeting is expected to take place in May 2026.

Basel, March 23, 2026

Tomás Sousa
avuba Co-President

Micha Bigler
avuba Co-President