

Dear members of the Negotiating Group for innovation,
science, higher education and research,

Congratulations on the successful start of coalition negotiations on the formation of a new federal government consisting of SPD, FDP and Bündnis90/Die Grünen. As an association of the PhD networks of the Leibniz Association, the Helmholtz Association, the Max Planck Society and the International PhD Program Mainz, we represent the interests of 16,000 Doctoral researchers from non-university research institutions and have a sharpened eye for the needs of future top researchers. We see the following points as central to meeting these needs:

- **Full salary for de facto full-time work** in the doctorate of all subjects
- **Adaptation of scholarships** by integrating them into social security systems
- **Minimum contract period of 4 years** for the doctorate
- **Secure career paths** and **new job profiles** for academic careers

The discussion under #IchbinHanna this year has once again highlighted a number of grievances in the German academic landscape. Many of the problems addressed have systemic causes and must be remedied in order to ensure the competitiveness of the German science system. Specifically, the lack of predictability of an academic career after the doctorate due to short-term chain contracts and the one-dimensional orientation of research careers towards the career goal of professorship were highlighted. However, the first traces of these precarious working conditions already manifest themselves at the beginning of an academic career, in the doctoral phase.

A doctorate lays the foundation for a scientific career and is therefore classified as a qualification phase. However, doctoral researchers make a substantial contribution to the scientific knowledge process and form one of the largest groups within the scientific staff. This fundamental services to society should be remunerated accordingly and we demand, as postulated by the SPD in the election campaign, **full pay for de facto full-time work** even during the doctorate. The subject-specific remuneration currently applied in practice, which is based on the

recommendations of the German Research Foundation (DFG), demonstrably disadvantages doctoral researcher in the humanities and social sciences in particular. We see this as a clear contradiction to the recognition and freedom of all research fields and the basis of basic research, as the SPD and Bündnis90/Die Grünen emphasized during the election campaign. It also contradicts a payment dependent on research performance, as stated by the FDP in the 'N² Wahlprüfsteine' ([N2 Election Test Stones 2021](#)).

Germany has a long tradition of supporting outstanding researchers and students through excellence scholarships. The SPD, FDP and Bündnis90/Die Grünen have therefore explicitly spoken out in favor of maintaining the scholarship system in principle. The system is nevertheless in need of reform: under fellowships, doctoral researchers are not classified as employees and are thus excluded from the regular social, pension and health insurance systems, while at the same time they receive on average almost 500 euros net (BuWiN 2021 and N² Survey 2019) below the income from contractual employment. Nevertheless, the additional academic freedom suggested by the scholarship is often not granted. We therefore demand that scholarships be **adjusted and that scholarship holders be integrated into the social security system**. As a compromise, we see the possibility of converting person-related scholarships into employment contracts in cooperation with institutes, in order to enable the integration of doctoral researchers into the social security systems.

Another point that contributes significantly to the precariat in science lies in the possibility and numerous uses of awarding chain contracts, which manifest themselves as early as the doctoral stage. For phases such as the doctorate, in which a fixed-term contract seems justified due to the qualification phase, your parties have advocated the contract duration to the project duration that can actually be expected. The average duration of a doctorate in Germany is 4.7 years (5.7 years excluding human and veterinary medicine), whereas the typical contract duration in Germany is just under two years on average, and three years within non-university research institutions, which is significantly shorter (BuWiN 2021 and N²Survey 2019). Contract extensions represent a recurring potential for

conflict with supervisors. In accordance with the statements of their parties, the doctoral researchers expect that a traffic light coalition will make a **minimum contract term of four years** the standard.

In our open letter of 23.06.2021 on #IchbinHanna ([N2 statement #IchbinHanna](#)), we have already described that academic careers must become more reliable and predictable. One way to achieve this is to expand the tenure-track system, which the SPD, FDP and Bündnis90/Die Grünen all advocated for during their election campaigns. In addition, the **academic career paths** must be supplemented by **further reliable and permeable career paths**, as the SPD and Bündnis90/Die Grünen are already calling for. Specifically, we consider it necessary to expand the currently existing job profiles to include the following in order to retain highly trained and excellent personnel: permanent academic staff, permanent lecturers, and group leaders. In our statement to #IchbinHanna, we have described these proposals in detail.

More reliable career paths in science not only hold the potential to significantly increase Germany's competitiveness in the global market, but also to improve **diversity in the German scientific landscape**. Currently, the long and uncertain path to a professorship is mostly reserved for privileged researchers, as reflected in the male dominance in professorship appointments to date (27% share of women in current W3 new appointments - BuWiN 2021). We therefore call for a reform of the 'Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz' along the lines already outlined. Beyond this, the federal government must improve funding that has already been approved, while developing and demanding clear concepts to remedy the shortcomings together with the states, research institutions and universities. For long-term and innovative research, there is a need for predictability, financial security and recognition of the different lifestyles of scientists in all phases of their academic careers.

In summary, we call for the **recognition of the research performance of doctoral researchers** through **full salary for the de facto full-time work performed**, through the **adjustment of scholarships** and through a **minimum**



contract duration of four years. Furthermore, we call for the creation of **transparent, more diverse and sustainable career paths in science,** promoted by a significant **reform of the 'Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz'** as well as of the current funding schemes. This is necessary to enable our diverse generation of researchers to pursue excellent and equal academic careers and thus to make Germany competitive and attractive as a location for science worldwide.

Respectfully,

The N² Board