



2021 PhDnet General Minutes

25-27 October 2021, virtual – gathertown + zoom
MPI for the Physics of Complex Systems

Monday, 25th of October

Welcome Session 9.00-10.30

*Chair: **Lea** Heckmann (PhDnet Spokesperson) | Speakers: **Aidan** Wastiaux (General Meeting workgroup coordinator), **Florian** Teichmann (PhDnet General Secretary), **Hang** Liu (Survey workgroup coordinator), **Barbara** Safaric (Equal Opportunities workgroup coordinator)*

1. Opening

- **Aidan** - Introduction to the General Meeting technical support group and the PhDnet general meeting: growing network aiming to improve work conditions by interacting with the MPS general administration and other MPS networks.
- **Lea** - Thanking PhDnet external representatives for their work and officially starts the PhDnet General Meeting 2021
- **Florian** - Introduction to the online platforms and code of conduct during the online meeting, the Steering Group election held in the last day of the meeting, the social activities during the event and the meeting agenda.

2. PhDnet & Working group introductions

- **Lea** - Comprehensive introduction to the PhDnet including: structure, steering group, workgroups, collaborations, achievements, ongoing projects
- **Hang** - Introduction to the survey workgroup: survey preparation and analysis, importance of the survey
- **Barbara** - Introduction to the equal opportunities workgroup: aims to tackle all forms of injustice, presentation of relevant survey results, ongoing and future plans.
- **Lea** - Closing remarks

Diversity Session 11.00-13.00

Chair: **Sarah** Young (PhDnet Deputy spokesperson) | Speakers: **Asifa** Akthar (Vice President, BM), **Frauke** Logermann (Diversity and Inclusion manager, GA), **Renee** Viera (Survey group), **Grace** Ho (EO group). Additionally on the Panel: **Yu-Xuan** Lu (PostdocNet), **Jan** Klenke (N2)

1. Opening by Sarah

2. Talk by Asifa:– Asifa represents the leadership of the MPS, is reaching out to the PhDs and praises the work of the PhDnet. Different diversity aspects include where people come from and gender distribution in the different levels of scientific staff. Shows that the MPS sees some clear areas that need to be improved e.g. welcome culture and anti-discrimination.

3. Presentation of the Survey results by Renee: presents the results of the 2020 survey with a focus on diversity, including gender, ethnicity and disability. Influences on these diversity backgrounds were found on discrimination and microaggression.

4. Presentation of the Safer Spaces project by Grace: represents the EO group of the PhDnet and shows that the diversity understanding of the MPS is not easy to be accessed. To help with a better working environment the EO group has formed the Safer spaces initiative which was presented.

5. Talk by Frauke: is the diversity and inclusion manager at the GA and explains the diversity understanding of the MPS as well as the measures that were implemented to foster diversity.

6. Panel discussion:

- 2 members in addition to the speakers (Yu Xuan (former PostdocNet spokesperson) & Jan Klenke (N² member))
- Sarah encourages conversation: speak up
- Questions to be included in chat.
- Any points that were missed out:

Asifa:

- o Congratulates on the survey.
- o Shocked by microaggression.
- o Ethnicity point that we don't have much: Africa initiative recently launched to reach out to partner groups in African countries.
- o Developing the scientific program
- o Diversity might have to do with that several systems do not need Masters program to start a PhD program. Rules by German universities, there is segregation of representation.
- o There might be systematic issues which should be addressed but the educational system might be creating this low representation.

Yu-Xuan:

- o Nationality and ethnicity under-representation
- o Inter-sectional further analysis: leaky pipeline, after 3rd year female scientists start dropping out. Does it have something to do with age, starting families?
- o Crucial to talk about diversity

Renee:

- o any idea on how to solve the Master's program question?
- o Nationality and ethnicity data: looking at ethnicity in Germany. UN analysis says that Germany has 1% people of African descent. Actively work towards anti-racism. Germans of African descent are under represented.
- o Sarah's question: doing internships for under-represented minorities, a lot of people do not have the resources to carry out internships to add to their CV.
- o Fast track program in neuroscience: to enter after bachelor's degree into a PhD program

Frauke:

- o issue with only bachelor, MP school programs available
 - o German legislation conservative and hopes changes with the new government
 - o VISA and residence permits for internationals: problems and constantly in contact with the ministry regard these problems
 - o Going back to the German law: why EO responsible for women? Also to do with German law.
 - o Institute level initiatives: create new diversity position, have more internships for minority ethnicity groups
- Question from Audience: wants to mention what is going well. knowledge of gender diversity discrimination is high at his institute. This has to do with the leaderships; higher level people at the institute push for awareness such as mental health (MH) issues, safety instructions at the start already include MH, diversity, reporting topics.

Asifa: acknowledges this point that leadership positions needs to show commitment.

- Question in chat: PhD not from EU get paid less in the institute.

Sarah: N² is advocating against stipends.

Jan: N² board, network of networks, from Leibniz PhD network. Jealous of the mindset from MPS compared to Leibniz, himself had a stipend/scholarship - earned less than with a contract, problems with social insurances and many other things-> Abolish internal stipends, Fan of safer spaces

Yu-Xuan: member of works council: you're contract is too old and cannot be updated - not true. Need strong support from leadership. International Postdocs start with step 2 whereas those on the contract start with step 3, also for just outside MPS people

Renee: Postdoc in North America - important to show that you can get funding and apply for scholarships, but in Germany if you apply for one you hardly can afford living in Munich. Decision between money or CV. Why not stipend + top up contract, Sarah: N²

advocates for that

Asifa: All DRs should have contracts, stipends should be max. For 6 months, MPs has taken care of it a while ago, but obviously it's still happening. MPS program admission should also be good for CV and counted as prestige. People in the same lab should not be paid differently. Not all should be dumped on the GA - institutes should be trained to act responsible and fair. Local people have to be trained. We should take pride in being in the IMPRS program.

from the audience: externally funded DRs contracts can be adjusted, works at his institutes, if directors are willing to.

- Question from the audience: EO officer only for gender, no one to go to for other discrimination. Not even in Berlin. Not in German law, but MPS should be creative and make it a priority

Frauke: Yes, this is an issue. At least we have that now at the central level for reporting lines, need to also establish it at the institutes. But with safer spaces we are starting an initiative to get people trained on diversity and on anti-discrimination. What are the expectations, what should be in the curriculum?

Asifa: Important to raise awareness locally, if you were at my institutes I would hope you would come to me directly. Unfortunate that it does not happen. Systemic problem at all institutes, have to train at all levels. EO officers are a good first point, but there are several levels of problems. Every institute should have people to go to confidentially. Ombudsperson to go to, but people don't feel safe enough to go there. Revisit how people are elected and operational. People turn to Munich more regularly than to local measures.

Renee: From the survey, people know where to go to. Why did people not report a conflict : Did not feel it would be resolved. Personal perspective: Conflict in my institute about racism, went to Ombudsperson and EO officer, but did nothing, did not know what to do.

Jan: comment as bisexual person, LGBTI+ experiences, microaggression and culture at institutes, what can be done: indicate your pronouns in digital meetings, in live setting: when introducing yourself make it a habit to introduce your pronouns, engage in small talk with a person, don't assume that a person is binary or heterosexual. Use partner instead of boyfriend/girlfriend or use both genders in one sentences. None of the Non-binary or trans people felt safe to be open about their sexual identity - make them, speak up for people where you observe it. Be an ally.

From audience: Casually racism at her institute, look at institute page for EO -only white woman. Did not feel comfortable that they would understand. Safer Spaces is a tool to close the gap, but not a replacement for hiring somebody who is specifically trained on this issues or hiring minorities - not checking off boxes, but being aware of it. Frauke needs coworkers!

- Last sentence: What would you change? Make a wish

Asifa: I wish that we will be able to make MPS a welcoming place for every single person no matter where you come from.

Frauke: Lower hierarchies and more communal approach

Renee: Structural change, particularly: have everyone that joins MPS read code of conduct, sign it and have a course

Xu Yuan: Giving the people who work into direction of diversity a highlight, and show that diversity improve the team and productivity

Jan: Generally wish, mandatory diversity and leadership courses for everyone that has a leadership position.

Mental Health Session 14.00-15.00

Chair: **Marga Albu** (PhDnet Biology & Medicine Section Representative) | Speakers: **Sanja Bökle** (Doctoral Researcher at MPI Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity), **Lukas Anneser** (Doctoral Researcher at MPI Brain Research), **Alina Fahrenwaldt** (PhDnet Survey Group Coordinator).

1. **Marga** - Introduction to the Mental Health Session
2. **Sanja** - Doctoral Researcher presentation on the topic of sociological perspective on possibilities of civil society organizing in times of diversification and singularization of society. Followed by short Q&A session.
3. **Lukas** - Doctoral Researcher talk on how solitude affects the bio-chemistry in the brain of zebrafish. Followed by short Q&A.
4. **Alina** - Presenting Mental Health related PhDnet Survey Results 2020 including topics such as: relevance, prevalence, role of discrimination, working conditions, supervision, conflicts on mental health, downstream consequences and reminder of EMAP the free online counseling tool offered to MPS employees.

Tuesday 26th of October

WG introductions 9.00-9.30

Chair: **Aroma Dabas** (PhDnet Human Science Section Representative) | Speakers: **Marta Porniece Kumar** and **Tobias Buscham** (Career Development and Conference workgroup coordinators), **Andrea Bours** (Webgroup workgroup coordinator), **Florian Teichmann** (PhDnet General Secretary)

1. **Marta & Tobias** - Introduction to the Career Development and Conference workgroup
 - Presented goals and activities of the workgroup: to inform DRs about broader professional areas, and organize conferences and career events
 - This year, ran a survey to understand the needs and skills of DRs and ran Career Evolution webseries.
 - Collaborates with the Planck Academy (Anne Grewlich-Gercke) on Career Evolution, Games Week and Business camp

2. **Andrea** - Introduction to the Webgroup

- Update working groups and N² website
- Restructuring PhDnet website
- Taking care of the mailing list

3. **Florian** - Secretary group

- Tasks: Transfer information and enhancement of communication within the network, maintaining mailing list and external representative election
- Adding external representatives to MAX team room directly
- Aim for the coming year: reach out to the institutes who are not part of the PhDnet and recruit institutes lost even new ones were recruited.

Otto Hahn talks 11.00-12.00

Chair: **Aidan** Wastiaux (General Meeting workgroup coordinator) | Speakers: **Rafael** Laso Pérez (BMS Otto Hahn Medal winner), **Elena** Redaelli (CPT Otto Hahn Medal winner), **Stephanie** Theves (HSS Otto Hahn Medal winner)

1. **Rafael Laso Perez** - A personal journey through life and academia

- During his PhD, discussed with peers and supervisors about career plans, participated in the PhDnet and received mental health support.
- Worked with an equation: x (work) + y (place to live = Madrid) = z (life) to understand career goals
- Final thoughts:
 - Engage in a project you like
 - PhD is not only science. It's a journey to grow personally.
 - Take care of yourself during the journey: family, friends, MH are important.
 - Career/life: set priorities, solve the equation stepwise.
 - You can always change your mind. There is no bad decision.

2. **Elena Redaelli** - My PhD journey

- Suggested talking to someone, e.g. Postdoc, to get help and advice during PhD.
- Tips: Always look out for new projects. Widens topic for research but also good for improving further collaborations
- Applying for jobs before the last months of your PhD
- A final work of advice: **Don't take big decisions about career in the last months of the PhD (stressful make rash decisions)**

3. **Stephanie Theves** - How to succeed in your PhD?

- Successful PhD depends on a lot of hard work and luck.
- PhD is not a normal job: no established routine. It's a very personal project. It's important to treat it as such
- Find YOUR research question.
- What counts are your discoveries (at least in the long run)
- Every PhD project is different

- Be aware that your personal development is a goal and a process on it's own.
- A PhD is a marathon: try to make an overall plan, but always focus on the next step. Tiny achievements are important.
- Talk to people, seek advice
- Start thinking about your long term niche towards the end of the PhD.

Open Science session 14.00 - 15.00

*Chair: **Johannes Bischoff** (PhDnet CPT Section Representative) | Speakers: **Pamela Ornalas** and **Daniel Torbio-Flórez** (Open Science workgroup coordinators)*

- Session opening by Johannes introducing Pamela and Daniel
- Problems in science
 - Publish or Perish Culture
 - Questionable Research and Publication Practices
 - Lack of Access: pay wall of journals, particularly problematic for researchers from institutions with fewer resources
- Open Science is a solution
 - Is a reformatory movement that tries to offer different solutions to these problems
 - Open Access, Open Data, Registered Reports, Replication Projects, Alternative Research Assessment
- General goal: making research in the MPS more accessible, transparent and reproducible
- Ran survey in 2019 to understand needs and use of Open Science approaches (Open Access publications, Open Data, Replication studies etc.)
- Open science packages to push at every institute
- Open Science Ambassadors program together with the MPDL to start a discussion within the MPS about open science practices
- OS strategies for the MPS
 - Discussion paper in 2021 (https://www.phdnet.mpg.de/phdnet/who/workgroups/open-science-group/Discussing_OS_in_the_MPS)
 - Proposed strategies: Infrastructure changes (OS officer at each institute) and Open Access Ambassadors (extending the scope of the program), Trainings (e.g. Through Planck Academy), data management
 - Paper discussed at the Presidential Circle; met with Prof. Lindenberger (VP of the HSS) who showed enthusiasm for the project
- What is DORA and it's importance?
 - Alternate assessment of research. San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (<https://sfдора.org/>)
 - Declaration signed by many important institution worldwide. It proposes different practices of evaluation of research. It includes not just reviewers but also funders

Science Communication Session 15.30 - 17.00

*Chair: **Sinisa Prelic** (General Meeting working group) | Speakers: **Srinath Ramkumar** (Offspring workgroup coordinators)*

- Annual magazine:

- o Covers work by DRs
 - o Based on a theme. E.g. Mental health, sustainability, interviews, books etc.
 - o Has a DOI
- Podcast
 - o Weekly or biweekly
 - o available on many platforms. Open to public
- Regularly post on social media
- Podcast season 2 include topics such as career in science, science communication, research in industry, equality, discrimination and women in in science
- Future plans:
 - o want to continue expanding their audience base.
 - o Plan to run a survey to understand interests of the audience
 - o focus on more scientific based topics
- Played part of Neil deGrasse Tyson interview
- Played part of Benjamin List interview

Wednesday, 27th of October

9.00-10.30 - Working conditions

*Host: **Lea Heckmann** (PhDnet Spokesperson) | Speakers: **Paul-Georg Majev** (Survey group coordinator), **Kerstin Dübner-Gee** (Head of Human resources development and opportunities department of MPS headquarters), **Signe Tuborgh** (MPS Human Resources Development Manager), **Ilka Schießler-Gäbler** (PhDnet contact in GA)*

1. **Opening by Lea** - short summary of the last day and outline for the day
2. **Survey presentation by Paul-Georg** - Presentation of the 2020 PhDnet survey results with focus on working conditions and scientific environment including funding situation, pay differences, workload, home office regulations, onboarding, supervision, career planning, satisfaction and support.
3. **Talk by Kerstin** - talk about the working and support conditions for doctoral students with the MPS from the HR perspective introducing the basic structure of the MPS HR departmen, its aims and focus points, the collaboration with the networks, especially the PhDnet and finsihing with a focus on the PhDnet survey results and its connection to the HR strategies.
4. **Talk by Signe** - Talk about the onboarding concept for young researchers in development by the HR department in collaboration with the networks introducing the main planned structure and the work packages 'Attract and Recruit', 'Welcome and Onboarding', 'Checklists, Recommendations and Guidelines', 'Trainings and Career Developments'

5. Open question round:

- Question from the audience:
What are the differences between support contracts and TVöD

Ilka:

The standard contract for DRs in the MOS is the support contract, combines the freedom of a stipend to concentrate mainly on the dissertation with social security measures. With a TVöD we are normal 'workers' and the focus is not always the dissertation.
Differences:

- o VBL (additional retirement plan) not included in support contracts
 - o 24th and 31st of December are not vacation days under the support contract (Special agreement for these days under the TVöD)
- Question from the audience:
Is there information on the onboarding project somewhere where can people find out about it?

Signe:

Most of the working packages are in progress and some will hopefully be finished by the end of the year, therefore there is no official information yet. But it would be a good idea to add a few sentences about what is to come.

- Comment from the audience:
Interest in the newsletter is announced

Kerstin:

Should come out soon, first as a pdf and then will evolve

- Question from the audience:
Contract durations, is there official guidelines, how is this monitored, are there guidelines for extensions?

Ilka:

Guidelines: 3 years should be initial contract duration, exceptions. GA started to look into it after last year's survey with 20% of DRs having shorter contracts and are now in contact with the single institutes to change the situation.

No guidelines for extensions, but it should be included in the TAC discussions. By law, extensions should be decided on at least 3 months before the end of the contract and the institute should notify the DRs.

DRs to be more proactive about this and talk to their directors/supervisors.

- Question from the audience:
360 degree feedback culture is planned. Can you explain this in more detail?

Kerstin:

We started with the Max Planck leaders program, now starting to focus on supervision to have more measures in the near future. HR development just started 4 years ago and we have to go all the way.

First step: Prioritization on the scientific leaders that should reflect also on DRs, but many leaders are very critical and hard to reach and convince.

And idea for the future after a new culture of leadership is established is to have tools and structures for 360 degree feedback systems.

- Question from the audience:
Is it correct that people get 6 months stipends before starting a PhD?

Ilka:

In line with the guidelines, but only for orientation doctoral fellowship - time for lab rotations and to find your lab and topic

- Question from the audience:
What is the limit of prolongations?

Ilka:

In the WissZeitVG it is in total 6 years. Cannot be extended beyond but there are some exceptions for single cases (people with disabilities for example)

- Question from the audience:
What to do to get a general extension after 3 years?

Could be a topic for next year. Should come from the PhDnet side

- Question from the audience:
Who is deciding on the contract length?

Ilka:

Director can decide, but have to take guidelines and regulations into account

- Question from the audience:
What do you think might be the root for the pay gaps?

Paul-Georg:

A difficult questions to answer and we cannot be sure from the data what are the exact reasons

Comment on TAC and supervision agreements: Write to Aroma to join the TAC taskforce! Next SG could tackle the topic of supervision agreements

General Meeting group introduction + SG elections, 11.00-13.00

Host: **Lea Heckmann** (PhDnet Spokesperson) | Speakers: **Sin Prelic** (General Meeting group member), **Florian Teichmann** (PhDnet General secretary)

1. Introduction to the General Meeting group by Sin

- Collaboration with all working groups to organise the GM and consultation with the steering group
- Short listed speakers, collaborated with WGs, make rooms for WGs, funs in gathertowns, games,....
- Call for volunteers for the next GM, for a hub that might be of interest.
- Manali Hemant Jeste & Nikita Polin interested from Cologne and Frankfurt region for the next GM, GM 2022!

2. Elections

- **Spokesperson**

Candidate: Hang Liu (MPI for Heart and Lung Research - Bad Nauheim)

71 eligible voters

55 votes (77.4% - quorum reached)

Result: 55 yes (100%) and 0 no – Candidate elected.

- **Deputy Spokesperson**

Candidate 1: Alina Fahrenwaldt (MPI for Research on Collective Goods - Bonn)

Candidate 2: Maria Leonte (Max Planck Institute of Neurobiology - Martinsried)

71 eligible voters

54 votes (76% - quorum reached)

Result: 46 Alina Fahrenwaldt (MPI for Research on Collective Goods - Bonn) (85%) and 8 Maria Leonte (MPI of Neurobiology - Martinsried).

SG elections part 2, 13.00-14.00

Host: **Lea Heckmann** (PhDnet Spokesperson), **Florian Teichmann** (PhDnet General secretary)

- **General Secretary**

Candidate: Anna-Dorothea Heller (MPI of Colloids and Interfaces - CPT - Potsdam)

71 eligible voters

55 votes (77.4% - quorum reached)

Result: 55 yes (100%) and 0 no – Candidate elected.

- **External Representatives** move to break out rooms according to HS, BM and CPT Section.

- **HS Section Representative**

Candidate: Danielle Pullan (MPI for the Study of Societies - Cologne)

19 eligible voters

15 votes (78% - quorum reached)

Result: 15 yes (100%) and 0 no – Candidate elected.

- **BM Section Representative**

Candidate: Maria Leonte (MPI of Neurobiology - Martinsried)

26 eligible voters

24 votes (92% - quorum reached)

Result: 24 yes (100%) and 0 no – Candidate elected.

- **CPT Section Representative**

Candidate: Jonas Sinjan (MPI for Solar System Research - Göttingen)

23 eligible voters

19 votes (82.6% - quorum reached)

Result: 19 yes (100%) and 0 no – Candidate elected.

WG recognition + closing 15.00-16.00

Speaker: **Lea Heckmann** (PhDnet Spokesperson)

Working group Recognition and Closing by **Lea**:

- Secretary group head: Anna-Dorothea
- Webgroup head: Andrea Bours
- EO group head: transition period and Grace will take over.
- Survey group head: Need time to find someone but they have some interested. Renee, Paul-Georg and Angela will do the transition. Renee is the coordinator till July 2022.
- Career development and conference group: Tobias Buscham coordinator till he finds another motivated people.
- Open Science group: Daniel will not stay too long and Pamela but there will be a transition period.
- Offspring group: Srinath Ramkumar will finish up soon looking for new members for the magazine but Bea will take over the podcast as coordinator. Otherwise transition and new coordinators in summer.
- General Meeting Group: new coordinator - Manali Jeste around Cologne Frankfurt area.
- Social media group: nnoone interested, but if someone is interested get in touch with Srinath and get training from the offspring social media coordinator.
- Honorary session for our dinosaurs: Marta, Srinath, Renee, Niko, Andrea, Barbara, Andrea Seiwert and Andrea Bours.
- Thank you to old SG and all external reps