PhDnet – General Meeting

9-11 November, Berlin

Minutes

Day 1: 09.11.2016

Session 1: Annual report by Steering Group

- Update given by Martin Grund, the spokesperson of PhDnet 2016.

Session 2: Flexibilize Elections Procedures

- Description of the External representative election procedure
- Presentation of the proposed alterations for the PhDnet statutes
- Approval of the new version of the PhDnet statutes with a quorum of 70% and 98% of votes in favour.

Session 3: Network of doctoral researcher networks

Helmlhotz Juniors (HeJu) presented by Markus Petermann (MP)

- Helmolhotz Association (HA) founded in honour of Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1984)
- Less institutes than in the MPS and as the MPIs, they are not universities
- Structure:
    - 18 Helmoltz centres
    - Board of Funding organisation into a senate
    - A president, a managing director and an executive committee
- Budget 2016
    - 4.11billion euros
    - 67% institutional funding (federal, state)
- Helmoltz Juniors:
    - 2 elected PhD representatives per Helmoltz centres
    - Established in 2015, meetings in summer and autumn
    - Link between headquarters and the ~6800 PhD
    - Aim: improve the situation for PhD to attract the best candidates
      network enhancement within the Helmhotz
    - Structure:
        1. Spokespersons: collaborating with PhDnet, Leibniz PhD network, Thesis (Federal universities)
        2. Structural development: organise budget in the long-term
        3. Survey group: online survey
        4. Working condition group:
           Overview of working condition of PhD in HA,
           Establishment of contracts, contact with politics, academics and administrative channels,
           65% E13 with 30 days' vacation minimal starting contract of three years, *first year is 50%*
           PhD project as main objective in the contract
        5. Communication group\internal communication

6. Events group:
   Meet exchange ideas, create collaborations,
   2nd nextgen@helmholts2016: had 110 participants but expected 150, showed a short movie the conference 2016

- Questions:
  - How many PhDs in the HA? 6470 approximately
  - Are there opportunities for PhDs from the MPI in Helmholtz? Didn't know it was an existing problem
  - *What's your experience of Junior? Tried many times, contact with different Juniors, at the beginning, they show interest, but finally no real interest*
  - How do you interact with local universities? As for the MPS, HA is not a university but they have graduate schools. The relationship between the university and the HA works well in MP's institute.

Leibniz PhD Networks

- Leibniz Association (LA) was founded in 1995, it has 88 institutes and research museums
- Leibniz PhD Network is quite young (September 2016)
- Structure:
  - Financially and legally independent
  - Decentralised structure
  - Research topics are developed bottom-up
  - 50:50 funded by federal and state
  - 5 sections: A (humanities and educational research) B(economics, social sciences, spatial research), C(life sciences), D (mathematics, natural sciences, engineering) and E (environmental science)
- Numbers:
  - 88 institutes(research museums)
  - 18500 employees and 9300 researchers
  - 3849 PhD, 80% in contracts
  - 724 finished PhDs in 2014
- Leibniz PhD Network:
  - Purposes and approach:
    1. Represent the Leibniz PhD interest
    2. Enhance interdisciplinary cooperation
    3. Facilitate experiences exchange and information among PhDs
    4. Participating in the development of standards
  - Structure: different working groups
    1. Steering group (representatives of the PhDs)
    2. General assembly group
    3. Structural group
    4. Digital survey group
    5. Diversity, equal opportunities, working condition group
  - Main topics
    - Highlight the importance of Humanities in LA
    - Encourage foreign PhDs to participate
    - Career paths for women in science
    - Organise interdisciplinary conference and a career fair

        - Collaboration with PhDnet and HeJu
- Questions:
    - How satisfied the PhDs?
    - Where does the presented statistics come from? From the person in charge of young scientists. But not really reliable.

Actionuni presented by Salome Adam (Skype call)

- Structure
    - Represent scientific staff in Switzerland (possible due to the structure of universities and scientific institutes in Switzerland)
    - General Assembly makes decisions about elections, membership, budget, membership fees, positions and aims, regulations...
    - Executive office: daily operations
- Membership
    1. Full : university (cantonal or ETH) , applied science, teacher education
    2. Associated regional
    3. or individual
- Executive office: chosen based on the diversity of language, gender and university
        2 in university of applied science
        2 in uni/ETH/EPFL (1 from German-speaking, 1 from French-speaking)
        2 in teacher/education
- *Coopt. Members: members of commission*
    - *Accreditation council*
    - *Swiss conference and council for higher education Nationalfond foundation Board*
    - *eurodoc*
- General Assembly
    - Once a year
    - Voting rights:
        only for full members
        one member of a delegation can represent multiple members
        number of voting rights is dependent from the number of members of the full member
- *Network*
    a group including the teachers is helpful. Less contact with president
    close contact thesis
- Mission statement
    - Improving working conditions, building constructive partner in fashioning the future, improving the quality and attractiveness of our research and educational environment, represent the interests of non-professional academic staff of all Swiss institutes of higher education, exercise their rights
- Main concern
    - Cartoon: professor like king/queen, the PhD is in the bottom line.
- Strategic aims for 2020
    - Position paper about career modules for young researchers.
- Questions:

- Do you work with undergraduate and how does it look like? Only with some, when we need to input on specific topic and need to discuss with them.
- How does postdocs and junior researcher, group leader establish themselves or go to the next level?
    - Open discussion: Successful in PhD, but reduced in the postdocs.
    - One reason we are together is because we represent different kinds of universities, different groups of people (PhD, postdocs and additional researchers), but we mix them together because they all belong to university.

Day 2: 10.11.2016

Session 1: Working Groups Presentation

- Objective: Get to know what we can do and how we can join the different working groups

- Difference between steering group and working groups

- Introduction of the steering group
  - All six members from the steering group have to be renewed this year

- Working Groups
  - The importance and benefits of joining a working group (skills acquired)
  - Small summary of each working group (strategy and comm. group has no defined task)
  - Working hours: they vary (around 2-3h of work per week)
  - Recommended size of each group: 3-4 people

Presentation of the groups:

  - **Webgroup** (4 people)
    - maintaining website, e-mail, web-support
    - new people are needed for 2017 (2-4 people)

  - **General Meeting**
    - Organize next General Meeting (location, hostel, room, transport, internet, food and drinks)

  - **Equal Opportunity Group**
    - Diminish any type of discrimination and promote an enjoyable working atmosphere
    - The group published an article in “The Offspring“ magazine

  - **Survey Group**
    - There are many topics touched by different types of surveys, including salary levels, holidays, cost of living, contracts/stipends, duration of PhD, and equal opportunities (discrimination)
    - Currently there are only three people (it would be great to have 4-5)

  - **Seminar Group**
    - Not currently active as a group (people always contact Roman Prinz)
    - There is probably not a clear advertising of the group as a whole, nor the process that has to be done to acquire support for a soft-skill course

- **The Offspring**
  - Communication-oriented (publication of the latest volume in six months)
  - The target audience? Normally it is distributed inside the Max Planck Institute, yet it is not directed towards your peers

- **Visions in Science**
  - Open, inter-disciplinary scientific event (from different fields)
  - Most of the budget relied on third party (sponsors, partners), giving more independence
  - The career fair was an important time-frame for students to know more about the different options that exist outside the academic world
  - Outlook – encourage a new organization group (there is already an initial budget)

- Collected the list of people interested in joining different working groups

- Knowledge transfer from old WGs to the new WGs

- Discussion: Should a WG be dedicated for media and communication or should the steering group take care of this?
  - Suggestion: Hub;
  - Suggestion: science communication (new WG)

Session 2: Equal opportunity (EO) strategies

Equal opportunity work group

- Need of this WG?
- Statistics show decreasing percentage of women in higher positions.
- Is a quota for female speakers-helpful or harmful?
- Surveys indicate the existence of discrimination.
- Diversity can promote productivity.
- Examples from ETH Zurich and University of Michigan.
- Why WE need to take care of this:
- we are the makers of the future

Prof Dr. Dr. h. c. Angela D. Friederici

- MPS Presidential Equal Opportunity commission (representatives at director, scientific staff and administrative staff levels)
- Aims at establishing the Equal opportunity policy.
- Program planned in 6 different levels.

- leaking pipeline as the career path moves from PhD candidates (40%) to postdocs (30%) to research group leaders (30%) and finally to directors (12%).
    - Constraints: several limited working contracts, part time contracts, reconciling work and family etc.
    - Proposal from President (to limit the period one spends as a postdoc)**: Junior Faculty.**
    - Existing measures for gender equality: child care & Family services & child allowance and child care allowances & extension possibilities & mentoring programs.

Q&A with VP

Q: Can MPS provide day care facilities?
A: Yes, only for kids not yet in schools. Financed by foundation money (in particular cases) but there is no general solution yet.

Q: How is the transparency of the EO commission achieved? Could it be published for the doctoral researchers?
A: It could be made available.

Q: How to get in touch with the commission directly?
A: A representative body of 3 doctoral researchers could potentially be involved in the discussions of the EO.

The quota system-as a start.

International office-as a mandatory office in MPIs: not as an add on job for secretaries or Assistants.

Q: Additional help for the doctoral researchers on paternity or maternity leave - who will fund it? Centralized funding?
A: Yet to decide on the funding. Survey is in progress to find the issues.

Session 3: General administration

Ilka Schießler-Gäbler

- Personnel and Personnel Law Department (Junior Scientists Unit):
    - Briefing of the work the organization does
    - Recent developments on “stipends to contracts“

- Co-operation with the PhDnet:
    - Interaction is important.
    - Willing to support doctoral researchers by organizing workshops / seminars → collaborate with the seminar WG

- Also focuses on supporting postdocs-LeadNet (network for postdocs)

- Career development programs could be organized with the input from the doctoral researchers.

- Q&A

Session 4: Max Planck alumni association

Dr. Norman Gerstner

- Planned activities:
  - Platform for social and professional development.
  - Transit ideas to projects
  - Form professional networks; centralized mentoring; contact points
  - Offer services through MPS: trainings, seminars etc

- Explanation of structure of MPAA.

- Anyone whose has worked with the MPS for at least 6 months can apply for membership. Also open to current members (with certain conditions).
- info@mpi-alumni.de

- MPAA-offers an extended career network:
  - a platform for recruiters
  - to find openings and collaborations.

- Q&As

Day 3: 11.11.2016

Session 1: Institute-specific challenges for PhDnet

- Open discussion about Institute specific problems.

Session 2: New Steering Group – Presentations and elections

- Presentation of candidates running for the Steering group:
    - Spokesperson: Jana and Alfredo present their candidature. Jana mentions her knowledge about the contract situation. Alfredo says that he has leaded the "Vision in Science" working group and organized the Career Fair.
    - BMS section representative: Rafael, Gabriel and Nasim present their candidature. Rafael wants to connect more the different BSM institutes to share knowledge between them. Gabriel mentions his international background and how it can help to foreigner students.
    - Humanities section representative. Teresa presents her candidature. She wants to involve more the Humanities institutes.
    - CPT section representative: Leo and Severin present their candidature. Leo has taken part in the Offspring group and coordinates the HansaHub. Severin mentions his ability to coordinate people.
    - Financial Officer: Daniel presents his candidature.
    - General Secretary: no candidature is presented.

- Summary:

Position	Candidate	Votes	
Spokesperson 60 institutes present	**Leo**	**31**	
	Jana	16	
	Alfredo	13	
Section Rep. – BMS 23 institutes present	Rafael	5	6
	Gabriel	6	3
	Nasim	1	0
	Lisa	12	14
Section Rep. – Humanities 15 institutes present	**Teresa**	14 (1 vote for 'her')	
Section Rep. – CPT 23 institutes present	**Jana**	12	
	Severin	11	
Financial Officer 61 institutes present	Niklas	16	11
	Severin	18	17
	Gabriel	22	31
	Daniel	4	0
	'Donald Trump'	2	
General Secretary 61 institutes present	Rafael	23	33
	Laura	20	28
	Matthias	17	
	'Cátia'	1	

- The voting procedure is by ballot voting. All external representatives (or delegates in the corresponding case) vote for three positions: Spokesperson, Financial Officer and General Secretary. For Section Representatives, external representatives (or delegates) only vote for the section they belong to.

Spokesperson
Candidates: Jana and Alfredo presented during the beginning of the session. Leo presents his candidature additionally before the voting.
Questions:

- Is it necessary to speak German for this position? And what is your German level? No, it is not. Jana and Leo are native speakers. Alfredo can speak German.
- To Leonard: what would be the first topic that you would bring to the MPG president when you meet him? The successes and accomplishments of the PhDnet. As well the importance of improving communication and information exchange between the PhDnet (steering committee) and the MPG administration.
- To Leonard: how is it possible to scale from regional hub coordination to the whole PhDnet? There is a need to transfer information between the different hubs, for what it could be possible to implement communication mechanisms, maybe the Offspring. Another helpful point could be the wiki pages of individual institutes. PhDnet information could be communicated better.

Results: 60 institutes allowed to vote. Leo becomes the Spokesperson of the PhDnet in first round with 31 votes. Jana got 16 and Alfredo 13.

BMS Election
Candidates: Gabriel, Rafael and Nasim presented during the beginning of the session. Lisa presents her candidature additionally before the voting.
Small presentation:

- Lisa: she addresses her passion for science outreach and how she is now involved in the Offspring group. She has carried out a survey in her own institute about working conditions and resolved a situation with the administration regarding the situation of stipends/contracts. She thinks that the communication between BMS institutes should be improved.

Questions:

- To Lisa: how would you increase communication between the different institutes? First step is to have meeting within the hubs. Another optimal link could be the webpage and a possible future platform to exchange techniques and instruments information.

Results: 23 institutes allowed to vote. In the first round (Lisa 12, Gabriel 6, Rafael 5, Nasim 1) there are 24 votes when only 23 institutes are allowed to vote. After one motion, it is decided by majority to repeat the elections. In the second round, Lisa is elected as BSM Section representative by absolute majority with 14 votes. Rafael gets 6, Gabriel 3 and Nasim 0.

Humanities Election
Candidates: Teresa.
Results: 15 institutes allowed to vote. Teresa is elected as Humanities Section representative with 14 votes of 15. 1 vote was for “her”.

CPT Election
Candidates: Severin and Leo presented during the beginning of the session. Leo was chosen as Spokesperson. Jana presents her candidature additionally before the voting.
Results: 23 institutes allowed to vote. Jana is elected on first round as CPT Section representative with 12 votes. Severin got 11 votes.

Financial Officer
Candidates: Daniel presented during the beginning of the session. Niklas, Severin and Gabriel present their candidatures additionally before the voting.
Short presentation:

- Niklas: he was elected external representative of his institute this year and joined the equal opportunity group what encourages him to get involved even more in the PhDnet.
- Severin: he has some background in financial consulting.
- Gabriel: he has a bachelor in Economics and therefore a fundamental understanding of how money works.

Results: 61 institutes allowed to vote. First round (Gabriel 22, Severin 18, Niklas 16, Daniel 4, “Donald Trump 2”) are declared invalid since there are 62 votes and only 61 institutes are allowed to vote. In the second round Gabriel is elected as Financial Officer with 31 votes. Severin got 17, Niklas 11 and Daniel 0. 2 institutes did not vote.

General Secretary
Candidates: No candidate was presented during the Session 1. Rafael, Laura and Matthias present their candidatures before the voting.
Small presentation:

- Rafael: he wants to connect different institutes between each other. This communication can be organized by the secretary. Additionally, he wants to contact the missing institutes.
- Laura: she has faced registration and bureaucratic problems and therefore she knows how to tackle such things and offers this expertise to solve them. Communication is also an important point for her.
- Matthias: he has been supervisor of lectures and exercises and leader of laser development in his institute.

Questions:

- In which working groups are you enrolled? Rafael is part of the active Hansa Hub and he is in the Survey Group. Laura is in the Scientific Event group and takes part in her regional hub. She is also interested in the Equal Opportunity group. Matthias is involved in the General Meeting group.

Results: 61 institutes allowed to vote. no candidates reaches absolute majority in the first round. Rafael gets 23 votes, Laura 20 and Matthias 17. Rafael and Laura pass to the second round. In the second round Rafael is elected as General Secretary with 33 votes. Laura gets 28 votes.

New steering group composition:
Spokesperson: Leo
BSM Section representative: Lisa

Humanities Section representative: Teresa
CPT Section representative: Jana
Financial Officer: Gabriel
General Secretary: Rafael

Session 3: New Steering Group Questions & Answers Session

Leo: what do you think is important and should be addressed by PhDnet?

- Rise of minimum payment to 65% of the TvöD E13 contract. If that is hard to implement, the increase could be addressed by sections.
    - Leo: survey group should help to cover this topic by getting an idea of the current situation. Then a plan of action can be formulated.
- The most important point is to collect data of the present situation: contracts, firing situation, equal opportunity topics. These data should be collected for the meeting with the president. Moreover, more awareness should be created among us to bring the problems to the steering group as they occur, since they can discuss with MPG specifically and may have knowledge of similar past situations. Survey should be the priority in order to formulate a plan of action by the steering group.
    - Leo: how could we reach everybody/more institutes? We need to create awareness that PhDnet exists and how beneficial it is. Individual representatives need to do this locally.
    - In some institutes there is a problem of people ignoring emails: a possible solution would be to do announcements in seminars, annual retreats etc, although not all the institutes have common retreats.
- It should be also important to get subjective data as well, especially on the contract situation. Therefore, the survey should Introduce ‘psychological items’ .
- Steering group should work to include the 18 missing institutes
- There is a need for not only data, but good data. Therefore time should be taken to consider the analysis, privacy problems etc. in order to produce valid and good data. We have to think carefully how to get them.
- There is a proposal to make a list of soft skill courses and how they have been evaluated.
    - This is the objective of the seminar group for the upcoming year. This was already begun in 2014. Seminar group should contact people from past seminar group.
    - Equal Opportunity group also thinks of creating a database with seminar related to awareness and sensitivity topics related to minorities, gender and discrimination. Therefore, Equal Opportunity group should contact the seminar group.
    - PhD representatives often organise soft skills seminars in their own institutes. It would be helpful to collect all the information available.
    - MPI Biophysics in Göttingen – the representatives sent an email to the directors/GLs to ask for recommendations of alumni to invite for a discussion with doctoral candidates. Finally they invited multiple alumni to share their experiences and career paths. It was very successful.
- The possibility to create a forum/platform to exchange scientific information, talks, workshop invitations etc. is proposed.

    - Slack is suggested to be used for this. Steering Group must find out if it's ok to use something like this officially. Slack and Facebook are proposed to share information about stipend information.
    - The need of some sort of communication platform is expressed. There is a Wiki page for PhDnet but it is not regularly used. Maybe it could be revamped. In this platform, PhD candidates could invite speakers from other MPIs.
    - This platform could include information about machines and equipment present in different MPIs in order to share them.
- A successful story from MPI CPFS Dresden was shared. In this institute, there were problems with the supervision of the PhD students. Representatives held a meeting before Scientific Advisory Board visit and prepared both pros and contras of PhD students in MPI CPFS, which were shared with the Board. Now Thesis Advisory Committee system has been implemented.
- Some institutes count with 2 separate programs (IMPRS and an international one) which have substantial differences in the requirements (international one has none, while the IMPRS program requires multiple things, although these requirements vary depending on the starting year of the PhD). In some institutes, the university requirements are also different, what is problematic for some people. The Scientific Advisory Board proposed the harmonization of the requirements but it got worse. PhDnet needs to be aware that completely different PhD programmes exist.
    - Leo: in my institute, we have one IMPRS program with compulsory credit requirements. Rafael: same situation.
    - MPI from Göttingen: they had a successful story of harmonisation of multiple programmes
    - MPI CBG: there is one IMPRS but there are differences between the students based on which year they started the PhD. It is not a problem though, since they have meetings with the coordinator once per month to give feedback and get things changed.
- Steering committee should claim for an improvement of the vacation days. The optimal situation would be 30days.
- The previous steering group had conference meetings with MPAA and administration. New steering group should strengthen collaboration with MPAA from the beginning.
    - The need of a career service was expressed. There is a career service already in Göttingen that could serve as an example.
    - The president of the MPG wants to promote career service but he wants to know the current situation. Catia has prepared a survey for that, which will be sent to the external representatives.
- The Vice-president of the MPG invited us to join the Equal Opportunity commission of MPG
    - Equal Opportunity group and the steering group will be in touch to prepare that.
- The connections with the Helmholtz Juniors, the Leibniz PhD association and the Swiss Reach should be kept, as well as the promotion of connections with the civil unions.
- Steering Group should also pay attention to international institutes, especially to the need of transparency between German regulations and local regulations.

- There must be a knowledge transfer between different institutes, especially through the PhD representatives. We need to know what is happening in other institutes.
    - Regional hubs can play an important role for this matter.
- A group for PhDnet in Linkedin and Research Gate should be created
    - The survey could be used to know which platform is more used between the students.
    - MPG is working on an internal social network.
- Yoga and meditation are proposed as a positive option for people experiencing stress/mental health problems, which could induce physical complications. Art of Living presents information about this.
    - Mental health issue should be a topic present in the survey.
    - Equal Opportunity group is responsible for this.

After the Questions & Answers sessions, the topics are resumed as followed:

- Working conditions: compensation and vacation
- Survey
- Soft skills seminar list
- Communication platforms
- Contact with institutes
- Requirements of graduate schools, interaction with affiliated universities
- Networking

The three prior topics for the future steering group are selected. Each person present in the meeting can vote three of them. The voting recount is as follows (in bold the three most voted topics):

- **Compensation + vacation - 48**
- **Survey - 56**
- Soft skills seminar list - 4
- Communication platforms - 14
- Get to know institutes - 1
- Requirements of graduate schools, interaction with affiliated uni - 0
- **Networking - 27**

Finish of the General Meeting of the PhDnet