



MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT



Communication of the Max Planck PhDnet Steering group on account of today's changes to the Fördervertrag in the Max Planck Society

Today the Max Planck Society (MPS) has made a change to the Fördervertrag, equally granting all doctoral researchers (DRs) in the society 30 days of vacation retroactively starting from 01.01.2019. Furthermore, the transfer of remaining vacation days from the previous year is now possible until 31.12 of the following year. Previously this was only possible until 31.03. of the subsequent year. These improvements are a result of the close collaboration of Max Planck PhDnet with the General Administration over the last years. It required significant lobbying efforts and various official requests to the *Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz (GWK)*, until the MPS was allowed to make this change.

Since the change of the MPS away from stipends, the vast majority of DRs are employed under the Fördervertrag. This contract has been created to equally ensure scientific freedom, as needed for a PhD project, as well as the social benefits of a regular employment. Nevertheless it runs short on a number of benefits, namely:

- Legal minimum number of vacation days (20)
- No possibility to participate in bonus schemes such as BLBV and no support for VBL
- Limitation to experience level 2 according to TVöD
- No possibility for a salary increase after the first signature

The discrepancies between the Fördervertrag and a TVL contract, backed by the collective wage agreement, are a major concern to DRs, since they are a disadvantage compared to DRs working in universities or other research organizations employed with a TVöD contract. Accordingly, the Max Planck PhDnet pointed out the shortcomings of this contract since its implementation. Therein the primary concern was the legal minimum of vacation days. This is especially a serious problem for international researcher, which comprise more than 50% of DRs in the MPS. In many instances they have to carefully consider whether it is worth it, using their vacations to travel far distances to spend some time with their families in their home countries, meaning this will be their relaxation time for the year.

Accordingly we thank all the people in the Administration, who helped us realize this. Especially, Rüdiger Willems (General Secretary MPS), and Prof. Martin Stratmann (President MPS) for listening to our concerns and their willingness to improve the working conditions of early career researchers. We hope that we can resume this fruitful collaboration, continuing communications about issues DRs are experiencing. For example, one such concern is that the base salary of the Fördervertrag (50% of payment for full time working hours) is not fulfilling common standards any longer. As the DFG already implemented, 65% payment is a necessary and

justified salary for DRs. Especially as the MPS is Germany's leading basic research organization with big international reputation, we believe it should lead such a change in more appropriately valuing the work of early career scientists.

Nevertheless, today we are very happy about the implemented changes to the Fördervertrag. We believe this a necessary step in appropriately valuing the work of early career researchers within the Max Planck Society.