A glimpse into doing a PhD in Germany’s top research organizations

This presentation will be recorded.
Your presenters today will be:

Isabela Paredes Cisneros (Helmholtz Juniors spokesperson 2020)

Lea Alina Heckmann (Max Planck PhDnet spokesperson 2021)

Jacob L. Gorenflos López (Leibniz PhD Network spokesperson 2020)

Please write questions in the Q&A.
What is N²?

- We discuss the future of science, the career perspectives and the impact on society
- We focus on the assessment and improvement of working conditions of doctoral researchers (DRs)
- We conduct individual surveys

we represent more than 16,000 Doctoral Researchers all across Germany
This data provides:

- The status quo of DRs in non-university research organizations
- Assess latent issues
- Identify areas of improvement
- Highlight best-practice examples
- Evaluate previously implemented measures
- Provide an anonymous platform for DRs to voice their concerns
N² Goals

we advocate for

100% payment
4 year contracts
abolishment of stipends
prevention of power abuse
N² PhD harmonized questionnaire

- Surveys conducted end of 2019
- response rate: ~29%
  (~ 5000 respondents)
- 94 questions
- Individual survey reports published in summer 2020

presented data does not include IPP
Get to know our DRs

**AGE - AVERAGE**

- **HELMHOLTZ**: 28.6 years
- **MAX-PLANCK**: 28.3 years
- **LEIBNIZ**: 29.1 years

**GENDER**

- **HELMHOLTZ**
  - Female: 47%
  - Male: 50%
  - Diverse: <1%

- **MAX-PLANCK**
  - Female: 41%
  - Male: 54%
  - Diverse: <1%

- **LEIBNIZ**
  - Female: 54%
  - Male: 46%
  - Diverse: <1%

**NATIONALITY**

- **GERMAN**
  - 80%

- **EU**
  - 20%

- **NON-EU**
  - 0%

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2021-02-04
Working conditions - What is it like to do a PhD?

- Motivation is mainly derived from DRs' topics and interest in their work
- Scientific excellence, but high pressure environments

→ Majority (76%) works overtime

→ Primarily due to workload
Working conditions - Employment types

- **Contracts**
  - Public service contract 50-100% (TVöD/TV-L E13)
  - Support/Subsidy Contract

- **Stipends**
  - Internal
  - External (e.g. Studienstiftung)
## Working conditions - Contracts

### MEAN MONTHLY NET INCOME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institute</th>
<th>Salary (Euro)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HELMHOLTZ</td>
<td>1708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAX-PLANCK</td>
<td>1670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEIBNIZ</td>
<td>1682</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Pay-gap between**
  - Disciplines
  - Nationality
  - Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Type</th>
<th>Salary (gross/net)</th>
<th>Hours/Week</th>
<th>Social Insurance/Pension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65% TVöD E13 Contract</td>
<td>~ 2600€/~1700€</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/Subsidy Contract</td>
<td>~ 2600€/~1800€*</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>based off of 65% TVöD E13</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*no VBL contribution

Values taken from [https://oeffentlicher-dienst.info/tvoed/](https://oeffentlicher-dienst.info/tvoed/)
Working conditions - Stipends

- ~10% respondents are stipend holders
- Non-Europeans receive the most stipends (11-29%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stipend Type</th>
<th>Salary (gross/net)</th>
<th>Hours/Week</th>
<th>Social Insurance/Pension</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65% TVöD E13 Contract</td>
<td>~2600€/~1700€</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stipend (internal and external)</td>
<td>mean ~1200€</td>
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<td>no</td>
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</table>

values taken from https://oeffentlicher-dienst.info/tvoed/
Working conditions - Expected duration of the PhD

**EXPECTED DURATION**

- **HELMHOLTZ**: 3-4 years
- **MAX-PLANCK**: 2.5-4 years
- **LEIBNIZ**: 3-5 years

- Mismatched contract duration
- Financial insecurity
- Difficult to plan ahead

**CONTRACT DURATION**

- > 3 YEARS

4 year contracts
Working conditions

Already on the right track

- Increase from 20 to 30 holidays in 2019
- Higher % of contracts than stipends
- Approval of BMBF for a 65% base salary

But there is still room for improvement!

Our recommendations:

1. Harmonized working conditions
2. 100% payment for 100% work
3. Secure and stable working environments
   a. without stipends
   b. with contracts adjusted to the expected duration of 4 years
Few people hold the majority of power, with direct impact on the individual career prospects.

Therefore, the academic environment is prone to:

- Abuse of power
- Inequalities
- Over-dependencies
- Conflicts
Conflicts in the Workplace

- 15% of DRs experienced conflicts
  - Only 5% reported a conflict
  - 10% of DRs did not report their incident

- Satisfaction with conflict management
  - Majority dissatisfied (~35%) with report
  - 20% DRs are neutral
  - ~20-40% are satisfied with report
Awareness of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

- Differences according to nationality
  - PhD representatives
  - Ombudsperson

PhD representatives have:
  - no training
  - no confidentiality agreement signed
  - no mandate

adapted from the Max Planck PhDnet 2019 survey report

A glimpse into doing a PhD in Germany’s top research organizations 2021-02-04
Power Abuse

SEXUALIZED HARASSMENT FROM SUPERIOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experienced</th>
<th>Witnessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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BULLYING FROM SUPERIOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experienced</th>
<th>Witnessed</th>
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<tr>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of experienced/witnessed at least once

HELMHOLTZ MAX-PLANCK LEIBNIZ
Power Abuse

Our recommendations:

1. Prevention of Power Abuse
2. Protection of Victims
3. Arbitration of Conflicts by an Independent Committee
4. Implementation of Consequences for Offenders

Power Abuse and Conflict Resolution
N² position paper¹, May 2019
by the Helmholtz Juniors, the Doctoral Researchers of the IPP Mainz, the Leibniz PhD Network, the Max Planck PhDnet.

¹ A glimpse into doing a PhD in Germany’s top research organizations
Mental Health - Depression

- Patient Health Questionnaire - PHQ-9

- German population: ~9.9%
  (age group 18-29)

- Socio-economic status correlates negatively with depressive indicators
  Busch et al., Bundesgesundheitsblatt, 2013

- 15-18% of DRs moderate to severe depressive symptoms
Mental Health - Correlating Factors

- Long working hours and little time off
  - few holidays taken
  - work on weekends
- Precarious working situation
  - stipends
  - short duration contracts
- Power abuse cases

Our recommendations:

➢ Raise awareness for the mental health situation of DRs
➢ Tackle the underlying mechanisms
Key Takeaways

1) Most new contracts are a minimum of 65% E13 TVöD

2) Stipends are increasingly replaced by working contracts

3) The average duration of a PhD is ~4 years, but average contract duration is less

4) Increasing awareness for power abuse and mental health

Therefore, we continue to advocate for:
- 100% payment
- Abolishment of stipends
- 4 year contracts
- Prevention of power abuse
Thank you for your attention

We thank:

- Survey groups
- Theresa Kuhl (plots)
- N² board & advisory board
- General Administrations

we represent more than 16,000 Doctoral Researchers all across Germany

find out more about us and our networks!

@N2PhDnet
@nsqrd
n2board@lists.gwdg.de

THE NETWORK OF DOCTORAL RESEARCHER NETWORKS
Q&A

Moderated by:

Lindsey A. Bultema
(Max Planck PhDnet spokesperson 2020)

Please write questions in the Q&A
This portion is NOT recorded