

Why should the MCFA (NOT ?) "dissolve" in Euroscience ?

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How would I reach such a potential member of our organisation, who might not participate because of the point-of-view of ES? Therefore, we should remain as apolitical as possible. At face value, it could look like MCFA would be taking over ES based on respective differences in the number of members. When one looks at the number of active people within both organisations, however, this image changes drastically.

Conclusion

We should not join ES, as it shifts our focus in a direction that places problems in front of some of our members. We can get out of these difficult times on our own, if we put more stress on our own organisation and try to regain strength by showing more activity to our members. I think that there is a definite chance for the MCFA and we should not give it up by joining ES. I believe in the MCFA and do not like the idea of giving up the potential that MCFA has. On the other hand, however, we have to start using this potential and reach

and bind our members to the association.

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Germany's Lost Generation ?

The initiative wissenschaftlichernachwuchs.de was founded in December 2000 when the governmental plans for a reform of the university system became imminent. Since there is no official representation of young scientists in Germany, some graduates and postdocs organised an informal movement. They formulated a manifesto entitled "Lost Generation" - due to the fact that the actual outlines of the new law on the whole are totally neglecting the interests of young scientists. In a certain way, the new law is even threatening future academic careers. The manifesto, which has been supported by ~9,500 individuals by now, was handed over to Minister Edelgard Bulmahn on 31st May 2001 - with no visible effect.

During the following months, we tried to obtain greater influence regarding discussion of the government's projects and, by doing so, to defend the interests of all young scientists. The initiative agrees with the government that fundamental changes are urgently required. However, some of the essentials of the new law, especially those concerning new qualifications and conditions for an academic career, are rejected. Although there were many discussions with governmental representatives, only a few changes were achieved and the law became effective at the end of 2001.

Nevertheless, wissenschaftlichernachwuchs.de further engages in showing the consequences of the new law. The number of supporters grows steadily. Meanwhile, there are a number of cases in which contracts for young scientists were not renewed and those scientists chose to leave Germany and obtain work elsewhere. Public interest was high at this point, and nearly all media reported such cases. There is small hope that further improvements may be achieved when the law is put into legislation in the different federal states.

Problems of the new German "Hochschulrahmengesetz"

The implementation of 6,000 new professorships called "Juniorprofessoren" (inspired by the US assistant professor) will annihilate a great number of existing positions for postdocs, especially for those who have already received their second doctor's degree (germ. Habilitation) and as such qualify for a

full professorship but who are not yet appointed. Furthermore, most of these new professorships will be probably created by abolishing vacant senior professorships. As such, the number of full professorships will also decrease, especially in the cultural and social sciences, where for one professorship position there are often 100 or more applicants. These highly motivated and well-trained individuals have worked hard for 10 to 15 years to assure their progression in an academic career - now, they are considered as either too old and/or lacking in innovation!

However, the new law does not improve prospects for the next generation. Students who are about to graduate have to decide on whether to obtain the second doctoral degree (Habilitation) which, in a transitional period until 2009, will simultaneously qualify for a full professorship - or to apply for a post as a "Juniorprofessor". Meanwhile, some representatives from the official council of German Universities, the "Fakultätentage", have declared that they will continue considering the Habilitation as the required qualification for a full professorship - therefore, young scientists will remain constrained within the current lengthy promotional process!

The new law also bears inequities for certain groups and - on the whole - disadvantages for the scientific community. It is one of the primary intentions of the government to give new vigour to the scientific staff; therefore, the duration of the postgraduate period for further qualification all together will be limited to six years for a doctorate and six years of postdoctoral research. Scientists that do not fit in with this ideal career format will be excluded, especially those without an appointment for the six years of postdoctoral research. It seems that youth in itself is higher evaluated than personal and scientific experience. Women, especially, continue to be discriminated - much against Mrs. Bulmahns eager assertions: two years are considered as enough for the education of children!

It was another major aim of the draft to allow postgraduates to work more independently from their academic tutors in an earlier phase of their career. While the

initiative fully supports this idea, it sees precarious consequences resulting from the numerous obligations of the Juniorprofessor. According to the new law, a Juniorprofessor has to teach four to eight hours a week; he/she has to raise money from funding programmes or industrial sponsors (this is also taken into consideration for his/her further evaluation!) and he/she has to work on his/her scientific qualification, i.e. to publish a second monograph. In short, he/she has the same rights as a full senior professor but more duties than before - and all this without any real economic perspective. As a consequence, the quality of research and teaching will decline and, in fact, students will once more be the victims of an academic reform. Last but not least, though the Junior professor will no longer depend on his/her personal tutor, he/she will now be submitted to the faculty deciding on the extension of his/her contract after the first three years.

Proposals

Wissenschaftlichernachwuchs.de has several propositions as to how the governmental draft could be modified. The Junior professorship should be provided with a tenure track to avoid all the demoralising uncertainties mentioned above. Furthermore, the Junior professorship should by no means turn out to be a means of discrimination against other qualified scientists. The teaching obligations of the Junior professor should be cut down to four hours per week to leave enough time for preparation and research. The current generation of postgraduates and their experience should not be excluded from the reform process. The existing post-doc positions on a fixed-term contract base could be transformed into (Junior) professorships with no particular time limitations. To stimulate the aspired innovation as fast and as effective as possible, the creation of new funding-professorships would be helpful, professorships which are assigned to highly qualified scientists and expire automatically, when the holder leaves his/her position.

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