

Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany

Statement

Alexander von Humboldt Foundation

German Research Foundation

Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft

German Rectors' Conference

Leibniz Association

Leopoldina German National Academy of Sciences –
National Academies of Sciences and Humanities

German Academic Exchange Service

Helmholtz Association

Max Planck Society

25 March 2015

Position statement of the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany on the planned amendment to the Academic Fixed-Term Contract Act (WissZeitVG)

Highly trained and productive junior scientists are a key factor for the success of our science system in the face of international competition. Science and government are required to jointly establish the optimal qualification and working conditions. The Academic Fixed-Term Contract Act (WissZeitVG) provides a science-appropriate starting point which can provide legal certainty. However, the practical application of the currently valid provisions has, in the past, resulted in too short contract periods for many junior scientists leading to great insecurity with regard to career paths.

We, the undersigning alliance organisations, take our responsibility very seriously and will seek to counteract these unfavourable developments, also in our own interests, through our organisation-specific guidelines aiming at scientists employed on a fixed-term basis. Through the implementation of the guidelines, we will ensure that junior scientists at all qualification stages obtain reliable conditions to achieve their individual objectives in terms of qualifications.

In addition to such measures, the planned amendment to the WissZeitVG itself must also be structured bindingly and in conformity with science. However, the legal provisions governing fixed-term employment will only be successful for all players involved in the science sector, if they are accompanied by a set of political measures aimed at the support of junior scientists that sufficiently takes into account the various missions and financing conditions. In particular, this means that transparent and dependable career planning must be ensured both before and after the doctorate. In principle, the contract term should therefore be in line with the qualification objective. In particular, an initial fixed-term employment contract for a period of at least 24 months with an extension option of a further 12 months should be concluded during the doctoral stage. The provisions of the WissZeitVG must therefore be supplemented by federal state or higher education law provisions on the structuring of supervision agreements.

We, the undersigning alliance organisations, regard the measures set out above as the basis for dialogue with the government in order to constantly improve the conditions for junior scientists. We thus hope to make a significant contribution to securing the outstanding position of the German science system within the internationally competitive environment.

Media contact:

Dr. Christina Beck
Head of Science and Corporate Communication
at the Max Planck Society
Tel: +49 89 2108 -1275
Email: christina.beck@gv.mpg.de