

Annual Report 2015 of the Board to the Assembly of Delegates

Board activities

By the Co-Presidents of actionuni, Andrea Tamas and Carla Duss, and the board of actionuni

1 Internal Initiatives

The board of actionuni met for 6 full sessions. In its first meeting, the board decided to invite the representatives of actionuni in the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Swiss Accreditation Council, the SHK/CSHE and Eurodoc to join the board meetings. A regular update of the current events in these central political institutions became an integral part of every board meeting and the representatives strongly supported all activities of the board.

The 2015 Assembly of Delegates commissioned the board to work on a strategy for actionuni. The board decided to first focus on the elaboration of a [Mission Statement](#). As opposed to the strategy, the mission statement will be broadly communicated. With the Mission Statement actionuni communicates its intention to become an equal partner in all political discussions concerning non-professorial academic staff in the Swiss Higher Education System. The board was in contact with its member organizations in order to first gather ideas and expectations and in a second round to improve the suggested draft. The Mission Statement will be submitted to the Assembly of Delegates for final approval. The board thanks Irmi Huber who supported the board with a professional translation of the document in English.

On the basis of the Mission Statement but also in the context of the political changes in the Swiss Higher Education System the board took on drafting a [Strategy of actionuni 2016 to 2020](#). The mentioned changes concern the Federal Act on the Funding and Coordination of the Higher Education Sector (HEdA) and the establishment of swissuniversities, the Swiss Accreditation Council and the SHK/CSHE. The board finalized its work on the strategy in February 2016. The main goals of the strategy are the development of a set of criteria regarding the employment and development of Swiss non-professorial academic staff, intensified networking with a set of important (political) stakeholders and goals of organisational development.

Maintenance and design of the [Website](#) of actionuni proved quickly to be a challenge. The board commissioned Lars Büthe (AVETH) with the redesign of the website. Although not all texts are ready yet, the Website went live on 1 March 2016. The new layout and design of the website are very appealing and the board will focus its activities in early 2016 on finalizing the project. We thank Lars for his effort and patience.

MVUB offered actionuni a workspace at the University of Bern for a [General Secretariat](#). The board decided to decline the offer, given the scarcity of actionuni's resources. The Assembly of Delegates 2015 decided to first focus on a strategy and to subsequently continue the discussion on finances and the establishment of a General Secretariat.

2 Networking

The board of actionuni focused on improving the actionuni's network. The co-presidents and a delegation of the board met on several occasions with representatives of the National Union of Students of Switzerland [VSS-UNES-USU](#) and of [Swissfaculty](#). It was decided to stay in informal contact and coordinate on common interest issues within the existing institutions of the Swiss Accreditation Council and the SHK/CSHE, and on current political issues.

A delegation of the board of actionuni participated in the "Séance de Réflexion of the National Research Council and Panel on Academic Careers in Science" of the [Swiss National Science Foundation](#) (SNSF) on 20 October 2015. Ruth Lyck (MVUB) participated in the panel. Her contribution focused on the lack of career opportunities of post docs. The event was very important for actionuni because of networking opportunities. Furthermore, a delegation of the board met with D. Höchli, M. Kullin and D. Sudan from the SNSF for the annual discussion on 23 November 2015. The main discussion points are summarized below. actionuni is invited to re-contact the SNSF for a next exchange in autumn 2016.

The board of actionuni invited Martina Weiss, secretary general of [swissuniversities](#). The meeting took place on 18 November 2015. After a presentation of our organizations, the discussion focused on possible ways of institutionalized cooperation. The board requested swissuniversities to consider inviting delegates of actionuni to be active participants in its delegations (research delegation, strategic planning delegation, teaching methodology delegation, quality and accreditation delegation). As a follow-up an official letter was sent to the president of swissuniversities, resulting in an invitation to a meeting with the president of swissuniversities (M. Hengartner), the secretary general of swissuniversities (M. Weiss) and representatives of VSS-UNES-USU as well as Swissfaculty. The meeting took place on 24 March 2016. The co-presidents and Florian Henri Besthorn represented actionuni. The organizations decided to meet in this group twice a year and to coordinate media activities and in the national political theatre.

Over the next six years all universities, universities of teacher education and universities of applied sciences will go through an institutional accreditation according to the Federal Act on the Funding and Coordination of the Higher Education Sector (HEdA). The board of actionuni is convinced that the non-professorial academic staff of these institutions should play a role in the accreditation processes – both, as university employees but also as accreditation experts. The co-presidents of actionuni and Florian Lippke (CSWM), actionuni representative in the Swiss Accreditation Council, will meet with Mr. Grolimund, Director of [AAQ](#), on 12 May 2016.

Actionuni was contacted by [Thesis](#), the German organization of non-professorial academic staff. Thesis is currently discussing to change its organizational model from having individuals as members to organizations as members (like actionuni).

3 Politics

In spring 2015, the board of actionuni conducted some indebt discussions about the strategies of the two chambers of universities and of universities of applied sciences and the **BFI-Periode 2017-2020/Période FRI 2017-2020**. In March 2016, actionuni was invited to a hearing by the Science, Education and Culture Committee SECC on 13 April 2016. Florian Lippke (cswm, actionuni representative to the Accreditation Council (SAC/SAR)) present actionuni's statement and answer the questions of the committee on our behalf.

actionuni was invited to participate in the **consultation on the partial revision of the Federal Act on the Federal Institutes of Technology**. actionuni welcomed the improvement of good governance provisions in its statement but voiced doubts regarding the increase in student fees for foreign students in the political context of the aftermath of the in February 2014 approved Initiative against Mass Immigration. Furthermore, actionuni asked that AVETH and ACIDE are consulted early in the process of the planned complete revision of the Federal Act on the Federal Institutes of Technology.

actionuni also welcomed the proposed **Federal Innosuisse Act** and the suggested support of young researchers in applied research. However, actionuni requested that the financial resources need to be increased so that this new instrument will not come at the cost of project funding. Furthermore, we asked that support for doctorate studies be prolonged to four instead of three years.

actionuni was further invited to the consultation on the "**Verordnung über die internationale Zusammenarbeit im Bereich der Bildung, der Berufsbildung, der Jugend und der Mobilitätsförderung / Ordonnance relative à la coopération internationale en matière d'éducation, de formation professionnelle, de jeunesse et de mobilité**". The new regulation is a suitable basis for mobility programs of Switzerland as a third state and the sought association to Erasmus+. However, we highlighted the importance of the role as coordinating institution in Erasmus+ for Switzerland and for young researchers.

In Mid-February 2016, the board of actionuni decided to take position against the enforcement initiative (**Durchsetzungsinitiative / L'initiative «de mise en œuvre»**). "For the academic intermediate staff geographical mobility is a key prerequisite to ensure exchange of knowledge between experts and for career development. The initiative risks the close and productive interrelation between the Swiss educational and research landscape and the wider European context."

The board of actionuni decided in its meeting on 14 July 2015 to sign **DORA** – The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment.

Swiss National Science Foundation

By the actionuni representative to the Foundation Council, Nenad Stojanovic

The Foundation Council is the highest body of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and makes strategic decisions. Since May 2015 the official representative of actionuni in the Foundation Council has been Nenad Stojanovic from the University of Lucerne. Until the end of 2015 his deputy was Irmtraud Huber (a change in the SNFS statutes does not allow for deputies as of 2016).

On 23 November 2015 a delegation of actionuni had a meeting with the SNFS director Daniel Höchli and his collaborators Marcel Kullin (head of the Division Careers) and Dimitri Sudan (head of the Programs Division). The main topics of the discussion were:

- (1) Access to personal and program funding schemes for young researchers from Universities of Applied Sciences (FH) and Universities of Teacher Education (PH). The SNSF is open to show more flexibility in this field but expects that FHs and PHs further develop their own career plans.
- (2) Organisation of professorships/chairs at universities. In order to reduce the “postdoc bubble” the SNFS does not intend to extend its project funding schemes but, rather, to improve the quality of the existing programs. The development of tenure-track positions is mostly a responsibility of universities. The envisaged SNSF grants for assistant professorships with tenure-track (APTT) are currently at risk because of the economy measures proposed by the federal government (a cut of 500 million CHF for the SNSF from 2017 until 2019).

In sum, actionuni is recognized by the SNSF as the main representative of young researchers and non-professorial academic staff in Switzerland. Its queries and inputs are taken into consideration at the highest level of the SNSF. In January 2016 the executive committee of the SNSF Foundation Council confirmed the co-optation of the actionuni representative in the Foundation Council for the period 2016-2019.

Swiss Conference of Higher Education SHK/CSHE (Hochschulkonferenz und Hochschulrat)

By the actionuni representative to the SHK/CSHE, Ruth Lyck

The SHK (www.shk.ch) represents the uppermost political organization of higher education in Switzerland. In accordance to the Swiss federal constitution, the federal councilor Johann Schneider-Ammann and the cantonal governing councilors for education and research develop and determine federal and cantonal mutual decisions on higher education policies. Since the first SHK meeting in 2015, *actionuni* has one official seat in the SHK with advisory vote. Other organizations with advisory vote are the association of Swiss students (VSS), Swissfaculty, Travail suisse, SGB, SNF, KTI, the ETH council, swissuniversities, SWIR, SBFI, SGV and EDK. In 2015 the SHK has held four meetings.

The SHK discusses and decides a large variety of topics, amongst others:

Appointment, regulation and budget of the accreditation council, financial subsidy of construction projects of higher education institutions, admission process for medical students, admission of the federal messages on education, research and innovation policy (BFI-Botschaft / message FRI / messaggio ERI) 2013-2016 and 2017-2020, budget of project-linked subsidies related to these

messages and federal subsidies to higher education institutions. One subject that has been discussed with increased attention is the numbers of medical doctors graduating yearly from Swiss universities and possible measures for a substantial increase of this number. The federal council has offered a total amount of 100 Mio CHF for funding of additional medical students, which, however, is linked to strict and not yet finally decided terms.

Taken together, attendance of the SHK allows us to get insight into the decision-making processes. The SHK offers a unique chance to get into personal contact with policy-makers and committee organizers. We now know that for being influential on the development of the next BFI message, *actionuni* needs contact with and access into committees of swissuniversities. In May 2015, this request was announced orally at the SHK and is documented in the minutes of that meeting.

Swiss Accreditation Council

By the actionuni representative to the Accreditation Council (SAC/SAR), Florian Lippke

Initiated by the new law of the Higher Education Sector (HEdA / HFKG / LEHE) the Swiss Council of Accreditation (SAC) was constituted in order to surveil and guide the measures taken by the Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Insurance (AAQ) starting its work in January 2015. Up to the present date there had been 5 meetings in which the major steps were conducted in order to guaranty the functionality and efficiency of the SAC as an independent committee with responsibility for the final decisions on accreditation according to federal law. Florian Lippke, University of Fribourg, was elected by the Swiss University Conference as the representative of actionuni. He is full- hence voting- member and in this function also full-member of the commission evaluating and preparing the statements and votes for the Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA considering the accreditation according to MedBG. The main tasks and achievements of the SAC can be categorized by four main focal points:

A. Organization of the Accreditation Council (SAC)

This part includes not only the definition of organizational structures and strategies of the council itself, but also defining the rules and guidelines for the Accreditation Agency AAQ. Important topics discussed were the simplified institutional accreditation and how agencies like the AAQ shall be recognized according to HEdA.

B. Legacy procedures of quality assurance

It is distinguished between program accreditation, institutional accreditation, quality audit and program accreditation according to Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities – LAU, program accreditation according to the law on medical professions (MedBG) or psychology (PsyG), evaluations etc.

C. Accreditation according to HEdA

The AAQ-Documentation for Institutional Accreditation has been adopted. In 2015, 60 mandates have been discussed in all different phases – from the entry application to the final accreditation discussed:

D. Quality audits mandated by third parties

Examples: System accreditation (Germany), Quality Audit according to the Austrian law on quality assurance of HEI (HS-QSG)

Eurodoc

By the actionuni representative and treasurer of Eurodoc, Clemens Nyffeler

Policy Paper

Eurodoc published a policy paper addressing serious issues and contradictions of a paper the European Commission had published on conditions of admission, entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, etc. Eurodoc suggested amendments to this paper advocating adequate working conditions for visiting researchers and, to this end, the classification of PhD candidates as early stage researchers rather than students.

eurodoc.net/eurodoc-recommendations-on-entry-and-residence-of-third-country-nationals

Re-establishment of the Eurodoc Wiki

After a server crash in 2014, Eurodoc lost the majority of its collective memory with the loss of the previous wiki-page. In the past year, we have set up a new wiki engine on our web server, created a basic structure and started reassembling the contents of our wiki.

European Research Area (ERA) Stakeholder Platform

The ERA Stakeholder Platform consists of a group of selected stakeholder organizations having a privileged partnership with the European Commission (EC) in order to promote and develop the implementation of the European Research Area. Eurodoc has applied to become a member of this platform by drafting a memorandum of understanding, proposing an agenda addressing various points of interest and offering an outreach to doctoral candidates all over Europe through the national member organizations.

ec.europa.eu/research/era/partnership_en.htm

Newsletters were published in March and October 2015 with highlights and news from member organizations, events and developments from across Europe. Another one will be released shortly.

eurodoc.net/policies/newsletter/

The **Eurodoc Conference and Annual General Meeting 2016 in Luxemburg** will be held soon and is currently in preparation. The conference will gather junior researchers, representatives from NGOs across Europe and a number of invited speakers to discuss the goals, future and best practices of postgraduate training and funding schemes. Registration is currently open and anyone is welcome to attend. Official delegates from member organizations will receive reimbursement for travel expenses.

www.eurodoc-lux2016.org/