

**Annual Report 2020/21 of the Board
to the Assembly of Delegates**

Board activities

Martina von Arx, Carmen Faso, Rashmi Rai-Rawat and the extended board of *actionuni der Schweizer Mittelbau*: Carla Duss, Sophie Girardin, Florian Lippke, Cosima Locher, Melanie Röthlisberger, Prabitha Urwyler.

Reporting period: October 2020 to September 2021

1 Overview of all activities October 2020 – September 2021

Event	Start Date	End Date
actionuni attended general assembly of a member association (MOL) on invitation	02 -11-2020	02-11-2020
Exchange with swissuniversities	17-11-2020	17-11-2020
swissuniversities Delegation Lehre	18-11-2020	18-11-2020
actionuni-SNSF exchange meeting	23-11-2020	23-11-2020
Vote on postponed Motion 3 from GA	24-11-2020	24-11-2020
SHK-HSR	26-11-2020	26-11-2020
OECD International Workshop "Reducing the precarity of research careers"	27-11-2020	27-11-2020
ESKAS	04-12-2020	04-12-2020
Board meeting	09-12-2020	09-12-2020
Board meeting	27-01-2021	27-01-2021
actionuni-VSS-swissfaculty hearing at WBK-S	02-02-2021	02-02-2021
Board meeting	24-02-2021	24-02-2021
SHK-HSR	25-02-2021	25-02-2021
ESKAS	18-03-2021	18-03-2021
Board meeting	24-03-2021	24-03-2021
Board meeting	21-04-2021	21-04-2021
Virtual roundtable on better science organized by actionuni in collaboration with MVUB, OILS and Eurodoc	29-04-2021	29-04-2021

ESKAS	07-05-2021	07-05-2021
SHK-HSR	20-05-2021	20-05-2021
Board meeting	26-05-2021	26-5-2021
Virtual roundtable on better science organized by actionuni in collaboration with better science team, university of Bern	31-05-2021	31-05-2021
Board meeting	23-06-2021	23-6-2021
Eurodoc GM & AGM	14-07-2021	15-07-2021
Board meeting	25-08-2021	25-8-2021
Evaluation of the HFKG, Interview done by Interface, together with VSS-UNES	02-09-2021	02-09-2021
Devising Specific Proposals to address Inequalities and Precarious Working Conditions in Academia-Invitation from the Swiss Young Academy	24-09-21	24-09-21
Collaboration with OILS as a partner Introduction of OS by actionuni representative	23-09-21	24-09-21
Board meeting	29-9-2021	29-9-2021
Additional (regular) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with the actionuni delegates and partners • Meetings with the collaboration partners • Participation in National Association delegates multiple meetings organised by Eurodoc • Mail correspondence & contribution in surveys, questionnaires, reports, etc. • Outreach activities 	Between Nov. 2020 – August 2021	

2 Statutory Changes from GA 2020

By the actionuni co-President, Carmen Faso

Two statutory changes were approved at the 2019 and 2020 general assemblies but have yet to be incorporated officially in the updated version of the statutes of actionuni. They are in force. The first concerns remuneration for actionuni delegates and the second concerns actionuni endorsement of national initiatives. Both motions are discussed in detail in the final protocols for the 2019 and 2020 general assemblies.

Statutory change from GA 2019:

Add a new paragraph 32 to the statutes:

Members of the board of actionuni der Schweizer Mittelbau or representatives and delegates in commissions/committees/working groups, who have been mandated and/or elected by actionuni der Schweizer Mittelbau and receive financial compensation for their work from external parties, are asked to pay 50% of the compensation to actionuni der Schweizer Mittelbau. In individual cases the board decides.

The amendment will be implemented on 1 January 2020.

The motion was presented, discussed, and details were clarified.

- The delegates approved of the new paragraph unanimously (44:0:0).

Statutory change from GA 2020:

Signing/endorsement by actionuni members of national-level initiatives driven by individual member organizations requires bilateral communication and information flow with the board of actionuni sufficiently in advance. Moreover, signing/endorsement of initiatives by actionuni requires the vote of a 2/3 majority of the general assembly. Opposing member organizations may request to be named in public communications.

This version of the motion obtained 27 votes. It is thus the version officially adopted by the assembly and will be incorporated in the statutes of actionuni.

3 Media Coverage

- Le Temps, 25.05.2020: Les carrières des chercheuses menacées par le coronavirus, y compris en Suisse
<https://www.heidi.news/sciences-climat/dans-la-recherche-les-carrieres-feminines-menacees-par-le-coronavirus>
- Le Journal UNIGE, 29.10.2020: Une pétition demande plus de postes stables à l'Université
<https://www.unige.ch/lejournale/vie-unige/archives1/petition>
- Das Lamm, 22.12.2020: Schweizer Hochschulen: Geht Weltklasse nur auf Kosten der Forschenden?
<https://daslamm.ch/schweizer-hochschulen-geht-weltklasse-nur-auf-kosten-der-forschenden/>
[actionuni has been contacted by e-mail]
- Medienmitteilung VSS-UNES, 23.03.2021: Mehr Zeit für Studierende und Forschende
<https://vss-unes.ch/blog/2021/03/23/mehr-zeit-fuer-studierende-und-forschende/>

- Radio SRF 2 Kultur, 24.06.2021: Das Prekariat der akademischen Welt protestiert
<https://www.srf.ch/kultur/gesellschaft-religion/ichbinhanna-das-prekariat-der-akademischen-welt-protestiert>
[actionuni has been interviewed by phone]
- Rendez-vous Radio SRF, 06.08.2021: Mittleres Uni-Lehrpersonal fühlt sich ausgenutzt und abgewertet
<https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/petition-der-uni-assistenten-mittleres-uni-lehrpersonal-fuehlt-sich-ausgenutzt-und-abgewertet>
[actionuni was contacted, but the journalist was interested in the petition itself]
- NZZ am Sonntag, 29.08.2021: Aufstand der Unterbezahlten
<https://info.petition-academia.ch/nzz-am-sonntag-aufstand-der-unterbezahlten-an-der-uni-zurich/>
[actionuni has been interviewed by phone, but no quote has been used]
- Bulletin VSH-AEU, August 2021: Brücken bauen: Was junge Forscherinnen in die Politik einbringen können // Bâtir des ponts : Ce que les jeunes chercheuses peuvent apporter à la politique
Martina von Arx und Sophie Girardin
https://vsh-aeu.ch/download/317/VSH_Bulletin_August_2021_WEB.pdf

4 actionuni activities

4.1. Audition with VSS, swissfaculty and swissuniversities at the WBK-S

On the 2. February 2021, Carmen Faso and Florian Lippke in their capacity as current and former actionuni co-presidents, participated and presented at the hearing with the WBK-S to discuss [Motion 20.3669](#) titled:

Stellungnahme des wissenschaftlichen Mittelbaus der Schweiz zur Stärkung der Partizipation und Mitwirkung der Studierendenschaft

The hearing was organized in collaboration with VSS and swissfaculty, following the initiative of WBK-S member and promoter Ms. E. Baume-Schneider. The purpose of the hearing was to decide whether the three tiers could rely on permanent representation at the SHK. Swissuniversities was also invited to participate. The motion was (unfortunately) turned down.

4.2. Collaboration

By the actionuni co-presidents, Carmen Faso and Rashmi Rai-Rawat

Since the year 2019/2020, we were consistently trying to strengthen the relationships with all our member associations and partners through various means. For example, (1) we had organized multiple one to one online and offline meetings with the delegates. (2) In our ongoing project (actionuni grand tour), we participated in the board meetings, general assemblies, as well as other activities of our member associations; (3) We tried to communicate regularly with our members and partners online and offline.

In the year 2020 / 2021, actionuni encouraged multiple initiatives of member associations and partners. This year, we made additional efforts to contact like-minded actors with a single intention to actively support scientific staff online during the extraordinary situation. Our efforts were indeed successful. Apart from our regular activities, we were also able to organize our first online event, in April 2021, actionuni has organized open access workshop in collaboration with [MVUB](#), [Eurodoc](#) and [OILS](#). In May 2021, better science workshop was organised in collaboration with [better science](#) team of Bern university. In September 2021, we again collaborated with OILS and became the official partner in their [4th Open Innovation in Life Science Conference](#).

4.2.1. Open Access Workshop collaboration with MVUB, EURODOC and OILS

By Melanie Röthlisberger, actionuni representative for Open Science;

Supported by Prabitha Urwyler (actionuni & MVUB) & Rashmi Rai- Rawat (actionuni & eurodoc); Supported by our partners: Giulia Malaguarnera (Eurodoc), Eva Hnatkova (Eurodoc), Joyce Yushi Kao (OILS), and Katharina Schubert (OILS)

On 29 April 2021, actionuni held a 1.5-hour workshop online on Zoom in collaboration with MVUB, Eurodoc and OILS (Open Innovation in Life Sciences). All delegates and members were invited and 10 joined.

Early-career researchers from the Universities of Bern, Lucerne, Zurich, Geneva and the ETH Zürich were introduced to the topic of Open Science practices with a particular focus on Open Access, incl. routes to Open Access, the benefits and disadvantages of Open Access, and national read-and-publish contracts in Switzerland. The workshop included an interactive part where participants had to assemble information on structural conditions around Open Science at their own institution. The workshop was recorded and the introductory part to Open Science is available as a podcast on switchtube: <https://tube.switch.ch/videos/CSkqGzRI8I>.

4.2.2. Roundtable in collaboration with Better Science team

By Sophie Girardin (actionuni), Rashmi Rai-Rawat (actionuni) & Joel Schaad (Better Science); Supported by Carmen Faso (actionuni) & Martina von Arx (actionuni)

On 31 May 2021, actionuni held a roundtable on the theme of improving research culture with Joel Schaad, the project coordinator of [Better Science](#), as the main speaker. Researchers from several Swiss Higher Education Institutions participated. Delegates, board members and some guests of actionuni were invited to this roundtable. The main objective of actionuni was to promote and support the Better Science initiative.

Joel Schaad presented Better Science, a Swiss-wide initiative that started in the University of Bern. It aims to raise awareness around the theme of healthy research culture in academia and to open the dialogue on how to improve it. In particular, Better Science has crafted ten calls to action, which can be found and supported on their website. The presentation was followed by a round of discussion, during which the members of the audience actively asked questions and shared their opinion on the topic. Participants agreed that there is a need to improve research culture and appreciated the charter and direction set by Better Science. Several attendees were of the opinion that to achieve a better research culture, structural changes and concrete measures coming from the top are needed. The question of how to monitor the evolution of research culture was also raised.

Overall, the event successfully engaged researchers from different universities and led to interesting discussions, with the prospect of a follow-up workshop or event related to the topic of improving research culture.

4.2.3. Collaboration with OILS

actionuni as an official partner in OILS conference

By Rashmi Rai-Rawat (actionuni), Melanie Röthlisberger (actionuni), Joyce Yushi Kao (OILS) and Katharina Schubert (OILS); Supported by actionuni board

In the year 2021, actionuni also became an official partner in the 4th Open Innovation in Life Science Conference, taking place in a hybrid format on Thursday, 23rd and Friday, 24th September 2021. OILS21 is a conference about career development of early career researchers combined with interactions with open science experts from industry and academia. Striving for broader openness in science, the OILS21 team has created an extensive program with keynote lectures and expert panel discussions covering different topics related to open science. The participants will also have the opportunity to attend workshops aiming at supporting career development and growth in academia and industry. While OILS focuses on life sciences, it welcomes all sciences to the conference. Please find additional information on the official website: <https://oils21.b2match.io/>

Actionuni contributed to the open science conference by promoting it on actionuni social media channels. All the delegates of the actionuni were informed by mail, and they were encouraged to get involved in this initiative by becoming partner organizations who would be interested in hosting viewing rooms at their institutions across Switzerland so young scientists can locally

gather together and watch the virtual portion of the #OILS21 conference together. Additionally, on 24 September 2021, actionuni representative Melanie Röthlisberger held an additional presentation at the OILS conference to introduce conference participants to Open Science.

5. Actionuni member associations

By the actionuni Co-president, Rashmi Rai-Rawat

actionuni has been consistently making efforts to support scientific staff in Switzerland. Since, last two years we have made additional efforts to connect and strengthen the relationships with all our member associations. Before the extraordinary situation we were able to physically connect with our delegates and visit member associations. This year, (1) we have emphasized a lot on the online outreach activities. (2) Multiple online meetings were engaged with the delegates to support them. (3) Several online events (roundtable, workshops, etc) were organised for the scientific staff. (4) actionuni has continued to promote and support the initiatives of our member associations. (5) members were regularly informed about the activities of our other partners through mails, website or social media. (6) we have also tried to reply to the individual queries of the individuals (scientific staff). Irrespective, of whether they were our members or not. (7) actionuni was also concerned about the mental and physical health of the delegates and other members of the association. Therefore, we tried to communicate directly with the delegates, and also made several arrangements to involve them in our ongoing activities.

6. Actionuni delegations to other institutions/bodies

6.1. Swiss National Science Foundation

By the actionuni SNSF delegate, Prabitha Urwyler

SNSF-actionuni annual meeting, 23.11.2020

In 2020, the exchange between SNSF and actionuni was virtual (webex). Actionuni was represented by Carmen Faso, Martina von Arx and Prabitha Urwyler. Topics raised by actionuni members and SNSF were discussed with the SNSF meeting delegates - Marcel Kullin and Thomas Werder. Main points of discussion were following:

- Reaction towards implementation of DORA including broadened definition of the mobility criteria, net academic age.
- PRIMA grantees position as Group leader or Asst. Prof
- COVID-19 measures for SNF grantees and their employees
- Reaction towards stopping the SNF Eccellenza Grant
- New DOC-CH instrument to promote Women in STEM
- Reflection of Pandemic on mobility

SNF reported that 1/3 of the postdocs who were in a mobility scholarship during the pandemic had received extensions and guidance was provided to postdocs who had returned due to closure of labs abroad. The complete report has been sent to all our members by email and can be found [here](#) too.

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

By the actionuni Co-president Martina von Arx

Actionuni has participated in one plenary session and three SHK sessions during the period of 2020-2021. We thank Isabel Bolliger who attended the plenary session and SHK session in November 2020 for the last time as an actionuni delegate. The position of the actionuni delegate was then handed over to Martina von Arx.

During the SHK session on May 20, 2021, the SHK mandated swissuniversities with the elaboration of the strategy for the BFI-Botschaft 2025-2028. Together with the VSS-UNES, Martina von Arx asked if the Stände would be involved in this development to any extent. The question was not answered but figured in the protocol under general remarks.

6.3. swissuniversities

6.3.1. Delegation Lehre

By the actionuni, extended board member, Cosima Locher

Participated at several meetings from the Delegation Lehre. Some of the most common topics that were usually discussed are: a) further education as in micro-credentials with the aim to ensure certificates and standardization; b) digital skills; c) competence-oriented teaching and learning at Gymnasium level, to adapt to what university is actually about; d) transition phase from Gymi to Uni; e) transition between different types of Unis eg. FH to Uni and vice-versa; f) Bologna and Erasmus; g) information from the SRK.

Also, I started to send emails to all representatives in order to gather inputs. These were the most common points that were raised: a) better record of Mittelbau achievement in support functions (eg. Lectures prepared for Chairs); b) Mittelbau should also be evaluated if they contribute to the course; c) More digital skills are needed and not less, with better QC approaches to ensure money is well-spent; d) additional teaching burden due to move online.

6.3.2. Application for a structured position for actionuni-VSS-swissfaculty

By the actionuni co-presidents, Martina von Arx and Carmen Faso

Following discussions with VSS and swissfaculty in the aftermath of our joint meeting with swissuniversities held in November 2020, the three tiers decided to collaborate on a proposal to swissuniversities for a 60% secretarial and coordinatorial position shared by the three tiers. Martina von Arx took the lead on this proposal, in close collaboration with colleagues from VSS and swissfaculty.

The proposal was submitted on January 4, 2021. On February 25, 2021 the proposal was dismissed with the rationale that the three Stände had enough possibilities of participation. A request for reconsideration and for an open discussion submitted on April 25, 2021 has been postponed. The final decision on the outcome of this proposal is still pending.

6.4. Swiss Accreditation Council

By the actionuni representatives, Carla Duss and Florian Lippke

In 2020/2021, the Swiss Accreditation Council (SAC) held its meetings for the second (2020) and third year (2021) of the second mandate period (2019-2024). actionuni is represented by Florian Lippke, who is in his second term, and Carla Duss, who has been appointed by the federal council as a shared board position of actionuni and VSS. At least the seat of Florian Lippke will be open for a new delegate starting 2023 since the present delegate has reached the limit of two mandate periods (allowed by law).

The SAC decided the institutional accreditation of four public Institutions of Higher Education in 2020 and up to the present date three of these institutions for 2021.

For the programme accreditation there is one study program for medicinal professions that was accredited. (The list of accredited Higher Education Institutions (UHEI) is published on the website of the SAC:<https://akkreditierungsrat.ch/en/accredited-institutionsprogrammes/>).

The consultation process of the re-accreditation of HEI in Switzerland will be ended by the 1st of October 2021. The changes were necessary as section 5 of the Ordinance of the Higher Education Council on Accreditation within the Higher Education Sector is only concerned with the procedure for the first institutional accreditation.

6.5. ESKAS- Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships for Foreign Scholars

By the actionuni representative, Sophie Girardin

ESKAS (Eidgenössische Stipendienkommission für ausländische Studierende /FederalCommission for Scholarships for Foreign Students) is a program from the Swiss government that attributes excellence research scholarships for foreign scholars at the pre-doctoral (research assistant), doctoral and post-doctoral level; as well as art scholarships at the master level. It usually gives out around 400 scholarships per year, out of a total of 1'500

applications (26% success rate). The goal of ESKAS is not to take in the typical “mainstream” high-achiever research candidates, but to encourage more diversity in research and to establish good relationships between Switzerland and other countries. The Commission is formed by a professor from each Swiss university and Polytechnical School, as well as by one member of the International Relation Office from each school. Based on their field of expertise, the professors are in charge of reviewing and rating 30-60 scholarship applications. They then send to the Commission a recommendation on which application should get accepted. Borderline cases are discussed by the Commission. A student representative from VSS/UNES is also seating in this Commission. Since 2020, this representative is chosen by actionuni, so as to have relevant expertise on research and on being a mid-level staff member. The representative is elected for four years (2020-2024). The ESKAS Commission meets three times a year, in March, May and December. Due to Covid-19, all meetings from the year 2020-21 took place online.

Summary of ESKAS meeting of December 4, 2021: Accepting the call for tenders 2022-23

- The “call for tenders” for the scholarship 2022-23 was accepted. This document defines the “priority countries” for the scholarships, as well as an outline of the number and type of scholarships by “group of countries”. The proposition was identical to that for the year 2020-21 and will be disseminated among the embassies of all 184 countries of the programme by the EDA/DFAE/FDFA (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs).
- Martine Hirayama (SERI/SEFRI/SBFI) presented the ERI message (BFI-Botschaft/Message FRI) 2021-24, followed by a question-answer and opinion sharing session.
- Stefan Estermann (ambassador, EDA/DFAE/FDFA) presented his experience with ESKAS scholarships and science in general as a soft instrument tool during his time in Swiss embassies in Russie, Ukraine and Croatia, followed by a question-answer session. M. Estermann raised the question of how to improve the ESKAS alumni network.

Summary of ESKAS meeting of March 18, 2021: Selection of candidates for the 2020-21 scholarships (Part 1)

- University/Polytechnical school representatives reviewed about 2/3 of the applications and shared their propositions for attributing the scholarships. The proposal is split by country to match the call for tenders. The proposals by country were put up to vote and all got accepted

Summary of ESKAS meeting of May 7, 2021: Selection of candidates for the 2020-21 scholarships (Part 2)

- University/Polytechnical school representatives reviewed the remaining 1/3 of the applications and shared their propositions for attributing the scholarships. The proposals by country were put up to vote and all got accepted.

6.6. Eurodoc

By the actionuni Co-president & actionuni representative of Eurodoc, Rashmi Rai-Rawat

Eurodoc, the European council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers, is a grassroots federation of national associations of early career researchers (ECRs) from European countries. Currently, 25 national associations across Europe are its members. Its mission is to advocate for positive change in the policies, culture, and environment that affect the quality training, well-being and employment conditions of early career researchers.

In the year 2020/2021, actionuni has contributed to the following activities of eurodoc.

Rashmi Rai-Rawat, as the actionuni's representative of Eurodoc since last two years,

- Participated virtually in the Eurodoc conference 2021 (Improving Doctoral Training in Europe) organised by Eurodoc on Wednesday, 14th July 2021 in Prague, Czech Republic.
- Participated virtually in the Eurodoc AGM 2021 with voting rights on Thursday, 15th July 2021 organised at Prague, Czech Republic.
- Organised an online workshop Open Innovation in Life Sciences on 29th April 2021 in collaboration with Eurodoc and other partners. (Refer to point 4.2.1. for more details)
- Participated in the virtual OECD International Workshop "Reducing the precarity of research careers" with Carmen Faso on 27th November 2020.
- Participated in the regular meetings organised by the Eurodoc for National Associations.
- Contributed regularly to the questionnaires, surveys, and reports of Eurodoc with the support of actionuni board members and delegates.
- Communicated regularly with the Eurodoc members. Several successful efforts were made in the last two years to strengthen the relationship between the two associations for the benefit of the scientific staff in Switzerland, as well as in the other countries of Europe.

6.7. Petition Committee

By the actionuni Co-president Martina von Arx

Within a bit more than a year the Petition Academia gathered more than 8'000 signatures. The aim also gained momentum through the work of the committee, as well as the Twitter-movement under the Hashtag #IchbinHanna that emerged in Germany. This was reflected by Swiss Media in the Swiss-German part as well as in the Romandie. Handing over of the Petition is planned for October 8, 2021.