

Annual Report 2016/17 of the Board to the Assembly of Delegates

Board activities

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

Reporting period: 1 April 2016 to 15 April 2017

1 Interna

The 2016 Assembly of Delegates approved the **Mission Statement**, which was communicated through actionuni's website in [German](#), [French](#) and [English](#). With the Mission Statement actionuni committed:

- to improve the work conditions and career perspectives of the non-professorial academic staff at Swiss institutes of higher education,
- to be a constructive partner in fashioning the future development of the Swiss academic environment,
- to represent the interests of the non-professorial academic staff of all Swiss institutes of higher education,
- to exercise rights, assume duties and realise chances of participation,
- to create networks, support coordinated actions and to strengthen our member associations.
- to take positions in debates about academic policy in a national and international context and to further an open dialogue between all stakeholders, and
- to act and take decisions based on consent and to ensure that all our actions are transparent.

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

Additionally, the **co-presidents** met several times to prepare the meetings with the board and networking stakeholders.

Overview of all activities April 2016 – April 2017:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| 13 April 2016: | hearing of the WBK-N / CSEC-N |
| 20-23 April 2016: | attendance Eurodoc Annual conference and General Meeting, Luxembourg |
| 29 April 2016 | meeting of the Foundation Council of the SNSF |
| 4 May 2016: | board meeting |
| 12 May 2016: | meeting with AAQ |
| 14 May 2016: | response to consultation on Berufsmaturität / certificat maturité professionnelle |

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 26 May 2016: | Swiss Conference of Higher Education SHK/CSHE |
| 3 June 2016: | Swiss Accreditation Council SAR |
| 25 July 2016: | board meeting |
| 31 August 2016: | response to consultation on financing scheme within of the HFKG |
| 31 August 2016: | response to consultation on simplified accreditation process |
| 6 September 2016: | board meeting |
| 16 September 2016: | Swiss Accreditation Council SAR |
| 23 September 2016: | SNSF Foundation Council |
| 3-4 November 2016: | panel discussion at conference "A Swiss Way to Research Quality" |
| 4 November 2016: | joint meeting with swissuniversities, VSS and swissfaculty |
| 15 November 2016: | board meeting |
| 18 November 2016: | Swiss Conference of Higher Education SHK/CSHE |
| 24 November 2016: | meeting with SNSF |
| 25 November 2016: | attendance "AAQ Institutional Accreditation Day" |
| 6 December 2016: | interview with "Deutschlandfunk" |
| 9 December 2016: | Swiss Accreditation Council SAR |
| 19 December 2016: | meeting with AAQ |
| 10 February 2017: | board meeting |
| 15 February 2017: | meeting with SERI |
| 23 February 2017: | Swiss Conference of Higher Education SHK/CSHE |
| 8 March 2017: | interview with NZZ |
| 24 March 2017: | Swiss Accreditation Council SAR |
| 27 March 2017: | board meeting |
| 28 March 2017: | participation in swissuniversities working group on Open Science |
| 31 March 2017 | meeting of the Foundation Council of the SNSF |
| 20 April 2017 | meeting with swissuniversities |

2 Representations / Invitations

On 13 April 2016, co-president Florian Lippke (University of Fribourg) represented actionuni during a hearing of the **Science, Education and Culture Committee SECC of the National Council (WBK-N / CSEC-N)**. The hearing regarded the recently released federal message on education, research and innovation policy. actionuni stressed as its main points:

- Increase the financial growth rate in the message to 3-4% annually
- Not to jeopardize those actions that are aimed at improving career paths for young researchers if there are budget cuts
- Increase the number of new Tenure Track positions from 40 to 100 new positions per year
- Definition of concrete actions and indicators for measuring the success of reaching the goal of improving careers for young researchers.

The position paper to support Florian Lippke's presentation was developed by the board. It can be found on our [website](#).

On 3-4 November 2016, a conference on **A Swiss Way to Research Quality** took place in Berne, which was the final event of the swissuniversities program "Performances de la recherche en sciences humaines et sociales". Co-president Florian Lippke was invited to a panel discussion on 4

November. Together with Geneviève Le Fort, Michael Hengartner, Catherine Paradeise and Alexander Hasgall under the moderation of Jacques Lanarès he discussed a position paper on the diversity of evaluation in research. A video is available [here](#).

Co-presidents Florian Lippke and Andrea Tamas attended the 1st **AAQ Institutional Accreditation Day** on 25 November 2016 on the topic "Communicating quality assurance". The program consisted of three presentations by international speakers about "The dos and don'ts of organizational communication: A theoretic approach", "Qualitätskultur als Kommunikationskultur – Interne Qualitätssicherung über Dialog" and "Reaching out: How to improve better communication and commitment of your institution's quality assurance" as well as a round-table discussion on "Effiziente Kommunikationsstrukturen: Wie erreicht man Studierende?". Conclusions can be found in an inspiring visual recording of the day and the workshop outcomes on the [AAQ-webpage](#). The next AAQ Institutional Accreditation Day will take place on 29 November 2018.

After the Swiss Conference of Higher Education SHK/CSHE had decided to develop and implement a national open access strategy until 2024, actionuni co-president Florian Lippke was invited to a **swissuniversities working group** to contribute to the development of an action plan a Swiss Open Access strategy. On 28 March 2017, representatives of swissuniversities, SBFI, SNF and several universities met in Berne.

3 Media Coverage

Just before the discussion on the mass immigration initiative in the parliament, actionuni co-president Andrea Tamas gave an interview to the German radio station **Deutschlandfunk**. She stressed the relevancy of the ratification of the Croatia protocol within the timeframe given by the EU to not loose association to the European research program Horizon2020. The short broadcast can be found [here](#).

On 5 April 2017, the **NZZ** has published an extensive dossier on the situation of the non-professorial academic staff in Switzerland. Co-president Florian Lippke took part in a dispute with swissuniversities president Michael Hengartner; co-president Andrea Tamas via telephone interview gave additional positions on the situation of the non-professorial academic staff at Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities of Teacher Education. The full dossier can be found [here](#).

4 Further Networking

Networking with key political players, with government agencies and further institutions was the greatest part in actionuni's activities in 2016:

The annual meeting with the **Swiss National Science Foundation** (SNSF) took place on 24 November 2016, see section "SNSF" below.

After the contact with **swissuniversities** had been successfully established in 2015 and after a first meeting with VSS-UNES-USU, swissfaculty and swissuniversities end of 2015, the second meeting took place on 4 November 2016. An important topic was the promotion of swissuniversities' blog

[AdValue](#), which is a swissuniversities initiative to support the universities' political communication regarding the importance of the association to Horizon2020 and Erasmus+. Furthermore, all three organisations, VSS-UNES-USU, swissfaculty and actionuni, keep stressing the importance of being included into the development of the next BFI-Botschaft / message FRI / messaggio ERI. The next meeting will take place on 20 April 2017.

Two meetings of the co-presidents with the [Swiss Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance \(AAQ\)](#) took place on 12 May 2016 and 19 December 2016. In the first meeting, actionuni's new structures were presented and discussed. It was agreed to establish a regular contact with the AAQ. The topics focused on the ongoing accreditation processes, timeline and difficulties as experienced by the AAQ. actionuni stressed the importance of having non-professorial academic staff involved in the accreditation process on both sides – the side of the universities as well as on the side of the expert group. The latter is not currently the case and seems to be difficult as the expert group only consists of 5 persons (peer-leader, vice rector education or research, quality expert, non-academic stakeholder, student). Furthermore, the idea of a joint project on the topic of involvement of the non-professorial academic staff in the new HFKG-accreditation processes was discussed.

On 15 February 2017, actionuni met for the first time with representatives of the [State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation \(SERI\)](#). actionuni's new structures were presented and it was agreed to establish a regular contact with the SERI. The main topic was how actionuni can be involved in the definition of the next federal message on education, research and innovation policy 2021-2024. The SERI suggested to develop a position paper to lay out the basis for the discussion with swissuniversities, and to raise the voice in the Swiss Conference of Higher Education. Most importantly, all member organizations must actively stand for their interests with their respective rectors.

5 Consultations

actionuni welcomed the proposed changes to allow persons with a eidgenössischen Berufsmaturitätszeugnisses / certificat fédéral de maturité professionnelle an easier access to Swiss Higher Education Institutions ("Passarelle").

actionuni gave feedback to the proposed financing scheme within of the HFKG. For Universities of Applied Sciences the model 85/15 was preferred unanimously, implying a moderate shift towards giving research a higher importance. Among the members of the universities, no clear consent was reached which financing model should be used.

The AAQ requested feedback regarding the topic of a simplified second accreditation process for universities, which have passed a first accreditation without obligations. actionuni supported the position of the Swiss Accreditation Council to postpone the decision whether and how a simplified accreditation process should be implemented until 2019 once more experience about the new accreditation system has been gathered.

All consultations can be found on the [website](#) (Activities → Position papers and press releases).

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 Stojanović, a political scientist of the University of Lucerne. He takes part in the meetings and ensures that the interests of young researchers are being taken into consideration during the discussions.

During the reporting period, the SNSF Foundation Council met on three occasions (29 April 2016, 23 September 2016, 31 March 2017). An important discussion took place during the last meeting: As of 2018, the career instrument “SNSF Professorships” is planned to be restructured. It is planned that this programme shall include incentives for academic institutions to create more assistant professorships with tenure track (APTT) instead of simply profiting from the SNSF funds during the duration of a SNSF professorship (four to six years) without offering any future perspective to the beneficiaries of such funds.

The annual meeting of actionuni and the SNSF took place on 24 November 2016. A delegation of the board of actionuni met the new SNSF director, Angelika Kalt, and her close collaborators Marcel Kullin (head of the Division Careers) and Dimitri Sudan (head of the Programmes Division). The main topics discussed were:

- (1) Regarding the new “[General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#)” of the SNSF, actionuni expressed concerns with regard to the reduction of the postdoc phase (as of 2016 the maximum period of employment for postdocs, funded by the SNSF, is five years). The current policy of the SNSF is to try to reduce the “postdoc bubble” by promoting “early independence” of young academics.
- (2) The topic of access to personal and programme funding schemes for young researchers from Universities of Applied Sciences (FH) and Universities of Teacher Education (PH) had already been raised during the 2015 meeting with the SNSF. The SNSF will continue to improve its funding schemes in order to take into account the specific situation of FH/PH researchers (who tend to do more applied research and have more teaching duties).
- (3) The “supplementary measures” of the SNSF, in particular the “[120% support grant](#)” (which allows researchers with young children to reduce their work-time percentage and/or hire a support person), show a number of inconsistencies in the implementation of this measure. actionuni asked the SNSF to clarify the conditions allowing researchers to gain access to such support grants.
- (4) Following a feedback from a young researcher, actionuni pointed out to the SNSF to revise its policy with regard to the communication of negative decisions.

The annual meeting with the SNSF as well as other frequent contacts with SNSF representatives and employees show once again that actionuni is recognized as the main representative of young researchers and academic staff in Switzerland and that its inputs are taken into consideration at the highest level of the SNSF.

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 councillor Johann Schneider-Ammann and the cantonal governing councillors 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 seat in the SHK with advisory vote. Attendance of the SHK offers personal contact with policy-makers and committee organizers.

During the reporting period, the SHK has held three meetings (26 May 2016, 18 November 2016 and 23 February 2017). One main topic was a special program starting 2017 aiming at a substantial increase of medical doctors from Swiss Universities. Further subjects concerned the Swiss Accreditation Council, swissuniversities, constructions of buildings of higher education institutions and the federal message on education, research and innovation 2017-2020. Main topics scheduled for 2017 involve the challenges caused by digitalization and the Swiss Open Access strategy.

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) and started its work in January 2015.

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.

During the reporting period, the SAR had four meetings (3 June 2016, 16 September 2016, 9 December 2016 and 24 March 2017). Substantial steps in the process of accreditation were initiated, evaluated and decisions were taken by the SAR as the final decisive board. The main tasks and achievements of the SAR 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 are 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. Until March 2017, 120 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

Salome Adam, William Ralvenius and Clemens Nyffeler attended the annual **Eurodoc Conference and Eurodoc Annual Meeting Luxembourg 20-23 April 2016**. Their report can be found on the [Website](#). Major topics were

- discussions on the need for PhD candidates to start thinking early about their future plans regarding staying in or leaving academia,
- funding schemes as well as bilateral university programmes, and
- insights into Eastern European PhD trainings and cross-country collaborations.

The 2017 Eurodoc Conference "Open Science" and the Eurodoc Annual Meeting will take place in Oslo from 26-29 April (<http://eurodoc-oslo2017.org/>). actionuni will be represented by Cecile Blaser and Burim Ramaj, both from the University of Fribourg.