

Annual Report 2023/24 of the Board to the Assembly of Delegates

Reporting period:

October 2023 to October 2024

1. Board of actionuni

Who is who?	Role	Period
Magali Bertrand	Board member, Delegate to Eurodoc	June 2022 to August 2024
Rachel Demolis	Board member, Delegate to the SNF Assembly	June 2022 to present
Carla Duss	Delegate to the SAR	October 2021 to present (second 4-year mandate starting in 2023)
Antonio Di Maio	Board member	January 2023 to present
Timon Elmer	Board member	June 2022 to present
Joanna Haupt	Co-President	October 2023 to present
Neele Heiser	Board member, Delegate to SHK	June 2022 to present
Laure Piguet	Co-President, Delegate to the SNF Assembly	October 2023 to present
Anupamaa Rampur	Board member, Treasurer and IT Manager	January 2023 to present
Lisa Rieble	Delegate to the	April 2022 to present

	Teaching Delegation of swissuniversities	
Melanie Röthlisberger	Open Science Delegate	October 2021 to present
Hannah Schoch	Co-President and Delegate to Eurodoc	June 2022 to June 2024 (board member since October 2021)
Philipp Walch	Board member and SNF Delegate	August 2024 to present
Joanna Rutkowska	Board member and Delegate to Eurodoc	October 2023 to present (delegate) August 2024 to present (board member)

2. Overview of activities

Event	Total hours	Number of members concerned
Presidency (with meetings 21.12.23, 11.01.24, 08.02.24, 22.02.24, 07.03.24, 11.04.24, 09.05.24, 16.07.24, 29.08.24, 16.10.24, 23.10.24, 19.11.2024)	94	2
Board meetings (17.01, 28.02, 20.03, 17.04, 11.05, 26.06, 21.08, 18.09, 16.10, 20.11, 18.12)	90	2-9
Mental health Survey	110	3
External meetings (board members + presidency)	24	3
Delegates of actionuni (total)	394	7
Admin board members	18,5	9
IT and treasury	15	1
Preparation of GA by board members	13	9
Total hours (includes preparatory work)	758.5	

3. actionuni priorities

As co-presidents of actionuni, our main objective, which led us to become involved in the association, is to **improve the living and working conditions of mid-level academic staff** in Switzerland. This objective has led to all the actions we have taken this year and which we will continue in 2025. Given the latest information on cantonal and federal budgets, it is very likely that the **fight against austerity** will become **our main priority in 2025**. We have already made contact with partners in this field (mainly the SSP-VPOD).

In 2024, we acted on different fronts with different strategies. Our **first objective** was to continue the successful entry policy pursued by Martina von Arx and Hannah Schoch before us. Thanks to their work and perseverance, and that of their predecessors, actionuni is now recognised as a key contact by all national institutions involved in university policy and as the association representing Swiss mid-level academic staff. We currently have three representatives at the SNSF delegates' meeting, one representative at the SHK, and we have had meetings with both SEFRI and swissuniversities, which gives us privileged access to the policies of the most important third-party fund of the Swiss academic system, as well as to the federal administration, and the opportunity to make our demands heard. It's a great opportunity to interact with people in positions of power. It also means a heavy workload, a lot of responsibility and moments of confrontation with people in positions of power that can be emotionally difficult to handle. There is also a risk of making too many compromises at the expense of our original goals. Finding the right balance between participating in power structures and maintaining our critical capacity will be a major challenge in the coming year.

Our **second objective** was to (re)build and maintain relationships and contacts with our affiliates and allies. For example, during the year we worked with one trade union, the VPOD-SSP, on a number of issues, producing joint position papers on the FRI and PgB messages. We also developed very good relations with Swissfaculty, an association of teaching and research staff (led by professors), and with VSS-UNES-USU, the Swiss students' association.

Finally, the outgoing part of the Board and the Presidency, namely Martina von Arx and Sophie Girardin, completed one of the priorities defined in last year's report, namely "to ensure continued access to documents and online communication for all Board members: actionuni has moved to a google work environment as well as to slack". We intend to continue this effort to "modernize" the Association by improving our IT tools and proposing a new visual and graphic identity. We want to link the modernisation of our image, and the development of effective IT tools, with **Actionuni's 25th anniversary in 2025**, an important anniversary that we want to celebrate in style. On this subject, see the article "Precarious memory" by Joanna Haupt in [SAGW/ASSH bulletin](#) 2024/2 (forthcoming).

3.1. ERI Dispatch/BFI Botschaft/Message FRI 2025-28

[Extracts from the previous year's report] “The education-research-innovation dispatch 2025-2028 (ERI dispatch / “BFI Botschaft” in German / “Message FRI” in French / “Messaggio ERI 25-28” in Italian) is the central document of the federal ERI policy, which the Federal Council submits to Parliament for approval every four years. The 2025-28 ERI dispatch ([French version](#)/[German version](#)/[Italian version](#)) contains an assessment of the current funding period (2021-24), defines the priorities, objectives and measures for the new period, and requests the necessary funding (“guarantee credits”) for their implementation. For the first time, the Federal Council had decided to publish an early draft and to put it out for consultation for relevant stakeholders to give feedback on it. The consultation procedure was open from June 2nd to September 24th, 2023.

Because the midlevel staff of Swiss higher education institutions is highly impacted by the ERI dispatch, actionuni wrote in september 2023 a position statement to the consultation, taking position on the issues most relevant to doctoral students, post-docs and non-professorial scientific employees:

- the **budgetary cuts** of the ERI dispatch, which actionuni opposes;
- the **objectives for higher education institutions**, which actionuni salutes, but would like to see completed with more attention to representation, to scientific integrity, and to improve research culture;
- **international cooperation**, which is essential for to quality research – in particular, a quick association to Horizon Europe ;
- **academic career and next generation scientists**, who need support and career prospects ;
- the **Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)**;
- **Equity: diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity**, which is rightly identified as a priority, but should be accompanied by concrete measures from all HEIs ;
- **open science**, which strategy should go hand in hand with guidance and resources for its practical implementation ;
- **ESKAS grants for international students**, which urgently need to be increased.

Actionuni’s full response was elaborated by consulting its members and can be found on our website, in [French](#) and in [English](#).”

Update for 2024 by Laure Piguet, Co-President

A new version of the ERI dispatch was published on 8 March 2024. This new version, produced after extensive consultation, contained significant changes, particularly in relation to the academic mid-level staff. These additions are partly due to the positions taken by the SHK and no doubt our own, although this is not specified. A long paragraph has been added highlighting several key elements:

- “The CSHE has defined **the promotion of young scientists** as a priority area for the period 2025-2028” [...]. “Taking into account the measures already implemented, it has decided to continue and intensify the efforts undertaken by means of **project-linked contributions** by acting in particular

in two areas: **improving the conditions of employment and the academic and extra-academic career prospects of young scientists in universities and organizing transitions within and outside universities**". [...]. "The emphasis will be on structuring the post-doc phase". [...]. "At the same time, within the framework of the CSHE, the bodies responsible for universities have adopted common principles for the promotion of young scientists". For more information on these principles, see the [document](#). (pp. 88-89).

- "To encourage the next generation of scientists at universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education, **project-linked contributions will be used to support cooperation with universities at doctoral level and to strengthen the dual skills profile.**" [...].
- "Project-related contributions (PgB). In the context of project-related contributions, the Federal Council is proposing a commitment credit of CHF 128.2 million to finance tasks of relevance to the higher education system. Under the LEHE, the selection process for project-related contributions is the responsibility of the CSHE's University Council. The Council will decide on the projects and their funding at the end of 2024 [...]. Support will be given to cooperation projects that correspond to the priorities and measures set by the SCHE, [in particular] **the promotion of young scientists**", pp. 93-94.

3.2. PgB

By Joanna Haupt, Co-President

Our main political activity in the area of federal university policy concerns the Projektgebundene Beiträge, and in particular the PgB "Nachwuchsförderung", which is based on the postulate 22.3390 "For equal opportunities and support for young scientists" resulting from the Petition Academia. We had several meetings and exchanged emails, the stages of which are listed below.

12.01.2024: **First meeting with swissuniversities**

The co-presidents Hannah Schoch and Joanna Haupt met Tristan Robert and Noëmi Eglin from swissuniversities, as well as representatives from Swissfaculty and the Swiss Science Council. Thanks to our insistence, we obtained several rewrites of the text of the call for PgB, as well as the creation of a PgB support group, of which we will be a member. We established a good and lasting contact with Tristan Robert of swissuniversities.

12.03.2024: **Fear of abolition**

During the SHK of 22 February 2024, the existence of the PgBs was threatened, so we prepared a letter to swissuniversities, which we did not send in the end. At the next SHK meeting (21 March 2024, extraordinary meeting), the support credits were voted on.

Also in March, the Petition Academia Committee, which includes the co-presidents of actionuni, sent an email to the SHK and to Guy Parmelin (member of the federal council) stressing that we were

counting on the PgB money and that we had informed the 8,600 signatories of the petition that the decision on funding was in the hands of the SHK. On 9 April, Guy Parmelin replied that he was pleased to know that we were supporting the PgB and that the decision on the swissuniversities proposal rested with the SHK.

22.08.2024: PgB kick-off meeting

SHK representative Neele Heiser and co-president Joanna Haupt were invited to the PgB kick-off meeting. At least one delegate from each university was present. Neele and Joanna emphasized the need to consult member organizations within the universities and to get clear figures on the current use of resources. They noted the diversity of projects planned by the universities and the fact that none of them would solve the structural problems raised by the Petition Academia. In the run-up to the meeting, we obtained the support of Stephan Morgenthaler from Swissfaculty, with whom we have established a very good working relationship.

17.09.2024: PgB meeting with member associations

Co-presidents Laure Piguet and Joanna Haupt organized a meeting with member federations to inform them of the situation and try to establish some form of coordination between us.

23.-24.09.2024: Threats against the PgB in the Swiss Parliament

During the autumn session, the PgB was discussed by the Council of States (23 September) and the National Council (24 September). The project was threatened with a reduction or even cancellation of the amounts allocated. In the end, the chambers opted for a very slight reduction.

25.09.2024: Statement for the SHK

In preparation for a big and important discussion of the SHK on 8 November, the SHK met for an extraordinary meeting on Friday 27 September. Since we couldn't be present at this meeting, Joanna, Laure and Neele wrote a statement and sent it to Marlene Iseli from SBFI, as well as to Swissfaculty and UNES. The statement was communicated to the rest of the participants of the SHK. In the statement: (i) we proposed to organize a discussion on support for early career researchers with the participation of all stakeholders, including representatives of mid-level staff; we stressed that the Haering report (the survey carried out in response to postulate 22.3390 "For equal opportunities and support for young scientists"), while thorough, overlooks critical challenges, such as the problems faced by lecturers and that the arbitrary three-year postdoctoral period does not address the Academia Petition's proposal for stable positions during the post-doctoral phase. To complement the Haering report, discussions need to include comparative studies of other systems and direct input from academic mid-level staff representatives to ensure well-rounded and effective solutions. The agenda for 8 November 2024 should include a presentation on innovative academic systems from other countries.

29.09.2024: Announcement of budget cuts following the Gaillard report

Point 2.9 reveals the abolition of all the PgBs, except for the PgB for nursing care.

01.10.2024: swissuniversities informed the members of the PgB working group that funding for the PgB is **only guaranteed for the year 2025**.

08.10.2024: actionuni, together with the SSP and Swissfaculty, signed a **letter to swissuniversities** asking for the continuation of the PgB as originally decided.

08.11.2024: **SHK meeting**

1. Before the meeting: Universities had to propose action plans for PgB-Nachwuchsförderung, but many lack critical measures such as surveys to assess postdoc needs → few universities want to directly improve working conditions
2. The SHK meeting voted on the future of the PgB: two options were discussed: 1) divide the money for each PgB proportionally, or option 2) allocate more money to the promotion of young researchers.
3. Despite the efforts of SHK representative Neele Heiser and Swissfaculty to allocate more funds to the relève académique/Nachwuchsförderung, option 1 was chosen and proportional cuts will be implemented, leaving each PgB with a smaller share.
4. The future of the PgBs remains uncertain due to the budget cuts for 2025-2028.
5. Some conseiller-e d'état/Regierungsrat-rätin suggest that the parliament should discuss this matter again, maybe there is still hope for the PgBs.

3.3. Mental Health Survey

By actionuni board members Timon Elmer, Neele Heiser & Rachel Démolis

In order to better understand the mental health and well-being of mid-level academic staff in Switzerland, actionuni launched the Swiss-Wide Mental Health Survey (SWiMS) in 2024. The overall objective is to obtain a general assessment of the mental health situation of academic mid-level staff in Switzerland and to identify areas where mental health support and resources can be improved. The survey covered a range of topics including mental health burden, stressors, work-life balance, working conditions and availability of support resources. It was open to all mid-level academic staff in higher education institutions across Switzerland.

In collaboration with many member organizations, our survey team designed the questionnaire to assess the mental health, stress and resources of mid-level academic staff across Switzerland. This actionuni project was launched in 2023, based on input from various member organizations expressing the need for such data. At the 2023 General Assembly, it was decided that actionuni would lead the design, coordination and analysis of the survey.

The survey was successfully **launched in May 2024**, with each of the 12 participating affiliates promoting the survey. The survey closed at the end of October 2024 with **more than 2500 responses from 12 HEIs across Switzerland**. We expect to have national and institutional results in 2025.

4. actionuni representation in national bodies

Actionuni is represented in several national bodies and commissions. Except for the Swiss Accreditation Council (SAR), actionuni has no voting rights in any of them. Actionuni is mostly represented as a consultative voice.

4.1. Swiss Accreditation Council (SAR)

By actionuni SAR delegate Carla Duss

Summary of SAR activities in 2023

With institutional accreditation in accordance with the HEdA, the legislator requires higher education institutions to implement a quality management system that ensures the quality of teaching, research and services. Institutional accreditation is a necessary condition for a higher education institution to use the reserved terms "university", "university of applied sciences" or "university of teacher education". The institutional accreditation of a higher education institution is valid for seven years. In order to retain institutional accreditation, higher education institutions must successfully complete the re-accreditation procedure before the end of the seven-year period. The role of the Swiss Accreditation Council is to decide on the admission of higher education institutions, to confirm the long lists of experts for the individual procedures, to take the accreditation decision and to decide on the fulfillment of the conditions related to the accreditation decisions.

In 2023, the SAR admitted seven higher education institutions to the process of institutional accreditation, five private higher education institutions for initial accreditation and two public higher education institutions for initial re-accreditation. The SAR also took three positive accreditation decisions, two re-accreditations and one initial accreditation of a private higher education institution. Six higher education institutions completed their initial institutional accreditation procedures by fulfilling their conditions. One decision of the Accreditation Council was appealed to the Federal Administrative Court. The procedure had not been completed by the end of 2023.

The Swiss Accreditation Council also decides on programme accreditations. If, as in most cases, programme accreditation is optional, the legislator stipulates in the Medical Professions Act (MedBG) that all study programmes leading to a federal diploma in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and chiropractic must be accredited in accordance with the HFKG and MedBG. The Health Professions Act (GesBG) requires programme accreditation for courses at universities of applied sciences in nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, midwifery, nutrition and dietetics, optometry and osteopathy. In 2023, the SAC accredited 22 programmes according to the MedBG or GesBG.

The SAC was commissioned by the Council of Higher Education to develop a proposal for simplified institutional accreditation. Carla Duss has been closely involved in drafting a proposal for revised

accreditation standards and new guidelines for accreditation agencies. The proposal will be submitted to the Council of the Swiss Universities, which will lead the political process in 2025.

The annual reports of the Swiss Accreditation Council are published on its website: <https://akkreditierungsrat.ch>

The main legal basis for the activities of the Swiss Accreditation Council are the [Higher Education Act \(HEdA\)](#) and the [Ordinance of the Higher Education Council on Accreditation within the Higher Education Sector](#).

Carla Duss has been a member of the SAR since 2019. She is in her second term of office, which ends in December 2026. Members of the SAR are subject to term limits.

4.2. Swiss Conference of Higher Education SHK/CSHE

By actionuni SHK delegate Neele H. Heiser

4.2.1. Summary of the SHK meeting of 22.02.2024

- Federal budget situation:
 - New savings will be needed in the coming years to comply with the debt brake.
 - An updated forecast (as of January) predicts a structural financing deficit of more than CHF 2 billion in 2025.
 - Additional budget cuts of around CHF 350 million will be necessary.
 - For the 2025-2027 financial plan, the Federal Council plans a linear cut **1.4%** across-the-board cut in non-targeted spending, excluding the military.
 - These measures are intended to eliminate the financing deficit of 2025.
- Impact on the ERI Dispatch:
 - The ERI Dispatch 2025-2028 will also face budget cuts as part of these measures.
 - Adoption of the ERI Dispatch by the Federal Council and its submission to Parliament is expected by mid-March 2024.
 - A proposal on reference costs will be submitted to the SHK after the ERI Dispatch reaches Parliament.
 - A decision on reference costs is crucial to enable linked expenditure.
 - A special meeting will be held on 21 March 2024 to discuss this issue, and invitations will be sent out shortly.
 - Position of the Federal Council: The Council will advocate for positive growth in the ERI domain within the framework of the debt brake. Prioritization and efficiency will be increasingly important in the coming ERI period.
- Discussion Points:
 - Several State Councillors (Aargau and Bern) emphasized the importance of protecting core contributions, which are essential for the stability of universities. **Any necessary cuts**

should focus on project-based funding (e.g. infrastructure and PgB contributions), as this allows for more targeted prioritization.

- Position of swissuniversities: swissuniversities reiterates the importance of protecting core funding for universities. If additional cuts are necessary, they should focus on infrastructure contributions, as this would be the least damaging option.
- Next steps:
 - SEFRI is currently analyzing the various options for implementing these budget measures.
 - The Federal Council will seek to minimize the impact on universities while ensuring that financial constraints are met.

4.2.2. Extraordinary SHK meeting of 21.03.2024

- Despite ambitions, financial constraints due to the debt brake require difficult decisions.
- Adjustments include: a one-time reduction of CHF 100 million in 2025 for the ETH/EPFL domain, a linear reduction of 1.4% in loosely tied expenditure from 2025. Result: Total ERI funding reduced by CHF 0.5 billion from the amount originally proposed. Growth rate reduced from 2.0% to 1.6% in nominal terms, equivalent to CHF 1.3 billion more than in the 2021-2024 period, with many conseiller d'État/Regierungsrätin expressing a desire for greater financial growth.

4.2.3. Summary of the SHK meeting of 16.05.2024

- For the period 2025-2028, the SHK has decided to focus on four main themes of national importance, based on evaluations from previous periods and in accordance with Article 69 of the LEHE.
 - The total provisional budget is limited to CHF 100 million.
- swissuniversities has been entrusted with the following tasks:
 - Scientific Career Promotion: swissuniversities must clarify by 8 November 2024 for the next SHK meeting how the needs of postdocs in the humanities and social sciences will be addressed in the proposal.
- UNES, Swissfaculty and the Committee of Labour Organisations support the rights of mid-level staff:
 - Swissfaculty: in the project "Nachwuchsförderung" (TP1) it should be recognised that the contracts for postdocs at many universities and universities of applied sciences are inadequate and that this needs to be changed.
 - UNES: recalls the importance of PgBs in general
 - AOA: The application for the promotion of young scientists is an application in an abbreviated procedure which does not yet fulfill all the conditions. It is therefore logical to approve this application with reservations. For the Committee, it is important to improve the employment conditions and career prospects of young researchers, especially in the post-doctoral phase, and to develop binding minimum standards.

4.2.4. Fachkonferenz meeting of 25.09.2024

As preparation for a big and important discussion of the SHK on 8 November, the conference of the SHK met on Friday 27 September. We could not be present, so Laure, Joanna and Neele wrote a statement and sent it to Marlene Iseli of the SBFI, as well as to Swissfaculty and UNES.

The statement was shared with the rest of the conference participants.

In the statement we propose to organize a discussion on the support of early career researchers with the participation of all stakeholders, including representatives of academic mid-level staff.

While the Haering report is thorough, it overlooks critical challenges, such as the problems faced by lecturers, and the arbitrary three-year postdoctoral period does not address the Academia Petition's proposal for stable postdoctoral positions. To complement the Haering report, discussions need to include comparative studies of other systems and direct input from academic mid-level staff representatives to ensure well-rounded and effective solutions. The agenda for 8 November 2024 should include a presentation on innovative academic systems from other countries. We also advocate more frequent participation in the Conference in the coming years. Many decisions in the SHK are made in advance, especially during the Conference, so participation in these meetings would open up new opportunities.

4.2.5. Summary of SHK meeting of 08.11.2024

PgB budgets have been reduced to 1/4 of their original amount and must be spent within the next two years, with their future uncertain due to the National Council's budget cuts for 2025-2028. Despite Swissfaculty's efforts to allocate more funds to the relève académique/Nachwuchsförderung (as advocated in the Petition Academia), proportional cuts were implemented, resulting in smaller shares for each PgB. We will continue to advocate for improved working conditions for mid-career researchers, stressing the need for reliable data collection on the needs of postdocs in each university. When you meet with your conseiller-e d'état or Regierungsrat-rätin, please emphasize this as it is in line with the Haering report and Postulat 22.3390. Universities have been asked to submit action plans for PgB spending, but many fail to include measures such as surveys to assess postdoc needs.

Budget cuts also affect FNS and Innosuisse, both of which are facing a 10% reduction in funding due to national austerity measures. Meanwhile, Horizon negotiations are ongoing and Erasmus+ is unlikely to resume before 2027, pending a decision by the National Council. Some cantonal councilors are opposed to raising tuition fees for foreign students.

Regarding applications from sensitive countries, we have worked with UNES/VVS to advocate for transparent criteria and a democratic process that includes academic mid-level staff and students. Although the President of the Swiss Universities has agreed to include us in occasional discussions, we won't be officially part of the working group. The composition of the working group includes representatives of ETH Zurich, other rectors, the Open Science Delegation, the cantons, the ETH Board and the SBFI (as a guest). It is worrying that decisions are being made on the basis of unofficial criteria, which has serious implications. The government (SBFI) is particularly concerned about the diplomatic and political consequences of these application criteria.

Concerning the future of PgBs, AOA and actionuni will work together, actionuni can be invited to some working groups in which AOA and UNES participate.

actionuni will present solutions for better working conditions, collected from other countries, at the next SHK meeting in February 2025. They voted and approved.

4.3. Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

By the actionuni SNSF delegate Rachel Demolis

4.3.1. Summary of SNSF meeting of 29.04.2024

- The Presiding Board of the Research Council acknowledged the views of the Delegates' Assembly and approved an adjustment to the upper salary limits for SNSF-funded project staff, effective retroactively from January 1, 2024.
- Election of the President, the Vice-President and the 2 DA bureau members. Are elected: Elisabeth Stark (president), Christine Pirolini (Vice president), Christian Bochet and Christian Wolfrum (Bureau members). Rachel Démolis, who applied on behalf of actionuni, and Horst Biedermann were not elected.
- The nomination of DA representatives for the Electoral Committee of the Research Council is discussed. Three approaches for nominating representatives are considered, and the DA votes in favor of giving the DA Bureau the task of proposing names.
- The Federal Council's decisions on funding are presented: CHF 50M will be allocated to the non-accessible parts of the Horizon Europe framework programme; CHF 28M to the SNSF Starting Grant 2024; CHF 14M to the Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowship.

4.3.2. Summary of SNSF meeting of 26.06.2024

- The multi-year programme is discussed, in particular the rationale for the discontinued instruments is presented (Doc.CH, Doc.MINT, MD-PhD, R'Equip, Practice-to-Science).
- A discussion on how to support early career researchers in consolidating their careers is presented as welcomed and will be discussed at the next DA meeting in the context of the activities of the "Next Generation Careers" network. Concerning the discontinuation of Doc.CH, a member of actionuni agrees that alternative ways of supporting doctoral students, such as giving them a specific status in projects, would be welcome. She emphasizes the aspect of autonomy that the instrument guaranteed, and that we should consider creating rules fostering autonomy and academic liberty of SNSF doctoral students working within projects. It is specified that researchers currently funded by one of the discontinued programmes, will not lose their grant; discontinuing the scheme means that there will be no new calls.
- It is specified that there will also be cuts to the NCCRs, but that funding will remain at a sufficient level.

- The new resolution on the adjustment of the lower limit of the doctoral salary range is discussed. The DA supports a one-step increase of the lower limit to CHF 50,000 in 2026.
- The draft DA Guidelines and Statutes are discussed and approved.
- It is specified that there will also be cuts to NCCRs, but that the funding will remain at a sufficient level.
- The new resolution for the Adjustment of the lower limit of the PhD salary band is discussed. The DA supports a one-step increase of the lower limit to CHF 50'000 in 2026.
- Draft DA guidelines and by-laws are discussed and approved.

4.3.3. Summary of SNSF meeting of 17.09.2024

- The members of the Delegates Assembly confirm their approval of the final version of the by-laws, currently available on SNSF website

4.3.4. Summary of SNSF meeting of 23.10.2024

- DA members are invited to vote on several measures related to the Action Plan.
- In September 2024, the SNSF hosted an event with 55 stakeholders from various higher education institutions and ECR bodies to discuss research careers. The main results are presented with the aim of guiding possible future reforms of the SNSF's career support portfolio.
- Updates on the next Roadmap Research Infrastructures were presented.
- The National ORD Strategy Council was discussed.

4.3.5. Summary of SNSF next generation workshop of 09.24.2024

By Joanna Haupt, Co-President

On 24 September, the SNSF invited a number of representatives from Swiss universities and higher education institutions, including actionuni, to a workshop entitled "next generation", which aimed to provide an opportunity for all those involved in the academic world to discuss the future of the early career researchers. The one-day workshop was organized around three round tables: career steps and competencies (1), recruitment, working conditions and career development (2), and international academic and intersectoral mobility (3).

Although the SNSF staff present at the workshop opened the day by talking about the problem of precariousness of the intermediary body (explicitly referring to the Petition Academia), these issues were quickly evacuated in the course of the discussions.

The following topics were discussed

- the possibility of introducing a minimum set of requirements for SNSF doctoral candidates (many of those present pointed out the great difficulty of harmonizing standards between disciplines and between cantons, as well as the difficulty for the SNSF of forcing universities to do anything)

- the possibility of changing career planning from a time-based model to a competence-based model (the SNSF proposal was rejected by those present)
- the conditions for mobility (proposal for mobility within Switzerland, more flexible mobility, consideration of third-party funding for intersectoral mobility).

The results of the day's discussions will soon be published in a report (over which we have no control).

4.4. Teaching Delegation of swissuniversities

By the actionuni delegate to the Teaching delegation Lisa Rieble

The Swiss University Teaching Delegation met four times last year, twice in person and twice online. In 2024, the delegation contributed to the formulation of the SwissUniversity commentary on a) "l'ordonnance sur la coordination de l'enseignement dans les hautes écoles suisses", b) the revision of the regulations on the recognition of teaching diplomas, c) the vocational baccalaureate 2030 and d) the Masshardt postulate "Access to higher education institutions with a vocational baccalaureate in a similar field". In all cases, the focus was on ensuring that higher education institutions retain the freedom to choose the necessary qualifications/basic requirements for admission. It also contributed to and discussed the position paper of swissuniversities on the use of artificial intelligence. With regard to the call for projects of the programme "Open Education & Digital Competences 2025-2028", the delegation defined the framework and the accompanying documentation for the call. The previous programme P-8 "Strengthening digital skills in teaching" (2021-2024) was extended to 2025 in order to use up the remaining funds and to allow projects to continue and complete with additional funds where useful and necessary.

The ongoing project is the discussion on the compensation of disadvantages (Nachteilsausgleich). Here it was decided to collect the practices of the different institutions and to create a collection of good practices that can be used by higher education institutions when they are confronted with questions on how to handle the compensation of disadvantages. The DeL secretariat was also tasked with reviewing the existing documentation, identifying open points of discussion and adapting it where necessary.

One issue that will remain under discussion next year is the commentary on the amendments to the Vocational Training Act (Berufsbildungsgesetz, BBG) and the Vocational Training Ordinance (Berufsbildungsverordnung, BBV). The aim of the revision is to increase the visibility of vocational training, including the introduction of the professional bachelor's and professional master's degrees. The delegation is critical of the introduction of these titles, as it is not yet clear whether they would allow access to higher education master's and graduate programmes.

In order to assess the impact of university rankings on teaching, the delegation chose Paul Cross (ETH) and asked the secretary to participate in meetings with the research delegation to communicate and discuss this issue and to bring the results back to the DeL.

4.5. Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships for Foreign Scholars (ESKAS)

From the actionuni delegate to the ESKAS, Annelise da Silva Canavarro (formerly; now Annelise Erismann). The ESKAS secretariat has been dutifully informed of my recent name change).

4.5.1 Summary of ESKAS meeting of December 1, 2023

Sophie Girardin and Annelise da Silva Canavarro attended this meeting together. More details [here](#). The debates at that time focused on the SEFRI proposal to increase the amount of an ESKAS scholarship, with a possible reduction in the number of PhD scholarships. The ESKAS secretary congratulated Sophie Girardin on her idea of organizing a national meeting for ESKAS fellows. I suggested inviting an elected ombudsperson or an elected representative of ESKAS scholarship holders within a given year as a guest to one of the meetings where no applications are discussed (generally the meeting at the end of the year / in December). I have also suggested to the Actionuni Presidents that the next person to fill this role should be an ESKAS scholarship holder (or that this criterion be taken into account and their applications given preference in the recruitment process for the role of Actionuni delegate to the ESKAS Commission, which is the only - or one of the few - paid positions within Actionuni). This could increase the diversity of the commission and strengthen community building among ESKAS scholars. Finally, we were presented with the results of an online survey of ESKAS scholars from 1996 to 2015. See the results [here](#).

4.5.2 Summary of ESKAS meeting of March 14, 2024

This is the meeting where a selection is made (confirmation of the previously selected ESKAS scholarship holders - by the Federal Office of Culture). Discussion of pools: countries with direct reciprocity (Israel, Italy, Japan, Poland, South Korea); USA (Fullbright-ESKAS); UK (Newton scholarships for Swiss students abroad); Central Europe; Brazil; India; South Africa. Procedures, “hard” and “soft” criteria (i.e. nationality, multiplier effect) and categorisations during recruitment (i.e. coups de coeur) are explained due to the increased number of new Commission members (i.e. known biases such as the “newcomer effect” or the strict evaluation of applications by new members). A company subcontracted by the Confederation to design the digitalisation process that the application process will undergo in the coming years gives a short presentation (i.e. plagiarism detection, facilitation of communication between international student officers, administrative staff and professors). There are open discussions about the fears of the reduction of the ESKAS budget and the strong dependence on the Parliament, especially as one of the so-called zero growth programmes. The circumstances of individual cases of ESKAS scholarship extensions or cancellations are discussed. There is room for improvement in the following areas:

- The use of ESKAS promotion (through videos with former participants);
- The role of Leading Houses in publicizing the existence of ESKAS
- The training of professors who support ESKAS applicants on their obligations and the need to coordinate with university staff.
- the disciplinary distribution of ESKAS scholarships (for the time being at the expense of SHS).

Details [here](#).

4.5.3 Summary of ESKAS meeting of May 3, 2024

This is the second day of the selection procedure. The secretariat strongly encourages reviewers to write longer and more informative comments in order to be prepared for questions from rejected applicants (and also to counter criticism, especially as it may happen that professors who are not experts in a given field nevertheless evaluate applicants in a field that is more remote to them). The secretariat also comments on SEFRI's suggestions for improvement, which they reject (for example, a pre-selection phase organized by the secretariat to facilitate the professors' choice). The professors then go on to justify their choices and votes; comments are made on the best evaluation practices when considering the use of generative AI. A contradictory fact: we celebrated the fact that 10,000 scholarships were awarded by the Swiss Confederation (the 10,000th was selected on 3 May). We also celebrated the fact that ESKAS has the most visited websites of all the programmes in the SEFRI portfolio. However, there is also an overall decrease in applications when looking at the last ten years (i.e. possible reasons: more generous fellowships as possible competition, such as Marie Curie; professors not able to compensate for the difference; changes in eligibility criteria (years since PhD). Their aim is to continue to focus on this order: Ph.D.s, Postdocs, Research Fellowships, Arts, and in general to favor applicants from a regional pool to "come here". Further comments on data protection legislation in the digitisation process and the willingness to strengthen the role of embassies as counterparts for applicants. Details [here](#).

4.5.4. Next meeting by the end of the year (invitation to be sent and date to be confirmed)

5. Actionuni representation in international bodies

5.1 Eurodoc

By actionuni Eurodoc delegate, Joanna Rutkowska

actionuni is one of the National Associations (NA) that are members of Eurodoc, the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers, whose main aim is to represent doctoral candidates and junior researchers (post-doc level) at European level in matters of education, research and professional development of their careers. Hannah Schoch and Joanna Rutkowska represented actionuni as delegates to Eurodoc for the actionuni term 2023/2024. In addition, Hannah Schoch served on the Eurodoc Board as Secretary for the entire period, and Joanna Rutkowska served as Co-Coordinator of the Working Group on Working Conditions and Welfare from May 2023 to May 2024 (part of the actionuni term 2023/2024). Both delegates received and responded to correspondence from Eurodoc, reviewed documents from Eurodoc and provided feedback on draft documents. Both delegates attended NA meetings and the General Assembly as representatives of actionuni.

5.1.1 Summary of Eurodoc NA meeting on December 14th, 2023

The first half of the meeting focused on the Mental Health Working Group (WG). We had a presentation and discussion about their aims. Then the WG coordinator presented proposed tools for NAs to use, including an Assessment tool for NAs to collect data on mental health related actions. Together with representatives from other NAs, actionuni delegates tried out the tool and gave feedback. Eurodoc then reported on their work on mapping the assessment procedures and requirements for the academic/research career path (e.g. habilitation) and the multilingualism survey. The last part of the meeting was devoted to Eurodoc's presentation and the ensuing discussion on the idea of developing a questionnaire for candidates for the European Parliament.

5.1.2 Summary of Eurodoc NA meeting on March 27th, 2024

The meeting started with a discussion on the form of the financial report for the AGM. Eurodoc presented the problems with the financial report last term and how they wanted to address them and report on expenses and budgets in a transparent way. NAs gave input on the process. Eurodoc then announced the call for auditors and the call for interest in participating in the working groups for the next Eurodoc term. They then announced the date and place of the next Eurodoc Conference and General Assembly (in June, in Ljubljana). The meeting ended with a short update from Eurodoc on the progress of the project to send questionnaires to candidates for the European Parliament and on the proposals for Eurodoc's Statutes and Rules of Procedure, including the new role of the Procurator.

5.1.3 Summary of meeting between Eurodoc and actionuni delegates on April 12th, 2024

The delegates of actionuni, Hannah Schoch and Joanna Rutkowska, met with two Eurodoc Board members to discuss the functioning of actionuni and which of the issues facing Early Career Researchers (ECRs) actionuni considers to be the most pressing. Topics discussed included employment and working conditions, the (lack of) representation of ECRs in governing bodies, mental health and PhD accreditation.

5.1.4 Summary of Eurodoc AGM on June 6th-7th, 2024

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Eurodoc took place in Ljubljana, with both actionuni representatives attending in person and voting on behalf of actionuni. Below is a summary of the main points of each day of the AGM.

1. Day 1:
 - a. Presentation of the Annual Report
 - b. Presentation of the financial reports from last term and this term
 - c. Discharge of the Board
 - d. Voting on the budget
 - e. Statue changes
 - f. Internal regulation changes
2. Day 2:
 - a. Croatia's National Association, Penkala, voted in as a new member

- b. Observers (from Turkey, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia) were removed
- c. Elections of the Board and the Secretariat
 - i. Hannah Schoch, actionuni delegate, got re-elected as the Secretary
 - ii. Joanna Rutkowska, actionuni delegate, officially oversaw the voting process
- d. Discussion on the Annual Goals and the new structure of the Working Groups
- e. Working Groups coordinators elections
- f. Announcement that the next year's AGM and conference will be organized by Denmark's National Association

5.1.5 Summary of Eurodoc NA meeting on September 24th, 2024

The main focus of the meeting was the draft of the new Code of Conduct in Eurodoc, which outlines the expectations and roles of Eurodoc members and persons representing Eurodoc. The representatives of the National Associations had received the draft beforehand and provided feedback on it, which now formed the basis of the discussion. The meeting ended with a short presentation by Eurodoc of its planned response to the public hearing “European Research Area - the new EARA 4 years on: achievements, lessons learnt and the way forward”.

5.2. PWO report launch on April 29th, 2024

This hybrid event was organized by the Irish Postgraduate Workers Organisation (PWO) on the occasion of the launch of their report on the status of PhD candidates in different European countries. Actionuni was represented by Joanna Rutkowska, who joined the event online. The summary of the report was first presented, section by section. Then the delegates from each organization present, from different European countries, discussed the status of doctoral candidates and the most pressing issues facing early career researchers in their countries. The delegates worked together to draft a resolution that could be adopted by their organizations: “That we, delegates of various European PhD researcher unions, associations, and collectives, assembled in Fiesole and online on 29 April 2024, recognising and acknowledging the ongoing efforts of Eurodoc, resolve to add to these efforts and encourage our respective organizations/governments to adopt the demand of salaried employment status for all PhD researchers, and to arrange another meeting to instigate and promote Europe-wide action to bring about that goal”. Actionuni’s proposed amendment was included in the text. In the week following the meeting, the actionuni board voted to support the proposed resolution.

6. actionuni member associations

By Laure Piguet, Co-President in charge of relations with member associations.

Actionuni is an umbrella organization made up of "local" associations linked to universities. The member organizations of actionuni are the "ordinary members" of the association (art. 4, statutes). They can belong to one of the following three categories: university (cantonal universities and federal institutes of technology), university of applied sciences or university of teacher education. There are 15 ordinary members of actionuni: on the university side we have ELSA (EPFL), AVETH (EPFZ), ACIDUL (UNIL), ACINE (UNINE), ACCORDER (UNIGE), AVUBA (UNIBA), CSWM (UNIFR), MOL (UNILU), MVUB (UNIBE), ADA (Graduate Institute), VAUZ (UZH). In order to represent all universities in Switzerland, the University of St. Gallen and the USI are missing. We have made contact with members of these two institutions. It is possible that at the General Assembly in 2025 we will be able to announce that we are complete. On the other hand, we need to do some recruitment work in the Fachhochschulen, and this should go hand in hand with a better understanding of the situation in these institutions. At the moment we only have the following members: AMb (Hautes écoles spécialisées bernoises), vmph Bern, and vmph FHNW.

Following very fruitful discussions with some of our member associations, we have agreed to put in place a more efficient and routine system for circulating information. The Board Committee now devotes the first item of its monthly meetings to discussing the latest university news. For example, ACIDUL sent us a long email with the latest news about their mobilization at UNIL. Of course, this is easier for ACIDUL because they have a paid secretary, but it would be interesting if the flow of information could also take place in this way when the necessary forces are present (minutes of meetings, points discussed with the rectorates, etc.). In order to keep members informed of the points discussed at the various Board meetings, we have decided that we will systematically send the minutes of meetings to members@actionuni.

7. Actionuni & friends

During 2024, we worked to develop our relationships with associations and trade unions whose actions, interests and demands are close to our own. The links we have forged are crucial to strengthening our presence at the federal level. In 2025, it will be important to maintain these links and build new ones.

7.1. Swissfaculty

We collaborated with Swissfaculty on the SHK meetings and the PgB support group. At the end of 2023, Hannah Schoch and Joanna Haupt had a meeting with Swissfaculty where it was decided to collaborate more closely. The idea of being invited to their meetings as external members was even raised. Stephan Morgenthaler has repeatedly shown his support for our activities and is a valuable ally.

7.2. UNES

We have collaborated with UNES on SHK meetings, LinkedIn and PgBs. We usually see eye to eye, and on the rare occasions when we don't, it's understandable and even amusing, as our priorities differ depending on whether we're talking about students or mid-level staff. Nadege Widmer has repeatedly

shown her support for us and our communication has been excellent. At the end of 2024, Nadege will be stepping down from her presidential positions at UNES and her representative position at SHK.

7.3. VPOD-SSP

The cooperation with the public service union, which began with the Petition Academia, is continuing and will become increasingly important in the face of the impending budget cuts. In particular, we have jointly drafted and signed (also with Swissfaculty) a letter to swissuniversities on the cuts to the PgBs budget. We work together through Philippe Martin, Central Secretary for French-speaking Switzerland, and Fabio Höhener, Central Secretary for German-speaking Switzerland.

7.4. Ständiger Ausschuss der Arbeitswelt - SGB

We also worked with the AOA, and more specifically with Nicole Cornu (SGB). Although we don't always see eye to eye - which is natural, since she represents the Ständiger Ausschuss der Arbeitswelt with economiesuisse, Travail Suisse and SGV - she has been an ally on certain issues and will be a key figure in the near future.