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Statement from the Leibniz PostDoc Network on the draft bill for the WissZeitVG

In our previous joint statement with other Postdoc networks, we outlined several significant concerns¹ regarding the “Referentenentwurf Gesetz zur Änderung des Befristungsrechts für die Wissenschaft” dated 06.06.2023. Despite our statement and our openness to discussions, we regret to note that the current draft of the bill does not include any substantial changes concerning researchers in the postdoc phase. While we appreciate the inclusion of postdoctoral perspectives in the discussions, it is important that our concerns are translated into meaningful revisions of the bill. This would ensure that the law effectively addresses the challenges encountered by postdoctoral researchers in Germany.

Unlike the PhD phase, which is clearly defined by the aim of acquiring a PhD degree, the definition of the postdoctoral phase is currently very vague. Postdoctoral researchers are a diverse community of professionals with a wide range of job definitions and career aspirations. Moreover, we are often required to perform duties of a permanent nature despite holding non-permanent positions. Constricting all postdoctoral researchers to a uniform timeline does not serve German science or higher education. Without clearly defined qualification policies and an accountability process for tenure decisions, the current draft does not help create a fair system and will give undue power to institutions on tenure decisions. We are concerned that with the unclear implementation of the proposed 4+2 model, combined with a lack of definitions for the R2-R3 phases in the German academic system, the time limit will become effectively 4 years. Furthermore, the main discussion around the time limits distracts from the real challenges of implementing a transparent evaluation system with clear criteria for professional development of early career researchers in Germany.

At the Leibniz PostDoc Network, we believe the current draft bill will make researchers' positions more precarious, harming the quality and innovativeness of scientific research in Germany. Recent studies have already shown a decrease in the attractiveness of academic careers in Germany². Without clear career development strategies, transparent evaluations for qualifications, and incentives for academic institutions to create more permanent positions, we believe the proposed



draft will further diminish the attractiveness of the German academic system, forcing the emigration of skilled professionals. In agreement with other Postdoc Networks³, we urge the German Bundestag to reject the proposed changes in terms of the time limits and adopt a holistic approach to reforming the German academic system in line with European guidelines⁴.

To this end, the Leibniz PostDoc Network remains committed to further dialogue and collaboration with other stakeholders to refine these reforms and ensure a sustainable and innovative academic environment in Germany.

Sincerely

Leibniz Postdoc Network Steering Committee

¹<https://www.postdocnet.mpg.de/148504/Comments-on-WissZeitVG-July2023?c=4296>

²https://nacaps-datenportal.de/oeffentlicher_bereich.html

³<https://www.postdocnet.mpg.de/joint-statement-wisszeitvg-2024?c=4296>

⁴https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/12/08/council-reaches-political-agreement-on-how-to-keep-attract-and-retain-research-innovation-and-entrepreneurial-talents-in-europe/?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Council+reaches+political+agreement+on+how+to+keep%2c+attract+and+retain+research%2c+innovation+and+entrepreneurial+talents+in+Europe