3rd General Assembly of the Leibniz PhD Network

26th – 28th September 2018

Host: Leibniz Institute of Photonics (IPHT) and Leibniz Institute on Aging (FLI), Jena

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**Foreword**

The General Assembly (GA) offers the main platform for the exchange of information to all representatives of the Leibniz Association’s doctoral researchers. It meets once a year in changing locations and all representatives of the doctoral researchers are invited to the General Assembly. At each meeting, the GA decides on the Leibniz PhD Network’s general strategic development, (re-)elects a new Steering Group, decides on changes to the Standing Rules to votes, can establish new Working Groups and organize future events. The 3rd General Assembly met from 26th to 28th September 2018 in Jena where it was graciously hosted at the premises of the Leibniz Institute of Photonic Technology (IPTH). It was co-organized by the three Leibniz Institutes: Leibniz Institute of Photonic Technology, Leibniz Institute on Aging (FLI) and Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology (HKI). The GA 2018 saw participation from more than 60 Leibniz Institutes and Research Museums that account for more than 2/3 of all Leibniz Institutes.

In the following you find the minutes of the individual points of the agenda.

1. **Welcome Talk by the Director of the Leibniz Institute of Photonic Technology (IPHT), Prof. Dr. Jürgen Popp**

Welcome by representatives of the organizational team of the GA 2018, Tetiana Poliezhaieva (FLI) and Florian Korinth (IPHT; Section Officer D), and introduction of Prof. Popp, scientific director of IPHT for an official welcome of the participants.

Prof. Popp

- Stressed that interdisciplinary is needed to move science forward, and as an example presented the story of the Beutenberg science Campus in Jena. The campus was established in 1992 with 10 research institutes covering the fields of life science and photonics;
- Since then, the institutes hosted on the campus have produced innovative research methods/successful results.

2. **Introduction of the Leibniz PhD Network (Spokespersons Jan-Lucas Schanze and Katarzyna Stoltmann)**

Both spokesperson expressed their gratitude to the Leibniz Association Head office, PhD representatives, working group members, the host institution IPHT as well as to the invited guests, the spokespersons from the Max Planck PhDnet and Helmholtz Juniors who had been invited to share their experiences of their respective doctoral networks.

The Leibniz PhD Network spokespersons

- Expressed a warm welcome to all invited guests and the PhD representatives. The Network is happy to be in the “Science City” Jena with around 100 participants of the GA 2018 and delighted to announce that more than 60 Leibniz Institutes and Research Museums are represented at this General Assembly. This accounts for more than 2/3 of all Leibniz Institutes;
- Thanked the PhD representatives for their important work;
- Thanked Sabine Müller from Leibniz Head Office, the Leibniz Association and its President Matthias Kleiner for their continued support throughout the year;
- Presented the Steering Group 2017/2018 including the Section Officers (A-E) and Marie as financial officer;
- Talk about the importance of the work of the network and their experiences from their last year in the steering group;
- Showcased some of the successes of the network of the year 2017/18, including
  - WG communication: release of the blog of the Leibniz PhD Network;
  - Preparation, implementation, and analysis of the first wave of the survey among all Leibniz doctoral researchers;
  - Development of a first generic version of a PhD agreement;
  - The conference of interdisciplinarity, the first event organized by the Leibniz PhD Network was held in June;
- Emphasized the importance of the GA as an opportunity for networking and communication among the Leibniz PhD representatives;
- Invited everyone to determine the future path of the PhD network, e.g. by joining a working group or running in one of the elections;

3. Networking Forum and Working Group Discussions

In the Networking Forum the Doctoral Representatives attended brief informative talks by the representatives of Leibniz Association, Leibniz PhD Network, Leibniz Post-Doc Network, Leibniz Works Council, N² Network and the various Working Groups of the PhD Network. Afterwards, an opportunity was presented to discuss each of those topics in detail, with tables organized in different rooms. A complete overview of the progress of the Leibniz PhD Network can be requested from the steering group. More information is available on https://leibniz-phd.net.

4. Keynote: PD. Dr. Thomas Kleinsorge (IfADo): „Stress among PhD students: Sources and Resources“

The Keynote focused on existing results of a study on stress factors among PhD students in Belgium and the Netherlands, the role of social support, over-commitment, effort-reward imbalance for PhD students. Slides of the talk are available upon request.

Dr. Kleinsorge kindly asked PhDs to register in PhD stress and mental health study by IfADo: www.ifado.de/gesundheit/phd_stress/

Content of discussion after the presentation:
- Need for self-organization as a stress factor for doctoral researchers → the role of self-control will play a high role in the planned IfADo study, is so far neglected;
- Are there data in actually diagnosed psychological disorders? Are people only at risk or are there also more diagnoses? → no data available, at least not aware of;
- What are the effects of fields of study on the experience of stress? → hypotheses that more isolated work (measured) by number of co-authors increases stress as there seems to be a more limited chance to receive social support (e.g. in the humanities);
- Differences between university and non-university research institutions → no teaching obligations for non-university researchers to reduce stress;

5. World Café
The following results were collected during discussions in the format "World Café" and represent the opinions of the participating representatives as a collection of ideas for the future work of the network.

Topic 1: Events - What do you want?
Undocumented

Topic 2: Working conditions

Status Quo
- Differential pay for same workload. Moreover, standard vary between institutes (e.g. pay, duration of contract, etc.);
- No compensation for parenthood, especially for fathers;
- There exists no right for home offices;
- Documentation of working time is often not professional. Add to this a culture which honors if you regular work more;
- Information deficit (about PhD standards, formal and informal procedures in the institute);
- Especially internationals are subject to these information deficits;
- Bad working conditions (office with ten colleagues, very hot in the summer, etc.);
- Scarcity in supervisors and fluctuation of supervisors;
- No control over a budget;
- No access to public transport;
- Missing software.

Goal
- Full and equal pay for full work;
- Similar standards across institutes (working contracts, pay);
- Time management tools plus work-life balance;
- Full information especially for internationals;
- Compensation for parenthood;
- Better work environment, also right to do home office.

Actions to achieve goals
- Full contracts (100% of a position) and equal pay;
- Time management;
- Standardized information (e.g. PhD Handbook for doctoral candidates);
- Offices for max. 4 people;
- PhD Agreement (also part of evaluation criteria)
- Parenthood:
  - Compensation (time and pay);
  - Childcare facilities (parent child room, support at search, maybe also own Kindergarten or Kindertagesstätte);
  - Events have to finish at 4pm at the latest;
- Joint/sharing of software licenses for Leibniz Institutes.

**Topic 3: Mental health issues**

Commonly named causes & factors contributing to mental health issues among doctoral researchers:

- Working conditions: short-term contracts, time pressure, working overtime, lack of funding, competition inside research groups/institutes, lack of balance between family life/parenthood and work;
- Supervision: lack of supervision, conflicts with supervisor, dependence on supervisor;
- Pressure to publish.

**Possible solutions:**

**Infrastructure**

- Contracts of realistic durations (3-4 years) and with fair payment;
- Implementation of supervision agreements, regular meetings with thesis advisory committee which include written protocols, setting milestones etc.;
- Contact person/neutral mediators/counselors/psychologists at the institutes or also the Leibniz level;
- Survey among employees to identify mental health problems;
- Evaluation of supervisors;
- Improved health care for employees: make psychological tests part of the medical examinations at the institutes, offer workshops and “mental health days”;
- Some institutes host Q&A sessions with their directors and/or PIs where the employees can anonymously submit questions and concerns which will then be replied to during the session.

**Doctoral researcher level/community level**

- Doctoral researcher community at the institute can provide an important framework to help doctoral researchers feel included and to bring up problems;
- Regular doctoral researcher events;
- Team building events for the entire institute: all hierarchies should be involved (students, doctoral researchers, postdocs, principal investigators, administration staff), mixing of different research groups/departments.

**Topic 4: Power abuse and good scientific practice**
Areas which are concerned:
- Publishing, especially authorships (problems are discipline specific);
- Relationship with supervisors / superiors: difficulties to raise critique or doubts on quality of research results, preferred methodology or else, pressure on distribution of working time or to work over-time or if/when to go on vacation, pressure to not prolong contracts;
- Hard to define where power abuse starts.

Possible solutions
- Empowerment: raise awareness and knowledge for the topic among doctoral researchers, make them aware that they can address work councils or (decentral and central) ombudspersons, let them know that they are not alone with their problem, power to say “no”;
- Power as a group: talk to other doctoral researchers, involve PhD representatives, stand up against possible misbehavior as a group;
- Seminars on good scientific practice and general guidelines on publishing standards and ethics;
- PhD agreements and the quality of PhD supervision (also a reasonable number PhDs for each supervisor);
- Mentoring: a neutral person should be accessible for doctoral researchers to solve possible problems or misunderstandings.

Possible actions for the Leibniz PhD Network
- Position paper on power abuse, similar to what Max Planck PhDnet did. It could be lobbied that institutes could sign this paper to show their support and compliance;
- Guidance documents that could be shared with new PhDs: awareness for resources in and outside the institute, create early awareness for the topic, Q&A section for the most relevant problems that can occur;
- Think about the consequences and what happens if there is a lack of consequences.

Topic 5: Your work as PhD representative
In the discussions the following needs and ideas were identified:
- It would be helpful to have more information on how other PhD representatives work at the different institutes;
- In general more and more regular information on how the network is working is needed to be able to pass this information to the doctoral researchers at the institutes;
- At each institute certain formats need to be created, like e.g. PhD breakfasts, BBQs, colloquia, welcome days, regular meetings for doctoral researchers, to be able to inform all of them;
- An idea might be a regularly updates PPT presentation provided by the steering group with the latest updates of the network that can be used by the PhD representatives to regularly inform the doctoral researchers of their institutes;

Also the problem of motivating people to participate in the network was discussed:
- The doctoral candidates need to be asked regularly for their needs (e.g soft skill courses, state of supervision, etc.) and help should be offered.
6. Discussion and votes on the Standing Rules of the Leibniz PhD Network

- Presentation of the changes on the standing rules by Jan-Lucas and Marie;
- Quick going through the standing rules;
- Explanation of the changes the steering group suggests

Participation

60 participants, 61 participants starting from change 3; 62 participants starting from change 8; 67 starting with change 10. Vote (In favor / Against / Abstaining).

Changes of the Standing Rules

- Change 1 (1.1) Delete “one” in “no one central location”. Vote (59 / 1 / 0)
- Change 2 (3.2) Add “common standards within all institutes and research museums across the Leibniz Association.” Vote (60 / 0 / 0)
- Change 3 (3.3) Add new paragraph N² Membership( inclusion of membership of N2 (55 / 0 / 5)
- Change 4: Add a definition of the major organizations that are in the standing rules of N² as a footnote. Vote (14 / 23 / 24)
- Change 5 (4.2) Change “network maintains and updates its communication structure.”
  Add paragraph 4.3 “Further specific tasks remain to be defined by the Steering Group and the working groups.” Vote (61 / 0 / 0)
- Change 6 (4.3) Add paragraph 4.3 “Further specific tasks remain to be defined by the Steering Group and the working groups.” Vote (54 / 0 / 7)
- Change 7 (5.2): Add “Members of the Leibniz PhD Network can suggest changes to the Standing Rules.” Vote (61 / 1 /0)
- Change 8 (5.3) Change to “Suggestions for changes to the Standing Rules should be sent to the Steering Group at least two weeks in advance of the General Assembly.” Vote (62 / 0 / 0)
- Change 9 (now 5.4) Suggestion: Delete paragraph (12 / 39 / 11).
- Change 10 (6.1) Suggestions: Change “doctoral students” to “doctoral researchers”. Note: The Leibniz PhD Network aims to include all working researchers at Leibniz institutes with the ambition to complete a doctorate.
  Remove (6.1) Vote (61 / 0 / 6)
Include paragraph (6.1) “All doctoral researchers of Leibniz institutes and research museums are members of the Leibniz PhD Network.” Vote (59 / 2 / 6)
- Change 11(6.5) Suggestion: Define “relevant information” more clearly, e.g. to “relevant information for the Leibniz Association”
  Replace “encouraged” with “asked”. Vote (55 / 1 / 11)
Add “and to provide the Steering Group with relevant information from within their institutes”. Vote (58 / 6 / 3)
- Change 12 (7.1) Add “bottom-up”. Vote (54 / 2 / 11)
- Change 13 (7.1.2) Replace “six” with “12”. Vote (66 / 0 / 1)
- Change 14 (7.1.3): Suggestions: “consists” is a misleading therefore add “All representatives of the doctoral researchers are invited to the General Assembly.” Vote (54 / 2 / 11) Keep additional sentence “The General Assembly consists of all members of the network.” Vote (25 / 4 / 22)
- Change 15 (7.4.2) Add “Financial officer”. Vote (65 / 0 / 2)
- Change 16 (7.1.6) Suggestion: Add “Representatives of the doctoral researchers shall provide the minutes to all members of the Leibniz PhD Network, the doctoral researchers at their institutes.” Vote (45 / 6 / 16)
- Change 17 (7.2.2) “interests within the Leibniz Association and beyond.” Vote (63 / 0 / 4)
- Change 18 (7.2.2) Add “They represent the Leibniz PhD Network as Board members in N² - The Network of Networks.” (62 / 0 / 5)
- Change 19 (7.3.1) Add “The General Assembly elects one Financial Officer.” Vote (66 / 0 / 1)
- Change 20 (7.3.5) Add financial officer term limits. Vote (63 / 0 / 4)
- Change 21 (7.4.2) “The Steering Group is responsible for coordinating all activities of the Leibniz PhD Network and determines the strategic direction of the network for the elected term. It is thereby bound to the decisions taken by the General Assembly.” Vote (62 / 0 / 5)
- Change 22 (7.5.1) “Each Working Group is open to all members of the Leibniz PhD Network.” Vote (67 / 0 / 0)
- Change 23 (7.5.5) “Section Officers or the responsible coordinating member of the working group report the results of the Working Groups to the Steering Group in regular meetings and at the General Assembly.” Vote (66 / 0 / 0)
- Change 24a (8.1.1) Delete “during the General Assembly” Vote (65 / 0 / 2)
- Change 24b (8.1.1) Add “and the Financial Officer” Vote (67 / 0 / 0)
- Change 25 (8.1.2) “Financial Officer” Vote (66 / 0 / 1)
- Change 26 (new paragraph 8.1.7) “The newly elected Steering Group officially takes over the office four weeks after the election took place. This is to ensure a proper handover of information, responsibilities and contacts.” Vote (67 / 0 / 0)
- Change 27 (8.2.2) “These resolutions need to be forwarded to the Steering Group 2 weeks in advance of the General Assembly.” Vote (65 / 0 / 2)

7. Election of spokespersons and financial officer

Institutes represented: 55

1. ATB 18. HPI 35. IRS
2. BIPS 19. IAMO 36. IWH
3. BNITN 20. IAP 37. IWM
4. DDZ 21. IDS 38. IWT
5. DIE 22. IFL 39. LFBI
6. DIPF 23. IFP 40. LIAG
7. DIW 24. IFZ 41. LIN
8. DPZ 25. IGB 42. LSB
9. DRFZ 26. IGZ 43. MBI
10. DSMZ 27. IHP 44. MFN
11. DWI 28. INM 45. PIK
12. FBN 29. INP 46. RGZM
13. FLI 30. IOER 47. RWI
14. FZ BORSTEL 31. IOS 48. TIB
15. GEI 32. IOW 49. WIAS
16. GESIS 33. IPHT 50. ZALF
17. GWZO 34. IPN 51. ZAS
Spokespersons
Katharina Willenbücher (Section E, ATB Potsdam) and Jonathan Stefanowski (Section C; DRFZ) were elected as spokespersons.

Candidates
- Nominee 1, Jonathan Stefanowski (Section C; DRFZ)
- Nominee 2
- Nominee 3, Katharina Willenbücher (Section E; ATB Potsdam)
- Nominee 4

Votes
- Invalid: 0
- Abstaining: 0
- Nominee 1: 37
- Nominee 2: 21
- Nominee 3: 30
- Nominee 4: 22

Financial officer
Bastian Sommerfeld (Section D, IAP) was elected. There were no other candidates.

Votes
- Invalid: 0
- Abstaining: 7
- Nominee 1: 48

8. Section meetings and elections

Section A
Anja Jahn (GWZO) was elected unanimously out of two candidates by 12 institutes.

Section B
Tim Rottleb (IRS) was elected unanimously by 9 institutes. There was no other candidate.

Section C
Lukas Heiberger (DRFZ) was elected out of three candidates (11 / 5 / 0) by 16 institutes.

Section D
Pablo Fook (IWT) was elected unanimously. There was no other candidate.

Section E
Aman Malik (PIK) was elected (5 / 3) out of two candidates by 8 institutes.