Protocol of the Leibniz PhD Network's General Assembly 2020

Date: 01.10.2020 – 02.10.2020

Online platform: Hopin

Number of participants: 182 signed-up / turnout: 168 (92.3%)

Steering Committee 2019/20:
Anja Jahn (GWZO), Spokesperson
Jacob L. Gorenflos López (FMP), Spokesperson
Antoine Verrière (MFN), Treasurer
Annika Diekmann (DBM), Spokesperson - Section A
Irene Broer (HBI), Spokesperson – Section B
Kristine Oevel (FMP), Spokesperson - Section C
Suyuan Chen (ISAS), Spokesperson - Section D
Guilherme Abuchahla (ZMT), Spokesperson - Section E

Day 1 | Open to all doctoral researchers

The Leibniz PhD Network General Assembly (GA) 2020 was opened by its Spokespersons Anja Jahn and Jacob Gorenflos. After welcoming all participants, they introduced the network's structure, the Steering Committee, and shortly summarized the achievements of the working groups (WGs) in the last year. As the on-going pandemic prevented a face-to-face event, however, the digital format of the 2020's GA enabled participation of all doctoral researchers on the first day.

Leibniz Association's Secretary General, Dr. Bettina Böhm, gave the welcome address in which she highlighted the difficulties created by the pandemic to all doctoral researchers' lives, both professionally and personally. She reminded the audience that the Leibniz head office published an official statement on their webpage in addition to sending it to all institutes (link). Furthermore, Dr. Böhm called attention to the fact that they are seeking to take action to address the results of the previous PhD survey. She felt optimistic about the positive trend when comparing the 2017 survey results to the latest results. In addition to that, she addressed subjects such as career paths and counselling, good scientific practice, and handling conflicts – the latter two counting with guidelines and a new advice center for conflict prevention (link) on the Leibniz Network's homepage.

Irene Broer introduced this year's keynote speaker, Dr. Antje Wegner (DZHW), who presented the audience with insightful numbers from the NACAPS panel (link) on practicalities related to the doctoral candidates' lives, e.g., contract duration (average of 27 months), income, mental health, decrease in the number of scholarships, and the change in career aspirations. Her approach called the general attention, instigating a fair amount of questions that were timely answered.

The first session 'Family and Friends' was dedicated to the presentation of the diverse WGs and their accomplishments and aspirations. The WG's goals and accomplishments were

presented by their representatives as following: Tobias Spanke (Welcome Package), Carolin Dittrich (PhD Agreement), Isabel Kilian (Communication), Navaneetha Manjappa (Diversity), Dolly Montano (Mental Health), Nicole Zerrer (Prevention of Power Abuse), Jan-Lucas Schanze (Survey) and Kristine Oevel (Sustainability).

The second 'Family and Friends' session gave relevant partners of the Leibniz PhD Network a stage to present their work, such as Katarzyna Stoltmann and Dr. Olga Naumov (Leibniz Alumni Network), Cornelia van Scherpenberg (Max-Planck PhD Network/N^2), Dr. Gitta Heinz (Leibniz Postdoc Network), Bernd Bibra (Network of Works & Staff Council), and Marvin Bähr (Leibniz Association Head Office).

During the lunch break, networking was enabled by different digital rooms, as well as an informal talk and cooking workshop with Section E's Spokesperson, Guilherme Abuchahla.

The entire afternoon was dedicated to connecting with the different WGs. First, the attendees had the opportunity to join several virtual rooms where the WGs presented themselves and the WG leaders were available for Q&A sessions. After deciding for their favorite topic, the doctoral researchers were invited to attend a second part where future goals and perspectives of the individual WGs were discussed. Recruitment of new members by the different groups was highly encouraged and appreciated, and the result was a fruitful exchange of ideas and experiences as well as the beginning of new initiatives.

The Spokespersons together with all Steering Committee members closed the day highlighting how productive the event has been so far, calling for candidates for the following day's elections.

Day 2 | Open to all institute delegates and candidates for office

The second day (open only to PhD representatives) started with the Spokesperson's overview of the first day of GA and an introduction to the program. Subsequently, Antoine Verrière, the Treasurer, gave an overview on the network's finances for the 2019/2020 term. He elaborated on the event founding opportunities that were introduced by the current Steering Committee, after a vote at the last year's GA. Furthermore, he presented the two event cooperations that were chosen after the first round of applications in February 2020. Section A Spokesperson Annika Diekmann presented the DBM in Bochum as suggested venue for the GA 2021. The Spokespersons opened the discussion on the network's standing rules. No changes of the standing rules were proposed.

In the first voting session the Spokespersons introduced the voting system and opened the call for candidates. After a brief introduction of the tasks and general impressions, Jan-Lucas Schanze (former Spokesperson) and Marvin Bähr (Leibniz head office) gave valuable insight into the work as Spokesperson and the support from the Leibniz head office. The first voting session elected the new Spokespersons and the Treasurer. The voting process counted with 54 institutes, electing the following:

- Pankhuri Saxena (DPZ), Spokesperson
- Jan Klenke (GIGA), Spokesperson
- Philipp Koch (FMP), Treasurer

The second voting session followed the same structure, although separated in different virtual rooms, in which only the PhD representatives of institutes within each corresponding section could take part. Each institute had one delegate responsible for casting a vote. The following persons will act as the new Section Spokespersons:

- Section A: Ali Dogan (ZMO), (elected with 9 votes, 2 abstained, out of 11)
- Section B: Serhii Svynarets (IfL), (elected with 7 out of 7 votes)
- Section C: Sandy Bauherr (DRFZ), Section C (elected with 16 votes, 1 abstained, out of 17)
- Section D: Emilio Quesada (IHP), Section D (elected with 8 out of 8)
- Section E: Matthias Renz (IGZ), Section E (elected with 3 votes, 2 abstained, out of 7)

After announcing the results and welcoming the new members of the Steering Committee 2020/21, the 'Future of the Network' sessions presented the possible fields of action for the next year. The perspective of future events and WG projects seem to be promising. The issues of PhD agreement implementation in one's institute and the pandemic-related contract extensions were widely discussed.

The closing session concluded the entire event and showcased the perks of working in cooperation with fellow doctoral researchers in a common goal, aiming at the improvement of the PhD phase for all doctoral researchers by the Leibniz PhD Network. The current Steering Committee had the opportunity to voice final impressions and encouraging words to the new team.