

Statement of the IKG Mittelbau on the planned amendment of the German WissZeitVG

The staff of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (IKG) at Bielefeld University take a stand on the key points paper on the amendment of the Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz (WissZeitVG) presented by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) on 17 March 2023. As an interdisciplinary third-party-funded institute, we agree with the statements already published by the German Psychological Society (DGPs) on 21.03.2023 and the German Sociological Society (DGS) on 05.04.2023, as well as the initiatives of the Mittelbau around #IchBinHanna #IchbinReyhan and the Network for Good Work in Science (NGAWiss). Like many other individual and collective actors in science and academia, we also consider the key points paper presented by the BMBF to be unsuitable for achieving an improvement in the already precarious situation of scientific employment. On the contrary: We even fear a deterioration for many researchers!

As those affected, we would like to address in particular the specific situation for third-party funded institutes with regard to the upcoming amendment of the WissZeitVG. Employees in exclusively third-party funded institutes are already affected by precarious employment under the highest pressure of competition, qualification, time and funding due to the acquisition of third-party funding and limited project durations. The proposed amendment to the WissZeitVG runs the risk of increasing the precariousness of the working and living situations of researchers in Germany, and thus also massively worsening the entire production of knowledge and ideas. Shortening qualification phases (doctorate/postdoctorate studies) from six years today to three plus two years in the future, without reforming the academic system in other areas as well, prevents a) research planning for longer periods of time in the sense of good scientific practice, because empirical research in particular needs time; b) the compatibility of work and family and thus the equality goals of all institutions; and last but not least c) safe and productive working conditions in science. This also requires fundamental changes in the allocation of third-party funding. In addition to an increase in basic funding with a de facto reduction in competitive third-party funding, we believe that the rules for awarding third-party funding should be adapted in such a way that permanent positions and longer-term perspectives are also possible at third-party funded institutes. The allocation of third-party funding by the federal government and the federal states should also be depoliticised, more strongly oriented towards scientific criteria and the expert opinions for the allocation should be made transparent.

We are extremely dissatisfied with the current situation for researchers in Germany and cannot and will not accept that the conditions for researchers will deteriorate even further due to the

planned amendment of the WissZeitVG. Like many other colleagues, we are of the opinion that the planned changes to the WissZeitVG will have a lasting negative impact on the already troubled situation for Germany as a centre of science and research.

An initiative from the non-professorial academic staff of the IKG