

Press release

German Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology e.V. (GBM)

April 22, 2024

Statement by the undersigned professional societies in the natural and life sciences on the planned amendment to the law on temporary contracts in the sciences (Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz)

An adjustment of the framework conditions to improve the career paths of young scientists within and outside academic institutions is very welcome from the perspective of the natural and life sciences. In addition to the necessary adjustment of the funding and personnel structures of academic institutions, this also includes the intensively discussed amendment to the German Academic Fixed-Term Contract Act (WissZeitVG). Based on the BMBF's draft bill of June 6, 2023, the Federal Cabinet recently adopted a draft law that is now being discussed in parliament. The draft provides for a maximum 6-year doctoral phase and a subsequent maximum 4-year postdoc phase. In addition, two further years of fixed-term employment with binding target agreements for the transition to a permanent position are to be made possible.

The undersigned scientific and life science societies welcome in principle the efforts to enable better planning and reliability of scientific careers, but point out the following critical points:

1. In the natural and life sciences as well as in biomedicine, the planned duration of the two qualification phases (max. 6 years up to the doctorate, [4+2] years as a postdoc) would in principle be only just sufficient in some - but not all - subject areas to achieve the project successes required for a professorship in the form of extensive data sets, independent publications, teaching experience and independently acquired research funding or to develop and consolidate an expert profile for career goals in addition to the professorship. As the planned amendment to the WissZeitVG will not create any additional permanent positions, the postdoc qualification phase is expected to be limited to 4 years in most cases. In experimental disciplines in particular, however, this period is often insufficient and will lead to an exodus of scientists abroad and a dramatic loss in the quality of research in the natural and life sciences and in biomedicine in Germany.

2. The undersigned professional societies consider a further opening of the collective bargaining clause, i.e. leaving important elements of the fixed-term regulations to be regulated by collective bargaining law, to be neither appropriate nor necessary. Fixed-term regulations in regional collective agreements would not do justice to the different academic institutions or the career paths of young academics and would lead to a fragmentation of the legal and collective bargaining framework. Differentiating the framework conditions for academic career options by federal state would be counterproductive and would lead to an imbalance in research in the federal states. If the entire time limit for qualifications were left to the discretion of the collective bargaining partners, the consequences for Germany as a science location and for the career paths of young scientists in the natural sciences and biomedicine would be serious.

3. For scientific work in the natural and life sciences, it is essential to be able to continue to offer fixed-term contracts in the context of externally funded projects - without time limits or a limit on the number of externally funded contracts.

4. The planned minimum contract term of 3 years for the first contract of doctoral candidates is generally very welcome. We would like to point out that the widespread implementation of such a minimum contract period poses additional challenges for academic institutions. For example, financial resources would have to be made available from the budgets of the institutions to ensure that available third-party funds with remaining terms of less than 3 years can be used appropriately.

5. The envisaged minimum contract period of one year for study-related employment is not feasible in many cases due to the inherent organization of university internships and courses in the natural sciences and biomedicine, so that there is a risk of impairment of university teaching. We therefore recommend allowing justified exceptions to the minimum contract period.

In order to achieve the improved predictability of academic career paths that the amendment to the *WissZeitVG* aims to achieve, the undersigned professional associations in the natural and life sciences believe that additional permanent positions must be created. This can only be achieved through a significant increase in permanent basic funding for universities and non-university institutions. The undersigned professional societies therefore suggest that a discussion on this matter be held with representatives of the federal and state governments as soon as possible.

Gesellschaft für Biochemie und Molekularbiologie (GBM)

Anatomische Gesellschaft (AG)

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Biologische Strahlenforschung (DeGBS)

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Experimentelle und Klinische Pharmakologie und Toxikologie (DGPT)

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Extrazelluläre Vesikel (GSEV)

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Immunologie (DGfI)

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Medizinische Psychologie (DGMP)

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zellbiologie (DGZ)

Deutsche Pharmazeutische Gesellschaft (DPhG)

Deutsche Physiologische Gesellschaft (DPG)

Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker (GDCh)

Gesellschaft für Entwicklungsbiologie (GfE)

Gesellschaft für Genetik (GfG)

Gesellschaft für Mikroskopie und Bildanalyse (GerBI-GMB)

Gesellschaft für Virologie (GfV)

Neurowissenschaftliche Gesellschaft (NWG)

Signal Transduction Society (STS)

Vereinigung für Allgemeine und Angewandte Mikrobiologie (VAAM)

The signatory professional societies represent more than 55,000 members in the natural and life sciences and biomedicine.

Media contact:

Prof. Dr. Volker Haucke
President of the Society for
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology e.V.
<https://gbm-online.de/die-gbm.html>
haucke@fmp-berlin.de
Phone +49 (0) 30 947 93 100



GESELLSCHAFT FÜR BIOCHEMIE UND MOLEKULARBIOLOGIE

Dr. Karin J. Schmitz
Society of German Chemists
Public relations
Phone +49 69 7917-493
E-mail: pr@gdch.de
www.gdch.de/presse



GESELLSCHAFT
DEUTSCHER CHEMIKER

Information on GBM

The German Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (GBM) is the largest bioscientific society in Germany. It offers its approximately 5,000 members from universities, research institutes and industry a strong external representation of interests vis-à-vis politics, business and the public, as well as opportunities for international cooperation. Internally, the GBM opens up numerous opportunities for networking and the promotion of scientific careers.