

Zeitschrift: Bulletin / Vereinigung der Schweizerischen Hochschuldozierenden =
Association Suisse des Enseignant-e-s d'Université

Herausgeber: Vereinigung der Schweizerischen Hochschuldozierenden

Band: 35 (2009)

Heft: 2

Vorwort: Editorial

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Editorial

Our Association's Board has decided to use English at Board meetings, so let me, rather than trying to transmit my messages in German and French, use today's scientific *lingua franca* for a change.

My first remarks relate to the lack of interest of my colleagues in getting involved in matters concerning all of us. Several years ago, one of our Federal Counsellors visited one of the most famous Swiss scientists, a professor at a science-oriented department. The professor took the opportunity to make some critical comments on then current matters of science and education. The Federal Counsellor indicated his indignation and suggested that both should do their proper jobs, he politics and the professor his science. This is, of course, a very dubious interpretation of democratic principles and might require more profound discussion. But restricting ourselves to matters relating to our core business, i.e., science and education, it is by no means acceptable to leave the field to self-proclaimed experts – and there are many, since everyone has attended some school at some stage... We who are at the bottom of the line where new rules and regulations have to be put into operation must have a right to participate in their formulation, and we must claim this right!

The project of a new federal bill on university funding and coordination of the Swiss higher education landscape (Bundesgesetz über die Förderung der Hochschulen und die Koordination im schweizerischen Hochschulbereich: HFKG - Loi fédérale sur l'aide aux hautes écoles et la coordination dans le domaine suisse des hautes écoles: LAHE) was submitted to the Federal Parliament in May (see pp. 31-37 for an official introduction). Three years ago, Swiss voters and the Cantons had adopted a series of constitutional articles on education. According to *Article 63a*, "The Confederation and the Cantons shall be jointly responsible for the coordination and guarantee of quality in Swiss higher education." The proposed bill for the higher educational sector (for the official terms of the tertiary sector, see http://www.sbf.admin.ch/htm/dokumentation/publikationen/Bildung/higher_education-e.pdf, see also the 'leporello' project at the sbf site as an example of the current situation) was drafted after a first version had been circulated to many public bodies and organisations and many consultations had taken place. Our organisation has not been asked for comments. The Council of States (Ständerat – Conseil des Etats) will be the chamber dealing first with the bill after the summer break. Early this July, the Committee for Science, Education and Culture of the Council of States held hearings on the bill (see "Aus Nah und Fern", p. 52). Our organisation was not invited, and we shared this fate with the corresponding associations of the faculties of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschulen – Hautes écoles spécialisées) and the Colleges of Higher Vocational Education and Training (Pädagogische Hochschulen – Hautes écoles pédagogiques). We expressed our concern jointly, especially since the bill foresees new legal bodies dealing with accreditation and quality assurance where the student organisations will be represented, but not those of the teachers. While it would seem absurd to design and develop new rules for soccer without any players, this seems quite acceptable to some when higher education is at stake. Two explanations are usually offered for this approach; (i) the faculty members' opinions and concerns are represented by their corresponding institutional leaders and it is up to them to make sure the internal communications work well, (ii) classical university teachers are typically uninterested in these matters, and if asked for an opinion, they usually offer only their own; thus one would have to ask them all – or none of them... While there are fundamental objections to the first point (they might be taken up in a later issue of the Bulletin), there is, unfortunately, some truth in the second statement. Indeed, we must change our attitudes towards public affairs in general and those affecting us directly in particular. There is no use in complaining about new rules etc. if one has not made any effort to influence them while it was still possible. In the present case of the new bill, if everything goes well, first parts of it will be implemented in early 2012. The

newly formed bodies will start to define the new procedures step-by-step, and it is expected that all implications of the new bill will be in effect for the period 2017-2020.

It is clear that our involvement is important now! Even those who might not be affected personally any more could give advice and help to make sure our profession keeps some of its unique characteristics despite increasing interference – meaning constraints – from all conceivable sources. If we do not explain who we are and what we do, we are not entitled to complain... To be present where new things happen, we need a strong organisation; more members and more who want to contribute their expertise more promptly than presently possible. Our profession deserves to be protected – even by those who will be retired by the time the new bill takes effect.

On a more positive note, it is a pleasure to welcome Alex Bänninger as the new Editor of the Bulletin (see p. 4). He will, with his broad background, make sure that timely topics will be covered in future Bulletins, and by competent authors. This issue is already heavily based on his input. The University news (twice a year) and the Faculty news (once a year) will continue to be assembled by the General Secretary.

We hope to develop the Bulletin further, and our readers are invited to send their suggestions. A first new item is the category “A propos...” (we adhere to the French spelling) where Board Members, but also any regular Members, have a space to write about their concerns.

The Association is looking forward to several important events in 2009 and 2010. In October 2009, our Austrian colleagues will host the annual meeting of the Boards of the Austrian, German and Swiss organisations of university faculty. (The subsequent meeting will be organised in Switzerland.) On 19 or 26 November 2009, the next General Assembly of VSH-AEU will take place in Basel, in combination with public talks and discussions concerning the results and consequences of the Bologna reforms. The exact date and further details will be announced in due course. The joint (VSH-AEU and Swiss Association of Gymnasium Teachers) Committee on Gymnasium-University issues has, with Prof. Andreas Vaterlaus (ETH Zürich) as the Main Applicant, obtained a grant to organise a meeting at Centro Stefano Franscini, Ascona (TI) where Gymnasium and University teachers from Switzerland and some experts from other countries will discuss matters of transition from Gymnasium to University for the subjects First Language, Mathematics, Physics, and History (24-27 October 2010, see <https://www.math.ch/csf> for details - in German).

With best wishes for some interesting reading and a good summer



Gernot Kostorz

PS. To our regret, some of our members have forgotten to pay their annual membership fee. They will find the appropriate reminder enclosed herewith.

Alex Bänninger

Neuer Redaktor des Bulletins



Über den Vorstandsentscheid der Vereinigung der Schweizerischen Hochschuldozierenden, mich in einem Teilpensum als Redaktor des Bulletins und als Beauftragter für Öffentlichkeitsarbeit zu wählen, freue ich mich sehr.

Nach dem Studium der Rechts- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften an der Universität Zürich wandte ich mich den Medien und der Kultur zu. Ich war redaktioneller Mitarbeiter der NZZ, stellvertretender Direktor des Bundesamtes für Kultur, Kulturchef des Schweizer Fernsehens und Lehrbeauftragter für Medien an der Universität Zürich. Seit 1993 arbeite ich als selbständiger Publizist mit Beiträgen u. a. für die NZZ, das Tages-Anzeiger-Magazin, das St. Galler Tagblatt, die Thurgauer Zeitung und Schweizer Radio DRS. Ich bin Autor zahlreicher Sachbücher: so über den Fotografen Hans Baumgartner, den Maler Mario Comensoli, den Unternehmer Fritz Gerber, den Journalisten Martin Schlappner, den Valium-Erfinder Leo Sternbach und den Apfel als kulturgeschichtliches Phänomen.

Auf regionaler und nationaler Ebene betreue ich eine Reihe kultureller und kommunikativer Projekte und wirke mit in den Stiftungsräten der UBS Kulturstiftung und der Zürcher Radio- und Fernseh-Stiftung.

Als Winterthurer Bürger mit früheren Wohnorten in Zürich, Neuenburg und Bern lebe und arbeite ich seit acht Jahren im Thurgauer Dorf Stettfurt.

Alex Bänninger