

Meeting of the steering committee of the FLÚ labour union

24. 1. 2022 10:00–11:30

Committee members in attendance: Teresa R. Baron, Jan Frei, Juraj Hvorecký, Robert Novotný, Pavel Nývlt, Darja Zoubková.

Taking minutes: Pavel Nývlt.

Juraj Hvorecký informed the committee that the energy supplier for the institutes of the ASCR has gone bankrupt, which will lead to a significant increase in energy prices and further burden the FIÚ budget. Juraj Hvorecký promised to ask the OS PVV (Trade Union of Workers in Science and Research) to appeal to the Government of the Czech Republic to take into account the difficult situation of the institutes of the ASCR caused by the collapse of the energy supplier, even if in a provisional budget.

Juraj Hvorecký also announced that the Operational Programme in Research, Development and Education (OPRDE), which allowed the admission of more people to the grant or HR department, will probably not be extended. There is therefore a risk that as of 1 January 2023, these people will be made redundant or their hours will be reduced.

Juraj Hvorecký further informed the committee that another meeting of the OS PVV is planned for February 23, 2022, which will be an election; each member of the ZOO can run for the position in the OS PVV committee. It will distribute this information to the members together with the necessary documents. In response to a suggestion from Joe Grim Feinberg, Juraj Hvorecký clarified that there is no ethics committee of the FIÚ, so it is not a member of it and there is no risk of a conflict of interest with the position of chairman of the ZOO Committee. There is currently a draft of the FIÚ Code of Ethics, in which Juraj Hvorecký participated, but which has not yet been approved by the FIÚ Council. The proposal includes the establishment of the FIÚ Ethics Committee, but its members should be primarily externalists.

In response to Julie Černá's suggestion, Juraj Hvorecký asked whether trade union members' contributions would be automatically deducted from the tax base or whether they should explicitly ask the payroll accountant to do so. Darja Zoubková stated that she had a confirmation of paid membership fees ready to be signed by the chairman of the Committee. They should therefore be available to members next week.

Darja Zoubková alerted the committee that paper statements from the ZOO bank account are still being sent. Juraj Hvorecký admitted that sending statements probably cannot be canceled via electronic banking and, given the current pandemic situation, he did not get around to cancelling the sending of paper statements by visiting the branch. He further informed the committee that he had prepared documents for the change of the entry in the Commercial Register, which will facilitate the change of the bank. The balance of the account as of 24 January 2022 amounts to CZK 100,455.33.

Darja Zoubková pointed out the inappropriately small office in which the staff of the personnel department must work. Juraj Hvorecký promised to ask the director if a change of rooms would be possible.

Juraj Hvorecký reminded the members of the Committee to send him comments on the draft collective agreement, which was discussed at the last meeting of the Committee. He further pointed out it has been nearly one year since the last membership meeting, and that a text must be prepared in good time and sent to all members of ZOO for comments. The last week of March, when the spring holidays will be over, seems to be a suitable date for holding a membership meeting.

Juraj Hvorecký also called for comments on the attestation rules. He said they appear fine to him. Robert Novotný drew attention to the need to avoid a situation in which, in pursuit of protections for some employees, we end protections for others. He suggested that the definition of the role of the attestation commission be adjusted so that the discrepancy between its proposals and the financial capacities of FLU does not increase in the future. Juraj Hvorecký said that it is possible to ask a lawyer of OS PVV to propose an amendment to the collective agreement in this sense, but expressed his belief that the attestation commissions should not take anything into account beyond academic work, so the drafting of permanent contracts would remain at the discretion of the head of department, and ultimately the director of the institute. He promised to ask how the director proceeds before establishing an open-ended contract, and to ask whether the members of the attestation commission are informed of the results of the attestation procedure regarding the staff they discuss.

Darja Zoubková and Robert Novotný drew the committee's attention to problematic aspects of the long-term provision of increased hours for people in old-age retirement over the age of 70. Pavel Nývlt proposed to amend Article IV, point 5 of the attestation rules in line with Ondřej Ševeček's views expressed at the last meeting (to allow open-ended contracts for long-term employees of category V1 who do not aspire to career growth and category V4), and to ask management to explicitly draw the attention of the members of the attestation commissions to these changes. He expressed his belief that the changes would only affect staff paid from institutional funds. Robert Novotný pointed out that limiting permanent contracts only to employees who are paid exclusively from institutional funds in the long term would discourage employees from submitting grant applications. He further emphasized that the attestation rules must contain as few binding conditions as possible in order to be able to properly assess individual cases, and the need for agreement within the institute. Pavel Nývlt pointed out that the attestation rules do not contain binding regulations, but do contain a career scheme, which is to serve as a guideline for attestation commissions (Article IV, point 5). He clarified that he did not want to include the criterion of institutional resources in the attestation rules, but that in his opinion, this would arise regardless from the fact that managers would not recommend an open-ended contract for an employee for whom they would not have sufficient money without grant funds.

In the matter of communication with the ZOO membership base, Juraj Hvorecký proposed to publish the dates of future meetings in advance, and to ensure that the minutes are published within ten days of the Committee's meeting. The committee approved the proposal (6 votes in favor, 0 against, 0 abstentions). Teresa R. Baron pointed out that members currently have to check the website to find out about the Committee's proceedings, and suggested that members be notified by e-mail that the minutes were published, but Juraj Hvorecký and Robert Novotný argued against this. Darja Zoubková suggested that the minutes of past meetings together with the dates of the future meeting appear on the union bulletin board.

The date of the next meeting was tentatively set for February 28, 2022 at 10:00.