



# A glimpse into doing a PhD in Germany's top research organizations

**This presentation will be recorded.**

# Your presenters today will be:



**Isabela Paredes Cisneros**  
(Helmholtz Juniors  
spokesperson 2020)



**Lea Alina Heckmann**  
(Max Planck PhDnet  
spokesperson 2021)



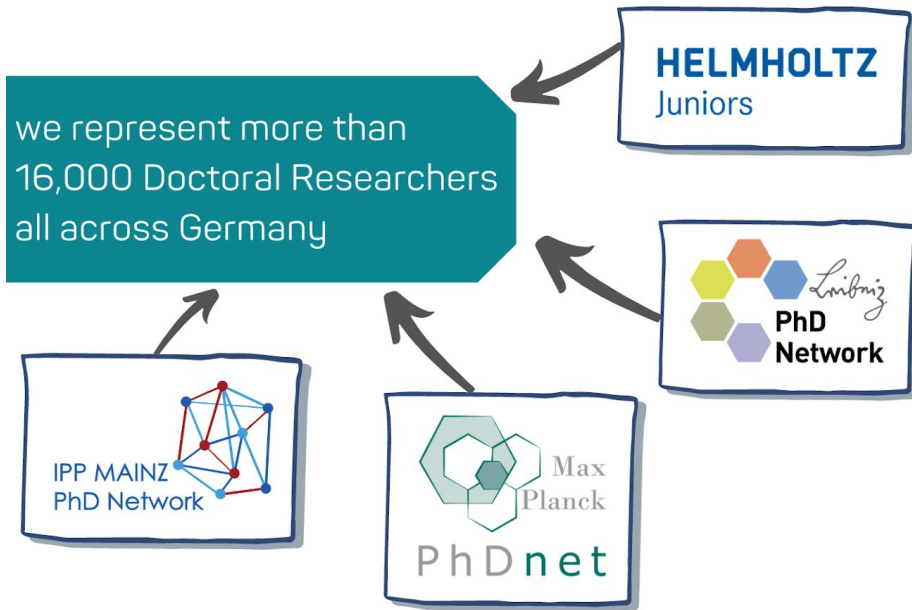
**Jacob L. Gorenflos López**  
(Leibniz PhD Network  
spokesperson 2020)

**Please write questions in the Q&A.**

# What is N<sup>2</sup>?



THE NETWORK OF DOCTORAL  
RESEARCHER NETWORKS



- We discuss the future of science, the career perspectives and the impact on society
- We focus on the assessment and improvement of working conditions of doctoral researchers (DRs)
- We conduct individual surveys

## This data provides:

- The *status quo* of DRs in non-university research organizations
- Assess latent issues
- Identify areas of improvement
- Highlight best-practice examples
- Evaluate previously implemented measures
- Provide an anonymous platform for DRs to voice their concerns

we advocate for

100%  
payment

4 year  
contracts

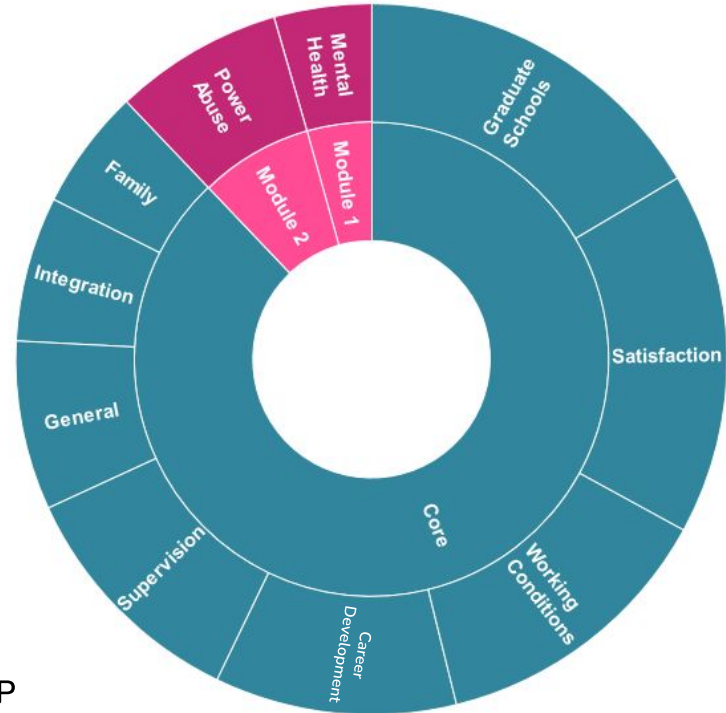
abolishment  
of stipends

prevention  
of power  
abuse

# N<sup>2</sup> PhD harmonized questionnaire

- Surveys conducted end of 2019
- response rate: ~29%  
(~ 5000 respondents)
- 94 questions
- Individual survey reports published in summer 2020

presented data does not include IPP



# Get to know our DRs

HELMHOLTZ

MAX-PLANCK

LEIBNIZ

## AGE - AVERAGE

HELMHOLTZ

28.6 years

MAX-PLANCK

28.3 years

LEIBNIZ

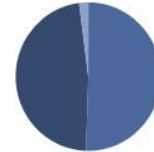
29.1 years

## GENDER

HELMHOLTZ

Female  
47%

Diverse  
<1%

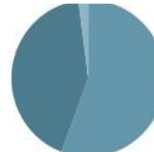


Male  
50%

MAX-PLANCK

Female  
41%

Diverse  
<1%



Male  
54%

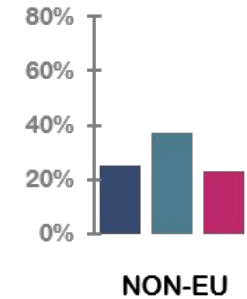
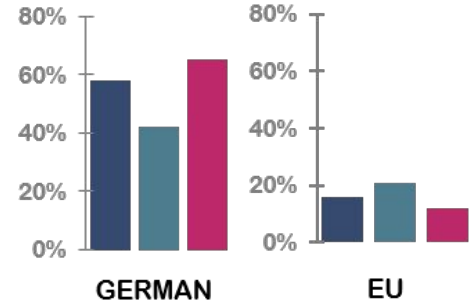
LEIBNIZ

Female  
54%



Male  
46%

## NATIONALITY



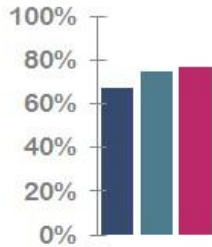
# Working conditions - What is it like to do a PhD?

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MAX-PLANCK

LEIBNIZ

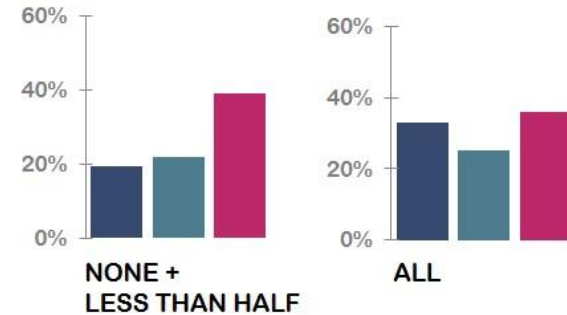
## WORKING HOURS >40H/WEEK



- Motivation is mainly derived from DRs' topics and interest in their work
- Scientific excellence, but high pressure environments

→ Majority (76%) works overtime

## HOLIDAYS TAKEN

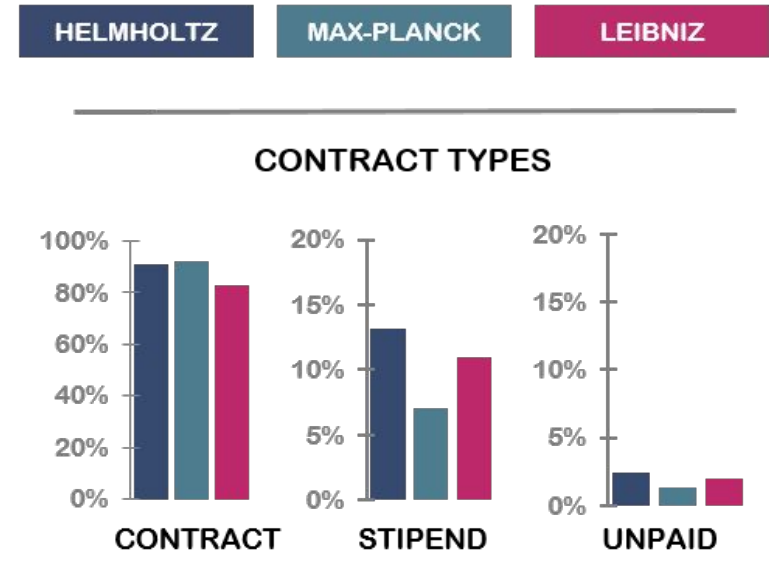


→ Primarily due to workload



# Working conditions - Employment types

- **Contracts**
  - Public service contract 50-100% (TVöD/TV-L E13)
  - Support/Subsidy Contract
- **Stipends**
  - Internal
  - External (e.g. Studienstiftung)



# Working conditions - Contracts

## MEAN MONTHLY NET INCOME



- Pay-gap between
  - Disciplines
  - Nationality
  - Gender

100%  
payment

	Salary (gross/net)	Hours/ Week	Social Insurance/Pension
65% TVöD E13 Contract	~ 2600€/~1700€	25	yes
Support/Subsidy Contract <i>based off of 65% TVöD E13</i>	~ 2600€/~1800€*	39	yes

\*no VBL contribution

# Working conditions - Stipends

- ~ 10% respondents are stipend holders
- Non-Europeans receive the most stipends (11-29%)



abolishment  
of stipends

	Salary (gross/net)	Hours/ Week	Social Insurance/Pension
65% TVöD E13 Contract	~ 2600€/~1700€	25	yes
Stipend (internal and external)	mean ~1200€	---	no

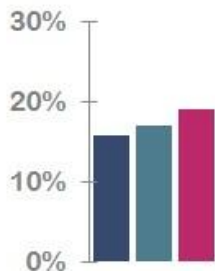
# Working conditions - Expected duration of the PhD

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LEIBNIZ

## CONTRACT DURATION



> 3 YEARS

4 year contracts

## EXPECTED DURATION

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3-4 years

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2.5-4 years

LEIBNIZ

3-5 years

- Mismatched contract duration
- Financial insecurity
- Difficult to plan ahead

# Working conditions

## Already on the right track

- Increase from 20 to 30 holidays in 2019
- Higher % of contracts than stipends
- Approval of BMBF for a 65% base salary

**But there is still room for improvement!**

## Our recommendations:

1. Harmonized working conditions
2. 100% payment for 100% work
3. Secure and stable working environments
  - a. without stipends
  - b. with contracts adjusted to the expected duration of 4 years

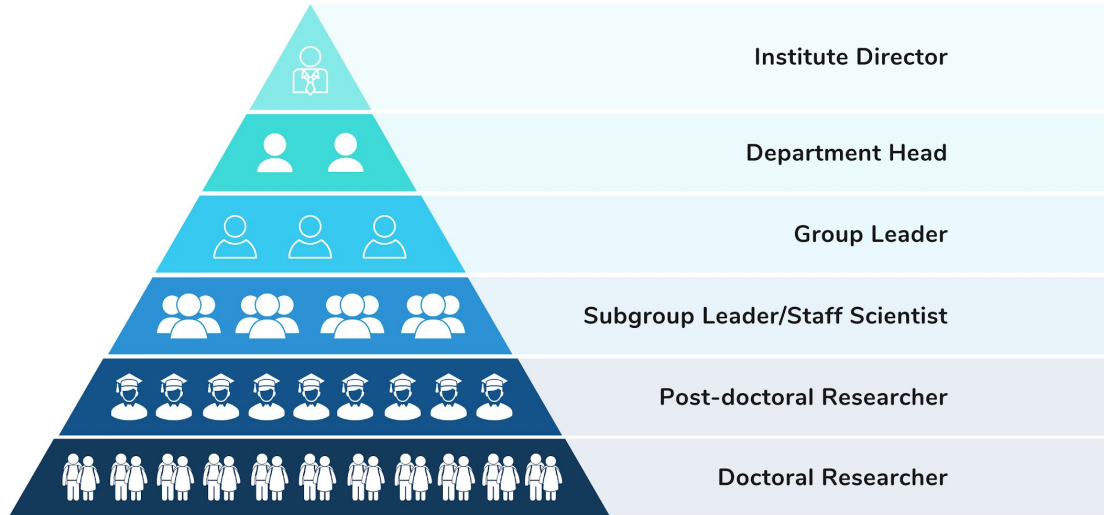
# Hierarchical structure of Academia

Few people hold the majority of power, with direct impact on the individual career prospects.

Therefore, the academic environment is prone to:

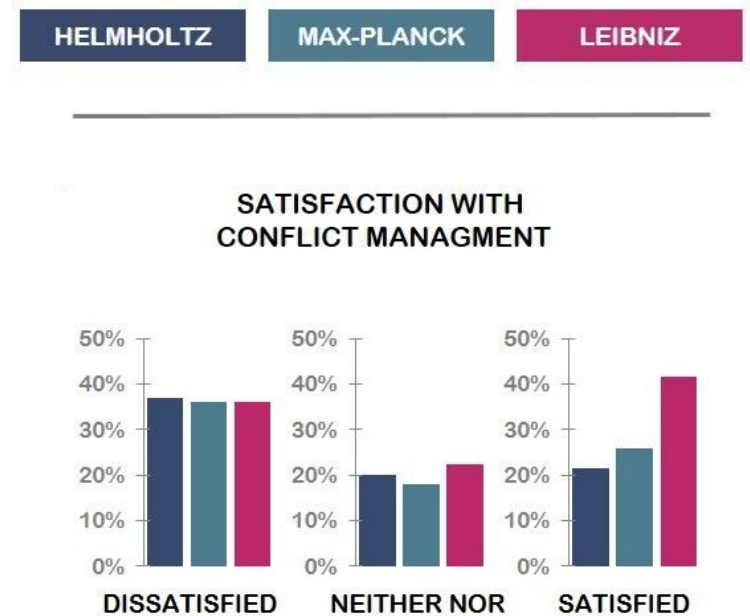
- Abuse of power
- Inequalities
- Over-dependencies
- Conflicts

Hierarchical structure of academic system

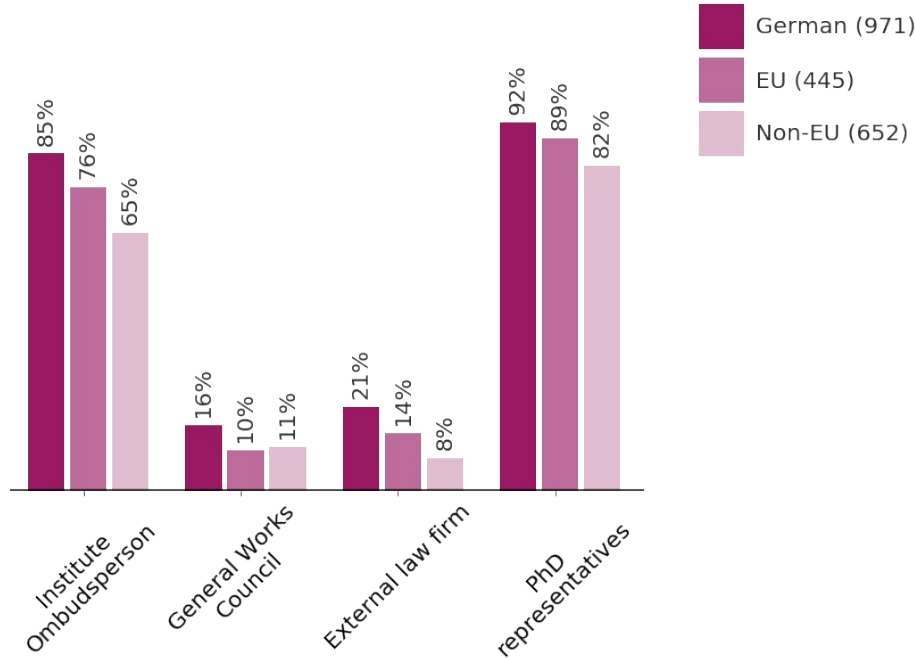


# Conflicts in the Workplace

- 15% of DRs experienced conflicts
  - Only 5% reported a conflict
  - 10% of DRs did not report their incident
  
- Satisfaction with conflict management
  - majority dissatisfied (~ 35%) with report
  - 20% DRs are neutral
  - ~20-40% are satisfied with report



# Awareness of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms



- Differences according to nationality
- Best known services:
  - PhD representatives
  - Ombudsperson
- PhD representatives have:
  - no training
  - no confidentiality agreement signed
  - no mandate



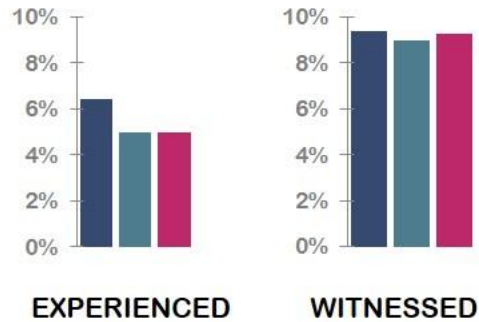
# Power Abuse

HELMHOLTZ

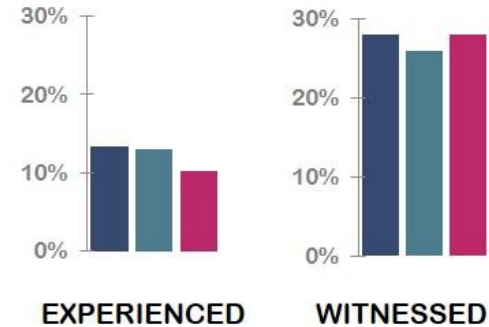
MAX-PLANCK

LEIBNIZ

## SEXUALIZED HARASSMENT FROM SUPERIOR



## BULLYING FROM SUPERIOR



% of experienced/witnessed at least once

# Power Abuse

## Our recommendations:

1. Prevention of Power Abuse
2. Protection of Victims
3. Arbitration of Conflicts by an Independent Committee
4. Implementation of Consequences for Offenders



### Power Abuse and Conflict Resolution

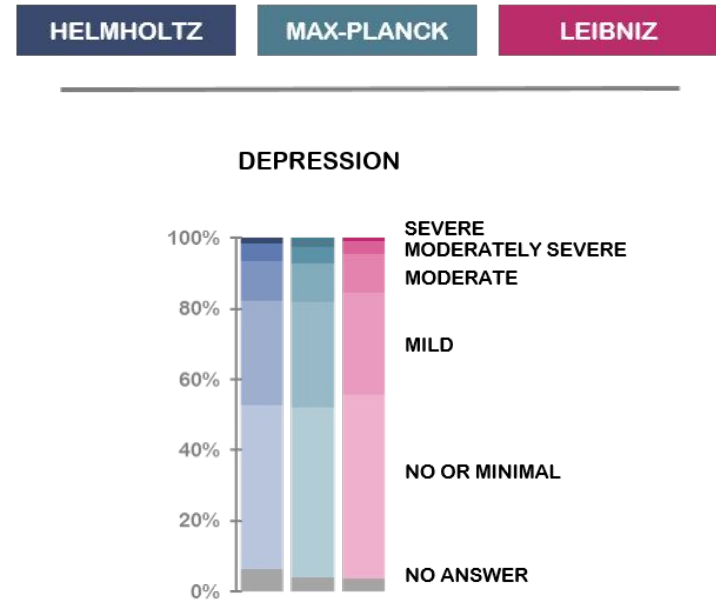
N² position paper<sup>1</sup>, May 2019

by the Helmholtz Juniors, the Doctoral Researchers of the IPP Mainz, the Leibniz PhD Network, the Max Planck PhDnet.



# Mental Health - Depression

- Patient Health Questionnaire - PHQ-9
- German population: ~9.9% (age group 18-29)
- Socio-economic status correlates negatively with depressive indicators  
Busch *et al.*, Bundesgesundheitsblatt, 2013
- 15-18% of DRs moderate to severe depressive symptoms



# Mental Health - Correlating Factors

- Long working hours and little time off
  - few holidays taken
  - work on weekends
- Precarious working situation
  - stipends
  - short duration contracts
- Power abuse cases

## Our recommendations:

- Raise awareness for the mental health situation of DRs
- Tackle the underlying mechanisms

# Key Takeaways

- 1) Most new contracts are a minimum of 65% E13 TVöD
- 2) Stipends are increasingly replaced by working contracts
- 3) The average duration of a PhD is ~4 years, but average contract duration is less
- 4) Increasing awareness for power abuse and mental health

Therefore, we  
continue to  
advocate for

100%  
payment

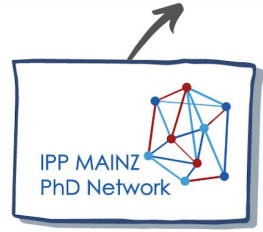
abolishment  
of stipends

4 year  
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prevention  
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abuse

# Thank you for your attention

we represent more than  
16,000 Doctoral Researchers  
all across Germany



## We thank:

- Survey groups
- Theresa Kuhl (plots)
- N<sup>2</sup> board & advisory board
- General Administrations

  @N2PhDnet

 @nsqrd

find out more about us  
and our networks!

HELMHOLTZ  
Juniors



n2board@lists.gwdg.de



THE NETWORK OF  
DOCTORAL RESEARCHER  
NETWORKS

# Q&A



**Moderated by:**



**Lindsey A. Bultema  
(Max Planck PhDnet  
spokesperson 2020)**

**Please write questions in the Q&A  
This portion is NOT recorded**