

What is the *Mittelbau*?

If you are working at this university in research, education or academic services without having a chair, and/or if you hold an academic qualification position, then you belong to the academic mid-level, the so-called *Mittelbau*. These positions are usually of limited-duration, their importance is often underappreciated, and people of the mid-level are usually underrepresented on a structural level.

At Uni Konstanz, the *Mittelbau* is now getting organised, to defend y/our interests!

A short video that explains the academic mid-level / akademische *Mittelbau*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtiBSwMO-Mk> <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtiBSwMO-Mk>>

Self-conception of the Mittelbauinitiative Konstanz

The *Mittelbauinitiative Konstanz* is to be a point of contact and mouthpiece for *akademische Mitarbeiter*innen* without a professorship. Together we strive for better working conditions in academia and for the democratization of universities. In particular, we call for more permanent employment other than the professorships, such as existing in the UK, France, or the USA.

Precarization of the Mittelbau

The working conditions of the *Mittelbau* at German universities are becoming increasingly precarious. 68 per cent of academics employed at German universities have temporary contracts (BuWiN 2013), 58 per cent (involuntarily) have part-time jobs (BuWiN 2017). The rigid regulations of the law on temporary job contracts in science (= *Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz*) blocks continued employment in the academic *Mittelbau* even when a project is near completion and when both employer and employee are interested in continuing employment. The planning of scientific career paths becomes impossible. The real problem - the mismatch between qualification positions and permanent positions - is not addressed.

The employees in the *Mittelbau* are confronted with ongoing financial uncertainty and serious social burdens. Forty-six per cent of the female academic staff at universities remains childless, even though 88 per cent of junior academics would like to have children (BuWiN 2017). This is reflecting fears about the future, which result in a dependency of employees that massively exceeds regular employment conditions. These structures are conducive to self-exploitation. The quality of "teaching and research" - the ultimate objective of the universities - is significantly affected. Advocacy for the interests of the *Mittelbau* in the universities, in addition to the normal workload, is rendered difficult by a lack of time, independence and secure future perspectives.

Identifying problems and finding solutions together

Our initiative intends therefore to document, together with our colleagues, problem areas in the various departments as well as the different forms of employment (*Akademische Mitarbeiter*, PostDoc positions, contracts for teaching, etc.) and to draw attention to them. Through close exchange and networking with other institutions and status groups in the university (such as the student councils, the convent of the PhD-students and the staff council), we want to develop strategies for tackling those difficulties that can be resolved within the university. Student assistants as well as doctoral students without employment contracts often face similar issues as the *Mittelbau*. We thus aim at cooperation especially also with these groups and welcome them in the initiative.

Building networks

In order to change the political and legal frameworks that currently form the basis for the precariousness of scientific work, there is moreover a need for action that goes beyond the University of Konstanz. That is why we strive for building networks on the national level with initiatives at other universities. Together we call for extensive reforms of academia: the improvement of working conditions and a thorough democratization of the universities.

Strengthening the Mittelbau

We want to give the *Mittelbau* within the university a voice. Getting organized together will enable a fast and constructive exchange of information and opinions in the *Mittelbau* of all departments as well as an effective communication of its interests to the outside. If we strive for a genuinely democratic university system, we, as *Mittelbau*, must make our voice heard.

Contact

If you are interested in our initiative, you can find further information on our website <https://www.uni-konstanz.de/forschen/wissenschaftlicher-nachwuchs/mittelbauinitiative-konstanz>. You can also subscribe to our e-mail list (<https://mailman.uni-konstanz.de/mailman/listinfo/mittelbau-initiative>).