

The Direction rejects all of the TAs' demands

No improvements will be considered to TA working conditions. This was the message that the Direction relayed following three negotiation meetings mandated by the Chambre des relations collectives de travail (CRCT).

As a result of this refusal to consider TAs' demands, TAs will continue to work under precarious part-time contracts, to pay reduced social charges, to have limited access to social protection, and to earn an undignified salary below what is considered necessary to live in Geneva, that is the minimum wage threshold for a full time job. Regardless of the time rate of the TA contract, indeed, TAs' working time is already fully taken by our commitments as assistants and by our own research, even though just a negligible percentage of the latter is remunerated through a wage.

During the first negotiation meeting on 1st February, the TA delegation demanded:

- 1) *The replacement of the distinction within the remuneration (scholarship + wage) with a single salary* in order to obtain full social protection (including unemployment, AVS and LPP pension contributions, accidents insurance, childcare, sickness and maternity leave) and adequate access to housing;
- 2) *An increase in the net remuneration* to improve our precarious living conditions. TAs' remuneration must allow us to live with dignity in Geneva;
- 3) *An increase of the activity rate of the TA contract* in order to ensure full social protection, to reflect the reality of TAs' work at the Institute, and to move in the direction of addressing the inequalities between teaching and research assistants;
- 4) *The implementation of the contract that we hoped to agree upon with the Direction to all PhD researchers performing labour as TAs at the Institute*, including those employed for the Applied Research Projects of the Master's programme in International and Development Studies, also known as "ARP tutors," who used to have TA contracts until January 2023.

During the second negotiation meeting, on 15th March, the Direction's delegation:

- Arrived with no proposals or budget estimations that could be used as a basis to co-create a solution to address TA precarity.
- Insisted that the current TA contract represents the best and only possible option for TAs. This position disregards our collective demands and our lived experiences.
- Refused to acknowledge that TAs are *workers* and not just PhD students, referring to our doctoral thesis as a personal project. However, TAs have a working contract with the Institute, and across Switzerland, teaching assistants' thesis time is considered *salaried work*.
- Stated that the only change to our contract that could be envisioned is to transfer a part of the scholarship that is part of TAs' remuneration into a 50% contract under which *TAs would receive a lower net wage*. It is important to note that, as a national trend, most institutions in Switzerland provide TAs with contracts (remunerated through a wage on which full social protection costs are paid) for which at least 40% of the working time is devoted to the doctoral research, and that this minimum percentage is increasing (up to 80% for PhD researchers employed as research assistants on projects funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, or SNSF). A high-quality PhD cannot be completed without a fair wage and time dedicated to the doctoral research paid through a wage.
- Forewarned the possibility of cutting TA positions. The TA delegation has clearly stated that any loss in TA positions is a *red line*, or a breach in the negotiation process, as this would adversely impact not only TAs but also students and professors who rely on assistants to ensure the quality of teaching and education.

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- Refused to provide budgetary information, including the allocation of public funds (including those from the Département de l'Instruction Publique).

During the third negotiation meeting, on 27th March, the TA delegation presented multiple scenarios that would lead to improved contractual conditions. Drawing from publicly available figures, *the TA delegation estimated that the Direction would need to allocate just an additional 1% of the Institute's budget to address TA precarity.*

As a response, the Direction's delegation:

- Stated that it entered negotiations without any manoeuvring room concerning the Institute's budget (regardless of the flexible and multi-year timeframe proposed by the TA delegation).
- Provided the TA delegation with figures of budgetary allocations on TA salaries in the past years that were inconsistent to numbers shared previously. When asked for clarification about the source of the figures, the Direction's delegation was unable to answer. Requests to improve financial transparency and share budgetary allocations, especially for public funds, were repeatedly denied.
- Refused to even consider requesting the Institute's funders for a budget increase to reduce TAs' precarity and address the lack of full social protections.
- Defended TAs' poor contractual conditions and the inequality of treatment between research and teaching assistants based on the fact that the Institute is managed by a private-law foundation and, therefore, is not compelled to follow public standards at the cantonal or federal levels, such as the Geneva state salary grid or the guidelines of the SNSF (which, again, highlight the importance for PhD researchers to spend most of their time on their doctoral projects).

The Direction has rejected the entirety of TAs' collective demands and reiterated that its prerogative is to not make any concessions nor look for any budgetary support or reallocations for TAs. The Direction has refused to reallocate or fundraise for the equivalent of an additional 1% of the budget to address TA precarity. It has also categorically turned down all requests to share any budgetary information. To TAs, these are clear signals of the Direction's unwillingness to genuinely negotiate and find a compromise with TA representatives. Meetings have regrettably ended without a co-created and gradual solution to improve TAs' contractual conditions. As a result, *TA representatives closed the process at the CRCT, regaining our full capacity for collective and public action and mediatization of our struggle.*

The refusal to address TAs' collective demands is unacceptable. The time for action is now.

SAVE THE DATE: 10TH MAY

DAY OF ACTION AND SOLIDARITY WITH TAs

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