

The new ADA Board meets with the Direction, but the stalemate continues

At two separate meetings involving the ADA Board and the Direction, the same stalemate afflicting this relationship for almost a year since the CRCT process, could not be overcome. The Direction verbally refused to acknowledge the Petition, and, further, rejected ADA's entire framing of the discussion, as well as even the possibility of future negotiations involving SIT.

Collège des enseignant-e-s (14/11)

At the semestrial meeting of all faculty with the Direction and student/assistant representatives, the Direction repeated their usual talking points, with a few innovations.

The Direction emphasized the improvements made to the condition of assistants through the PhD reform (with "the only fully-funded PhDs in Switzerland"), ignoring the experiences and accounts of TA's, who have repeatedly asserted that this income does not allow them to live decently and make ends meet in Geneva, an aspect emphasised by AdA-SIT with regards to this 'model'.

The Direction also claimed that the previous Board had not behaved like "adults" and hoped that the new one would. They also made many of the claims that are covered in more detail in the next section (about not receiving the petition, about this petition causing problems in her negotiations with the government, etc.).

Despite what the Direction later told ADA about the fact that the maximum financial ambition on the horizon is to avoid cuts, rather than increase spending (see below in the section on the ADA-Direction meeting), during the Collège des enseignant-e-s (CoE) they said: "We are having an extremely strong mobilization on the part of the Direction to find innovative financial stabilization solutions which allow us to continue all the activities and missions of the Institute and new projects to guarantee the prestige of the Institute."

Additionally, the Director of Research spoke about the Research Centres reform, and mistakenly asserted that ADA had sent a letter to the SNF about this issue. It was actually RAs who did so, without ADA involvement. When ADA contested this, the Director said that it was a previous Board who had done it (they had not). He later admitted he was mistaken in private, and committed that this would be rectified in the official meeting minutes, and at the next Collège.

Meeting with Direction (20/11)

On November 20th, the new ADA board was invited to officially meet the Direction and discuss ADA's priorities for the ongoing term. Disappointingly, the meeting centered on the

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Direction's vague suggestion for "checking facts and aligning narratives" in order to continue any discussion toward acknowledging ADA's demands.

The main discussion points were as follows:

- The Direction maintained its **non-recognition of the Petition**. ADA asked repeatedly for them to provide a written response, and they refused. As in the CoE, the Direction also insisted on the fact that they had not received it. The Petition, however, was sent by email and *courrier recommandé* on the 3rd of October 2023, to the Direction and Conseil de Fondation.
- As in the CoE, the Direction **insisted that the PhD package is already ideal**
- The Direction suggested that the ongoing negotiation with the government over the next Convention d'Objectif¹ (COB) could result in an extra 2 million CHF for the Institute's budget, after which the Institute could look into TA demands. **The TAs' demands will not be addressed at all until the end of Convention negotiations.**
- The ADA Board suggested that both sides could collaborate to obtain more funding for TAs in the next COB, that this is the right time to make such a demand. The Direction rejected this proposal, alleging the extra 2 million CHF would only **allow them not to make overall cuts, and cannot be used on new spending.**
- The Direction also alleged that the Petition sent to the Grand Conseil added an extra layer of difficulty for negotiating the Convention d'Objectif. However, once ADA proposed to use the petition to pursue together an increase in the budget with the government, the Direction denied it, **arguing that the Petition had no impact.**
- The Direction demanded a **"fact-check and narrative alignment"** meeting before any negotiating session can occur. They insist that this meeting must occur without SIT or preparatory documents. When ADA asked if the Direction would consider returning to negotiations *after* this fact-finding meeting, they refused to commit.
- ADA requested that the Direction give a formal written response to the Petition signed by 916 members of the Geneva higher education sector. Such a rebuttal would serve the community by clearly establishing the Direction's specific position on each issue raised by the Petition, and could serve as a basis to the "fact-finding" meeting. The Direction refused.
- The Direction insisted that **IHEID will never adopt the Unige assistants model**. The "Anglo-Saxon" model adopted by the Institute, in which Assistants are considered PhD students pursuing a personal endeavor, will remain.

In a revealing moment, when ADA asked the Direction if they would even *consider* negotiating sessions with a joint ADA-SIT delegation if ADA accepted this "fact-finding" framework, the Direction refused to answer.

Given such an impasse, and lack of commitments on the other side, the ADA Board did not accept their framing of the issue, and did not schedule a "fact-finding" session.

¹ This is a recurring agreement between the government and IHEID on their relationship, and includes a funding element. There is a separate COB for the Canton and Confederation.

A puzzling accusation

Given negative past experiences in this regard, the ADA Board diligently kept its own minutes of both meetings, and sent them to the Direction's Executive Secretary. Regarding the ADA-Direction meeting, the Secretary later emailed ADA claiming that the minutes were too close to verbatim, and accused the Board of recording the meeting. This is untrue and rather baffling, given that precise note-taking is a basic skill honed over years of schooling.

This is another example of how the Direction behaves with staff representatives, and helps explain why this post-CRCT stalemate endures.