Statutes of the Max Planck Society PostdocNet

1 Definitions and Participation

1.1 Preamble
Henceforth, postdoctoral researchers within the Max Planck Gesellschaft (MPG) establish a network to improve the working life of all Postdocs within the Max Planck Gesellschaft (MPG Postdocs), maximise opportunities for mentorship, academic exchange and to strengthen MPG Postdoc interactions through solidarity.

1.2 Definition
An MPG Postdoc is any person who has been awarded a doctoral degree and is currently undertaking scientific research within the MPG by means of a time-limited contractual relationship (e.g. employment contract, stipend from internal or external funding). A postdoc is defined for the purposes of the PostdocNet as Doctorate degree (PhD) holders who have not yet established a significant level of independence. For the purposes of the MPG, this includes Project Leaders but should, except with good cause, exclude group leaders.

1.3 Name
The name of the network is “Max Planck Society PostdocNet” or, for short, PostdocNet.

1.4 Language
The working language of the PostdocNet is English.

1.5 Aims
The PostdocNet acts on its own terms and independently of the MPG. The PostdocNet provides support to all postdoctoral researchers within the MPG regardless of ability, gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, religion, identity and experience. The PostdocNet aims to provide support by means of fostering the professional development of MPG Postdocs in an environment which values their health and well-being and to enhance the visibility of their contributions to the MPG.

1.5.1 Provide an inclusive space to all MPG Postdocs
To provide support, as well as an inclusive space to all MPG Postdocs, the PostdocNet will:

- Organize interdisciplinary meetings
- Organize an annual General Meeting, and
- Organize and fund academic seminars

To this end, the PostdocNet brings together MPG Postdocs from different institutes in workshops, meetings and seminars as organized by its various Working Groups.
1.5.2 Improve the professional development of MPG Postdocs

To improve the professional development of MPG Postdocs, the PostdocNet will:

- Encourage cross-institutional and interdisciplinary networking
- Organize workshops (for instance, on career and professional development opportunities that include those outside of academia), research seminars and scientific meetings tailored for postdocs (i.e., to raise common concerns within institutes)
- Establish a mentoring program for all postdocs
- Record the immediate career trajectories of postdocs after they leave the MPG
- Take actions to increase diversity including, but not limited to, gender balance at the postdoctoral level within institutes
- Highlight postdoctoral contributions to MPG research through social engagement and outreach
- Promote the scientific careers of MPG Postdocs

1.5.3 Identify and address collective concerns

MPG Postdocs at different institutes often find themselves confronted with difficulties that are of a similar nature or with problems that cannot be resolved with the help of institute representatives alone. Additionally, possible solutions to common problems/issues may vary from institute to institute. This might result in discrepancies in support and opportunities made available to MPG Postdocs. In that regard, the PostdocNet aims to facilitate recognition, discussion and to provide solution of issues recurring at multiple institutes through central hubs of the PostdocNet and represent all MPG Postdocs towards the MPG Administrative Headquarters (Generalverwaltung), the MPG Leadership and to other external parties through the Spokesperson of the PostdocNet. To achieve this, PostdocNet will:

- Provide a formal space to raise and address concerns/complaints
- Provide organized and structured support system to address concerns, i.e. by:
  - directing concerns and complaints to the appropriate party or parties
  - following up with progress reports
  - overseeing implementation at an institutional level

1.6 Participation

All MPG Postdocs are invited and encouraged to contribute to PostdocNet activities, either at the General Meeting or at their own institutes. All MPG Postdocs are eligible to hold PostdocNet offices at all levels.

2 Organizational Structure and Officers

PostdocNet officers are Steering Group members, Working Group Leaders and External Postdoc Representatives, and are stratified across two levels: central and local. At the central level, the Steering Group broadly coordinates the entire PostdocNet and interacts with entities outside the network. Working Group Leaders
coordinate the activities of the PostdocNet's many subgroups and act as contact points between these Working Groups and the Steering Group.

At the local level, MPG Postdocs within each institute are represented, most directly, by an External Postdoc Representative. A single External Postdoc Representative is involved in functioning of the PostdocNet. External Postdoc Representatives may also serve as Internal Postdoc Representatives within their respective institutes. The possibility of electing more than one Internal Representative is left to the discretion of the postdoc community within each institute.

2.1 Central structure and officers

2.1.1 General Assembly, General Meeting, and Delegates

Once each year, the PostdocNet will hold a General Meeting to bring together all officers and other interested MPG Postdocs. At the General Meeting, all MPG Postdocs in attendance at the General Meeting (also known as the General Assembly) determine the network’s general strategic development and hold elections for its officers at the central level (§6). All MPG Postdocs may attend the General Meeting. Other guests must be invited and approved by the Steering Group; however, will not vote in the General Meeting. The date of the General Meeting must be announced at least three months in advance, using the PostdocNet’s official channels. The General Meeting must end no later than 30th of May. In the case of exceptional circumstances leading to the cancellation of the general meeting, such as country-wide travel restrictions experienced in 2020, the General Meeting may be delayed to a later date that calendar year, to be selected at the discretion of the Steering Group. Minutes of the General Meeting are to be published on the PostdocNet webpage no later than eight weeks after the General Meeting has concluded. These minutes include annual reports of the Steering Group, the Financial Officer and Working Groups. MPG Postdocs of each institute shall send one delegate to the General Meeting to vote on their behalf. Other members of the General Assembly vote only in minor votes. The delegate should be the External Postdoc Representative of the institute, but in case the Postdoc Representative cannot attend the General Meeting, they may appoint, as a proxy, one MPG Postdoc from the institute to serve as a delegate.

If an institute does not have an External Postdoc Representative, but one or more postdocs from that institute sign up to attend the General Meeting, a single delegate to represent the institute in major voting must be selected from those registered attendees. The Secretary Group will email all registered attendees from each institute with no External Representative, and request that they email the secretary group beforehand to nominate their preferred delegate from the cohort of postdocs attending the general meeting. The nominated delegate will then have the vote for the institute during major voting. The result of the decision on the delegate for an institute must be communicated by the Secretary Group by email to all registered attendees for a given institute no later than one day before the start of the General Meeting. To ensure transparency, following the General Meeting, the Secretary Group will produce a report with the names of all institute delegates who participated in major voting. This report will be released with the meeting minutes on the PostdocNet webpage, no later than 8 weeks after the General Meeting has concluded.
2.1.2 Steering Group
The Steering Group is responsible for the overall development of the PostdocNet according to the resolutions of the General Assembly. The Steering Group consists of the Spokesperson, the Deputy Spokesperson (also the Financial Officer), the three Section Representatives, and the General Secretary. In addition to the fixed responsibilities of each office, Steering Group members adopt responsibilities for other organs: each Working Group is assigned, by the Steering Group, a Steering Group member that oversees it. The composition of the Steering Group of the Max Planck PostdocNet should reflect the diversity of MPG Postdocs and the MPG institutes. The Steering Group meets at least quarterly, the meeting of which is the responsibility of the spokesperson and keeps publicly available minutes of meetings.

2.1.3 Spokesperson
The Spokesperson represents and manages the PostdocNet and heads the Steering Group. The Spokesperson is responsible for communication within the network as well as with external parties, such as the President of the MPG and other official MPG branches. The Spokesperson shall report on the work of the Steering Group in front of the General Assembly during the General Meeting, near the end of their term.

2.1.4 Deputy Spokesperson
The Deputy Spokesperson takes on the responsibilities of the Spokesperson when the Spokesperson is temporarily unable to carry out their duties. In the case that the Spokesperson is unable to complete their term of office, the Deputy Spokesperson may become the new Spokesperson and a new Deputy Spokesperson must be selected. Next to the Spokesperson, the Deputy Spokesperson is responsible for the representation of the PostdocNet.

The Deputy Spokesperson also acts as the Financial Officer (Zeichnungsbeauftragte/r) and is responsible for the PostdocNet’s funds. Only the Financial Officer is authorized to sign payments from the PostdocNet’s budget. The name of the Financial Officer must be communicated to the MPG Administrative Headquarters (Generalverwaltung) within four weeks after the General Meeting has concluded. The Financial Officer reports every transaction to the Spokesperson in a timely manner and provides a final statement of accounts to the Spokesperson and the succeeding Financial Officer at the end of their term. In the event that the Financial Officer is unable to act at any required moment (e.g. sickness) they need to formally notify the Steering Group. The Steering Group must decide a temporary substitute from one of the members of the Steering Group.

2.1.5 Section Representatives
The three Section Representatives represent the diverse scientific disciplines of MPG Postdocs in their respective MPG sections: Biology and Medicine Section (BMS); Chemistry, Physics and Technology Section (CPT); and Human Sciences Section (HS). The Section Representatives are the primary points of contact within the Steering Group for Postdoc Representatives at their constituent institutes and should thus maintain contact with those representatives. Section Representatives represent
the interests of their section’s Postdocs within the Steering Group. Section Representatives work to expand the membership of the PostdocNet, implement local PostdocNet structures, and help to advertise the General Meeting to their respective section. Additionally, Section Representatives support the Spokesperson in liaising with the Sections considered as a governing body of the MPG; this includes liaising with their Chairpersons and with the Speakers of Scientific Staff Representatives.

2.1.6 General Secretary
The General Secretary oversees the administrative tasks of the central level of PostdocNet, including the elections of local Postdoc Representatives. For assistance with these tasks, the General Secretary leads the Secretary Group formed in the General Assembly. However, unlike other Working Group Leaders, the General Secretary is elected by the delegates of the General Assembly as part of the Steering Group. During their term, the General Secretary may add more MPG Postdocs to the Secretary Group.

2.1.7 Working Groups
The Working Groups (WGs) are essential to the PostdocNet’s mission, as they provide the principal platform for the network’s day-to-day activities. They are formed among the members of the General Assembly during the General Meeting, and each Group has a single Leader. During their term, each WG Leader may add more MPG Postdocs. The WG Leaders report regularly to the Spokesperson. The following four WG are permanently established:
- General Meeting WG (organisation of the annual General Meeting)
- Secretary WG (administration and support of the network)
- Career Development WG (organisation of soft skills and scientific seminars)
- Communication WG (design and maintenance of the PostdocNet’s web and social media presence).

Upon a successful motion proposed by the Spokesperson, the General Assembly can establish additional WGs for a one-year term.

2.1.8 Communication
All working groups meet at least quarterly and keep minutes of meetings in an OwnCloud folder available to members of the Steering Group and other Working groups.

2.2 Local structure and officers

2.2.1 Internal Postdoc Representatives
The MPG Postdocs affiliated with an institute elect Internal Postdoc Representatives for their institute as their direct representatives in the institute. Those MPG Postdocs are the local constituents of the elected Internal Postdoc Representatives for that institute. Internal Postdoc Representatives play a crucial role in the representation of MPG Postdocs at their institute. An institute’s Internal Postdoc Representatives maintain cohesion of their local constituents and represent the interests of those
constituents to the institute’s management and administration. Concretely, Internal Postdoc Representatives convene regular meetings of the MPG Postdocs at their institutes; they assist with elections and campaigning at the institutes; they look for and create opportunities to improve postdoctoral training conditions for their constituents; and they keep in touch with their institute's directors, administration, academic staff member in the scientific council, ombudsperson, Promotionsbeauftragte/r, and works council (Betriebsrat).

2.2.2 External Postdoc Representative
The MPG Postdocs affiliated with an institute additionally elect a single External Postdoc Representative to serve as their representative to the central level of PostdocNet. Whereas the Internal Postdoc Representatives act entirely within their institutes, the External Postdoc Representative acts within PostdocNet, for example, by reporting to their Section Representative and by voting as a Delegate at the General Meeting on behalf of their institute. The External Postdoc Representative may be one of the Internal Postdoc Representatives of the institute. External representative conveys the decision of the PostdocNet to their institute.

2.3 Terms of office

2.3.1. Officers at central level
For all officers at the central level, the term of office begins on 1st of July and ends on 30th of June the following year. In the case of exceptional circumstances leading to postpone the elections in General Assembly after 30th of June the following year, such as country-wide travel restrictions experienced in 2020, all officers stay in office until two weeks after successors have been elected.

If a member of the Steering Group is unable to complete the term of office, the remaining members of the Steering Group should select a replacement from MPG postdocs within one month and communicate this to the PostdocNet through the PostdocNet’s official channels.

In the case that a working group leader is unable to complete their term of office, they must select a replacement within the working group before their departure and the Steering Group should be informed in advance.

All PostdocNet officers should summarize their experiences in writing for their successors in order to ensure smooth transitions and efficient knowledge management. The outgoing Steering Group instructs the newly elected Steering Group between the election of the new Steering Group and their assumption of office. At least one member of the outgoing Steering Group should be available to the succeeding Steering Group as a consultant for the first half of their term.

2.3.2. Officers at local level
For External Postdoc Representatives, the term of office and the respective election procedure should follow Appendix A. For Internal Postdoc Representatives, the term of office and election procedure is to be determined locally.
3 Voting and Elections
Various forms of voting and election take place at the different levels of PostdocNet. On the local level, voting occurs within each institute for the election of PostDoc Representatives. The election of PostDoc Representatives is described in full detail in Appendix A. To facilitate the organization of election across all institutes, local elections should generally be held every year at least one month in advance of the general assembly as set by the Steering Group.

At the central level, voting occurs at the General Assembly of the PostdocNet to serve two goals. First, to maintain democratic legitimacy, certain critical votes are reserved for delegates only. Second, to encourage active participation of everyone at the General Assembly, non-critical votes are open to all members of the General Assembly. Voting at the General Assembly is therefore categorized into major and minor voting, respectively.

3.1 Major Voting
Major voting consists of the elections of Steering Group members and votes to ratify new versions of these statutes. Only delegates may participate in a major voting, for which each delegate is allocated a ballot. Major voting requires a quorum: the delegates of a majority of the institutes of the MPG must be present.

3.2 Election of Steering Group Members
The elections of the Spokesperson, Deputy Spokesperson and General Secretary require an absolute majority of Delegates. The elections of the three Section Representatives require an absolute majority of Delegates among the institutes of the respective section. In the case that no candidate receives an absolute majority, a run-off vote between the two candidates that received the most votes will be held. If more than two candidates are tied, all tied candidates participate in the run-off vote. If the run-off vote is also tied, the election for this position will be repeated. If there is only a single candidate for any position, the ballot shall contain the options “Yes” and “No” and the candidate shall be elected only in the case of a majority of the “Yes”-votes. In the case of a majority “No” vote, a new vote will be held. In the case of a second majority “No” vote, the position will remain vacant until the following election period.

The composition of the Steering Group of the Max Planck PostdocNet should reflect the diversity of the represented group of Postdocs and institutes. The elections for the Steering Group shall be held at the last day of the General Assembly of PostdocNet. Any MPG-PostDoc that is present at the General Assembly can stand for election for Steering Group offices, provided that they intend to stay in the expected term of the Steering Group. Holding the elections earlier requires a successful motion proposed by the Spokesperson. WGs must be formed before the election of the Steering Group takes place. Additional rules for the election of Spokesperson, Deputy Spokesperson, and Section Representatives follow.
3.3 Rules for electing Spokesperson and Deputy Spokesperson
Candidates nominated for Spokesperson or Deputy Spokesperson can also be nominated for General Secretary or a Section Representative position, but cannot hold multiple positions. Hence, elections for Spokesperson and Deputy Spokesperson have to be held before the rest of the Steering Group is elected. If a WG Leader is elected Spokesperson or Deputy Spokesperson, they are no longer WG Leader and the WG shall determine a new leader before the end of the General Assembly.

3.4 Rules for Electing Section Representatives
A single Section Representative for each one of the three MPG sections (Biology and Medicine, Humanities, Chemistry, Physics, and Technology) will be elected. Any candidate that does not receive a valid vote will not be eligible for appointment this term.
In case the Section Representative positions cannot be filled, upon a successful motion proposed by the Spokesperson, the General Assembly can hold an additional round of voting in which the sectional restrictions on candidates and electorate are lifted, to the effect that any vote can be cast for any candidate so that all three seats on the Steering Group may be filled. A candidate thus elected will be a Steering Group member-at-large. In the event of a tie, the mechanism should follow that indicated in section 3.2.

3.5 Ratification of New Statutes
These statutes require a validation in practice and therefore, a second confirming or amending vote on them is required within the following two general assemblies after the initial ratification.
These statutes may be replaced by a new statute upon a ratification vote. The proposed new statutes must have been sent to the MPG Postdocs of all institutes no later than two weeks prior to the first day of the General Assembly. The draft may be further amended at the General Meeting, before ratification, by motions proposed by members of the General Assembly. The ratification vote to replace these statutes with the (possibly amended) new version requires a two-thirds majority of the “Yes” votes of present delegates. In the case of a successful vote, these statutes are replaced with the (possibly amended) new version and a record of the change must be appended.

3.6 Minor Voting
Minor Voting consists of votes on motions proposed by the General Assembly and the election of WG Leaders. All members of the General Assembly are eligible to participate in minor voting. Minor voting may be conducted by voice or show-of-hands vote.

3.7 Votes on Motions
At the discretion of the Steering Group, an immediate minor vote may be taken on a motion proposed by a member of the General Assembly. A successful motion requires a simple majority of the votes by all members of the General Assembly present, in
which case the motion must be enacted. A motion may not be used to circumvent major voting.

3.8 Election of Working Group Leaders
Except for the Secretary Group (lead by the General Secretary as defined in 2.1.6), the members of each group conduct a minor vote to elect that Group’s Leader. Each election requires a simple majority of the votes of the Group’s members.

3.9 Announcement of election results
After all elections have successfully conducted and the positions have been filled, the outgoing Steering Group must inform all MPG Postdocs and external parties, such as MPG Administrative Headquarters (Generalverwaltung) and other official MPG branches, the election results including the names of all elected officers at the central level, within one week after the General Meeting.

4 Enforcement
These statutes come into force the day after they are published on the PostdocNet website (http://www.postdocnet.mpg.de), having previously been accepted by the Delegates in the PostdocNet General Assembly and signed by a majority of Steering Group members.

Accepted and signed on April 30, 2019
5.1 Election of Postdoc Representatives

At every institute founded or adopted by the Senate of the Max Planck Society, and its associated institutes (Research Center CAESAR and Ernst Strüngmann Institute) - irrespective of existing sub-classifications - an External Postdoc Representative there associated shall be elected for the period of one year.

The following general rules apply for External Postdoc Representatives:

1. All MPG Postdocs (as defined in the Preamble) affiliated with an Institute have the right to elect the Postdoc Representative at this Institute. As a general rule, all postdocs who have not acquired a level of independence comparable to that of a Research Group Leader ought to be allowed to vote in the Election and who are employed/enrolled in their institute on a fixed term basis should be allowed to vote. For a more specific definition of a Postdoc is required to define the pool of candidates or voters, ECs are encouraged to consult the European framework definition (R2 Researcher) which is the basis on which the European Union decides in which bracket a researcher fits within the academic pyramid for funding applications. ([https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/europe/career-development/training-researchers/research-profiles-descriptors](https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/europe/career-development/training-researchers/research-profiles-descriptors))

2. MPG Postdocs who are entitled to vote are eligible to stand for election.

3. MPG Postdocs who are affiliated with more than one Institute have to decide before the election period at which Institute they want to be eligible to vote and stand for election.

There may be any number of Internal Postdoc Representatives at each institute. The procedure of electing Internal Postdoc Representatives may be decided by the individual institutes.

5.2 Formation of an Election Committee

The election will be prepared for and conducted by an Election Committee which consists of at least two members; all members must be eligible to vote. These members must be announced to those eligible to vote upon formation of the Committee. Once constituted, no changes shall be made to the Election Committee except to replace a member that is no longer able to perform their duties. In this case, a new member can be appointed to the Election Commitment as a replacement. Any changes made to the Election Committee must be announced to those eligible to vote; this announcement must include an account of the rationale behind the changes in question. The members of the Election Committee forfeit their eligibility to stand for election.

5.3 Tasks of the Election Committee

The Election Committee has the following tasks:

1. The Committee must prepare a list of those who are eligible to vote. Although the Institute’s administration will typically assist the Election Committee in
preparing this list, it is ultimately up to the committee to determine who is eligible
to vote. The role of the Institute’s administration is thus explicitly limited to the
provision of logistic support so as to ensure the independence of the election
process. The Election Committee will decide, upon any objection, the accuracy
of the list.

2. The Committee should determine a procedure for voting remotely to collect
votes from those eligible voters unable to participate in the vote on the day of
the election.

3. The Committee must declare the election not less than two weeks prior to the
starting date of the election to all those eligible to vote. The election declaration
must contain:
   a. the place and date of the election,
   b. a procedure for voting remotely, when needed,
   c. a copy of this election procedure, and
   d. a description of each position

4. The Committee must call for candidates who wish to stand for election, and
announce the final list of candidates.

5. The Committee must supervise the due and proper casting of votes and must
count the votes.

6. The Committee must announce the result of the election immediately and report
it to the General Secretary.

5.4 Election Procedure

1. Voters have only one vote to give. The vote is cast by marking a cross against
one of the names listed on the ballot paper. If there is only one candidate
standing for the election, the ballot paper must include the alternatives “Yes”,
“No”, and “Abstention”. Ballot papers on which more than one name is crossed
of which contains additional remarks will be invalid.

2. Voters not present on the day(s) of election may vote remotely in accordance
with the election declaration. When the casting of votes is concluded, the
Election Committee must add the votes received remotely, ensuring that no
remote voter already cast a vote as in paragraph 1.

3. The election requires a quorum: at least 50% of eligible voters must participate
in the election. If no quorum is reached, the election shall be invalid. The
election procedure must then be repeated at a later date announced to all
eligible voters, but this second vote does not require a quorum.

4. The candidate with the most votes will be elected. In the event of a tie, a second
round of voting will take place with candidates to be decided by the Election
Committee on the basis of the first round of voting i.e. those who tied. In the
second round, the candidate with the most votes is elected. In the event of a tie
in the second round, the election must be carried out with the formation of a
new Election Committee from the beginning. If only a single MPG-PostDoc
stands as a candidate in the first round of voting and fails to achieve at least
50% “Yes” votes among valid votes cast, the election shall be invalid.
5. Should a draw occur in the second round of voting, the whole election procedure has to be repeated until one candidate receives votes from more than 50% of eligible voters.

6. An electronic record must be kept of each election. This record must in particular state:
   a. the name of the institute,
   b. the name of the Election Committee members,
   c. the number of people eligible to vote,
   d. the number of votes cast per candidate,
   e. the number of invalid votes, and
   f. if the election was valid, a statement of acceptance signed by the elected candidate.

5.5 Electronic Voting
With due consideration to the interests of confidentiality and in compliance with the specified deadlines, the election may be prepared for and conducted by suitable electronic means. The arrangements contained above are to be applied accordingly.

5.6 Contesting an Election
A challenge to an election shall be resolved by the Secretary Group. Any such challenge must be presented electronically no later than two weeks after the day of the election for the attention of the General Secretary. The Secretary Group and General Secretary can determine whether an election should be re-contested based on submitted testimony, with a written justification of the decision submitted to the Steering Group for their record.

5.7 Reporting the Election to the General Secretary
The elected candidate for the Institutes must be reported as the PostDoc Representative to the General Secretary. The Election Committee shall provide the General Secretary with the name and contact information of the elected Representative and the electronic record of the election procedure.

5.8 Deputy External Representative
At the discretion of the administering Election Committee, it is possible to elect a deputy external Postdoc representative at a given institute for a given election. This deputy external representative acts to support and act on behalf of the External representative in cases where the workload is too great for the External representative. However, any legislative or official responsibility remains with the External representative. The deputy External representative is the candidate who fields the second most votes during the election, and becomes the External representative in the situation whereby the External representative withdraws from their post. The Election Committee must state that a deputy role is being formed for an election to the voting cohort prior to the election at least one week before the week is held via
email. Only if clear notice is given that a deputy post will be created at a given election is the role created and not post-election.

5.9 Term of Office
If there is no challenge to the election, the term of office commences at least two weeks after the day of the election, as determined by the Election Committee, and lasts for one year. The outgoing PostDoc Representative should be available to the succeeding PostDoc Representative as a consultant for at least the first half of their term.

5.10 Premature withdrawal
Should the PostDoc Representative withdraw from office prior to the expiry of their one-year term of office, a new election must be held at the Institute and the General Secretary must be informed. The newly elected PostDoc Representative’s term of office ends when their predecessor's term would have ended.

An elected PostDoc Representative prematurely withdraws from office if they:
   a. permanently depart the Institute,
   b. loses their status as a PostDoc,
   c. temporarily leave the Institute for more than four months, or
   d. resign.

Resignations of PostDoc Representatives take immediate effect and are to be announced at the Institute and sent to the General Secretary.
APPENDIX B:
Conflict Resolution within the PostdocNet

The day-to-day operation of the PostdocNet can be stressful and lead to disagreements between members of the Steering Group and/or Working Group leaders. In such cases, these disagreements may be resolved on their own through dialogue between the parties involved. However, on occasion disagreements and conflicts between members may lead to one or more parties feeling abused or aggrieved in a way that goes beyond normal disagreements, and which in some cases may lead to escalation and the need for arbitration.

6.1 Definition of Conflict
A conflict is defined as an argument or disagreement that is protracted in length. In the context of the PostdocNet, this relates to a situation in which a disagreement or argument between one or more members of the executive body for the PostdocNet (i.e. the Steering Group or Working Group leader) resulting in one party feeling abused or belittled by another member over a period of time. Under this situation the actions of the accused party would need to be considered as falling beyond what would be considered reasonable behavior. The sections below detail the arbitration process to be followed in the event that conflict cannot be naturally resolved.

6.2 First Arbitration
In the event of a situation where a member considers themselves to be in receipt of abusive behavior, the first instance for arbitration would be for the aggrieved party to contact the General Secretary to report their grievance, either verbally or as a written statement, and for the General Secretary to act as arbiter. In a case in which the General Secretary is not a neutral arbiter, such as if the General Secretary is involved in abusive behavior, the next level of contact would be the Spokesperson, and if also not appropriate, the Deputy Spokesperson.

The role of the “arbiter” in this context is to attempt to bring the parties to a point at which the conflict may be resolved, either through dialogue between the involved parties, or together.

6.3 Second Arbitration
Should the first arbitration fail to resolve the conflict between the involved parties, the complainant and/or General Secretary (or other arbiter) should refer the case to an external ombudsperson, whose responsibility is to contact both parties in the conflict and mediate a dialogue between the parties.

The ombudsperson is appointed by the Spokesperson and Deputy Spokesperson. Should this not be appropriate, either one of the interested parties may request the General Secretary to appoint an alternative ombudsperson. The appointed ombudsperson should handle the discussion with absolute confidentiality. The
ombudsperson will issue a recommendation to the Steering Group on the next course of action.

Possible recommendations include:

1. Dismissal of the complaint
2. Removal of one or both parties from PostdocNet duties for 3 months
3. Referral to the PostdocNet contact person at the General Administration of the MPG. In this case, duties for all involved the parties should be suspended pending the resolution of the conflict by MPG.

The reasons for the outcome should be written and presented to the General Secretary and the Spokesperson. The General Secretary will then present them to the complainant/accused.

6.4 Escalation
In extreme cases, referral of the case to the contact person for the PostdocNet at the General Administration of the MPG should be done by the “arbiter”. In this case, duties for all involved parties should be suspended pending the resolution of the conflict by MPG.

Complainants may go directly to this stage, but can only be done with support of the PostdocNet officially through the second arbitration process.
APPENDIX C:

Voting process in Steering Group

During the daily running of the Steering Group, it is possible that a democratic vote on a discussed subject may be required; an official vote is required when consensus cannot be reached via discussion within the Steering Group. In this case, Section Representatives count as one vote per section, and the Spokesperson, Deputy Spokesperson and General Secretary each have one vote.

The procedure for Steering Group voting will be as follows:

1. The Spokesperson calls for the vote and formulates the voting subject/question and the voting options in as simple and concise way as possible
2. There should always be a “no vote” option in the vote to prevent the options being skewed to favour a given outcome.
3. The General Secretary sets up the vote and assures anonymity for voting.
4. The vote should be announced by email to all parties eligible to vote.
5. There should be an email to remind people to vote the day previous to when voting opens.
6. All votes should be cast/submitted within the 48-hour timeframe in which to vote.
7. The option that has the most votes in favour wins and does not require a majority of votes.
8. In the case of a tie, the Spokesperson makes the final decision.