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Petition – Stop Unlimited Fixed-Term Contracts in Academia!

This English summary is intended to convey the essence of the petition to international stakeholders

We petition Bettina Stark-Watzinger, the Federal Minister of Education and Research, as well as Kai Gehring and Dr. Petra Sitte, the chairs of the Education and Research Committee in the German Parliament, along with the remaining Members of Parliament.

To address challenges such as climate change and digitalization, we need robust research and educational institutions. However, many researchers and scholars in Germany are employed under precarious working conditions: nine out of ten have fixed-term contracts, and 42% of employment contracts last less than one year.

The legislation permitting this situation is on the verge of being amended. The current proposal to amend the German Fixed-Term Academic Contracts Act (WissZeitVG) presented by the minister falls short of the commitments the governing parties made in their coalition contract. We petition the Education and Research Committee to revise the proposal in ways that genuinely enhance working conditions in German higher education and research.

Among the changes we request are the following:

- Employment contracts for doctoral candidates must cover the actual time researchers need to complete their PhDs. This amounts to six years, and the standard length of such an employment contract should be four years.
- Employees assigned recurring tasks must receive permanent contracts.
- As a rule, only permanent contracts should be offered to researchers and scholars who have obtained a PhD. Alternatively, a tenure-track position should be provided.

Other changes we request include that the law recognizes the unions' right to negotiate with employers improvements in contract length different from the act; uniform and binding regulations on benefits that compensate for disadvantages in the case of care, disability, and chronic illness; and a right for employees working on projects financed with third-party funding to enjoy from the same benefits as other employees. As a rule, student assistants should be offered contracts with a minimum duration of two years.

Please sign the petition:

<https://weact.campact.de/petitions/stoppt-die-dauerbefristung-in-der-wissenschaft>

