

IBPC motion on the LPPR

We, members of the Institut de Biologie Physico-Chimique, share the analysis of many higher education and research bodies (ESR) on the “Loi de Programmation de la Recherche” (LPPR). We agree with the opinions expressed since the publication of the text of the bill on June 7, 2020 by the ADL¹, the CP-CNU², the C₃N³ and the CESE⁴, and ask for a completely different LPPR that truly meets the expectations of the community and the needs of society. In a general assembly meeting on September 8, 2020, we express strong opposition to this bill.

The COVID-19 pandemic perfectly enlightens us to the importance of free and plural fundamental research to arm ourselves with knowledge and better fight crises, by nature, unexpected. Only public research motivated by curiosity permits one to obtain an ever finer understanding of the world around us in all scientific fields, without predicting discoveries that will prove to be disruptive when the time comes. The current bill, developed before the health, economic and social crisis currently affecting our country, does not draw lessons and does not respond to the challenges of the moment. Thus, the problem of precariat in the research professions and the objective of funding public research to the extent of 1% of GDP are two key points on which the scientific community and our leaders seemed to agree, and for which the LPPR proves to be disappointing or even going backwards from the announced objectives.

First of all, on the budgetary effort. Although it is worthy to want to plan to increase the budget of the ESR, the amounts announced for the next two years, which are the only ones to really be committed to by the current government, are anecdotal, and the allocation of these scarce resources is inappropriate in view of the current crisis. While a massive investment in ESR is more than necessary, given the underfunding that has lasted for many years, the several hundred million euros announced are not up to the challenges of knowledge and will accelerate the dropout of France in particular compared to other European countries. If the government's ambition to achieve public research funding of up to 1% of GDP is sincere, then how would one interpret the anecdotal investment granted during this five-year term? In addition, contrary to the emergencies imposed by the current crisis, the small additional credits are almost entirely allocated to increases in remuneration in the form of bonuses to statutory staff, as well as to the increase in the budget of the “Agence nationale de la

recherche” (ANR). The salary increases for ESR staff are essential given the low salaries of administrative staff, technicians, engineers, researchers and teacher-researchers. In addition to this upgrading, we are asking for additional resources this year for the recruitment of precarious ESR staff to permanent posts. On the other hand, the announced increase in the ANR's budget cannot resolve all of the ESR's funding problems. Basic laboratory support credits must also be upgraded. After having seen the share of recurring credits continually drop in laboratory budgets, in favor of project financing budgets, it is time to turn the tide and take advantage of the promised increase in the ESR budget to give priority to recurring credits. The underfunding of research on coronaviruses over the last decade, decided after the end of the SARS crisis, perfectly illustrates the danger of funding only on projects subject to trends. On the contrary, recurring funding allows laboratories to develop long-term original research, sometimes going against the trend of mainstream research, and for which the importance is not immediately apparent.

Then, on the measures establishing an alternative route for the recruitment of research staff and teacher-researchers (the "junior chairs") and those allowing the hiring of contract research staff through “CDI de mission”. We consider that these new statutes go against the functioning of our laboratories that live and express themselves thanks to solid research collectives. Recruitment on precarious so-called "mission" contracts is detrimental both to young researchers, but also to all the so-called "research support" functions performed by engineers, technicians and administrative staff, whose leading-edge work and know-how acquired over the years allow research groups to work effectively. What laboratories need are not legal means to renew precarious contracts from one year to another, but budgetary means to recruit staff trained on long-term government employee contracts. On the other hand, recruitments through “junior chairs” will lead to the creation of a two-tier system, with different statutes and obligations, which is not desirable for the functioning of the collectives, especially since the establishment of these "junior chairs" does not meet any real need. French research does not suffer from a lack of attractiveness, and each year attracts brilliant foreign researchers. Like many institutes in France, the IBPC is run by many foreign researchers, of all nationalities, attracted by the French model of research based on long-term jobs and research collectives. More insidiously, the establishment of “junior chairs”, by making young people vulnerable for many years during the decade of their thirties, will de facto establish gender discrimination against women wishing to have children. This type of measure will only strengthen the grip of men on the positions of Professors and Research Directors, and goes against the current

measures to be taken to reduce gender inequalities in the ESR. We consider that these major changes in the methods of recruiting ESR personnel are unnecessary and harmful, we ask for their removal from this bill, and we are in any case also concerned regarding the harmful consequences that these types of contracts (“junior chairs” and “CDI de mission”) would have within our institute.

We are therefore asking for a completely different LPPR with:

- the establishment of a multi-year recruitment plan for permanent positions in all ESR functions so that precariousness and its many deleterious effects on research groups cease.
- increasing budgets for the benefit of basic laboratory support so that grant proposal research projects do not become the only mode of funding and that long-term public research can continue to develop, motivated by scientific curiosity, not burdened by time spent writing funding requests.

Motion carried unanimously (less one abstention) on September 8, 2020

¹ Avis sur la LPPR de l'assemblée des directions de laboratoire (<https://adl.frama.site/blog/avis>)

² Motion de la Commission permanente du Conseil National des Universités sur la LPPR (<https://cnu34.osug.fr/IMG/pdf/motion-cpcnu-lppr.pdf>)

³ Motion de la Coordination des responsables des instances du Comité National de la Recherche Scientifique (https://www.cnrs.fr/comitenational/struc_coord/c3n/motions/Motion_C3N_Pour-une-autre-LPPR.pdf)

⁴ Avis du Conseil économique, social et environnemental sur la LPPR (https://www.lecese.fr/sites/default/files/pdf/Avis/2020/2020_13_programmation_pluriannuelle_recherche.pdf)