

Navigating by the Minerva Compass

Excellence and integrity – the principles underlying the MPS compliance system



Not just obeying the rules, but also thinking about one's behavior as an individual – that's the secret of a good corporate culture. The MPS aims to provide better guidance on this in the future.

He plugs in his earphones on his way from the airport to downtown Cologne. But on this particular Friday morning, Sven Friese, Officer for Compliance and Corruption Prevention at the MPS, is not listening to pop or classical music, even though he enjoys listening to Internet radio when he's on the go. Today, Friese is tuned in to "higher things," namely the livestream from Bellevue Palace. As he travels on the commuter railway, he's listening to German President Christian Wulff accepting the consequences of his actions and announcing his resignation. "This was the logical outcome given the accusations against him – it was all about trust in the German legal system, especially the principle of equality," says the 38-year-old.

Friese believes that these principles were shaken to the core by the scandal surrounding Wulff. "Around Christmas

time, I received e-mails asking how it could be that MPS employees had to return gifts while the news was full of other people having entire holidays paid for."

ADVISOR ON CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Friese replied to these e-mails at length. At the end of the day, it's all a question of proportion – and there's a difference between a simple ballpoint pen and a hand-signed art calendar. The question of whether people should accept invitations and gifts is only a small part of his job. Compliance means more than this; the English word, which has recently also found its way into the German language, is about abiding by the law, and it defines the regulations that apply to all employees. These regulations are both external and internal, and company ethics also have a part to play. "As the patroness of science, Minerva embodies fundamental MPS values – excellence and, in terms of compliance, integrity above all."

Accordingly, Friese always attaches the Minerva pin to his lapel when giving lectures. "We can all identify with the logo. And identification is the source of integrity." He has worked at the MPS since the beginning of 2011, observing time and again how employees live this mindset. "It's part and parcel of the MPS's excellent reputation," says Friese. He sees his role as that of advisor to all employees, be they scientists, administrators or general management staff, and emphasizes "lived compliance" as a common duty. "This cements our excellent reputation, which is key in a scientific environment in terms of the MPS as an attractive employer, for example, as well as with respect to our financial backers." He also points out that, if a legal violation occurs, it is not only the individual who is liable, but ultimately the MPS as a whole.

Friese, who comes from Plauen in Vogtland, is an enthusiastic mountain climber and lives just outside of Munich with his wife Anja and son Thorben. He studied for his first degree in public administration in Munich and, after obtaining a Master of Public Administration in Berlin, he worked for seven years at the German Patent and Trademark Office in Munich in a similar role to his current one. In addition to the training courses for which he travels all over Germany advising institute employees, he also devised a compliance system for the MPS, integrating all of the principles and organizational measures that ensure that processes are carried out by the book. The system is based on the Guidelines and Rules of the Max Planck Society and a Responsible Approach to Freedom of Research and Research Risks adopted by the Senate in 2010.

Friese has identified nearly two dozen "compliance areas" in all: from public procurement law, IT security and scientific misconduct to occupational health and safety and acceptance of gifts. He is able to clarify the legal position on every topic, supplemented by the MPS's own additional criteria. These

may involve the ombudsman procedure, in the case of scientific work, or, in the case of technology transfer, the clearing office, which assists with outsourcing. However, the quality of a compliance system is about more than just rules. “It’s important that people live the corporate values – and that employees live up to their responsibilities.”

This becomes easier when the complexity is manageable, namely when someone cuts through the thicket of rules. To this end, Friese and a working group are drawing up a draft code of conduct, to be agreed with the MPS governing bodies. “The code of conduct will serve as a common denominator, providing clear guidance to all employees, whether they are scientists or service personnel.”

Obviously, not all individual cases can be covered. “The code of conduct will thus provide further guidelines; procedural channels will have to be clarified, and contact persons designated.” And the advisory service will remain a key part of all of this. After all, balanced judgments are often necessary

QUESTIONS FOR THE INNER COMPASS

- Am I acting lawfully? Is my conduct ethically reasonable?
- Am I acting solely in the interests of the MPS?
- Am I prepared to take responsibility for my actions?
- What public impact will my conduct have?

To avoid conflicts of interest, it is useful to be aware of these questions – and it is important to be able to answer them with the company in mind. If conflicts of interest arise, the superior is the first point of contact, followed by the Compliance Officer, who is bound by confidentiality.

Telephone: 089-2108-1888, e-mail: compliance@gv.mpg.de
Intranet: <https://intranet.mpg.de/beauftragte/compliance>



Sven Friese

– black and white rules can’t always be applied to the everyday working world.

Take, for example, the following problem that Friese recently had to deal with at one institute: When a scientist applied for a visa for a research trip, an extra fee was suddenly brought into play. “Going along with this would be a clear case of bribing foreign officials,”

says Friese. The general advice was thus: Don’t pay. “But if you’re stuck all on your own at a border checkpoint, and you absolutely have to get the stamp in order to proceed, you’d be forced to take a different approach.” Integrity, however, would demand that you report the incident to the institute, thus keeping your conscience clear.

Debate 2.0 – How the Science Gallery Talks in Berlin Work

When a Science Gallery Talk is held in Berlin, it isn’t at all like a traditional podium discussion. With this format, the audience is directly involved, as was the case, for example, with the event entitled “Are we all becoming cyborgs – how far does technology penetrate into our brains?” Not only can audience members ask questions, they can also use their mobile phones to send text messages, which then appear directly on the screen. The podium guests, Moritz Grosse-Wentrup, an engineer and brain researcher from the MPI for Intelligent Systems, and Jens Clausen, philosopher and biologist at the University of Tübingen’s Institute of Ethics



and History of Medicine, responded to the questions directly. However, the audience has even more influence on the direction taken by the debate: participants can use laser pointers to decide which topics will be discussed. Several options are presented for selection on the screen, sometimes accompanied by short video clips. The debate continues on the topics at which the most light-points accumulate. The format has proven to be a big hit with audiences. The hall at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, which organizes the series jointly with the Science Gallery team, is always full.

Switching Seats for Future Prospects

Speed Informing brings doctoral students and alumni together and reveals the variety of careers open to MPI alumni



Speed Informing: A new event format provides doctoral students with the opportunity to meet alumni of the Max Planck Society.

The series of events is a little like speed dating – but professional careers, rather than flirting, is on the agenda. In the process, doctoral students get to know alumni in ten-minute sessions. Six MPIs have already taken part.

The lecture hall at the MPI for Molecular Genetics in Berlin is perfectly set up for a career information event. But now the chairs have to be removed to make sure there's enough room – for cardboard stools. These are arranged in circles on the blue carpet for five small groups who are going to get to know one another. Just like speed dating, except that the purpose of the event is not to start an affair or find the love of one's life, but to sound out career prospects. It is an initiative for MPI doctoral students who have registered especially for the occasion – and who will not only have fun, but will also come away with some tips for the future.

The 30 participants don't know much, only that they are at a Speed Informing function, a new event format with the theme: "Paths to professional life – what happens after Max Planck?" During the event, doctoral students meet up with alumni of the Max Planck Society. At this particular event, the alumni

are mainly those who have chosen a career outside of science following their doctoral studies.

The event starts with the necessary facts and figures. Kolja Briedis, Project Manager for Graduate Research at the Hannover-based HIS-Institut für Hochschulforschung (an institution that conducts research on higher education) has come to Berlin. His key message is that it pays to have a doctorate – and not only because the unemployment rate among graduates with science doctorates is less than three percent. Earning potential and job

satisfaction are also very high. Where do graduates go once they have completed their doctorate? The answer is quite surprising: 42 percent of all doctoral graduates remain at the university, at a non-university institution or at another institution where the focus is predominantly on research and teaching. The remaining 58 percent of doctoral graduates move into areas that have no research connection.

IT PAYS TO HAVE A PH.D.

This multifaceted career path is also reflected in the selection of alumni present today: a patent attorney, two self-employed graduates, a CEO of an integrated research and treatment center at a university hospital, and a head of marketing and medicine in a pharmaceutical company.

This is where the cardboard stools come in. Each alumnus or alumna joins one of the circles and the event begins: a maximum of six doctoral students can question a former student in each session. A piercing whistle marks the beginning of the Speed Informing discussions. Each group has ten minutes before it is startled again by a piercing

whistle. The doctoral students then rotate to the next circle. The 30 young junior scientists are highly focused as they listen intently to their predecessors, asking specific questions and occasionally making notes to record the details.

ENOUGH TIME TO ASK IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

The discussions continue at the next get-together. "I tried to reassure the young people that they can confidently apply for jobs with their heads held high because they have completed their doctorates at a Max Planck institute," says Wolfgang Kapfer, former doctoral student and now head of marketing at Sanofi-Aventis. "This is an important calling card to have, especially right at the start." He likes the fact that the press office at Administrative Headquarters, together with the press officers of the relevant institutes, initiated the series of events. Other alumni report that they would have liked to participate in similar initiatives when they were completing their doctorates.

A total of six institutes participated in the first Speed Informing series. "The collective enthusiasm for this new format was clear," says Christina Beck, Head of Press and Public Relations at Administrative Headquarters. According to the students, they found it considerably more informative to be able to speak to all the alumni for ten minutes instead of sitting through various talks, as is usual at career events. "I could ask questions that were important to me, and I gained some insight into the world outside of science."

Further events are planned – including events involving alumni who have continued their careers in science. This suggestion also came from the feedback sheets. The general consensus is that the right priorities were addressed. After all, as one doctoral student wrote, "it is much easier to get to know heads of a junior research group than to build contacts with people outside of science."