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Media release

Young Academy tackles today's social challenges

Lessons learned from fake news about Covid-19, the role of science in the legislative process, precarious work situations in academic institutions and human rights for the future - these are the topics addressed by the first four joint projects of the Swiss Young Academy.

Looking closely, making things visible and improving general conditions – these are the themes that link the first four projects to have been approved by the General Assembly of the Swiss Young Academy. The project group of communication scientist Sabrina Kessler addresses the question of how well the population knows about Covid-19 and what fake news is circulating. The members want to find out what we can learn about fake news from the pandemic using an interdisciplinary, participatory approach and involving the Swiss population.

“Our project *Challenging Inequalities* tackles two major problems faced by Swiss science: the increase in insecure employment conditions and a lack of equal opportunities and diversity,” says Lucas Mueller, a post-doctoral researcher in history of science and a member of the Young Academy’s Executive Board. He said the project supports young researchers who belong to structurally disadvantaged groups and addresses the insecure working conditions in the academic sector. What does the future of human rights look like? “Human rights are under pressure in both democratic and authoritarian regimes,” noted musicologist Luis Velasco-Pufleau and lawyer Aimée Zermatten. With their group, they intend to investigate in particular how art, climate change, digitalization and health affect human rights.

How is science taken into account in the legislative process? How do parliamentary commissions or groups select their experts? “We will be conducting interviews with stakeholders. The aim is that it should become possible to shape the policy process more transparently and with the necessary diversity,” explained lawyer Odile Ammann.

The Executive Board of the Young Academy had intensively examined the projects in advance. Each project was then presented to the plenum with a pitch. “Despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Young Academy has got off to a good start and the members have succeeded in organizing themselves and creating exciting inter- or transdisciplinary projects,” commented with satisfaction Estefania Cuero, a doctoral student at the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Lucerne (GSL) and speaker of the Young Academy, six months after the election of the first members. “Now things are at last really getting moving – the projects are being implemented!”

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The **Swiss Young Academy** networks young researchers from a wide range of scientific disciplines and universities and creates an inspiring environment for inter- and

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transdisciplinary exchange and innovative ideas. Its members are the representatives of Swiss science in the national and international context and are regarded as the young voice of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences.

The Swiss Young Academy belongs to the network of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences.