



Avoiding Profkippen and a limes promovendi – the solution for challenges with PhD supervision and with fair distribution of resources?

APNet shares De Jonge Akademie's concerns about the quality of doctoral supervision and the uneven distribution of resources, which have become increasingly urgent issues in Dutch academia. As Assistant Professors we recognize the challenges and we are committed to providing high-quality supervision for all PhD candidates and believe **it is crucial for academia that PhDs can rely on high-quality supervision**, allowing them to develop and grow, while providing structured guidance. We, therefore, welcome the opportunity to contribute to a constructive conversation that aims to improve the quality of PhD supervision.

De Jonge Academie has identified so-called 'Profkippen' as one of the sources for limited supervision quality. When a small number of researchers end up supervising very large numbers of PhD candidates, that can indeed compromise supervision quality and increase workloads – both for the 'Profkippen' and for their colleagues, who may take on day-to-day mentoring when senior supervisors have limited capacity. This situation is further reinforced by the fact that promotion rights (*ius promovendi*) and PhD-related responsibilities are concentrated within a relatively small number of faculty members.

In this context, APNet is cautious about the proposed "limes promovendi" as a stand-alone solution. A cap on the number of supervised PhDs will only be effective in terms of improving PhD experiences and research culture, if it is accompanied by measures that strengthen supervision in practice: clear supervisory team structures, transparent division of roles and responsibilities, and a fair recognition of all substantive supervisory work. The discussion about "limes promovendi" can, therefore, not be held without discussing the way that supervision of PhDs is conducted in practice. **We would like to discuss the different roles and the division of labor within a supervisory team and how all supervisors can obtain fair recognition for their work.** A clear structure for these teams, tailored on an individual case-by-case basis, will provide PhDs with the opportunity to benefit from various strengths provided by the supervision team, while allowing sufficient room for supervisors to supervise the projects with the needed care and attention.

In this context, the role of *ius promovendi* as a crucial tool in the recognition of supervisory labor needs to be discussed again. **We are convinced that those who acquire funding for their own projects and/or hold sufficient supervision experience and carry the primary daily supervision responsibilities should also be able to act as promotor ("iedereen professor").** Too often, early-career and mid-career academics carry a large share of day-to-day supervisory work without the formal authority or recognition that corresponds to those responsibilities. This not only undermines fairness and career development, it also contributes to the concentration of formal promotorship that the "Profkip" debate highlights.

Addressing the root causes also requires improving the distribution of resources and opportunities. APNet is convinced that **additional opportunities should be created for group leaders at the Assistant Professor level to build their teams and take on supervisory responsibilities.** This would not only support their development as supervisors but could also reduce supervisory pressure on the "Profkippen", thus increasing the overall quality of PhD supervision. In this context, we would like to contribute to the discussion on, how the NWO talent scheme can best achieve its objectives at each career stage. We also propose exploring mechanisms that strengthen Assistant Professor participation in large collaborative grants – for example by requiring the meaningful involvement of a minimum number of Assistant Professors in consortium grants – to increase their access to scientific networks and strengthen opportunities to build track records in collaborative research projects.



Finally, we would like to continue the discussion on, how biases in the funding system can be alleviated, so that all researchers have a fair chance at each career stage. Taken together, these measures can contribute to a fairer distribution of resources, supervisory rights and responsibilities, and in turn a healthier supervision culture, without relying primarily on a formal upper limit on supervised PhDs.

APNet looks forward to continuing this conversation and is ready to engage with De Jonge Akademie and all relevant stakeholders to identify solutions that improve PhD supervision, reduce unhealthy workload pressures, and distribute opportunities more fairly.