

Meeting of the ETH Board of 13/14 December 2017

New strategy for a higher share of women and equal opportunities

The ETH Board is publishing its 2017–2020 strategy for gender balance and equal opportunities for women and men. The share of women in the ETH Domain is intended to increase further in the next few years. Various focus areas and measures are being envisaged for this purpose. Thanks to a correction adopted by the Parliament, the ETH Domain will be granted exactly as many funds in 2018 as in 2017 and will thus be spared a budget cut. An external study reveals that the resources invested in the ETH Domain by the Confederation create a great deal of value: each franc generates five times its own value for the Swiss national economy.

Bern, 14 December 2017

Gender strategy for 2017–2020

The ETH Board wants to increase the share of women in teaching and research, as well as in management positions. For this reason, it is launching a “Strategy for Gender Balance and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men”. The strategy covers five focus areas. They include a strong anchorage of equal opportunities in the institutions, awareness of gender stereotypes and biases, support for women’s career development, better conditions for a balance between the different areas of life, as well as gender-specific aspects in teaching and research. The responsibility for their implementation lies with the institutions of the ETH Domain, i.e. the two universities ETH Zurich and EPFL and the four research institutes PSI, WSL, Empa and Eawag. They will spend a minimum of 0.4% or approx. CHF 10m of the annual Federal financial contribution on this.

Possible measures to be taken by the institutions include workshops and lectures about respect, mobbing and sexual harassment. In addition, many institutions offer mentoring, coaching and training sessions for women at all levels, as well as childcare facilities for occasions such as conferences, holiday activities and emergencies. The share of women should be increased at the level of professorships, in particular. Therefore it is important not only to appoint a sufficient number of women as professors every year but also to retain them. In 2017, the 61 newly appointed professors at ETH Zurich and EPFL included 18 women. This is tantamount to a proportion of 29.5%. With just under a third, this is an encouraging number that points in the right direction.

2018 budget: correction by Parliament

In its 2017 winter session, the Parliament corrected the budget cuts planned by the Federal Council for the ETH Domain. The Federal Council’s finance plan stipulated cuts of CHF 90m for 2018. Thanks to a correction by CHF 53m, the funds available to the ETH Domain in 2018 will be precisely the same as in 2017. ETH Board President Fritz Schiesser is pleased about the broadly based support from politicians: “Parliament has thus expressed its confidence in our judicious employment of the funds. We will invest them in research, teaching and the transfer of knowledge. This is where we have to defend our top position because many countries are making massive investments in education and research.” The strong increase in student numbers by approx. 60% in the last ten years, coupled with a slower increase in federal funds by 30%, was mastered in the ETH Domain by means of continual boosts to efficiency. The quality of services provided to students was preserved in spite of strong growth.

Study about the ETH Domain's value creation

The institutions of the ETH Domain make a crucial contribution to competitiveness and value creation in the Swiss national economy. The fact that the monies are well invested in the ETH Domain is revealed by a new study conducted by the consultancy firm, BiGGAR Economics. More than 800 professors teach over 30,000 students and doctoral students, who then enter the Swiss labour market as highly qualified professionals. Research achieves scientific breakthroughs which result in completely new technologies. All in all, there are approx. 3,500 ongoing cooperation ventures with SMEs and big corporations from all over Switzerland. In 2016, the ETH Domain generated about CHF 13bn of gross value added and just under 100,000 jobs in Switzerland, and CHF 16.5bn and 125,000 jobs respectively at the global level. This was achieved with a federal contribution of approx. CHF 2.5bn per annum. Thus each franc invested in the ETH Domain generates five times its value in Switzerland and six to seven times its value worldwide.

2018 salaries – adjustment to inflation

Owing to the unclear budget situation in autumn 2017, the result of the ETH Board's salary negotiations with the social partners can only be announced in December. The correction adopted by Parliament provided the ETH Board with some more leeway. The remaining cuts by CHF 37m in comparison with the original finance plan rule out any general salary increase for employees, who will be granted an inflation adjustment of 0.6%. In addition, salary increases based on achievements and experience continue to remain an option.

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The ETH Board is the strategic management and supervisory body of the ETH Domain. The ETH Domain is made up of the two Federal Institutes of Technology, i.e. ETH Zurich and EPFL, as well as the four federal research institutes PSI, WSL, Empa and Eawag. The members of the ETH Board are appointed by the Swiss Federal Council. The ETH Board supervises the development plans of the institutions, is responsible for strategic management accounting and ensures coordination. It draws up the budget and the financial statements of the ETH Domain and coordinates the value maintenance and continued functionality of the properties. It is the authority responsible for appointments and represents the ETH Domain before the federal authorities. A staff assists the ETH Board in the preparation and implementation of its business.