

Meeting of the ETH Board of 6/7 March 2019

The ETH Board supports institutional agreement with the EU

The ETH Board supports an institutional agreement between Switzerland and the EU. It encourages the Federal Council to find a solution with the EU that is capable of commanding a majority in parliament and the voting public. Furthermore, the ETH Board allocated the funds for 2020 to the institutions of the ETH Domain and adopted the consolidated reporting 2018. The ETH Board awards employees full compensation for inflation; this is what the social partners agreed in the renegotiations. Dr Anna M. Hersperger has been appointed as a new member of the Directorate at WSL.

Berne, 8 March 2019 – At its meeting of 6/7 March 2019, the ETH Board discussed the proposal for an institutional agreement between Switzerland and the EU. The bilateral agreements with the EU are of supreme importance to the ETH Board since. They constitute the cornerstones for the access of the ETH Domain's institutions to the European research framework programmes (EU-RFPs) and, thanks to the free movement of persons, also to the European talent pool. More than half of the ETH Domain's professors hail from the EU.

The ETH Domain would be particularly strongly affected by Switzerland's exclusion from the EU-RFPs. Thus in 2007–2016, it attracted more than half of all grants from the European Research Council (ERC grants) that were awarded to Swiss institutions. In addition, the EU-RFPs are the second most important source of research funds for the ETH Domain. In 2018, the ETH Domain raised more than 140m CHF. The financial consequences of an exclusion from the EU-RFPs would be considerable. However, the consequences for the attractiveness, reputation and international network of Switzerland as a centre of research would be even more serious.

No alternative to an institutional agreement with the EU

An institutional agreement would make it possible for Switzerland's relations with the EU to be put on a stable legal basis. This is also in the interest of the ETH Board. The institutions of the ETH Domain depend on well-regulated relations between Switzerland and the EU. Uncertainty is poison for Switzerland as a centre of research. This was demonstrated by the experience after the adoption of the mass immigration initiative. The ETH Board would like to encourage the Federal Council to find a solution with the EU which is capable of commanding a majority in parliament and, if necessary, in a popular vote. From the ETH Board's perspective, there is no alternative to an institutional agreement with the EU.

Allocation of funds for 2020

It is expected that for 2020, federal funds in the amount of 2,566m CHF will be available to the ETH Domain. The lion's share of these funds, namely 2,423m CHF will be allocated to the two Federal Institutes of Technology ETH Zurich and EPFL, and to the four research institutes PSI, WSL, Empa and Eawag, for the further development of operations in the face of increasing student numbers, as well as for the implementation of their strategic projects. The remaining funds will be used for projects that have been planned across the entire Domain, such as the four strategic focus areas of Data Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing, Personalised Health and Energy, as well as for large-scale research infrastructures such as ETH Zurich's Swiss National Supercomputing Centre, the neuroinformatics project Blue Brain at EPFL, the extension of the SwissFEL at PSI and new initiatives.

Consolidated reporting 2018

The ETH Board has adopted the consolidated reporting 2018. The Annual Report with the consolidated financial statements for 2018 will be submitted to the Federal Council and will be published once approved by the Federal Council. In its Report, the ETH Board highlights some topical focal points and reports on the attainment of the strategic goals.

Full compensation for inflation for employees of the ETH Domain

In 2019, the employees of the ETH Domain will be awarded full compensation for inflation to the tune of 0.9 per cent. This was agreed by the social partners in renegotiations. From 1 January 2019, the employees of the ETH Domain have received compensation for inflation at a rate of 0.8 per cent. They will receive the lacking 0.1 per cent through an additional 0.2 per cent from 1 July 2019. In this way, the ETH Board is following a solution approved by the Confederation.

New member of the WSL Directorate

The ETH Board has appointed Dr Anna M. Hersperger as the new member of the WSL Directorate from 1 June 2019. She comes from the Canton of Lucerne, studied Rural Engineering and Surveying at ETH Zurich and was awarded the joint degree of a PhD in Ecology and Landscape Architecture. Previously, from 1989 to 1991, she had worked in the private sector for the engineering and planning firm Emch+Berger and had been at Arizona State University with a Fulbright Scholarship from 1992 to 1994. After obtaining her Doctor's degree, she conducted research as a postdoc at the Department of Environmental Systems Science at ETH Zurich. Since 2002, she has worked for WSL, first as a research scientist and since 2006 as the head of a research group; she now heads the Landscape Ecology Group. Anna M. Hersperger is a spatial planner and landscape ecologist and examines the actors and driving forces of changes in land utilisation in urban and extra-urban spaces.

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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 unit assists the ETH Board in the preparation and implementation of its business.