

Meeting of the ETH Board of 22/23 May 2019

ETH Board focuses its strategic orientation on digitalisation

At its meeting of 22/23 May, the ETH Board made decisions concerning the finance and investment planning for 2020 and debated the annual reporting on the strategic focus areas. The ETH Board also dealt with ETH Zurich's application for the dismissal of a professor and received an interim report on the administrative enquiry into governance at ETH Zurich.

Berne, 23 May 2019 – At its meeting of 22/23 May 2019, the ETH Board adopted the finance and investment planning for 2020. This includes the budget, the investment credit for buildings and the 2020 construction programme. The total federal contribution is expected to amount to 2.566bn CHF. This is a decrease of 15m CHF in comparison with the 2019 budget. Operating revenues, however, will increase by 56.5m CHF since in the coming year, many teaching and research projects will be conducted for which the institutions of the ETH Domain successfully raised competitive funds. The budget that was adopted also includes resources for the Confederation's digitalisation action plan, as well as for the strategic focus areas of Data Sciences, Personalised Health and related technologies, as well as Advanced Manufacturing and Energy.

Strategic focus areas for the reinforcement of digitalisation

The ETH Board took note of the annual reporting on the above-mentioned focus areas. The institutions of the ETH Domain, which include ETH Zurich, EPFL in Lausanne, PSI, WSL, Empa and Eawag, are important actors which are leading Switzerland into the age of digitalisation. One example from the field of teaching is the new Master in Cyber Security, which is offered jointly by ETH Zurich and EPFL.

Furthermore, many chairs are adapted in the course of digitalisation, and professors with a corresponding profile are being sought. At ETH Zurich alone, 25 to 30 new professors are appointed every year and their chairs are strategically realigned along the axis of research and teaching requirements. In the last few years, the university has reconceptualised and introduced just under 10 per cent of its degree courses; and a quarter of its courses have been subjected to significant revisions. The major in machine-building, for instance, has been fundamentally changed, from turbines to micro- and nanorobotics for medical applications.

An important example of a successful project is the Renku platform of the Swiss Data Science Center SDSC, a key element of the strategic focus area of Data Sciences. This open-source software enables an exchange of knowledge and data between top-notch research and business. In this way, the SDSC supports the digital development of the Swiss industry and its numerous SMEs.

Application by ETH Zurich for a professor's dismissal

In March, ETH Zurich submitted an application for the dismissal of a professor to the ETH Board. The ETH Board now took cognisance of the statement made by the professor concerned; the proceeding is still pending and the date of the decision remains open.

Administrative enquiry at ETH Zurich

Furthermore, the ETH Board is having reproaches concerning governance, allocation of financial resources and gender equality at ETH Zurich's Department of Physics investigated by an external, independent auditing and trust company. The ETH Board took note of the interim report. The final report is expected in a few weeks' time.

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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.