

Strategic Plan 2025–2028 of the ETH Board for the ETH Domain

Executive Summary

For the period 2025–2028, the ETH Domain aims to be internationally competitive and to serve Switzerland by addressing important challenges in the context of education, research and innovation. The ETH Board prioritises five Strategic Areas to respond to most pressing global challenges, and in which the ETH Domain is well positioned to have a strong impact. A set of measures are also identified in the context of the core and key transversal tasks of the Domain, in order to continue achieving excellence in education, research and knowledge and technology transfer. Moreover, the present Strategy addresses the long-term organisational development of the ETH Domain as a whole, aiming at remaining as agile as possible, as well as at strengthening collaboration and exploiting synergies among the institutions of the ETH Domain.

Challenges and Opportunities

The ETH Domain identifies six global challenges that are of particular importance for society in the context of education, research and innovation between now and 2028:

- Encouraging and ensuring scientific excellence in an increasingly complex world
- Strengthening the dialogue between science and society for more inclusive and ethical decision-making
- Generating comprehensive environmental and societal knowledge and working towards a positive environmental impact
- Enabling access to a global and inclusive education
- Accelerating technology for the benefit of people and the planet
- Promoting, enabling and practising new forms of employment

As a key actor in education, research and innovation in Switzerland, the ETH Domain is well positioned to contribute to solving these pressing global challenges.

Challenges that are specific to the ETH Domain and the ERI (education, research and innovation) sector are also identified and addressed transversally within the Strategic Plan 2025–2028:

- Ensuring sustainable institutional development
- Maintaining a favourable international context

Strategy 2025–2028

The strategic approach for 2025–2028 is based on the following pillars: the specific Strategic Areas identified by the ETH Board for the period 2025–2028, the tasks for which the institutions are responsible according to their mandate, and the long-term organisational development of the ETH Domain.

Strategic Areas and Joint Initiatives of the ETH Domain

The ETH Board identifies five Strategic Areas that aim to respond to the global challenges identified for the period up to 2028:

- Human Health
- Energy, Climate and Environmental Sustainability
- Responsible Digital Transformation
- Advanced Materials and Key Technologies
- Engagement and Dialogue with Society

In all five Strategic Areas, the institutions of the ETH Domain are well positioned to have a particularly strong impact – on their own as well as through cooperation within the Domain and beyond. Beside these defined Strategic Areas, the ETH Board and the ETH Domain institutions emphasise the general importance of fundamental discovery science as the cornerstone of all the ETH Domain institutions' activities.

The ETH Domain implements the five Strategic Areas for 2025–2028 through existing or new activities at the level of the individual institutions, and with Joint Initiatives at the level of the ETH Domain. Joint Initiatives are proposed bottom-up on a competitive basis and may be co-funded by the ETH Board.

Core Tasks and Key Transversal Tasks

The ETH Domain institutions perform their manifold tasks according to the mandate conferred on them by the ETH Act and the strategic objectives of the Federal Council. For the period 2025–2028, the ETH Board sets the following objectives for each of these tasks:

Top-Quality Research-Based Education. The ETH Domain institutions play a leading role in Switzerland's educational system by providing research-based education and continuing education of a very high quality. Students and doctoral students are enabled to succeed in their studies and are well-equipped to help actively shape the future of Switzerland and society in general. Institutions continue to ensure top-quality education even in the context of a growing student population – a consequence of the attractiveness of the ETH Domain and the high demand for engineering and information and communications technology professionals in Switzerland.

World-Class Research. The ETH Domain continues to perform research at the highest, internationally competitive level. It contributes to anticipating and resolving the most pressing local, national and global challenges and to strengthening Switzerland's innovative potential and international reputation. Fundamental discovery science remains a core element of all the ETH Domain's activities and is supported by adequate funding. In addition, the ETH Domain institutions promote Open Science, ensure research integrity, and nurture national and international collaboration and cooperation.

State-of-the-Art Large-Scale Research Infrastructures and Platforms. The ETH Domain conceptualises, develops and operates a portfolio of large-scale research infrastructures and platforms that offer unique resources and services for research communities within the higher education sector in Switzerland and abroad, and for industry users. The ETH Domain's large-scale research infrastructures play a major role in the country's international reputation. The ETH Domain contributes to the coordination of large-scale research infrastructures at the national level by participating to the Swiss Roadmap 2023 process.

Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KTT). The ETH Domain institutions actively contribute to Switzerland's innovative capacity by accelerating the uptake of research results into technologies, practice and policy-making, and collaborate with industry and public authorities to that end. They foster entrepreneurship among their members, and provide graduates with the skills required to become the main actors of knowledge and know-how transfer between academia and society. Engagement and dialogue with society is emphasised as a central KTT activity.

Attractive Careers and Positive Work Culture. The ETH Domain institutions foster an inspiring, inclusive and respectful environment for all their employees and students. They develop and exploit new forms of work. Diversity is recognised as key to excellence and creativity, whether in research, in education or in all other activities. The ETH Domain institutions are stepping up their efforts to increase the proportion of women among their members, especially in professorial and management positions.

Sustainable Real Estate Management. The ETH Domain maintains and develops its real estate portfolio in order to offer the best conditions for education, research and KTT. The institutions' efforts focus on functionality (incl. accessibility), cost-effectiveness and sustainability of existing and new buildings, and maintaining their value and function. The ETH Domain aims to act as a role model in terms of sustainability.

Strategic and Proactive Financial Management. The institutions have a sound financial base and pursue sustainable, accountable financial management and planning to ensure long-term financial stability. As part of this corporate responsibility, they actively manage financial reserves and, together with the ETH Board, aim to make further use of them strategically in the period from 2025 to 2028. When allocating the federal funds, the ETH Board takes account of the institutions' tasks, strategic requirements and performance.

Organisational Development of the ETH Domain

The ETH Domain is committed to serving Switzerland with an organisation that is highly agile and responsive, and is able to adapt quickly to dynamically changing environments, new challenges and opportunities as well as ever-increasing complexities. The ETH Domain continues to make organisational adjustments as necessary, in order to facilitate and further improve its ability to deliver on its stated mission and in order to align with the defined Strategic Areas.

Financial Requirements

In order to be able to implement its strategy with appropriate measures and to enable the ETH Domain to fulfil its mission, the ETH Board is asking the Federal Council and Parliament to approve an expenditure ceiling of CHF 12 222 million for the ETH Domain for the period 2025–2028. Based on the financial plan for 2024, this amount would represent a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 2.5% in real terms. The ETH Board is earmarking 3- 5% of the Swiss Confederation's financial contribution for the years 2025–2028 to co-finance Joint Initiatives in the Strategic Areas of the ETH Domain, and for large-scale research infrastructures (substantial upgrades and new projects) prioritised by the ETH Board. The lion's share (approximately 95%) of the annual federal funding is allocated to the six institutions as a base budget to enable them to fulfil their mission.