

STRATEGY FOR DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION 2025–2028

of the ETH Board
for the ETH Domain



Strategy for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion 2025–2028

The ETH Domain institutions are committed to diversity, equality and inclusion¹ (DEI). Consequently, they foster a culture of inclusion and belonging along with appropriate structures and processes in which diverse and unique characteristics, perspectives, life designs and experiences of people are seen as a foundation for creative thinking, innovation and development. This helps equip the ETH Domain to fulfil its public mandate. Ensuring non-discrimination and equal opportunities irrespective of personal characteristics is a prerequisite for achieving this objective. Improving the gender balance in all its member institutions by increasing the share of women in education and in research, as well as in management/leadership positions and in decision-making bodies, remains a key goal.

This document has been drawn up based on the Gender Strategy 2021–2024 for the ETH Domain and was expanded in order to constitute an overarching strategy to foster DEI within the ETH Domain. It builds on an intersectional understanding of DEI, as defined in the Glossary. The strategy includes general principles and consists of five Focus Areas. Measures required for achieving the goals laid down here may differ from one institution to another. Therefore, the individual ETH Domain institutions are responsible for implementing the present strategy in a way that matches their respective situation.

Continually improving DEI, along with the institutional cultures that are conducive to this aim, means incorporating as much knowledge as possible regarding the effectiveness and impact of potential measures as well as any other effects they may have. The ETH Domain institutions collaborate in adopting good practices both from within the ETH Domain and from institutions in Switzerland and abroad, particularly from universities and research institutes, but also from other organisations in both the public and private sector. The institutions also consider relevant insights from scientific literature and recommendations in order to identify measures with high potential to support the ETH Domain in attaining its goals. There are two major mechanisms of alignment between the Domain's institutions: the Domain's existing Equal Opportunities Working Group, comprising representatives from all ETH Domain institutions, facilitates dialogue and collaboration between the institutions; and the ETH Board – in its function as a strategic management and supervisory body – monitors the efforts undertaken by the ETH Domain institutions to foster DEI.

The present strategy concerns all members of the ETH Domain, including students and employees in technical, administrative, scientific or management/leadership positions.

¹ Diversity, equality and inclusion are defined in detail in the glossary at the end of this document.

Focus Area 1:

Firm embedding of diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) in the institutions

Firm embedding in the institutions plus commitment on the part of the top management are central to the implementation and effectiveness of DEI policies. The responsibility for implementing and communicating such policies lies with the Presidents or Directors and the executive boards or boards of directors of the respective institutions and with the heads of their sub-entities (e.g. schools, departments, administration), depending on the institutions' individual structure. The development and implementation of DEI policies in the ETH Domain institutions are supported by appropriate professional structures, as well as by staff with adequate resources who are associated with a member of the executive boards or boards of directors.

Implementing a strategy on DEI requires goals, appropriate measures for reaching these goals and monitoring instruments. All ETH Domain institutions formulate their own specific DEI strategies or DEI action plans based on the Focus Areas outlined in the present document and regularly update them to address emerging DEI topics. The strategies/action plans contain the specific goals and measures set by each ETH Domain institution and the institutions ensure that the measures take into account the intersectional character of DEI. It is advisable for the institutions to formulate their own specific DEI strategies/action plans in participative processes. The topic of DEI should be part of department and school evaluations of ETH Zurich and EPFL as well as the evaluations of the research institutes and their divisions. The ETH Domain institutions and their sub-entities take into account the recommendations which result from these evaluations when developing their individual strategies/action plans and when defining specific goals and measures. Monitoring methods and assessment instruments used by the institutions should strive to ensure adequate comparability of the results – both between the years under review and, as far as possible, between the ETH Domain institutions. The ETH Domain institutions monitor the status and development of diversity, equality and inclusion based on quantitative and qualitative indicators and methods, such as statistics or surveys. They publish their individual strategies/action plans, their goals (incl. indicators and target values, where applicable) as well as their monitoring reports. It is recommended that the institutions also publish information on the attainment of their goals. The ETH Domain institutions report regularly to the ETH Board on their progress in implementing the present strategy. This report contains the monitoring results as well as information on the measures taken.

An appropriate financial commitment is essential for strengthening existing efforts or launching new instruments at the level of the individual institutions. Taken together, therefore, the ETH Domain institutions aim to spend at least 0.5% of the overall annual financial contribution the ETH Domain receives from the federal government on implementing measures for fostering DEI. These measures, and especially the recurring ones, should be diverse and well balanced.

Focus Area 2:

Inclusive culture and communication, safe environment and good leadership practice

The ETH Domain institutions strive to create and maintain an inclusive institutional culture on all levels. This involves fostering an environment where individuals feel respected and valued and where they are empowered to fully participate and contribute. It also means actively removing barriers, countering biases, and preventing discrimination to ensure that all members have access to opportunities and resources.

The ETH Domain institutions develop standards for an inclusive institutional culture, such as the use of inclusive language.² They encourage, wherever possible, diversity in representative functions, both at public events and in respect of prominent roles. To that end, they ensure that there is a balanced and diverse pool of potential candidates in place for such functions. In doing so, they take various aspects of diversity into account. Information on the institutions' DEI strategies or action plans and measures are actively disseminated in the institutions and are part of the information packages for employees and students.

One of the significant challenges in establishing an inclusive institutional culture involves dealing with stereotypes and biases (for definitions see Glossary). The ETH Domain institutions take continuous action to enhance awareness among their members of their existence and the impact they can have. The institutions adopt effective measures to proactively mitigate stereotypes and biases. These measures include, for example, guidelines for committee-based recruitment, workshops aimed at fostering awareness, or the provision of online resources.

The ETH Domain institutions acknowledge that mutual respect constitutes a fundamental cornerstone of good cooperation and position themselves firmly against inappropriate behaviour. They create and maintain a respectful working and studying environment by implementing directives, procedures and codes of conduct which set rules to prevent discrimination, bullying, mobbing, threats, violence and sexual harassment. Violation of these rules shall lead to appropriate consequences. The institutions commit to training their members to ensure adherence to these principles and to the consistent application of the rules and they enable them to contribute to the creation of a respectful and inclusive culture through such measures. The ETH Domain institutions have easily accessible and confidential contact points for their members in place and regularly disseminate information about this offering.

In addition to the grievance procedures, the ETH Domain institutions nurture a culture of dealing openly and respectfully with different opinions and conflicts and other cases of personal challenges at the workplace. They install low-threshold conflict management structures and designated contact points. Regular evaluations, such as surveys, are carried out to measure the effectiveness and results of these structures. The ETH Domain institutions invest in the training of support and contact points in order to further improve the quality and professionalism of counselling and

² The ETH Domain institutions take into account the guidelines of the Federal Chancellery "Leitfaden zum geschlechtergerechten Formulieren/ Guide pour un usage inclusif du français".

facilitate exchange and coordination between the contact points. To generate credibility, the contact points must be able to act effectively and in a timely manner while respecting the procedural rights of those involved. High priority should be given to the aspect of an adequate internal and external communication.

Leadership skills form an essential core element in establishing an inclusive workplace culture. Good leadership practice means creating a working environment in which employees are encouraged to contribute their own points of view, thoughts and ideas in a cooperative way. The ETH Domain institutions train all their managers/leaders regularly in exercising their duty of care and support them through training and other management development measures in creating an inclusive culture and setting a good example.

Focus Area 3:

Equal opportunities in career development

All ETH Domain institutions recognise the importance of career development to foster an inclusive and equitable environment and to promote equal opportunities for all employees. Based on monitoring and the consideration of good practices, and in accordance with the legal framework³, each institution defines specific measures and tailored support for women and other groups under-represented in the ETH Domain, and especially in STEM subjects, for both academic and non-academic career paths.

Career development for women

Career development for women continues to be a key dimension of the ETH Domain's DEI efforts. The ETH Domain institutions are thus maintaining their efforts to significantly increase the proportion of women among professors, senior scientists and postdoctoral researchers, in line with each institution's particular situation. They strive to improve career perspectives for women in science, industry and entrepreneurship, and to enable them to thrive and excel. The institutions aim to offer diverse career paths in studying, teaching, research, management, administration and in the technical sector. This requires ambitious targets and actions by all institutions, schools or departments. Each institution defines its own qualitative and quantitative targets. The associated actions may, for example, include: a) reviewing job descriptions and requirements to remove potential barriers and encourage diverse applicants; b) implementing proactive recruitment strategies to attract a diverse pool of candidates; c) ensuring diverse representation on selection committees and providing unconscious bias training at all levels of the institution but especially for committee members; d) ensuring equal opportunities in internal promotion procedures e) carrying on with existing (and especially cross-institutional) programmes and establishing new mentoring and training programmes, which should also include training for mentors. The ETH Domain institutions make sure that the assessment of perfor-

³ E.g. Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, Federal Act on Gender Equality (Gender Equality Act, GEA), Federal Act on the Elimination of Discrimination against People with Disabilities (Disability Discrimination Act, DDA), Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (Higher Education Act, HEdA).

mance and academic excellence in the context of recruitments, promotions, awarding of academic honours and of funding, etc. is based on clear and comprehensible criteria as well as transparent processes.

The ETH Domain institutions strive for an appropriate gender balance for management/leadership positions (lower, middle and upper management), decision-making bodies at all levels (such as research, strategy, hiring or tenure track evaluation committees), as well as among employees and apprentices in highly segregated technical and administrative sectors. They regularly assess the gender balance in recruitment and promotion procedures, as well as access to and participation in employee development measures. The institutions are committed to detecting and mitigating internal structural gender biases. They ensure equal treatment regarding salary conditions and access to resources, and abide by the rules of the Swiss Charter for equal pay in the public sector, which all ETH Domain institutions have signed.

Creating equal opportunities for under-represented groups

The ETH Domain institutions work to create an inclusive culture at all levels so as to attract a diverse range of students and researchers and enable them to thrive and excel. They actively support students from all social backgrounds to allow them equal chances of success, for example by offering them coaching, mentoring, counselling for particular needs and participation in targeted study groups. Where appropriate, they develop additional measures with a specific focus on removing barriers for learning, e.g. compensation for disadvantages and ensuring accessibility, and on promoting career opportunities for members of different groups such as first-generation academics.

ETH Zurich and EPFL implement appropriate measures to ensure that more members of under-represented groups enrol in their Bachelor's and Master's programmes. To this end, they expand their outreach efforts and intensify their cooperation with teachers, schools and other stakeholders active in promoting science outreach and education. They focus in particular on encouraging young women to enrol in studies in STEM fields and on inspiring their female students to pursue an academic career.

Focus Area 4:

Conditions for a good life domain balance

The institutions of the ETH Domain and the ETH Board ensure that working and studying conditions are conducive to a good "life domain" balance that preserves their members' health and psychological well-being and allows them to fulfil their social and care responsibilities.

Support measures and incentives are put in place to foster work flexibility and enable employees to fulfil their care responsibilities, with the aim of strengthening employee satisfaction and performance and thus contributing to achieving the goal of excellence. The institutions also address the challenges of reconciling care responsibilities with studying.

Professors and leaders are alerted to the relevance of work flexibility and a good life domain balance in achieving employee satisfaction and excellence in their respective

institutions. Working and study conditions respect each person's need for and right to their private life and their right to disconnect. The ETH Domain institutions also address potential adverse effects of flexible working, remote and virtual working models on equality, diversity, health and inclusion.

Solutions to enhance the flexibility of working conditions (e.g. flextime, remote and virtual working models) are promoted at all levels and wherever possible, so that members are more autonomous and effective both in their individual work and as team members. Targeted measures are implemented, evaluated and expanded on an ongoing basis in order to attract, retain and foster talents while paying due attention to their varied family circumstances. Instruments for compensation for parental leave are in place – such as a “stop the clock scheme” for tenure track positions or contract extension opportunities for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers. The institutions also address dual career issues, develop solutions and ensure that corresponding expertise is shared among them and that cross-institutional coordination is established.

Day nurseries and childcare offers for specific occasions (such as emergency childcare, holiday activities or childcare solutions for conferences) are developed further, based on an assessment of employees' and students' needs. Taking into account the variety of care responsibilities, the institutions of the ETH Domain provide a framework that helps their employees and students to perform their role as carers for other members of their household or their family (e.g. parents).⁴

The institutions of the ETH Domain actively and regularly provide information on support measures. They organise awareness raising actions and provide counselling opportunities. Working and study conditions as well as support measures are regularly assessed by considering good practices from other leading universities and in terms of their ability to respond to the needs of employees and students in the respective institutions.

Focus Area 5:

Inclusive research & innovation and teaching

The ETH Domain institutions implement specific measures in all the areas where it is appropriate to foster the integration of aspects related to diversity, in particular gender, in research projects and programmes. They provide training opportunities for students and researchers that allow them to acquire the relevant skills to develop research designs and innovations in the interests of an inclusive society and based on principles of equality and diversity. The institutions of the ETH Domain support critical debate, exchange of experience and translational research when developing such research designs and innovations.

The ETH Domain institutions also engage in organising training courses for persons involved in teaching, teaching assessment and curriculum development with the aim of enhancing awareness of potential differences in learning strategies and perceived

⁴ In accordance with the “Personalverordnung ETH-Bereich, PVO-ETH/ Ordonnance sur le personnel du domaine des EPF, OPers-EPF”.

self-efficacy for various social groups. The institutions support the implementation of pilot projects for innovative approaches in teaching, built on research and good-practice examples.

Within the ETH Domain, the institutions actively engage in an exchange of experience on these topics.

Glossary

In the context of the present Strategy, **diversity and inclusion** are used as interrelated concepts that refer to creating a work, social or educational environment that recognises and values the characteristics, perspectives and experiences of people from different backgrounds.

Diversity refers to socially relevant similarities and differences between people (such as gender, sexual orientation and identity, socio-economic origin, migration and ethnic background, nationality, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity, neurodiversity, age, psychological impairments or disability) and to their consideration and recognition under the premise of equal participation.⁵

Inclusion means creating an environment where diverse individuals feel respected, valued and empowered to fully participate and contribute. Inclusion goes beyond merely acknowledging diversity and aims to foster a sense of belonging. It involves actively removing barriers, biases and discrimination to ensure that everyone has equal access to opportunities, resources and decision-making processes.

Equality and equal opportunities refer to the basic principles of human rights and the constitutional mandate conferred upon the ETH Domain institutions, in particular with regard to gender equality and disabilities. All ETH institutions strongly champion equality at all qualification levels and in all areas of research, research support and student life. Equal opportunities are a key criterion of quality and excellence. Equality and equal opportunities are accompanied by equity, which means taking into account specific needs and existing inequalities and consequently deriving goal-directed measures to ensure equal opportunities.

Intersectional diversity defines a concept of interconnected social categorisations based on alleged “race”⁶, so-called social layers and classes, gender etc. that can create overlapping and interdependent experiences of discrimination or disadvantage. This emphasises that members of specific groups are not all the same, and while they may face similar challenges and share experiences they cannot be reduced to one category.

⁵ Based on the definition in swissuniversities P-7, Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity in University Development (2021–24).

⁶ “Race” is a socially constructed category, which is strongly rejected by the ETH Board and the ETH Domain institutions. In the context of this strategy, the term “alleged race” is used to address, on the one hand, the fact that people are subject to discrimination based on “race” and, on the other, that this category is, with its underlying biological and racist assumptions, scientifically untenable. For further information on the use of the term “race” in Swiss law see: <https://www.edi.admin.ch/edi/de/home/fachstellen/frb/publikationen/verwendung-begriff-rasse.html>

A **stereotype** is a widely held and simplified belief or set of beliefs about a particular group of people. Stereotypes are often based on assumptions, generalisations or preconceived notions rather than accurate or nuanced information. They can encompass various characteristics such as attributes, behaviours, roles or traits that are attributed to the members of the group. Stereotypes can be positive, negative or neutral, and they can lead to biases and inappropriate judgements. While some stereotypes may contain elements of truth, they can be harmful when applied without considering individual differences and diversity within the group.

Implicit biases are attitudes, beliefs or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious or automatic manner, sometimes making them challenging to recognise and address. They can affect how we perceive and interact with others and make judgements and choices, often leading to unintentional discrimination or unfair treatment. Gender, age, origin or socioeconomic background, as well as many other characteristics, may become the subject of the bias. These biases are often rooted in personal, societal and cultural experiences.

Under-represented groups are groups that have (historically) a relatively low share within the ETH Domain. A comparison with the general population can give an indication whether a group may be under-represented. However, under-representation is always context specific, it may vary between institutions, scientific fields, functions etc. and it can have different causes. For instance, women in STEM fields or first-generation academics can be regarded as under-represented groups in the ETH Domain. The ETH Domain institutions can determine what under-representation means in their specific context and how it relates to their own strategies/action plans.

STEM is an acronym for the disciplines science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. In the context of the present strategy, the term shall also include computer and communication sciences, in analogy to the German term MINT (Mathematik, Informatik, Naturwissenschaften, Technik).

Publication data

Publisher: ETH Board, Haldeliweg 15, 8092 Zurich/
Hirschengraben 3, 3011 Bern, Switzerland

Project lead and contribution: Strategy for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion 2025–2028
Working Group of the ETH Domain institutions, with contributions from the ETH Board
science staff

Translation and proofreading: ETH Board translation services

Layout: ETH Board communication staff

The Strategy for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion 2025–2028 is published in English, German,
French, and Italian. The English version shall be binding.

The strategy is available electronically at
www.ethboard.ch/diversity-strategy-2025-2028.

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