

## **Institute for environment and sustainability in the ETH Domain: further steps taken**

**At its meeting of 11/12 December 2019, the ETH Board approved the blueprint of a parliamentary ordinance for the establishment of a new research institute for environment and sustainability, in which the present-day research institutes WSL and Eawag are intended to be united. Now the ETH Board is launching an internal hearing in the ETH Domain. The new institute should provide technological solutions to societal challenges such as the impact of climate change on the environment and on society, as well as solutions to a sustainable use of natural resources. The base budget of EPFL was structurally adjusted to financial requirements in order to reinforce the university's development in a sustainable fashion. Furthermore, the ETH Board provides information about salary negotiations and appointments.**

Zurich/Berne, 13 December 2019 – In its capacity as the strategic organ of the ETH Domain with its institutions ETH Zurich, EPFL, PSI, WSL, Empa and Eawag, the ETH Board is responsible for ensuring that they are optimally oriented towards the future. The ETH Board has been reviewing the structure of the ETH Domain periodically, latterly since 2017. The institutions should become even more agile and cooperate more closely when it comes to working out innovative solutions to societal challenges such as the impact of climate change on the environment, on society and on the economy.

### **Specification of the new institute's subject orientation, and internal hearing**

The new research institute for environment and sustainability should enable the strengths of WSL and Eawag to be pooled under one umbrella and with a shared management. This will make for a strategically more focused orientation and create the necessary critical size. In addition, the amalgamation of WSL and Eawag will provide an opportunity to exploit synergies and to enhance international visibility and subject-related cooperation. In this manner, the ETH Domain will be in a better position to provide interdisciplinary solutions to current and future challenges. The orientation of the institute is going to be developed in cooperation with the two institutions WSL and Eawag, as well as PSI, Empa and the two Federal Institutes of Technology. Among other things, this will involve the specification of the thematic priorities and specialist orientation. The ETH Board has set up a working group under its aegis for this purpose, which consists of the director of Eawag, the director of WSL, the heads of Empa's Mobility, Energy and Environment Department and of PSI's Department for Energy and Environment, as well as the vice-presidents of ETH Zurich and EPFL. On the basis of the work done to date, the ETH Board is going to launch an internal hearing in the ETH Domain with a blueprint of a parliamentary ordinance in the next few days. In the case of structural adjustments, the ETH Act stipulates that a parliamentary resolution is required for the establishment of new research institutes or for the dissolution of existing ones.

### **Structural adjustment of EPFL's base budget**

EPFL has enjoyed a successful development ever since it was established, and celebrates its 50th anniversary as a Federal Institute of Technology this year. It has been named the world's best "young" under-50 university several times. With its antenna strategy, EPFL is also present in various Western Swiss cantons and makes an essential contribution to Switzerland's social and economic development together with ETH Zurich and the research institutes. In the ETH Board's

view, a sustainable continuation of this success story will in future require two strong, closely cooperating Swiss science locations, one in German-speaking Switzerland, the other in the Romandie.

The ETH Board acknowledges EPFL's increase in financial requirements which have to be satisfied to safeguard its growth of the last few years and its previous successes. EPFL has reached a good size that enables it to implement an effective transfer of knowledge and technology to the economy and to society and to be highly competitive in the field of science at an international level. To fund EPFL's academic infrastructure in a sustainable way and to stabilise its successful tenure-track system in the long term, the ETH Board will gradually increase EPFL's base budget. Above and beyond the additional funds of 15m CHF for 2020, which were already granted in March 2019 for various measures at EPFL (10m CHF) and joint strategic initiatives with ETH Zurich (5m CHF), the ETH Board will structurally increase the 2020 base budget by another 14m CHF. Furthermore, it will reserve additional funds for structural measures in the amount of 10m CHF for 2021 and 5m CHF annually for the years 2022 to 2024. All in all, the EPFL's base budget will thus increase from 26.4% in 2019 to 27.7% in 2024. Besides stabilising the EPFL budget, the additional funds are also intended to serve to reinforce EPFL's cooperation with ETH Zurich, PSI, Empa, WSL and Eawag. Initiatives such as the recently launched joint Master's programme in Cyber Security are witness to the intensified exchange between the two universities, ETH Zurich and EPFL. As is the case with all funding decisions, the internal members of the ETH Board had to abstain from voting in this instance.

#### **Salary negotiations – pay rise for 2020**

The ETH Board's salary negotiations with the social partners resulted in the employees of the ETH Domain being granted a general pay rise of 1%. This also includes compensation for inflation. As in the preceding years, 1.2% of the relevant wage bill will additionally be available for individual wage measures.

#### **Proportion of women in the appointment of professors**

The ETH Board was pleased to take note of the fact that the proportion of women among the newly appointed professors had been stable at more than 30% for three years. All in all, 68 new professors were appointed in 2019, among them 22 women. At the end of 2018, the proportion of women among the professors amounted to 15%. This percentage has been continually growing for some years.

#### **Appointments**

At its meeting, the ETH Board also made various appointments. The ETH's Appeals Commission is a special administrative court of the first instance, which makes rulings concerning appeals against decisions made by organs of the ETH Domain. The ETH Board appointed Dr. Beatrix Schibli as vice-chairwoman for the term of office from 2020 to 2023. Furthermore, it reappointed the existing Board of Trustees of the Robert Gnehm Fund. The Robert Gnehm Fund serves to provide members of both ETHs with assistance through the promotion of childcare services.

#### **Enquiries**

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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.