

Record number of female professors appointed

At its meeting of 8/9 December 2021, the ETH Board welcomed the fact that there has once again been a significant year-on-year rise in the proportion of women newly appointed to professorships. The figure was higher than ever in 2021. This gratifying development is an important step towards further improving the good gender balance in the ETH Domain. At the meeting, tribute was paid to the Rector of ETH Zurich, Professor Sarah Springman, who will be handing over to Günther Dissertori at the end of January 2022 on reaching retirement age. The Board members also appointed Birgit Ottmer, Head of Communications at WSL, as a member of the WSL Directorate.

Zurich/Bern, 9 December 2021

New professorial appointments show significant improvement in gender balance

In 2021 the ETH Board appointed a total of 24 women and 28 men to professorships, with women thus accounting for 46.2% of new appointments. A further improvement was therefore achieved in comparison with the previous year, when the proportion of women among the new appointments was already a gratifyingly high 39.6%. This is the highest ever proportion of women among the newly appointed professors at ETH Zurich and EPFL. The ETH Board is thereby underlining the importance it attaches to promoting women in the ETH Domain. Achieving a good gender balance poses a particular challenge for technical universities, since it is still the case that more men study STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). A large number of initiatives have been implemented, both in the ETH Domain and elsewhere, with the aim of encouraging girls and young women to take STEM subjects. These are now clearly bearing fruit, as the number of women at professorial level is increasing steadily.

Departure of Sarah Springman, Rector of ETH Zurich

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Sarah Springman, who has been Full Professor of Geotechnical Engineering at ETH Zurich since January 1997 as well as Rector of the Federal Institute of Technology since January 2015, is to step down from both positions at the end of January 2022. Professor Springman has been a trailblazer in many ways. As the first female professor of engineering at ETH Zurich, she has been a role model for countless women students and researchers. Through her work and commitment as Rector, and the specific projects and initiatives she has launched at ETH Zurich, she has had an outstanding impact on the development of teaching at all levels. Her achievements include splitting the first-year examinations into two blocks and setting up the Student Project House, which offers all ETH Zurich students a creative space for testing new ideas. She introduced the Bachelor's degree in Human Medicine and founded the School for Continuing Education. "I've always admired Sarah Springman's energy and achievements", says ETH Board president Michael Hengartner. "Not only does she radiate great charm and true British humour, but she calls a spade a spade when the situation demands it. With her, you always know where you stand – and working with her is always fun. That's something I have always appreciated, not least of all during my time as Rector of Zurich University."

The ETH Board thanks Professor Sarah Springman for her exceptional contribution to ETH Zurich. Günther Dissertori, Full Professor at the Institute for Particle Physics, will take over as Rector of ETH Zurich on 1 February.

Birgit Ottmer becomes a member of the WSL Directorate

At the request of the new Director of the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL), Professor Beate Jessel, the ETH Board has appointed Birgit Ottmer, Head of Communications at WSL, as a member of the WSL Directorate as of the beginning of January 2022. Birgit Ottmer studied environmental sciences at ETH Zurich and has held a variety of posts at WSL since 2001. Thanks to her many years' experience at WSL – which has included assuming the duties of a member of the Directorate on an interim basis following the death of the late Director, Koni Steffen – Birgit Ottmer is already very familiar with the way in which WSL operates and has an excellent knowledge of all its units and areas of work.

Salary decisions by the ETH Board and partial revision of the ETH PO

Following the pay negotiations with the social partners, the ETH Board has decided to grant all professors and employees of the ETH Domain an inflation adjustment of 0.5%. This is in line with the Federal Council's decision relating to employees of the Federal Administration. As in previous years, 1.2% of the applicable wages bill will be available for individual pay awards based on experience and performance.

In addition, the ETH Board is pleased to note that the Federal Council approved the partial revision of the Personnel Ordinance for the ETH Domain (ETH PO) on 3 December. This means that the rules affecting the ETH Domain have been further harmonised with those applicable to federal personnel. The amendments take effect on 1 January 2022. In particular, they will make it easier to combine career and family. For example, paternity leave has been doubled from 10 to 20 days and the period in which the non-mandatory portion of paternity leave must be taken has been extended from 6 to 12 months. Paid leave to care for a child with severely impaired health has also been introduced.

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