

Meeting of the ETH Board of 25/26 September 2019

Switzerland to remain the world's innovation leader

Switzerland is internationally regarded as the world innovation champion. However, digitalisation and globalisation are stoking competition. The ETH Board's strategy aims to retain the ETH Domain's research and teaching at the top in the future, too, and to reinforce Switzerland's innovative power. At its meeting of 25/26 September, the ETH Board also expressed its opposition to the limitation initiative, which would be to the detriment of research in Switzerland, and welcomes the resolution of the National Council. The Board also (re)appointed the members of the ETH Appeals Commission.

Bern, 27 September 2019 – In 2019, Switzerland again came first in the Global Innovation Index of the World Intellectual Property Organisation. Maintaining this top position will become a great challenge in the next few years. More and more countries are investing in research and education. The increasing globalisation of science and business, as well as digitalisation, result in more competition. The ETH Domain with its two universities ETH Zurich and EPFL, as well as the four research institutes PSI, WSL, Empa and Eawag is an important actor when it comes to bolstering Switzerland's innovative power. To remain at the top, the orientation of the ETH Domain's organisation and research must be reviewed on a regular basis. For this purpose, the ETH Board intends to concentrate the institutions' existing competencies in order to orientate research towards the solution of the most urgent social challenges for a sustainable future.

Solutions to social challenges

In its 2021-2024 strategic planning, the ETH Board is setting particular store by measures in the field of digitalisation to remedy the shortage of specialists, as well as in research and teaching. The ETH Domain intends to place particular emphasis on cyber security. A joint Master's programme of the ETH Zurich and EPFL in this field has already started in 2019. For 2021-2024, the two universities are planning additional professorships in information technology and computer science, and furthermore, they are planning to strengthen the fields of Personalised Health, Data Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing, as well as Energy and Environment, together with the four research institutes. It is in these strategic focal areas that the thematic competencies of the ETH Domain's six institutions are to be focused and that new initiatives launched by the institutions are to be promoted and coordinated.

The ETH Board is against the limitation initiative

The ETH Domain conducts top-notch research, educates urgently needed specialists and engages in close cooperation with SMEs, industry and the authorities. In order to be able to provide these top-level services for the benefit of the Swiss economy and of Swiss society, it depends on qualified employees from home and abroad. A central pillar is constituted by the free movement of persons with the EU. More than half of the professors at ETH Zurich and EPFL hail from the EU. If the free movement of persons is cancelled, this would also put other treaties of the Bilaterals I in jeopardy, among them Switzerland's participation in the EU's research framework programmes. Without cooperation and interlinkage with the world's best, Swiss research will forfeit innovative power and lose significance. The ETH Board thus welcomes the National Council's rejection of the initiative.

(Re)appointments of the ETH Appeals Commission

On the occasion of the elections of the ETH Appeals Commission, which takes place every four years, the ETH Board (re)appointed a chairwoman and four members of the ETH Appeals Commission for the term of office starting on 1 January 2020. Attorney at Law Barbara Wenger Gmür will succeed the current chairman, Prof. Hans-Jörg Peter, who has held this office for eight years. The vice-chair's office for the term from 2020 onwards is still vacant. The ETH Board would like to thank the departing chairman, the departing vice-chairwoman and the two departing members of the Appeals Commission for their great

commitment in the last few years.

The ETH Appeals Commission assesses appeals against orders of the two Federal Universities of Technology and the four research institutes which concern employment relations under public law, admission to degree courses or the results of examinations and the assessment of doctoral theses.

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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.