

The ETH Board welcomes the ERI Dispatch and underlines the importance of the European research programmes

At its meeting of 4/5 March 2020, the ETH Board discussed various topics related to education policy. The Board takes a positive view of the Federal Council's ERI Dispatch, in relation to which it stresses the great importance of Switzerland's full participation in the forthcoming EU research framework programme "Horizon Europe". It is opposed to the Limitation Initiative, which would hinder participation in Horizon Europe and make access to talent more difficult. The ETH Board also approved the consolidated reporting for 2019 and decided how resources will be allocated in 2021. In particular, it favoured promoting projects that involve cooperation between the ETH Domain institutions.

Zurich/Bern, 5 March 2020

The ETH Board supports the Dispatch on the Promotion of Education, Research and Innovation (ERI Dispatch) 2021–2024 that was approved by the Federal Council on 26 February 2020. It welcomes the fact that the Confederation continues to give high priority to the ERI field. The funding proposed for the ETH Domain enables the latter to carry out its numerous tasks in the areas of teaching, research, and knowledge and technology transfer to a high standard on behalf of Switzerland. A possible participation in Horizon Europe is not included in the ERI Dispatch. However, the dispatch on funding for Horizon Europe is expected to be submitted to Parliament soon. The ETH Board is in no doubt that Switzerland must be able to participate fully in the programme as of 2021. Staying on the sidelines would have serious consequences for Switzerland's attractiveness and reputation as a research location. Although the Confederation might be able to make good the funding shortfall, it could not compensate for the missing expertise, the international network and the competition with the best in the world.

No limitations on research – ETH Board rejects the Limitation Initiative

The ETH Board regards the bilateral agreements with the EU as vitally important. They form the basis for access to the European Framework Programmes for Research, and – thanks to the free movement of persons – to the European talent pool. The ETH Domain relies on qualified staff from Switzerland and abroad so that it can continue to conduct leading research, educate urgently needed specialists and collaborate closely with SMEs, industry and authorities. If the Limitation Initiative is accepted, this will lead to the termination not only of the free movement of persons but also the Bilateral I agreements, including Switzerland's participation in the EU Framework Programmes for Research. The innovation capacity and importance of Switzerland as a research location would diminish if it does not collaborate and build networks with the best in the world.

Consolidated reporting for 2019

The ETH Board approved the consolidated reporting for 2019, which includes the Annual Report and the consolidated Financial Report for 2019. These reports are being submitted to Parliament and the Federal Council, and will be published at the end of March. In it, the ETH Board describes various developments within the institutions of the ETH Domain and reports on the achievement of the strategic objectives.

Allocation of resources for 2021

According to the Federal Council's budgetary guidelines, CHF 2587 million will be available to the ETH Domain in 2021. This amount has not yet been confirmed. Parliament will make the final decision in December 2020. The majority of this funding, i.e. CHF 2442 million, is needed to operate and develop the two Federal Institutes of Technology (ETH Zurich and EPFL) plus the four research institutes PSI, WSL, Empa and Eawag. CHF 171 million is allocated to centrally planned resources, including CHF 82 million for the further development of major research infrastructures such as the Blue Brain project at EPFL, the HPCN-24 supercomputer system at the Swiss National Supercomputing Centre (CSCS) at ETH Zurich, and the Swiss Light Source (SLS) at the PSI. CHF 35 million is earmarked for the following strategic focus areas: "Personalised Health", "Data Sciences" and "Advanced Manufacturing".

In addition, the ETH Board allocated financial resources to strategic collaborative projects in the areas of research and teaching, as well as to shared infrastructural facilities. These help the institutions of the ETH Domain to continue strengthening their cooperation by working on joint projects. A total of CHF 22.2 million has been reserved for this purpose. This also covers a major collaborative project undertaken by the research institutes WSL and Eawag on the theme of biodiversity and by Empa and the PSI on synthetic fuels. A further recipient of funds is a joint project of ETH Zurich and EPFL that deploys technology in support of humanitarian aid. This national project is being implemented jointly with the International Committee of the Red Cross.

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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.