

Switzerland's rapid and full association with Horizon Europe must still be the objective

At its meeting on 22/23 September the ETH Board welcomed the Federal Council's planned transitional measures for Horizon Europe. They represent a first step towards alleviating the adverse effects of non-association. However, they are no substitute for Switzerland's full association. The ETH Board therefore remains committed to Switzerland's rapid and full participation in the EU's framework programme for research and innovation. The ETH Board has also launched the procedure for appointing the successor to the Director of Eawag, Janet Hering. This post will be advertised at the end of 2021.

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Owing to Switzerland's current status as a non-associated third country, our researchers are no longer able to participate in prestigious individual projects such as the ERC grants scheme under Horizon Europe. Furthermore, they are no longer allowed to lead any EU projects. Switzerland is therefore losing the opportunity to contribute to the development of the European research and innovation area or define priorities. Aside from that, Switzerland is excluded from tenders relating to space and quantum technology research. There is a risk that leading researchers will emigrate to other countries or no longer come to Switzerland at all, resulting in our country losing out on international cooperation. This has negative consequences for the ETH Domain's considerable innovative capacity and appeal, as well as for Switzerland overall. It is not only research that benefits from EU support: innovative companies and spin-offs also benefit directly from EU funding.

Universities, research institutions and companies in the EU are the key international partners of the ETH Domain. This close relationship cannot be compensated by increased cooperation with Asia or the USA. In fact, more than half of all the international cooperation schemes in which the two Federal Institutes of Technology participate are with partners in the EU. At Empa, 90% of international contractual partners are in the EU.

ETH Board supports full association with Erasmus

The ETH Board also firmly believes that Switzerland should be a full participant in the Erasmus programme as well as in Horizon Europe. Erasmus brings significant added value to our country. It is more than just a student exchange programme: its scope also extends to the promotion of vocational training, education and professional development. Its declared aim is to forge links between people in the fields of education, research and industry, and to promote cooperation. The Swiss universities rely on these networks in order to continue improving the quality and attractiveness of their educational offerings and position themselves successfully at international level.

Revised ETH Law comes into force on 1 November 2021

In March 2021, Parliament approved a partial revision of the ETH Law. This will enter into force on 1 November 2021. Among other matters, it sets out the rules on voting rights and recusal for the institutional members of the ETH Board (the presidents of the two Federal Institutes of Technology, a representative of the research institutes and a representative of the University Assemblies) and clarifies the supervisory powers of the ETH Board and the appeal possibilities

for the institutions of the ETH Domain. Furthermore, the revision of the Law includes amendments to personnel law and the legal framework for the sale of surplus energy, for security services and for video surveillance. The revision of the ETH Law means that other regulations need to be amended. For example, the rules of procedure of the ETH Appeals Commission are now the Federal Council's responsibility. These regulations are expected to enter into force over the next year.

Appointment committee for a successor to the Director of Eawag

Janet Hering, who has been Director of Eawag since 2007, is to retire on 31 December 2022. The ETH Board has launched the procedure for appointing a new Director and has decided on the composition of the appointment committee. The post will be advertised nationally and internationally towards the end of 2021. Janet Hering's successor will be appointed by the Federal Council following an application by the ETH Board.

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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.