

Position Statement of ETH WPF to the ETH Board's Strategy for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) 2025-28

Zürich, Lausanne 03.06.2024

The ETH Women Professors Forum (WPF) welcomes the ETH Board's decision to adopt a domain-wide Strategy for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion for the period 2025-28. Such a strategy is considered key to support progress and to ensure the institutions of the ETH Domain's capacity to fulfill their role.

While reviewing the proposed Strategy, the ETH WPF has identified a major flaw:

The 2021-2024 Strategy included specific provisions regarding the ETH Domains commitment to allocate adequate resources. This language is missing in the 2025-2028 document. We find this omission especially troubling in the context of budget constraints.

The specific language regarding financial resources from 2021-2024 remains valid and should be restored to the document:

"An appropriate financial commitment is essential for strengthening existing efforts or launching new instruments on the level of the individual institutions. Therefore, the ETH Domain institutions will spend at least 0.5% of the overall annual Federal financial contribution for implementing measures supporting the promotion of equal opportunities. The financial resources should be used to foster gender balance and equal opportunities for women and men in a broad sense. The respective measures should be diverse and well balanced. At least two thirds of the 0.5% target proportion should be used for measures other than supporting regular childcare facilities."

We also propose the following Amendments, which we consider essential for the DEI Strategy to deploy its potential.

(1) Accountability

Accountability requires that there are meaningful consequences for violations of policies. The DEI Strategy document mentions "implementation" several times but lacks mentioning consequences in the case of non-compliance. Past experience has shown that policy implementation does not guarantee compliance. The strategy should include provisions (for example in Focus Area 1, paragraph#2 and Focus Area 2, paragraph#1) to oversee the implementation of policies and foresee consequences for non-compliance with these. Issues of potential conflict of interest in administrative processes and best practices therein should be explicitly included.

(2) Monitoring

In addition, the 2025-2028 DEI strategy document should include a specific commitment to a targeted assessment of the campus work/study climate on a regular schedule. This type of

assessment, according to best practices, should include both a survey targeting the entire population of the institution and a smaller, qualitative part that includes interviews. Specific guidance for the type and frequency of the assessment should be outlined in the DEI strategy (for example in Focus Area 2, paragraph#4). The WPF also insists on the importance of regular evaluations of the grievance procedures, as is common in the private sector, either as part of or in addition to this assessment.

(3) Inclusion

The strategy to increase diversity focuses on attracting and hiring more diverse candidates and subsequently training them to fit into the current culture through coaching and mentoring. While the training provided helps establish a set of common values, the WPF proposes to include a feedback system to gather and integrate the perspectives that diverse individuals bring. That is, monitoring and training should solicit diverse perspectives, and allow for the progressive implementation of feedback. This would provide a dynamic DEI environment, help to create a more inclusive work and learning place, and identify measures to retain diverse individuals. Indeed, retention valorizes successful recruitment. Moreover, the current Strategy makes no mention of LGBTQ+ when defining diversity – this should be corrected.

The institutions of the ETH Domain need to continue their efforts to achieve real progress with regard to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion both within the institutions, and with regard to their role for society. The abovementioned amendments appear key to ensure the effectiveness of the Strategy and its long-term impact.

For the ETH WPF

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