

Press release

Two new Executive Board domains and greater departmental responsibility

ETH expands its leadership structure

Zurich, 6 June 2019

ETH Zurich is adopting a new leadership structure: the number of Executive Board domains is being expanded from five to seven in order to respond to the growing demands in leadership and staff development, as well as in knowledge transfer and corporate relations.

ETH Zurich is expanding, and the challenges facing the university's leadership are becoming increasingly complex. The Executive Board has comprised five members since 2008. Now the Executive Board has accepted a proposal by ETH President Joël Mesot to strengthen the Board and reorganise its key areas of responsibility. The university's further development will therefore involve three new areas: personnel development; knowledge transfer and corporate relations; and the independent management of the academic departments.

Enhancing leadership – promoting women

Since taking up office at the start of the year, the President's stated goal has been to strengthen staff development at all levels. For this reason, all areas devoted to the recruitment and professional development of staff and managers will be concentrated under a new, additional Executive Board member. "Personnel and leadership issues have become increasingly important over the past years. We therefore came to the conclusion that our organisational structure should reflect this. By bundling these key resources, we can further improve leadership and development, while at the same time paying particular attention to the advancement of female employees," says ETH President Mesot.

ETH as a major innovation driver in Switzerland

In recent years the number of ETH spin-offs has been steadily rising and the university has consciously stepped up its collaborations with large corporations and also with SMEs. Now an additional Executive Board domain is being created to ensure that ETH Zurich will continue to perform its key role in future as a major driver of innovation in Switzerland. The new domain will be devoted to

knowledge transfer and corporate relations. Mesot: “ETH has a huge responsibility towards Swiss business and society as a whole. It therefore makes sense to concentrate our activity in this area, by adding another dedicated Executive Board member.” The existing Executive Board domain Research and Corporate Relations will focus on strategic guidance and promotion of research, an area that has become increasingly complex and demanding in recent years due to rapid globalisation.

Academic departments given greater responsibility

The implementation of the new Executive Board structure will also involve expanding the academic departments’ tasks, authority and responsibilities, as well as strengthening the role of the heads of department. The aim here is to strengthen the connection between the academic departments and the Executive Board, reinforce our collective values and systematically develop the university’s leadership culture. In the coming months the details of the new leadership structure will be worked out in consultation with the academic departments and university groups, and two new members will be recruited to the Executive Board. The new composition of the Executive Board should be in place by spring 2020. “I very much hope that we can inspire women to take on the new leadership roles,” says Mesot.

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The current Executive Board and the new focal areas

At present the Executive Board comprises the President (overall responsibility), the Rector (education), the Vice President for Research and Corporate Relations, the Vice President for Finance and Controlling and the Vice President for Human Resources and Infrastructure. The two new vice presidents will concentrate on the increasingly important areas of leadership and personnel development, as well as knowledge transfer and corporate relations (working names). The vice presidents will be nominated by the ETH President and elected by the supervisory authority for the ETH Domain, the ETH Board.