

Equal Opportunity & Diversity Action Plan

2021-2024



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Executive summary

Beyond fulfilling our core missions of education, research and innovation, we also strive for excellence in all that we do, so that our students can enjoy the best possible learning environment and our employees can further develop their skills. Achieving this means promoting equal opportunity and nurturing a culture of inclusion and respect – two cornerstones of our 2021-2024 strategy.

This action plan builds on our past efforts and is designed to:

- ➔ **instill a culture of respect and create a sense of belonging among our entire community**, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, religion, origin, or any disability.
- ➔ **increase the percentage of women in management and leadership positions** and among our faculty, researchers, and administrative and technical staff.
- ➔ **increase the percentage of female students at our School**, and specifically in areas where they are still heavily underrepresented, through outreach programs at local high schools.
- ➔ **provide conditions more conducive to a healthy work-life balance support** and dual-career couples.

This plan was drafted through a concerted effort by a variety of stakeholders, including EPFL's five school deans and two college directors along with our vice presidents, associate vice presidents, associations and the unit heads who will be tasked with specific action items. It implements the gender-equality and diversity-related aspects of our strategy based on the reference documents listed below. EPFL's upper management (the "Direction") approved this action plan at a meeting on 14 December 2021.

Reference documents

- EPFL's 2019-2020 gender monitoring report
- Report on the status of women faculty at EPFL (SWF)
- The ETH Board's 2021-2024 gender strategy
- The equal opportunity section of EPFL's 2021-2024 strategy
- 2021-2024 strategic objectives of the Federal Council for the ETH Domain
- EPFL's 2021-2024 target agreement with the ETH Board (internal document)
- Horizon Europe guidance on gender-equality plans

Instilling an inclusive organizational culture

We aim to be a benchmark university and equal-opportunity employer that gives students and employees an open, tolerant, welcoming and enriching environment where they can realize their full potential. To create this environment, we will need to anchor our organizational culture, manage change effectively and demonstrate management's commitment to our efforts. To that end, we created a Vice Presidency for Responsible Transformation (VPT) in 2021, with the goals of establishing a culture of respect, promoting diversity and enhancing equal opportunity. We also have an equal opportunity office within the VPT to serve as a driving force for change. That office supports EPFL's presidency and vice presidencies and brings all EPFL schools and colleges into our collective effort. EPFL is also a part of university associations and networks where we share best practices, successes and challenges in the areas of gender equality and diversity.

equal opportunity steering committee (Copil Égalité), which includes representatives from our central services, in order to share best practices and coordinate various measures. VPT-EGA will oversee the committees' work and foster synergies. [Adapted from the Report on the Status of Women Faculty at EPFL (SWF), Recommendation 13]

Dialogue with Swiss and international experts and perform benchlearning with other universities

VPT-EGA and the equal opportunity steering committee will consult experts in gender equality and diversity and perform benchlearning, which is a structured process for learning from our peers and improving. The goal will be to share best practices and gain inspiration on issues related to gender equality, diversity and inclusion. EPFL units associated with these issues will be involved in the dialogue and benchlearning.

Monitor performance, conduct impact assessments and issue reports

As set forth in the ETH Board's gender strategy, we will continually monitor gender equality at our School and issue biennial reports on gender equality and our progress on this action plan. For the 2021–2024 period, we will add new key figures and indicators for equal opportunity; we will also outline specific action items to assess the effectiveness and impact of our strategy for gender equality, diversity and inclusion and to measure implementation of Recommendations 1–16 in the SWF.

"Give students and employees an open, tolerant, welcoming and enriching environment"

Set up equal opportunity committees within each school and college, coordinated by the VPT

These committees will reinforce our commitment to and efforts in promoting equal opportunity, in association with all EPFL stakeholders. We have already formed an



Hiring and retaining women professors

The strength of a university rests largely on the quality of its faculty. Our procedures for hiring and retaining faculty will play a key role in fostering gender equality and diversity. In the area of gender equality, we plan to significantly increase the number of female professors we hire in the 2021–2024 period, reaching the ETH Domain's targets of at least 40% of new job offers being made to women and 35% of new hires being women. Achieving these targets will require a strong commitment across our organization.

Introduce a dual-career program

quently, it will be deployed as a tool for improving gender equality and diversity at our School. [Adapted from the SWF, Recommendation 11]

This program will support dual-career couples as part of our hiring process for new professors. We have recruited an individual responsible for assisting partners in their job search, liaising with EPFL schools, colleges and upper management, and maintaining ties with other universities (such as through the Swiss Academic Dual Career Network) and outside organizations. We will issue guidelines that specify the scope of and conditions for receiving financial assistance from EPFL's Dual Career Fund. These steps are intended to make EPFL a more attractive employer and help us better retain professors. [Adapted from the SWF, Recommendation 9] *See Section IV below for information on our action items to expand our daycare services and make EPFL a family-friendly university.*

Increase our commitment to excellence and diversity by introducing a visiting professor and academic guest program

To increase the diversity of our faculty and provide role models for underrepresented groups at EPFL, we will roll out a program to invite visiting professors and academic guests to our campuses and hold seminars and lecture series with these experts. This program will be developed in association with the equal opportunity committees at individual schools and colleges, and will aim to identify and engage with a broad pool of diverse candidates.

Increase the number of women professors

To reach the ETH Domain's targets for women professors (40% of job offers and 35% of new hires), we will proactively search for and engage with a diverse pool of highly skilled candidates and build awareness among the people who make hiring decisions at EPFL of implicit biases in the selection process. We will also review our hiring policy and set up systems for EPFL schools to learn from each other's experience, in order to support effective policy implementation. Units that do not comply with the principles of our hiring policy may find their candidate searches interrupted, or may be asked to ensure there is an adequate number of short-listed female candidates. [Adapted from the SWF, Recommendation 10]

EPFL may, on rare occasions, hire faculty members directly rather than going through an open-application procedure, in order to attract outstanding professors to our School. While we still plan to use this procedure only very infre-





Increasing EPFL's attractiveness to women Bachelor's, Master's and PhD students

EPFL and ETH Zurich have got a joint target of having women make up 33% of their combined student body by 2024. Increasing our intake of female students and achieving greater gender balance in our Bachelor's, Master's and PhD programs will be key to properly fulfilling our role in society. Several units at our School (e.g., the Education Outreach Department, Science Outreach Department, Teaching Support Center and LEARN Center) are working towards this goal, mainstreaming efforts across our organization and working with high schools and other educational establishments, policymakers and other stakeholders.

In addition to breaking the stereotype that engineering schools are mainly for men, we also aim to provide a safe, welcoming and nurturing learning environment for all students. This entails adopting innovative teaching methods that promote diversity and inclusion, as described below.

Increase the number of female students

Our schools, colleges and sections – working under AVP-SAO and with the support of VPT-EGA – will develop an ambitious, innovative strategy and action plan to improve gender equality in our student body. This will include assessing the current situation at EPFL and in Switzerland's secondary schools. Our goal will be to increase the percentage of women and other underrepresented groups (such as first-generation academics, underprivileged students, first- and second-generation immigrants, and others with marginalized social identities).

"Having women make up 33% of their combined student body by 2024"

Action items developed and implemented by the Science and Education Outreach Departments

The Science Outreach Department will continue its MINT program for girls aged 7-16, as well as its workshops, semester-long classes and camps for different age groups. These programs cover topics in science, engineering and information and communication technology, and include mentoring activities. The Department will also continue its information and awareness sessions for parents and teachers. The impact of these initiatives will be assessed regularly.

The Education Outreach Department will pursue its strategy of developing awareness campaigns that showcase female university students, scientists and engineers. These campaigns are

"The hope is that by orienting our efforts starting at the high-school level, we can help eliminate unconscious gender biases"

intended to present high-school students with role models they can be inspired by. The Department will also continue its summer-school programs to attract more female high-school students to EPFL. The Education Outreach Department's strategy is based on an in-depth review of how EPFL's degree programs are positioned and what topics are covered in our outreach programs for secondary school students. The hope is that by orienting our efforts starting at the high-school level, we can help eliminate unconscious gender biases, especially in the way some professions are presented and certain subjects are taught.

Action items developed and implemented by CAPE, LEARN and CEDE

CAPE will further incorporate the topic of implicit biases into its teaching workshops; CAPE, LEARN and CEDE will jointly develop a new workshop series on inclusive teaching and universal lesson design for university professors; AVP-E and AVP-SAO will work with sections to improve the teaching of transferrable skills related specifically to working and learning effectively in diverse groups; and LEARN will broaden the scope of its research by taking into

"Improve the teaching of transferrable skills related specifically to working and learning effectively in diverse groups"

account potential moderating factors like gender, social and cultural background, native language and prior knowledge, drawing on theoretical and empirical evidence.

Seek out innovative measures we can take

We will issue a call for proposals for innovative teaching initiatives we could implement at EPFL to improve student diversity and inclusiveness, working in association with high schools and teaching schools.

Monitor the impact of our efforts

We will monitor students' trajectories and experience based on factors such as study section, educational background and gender, using various indicators (e.g., success rates, grades, drop-out rates and assignment to the MAN course). This information will tell us if the conditions at our School and the actions we have taken are effective in promoting equal opportunity. The information will also be used to design further action items.





Expanding, recognizing and understanding diversity at EPFL

At EPFL, we strive to foster an inclusive culture that values diversity, respect and equal opportunity. Achieving this goal will require sharpening our awareness of existing inequality at our School, understanding the mechanisms and effects of implicit biases as evidenced in

research, and building our managers' social skills and knowledge of these issues at all levels. We will also expand our understanding of the concepts of inclusion and diversity and listen to the needs of different groups in order to map out a way forward together.

Action items in this section are grouped into the following three categories:

1

Recognizing the breadth of diversity and the needs of different groups

2

Fighting harassment and discrimination; promoting respect and inclusion

3

Becoming a caring organization with working and studying conditions that are conducive to a healthy work-life balance

1. Recognizing the breadth of diversity and the needs of different groups

Expand our understanding of diversity

To actively promote diversity at EPFL, we must deepen our understanding of what diversity means and adopt an intersectional approach. This will entail sharpening our awareness of existing inequality at our School and the effects of implicit biases as evidenced by research. We introduced measures in 2021 to improve inclusion and better recognize the rights and needs of members of the LGBTIQ community, and we plan to extend these measures to other groups.

Better recognize diversity at our School

We will evaluate what could be improved in our existing approach, identify best practices in diversity and update our databases and procedures to allow members of the EPFL community to indicate their gender identity (including a neutral/non-binary category) in internal and official EPFL documents.

Make our campuses more accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities

As a public-sector institution, we must be exemplary in how we cater to the needs of

people with disabilities. To that end, we will commission an assessment of our performance on integration standards with regard to students, employees and visitors.

Update our facilities so as to better serve our diverse community

Efforts we have planned in this area include installing dispensers in public bathrooms for free menstrual products; installing modern, non-gendered and accessible toilets and shower stalls; making more lactation rooms available; and improving disabled access on our campuses.

Some non-gendered toilets and shower stalls were installed as part of the CE and CM building renovations in 2021. Gender-specific toilets will still be available on our campuses. Our initial experience with these non-gendered toilets will be used to inform further renovation and construction work.



2. Fighting harassment and discrimination; promoting respect and inclusion

Prevent harassment and discrimination and foster a culture of respect

We have set up the Task Force Harassment A-Z & Promotion of a Culture of Respect (including several working groups), which is overseen by our Vice President for Responsible Transformation. This task force will implement prevention and support measures and make sure that complaints are handled and redressed to the highest standards. The prevention measures will address sexual harassment, racism and other forms of sexism and discrimination, as well as psychosocial risks more generally. They will cover situations in day-to-day campus life as well as special events like conferences and parties, and will include training for new students and employees on these aspects of our organizational culture and values. [Adapted from the SWF, Recommendations 12 and 17]

Hold seminars on implicit biases, diversity and inclusion

These seminars will be tailored to different segments of our community, such as faculty, students who have supervisory and coaching duties, and administrative and technical managers who have supervisory and hiring duties. [Adapted from the SWF, Recommendation 12]

"The EPFL will support the implementation of inclusive language in both French and English"

Provide guidelines and training on best practices for inclusive communications

At EPFL, our perceptions of legitimacy and belonging are reflected in our administrative forms, databases and written and visual communications. These are some of the key elements we will address in our efforts to adopt inclusive communications, which will start with the implementation of inclusive language in both French and English. We will develop a specific webpage on this topic and hold presentations and seminars for different segments of our community, in order to facilitate the transition. [Adapted from the SWF, Recommendation 15]

3. Becoming a caring organization with working and studying conditions that are conducive to a healthy work-life balance

Provide better information and support for caretakers

Many members of our community also serve as caretakers for family members, beyond the role they may have as parents. EPFL and the ETH Domain are becoming increasingly attuned to this issue and responding with new support measures. However, for these measures to be effective, we need to improve how we communicate about them, whether for childcare, eldercare or the care of ill relatives. We will therefore develop and implement a specific communications strategy for this issue; this action item will also include rolling out initiatives to encourage peer-to-peer support, such as coffees for parents and networks for PhD students who are parents.

Ensure adequate daycare capacity

We will conduct an assessment of the existing daycare facilities on our campuses and use the results to expand our capacity, so as to better serve EPFL students and employees. [Adapted from the SWF, Recommendation 4]

Provide guaranteed daycare to new faculty members

Providing better access to daycare is an objective pursued jointly by EPFL, UNIL and local governments. Access to adequate daycare for new faculty members, other new employees and new students, in the event they are relo-

cating, is a particular challenge. We will prioritize guaranteed access to daycare for new faculty members and, based on our experience, we may expand our efforts to other new employees and new students. [Adapted from the SWF, Recommendation 5]

Encourage family-friendly working hours

With today's flexible working arrangements, it's even more important to set clear boundaries for meeting times. Meetings should be held between 9am and 5pm, teaching schedules notwithstanding, so as to coincide with standard daycare hours. And because some form of remote working will likely continue, we also need to respect employees' lunch breaks

(12pm to 1pm) as much as possible. [Adapted from the SWF, Recommendation 5]

Provide parental leave for non-birth parents

We will assess the implementation of one month of parental leave for non-birth parents (fathers or registered partners), as required in the amendment to the ordinance on ETH Domain employees (OPers EPF). [Adapted from the SWF, Recommendation 6]

Offer teaching relief

Female tenure-track assistant professors can take one-year teaching relief (maternity leave plus an additional semester) after giving birth. Female associate and full professors will also be entitled to an additional semester of teaching relief after their maternity leave; one semester of teaching relief will be offered to new non-birth parents as well. [Adapted from the SWF, Recommendation 7]

Reward good leadership

We will consider different ways of encouraging managers to show outstanding leadership by promoting inclusion and a healthy work-life balance.

"We will conduct an assessment of the existing daycare facilities on our campuses and use the results to expand our capacity"



Enhancing employees' career development prospects

Until now, our gender equality initiatives in the area of career development have been geared mainly to female PhD students and postdocs. We plan to extend these initiatives to administrative and technical staff, therefore helping to improve gender equality across all EPFL sectors and functions. Our aim is to increase the percentage of women in management and leadership positions (function levels 10 and above) to 25% by 2024.

Review the roles, duties, responsibilities and career development prospects of administrative assistants, and outline recommendations

Administrative assistants perform a variety of tasks and have a range of responsibilities. We are in the process of reviewing this function, held almost exclusively by women, so as to better recognize their efforts and clarify their career development prospects.

Increase diversity among our administrative and technical staff

We plan to develop and implement best hiring practices so as to increase diversity among our administrative and technical staff, managers and apprentices. Equal opportunity will also be taken into account in our promotion decisions for senior administrative and technical positions.

Provide career development opportunities (e.g., through mentoring and training) for women in entry-level and middle-management administrative and technical positions

This action item will include expanding the leadership training we provide and introducing specific measures for underrepresented groups.

Continue our career development programs for researchers

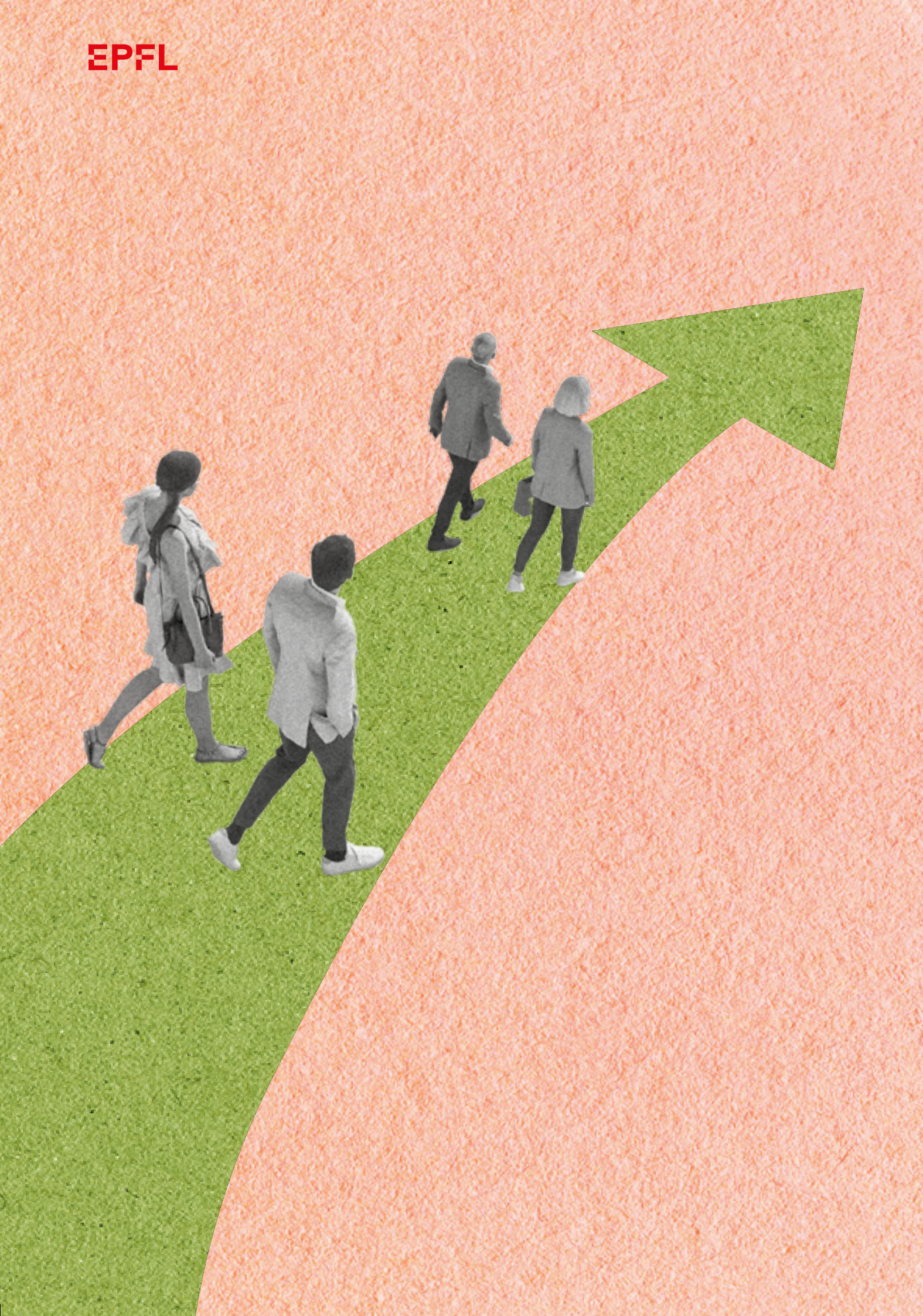
We will continue our career development programs for researchers (FLP Program - Fix the Leaky Pipeline; RRM - Réseau romand de mentoring pour femmes; ateliers REGARD; CONNECT - Connecting Industry and Academia; H.I.T. - High Potential University Leaders Identity & Skills Training Program) and better leverage synergies. We have been steadily expanding our mentoring, coaching and training programs on improving gender equality and equal opportunity at all levels of our organization. Most of these programs are carried out in association with other ETH Domain institutions and Swiss cantonal universities. Going forward, we plan to enhance cooperation among EPFL units in order to leverage synergies and transfer knowledge.

Continue implementing the European Charter & Code for Researchers, which we signed in September 2005

Career development and equal opportunity are core elements of this Charter & Code. We will assess implementation every two years.

Continue implementing Switzerland's charter on equal pay in the public sector, which we signed in 2019

We will assess implementation every two years.





Improving gender equality and diversity in research and innovation

We will adopt two key concepts in gender equality and diversity – Responsible Research and Innovation and Gendered Innovation – which are becoming increasingly prominent in leading research institutes and funding organizations. Here the goal will be to conduct research that incorporates and responds to the needs of different groups of people. We will also introduce measures to build students' and researchers' awareness of these concepts.

Enhance awareness of gender and diversity issues in research and innovation

We will add documentation and other materials on Responsible Research and Innovation and Gendered Innovation to our own resources for project-based teaching and learning. We will also make these materials available to the wider research community and hold at least one event on these topics each year (such as a conference or workshop).

"We will add documentation and other materials on Responsible Research and Innovation and Gendered Innovation to our own resources for project-based teaching and learning"

Acronyms

AVP-SAO	Associate Vice Presidency for Student Affairs and Outreach
AVP-E	Associate Vice Presidency for Education
CAPE	Teaching Support Center <i>(Centre d'appui à l'enseignement)</i>
CEDE	Center for Digital Education
ETH	Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology <i>(Eidgenössischen Technischen Hochschulen)</i>
LEARN	Center for Learning Sciences
VPT	Vice Presidency for Responsible Transformation
VPT-EGA	Equal Opportunity Office
SWF	Report of the Commission on the Status of Women Faculty at EPFL



Impressum

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