

Advancing Respect, Equality, Accessibility, Diversity & Inclusion

Action Plan 2025-2028

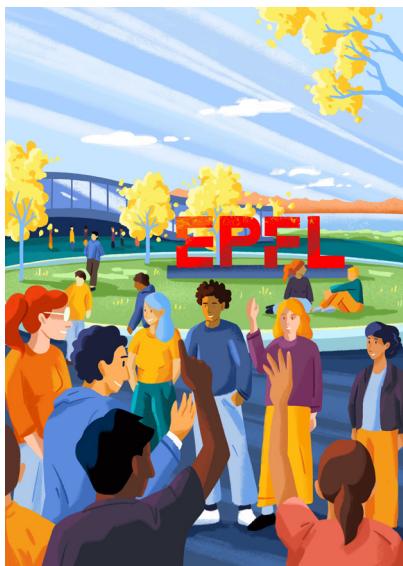


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About the Action Plan

Respect, Equality, Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion are integral to EPFL's strive for excellence and its mission to serve society and the economy in Switzerland and beyond.

Over the past decade, EPFL has made significant progress in advancing in our institution's cultural change towards gender equality and diversity, including notable progress in the share of women among faculty and in management roles. Principles of respect, diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) have become part of our institutional fabric and community life. Key initiatives for the prevention of harassment and promotion of respect, and the EPFL Without Barriers initiatives built on participatory approaches to enhance inclusivity. Efforts to diversify the student body have been reinforced, translating into slow yet steady change. Additionally, EPFL has continued to enhance its standing as a quality employer, fostering a supportive environment for work-life balance, mental health, and caregivers' responsibilities.

Yet, further progress is needed.

The present Action Plan supports the implementation of the EPFL Development Plan 2025-28, reinforcing the commitment to excellence through diversity and placing people and humanist values at the heart of the institution, with the aim of building an increasingly healthy, stimulating and inclusive environment, where every member of the community feels valued, listened to and encouraged to contribute fully (EPFL Development Plan 2025-28, p.8¹).

It builds on existing achievements, as outlined in the [Gender Monitoring](#) and [Progress Reports](#), and on reference documents such as the [ETH Domain's Strategy for Diversity, Equality & Inclusion 2025-28](#), the Target Agreement between EPFL and the ETH Domain, as well as the [EPFL Compliance Guide](#), and its chapter Equality, Diversity, Respect. Findings and recommendations from recent EPFL studies, surveys, and audits² have also been instrumental in drafting the different measures.

Main objectives of this Action Plan are to:

- Establish and embed an EPFL-wide DEI strategy and accountability
- Actively engage the EPFL community in the development of an inclusive culture
- Enhance equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion among students, in recruitment and career prospects
- Stand out as an institution that promotes good life-domain integration
- Support excellence in teaching, research and innovation through DEI awareness.

¹ Internal document. A summary is available here: <https://www.epfl.ch/about/overview/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/LEX-1.1.11.pdf>.

² Status of Women Faculty@EPFL Report (2020); Survey on Harassment, Violence and Discrimination (2021); Mental Health & Well-Being Survey (2023); Satisfaction Survey [Employees] (2023); EPFL Without Barriers. Self-evaluation Report (2023); Audits of EPFL Schools and Doctoral Programs (2023). EPFL Accreditation Audit (2022).



I. Anchoring Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Institution

The ETH Domain Strategy for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion puts an emphasis on firmly embedding DEI policies in the institution, and on the commitment on the part of the top management to ensure their implementation and effectiveness. At EPFL, the integration of the Office for Equal Opportunity into the Vice-presidency for Human Development (VPH), as part of its Well-being and Inclusion (WINC) domain, and the principle of collective responsibility are cornerstones for this approach.

Accordingly, actions to be implemented in this focus area aim to ensure that:

- DEI principles are a shared responsibility throughout the VPH
- EPFL and its entities engage in efficient and continuous peer-learning and accountability regarding DEI.

■ Integrate DEI aspects throughout VPH Domains

A key objective for the development of EPFL in 2025-28 is to strengthen a culture of collective responsibility, to foster a respectful environment for everyone. To achieve this, initiatives, projects and policies developed by VPH Domains will integrate DEI aspects in a systematic manner. The expected outcome will be a streamlined integration of DEI principles in VPH policies and projects, with an impact throughout EPFL and on its attractivity as a responsible employer.

■ Foster internal and inter-institutional peer-learning on DEI

Advancing Equal Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion highly benefits from intra- and inter-institutional peer-learning. Over past years, EPFL schools and colleges have appointed Diversity committees or representatives and developed a variety of initiatives. In 2023, an EPFL-wide DEI committee was set up with the aim to support peer learning and engagement with DEI in schools and colleges. The efficiency of the peer-learning framework should be further enhanced. To support this effort and to include an international perspective, EPFL together with the institutions of the ETH Domain will explore the potential of the [Athena Swan Charter](#) as a framework to support peer-learning and advancement of DEI. Expected outcomes are an enhanced awareness and engagement of EPFL entities in the advancement of DEI, effective internal and inter-institutional peer-learning processes, and a framework to foster DEI in 2029-32.

■ Ensure accountability on actions and progress

Accountability on actions and progress regarding DEI is at the heart of EPFL's quality and accreditation process, and a prerequisite to continuous learning and improvement. To this end, a biennial progress report on the implementation of the present action plan will be made available online. Furthermore, the biennial EPFL gender monitoring report will be expanded to include indicators for other DEI aspects in addition to gender. These indicators will be developed in collaboration with institutional stakeholders. Expected outcomes are visibility of actions and achievements, compliance with accreditation standards and trust from the community in the institution's commitment towards equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion.



II. Inclusive organizational culture and communication, safe environment and good leadership practice

A key objective for the development of EPFL in 2025-28 is to strengthen a culture of collective responsibility across the entire community, to ensure and maintain a respectful work and study environment for everyone. As stated in the EPFL Development Plan, this shared commitment is key to making EPFL an increasingly inclusive, healthy, and inspiring place, where the well-being of every individual is upheld as a collective priority.

The actions outlined below are designed to contribute to this key objective, by:

- actively engaging the EPFL community in the development of an inclusive culture
- improving access and visibility of DEI resources and support systems for all members and campuses
- supporting leadership engagement and accountability.

Inclusive organizational culture and communication

■ Implement a participatory process to develop EPFL Values

Values are not just symbolic. They are integrated into everyday decision-making, processes and behaviors and are foundational to the development of a sense of community. They guide and impact both what we

do, and how we do it. As part of its organizational culture development and the rethink EPFL initiative, EPFL will develop its own values statement. In line with efforts towards greater inclusion, the focus will be on appropriating EPFL's values in a community-driven process. A subsequent survey will allow us to identify key elements, from the point of view of EPFL Values, that will guide the evolution of the institution's human and societal priorities.

The expected outcomes of this process are an enhanced sense of community and shared purpose, clarity on expected behaviors in a complex environment, as well as an informed strategic development that celebrates the best of EPFL and brings the community forward together.

■ Create a catalogue of DEI resources and tools available to the EPFL community

An online DEI resources catalogue will be developed to enhance the visibility and accessibility of DEI resources available to the EPFL community. The catalogue will be structured according to different Diversity categories, as identified in the chapter 'Equality, Diversity, Respect' of the EPFL Compliance Guide, and take inspiration from a similar tool at ETHZ. It will include entries such as Gender Equality, LGBTIQ Visibility, Anti-Racism, Internationality, Culture & Religion, Inclusion and Accessibility, Socioeconomic Background, and Age and Generations. The expected outcome will be an enhanced sense of belonging through greater accessibility and visibility of DEI resources, awareness and engagement.

■ Support community-driven bottom-up initiatives and engagement with DEI topics

Community driven bottom-up initiatives are an effective way to support inclusion and a sense of belonging for members that are part of a minority. Such initiatives, as for example the PhD-parents network, Women in IC, or the LGBTIQ+ Safe Space further help articulate needs and develop institutional good practice. The VPH-WINC team will support

and collaborate with associations and stakeholders on campus to support bottom-up initiatives geared towards an engagement with DEI topics and inclusive community building. In addition to topics such as gender equality, parenthood, disability, and LGBTIQ+ rights and safe space, the aim is to engage with questions around 1st generation students and academics, cultural background, age, etc. These initiatives will foster equal opportunity and help prevent discrimination.

■ Organize public events to foster engagement with DEI principles

Public events allow the wider EPFL community to actively engage with DEI topics, and the historical and academic foundations of related policies, challenges and solutions. These events also contribute to a constructive dialogue-culture on DEI topics. Generally linked to international dates, events will be organized in collaboration with stakeholders in the EPFL community, as well as with other entities (University of Lausanne, communes, Canton of Vaud, etc.).

■ Assess implementation of inclusive communication principles

Communication has an impact on the perception of gendered roles and competencies, self-efficacy and sense of belonging. In 2021, EPFL adopted principles to foster inclusive communication with an implementation strategy based on voluntary participation. Five years after its adoption, inclusive communication should be standard in overall communications and systematically be verified in key texts such as job announcements, websites and (new) official documents.



Safe and respectful environments and good leadership practices

■ Assess EPFL's psychosocial risk support and complaints management and implement recommendations for improvement

EPFL has made significant progress in addressing harassment and preventing psychosocial risks, including a prevention and support system and complaint management process. Prevention initiatives include Respect campaigns, training tailored to different publics, and the Trust Point digital hub. EPFL will evaluate this support and complaints management system. Expected outcomes include recommendations to strengthen prevention and support structures, and clarify the complaint process, including mechanisms for feedback and continuous improvement.

■ Include DEI aspects in EPFL's strategy for health and wellbeing

Studies³ conducted at EPFL in past years have shown that members belonging to underrepresented or minority groups tend to be more exposed to psychosocial risks and mental health issues. Accordingly, the strategy for the promotion of physical and mental health and wellbeing, and for the prevention of psychosocial risks will strive to address the needs of diverse target publics in an intersectional way. Expected outcomes are an enhanced sense of inclusion and belonging, and fewer psychosocial risks for underrepresented groups, as well as better access to support, and improved wellbeing across the community.

■ Provide leadership training related to DEI and diversity-aware team cultures

Employee wellbeing, productivity and inclusion are linked to the units' culture and the supervisor's leadership capacities. DEI topics will be included in EPFL's leadership development programs and offer, addressing topics such as Implicit bias awareness, Protection of personality, Inclusive leadership,

Conflict resolution and Diversity & team culture. The offer will be based upon a needs-analysis and take into account experiences at EPFL and reference institutions. The training offer will also be part of EPFL's strategy to prevent and address psychosocial risks. The expected outcome is a strengthened leadership culture that actively fosters inclusion and enhances both employee well-being and team performance across EPFL.

Ensuring accessibility and inclusion is essential for EPFL to provide equal opportunities, foster well-being, and meet its societal responsibilities.

■ Assess implementation and improve guidelines for accessible and inclusive events

Events at EPFL reflect the institution's values and shape its public perception. [EPFL's Sustainable Events Guide](#) contains a section on Equality and Diversity. While pilot measures have been undertaken in past years to make major scientific and public events taking place at EPFL more inclusive and more accessible for parents, people with disabilities, and young scholars from lower income countries, there is currently no overview on how recommendations on equality & diversity are implemented and how they could be improved.

To build on the current situation, EPFL will assess the implementation of existing recommendations for events and identify needs for improvement to more systematically support equality, diversity, accessibility and inclusion. The expected outcome is to ensure that EPFL events meet high standards regarding DEI and contribute to EPFL's reputation as an excellent research and higher education institution.

■ Enhance visibility and access to support services in associate campuses

While the needs for support services among EPFL members working in one of the four associate campuses are overall the same as among the community located in the main campus in Lausanne, the conditions to access and benefit from these support measures and other resources are not. Actions will be developed to improve the visibility and access to support services related to health, well-being and DEI in associated campuses. These actions include targeted development of services, such as childcare offers in associated campuses, facilitation of ticket reimbursement for well-being services located in the Lausanne campus, adapted communication and an on-site offer of training and prevention measures. Expected outcomes are enhanced equity in access to services, and a strengthened sense of community among all campuses.

EPFL without Barriers. Accessible and inclusive

■ Develop a detailed action plan and institutional program

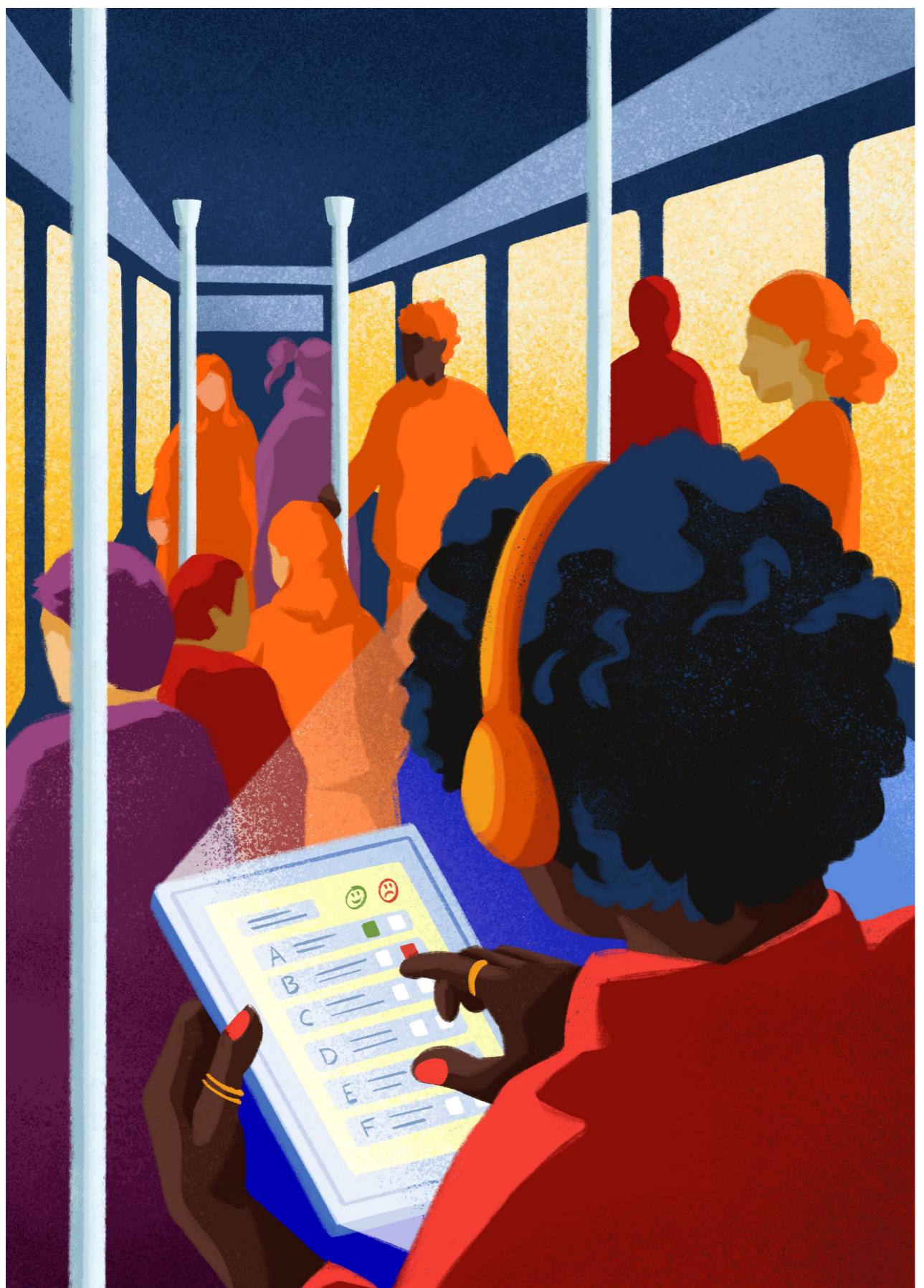
Ensuring accessibility and inclusion is essential for EPFL to provide equal opportunities, foster well-being, and meet its societal responsibilities. To move beyond a reactive approach and establish sustainable, forward-looking solutions, EPFL will prioritize the development of a detailed action plan and institutional program for 2025-28.

This plan, involving stakeholders across the institution, will build on Phase 1 of the "EPFL Without

Barriers" (ESB) project (2023/24), which analyzed the status quo, and formulated recommendations with prioritized measures in seven thematic areas. The findings from Phase 1 revealed that EPFL's approach to accessibility is often reactive, which, while often effective in the short term, leads to unsustainable costs and insufficient accommodation over time. There is also a general lack of awareness and information on accessibility needs.

A dedicated project manager was appointed in September 2024 to coordinate and oversee the development of the action plan and institutional program. The development of awareness and internal expertise, and the involvement of those directly concerned and impacted by the (lack of) actions will be key. The expected outcomes are an easier access to information on accessibility and inclusion at EPFL, promoting equal opportunity and autonomy; improved social and professional inclusion and participation; increased attractiveness as an employer and school; and clear progress towards meeting societal needs and evolving legal requirements.

³ For example: EPFL Mental Health and Well-being Survey, 2022; EPFL Survey on harassment, violence and discrimination, 2021.



III. Equal opportunities in career development

As highlighted by the EPFL Development Plan 2025-28, fair and inclusive education promotes justice, diversity, innovation and social progress. Advancing equal opportunities in education and career development is central to EPFL's mission to contribute to a more informed, inclusive, and resilient society, across Switzerland and beyond.

Equal opportunity in study and career prospects and inclusiveness with regard to gender, disability, social and cultural diversity for students, staff and researchers are key objectives to which the below actions will contribute.

For the Student Population

Actions targeted to advance equal opportunity and diversity in the student population pursue the following objectives:

- Achieve an overall share of more than 33% women undergraduate students at EPFL
- Enhance the share of students who are first generation academics
- Enhance understanding of student experience and success factors, and monitor the impact of measures to foster equal opportunity.

■ Understand students' experience of engagement and barriers towards equal opportunity

After the 1st Semester, women students are more likely than their male counterparts to be directed to the MAN (*mise à niveau*) program. Surveys⁴ also show differences in well-being and mental health between genders and underrepresented or minority groups in the student population. A longitudinal study, launched in 2024 aims to further understand the phenomenon and identify mitigating factors and measures.

The outcome of the longitudinal analysis will be a deepened understanding of barriers towards equal opportunity in student experience and success rates, taking into account categories such as gender, 1st generation academics and migration background. Additional outcomes are intervention studies that will provide insights into the impact of measures to mitigate barriers towards equal opportunity.

■ Reinforce outreach and STEM promotion

To Nurture the Next Generation of STEM Talents is one of the axes in EPFL's Impact Strategy. Flagship initiatives include the expansion of STEM promotion activities across Western Switzerland, the expansion of mentoring programs aimed at ensuring the success of a diverse student pool, including first-generation students, and the active participation in regional and national STEM outreach network efforts.

Currently, in the French speaking part of Switzerland, the impact of the educational level of parents on the probability of their children to opt for a Physics and applied Mathematics (PAM) high-school diploma is considerably higher than in the national average. In addition, girls with high grades in Mathematics at the Secondary I level in the Canton of Vaud are less likely to choose the PAM option in High School than boys with comparable or average grades⁵. First-generation women students who pursue advanced mathematics in high-school (gymnase) and express an interest in the fields taught at EPFL are less likely to come to EPFL than girls from families with an academic education⁶.

A communication strategy will be developed to ensure that the actions deployed through EPFL's impact strategy reach minorities and communities historically underrepresented at EPFL, fostering the visibility and connection with EPFL's diverse community.

⁵ GREGORIO Francesca, et al. (2024) *Genre et mathématiques à l'école : Etat des lieux dans le canton de Vaud et impact du système scolaire sur les parcours des élèves*. *Revue de mathématiques pour l'école*, No 241, juin 2024, pp. 27-41. <https://orfeo.hepl.ch/bitstream/handle/20.500.12162/7616/RMe-241-Gregorio.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=true>

⁶ EPFL Data Stories (2024). Challenges and opportunities of social diversity: Who will be our students of tomorrow? <https://www.epfl.ch/about/data/challenges-and-opportunities-of-social-diversity-who-will-be-our-students-of-tomorrow/>

Among the expected outcomes is the enhanced diversity of EPFL's student body, and the increased likelihood of girls and young people whose parents do not have a university education to choose PAM or "Math renforce" in High School, and to enter EPFL as students.

■ **Teaching for Mastery Experiences**

"Mastery" learning is based on the idea that all students can learn effectively with appropriate instruction and time. It is an approach that increases self-efficacy, which is key in determining student experience and outcome. Teachers' ability to teach in a way that fosters this competency is therefore likely to contribute significantly to foster equal opportunity. Under the leadership of Simone Deparis, A "Cookbook of Good Teaching Practices" has been developed by a group of 1st year teachers and distributed to other teachers. The dissemination, implementation and impact of these practices will be assessed and evaluated. The expected outcome are improved student performance and equity, and data-driven educational improvement and pedagogical development for teachers.

■ **Launch a belonging communication campaign**

Stereotypes and implicit biases towards women and underrepresented groups in STEM are still widely present in Swiss Society, and affect the young generation, their parents and teachers. To counter these barriers, EPFL will launch a communication and outreach campaign to highlight the diversity of its community. The expected outcome are an increased awareness and visibility of Diversity in STEM, a supportive environment for all student and staff and increased attraction and retention of a diverse student population.

■ **Develop career-tracking efforts for EPFL Alumni & Alumnae, including postdocs**

Career tracking provides relevant insight into factors that co-determine professional paths, and how they are correlated to gender and to other

aspects of diversity. Awareness of these influencing factors allows to improve career counselling and career development measures. Career tracking also enhances the visibility of diverse role models. The expected outcome of this action is improved career counselling and enhanced equity in career perspectives.

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For Employees

Action targeted to advance Equality, Diversity and Inclusion among faculty, scientific, administrative and technical staff pursue the following goals:

- Increase the target of offers for faculty positions to women to the extent possible while maintaining the highest standards of excellence, with the goal of reaching 45% female new hires
- Reach 29% of women in management positions (including professors) by 2028
- Enhance DEI in career development opportunities and prospects for scientific collaborators and members of the technical and administrative staff
- Enhance diversity in apprentices' recruitment for all vocational fields.

■ Review recruitment and promotion processes and guidelines for academic and non-academic staff

The EPFL policy for Equal Opportunity in Faculty recruitment, adopted in 2017, has significantly contributed to EPFL's successful faculty recruitment over the past years. A review of this policy, aiming at an increasingly intersectional approach, will ensure its continued effectiveness.

The integration of DEI principles to ensure equal opportunity and enhance diversity is important in all recruitment processes, including for doctoral programs, postdoctoral positions, administrative and technical staff and apprentices. To this end, guidelines for recruitment processes for these staff categories will be reviewed and adapted accordingly.

They will be supported by training measures, including training on implicit bias awareness. Promotion processes will also be reviewed. The expected outcome is increased diversity among recruited candidates, improved retention of a diverse workforce and equal opportunity in promotions and career progression.

■ Review and adapt welcome and onboarding programs suited to a diverse workforce

Structured welcome and onboarding processes pave the ground to ensure that everyone feels included and works in conditions that allow them to perform and excel, taking into account specific needs. A comprehensive onboarding program should include structured guidance for administrative processes, address cultural aspects as well as support measures and campus resources. A feedback system should be in place to continually improve on-boarding and inclusion. Under the leadership of VPH, welcome and on-boarding processes will be reviewed and adapted. The expected outcome is to enhance new EPFL members' engagement, efficiency and sense of belonging and a continually improved on-boarding.

■ Analyze the status of scientific collaborators @EPFL

The status of scientific collaborator at EPFL recovers a variety of functions and is characterized by a heterogeneity of job profiles, roles and employment conditions. Linked to a lack of clarity or transparency, this situation creates insecurities that are likely to negatively affect equal opportunity and well-being, especially among members of underrepresented groups. An analysis of existing functions, roles and employment conditions of scientific collaborators at EPFL will help identify clearly defined profiles. For each profile, career development opportunities will be identified. Expected outcomes are enhanced clarity of expectations, visibility of career outcomes, engagement and equal opportunity in career prospects.

■ Reiterate the Status of Women Faculty @ EPFL Analysis

The 2020 study on the ["Status of Women Faculty at EPFL"](#) provided a quantitative and qualitative analysis on working conditions and experience of EPFL faculty, based on their gender, status and other diversity aspects. The results and recommendations contributed to shape the [2021-24 EPFL Equality and Diversity Action Plan](#), and also actions in the present document. EPFL will update the quantitative and qualitative analysis and include topics such as distribution of teaching and administrative responsibilities, matching teaching assistants based on faculty needs, and thus provide updated insights into faculty experiences, along with recommendations for the subsequent years. The expected outcomes are evidence for the impact of the previous study, and actionable measures to further improve work conditions of EPFL faculty.

■ Conduct a study on the Status of Women in the CAT @EPFL

The corps administrative et technique regroups a wide range of job profiles, roles and functions. While the share of women in management positions at EPFL has improved over past years, gender differences among different categories of administrative and technical staff remain high. Little is known about other diversity aspects among different categories of administrative and technical employees, and how these aspects relate to salary, work conditions, job satisfaction, well-being, and career development. The expected outcome of the quantitative and qualitative analysis is a clearer understanding of diversity structures among the CAT and actionable recommendations to enhance equal opportunity and inclusion in the coming years.

■ Assess mentoring, training, and coaching programs and incorporate DEI aspects

Mentoring, training, and coaching programs are effective tools to foster personal and professional development and to enhance the advancement of underrepresented groups in specific fields

and management positions. An overview and assessment of mentoring offers will be realized to ensure the continuous improvement of existing programs and the development of new offers that address existing and evolving needs in the EPFL community. The expected outcomes are more accessible and effective mentoring opportunities, higher participation of underrepresented groups, and measurable progress in their retention, career advancement, and access to leadership positions.



IV. Conditions for a good life domain integration

EPFL's attractivity and capacity to attract a diverse student population and workforce requires working and studying conditions that take into account care and social responsibilities, preserving health and well-being. These are core responsibilities and instrumental to ensure the quality of life at work and during studies, and to maintain a close-knit and innovative community, allowing all its members to strive for excellence, both individually and collectively.

The actions outlined below are designed to:

- Improve support and information for caregivers and supervisors
- Provide adequate networking opportunities and feedback channels
- Strengthen flexibility arrangements and improve boundary conditions for caregivers to ensure equal opportunity.

■ Improve employment and study conditions for caregivers

Parental and other caregiving responsibilities still represent a risk of both indirect and direct discrimination. In line with existing regulations, efforts for continuous improvement of employment and study conditions need to be taken to mitigate these risks and invest in excellence in a cost-effective way. Topics to be addressed include childcare offers in associate campuses; implementation of family-friendly schedules for meetings; use of paternity leave and teaching relief; conditions for the reimbursement of professional travel costs with a small child; and improved conditions to benefit from work-flexibility arrangements.

■ Increase visibility & improve information on work and study conditions for caregivers and their supervisors

EPFL does not currently have a central webpage and information strategy addressed to caregivers. For a highly mobile and international community, this is particularly relevant, as it enhances the risk of unequal

access to resources and diminishes EPFL's attractiveness. To ensure that both students and employees, as caregivers and supervisors, are informed and aware of support measures and boundary conditions, a central webpage and unified information strategy will be developed. The aim is to ensure that all stakeholders have the information they need when they need it and feel supported in their roles. This will better enable EPFL members to fulfil their carers' role while pursuing their professional ambitions, strengthening their satisfaction and performance and contribute to the goal of excellence. It will enhance trust and foster a sense of community and belonging for all members of EPFL.

■ Implement efficient networking opportunities and feedback channels for parents and people with care responsibilities

Networking opportunities and feedback channels are key to identifying unmet and evolving needs and finding relevant solutions. Monthly "café-contact" brown-bag lunches for parents and a parent network for PhD students and postdocs who are parents are already in place. In addition, support offers for parents are assessed through dedicated feedback channels linked to the specific offers. As part of the above-mentioned information strategy, feedback channels for caregivers will be assessed and improved. The measure is expected to further strengthen the sense of belonging of caregivers among the EPFL community.

■ Strengthen work-flexibility arrangements

Well-designed work-flexibility arrangements enhance attractiveness as employer, foster productivity and well-being, and reduce costs through fewer medical leaves and improved retention. The VPH will support, accompany and assess the implementation of work-flexibility arrangements that are (comparatively) new to EPFL. Among these are: job-sharing, including in management positions, and temporary reduction of the employment rate, particularly for caregivers. The outcome will be enhanced awareness and experience with flexibility arrangements, increased satisfaction and productivity.



V. Inclusive Research, Innovation and Teaching

An important strand in EPFL's 2025-28 Development Plan is dedicated to empowering EPFL members at all stages of academic life, from student-led projects to faculty leadership, to pursue initiatives that address societal needs and train engineers and professionals with the skills, responsibility and ethics needed to build a sustainable and inclusive future. Addressing gender and diversity in science, technology and innovation are an essential part of this endeavor.

The actions outlined below aim to ensure that students and researchers will have the opportunity to discuss these topics and examine the relevance of gender and other categories of diversity for their field of studies and their research.

■ Foster a Gender in Research and Innovation approach

Drawing from Londa Schiebinger's work on [gendered innovation](#), EPFL will provide regular opportunities for PhD students and researchers to foster a gender in research and innovation approach, where relevant, and thus enhance knowledge production, excellence, sustainability and societal impact. Schiebinger has shown that not taking gender (and, in an intersectional approach, other social markers) into account leads to technologies that are more dangerous, more costly, and potentially discriminatory. Whether it is in AI or medical testing, animal experimentation, a Gendered Innovation approach improves the overall design of technologies their responsiveness to social needs and commercial relevance.

■ Integrate competences of social sustainability in study programs

The [EPFL Development Plan 2025-28](#) stresses the need to include ethical values such as sustainability, an open science approach, good leadership practices and respect in the teaching of fundamental sciences and technologies (p.19). In recent years, EPFL has introduced sustainability

courses in all its Bachelor and Master Curricula. Aspects related to DEI and social sustainability are, however, not yet systematically addressed in student curricula. Based on the experience with courses on sustainability, a plan for a systematic integration of social sustainability and DEI awareness in Bachelor or Master study programs will be developed.

■ Continuing the Assistive Technologies Challenge of the MAKE Platform

The [Assistive Technologies Challenge \(ATC\)](#) gives students the opportunity to design and develop meaningful technological solutions for and with people with disabilities. The ATC Challenge has been initiated and developed through the initiative of a student association with support of the BioRob Lab, with the aim to provide students with firsthand experience in working with real end-users and to understand how their skills and abilities can have a positive impact on society. To ensure the continuity of the ATC Challenge, the coordination will be institutionalized via VPH-WINC, in collaboration with MAKE.

■ Provide coaching on DEI topics for the MAKE Platform

Students who work on MAKE projects can reach out to a variety of specialist coaches. Coaching for questions related to equity, diversity and inclusion is not offered yet. VPH-WINC will provide coaching opportunities on DEI topics for the MAKE platform.

Glossary

DIVERSITY refers to socially relevant similarities and differences between people (such as gender, sexual orientation and identity, socio-economic origin, migration and ethnic background, nationality, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity, neurodiversity, age, psychological impairments or disability) and to their consideration and recognition under the premise of equal participation⁷.

EQUALITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES refer to the principles of human rights and the constitutional mandate conferred upon the ETH Domain institutions with regard to non-discrimination, gender equality and equal opportunity for people with disabilities. The chapter Equality, Diversity, Respect of the [EPFL Compliance Guide](#) provides a detailed overview of relevant legal texts. All ETH institutions strongly champion equality at all qualification levels and in all areas of research, research support and student life. Equal opportunities are a key criterion of quality and excellence. Equality and equal opportunities are accompanied by equity, which means taking into account specific needs and existing inequalities and consequently deriving goal-directed measures to ensure equal opportunities.

INCLUSION means creating an environment where diverse individuals feel respected, valued and empowered to fully participate and contribute. Inclusion goes beyond merely acknowledging diversity and aims to foster a sense of belonging. It involves actively removing barriers, biases and discrimination to ensure that everyone has equal access to opportunities, resources and decision-making processes.

INTERSECTIONAL DIVERSITY defines a concept of interconnected social categorizations based on alleged “race”⁸, so-called social layers and classes, gender etc. that can create overlapping and interdependent experiences of discrimination or disadvantage. This emphasizes that members of specific groups are not all the same, and while they may face similar challenges and share experiences they cannot be reduced to one category.

UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS are groups that have (historically) a relatively low share within the ETH Domain. A comparison with the general population can give an indication whether a group may be under-represented. However, under-representation is always context specific, it may vary between institutions, scientific fields, functions etc. and it can have different causes. For instance, women in STEM fields or first-generation academics can be regarded as under-represented groups in the ETH Domain. The ETH Domain institutions can determine what under-representation means in their specific context and how it relates to their own strategies/ action plans.

⁷ Based on the definition in swissuniversities P-7, Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity in University Development (2021-24): <https://www.swissuniversities.ch/fr/themes/egalite-des-chances-et-diversite/p-7-diversite-inclusion-et-egalite-des-chances>

⁸ “Race” is a socially constructed category, which is strongly rejected by the ETH Board and the ETH Domain institutions. In the context of this strategy, the term “alleged race” is used to address, on the one hand, the fact that people are subject to discrimination based on “race” and, on the other, that this category is, with its underlying biological and racist assumptions, scientifically untenable. For further information on the use of the term “race” in Swiss law see: <https://www.frb.admin.ch/fr/glossaire>

IMPRESSIONUM

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