

Comments on the Consultation on the revision of the ordinance on the organisation of EPFL (LEX 1.1.1)

This position statement is written jointly by:

- ACIDE, *l'Association du corps intermédiaire de l'EPFL*
- PolyDoc, the EPFL PhD students' association
- EPDA, the EPFL postdocs' association

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Dear Prof. Fontcuberta i Morral,

On behalf of the intermediate body representing PhD students, postdocs, and scientific staff at EPFL, we appreciate the vision set out in your letter and have specific comments related to the proposed changes.

We are particularly encouraged by the creation of the new Vice-Presidency for Human Development (VPH) and the emphasis on training and skills development for employees at all levels. As an integral part of EPFL's academic and scientific staff, we recognize the importance of continuous professional growth and the development of competencies that align with the evolving demands of our fields. Currently, this type of focus to enable junior and experienced scientists to grow through our careers is lacking.

Comments specific to certain Articles or themes:

1. Inclusion of ACIDE (Article 2 and 4.2)

In the new Article 2, the four bodies that EPFL recognizes are currently not all represented (ACIDE (intermediate body), AGEPOLY (students), CCE (teaching body) and the administrative and technical staff). Only the teaching staff (CCE) are included in the description.

ACIDE is also not included in the list of entities the Direction should meet with regularly (Art. 4.2). As the association that represents the intermediate body, we believe that the EPFL Direction should regularly meet and hear our concerns. This also places ACIDE on the same footing as AGEPOLY and CCE. We request that Article 4.2 is changed to include language that ACIDE or the organization that represents the intermediate body are also included. We also would like to note the absence of the technical and administrative staff here.

2. Support for Career Development (Article 13)

The explicit focus of the VPH on supporting all career stages of EPFL personnel is a significant step forward. We are pleased to see the inclusion of initiatives aimed at enhancing the skills and careers of all levels. This holistic approach ensures that every employee of the EPFL community can benefit from tailored support and opportunities for professional advancement. We

appreciate Article 13.2.c and hope that training will be offered equally to all levels with a targeted approach for each group. Currently we believe that transversal skill development for PhD and Postdocs in either an academic or non-academic career path are lacking. In addition, for established scientists there are limited career opportunities to grow further at EPFL.

3. Well-being and Inclusive Environment

We believe there is still a long way to go to achieve a truly inclusive and respectful environment for everyone at EPFL. We appreciate the progress made by the Respect and Mental Health campaigns over the past few years, but we still hear about far too many cases that impact the well-being of members of the intermediate body, often corresponding to well-known systemic problems in academia that are persistently unaddressed or ignored. It is crucial for the relevant administrative bodies to speak directly with PhD students, postdocs, and scientists to really understand these issues and start developing support structures. As the Trust and Support Network and the Respect and Compliance Office will now be under the new VPH, we hope they will take care to maintain the continuity of their efforts, and be provided the resources to make much-needed further progress. We also look forward to participating and giving feedback on the “in-depth reflection on the conflict and complaints management system [that] will be carried out at the beginning of 2025” (Art. 13, commentary).

4. Concerns About Administrative Bloat

The addition of a VPH (Art. 3.1) along with the staff under it, the power granted to the VPA to appoint AVPs (Art. 3.4), and the creation of an “Office of the Presidency” (Art. 9) are noteworthy. While these additions may be necessary, it is worth reflecting on whether there are correspondingly parts of the administration that suffer not from lack of staff but from lack of efficiency or organization, and how we can avoid unnecessary bureaucracy overall.

We appreciate Article 3.1, which states that the direction is composed of a majority of faculty members and now defines quorum. This promotes more open decision-making.

There are concerns about the vagueness surrounding the role of the Presidency (Art. 9). In particular the specific roles of the advisors and their total numbers. Transparency in these dealings is crucial to ensure trust and effective governance.

5. Inclusive Language

The use of “she or he” throughout the document is needlessly gendered and awkward. Adopting the singular “they” would be more inclusive and reflective of contemporary English usage.

As representatives of the intermediate body, we look forward to actively collaborating with the VPH to ensure that the proposed initiatives meet the needs of our community. We are

committed to providing ongoing feedback and suggestions to help shape effective and relevant programs to maximize their impact.

In conclusion, the intermediate body supports the proposed changes and the establishment of the VPH. We are optimistic that these initiatives could enhance the professional development and well-being of the intermediate body and EPFL staff, contributing to the institution's overall success and impact. We appreciate your leadership and vision in driving these important changes and look forward to working together to achieve our shared goals.

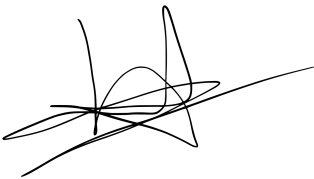
Sincerely,



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Lausanne
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