



Consultation in regards to the Revision of the Directive on the recognition of student associations by EPFL (LEX 8.2.1), the Regulations on the Organisation of Events on the EPFL Campus (LEX 8.3.1), and the introduction of Regulations on the Use of EPFL Premises and Outdoor Spaces (LEX 7.1.4)

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In the following, “ELSA” refers to all three entities ELSA, PolyDoc and EPDA. This document is the joint position of these three entities.

ELSA would first like to thank the organizers of the consultation for the translations of the proposed LEX in English. Also, ELSA thanks the School Assembly for organizing this consultation.

ELSA is worried by the **general increase in unnecessary bureaucracy** to what should be a straightforward process of organizing events on campus. They are contrary to the stated goals of clarifying the current regulations and encouraging a vibrant campus life.

The concerned services (ie. MEV) are already overwhelmed, and the addition of new rules will not diminish their burden. The current rules and regulations for holding events on campus are already not convenient. Events such as an apero after a defense, an extended reception after a meeting or a larger lab or departmental gathering already face obstacles in obtaining a room or permission with minimal delays. These simple and often spontaneous events bridge the scientific and social life of EPFL researchers, sparking creative exchanges, improving well-being and productivity, and planning them should be simpler. More often than not many of these informal events end with being requested to leave upon the arrival of security.

Revision of the Directive on the recognition of student associations by EPFL (LEX 8.2.1)

We would first like to clarify that ELSA and EPDA are officially considered “Représentation des différents corps de l’EPFL” and are not student associations (<https://www.epfl.ch/campus/associations/fr/liste-des-associations/>). However, Polydoc is considered a student association. *We would like to take the opportunity to request that Polydoc is also considered equal to that of ELSA and EPDA.*

In regards to LEX 8.2.1, the main concerns surround Article 3.1.g. :



In the arguments provided, the intended goal behind this change is to “clarify” the previous criterion regarding the limits of the political involvement of associations on campus. ELSA feels that the **proposed criterion remains unclear and lacks specifics**. Indeed, the notions of “political orientation” or “political debate” are very much up to subjective interpretation and its application could be abused.

Worryingly, the fact that associations have to remain “*free from any political [...] orientation and from any affiliation with organisations active in the political [...] arena*” is a concern for ELSA, given its membership in actionuni, the “Umbrella organisation of academic mid-level staff in Switzerland”. This organization also includes ELSA’s homolog at ETHZ, AVETH. We believe that it should **remain legitimate for ELSA to contribute to defending and bettering the intermediate body’s rights at EPFL and to advocate for the teaching and research done at EPFL at the federal level** through actionuni. The proposed phrasing does not make that clear enough and interpretation may differ in the future leading to the silencing of our opinions.

Thus, ELSA proposes the following statement: “[the association] are free from any affiliation with political parties or religious organisations.” This statement has the cumulative advantages of being concise, clear and not over-limiting.

More generally, in connection with Article 3 of LEX 8.3.1, it is unclear that the proposed regulations would allow student associations like Polyquity or Women+ in IC to conduct their activities, as they engage in **topics that are necessarily biased by gender or other criteria** (and rightly so), and necessarily involves **political debate tightly linked to the academic world**.

Furthermore, **political debate is very much part of academic life**. As junior and advanced researchers, we play an important role in many political debates, as would future engineers in their undergraduate studies. We believe that a university’s role is to nurture this sense of societal responsibility of its constituents, through events organized by its associations. The direction this Article seems to take is the opposite one, which we consider a disappointing development.

Regulations on the Organisation of Events on the EPFL Campus (LEX 8.3.1)

Our overall comments relate to potential future (mis)interpretation of these regulations that would not conform to the spirit of this consultation and could have an effect on valid research adjacent events.

- *Regarding Article 3.4.4: “the following events are not permitted on EPFL campuses: [...] private celebrations (weddings, birthdays, baptisms, etc.), subject to exceptional*

authorisation granted by the Direction". The public PhD defence is, at least in part – and despite its name - a private celebration upon invitation. It is **not realistic that the Direction approves each public PhD defense**. A clause should add this exception explicitly. These events already require too much logistics to plan and this adds another administrative layer.

- *Regarding Article 3.4.6: "the following events are not permitted on EPFL campuses: [...] events that include the conferral of diplomas from another educational institution"*. This line poses **an issue for the defences of PhD students who were enrolled in another institution**. This sentence should be adapted to "the conferral of diplomas **solely** from another educational institution".
- *Regarding Article 19 on catering*. It is customary for **public PhD defences** to include a dinner or an apéro, where the caterer is usually not associated to one of EPFL's restaurants. This is because the **exact food requests typically cannot be addressed by EPFL's caterers**. The resulting requests for MEV specifically regarding the approval of an external caterer for every PhD defence adds unnecessary administrative load. **Consequently, PhD defences should be an automatic exception stated in Article 19 e.g. in paragraph 4**. The **budget** necessary to ask for catering from internal EPFL vendors are also **usually over the ones** fresh PhD graduates could be able to pay, some of them not having a salary at that point in time. These aperos are also one of the few ways EPFL's scientific community gets to **exchange in a more relaxed setting**, restricting it would therefore be an overall loss for EPFL.
- As it stands, *the proposed decision tree* in Article 3 discourages organizing events. A healthy, well-designed process **should accept events by default**. The proposed tree does the opposite by providing an exhausting checklist that makes it feel that organizing any event is a chore, task and a burden rather than something benevolent.

In addition, Article 3 also states that "*events that are liable to harm the cohesion of the EPFL community*" or "*to significantly harm the [...] reputation of EPFL*" would not be permitted. Similar to Article 3.1.g of LEX 8.2.1, these considerations are arbitrary and fail to set a clear and unequivocal guideline. It raises concerns that the School may undermine the constitutional principle of proportionality, using the opaque criterion of "*[liability to] harm the reputation of EPFL*" forbid events where members of the EPFL community would discuss their disagreements with the School's policies or actions. ELSA requests that EPFL be **transparent** about the events it may



not allow for such reasons, with a **publicly available regular (e.g. yearly) report listing events that have not been approved and the reasoning for these decisions.**

Members of EPFL are often planning and holding events on a volunteer basis. We expect the rules to be clear and not up for debate or interpretation at every application to better allow us to plan efficiently. If EPFL already has certain events in mind with examples of events that would not be approved, this should be provided in the LEX.

Regulations on the Use of EPFL Premises and Outdoor Spaces (LEX 7.1.4)

Our overall comments:

- *Regarding Article 7.6 and the forbidding of parking bicycles and scooters in buildings.* Whilst we understand why using bicycles and scooters indoors is dangerous, **it is common for employees to park their bicycle or scooter inside of their office where it is both secured and poses no threat to public safety.** This practice should be allowed. There are already buildings with designated parking inside to shelter from the elements.
- *Regarding Article 8.3 and the forbidding of moving furniture between rooms.* This should be allowed for entities who are organising an event in these rooms, if they put the furniture back after the event.
- *Regarding Article 10 and what constitutes an ordinary event.* ELSA is of the opinion that the current list of ordinary use is limiting considering that EPFL seeks to support the well-being and professional life of students and researchers. We support adding to the list courses/events/workshops that promote career and professional development.

Lastly, Article 19.5: “The distribution or provision of leaflets and printed matter, newspapers, etc. is subject to the authorisation of Mediacom Events”. This is contrary to the decision of the ETH Appeals Commission from the 26th of October 2017 [link], which states that **ETH Zürich cannot always subject to a request for prior authorisation the distribution of leaflets**, as this disproportionately violates the constitutional freedoms of expression, of reunion and of the press. **The same conclusion can be drawn regarding the blanket ban on the collection of signatures in Article 16, save for the right of petition.** Both Articles 16 and 19.5 should be changed accordingly.



Member Consultation - In parallel with this response, ELSA surveyed its members:

“EPFL is standardizing the rules for using campus spaces and holding events (LEX 8.3.1 / 7.1.4). What is your biggest concern for our association’s activities?”

A) Too much bureaucracy/paperwork for small scientific networking events - 15 votes

B) Lack of priority in booking rooms compared to large student events or external guests - 6 votes

C) I find the current booking process fine and don’t expect issues – 4 votes