

Comments on the Implementation of Security Screening Protocols for Admissions at EPFL

This position statement is written jointly by:

- ELSA, *the EPFL Scientific Staff Association*
- PolyDoc, the EPFL PhD students' association
- EPDA, the EPFL postdocs' association

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To the EPFL Assembly,

As representatives of the intermediary body—a diverse group of PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, and scientists—we wish to express our shared commitment to upholding the values of inclusion, transparency, and equity that define EPFL's mission. Recent discussions around security screening protocols and their potential implications on academic freedom and international collaboration have raised concerns that we believe warrant broader and more inclusive dialogue.

EPFL thrives as a global hub for education, research, and innovation because of its diverse and talented community. Many of us, as members of the intermediary body, come from various international backgrounds and bring unique perspectives to the university's endeavors. However, the absence of intermediary body representation in changes to processes that directly affect our members risks overlooking the lived experiences and contributions of those directly affected by institutional policies.

We strongly urge EPFL leadership to ensure that the intermediary body has a seat at the table in discussions regarding policies that impact the academic, professional, and personal lives of our international community. Specifically, we request representation on the commissions and in consultations responsible for admissions, security screening, and international collaboration policies. Our inclusion in these bodies would enhance decision-making by providing valuable insights into the practical implications of these policies and ensuring alignment with the needs and aspirations of EPFL's global academic population.

Transparency is foundational to trust. To maintain EPFL's reputation as a fair and open institution, it is essential that decisions regarding admissions, security screenings, and international collaborations be guided by clear, publicly available criteria. This would prevent misunderstandings, reduce the potential for perceived biases, and uphold the principles of meritocracy. Furthermore, we propose establishing mechanisms to collect, analyze, and present aggregated data on admissions campaigns to the EPFL community. While we acknowledge the existing EPFL statistics tool (<https://www.epfl.ch/about/facts/fr/statistiques-institutionnelles/>), we suggest providing more detailed reports. These reports should include anonymized information on acceptances and rejections, with details on the reasons for decisions, geographic distribution, gender, age, and ethnic group—ensuring compliance with data protection regulations to safeguard individual privacy.

International students and researchers are integral to EPFL's success. Their struggles, whether bureaucratic, financial, or emotional, often go unnoticed. Policies that inadvertently create barriers for international talent risk undermining EPFL's position as a global leader in academia and innovation.

We emphasize the need for:

- **Proactive Support Services:** Strengthening administrative and social support for international students to navigate challenges, particularly those arising from visa restrictions or new institutional policies.
- **Equity in Opportunities:** Ensuring all candidates, regardless of their country of origin or circumstances, are evaluated on their individual merit, consistent with EPFL's commitment to fairness.
- **Collaboration over Isolation:** Policies should reflect EPFL's role as a bridge between nations, fostering global dialogue and understanding through science and education.

As EPFL continues to adapt to global challenges, it is critical to reaffirm the values of openness and equity that have made it a leader in the academic world. By including intermediary body representatives in policy discussions, committing to transparency, and prioritizing the needs of its international community, EPFL can ensure it remains a beacon of opportunity and innovation.

We stand ready to collaborate with EPFL leadership, faculty, staff and students to shape policies that reflect our shared commitment to excellence, inclusion, and fairness.

Sincerely,

Nikita Norkin
Co-President, ELSA



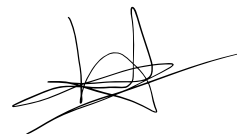
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