

APEL's position statement - EPFL Travel Policy

EPFL, Dec 10, 2021,

Dear Colleagues,

An email was sent to all professors and MER with the request for comments. We have received more than 30 answers (see below). We then sent a survey to all professors and received more than 230 answers in 24 hours, the results of this survey are attached below. Our comments are the following.

We all agree that EPFL has to reduce its footprint, federal restrictions or not. However, the current formulation of the directive does not allow enough freedom to address exceptional cases. Responsibly fulfilling our professional duties and **balancing work/family life** may sometimes mean to **shorten travel**. For instance, the following points have been raised several times.

- The use of a unique travel agency is questionable/not optimal.
- The use of business flights should be less constrained.
- The use of public transport is not always possible.

Up to now, traveling was easier at EPFL compared to many other international institutions. With this directive, we have the feeling that traveling will be much more difficult. Traveling is still unavoidable to maintain EPFL's reputation and collaborations around the world, we therefore suggest to aim at a more pragmatic solution that allows for more freedom than the one proposed in this directive.

Best regards on behalf of APEL

The APEL committee, A. Boghossian, G. Fantner, A. Kis, D. Kressner, M. Picasso

244 responses



Accepting responses ☒

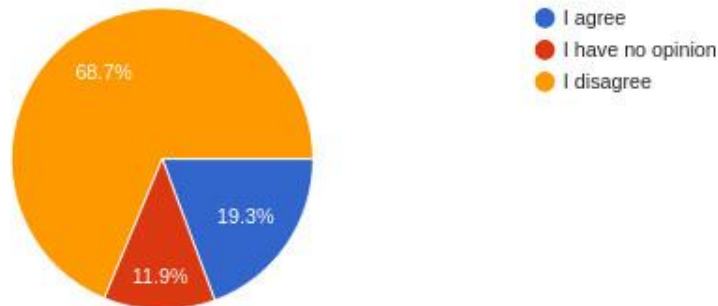
Summary

Question

Individual

The proposed directive says: "To ensure that the directive is observed and to guarantee the duty of care toward its employees, use of the EPFL travel agency is mandatory for all professional travel reservations by plane."

243 responses



The proposed directive says: "Only Economy and Economy+ class tickets are reserved for flights lasting less than nine hours or eleven hours with layovers, according to the predefined list (Appendix II). Exemptions may only be made for overnight flights."

243 responses



Comments received

- Nous approuvons la démarche générale qui consiste à réduire les coûts financiers et écologiques des voyages professionnels et encourageons l'Ecole dans cette démarche.
- Art. 4, 6, 7: Bien que nous comprenions les raisons derrière des prestataires centralisés pour l'organisation des voyages et que nous encourageons cette pratique, nous pensons qu'il est absolument nécessaire de laisser une marge de manoeuvre pour les cas d'urgence, par exemple un voyage décidé en dernière minute, un changement de programme, un trajet annulé, etc. Il faut que le voyageur ait la possibilité de réserver un billet de train ou un logement pour des cas d'urgence.
- Art.4: Il faudrait ajouter le remboursement des frais de prophylaxies recommandées (p.ex. malaria) en plus des frais de visas et vaccins.
- Art. 7: Un deuxième bagage s'avère parfois nécessaire, lors de missions de collaborations où l'on doit apporter du matériel, par exemple.
- Art. 12: Pour le même cas de figure, lors de transport de matériel, il faudrait prévoir l'usage d'un véhicule de location.
- Art. 18: De même, pour l'organisation des logements, dans certains contextes (par exemple plusieurs personnes du labo qui partent à la même conférence), il est avantageux de pouvoir réserver un logement partagé comme un appartement airBnB ou équivalent. Est-ce que le prestataire de voyage sera à même de fournir ce genre de services? Il serait souhaitable de remplacer le terme « prioritairement » par « dans la mesure du possible » afin de laisser clairement la possibilité à des alternatives. De même, il serait judicieux d'ajouter la possibilité de pouvoir défrayer un tiers qui mettrait à disposition un hébergement (dans la mesure où c'est une mesure plus économique par rapport à une offre commerciale hôtelière).
- Art. 11: Pour les personnes n'étant pas dans la région lémanique, les vols avec un départ au petit matin ou un retour tard dans la soirée ne permettent pas un trajet avec les transports publics. Il est alors proposé qu'elles passent une nuit à l'hôtel proche de l'aéroport. D'un point de vue financier, cela ne semble pas intéressant pour le laboratoire, et cela n'est pas forcément compatible avec une vie familiale. Il faudrait permettre, moyennant justification validée par le supérieur, que le collaborateur puisse prendre son propre véhicule et se faire rembourser le parking au minimum.
- Art. 13: Il y a des cas où il est nécessaire de prendre un taxi, cela doit pouvoir être remboursé pour les cas justifiés (transport publics en retard induisant un problème pour un examen par exemple, visiteur à mobilité réduite, etc).
- Art. 19: Nous approuvons la contribution CO2, cependant il faut clarifier qui prendra ces frais en charge. Est-ce que les bailleurs de fonds accepteront ces dépenses au même titre que le reste du voyage professionnel? Ou y aura-t-il un fond central dédié à ce sujet?

You asked for some feedback on the revisions to the revised EPFL travel policy.

We have discussed this among a group of professors (who wish to take you up on the anonymous aggregation of information though).

Here is our “prise de position”:

We welcome many of the changes suggested in the revised sustainable travel policy, for example the idea to privilege trains over personal cars, flights for relatively short distances or the ban on national flights.

However, we also believe that the burden of travel planning should not go up. Restrictions such as booking train tickets in advance seem to be overly burdensome.

We also feel very strongly about the ban of business class travel for transatlantic / long flights and would like to object on the following grounds:

1) Productivity

Productivity will go down if professors are forced to fly in economy. In business class, the Europe – US leg for example enables a professor 8 hours of efficient work time. In economy class, working with a laptop is realistically not possible. Some professors will take an extra day of travel so that they are not that exhausted by the time difference after flying in coach class. The new directive is very vague on permissible exceptions for the overnight leg on business – if those exemptions turn out too strict, professors will lose another day or two of efficient work time if they fly coach on the overnight leg and don't sleep.

2) EPFL's visibility

Some professors will choose not to go for short-term trips to international conferences if they cannot fly business. Although that accomplishes the goal of sustainability, it is short-sighted and to the detriment of EPFL's international visibility. The academic profession lives and dies by the exchange of ideas, and collaborations. These often start at international conferences.

3) EPFL's competitive position in recruiting top talent

Internationally visible professors may be attracted to other universities if we make travel too cumbersome, and EPFL's restrictions could be used by other universities as a recruiting tool.

I am again surprised to see how much confidence the school put on the head of laboratory. The person who travels must follow certain rules, but these new documents explain even what would be good or not. Why putting a rule on the time travelling and then saying that we could choose if this is over that time ? In a “règlement” we write what is right or not. It is yes or no, but not in between ?

- Eliminate all the appendixes : time of traveling is the rule. The head of lab can decide if it is over or under this limit. As the timing and schedule are always changing, these appendixes are a nonsense
- Suppressing the appendix will solve the problem of people departing from Neuchatel, Sion or Fribourg.
- Make the possibility to have exception for medical reasons
- Let the head of the unit a frame of possibility.
- Do not change the “règlement de voyage” every year ! For different purposes !

My position is that while it makes a lot of sense to limit professional travel to what is necessary and encourage all faculty to make an informed judgment about whether it is responsible carbon wise to travel versus meet online, the micro-management on business vs. economy travel seems disproportionate considering the effect that a long flight without sleep and/or without the opportunity also to work efficiently during the trip has on the productivity of the faculty member, and thus on the positive impact of this trip overall.

Once the decision is made that the trip is worth the effort and the carbon impact, we should on the contrary ensure that it allows as much productivity as possible. Therefore, I would at the very least recommend not to limit the choice of business vs. economy class (cost difference to be paid by the lab) to flights longer than 9 hours, but to flights longer than 6 hours (these durations can be associated to significant jet lag as well), so as to include any flight where sleep or work productivity is critical (e.g. transatlantic/overnight flights from the East Coast to Ireland, etc).

I find the lack of flexibility in this travel document extremely problematic. It will make certain travel scenarios extremely unpleasant and not provide much benefits. Below, I provide a few examples and suggestions.

Concerning business class restrictions:

- I have never actually taken business class on a day flight that was less than 9 hours but I appreciated the flexibility to do so and I think it's important to allow flexibility for specific circumstances. To give a specific example, several times I have gone to conference locations that are only accessible via a car (e.g. a Gordon Conference in New England). This can imply a 2-3 hour drive after a 8.5 hour flight (e.g. from Zurich to Boston). Such a drive occurred after an already 14-15 hour travel day. With jet lag this can be extremely dangerous, if one cannot rest properly on the flight (i.e. get some good flight on the plain). Taking away such options is again a move towards stricter micromanagement of our actions and is a bit infantilising. We should be able to be trusted to use our best judgement in such cases. If more micromanagement is absolutely needed than the total travel time needs to be taken into account and/or special

adaptations need to be possible for special circumstances. A blanket rule that looks at just the flight time as is currently the case is not suitable.

- The law needs to provide the opportunity for medical exceptions for these new business class rules. Asking older colleagues, those with circulatory issues or rheumatic issues to sit in very cramped seats where one cannot properly stretch or lie down for 9 hours is not appropriate.

- I find the 9hr limit extremely poorly chosen as many east coast flights are very close to 9hrs. Despite what the document says (according to past tickets), Geneva-Newark is typically between 8.5 and 9.5 hours. Zurich-Boston is 8.5 hours. Geneva-Washington is 9.5 hours. This means that very similar flights (or the same depending on the company or daily circumstances) will face different regulations. It would be more logical to have the limit at 6 or 7hr to clearly delineate between transcontinental and local flights.

- Many of our more prestigious US colleagues have demanded business travel for participation in high impact events (important lectures, advisory councils, etc.) . If we strictly impose a lack of business class on some transatlantic flights, we will undoubtedly lose opportunities to interact with some of our best peer researchers. I don't think it's worth it for the ultimately inconsequential carbon savings this will create.

Concerning the restrictions of car or taxi use:

- We need some flexibility with taxis and car use to get to the airport. Several times I have taken flights that have been delayed beyond the last train out of Geneva airport and/or delayed to the point of potentially missing an important event (e.g. a class) at EPFL. In such cases, I appreciated the flexibility to take a taxi and not miss the event or be able to get home. Again, I am not sure it is worth adding such significant restrictions to police what are (I'm guessing) very rare events. If more restrictions are ultimately decided, these motivated exceptions need to be possible.

Ce nouveau règlement part des bonnes intentions écologiques mais porte aussi un risque d'introduire des inégalités de traitement et de nuire au bon fonctionnement de l'EPFL. En particulier, plusieurs questions méritent d'être clarifiées:

- Est-ce que le règlement s'applique à TOUT le personnel sans exception?

- Quelles sont les sanctions indiquées sous l'article 29? Concrètement, quelles sont les conséquences d'un voyage qui ne respecte pas le règlement? Il y a remboursement (complet ou partiel?) du voyage par le membre du personnel y compris la compensation CO2 pour un voyage en avion?

- Est-ce que des exceptions sont possibles? Si oui, qui décident sur le motif évoqué et selon quels critères? Par exemple:

* Des choix non-conformes au nouveau règlement mais dûs aux contraintes d'organisation professionnelle ou familiale?

* Des choix non-conformes pour éviter le (risque de) grève d'un moyen de transport?

* Des raisons médicales pour justifier un moyen ou classe de transport du personnel? Qui traiterait ces informations sensibles?

* Des invité(e)s de grand renommé?

- Qui prend la responsabilité si le choix imposé par le règlement est contesté ultérieurement par le bailleur de fonds comme étant plus cher? Et si le bailleur de fonds n'accepte pas de couvrir la compensation CO2?

- Est-ce que des voyages payés par des fonds hors EPFL (p.e. autre institution, invitation) et dans un contexte professionnel, peuvent dévier de ce règlement? Il y a un devoir de déclaration ou contrôle de ces voyages?

- Qui décide sur les montants et l'usage du fonds CO2?

The new règlement is very detailed, and clearly a lot of thought has been put into it. I do think it is a little too prescriptive, and research suggests that formulating incentives for responsible behavior instead of micromanaging things like travel improve not only morale but also awareness of the need for being responsible (as opposed to just observing the letter of the rules). I also think that it might serve better to invest in clarifying the objectives and then delegating some of the minutiae of the implementation to the traveler, instead of the other way around. We can trust our staff to a good extent to make decisions that achieve the objectives in the specific situation at hand, as long as the objectives are clear. Otherwise we end up with a set of strict rules that apply in most cases but not all, and the union of all the cases where one rule or another is unjustifiably inconvenient may end up being higher than wished for.

There are some specific aspects that I would suggest for refinement or reconsideration:

Highest priority:

(Art. 7.2) "Only Economy and Economy+ class tickets are reserved for flights lasting less than nine hours or eleven hours with layovers"

This is an example where the cookie-cutter approach does not work well, and some trust can be extended e.g. to the professor traveling to a conference. Take someone who is 190 cm tall who, due to a bad back, only travels a couple of times a year: the current rules require her to sit in economy for 8.5 hours, and arrive on the other end a complete wreck. Professors are creative individuals, so she will find a workaround. She might replace the direct flight with a two-segment flight with a 3-hour layover. Or she might book an extra hotel night and thus spend an extra day

on the road, which means an extra day away from the office and her EPFL responsibilities. The workarounds are endless.

If instead we provided incentives to those faculty who travel 20x per year to far destinations to reduce that in half, the savings in terms of CO2 and CHF would likely outweigh the savings from forcing the tall professor into an economy seat. An incentives-based approach would also improve morale, especially for faculty who compare the conditions in which they travel to those of our colleagues at ETHZ.

The bottomline is that professors will find a way to game the system, so if we want to achieve the objectives of sustainability we're better off providing incentives to profs to find ways to reduce the carbon footprint of their individual travel, instead of thinking of and plugging all the various loopholes. Or at least structure rules in such a way that the objectives are achieved globally while allowing profs to optimize locally (e.g., limiting business-class travel to 3x per year per prof would allow each prof to make the trade-offs that are right for her/him). One could also include the need to justify why using the higher class of travel is important in a given case. And again, I need to bring up morale and the risk of a backlash against sustainability efforts on campus.

(Art. 12.3) "Vehicle rental is accepted in addition to public transport (intermodally) or on its own if the time gained by car exceeds at least 50% of the journey time on any journey served by public transport."

The fastest way to get from Chicago O'Hare to the downtown hotels is the Blue Line commuter rail. I've taken this one February evening after dark, and it ended up being one of the few instances when I seriously feared for my life, and swore to never do it again. I subsequently heard similar of similar experiences from others when taking it after dark. Rules like 12.3 conflict with Art. 4.1 ("Evaluate the cost/benefit of the trip, which should take into account professional, personal safety, environmental and financial criteria."). It would be easy to allow for exceptions, with a justification, that allow the traveler to make choices that strike the right balance between professional, environmental, financial, and personal-safety criteria.

Secondary priority:

(Art. 5.3) "Public transport should be prioritized for all travel in Switzerland."

Have you considered factoring in electric-vehicle travel? I think the carbon footprint of this is lower than an itinerary involving e.g. buses. The fix would be as easy as "The lowest carbon-footprint solution should be chosen" ...

(Art. 7.2) "EPFL will only bear the cost of one item of checked luggage and one item of hand luggage per trip. Any additional luggage is the responsibility of the traveler."

It's not clear to me what happens when traveling to a conference where one needs to give a demo using non-trivial equipment, or is presenting a poster that is transported in a poster tube? Would the staff member have to check in these additional (professionally justified) pieces of baggage at their own expense? Or send the poster by international FedEx to the target destination? I think that, here again, one can provide the general principle and allow the traveler to optimize for the situation at hand.

(Art. 19.4) "The travel agency assists in quantifying CO2 emissions and issues an annual invoice to the unit responsible for organizing."

I'm wondering if the VPTA has checked whether such internally generated CO2-emissions invoices are eligible to be charged as travel expenses to SNSF and EU grants?

(Art. 21.4) "Specific personal data may also be sent to government agencies in the country of destination or in countries visited as an essential condition of travel."

I would codify here that EPFL has a duty of informing the traveller in advance what data will be shared with the foreign government, in order to make decisions appropriate to one's personal situation.

A few questions:

1) Will these directives apply to the direction? In particular, will the prohibition of business class travel for trips shorter than 9 hours be observed by them?

2) What is the carbon footprint of travels by the direction staff as a whole? Will it be made public?

3) Would having fewer vice-presidents and associated vice-presidents help?

In short, it's ok to have draconian rules but the direction should lead by example.

1. The benefits do not pay off. Micromanaging travel will not make it more economical and safer. It will require a huge bureaucracy.

2. Will EPFL maintain a transparent operation with multiple suppliers for travel? Will EPFL institute a monopoly operation for travel, which may collide with the free trade rules of Switzerland?

3. At the time of a 5th wave of pandemy, it is not advisable to ask travelers to prefer public means. Airplanes are clean and subject to covid19 control. Trains are not. Will EPFL take the

responsibility if employees get infected because asked to take a less safe (covidwise) means of transport?

Je pense qu'adapter la directive sur l'organisation des voyages en tenant compte de la réalité climatique est une excellente idée. Je trouve cependant que la proposition fait preuve d'un zèle incroyable pour donner l'impression que le personnel de l'EPFL est un groupe de pollueurs paresseux qui voyagent pour le plaisir au mépris de l'environnement. Il faudrait sans doute rappeler que nous voyageons pour exercer notre métier, parfois au détriment de notre santé et qu'il n'appartient pas à une règle administrative de décider si un voyage est approprié ou non. Après bientôt deux ans de travail par vidéoconférences, je peux maintenant affirmer qu'il n'est pas possible sur le long terme (en tout cas pour certains d'entre nous) de suivre une conférence sur Zoom et que beaucoup de liens sociaux ont été cassés en deux ans sans voyage.

La directive oblige à renoncer à un certain confort suivant des critères incohérents. Par exemple, il est considéré que voyager en train pendant 6h est une perte de confort acceptable (et obligatoire) par rapport à l'avion. En même temps, il est considéré que voyager 9h-11h en classe économique est une perte de confort acceptable (et obligatoire) par rapport à la classe business en avion. Je trouve ceci incohérent, car le train est bien plus confortable que la classe économique. 6h en train et 6h en classe éco ne sont pas du tout comparables. Les deux limites de 6h

et 9h-11h devraient être dans l'autre sens, c'est à dire ou bien changer la limite de 6h pour le train en 9h, ou bien changer la limite de 9h-11h pour la classe éco en 6h. De plus, la limite de 6h est pour une durée totale de voyage de l'EPFL à destination alors que la limite de 9h-11h est uniquement pour la durée de vol (donc d'aéroport à aéroport), ce qui est loin d'être la durée totale du voyage.

En outre, je trouve les limites de 6h et 9h très élevées et elles seront à tous les coups sujettes à exceptions. L'EPFL est tenu de protéger la santé de son personnel. Quel sera sa responsabilité lorsqu'un collaborateur se retrouvera avec le dos bloqué après un vol long courrier en classe éco (ce qui a été mon cas avant que l'EPFL m'autorise la business)? Est-ce qu'une hernie discale donne droit à une exception? Le projet de directive ne laisse aucune place aux exceptions médicales.

Ayant connu une période où la classe business n'était pas autorisée du tout "sauf exception", je trouve d'ailleurs surprenant que le relâchement soit devenu si généralisé que la seule contrainte qui subsiste soit une durée de voyage. On était plus green il y a 20 ans.

La directive encourage à voyager plus longtemps (la veille, avec des transports plus lents) sans dire si le temps supplémentaire sera considéré comme du travail supplémentaire ou à compenser sur le temps de travail.

Inversement, la directive limite le nombre de bagages à transporter en avion (Art.7), ce qui favorise plutôt les voyages courts et décourage les voyages longs. Je pense qu'un bagage de plus pour un voyage de plusieurs semaines n'émettra pas plus de CO2 qu'un voyage de 4 jours.

L'Art.17 sur la "classification des pays" introduit un arbitraire dans l'autorisation des voyages. Tout d'abord, la classification des pays n'est pas incluse dans la proposition de directive et n'est pas disponible sur le site du DSE. Cela signifie que le DSE peut arbitrairement décider d'interdire des destinations. L'article mentionne une "commission voyages de l'EPFL" sans en préciser sa composition ni son mode de fonctionnement. Finalement, on peut se demander pourquoi on doit introduire un classement du DSE au lieu de se référer aux recommandations de DFAE, ce qui supprimerait des couches administratives dans l'application de la directive.

Au niveau de la protection des données, l'Art.28 est mal formulé et insatisfaisant.

L'alinéa 3 stipule qu'"il appartient à la Conseillère ou le Conseiller à la protection des données de se déterminer sur l'exercice d'un droit par une personne concernée", ce qui signifie que l'EPFL peut s'opposer à l'exercice du droit. Je suppose qu'une meilleure formulation consisterait à dire que ce.tte conseiller.e détermine si la requête est

légitime et si l'EPFL doit s'exécuter.

L'alinéa 4 "en raison des tâches qui incombent à l'EPFL, il est possible que certaines données continuent d'être traitées même en cas d'opposition de la personne concernée" doit à mon avis être supprimé. Il n'est pas acceptable que l'EPFL puisse se soustraire ainsi au droit "par facilité". Même si une telle pirouette était légale, elle serait sans doute un très mauvais exemple à donner.

L'Art.29 parle de sanctions en restant trop vague. L'alinéa 3 invoque des "règlements en vigueur" sans faire de référence précise.

Finalement, il manque certainement un article sur le remboursement des repas, qui inciterait à manger végétarien et à éviter les aliments qui provoquent trop de flatulences.

Autres commentaires:

- Art.7 "différence significative en termes de prix (50%)". C'est 50% de quel prix? Le prix le plus bas ou le plus élevé?

- Art.7 "en cas de correspondance dans un aéroport suisse pour un autre vol, le train pour y accéder est préconisé". Quelle est la signification de "préconisé"? Cela signifie-t-il que l'on a une autre option?

- Art.7 "pour toute destination accessible en moins de six heures": la table donnée en annexe suppose que la destination finale est la gare où l'on descend du train, ce qui est rarement le cas.

- Art.7 "Seules les classes Economy [...] et à l'exception des vols de nuit". Cela signifie que l'on peut aller sur la côte est des Etats unis en eco et revenir en business? Est-ce qu'un vol qui se déroule pendant un moment de la nuit (un décollage avant le lever du jour ou un atterrissage après le coucher du soleil, voire un vol d'une heure pendant l'hiver après le coucher du soleil) est considéré comme un vol de nuit?

- Art.11 "les frais de stationnement aux aéroports en Suisse ne sont par remboursés". Actuellement, les frais de déplacement vers les aéroports en voiture privée ne sont pas remboursés mais les frais de stationnement inférieurs à une semaine le sont. Ajouter cette restriction supplémentaire est injuste pour ceux qui n'habitent pas à proximité d'une gare. Non seulement elle allonge la durée du voyage, elle rend plus difficile le transport de bagages, mais elle ajoute encore un stress supplémentaire quand on voit régulièrement dans les journaux les problèmes de fiabilité du train. Finalement, elle encourage les voyageurs à se faire déposer par un conjoint, ce qui implique deux allers-retours en voiture au lieu d'un. C'est l'effet inverse qu'escompté pour limiter les déplacement en voiture.

- Art.17 pour les régions de niveau 4, il faut "demander préalablement une validation" et pour les régions de niveau 5, "une exception dûment motivée peut être demandée". Quelle est concrètement la différence entre une demande de validation et une demande d'exception? Est-ce une surenchère de niveau de classement superflue?

- Art.21: pourquoi le sexe est-il nécessaire à la réalisation des prestations de voyage?

- Je suis très opposé à l'obligation d'utiliser l'agence de l'école (CWT) qui est très mauvaise et dont beaucoup se plaignent. En plus il faudrait s'assurer de la légalité de la chose.

- Il faudrait quand même garantir une flexibilité dans le choix des vols. Personnellement, il y a des compagnies de certains pays sur lesquelles je refuse de voler pour des questions éthiques, quel que soit le prix ou le bilan écologique de leurs vols.

- Une suggestion. Il faut être au moins aussi vertueux pour soi-même que ce que l'on exige des autres. Je propose que à partir d'un certain niveau (e.g. vice-présidence ?) le bilan carbone annuel et nombre de voyages etc... soit rendu public.

- I am in favor of imposing new rules toward more responsible traveling. However, I find the impact on external visitors important. It is one thing that we (the EPFL people) adjust to new norms and reduce our carbon footprint in our trips — but imposing hardship on a one-time visitor by having to navigate through a set of uncommon rules is a different thing. It should not become too complicated and annoying for people to travel to EPFL. We will be the first victim of that. And it does not even accomplish much since the visitors, except for their one-time trip to EPFL, will do their trips according to their home institution rules, so their overall carbon footprint won't be impacted meaningfully. Therefore I suggest we have more accomodating rules for one-time external visitors.

- As the role of EPFL's travel agency becomes more central and exclusive, their workflow and competitiveness should be improved. I have heard numerous complaints from various colleagues who were unhappy with the travel agency.

overall I very much agree with the new policies. However, I question the arbitrary cut-off of 9h for non eligibility for business flights. If work productivity is added to the equation, an economy or economy+ flight back from the US will result in a much bigger jet lag and hence reduced work productivity in the days after the travel than a business class flight. So, perhaps any overnight flight irrespective of its length should be eligible to business?

Furthermore, some airlines such as Swiss don't even offer economy+, which is a further argument against the proposed rule.

As several of us (professors) are older and have medical conditions that preclude being for 9-10 cramped in an economy seat for trans-continental flights, I think this can only become a guideline, not a strict rule.

Professional travel:

1. Article 4, Article 6, Article 18, and Appendix 3 of LEX 5.6.1 all specify that travelers must book their professional travel using the EPFL travel agency. This is a topic that has been brought up at previous JSPs where the administration tried to force employees to use this service, a service that is consistently faces with issues that remain unresolved:
 1. The agency overcharges personnels for flights that can be booked directly themselves, costing the labs more while providing little to no service. It seems like a means for the administration to just funnel more funds away from the labs and into their own pockets.
 2. In some cases, the agency is not even able to provide the travel options that are available from purchasing directly, and their limited can prevent travel altogether for tight schedules. They are also unable to book order for special promotions, such as discount rates that are available from conference websites.
 3. The agency is also unavailable on an immediate basis to place bookings including placing bookings in the evenings, over the weekends. In many circumstances, timing is important, both for cost and for availability (especially in cases where there is a limited block of availabilities reserved for a conference).

The problems on overpricing, limited options, and response/urgency with this agency need to be addressed for this to be considered a useful/practical service. If the agency is required to book travel, there must therefore be accompanying restrictions that prevent them from overcharging

relative to purchasing from suppliers directly and that ensure the availability of all options available from the supplier.

2. Article 14 specifies that private vehicles are only permitted in Switzerland. We have had institute outings just across the border that were only accessible by car and attended by carpooling. It is unclear if this was the intended consequence, but these restrictions would now require that cars be rented instead, which is less cost effective and not necessarily more environmentally friendly.
3. Article 19 - It is unclear the purpose of the voluntary contributions. How will it be used to reduce CO2 emissions in the EPFL action?
4. Article 21 and 22 require the creation of a passenger profile and denies the personnel the right to not have their personal data processed. This seems to go against data protection laws. There needs to be an option for the personnel to make the booking on their own if they do not want their data processed.
5. Article 27 - What are EPFL interests? Who determines this? They need to be communicated in advance. Otherwise, we don't even know what we are supposed to be protecting if we are not told beforehand.
6. Article 28 specifies that the data can still be processed even if they individual objects. This seems to go against the data protection law.

I think that business class should be accepted for flights longer than 6h (and not 9h) as already done in the industry.

"The mandatory purchasing channel for plane tickets is EPFL's travel agency." — the EPFL travel agency has in the past offered exceptionally poor service in my opinion. Turnaround time is slow, and prices are surprisingly often *worse* than booking directly. I don't think it's a good idea to cement this agency into such a privileged position.

"It also applies to travel by guests" — inviting guests and getting them here reasonably is already a hassle. Imposing all of these extra complications and rules on guests, while adding a slow indirection through the travel agency is going to make visiting EPFL a frustrating experience. I can understand the restrictions for EPFL staff but would rather leave visitors outside of this maze of rules.

The intentions of this directive are very welcome; however the idea of a

compulsory EPF travel agency partner is counter-productive and should be abandoned (unless it becomes optional). Experience has shown very clearly that this will be a major impediment since such an agency will never offer the flexibility and competent choices that can in many cases be best made by the travelers themselves. Agencies tend to have consistently poor records both in terms of flexibility and of cost.

The additional restrictions to upgrades (say, toward the East Coast) are difficult to justify rationally (especially in the case of upgrade to existing flights) and will in some cases simply lead to the traveller cancelling their trip (whether EPFL travelers or EPFL guests). This is out of line with practices elsewhere.

I think the approval system (like a french-style 'ordre de mission') makes sense if it's done lightweight and fast (hours not days to get approval, for example for inviting an incoming academic guest). it has to be fast or EPFL's attractiveness might suffer for top people visiting.

Though I do have a concern on "Book their professional travel using EPFL's official suppliers". If this means that "supplier=our on-campus travel agency", then they are clearly not qualified to book anything from flight/train/bicycle. (They are slow and make tons of mistakes and all their booked flights are usually 50% *more* expensive than if I spend 30sec on google flights. They don't even have access to most relevant flight booking systems, so it would not be a good way of using resources).

(I travel very rarely but experience with them was always negative also from what I heard from colleagues)

J'aimerais réagir sur un aspect de la directive concernant les voyages en classe business.

"Seules les classes « Economy » et « Economy+ » sont réservées pour les vols de moins de neuf heures ou onze heures avec escale(s), selon la liste prédéfinie (annexe II) et à l'exception des vols de nuit."

La limite de 9 heures me paraît excessive. Un voyage de 9h en classe économique, c'est long et très fatigant. Surtout après un certain âge ;-). De plus, ce temps ne peut pas être utilisé pour travailler dans l'avion. Il me semble plus judicieux de descendre cette limite à 6 heures au lieu de 9 heures comme principe général.

I find the directive to be very weak - I was hoping for fixed limits on air travel (e.g., two trips per year payable via professional accounts). It is also unclear to me how oversight would be handled, e.g., with respect to choosing the "most ecological airline". Basically, the directive just reflects how things are already done right now, and I don't see any effective changes that would reduce our footprint. I would advocate for much stricter rules.

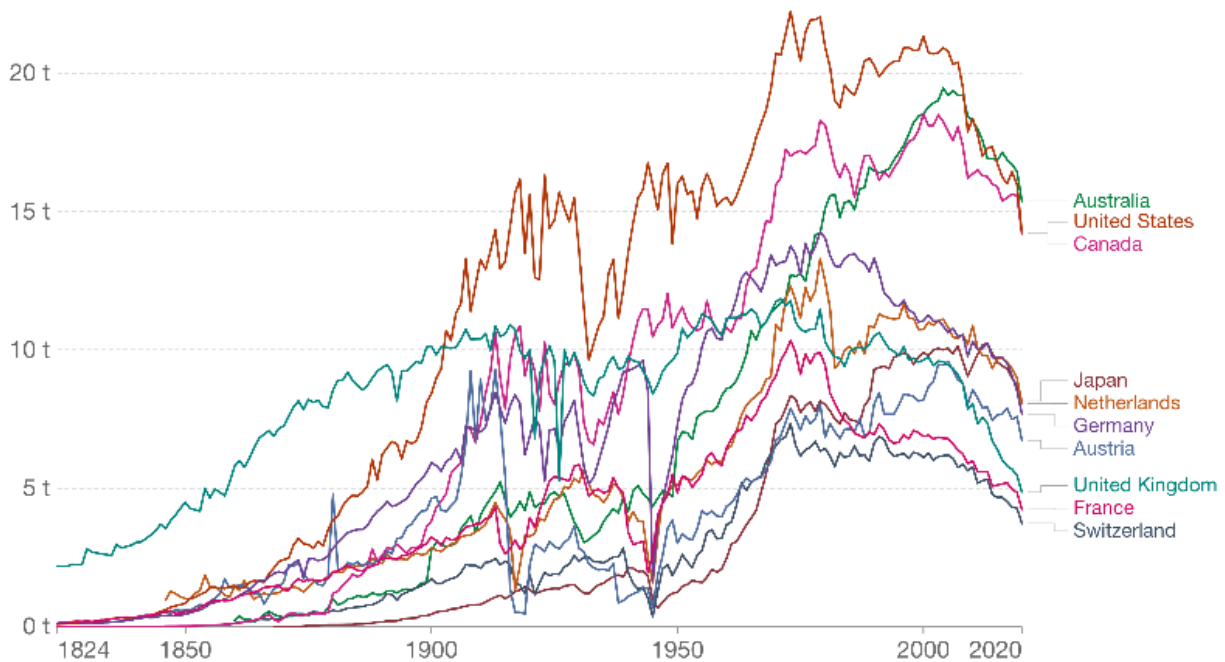
Switzerland has one of the lowest per capita carbon footprints in the developed world. I do not think it's reasonable to cap travel (or, especially for all Professors/staff equally). A limit on travel, and even a limit on mode of travel, for non-tenure PIs can be severely limiting to their career, and to the advancement of EPFL. Namely, if I have to spend one full day of travel to get to Berlin by train vs. being in my lab working and taking a 1-2 hour flight in the evening, it effectively costs my unit a whole day - is that a good use of taxpayer funds? My lost time? etc.

Moreover, internationally, EPFL is not widely known (many in the US have never heard of it), and the most effective way to put ourselves on the map is to go network with colleagues around the world.

<https://ourworldindata.org/co2/country/switzerland>

Per capita CO₂ emissions

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the burning of fossil fuels for energy and cement production. Land use change is not included.



Source: Our World in Data based on the Global Carbon Project

[OurWorldInData.org/co2-and-other-greenhouse-gas-emissions/](https://ourworldindata.org/co2-and-other-greenhouse-gas-emissions/) • CC BY

Note: CO₂ emissions are measured on a production basis, meaning they do not adjust for emissions embedded in traded goods.

It is probably good to revise travel policy at EPFL.

However, there are several problems with this new policy: the first is the monopoly the official travel agents get to sell plane tickets. As this agency has not, and by far, been very efficient in the past, I doubt that the new situation will give any incentive to better the service provided. In order for the new system to work, there should be at least two, better three official providers to choose from, in order to get some competition between the providers and lower the frustration of the users

A second concern is to have to use the travel agency to reserve hotel nights: this is inefficient, expensive and you never get a hotel in the city part you need.

Finally, a concern is the amount of personal data that EPFL plans to collect (and keep for 5 years) with this new system

While we agree with the global idea of decreasing environmental impact, there are several aspects of the present text that we believe will be hurtful for EPFL as a whole, and some that are factually wrong or biased. To be concrete, the main criticisms that we have are:

** The absence of hybrid and electric cars in the entire document - the comparison of electric vehicles in terms of CO2 cost should be given.

** A “No-exception” attitude that refuses to take into account real-life situations & concrete particular constraints. Motivated exceptions should be allowed.

** A biased presentation of time duration. Instead, duration intervals taking into account varying circumstances should be given.

We will develop on these issues further down and give concrete examples that actually DID happen to us.

1) The absence of hybrid & electric cars in the entire document

It is astonishing that, at no point, the fact that some of us have an electric or hybrid car, with a low CO2 footprint, is not even considered or mentioned. There are studies showing that electric cars cause less CO2 emissions than, for instance, ICE [1]. In Table 1, it is given 13Kg CO2 for a train trip between Lausanne and Milan. It would be less than 10Kg (Source [2]) with an electric car with a swiss electric mix.

This is NOT an abstract problem, but a very concrete one for us: We both traveled to a conference in central Germany departing in Czech Republic where we were on vacation. The train was more than 10H, so we took our car for a 6h trip. EPFL did NOT reimburse the trip because it was a personal car, while the reimbursements of a rental car would have been possible. At no point did the fact that we have a low CO2 car entered the discussion (in this situation, renting a car would have resulted in an increase in the CO2 emission). Given, in addition, that we usually traveled TOGETHER we are puzzled with the idea that we are not allowed to take (or better encourage) our personal car if it is the lowest CO2 option.

2) A “No-exception” attitude,

The entire text is making rules and states that there will be no exception. Appendix one for instance gives a list of places ‘ that MUST be traveled to by train’ (no car, no plane are allowed, under no circumstances). Many of these rules are reasonable in a typical situation. Real-life, however, is not always typical, and it may be good to acknowledge that these rules should or could sometimes be amended. Sometimes, we HAVE to use other means. Sometimes, trains are just not practically doable. The difference between 2h and 6h is not simply us being “on the rush” and “impatient”. For some of us with teaching, parental and laboratory duties, this is what

makes the difference between possible and impossible. Quite bluntly: we are NOT traveling for pleasure and we have to come back to take care of our kids.

Here are, again, some concrete situations, that happened to us:

* When one of us interviewed in EPFL, he was called to give a seminar at the last minute. It was during our vacation in Chamonix with our daughters. One of them was sick and one of us needed to stay with her. The only way we could manage was by letting our other daughter go to the Holiday club and make the one-day trip to pick her back in the evening. While this is “technically” possible in train (3H to go, 3H to go back, source : [3]) it would have been practically impossible to reach EPFL in the morning. So the one interviewing took the car, and drove 1H30. If we had to take a train, we do not think I would have made it. Again this is an actual situation, not a theoretical one.

* Another situation when one of us interviewed in EPFL, in another department, from Paris, there was a strike in France. Again, this is a very common situation, it happens basically every year. The only way for several candidates involved in the opening position was to drive or to take a plane. What should they have done? Why having a “no-exception” policy in the document that does not take into account atypical but common real-life situations.

* Consider teaching duties in EPFL: if one teaches, say Tuesday and Friday, then he/she can only travel Wednesday morning and come back Thursday evening, or Friday early morning. In this case, the difference between a 6H train way and back with an early flight is paramount. What if the only way to go to this workshop in Paris, Frankfurt or Rome and to make it to your next lecture in front of the student is to take the plane early in the morning? Or to actually drive to Milan or Lyon (train schedules are not always ideal)? Again, this can be dictated by real-life practicalities (such as the timetable of the student) that we never see even mentioned in this text.

* Note that this is working both ways. If we want to invite a colleague from Frankfurt or Trieste. Apparently, he or she cannot take the plane. In practice, this means he or she WOULD NOT come (especially if we talk of a mother who would what to be back at some point with her family rather than just staying in a train for 6h with 2 changes) and this will hurt EPFL both in terms of research and students.

That at no point motivated exceptions are not allowed is surprising to us.

3) A biased computation of time duration

At many points in the document, the numbers given are simply wrong or at the very least biased. This gives biased estimates and false equivalences.

When we see, for instance, that according to appendix 1 it takes 5H30 to go to Paris by plane, while it is just 3H40 in a train, we wonder how this was even computed. Maybe because the person who did the counting considered that one needs to fly to Roissy CDG and then take the

RER to Paris? It could be interesting to note that there is another airport in Paris, called Orly. It is in the south, a few kilometers from academic institutions like Orsay, Polytechnique, and Saclay. This is indeed where many of us go when visiting Paris.

This is not an isolated example.

* How could anyone believe it takes almost 6h to reach Rome in a plane? There are direct flights to Fiumicino by easyJet from Geneva <https://www.easyjet.com/en/buy/seats>. We did took the early plane and were ready to participate to conference in rome on the very morning!

* Anyone seriously believe it takes the same amount of time to reach Trieste and Venezia by train and by plane? (Again, direct flight from Geneva by Easyjet). Or to Frankfurt? (Direct by Lufthansa).

These numbers seem to have been computed by the “best possible” train journey (which is unrealistic, and likely to be at a time not compatible with family/teaching life and duties) and compare them with the worst possible trip on a plane. Not to mention that swiss punctuality in not a value consistently shared by french and italian trains.

If, for instance, one of us goes to visit Paris in Ecole Polytechnique, then by arriving at Gare de Lyon (by train), it takes up to an additional 1H30 --at the very least-- to reach Saclay or Polytechnique by train and RER. The total length of the trip is close to 6H. Instead, arriving in Orly airport by plane from Geneva, one can reach Antony RER in a minute by electric tram and be in Orsay/Saclay in no time (or better, have a colleague to pick you up at the airport, which is again a real-life situation not taken into consideration). The trip door to door could be less than 3H.

This is not, again, an isolated example. Paris, Trieste, Rome and Frankfurt are where our main collaborators are.

To conclude, we hope that at the very least well-motivated exceptions will be allowed. Further, the times given should be adjusted to realistic intervals, and comparison with CO2 cost of electric vehicles gives as well.

I regret the proposed ban on business travel: I often go to the US for only a couple of days, so as not to suffer jet lag on the way back and be operational quickly. Business seats are very useful for that because they make it possible to sleep on the way back.

Generally I support the moves to reduce Travel related CO2. However the directive that all travel must be booked through the travel agency is completely unworkable. Only if you book directly with the airline do you get informed when flights are delayed or cancelled and have the

possibility to make changes 24 hours per day. I have been in a situation previously where I have been stranded in the USA (for example) due to the impossibility to work with CWL. I hope APEL can object strongly to this aspect.

This directive is one of the worst that EFL ever proposed, not taking into account the extremely negative impact of the proposed measures for travel on two key aspects: (1) the time, and, (ii) the health of EPFL professors and research personnel. We are working a tremendous number of hours per week with passion and dedication for keeping EPFL reputation as high as possible.

Frequently, we are traveling over our week-ends (taking time from our families) to save time for work and teaching during the week. Therefore, taking trains for destinations up to 6-7 hours would be a total disaster. Imagine a 1 day project review meeting in Brussels, on Monday from 9:00am to 6:00pm (a very normal agenda). Instead at leaving home at 5:30am on Monday to take an 1 hour flight from Geneva to Brussels and return with the last flight on Monday at 8:00pm, according to the new directive, one should travel 7 hours with a change in Paris over the Sunday (instead of staying in family, reading or even working), spend 2 nights in Brussel (there are no night trains) and then return over another 7 hours on Tuesday - almost 2.5 days lost! This is just one example of how detrimental that directive could be on our time.

There will be accumulated health issues in the long term with such long travels that will cost us and the society immense "equivalent CO2" than the tiny amount that we will save by this unreasonable action. This concerns also the restrictions on business travels on long destinations for people that go there as a consequence of their hard work to present work and to network in a few days with people in the US, Japan, China... The people who wrote this directive do not know that we frequently go over the ocean only for 2-3 conference days, so yes in this case a business class makes an enormous difference for our health and fatigue! The next day at return, I am back to give classes or to have a full day project meeting. That's the reality that the ones only counting % on their computers do not understand: for them % are more important than people's health!

I am simply afraid that such directive is just an "opportunistic" text made by people that do not understand how we work and we operate to be productive and want only to report some numbers and % of reduction to the upper layers, without any deep reflection of the severe consequences that will result and with little respect for our daily efforts. I really hope this directive will not be approved in the current form and we can find other more realistic and much more effective ways to engage the EPFL community towards climate change goals

Deux pulsions opposées m'empêchent de participer au débat.

1. Mon inspiration *liberté et responsabilité* qui refuse le prêt à penser, d'autant plus qu'à ce stade de ma carrière, le seul risque est de passer pour un vieux con.

2. Mes discussions avec des plus jeunes, qui pensent qu'un carcan est nécessaire pour sauver la planète, faute de quoi la liberté serait creuse.

Au lieu - ou en plus - de former, l'EPFL veut éduquer. Mes étudiant-e-s ne sont pas mes enfants, mais si nos cadets pensent que c'est leur mission...

The proposed policy will likely not impact me as I am a full professor so I can “afford” to not do professional travels. And I have young children so I cannot really travel. But I want to see this from the perspectives of my colleagues who will be impacted.

I appreciate the desire of the Direction to decrease the carbon footprint. But the proposed changes likely will have a minimal impact in the overall carbon footprint while potentially harm faculty members physically or mentally. First let me suggest something that would be useful in reducing carbon footprint:

1. Talk (nicely please) to faculty members who travel extensively and sensitize them with the issue. Most of them will be open to a reasonable discussion. Like everything else, probably 20% of faculty members are responsible to 80% of total travel. There is no need to make one policy for all which likely does not fit all anyway.

2. Officially make PATTs and POs know that they are not expected to give a large number of conferences when they ask for promotion. Ask them to put declined invitations on their CV. Send explanatory notes to letter writers saying EPFL only care about quality of presentation, not the numbers.

3. Reduce (or replace) unnecessary invitations to people from other continents (e.g., US or Japan or China) to campus for a talk, workshop, and especially events that central to the missions. For those people, give options of Zoom.

4. Widely encourage the use of Zoom interviews for faculty candidates from far, at least in the initial stage.

5. Cancel JSP as I and many colleagues never see any real benefits of such meetings.

6. Reduce events not essential to our mission. Reduce bureaucracy and red tapes. All unnecessary actions are consuming carbon without producing anything useful.

7. I suggest (if you have not) this article for reducing carbon footprint in conferences: the same goes to any academic activity. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02057-2>

Now let me comment briefly on what the proposed policies would harm faculty members.

Without going to all rules, just pick one that the VP highlights as a justification in the email sent to all faculty members:

VP: The second question is related to business class. Business is useful to reduce fatigue, so night flights or very long flights can be done by business. The East coast of the US however is a flight from morning to evening, about 8h. A business seat, due to the space it occupies in a plane, has a CO2 footprint that is 3 to 4 times higher than Economy or Economy +. Is it necessary that we fly business on day flights to Boston? That is essentially the question you are asked to answer.

Comment: Does the VP suggest all flights to the east coast of US is from morning to evening? Even if this is case, whose morning and whose evening is it? There are actually time differences between CH and east coast. And the world is much bigger than Boston, so why is this policy related to a day flight to Boston? It is clear that the Direction has not really considered what the effect of this policy is. Under one policy for all, would a pregnant woman colleague not suffer from this restriction to go somewhere other than Boston because they thought it would be good for their career to go? Disabled? Or simply colleagues who work hard and are tired? In industry, anywhere more than 6 h is automatically business for managers and even their guests. Do professors deserve less than industrial employees only because they are professors? What is the message the rule wants to send: your health and comfort are not what concerns the Direction?

Now let's look at the problem from another angle: is this a widespread problem that people abuse business flights as a guilty pleasure? The problem is self-regulatory because of the budget involved. Is there any real need to micro-manage everything while there might be many scenarios the policy makers just cannot possibly consider beforehand?

The arguments that flying to the US happens during the day is only true for the flight leaving CH. Flights coming back are always dreadful night flights. So how should one do, book single ticket economy going, business coming back?

I think that introducing limits to Business air travel (with exceptions for medical conditions) makes perfect sense and is a simple gesture to reduce our collective CO2 footprint.

the target reduction can be achieved if EPFL trusts the Professors and they implement a voluntary downscale of travel.

It is important that the choice of travel provider is left, including buying tickets on the web. If EPFL wants to put in a single agency to regulate/impose travel, this would create an incredible friction and loss of time.

People will find all the ways to get around restrictions. It will not pay off. And the monopoly may be against Swiss laws as well.

Green travel will never fly without trust in the head of units!

I think the poll numbers speak very loudly for themselves. I would also support to implement the general ideas as best practices guide, without extra administrative overhead, travel agency and more hoops to jump through. Personally, I travel 90% of the time economy but I would like to have the freedom of choice and be trusted that I have good reasons for my choice without having to constantly justify myself and be judged. The direction should really discuss these things with professors and not keep trying to impose their vision and super-bureaucratic solutions on everybody else. If they want to reduce travel, why not identify the top 10-20% travelers, they probably contribute most and simply nicely ask them to reduce?

Additional comments received from the survey

To effectively reduce travel it would make more sense to keep track of how much individual people travel. Some faculty members travel a lot more than others. Putting further restrictions on people that are already frugal in their travel isn't fair or productive.

Really going through the travel agency is impossible I have been stranded in place due to this. The use of the agency inserts huge inefficiency. A more clear policy about what are the criteria for flights (environmental, price, or others) would be more helpful than solving this with a big hammer that just creates more problems than probably it solves.

The second point should say "Overnight flights are not interested by this rule". Use of EPFL travel agency is greatly limiting options, it slows down the process, especially when multiple travel arrangements are needed for PhD students. Another strange decision is to limit use of private cars to maximum of 150km. Basically, one cannot go to Sion and back from Lausanne for short meeting. Equally, trip to Zurich and back suddenly become significantly longer, unless one lives in Lausanne Gare directly.

I believe the proposed directive is very restrictive and does not guarantee the best choices/options for the flights. For instance, the travel agency of EPFL is really against using low-cost airline companies, which often are the cheapest in many of the travels. Also, the directive of the number of hours does not make any sense because it will make people take longer travel times (e.g., more hops) to be able to opt for business travels when doing intercontinental travels, as in the case of traveling to the East coast in the US. I believe reducing the number of hours to something much more standard for other institutions or companies (e.g., 6-7 hours) is what makes more sense.

With serious back problems, it is impossible to fly in economy beyond 4 hours — personal experience.

With respect to business class travel, I often go to the US for a day or two to minimize jet lag and be operational as soon as I get back. A business seat that makes it possible to sleep on the way back makes that an effective proposition.

I strongly disagree with giving CWT a monopoly over EPFL professional travel. I think that the request to use trains when possible for a given time duration of the trip, should be a suggestion not a requirement since we might have other restrictions to respect. The EPFL travel agency is not helpful in booking good travel plans or saving budget. The better way to do this is to set a limit for travels within EU or in each country according to the local economic status.

An EPFL agency is ok but it needs to be MUCH better than CWT (e.g. the Max-Planck Society had / has an agency somehow related to Lufthansa - Booking a flight takes < 1 min and special prices are negotiated for common routes.)

Instead of merely putting in place a rule on how to travel the directive should rather focus on the much more relevant issue on why people (professors) travel. To give an example, should a journey following an invitation for a plenary talk as a key opinion leader in the field be treated the same as a non-invited conference attendance with subsequent prolongation for private (e.g., holiday) reasons? The new suggestions will not help in the reduction of (unnecessary) travel - which I perceived as the goal of this initiative.

I agree to go through EPFL travel agency provided that they make the effort to find the optimal solution, which is not always the case...

Business flights are often a choice imposed by medical reasons!

Economy plus is not available on all airlines - an important point to consider. Further, the choice between economy plus and business also depends on the direction of travel. For example, US-bound flights during the day can easily be done in economy plus. However, US-return flights during the night in economy plus are a hassle and will significantly impinge on productivity in the days after travel because of the jet lag. Thus, on the return leg, a business flight would be preferred.

The the EPFL travel agency is too slow (not responsive enough) and does not provide as many choices of route and price. Our right to purchase tickets ourselves online needs to be preserved. The EPFL can verify that any flight meet the criteria by checking the DV. I find these rules perfectly reasonable. Of course the travel agency must offer competitive pricing.

It is crucial that the administration understands once for all that when we travel it is not for pleasure. I repeat: travels done by professors are not trips for pleasure. In particular, travels oversea, are very demanding but they are crucial to keep EPFL on the map. A trip to the East coast (Boston, N.Y) would last less than 9 hours, but most of us professors must do this and be up to work right when we get there and when we come back (for teaching, meeting with graduate students, or taking care of our family). When you are 20 years old, it is likely ok to be up and running without a break, but when you get older, you need to be able to get some rest on the way there and back. I fully support the wish to reduce the number of trips abroad to only what is necessary. We should do less trips. But there are trips that are unavoidable. Long flights are extremely tiring and professors who do this, have also many other duties (such as taking care of their children, teaching right the day after they are back from the trip). The institution has also an obligation to preserve their health. Reducing the number of trips but allowing those very demanding to be done in business is finding a good balance between showing consideration for climate change issue and consideration for the enormous amount of work, extra hours, etc, professors put on a daily basis for their job.

I think that putting a lower limit of flight hours (or limit to overnight flights) for Business class flights generates strange incentives and might backfire, i.e. people choosing small detours e.g.

(Geneva-Zürich) to 'be able' to fly Business. How about NEVER allowing Business flights on EPFL money, but allow people to pay from the Eco-> Business upgrade out of their own pocket or with miles? If someone else pays, I am not sure EPFL should interfere, but of course appeal to each Prof's conscience to take a less polluting option.

The requirement to use public transport is not always feasible - there is almost none in USA. Renting a car or using a service like Uber is often the only reasonable and safe means of ground transportation there. This directive is also an administrative overkill, with little benefits (20% stated CO2 reduction) and a huge cost in terms of making our lives more complicated by adding extra rules, hoops, checks etc. and further increasing the already enormous EPFL administration. Travel agency is a bad option, using regular travel approvals and cost reimbursement can already serve the purpose of tracking CO2 consumption and compliance. The directive also treats travel as a bad habit that should be reduced and forgets that the basic purpose of travel for EPFL faculty is work, increasing the quality of networks, starting collaborations, getting new ideas, promoting EPFL, group members, group work. Most of us have limitations on how much we can travel anyway due to teaching and family obligations. Now that we know that committee and review meetings can be done on-line (but conferences not), the amount of travel will naturally decrease anyway.

Business Travel accounted for 34% of EPFL's CO2 emissions in 2019. It seems obvious that we need to reduce the impact of business travel. Since business class emissions seem to be 3 times that of economy class, (<https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/corporate-business-travel-carbon-budget-s-loom-airlines-2021-10-10/>) it makes sense to require economy class for travel that lasts less than 11 hours.

I strongly object to the mandatory use of the EPFL travel agent. Not only as a matter of principle (a forced monopoly) but especially because I've usually been able to find better or cheaper options searching directly, definitely much faster. I'm open to using the travel agent if they can become more competitive or otherwise attractive, but giving them a monopoly is a counter-incentive for them to improve.

EPFL new rules on travel should be more ambitious, especially concerning flying (max number of flights per year or over 2 years, compensation, etc).

I also found it admirable that the president took the train to Sweden, but some of us with young children, especially those who are single parents cannot afford the luxury of being away from our kids so long for a trip.

Such a decision should be left with us. We are responsible and aware of the global ecological situation and the impact our travel may have. To tie the possibility of flying business class to the duration of the flight may incite people to fly detours just to make it above the threshold. Enforcing the use of a specific travel agency is only acceptable if there is a demonstrated advantage for EPFL employees. As it stands, the EPFL travel agency is not cheaper than

others, and they do not find the cheapest flights nor do they seem to offer a discount to the lab that makes the reservation. There is no justification to force us to use that agency.

I generally agree on the second proposition, with two comments: 1- this must apply to ALL levels of EPFL employees, including its direction. 2- Exceptions should be possible for serious medical reasons.

I certainly support mandatory economic class flights for EPFL personnel on all European flights but for transcontinental flights Business should still be authorized (in particular all flights to the US east coast). Also one should be able to invite high level scientist in business class. I totally object to the obligation to pass through a travel agency and there are many reasons against; the process would be extremely heavy both for EPFL members and for the EPFL visitors. Moreover it will probably create bottlenecks and delays after the pandemic ease down when everybody will start retravel all at the same time.

Regarding the first question, sometimes it is easier to book ourselves (say easy jet etc ...). Regarding the second question, it should be left to each to decide. Prices are sometimes not that different.

Not being able to take our own train tickets is also an issue (including abroad).

I have a medical condition that will not allow me to fly such long-distance in economy leaving some flexibility to the labs to organise complicated trips is important in my opinion. One should not be limited with extra conditions. Sometimes the travel agency is not proposing the lowest prices. The limit for deciding to go business must remain with the head of the lab. There might be other considerations that apply, for instance time for recovering after the trip, another trip in sequence, etc. Extra constraints make the planning just more complicated. I would agree with question 1 if administrative staff is in favor (if this makes it easier for them). For the last point I would reformulate "Exemptions are only possible for overnight flights and medical reasons."

CWT est très mauvais et ne fait pas son travail. Il arrive que l'on trouve moins cher et de mauvaise grace, ils s'exécutent. Il faut laisser jouer la concurrence. Egalement on doit avoir le droit de refuser d'utiliser certaines compagnies pour des raisons éthiques de manière générale.

I often use the EPFL travel agency, but I don't think I should be forced to.

Risk of monopoly from one travel provider only, extra cost should not be pushed to our project funds which may not agree to cover for added costs, including a CO2 tax contribution which is not the correct approach.

Les voyages semblent de toutes les manières compromis mais pour une initiative qui se dit responsable, infantiliser les professeurs au lieu de les déresponsabiliser me semble très moyen; il me semble plus judicieux de sensibiliser et de laisser chacun suivre sa conscience; On peut décider nous-même de ne pas prendre une classe business pour un vol de 9h qui ne nous stresse pas ou, au contraire, de la prendre pour un aller retour rapide à New-York avec un keynote important le lendemain qui nous stresse.

using the EPFL travel agency is too expensive time consuming and leads to sub-optimal solutions

Use of the EPFL travel agency service should be strongly encouraged but not absolutely mandatory.

Healthcare is terribly missing in the project (back pain).

The added paperwork makes it very complicated to organize traveling and to represent EPFL with colleagues. This will require more admins to be hired to handle this extra work. I don't believe this is a good use of public money. If we want to have a real impact on carbon footprint, we should invest in research in green technologies that enable large-scale reductions of greenhouse emissions or removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere. This is what EPFL does best. All EPFL schools could contribute in this quest in different ways. I can think of concrete examples of research activities that would have a major impact, from green construction projects to building efficiency, from super-efficient solar cells to novel renewable energy sources, etc.

I feel restraining to only one provider is reductive in some situations, being flexible is always better even if the EPFL travel agency should be the default. For the second point, it should depend also on whether one has to work right after the flight or not: especially during the semester, it happens that we need to travel far but for a short time and have to teach, or give a conference, on arrival: in these situations, a reasonable Business class ticket can make sense, regardless of it being 5h30 or 6h10. Again, making strict rules is not the way to go, common sense and trust should prevail.

A single EPFL travel agency is a monopoly that is not acceptable. The taxes on travels paid by third party funds is also not acceptable as these taxes will not be eligible for funding. Only travels paid by EPFL budget may be subjected to such taxes. Also, this is not clear how these taxes will be really used for projects. There is a high risk that this money falls in the pocket of the same people, with no transparent allocation. Once again, with this new LEX, we see the tendency of the EPFL management to deteriorate the working conditions at EPFL and to treat the researchers as irresponsible individuals who should be punished rather than supported in their missions for EPFL.

I modified the answer to the second question after van der Gout's email. The argument is questionable. If I change seat on the plane, how can my Carbon footprint be changed? I see bureaucratic arguments, very far from our ecological concerns.

I don't understand why a large number of PI's at EPFL only fly business class / or higher (and take only 1st class seats on trains, etc). I personally see this as not a very responsible use of tax-payers funds (beyond flying/carbon footprint issues that are in discussion here)

Trust the professors, monitor and track travel by each unit and approach those abusing the system or show disregard to the EPFL policy of sustainability. Do not punish all for the actions of a few.

I find business class especially important for cross-atlantic flights, in particular red-eyes. This travel directive is one of the worst directives that EPFL ever proposed, without taking into account severe consequences on the most precious resources that we have: (1) our time and (2) our health. All in the name of CO2 reduction by identifying wrong targets and wrong restrictions and by paying a cost with incredibly negative consequences. Imposing a single agency of travel to "control" the travel in the internet era (when we have an example already how bad this idea was for everyone in the past), imposing to take trains for up to 7 hours to destinations that can be reached by air in 1 hour, so that for an intense meeting of a 1 full day we should travel $7 + 7 = 14$ hours, losing nights and days in addition (also over our week-ends), is simply not acceptable. This will have an immense detrimental impact on our health and time available for work. This directive is proposed by people that HAVE NO IDEA what the hard work of an EPFL professor is, what little time we have and how much the school reputation is depending on creating conditions to travel in appropriate conditions.

It would be better to develop other ways to collect statistics from EPFL flights than resorting to a single travel agency.

I support reducing carbon emissions, but not at the cost of significantly reducing flexibility in travel options. My experience with travel agencies across multiple universities is dismal, and I do not think that EPFL will be the exception. Further, I have chronic back pain, and I have reduced my professional travel to the absolute minimum, using business class whenever a flight is more than 4 or 5 hours. The new policy means that I will stop flying to the east coast or asia. Again flexibility should be the goal (e.g., at most X business class tickets per year), rather than restricting all travel in a rigid way.

transatlantic flights on return are always night flights (at least if you want to come back). Gisou suggests in her email that this is not so... An advice for 6 hours would be acceptable - but it really depends on the nature of the activity and the situation whether economy or business is chosen

Question 1: My experience with the current travel agency is terrible. Whenever I use it, I need to propose specific flights that are usually cheaper than what they suggest. We might keep the purchase of short flights at the lab level and have a simple system of direct reporting in an EPFL site of every single flight/travel (which most probably happens anyways). Question 2: Flying business class for a flight to Boston is not a luxury as usually this is a short academic trip for a few days with non-stop schedule. Let's not ignore the jet lag, the fatigue of travel and the fact that there is no free time to rest, as most probably on our arrival in the early evening we will have a meeting for dinner with colleagues. We should all try to reduce our CO2 footprint, but not at a cost for our health.

I would agree that business is not allowed for continental flights. For intercontinental flights, there should be no limit. Regarding use of a sole travel agent: In the past, the selected travel agent has often proposed uneconomical and inefficient flight connections, since it did not have any healthy competitor. As faculty it is our responsibility to administer our funds in the most efficient way, such a monopoly just produces the opposite. It is also very questionable that the refund generated by the overall traveling business should land into EPFL's general accounts, rather than go back to the laboratories that are financing this business.

EPFL is a place of creativity, there is an untapped opportunity to avoid restrictions

Health conditions should also be taken into account, not only duration

Making use of a travel agency mandatory seems to me problematic on many levels - introducing additional bureaucracy, creating a monopoly, etc. The link with the stated objectives of this Lex are also tenuous: travel arrangements that violate the requirements of the regulations would not be eligible for reimbursement, which seems sufficient motivation to follow the rules.

To me what is really important with the business class is that it does not apply to visitors (who e.g. choose to upgrade themselves) or when we are invited and they fly us in in business class. I also think it is weird that we can't use our miles to upgrade.

So many business class tickets are purchased to invite "pseudo-big" names from the US to give a lecture/conference to the EPFL campus. Start by cutting those!

Please note that not all people are the same, as medical conditions or just body physiology (tall, obese) may make economy travel very uncomfortable over extended hours. In addition, most colleagues I know are very reasonable with respect to travel conditions, so let's trust their good judgement rather than imposing rule after rule...

Being able to fly (and comfortably) fuels our collaborations, which cement our high ranking as a top university in the world in several disciplines. We are geographically far from action in several fields and easing travel is a very important enabler. Taking a mandatory professional trip away from family is hardly a pleasure, and time pressure from family and professional responsibilities has often forced us to shorten the duration of trips. It's often the case that we have to travel to help our group members' and our own careers. Limits don't help anyone, just cause additional bureaucratic hurdle. What if we reduce the limit to six hours and one needs to take two flights with duration five hours each? How can we function properly if we take a trip overseas on economy, unable to sleep, have to work three full days with jetlag and then return and teach the morning after? We are forced to either prolong the trip taking more time away from our families or simply not take the trip which is often critical (not to mention that women will end up traveling a LOT less under such restrictions). The direction can and should trust the EPFL faculty to be cautious and responsible without strict and demeaning rules (for which there will surely be exceptions granted, which in turn will further aggravate and demotivate people who do not wish to ask for special treatment).

I cannot agree with the first point due to very bad experience with other institutions that made the same transition. I understand that some travel agencies are better than others, but this measure means a loss of flexibility and freedom in any case. It probably also means we cannot book ourselves and get reimbursed later. But what if, say, there is a bug with the travel agency portal, or administrative assistants are on vacation? This may sound unlikely, but both of these situations have already happened to me. I understand the need for monitoring, but we could enter data about bookings that were not made through the travel agency.

Regarding the first question: My key concern is flexibility. Organizing travel is complex. The websites of airlines (and Google flights) allow us to organize the travel based on our constraints. Having many round trips with a travel agency is just a burden, pain, and incurs additional time cost on our end. It's not just that the current travel agency is bad (it is really bad!) but that the added round trip times of going through a human just make organizing travel unnecessarily much more challenging. Regarding the second question: I personally fly economy on all day flights and business on overnight so that I can work the next day. I made an exception during the pandemic when I had to fly to the US on short notice. I'm against the restriction on intercontinental flights as it again limits flexibility. I would welcome a recommendation to use economy flights whenever possible and especially for day flights. For sustainability (and because it is reasonable) I would support and love a policy that prohibits all flights for destinations that can be reached in less than 4 or 5 hours by train or other public transport. When has monopoly led to better quality?

I very rarely fly business. However, I'm quite tall, and economy is becoming increasingly uncomfortable for people like me, so I'd like to keep the option of business class when one needs to be in reasonable shape upon arrival. Also, as a general principle, it seems we're creating more and more bureaucracy to implement and check the increasing body of rules and regulations, which I think is a very unfortunate development.

We can reduce our CO2 footprint through other initiatives that do not disincentive us so strongly from attending conferences and professional events held in the US or Asia. One possibility would be to put an upper limit on business-class travel e.g. max 4 round-trips per year. None of the universities I have worked at in the past had a properly functioning travel agency. I can certainly believe that EPFL would try to find one, but I am not convinced one exists. It's just way more efficient--and often cheaper--if I book things myself.

EPFL travel agency is expensive and inefficient. Here competition is of advantage. Why does layover time not count? It really extends the time without rest. Will such rules be applicable to all EPFL? (incl. direction)

We do need a better travel agency than the current one, and a way to give them feedback on their service so they can improve. Another possibility would be mandating two agencies to maintain some kind of competition.

It seems to me that the questionnaire is a bit biased having several disagree options for the second question.

regarding the first question: isn't this already the case? it looks to me we are always forced to book with CWT

- allowing business FROM Boston (Gisou's example) but not TO Boston is not practical for booking reasons. Either both directions business or none. - modern Econ (e.g. Swiss / AF crazy 10-seat 777) makes working impossible. Thus the 8h to Boston means losing an entire work day! Leave it to the pros to decide if spending money in Business makes sense. Nobody will pay extra for business if it is not necessary!

The "responsible" travel is more about "how to travel" than "why to travel". To meet the 30% reduction one could not only address "how to travel" but also why to travel, to reduce overall travel. There are ample of travel that is not necessary and not related to the core mission of travel, which is dissemination of research results. For example, flying business class to a conference for the purpose of: - Simply attending (no talk) - to serve as a session chair, - to take part in an editor meeting (e.g. for those that are paid editors) - to take part in a paper selection committee All these do not serve the core mission of disseminating research results and should as such either not be supported at all, or downgraded to the economy at all times for all distances. Why should one fly business to simply attend an editor meeting? A limitation of business class to absolutely necessary in person talks by the PI seems well in place. On the other hand: travel for - A conference presentation (invited talk, plenary talk, contribute talk, tutorial, etc.) - Funding review meeting should be allowed to be business class if it is overseas, and if the flight time is > 6 hours. The LEX discusses also to combine personal travel with vacation. The ability to combine conferences and vacation may motivate some to choose far away destinations. If already vacation is taken with a conference, why even at all allow business class? Who after all travels business for vacation? Here again the rule could be that if combined, it is economy class at all times. The comment on upgrades is not in the line of the "mission" of responsible travel. The reason is that it has no direct relation with emissions. If business seats are available and left free upgrades are given. Airlines are highly restrictive with this policy and everyone who received once a "free upgrade" understands that upgrades are to reduce occupancy in economy. Since current air travel is dominated by leisure travel (ca. 80%), not business travel, this rule even could imply more emissions and less ecological travel as upgrades from economy to business are used by airlines to increase capacity in Economy. Last: working in economy is not possible, as airlines lack electricity for laptops and space does not permit laptop use. Exception should be made for cases where the PI needs to work on a proposal deadline, or prepare a talk. Not being able to work on a flight from Zurich to Los Angeles of 10:50h appears very unproductive. Other exceptions should be considered: Some PI travel only very shortly, to minimize time away from EPFL. If a PI has to present an invited lecture or at a review meeting personally, shortly within arriving to minimize time, Business class should be allowed. The 11 h appears arbitrary. What about a 10:50 flight to Los Angeles? I do not find the regulation helpful for the good cause.

if there is one only available business seat in the flight, to be in economy cabin or business cabin has the same effect on environment, we do nothing. By the way, the economical rentability of a

flight is only possible with Business cabin (according to Air France in Africa - the business passengers pay for the full flight) it means that to be able to save the planet flying in economy class we need other people flying in biz.. NYMBY situation

What is the EPFL compensation mechanism put in place to compensate the CO2 emissions of our activities. Do we compensate via the air travel agency or do we create a specific fund to finance EPFL own CO2 mitigation options ?

EPFL travel agency is expensive and inefficient. Here competition is of advantage. Why does layover time not count? It really extends the time without rest. Will such rules be applicable to all EPFL? (incl. direction)

EPFL new rules on travel should be more ambitious, especially concerning flying (max number of flights per year or over 2 years, compensation, etc).