S'ÉPANOUIR
FLOURISH

LAUNCH INITIATIVE S'EPANOUIR-FLOURISH

FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY

19.NOVEMBER.2025

Context and Objectives

On **19 November 2025**, EPFL launched the s'EPanouir-FLourish initiative, which aims to develop all bachelor programs with the goal of equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to thrive in this rapid-evolving world and reach their full potential. The project envisages a three-stage process:

→ *Review*: Until spring 2026 we are reviewing the state of the art both in EPFL and internationally. We are collecting feedback from students, teachers, educational leaders and other members of the community, and looking at practices in science and engineering education in other universities in Switzerland, Europe and beyond.

→ *Co-design*: Starting in Spring 2026, sections will begin to elaborate their study plans, with involvement of students and teachers, considering the project's principles. This will be informed by the review work which will provide data, models, and examples to support program development. This phase will also provide an opportunity for teachers to test new ideas and new materials.

→ *Implementation, monitoring and optimization*: The first program changes are envisaged as being introduced in autumn 2027. The impact of these changes will be monitored and the results fed back to sections and teachers to help them optimize the implementation of changes. Implementation, monitoring and optimization will continue across the bachelor programs to 2031.

The launch brought together **more than 100 participants** in person and a dozen online. The structure of the event aimed to provide an opportunity for students, teachers and other members of the EPFL community to collaboratively generate ideas and suggestions in the initial Review phase of the project.

To achieve this, **14 facilitators** led small discussion groups of around six participants, focusing on five key questions.

Key Insights

The discussions highlighted several priorities for the future of EPFL's bachelor programs:

- **Curriculum reform:** Reduce overload to allow deeper engagement and understanding; integrate real-world, interdisciplinary, and complex projects.

- **Graduate profile:** Foster independence, creativity, and awareness of societal impact; help students learn how to learn.

- **Campus experience:** Strengthen meaningful teacher-student interaction.

- **Pedagogy:** Promote interactivity in teaching and learning, AI literacy and balance technological tools with human connection.

QUESTIONS DISCUSSED

Question 1: If you had to change the first year, what would you do?

Question 2: What type(s) of graduates do we want to train?

Question 3: How to teach transversal skills, ethics and sustainability?

Question 4: How do we ensure students benefit from interacting with teachers and students on campus?

Question 5: AI changing learning. How will the role of the teacher evolve over the next few years?

Topics emerging across questions

Several themes appeared repeatedly throughout the parallel conversations:

- Reduce content overload to allow students time for reflection and deeper understanding.
- Integrate real-world, interdisciplinary projects early to connect theory with practice and foster collaboration within and across sections.
- Reimagine exercise sessions as spaces for teamwork and live problem-solving.
- Emphasize learning how to learn, both as a principle for course and program design and as a key outcome for fostering autonomous graduates.
- Preserve meaningful human interactions, both among peers and between students and teachers.

This report will be shared with the chairs of the working groups to integrate the insights in their discussions.

The **next community event** will take place in early Spring. If, as a teacher or student, you would like to be actively involved in it, please get in touch with us: iris.capdevila@epfl.ch

Community Insights by Question

QUESTION 1. IF YOU HAD TO CHANGE THE FIRST YEAR, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Main ideas raised by the participants:

- Focus on understanding over memorization; lighten content for depth, revise workload.
- Have early contact to the discipline, also, interdisciplinary projects from first year.
- Question the common first-year across disciplines. Find balance between allowing easy section-transfer and discipline specific experience (proposal of a "Buffet model" for first-year courses with MOOCs to allow students to catch up if they want to change sections).
- Importance of having iterative feedback (i.e. introduce review weeks; introduce a mid-terms week with no teaching)
- Revise the format of exercise sessions (i.e. having a friend/group to solve problems together with an assigned TA)
- Importance of "learning how to learn", via (i) integrated in the classes, and/or (ii) peer-mentoring.
- Adapt to diverse backgrounds (i.e. with bootcamps or introductory semesters).

" *Donner plus de temps pour apprendre.*
Exams based on understanding, not memorisation. "

QUESTION 2. WHAT TYPE(S) OF GRADUATES DO WE WANT TO TRAIN?

Main ideas raised by the participants:

- Independent, autonomous and creative individuals
- Capable of solving real complex and interdisciplinary (reflect on the weight of projects. Differences between small courses vs. makerspace).
- Having a deep understanding of fundamentals (currently, no time to solidify knowledge).
- Conscious of the impact in society at different levels (sustainability, technological, politics…).
- Students that can both do research and work in industry.

> " *des gens qui comprennent ce qu'ils font; des gens créatifs prêts à résoudre les défis actuels de la société.* "

QUESTION 3. HOW TO TEACH TRANSVERSAL SKILLS, ETHICS AND SUSTAINABILITY?

Main ideas raised by the participants:

- Systematic integration of these skills in the already existing disciplinary courses and teach them explicitly (via workshops or projects)
- One long-term project across semesters with real societal impact (for example from BA4 to BA6).
- Interdisciplinary projects, within a section or cross-sections. Possibility to have external experts to bring their insights.
- Reflect on the possibility of crediting extracurricular activities (ie. Associations; participation to conferences and seminars that EPFL offers outside the curriculum).
- Give importance (by crediting) to these notions and skills – making them obligatory during the program.

> " *Projets transversaux - au sein d'une faculté ou interfacultaire pour être amené à travailler avec des gens qui ont des compétences différentes des nôtres* "

QUESTION 4. HOW DO WE ENSURE STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM INTERACTING WITH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ON CAMPUS?

Main ideas raised by the participants:

- Agreement that the attendance is low. Main reason: a lot of resources at disposal, so attending adds no real value. They can get the knowledge working independently.

- The added value is the interaction with the teacher – difficult in big courses. Small courses (fewer number of students) are better.

- Interaction that brings students to class: live quizzes; exam-style exercises solved live; structured Q&A sessions.

- Reduce content overload to allow engagement. Focus on key learning outcomes, lighten content and prioritize interaction

- How to incentivize attendance? possibility to make it mandatory, offer extra points. However, if it doesn't bring added value, this is not the way.

> " *I think the workload gets too heavy. And so students start prioritizing tasks. Whenever all info is available…you start prioritizing other activities like projects for that same class.* "

QUESTION 5: AI CHANGING LEARNING. HOW WILL THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER EVOLVE OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS?

Main ideas raised by the participants:

- Balance AI use with human interaction; need a framework for collaborative interactions and problem-solving.

- Students use AI mainly to save time (ask questions, clarify solutions). Reduce workload to allow time for reflection and deeper learning.

- Reflection is reduced: new students focus on answers rather than process; less critical thinking compared to older cohorts.

- AI can support teaching tasks (generate exam questions, course materials, creating false answers for critical thinking, help with grading and providing feedback…). Students are ok with teachers using AI, as long it is transparent and teachers have the final say.

- Concerns about loss of human interaction, quality of AI responses, and lack of critical thinking, as well as keeping up to date with AI considering its rapid evolution.

- Need for clear rules, especially for assessments.

- Need for AI literacy for both teachers (to integrate it in their discipline) and students; better understanding of learning processes (how people learn) – to adapt programs to foster it.

> " *L'étudiant+l'AI comme unité à considérer. Rôle enseignement : optimiser la performance de cette unité.* "