

Life

When colleagues become friends

Staff tell us how they found friends for life at ETH – and what makes their friendships so special.

4

Do we need a quota for women in management positions at ETH?

Two women, two opinions – which do you find more convincing?

10

A visit to Campus Info

Bizarre phone calls and rewarding encounters: all in a day's work for the counter and switchboard staff.

12

ETH zürich



Dahia →



About *life*

What would ETH staff like to read about in their community magazine? That was the question at the forefront of our minds when we started redeveloping *life* a year ago. The answer, obtained from an online survey and several workshops with scientific, administrative and technical staff, was this: more people, more interaction and the feeling of belonging to an "ETH family".

As we of course want to accommodate these requests, from now on it is you, dear reader, who will be at the heart of *life*. Employees interview each other in the new "Dominoes" column, we

visit various departments in "A visit to" and we are allocating more space to the "For & Against" and "Portrait" columns.

After all, it is the people we work with who enrich our day-to-day working lives the most. And in the best-case scenario, they might even become friends for life. You can read three tales of exactly this sort of friendship in this issue's cover story. To learn more about how we are redeveloping *life*, see Internal news – the online source for all your internal information.

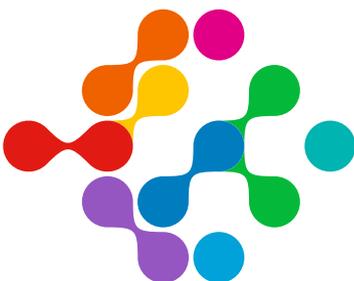
We hope you enjoy reading this issue of *life* and would be delighted to hear your feedback!

Your *life* relaunch project team
→ www.ethz.ch/life-relaunch-en

Future inclusion

This is the motto of the Disability Rights Convention Action Days from 27.8 to 10.9. With events and an exhibition, ETH wants to contribute to the discourse and sensitisation of the issue in society.

→ www.ethz.ch/action-days-brk





Anyone wanting to get from one ETH location to another can easily rent an e-bike. Twenty-five e-bikes and one e-cargo bike are available to rent on the Zentrum and Hönggerberg campuses and in Oerlikon at a rate of 50 centimes per hour. By 1 June, 769 ETH members had already taken up this opportunity, which ETH is providing in collaboration with Urban Connect.

→ www.ethz.ch/bike

The Campus Experience team has been offering new themed tours since March: admire the 300 works of art found in ETH buildings, find out how the energy grid works or dive into the world of astronomy at the Semper Observatory. All tours last 60 minutes and can be booked for groups of up to 25 people.

→ www.ethz.ch/private-tours



Keeping track of sanctions

Researchers who enter into a contract with international partners need to ensure they are not from countries that are subject to any trade embargoes. To help researchers to carry out their due diligence, the Young n' Rising team of ETH trainees have developed a sanctions list search engine exclusively for ETH.

→ www.sanctionsearch.ethz.ch/app/en

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Jinghao Cao and Viola Bosselmann on the ASVZ tennis court (Photo: Yves Bachmann)

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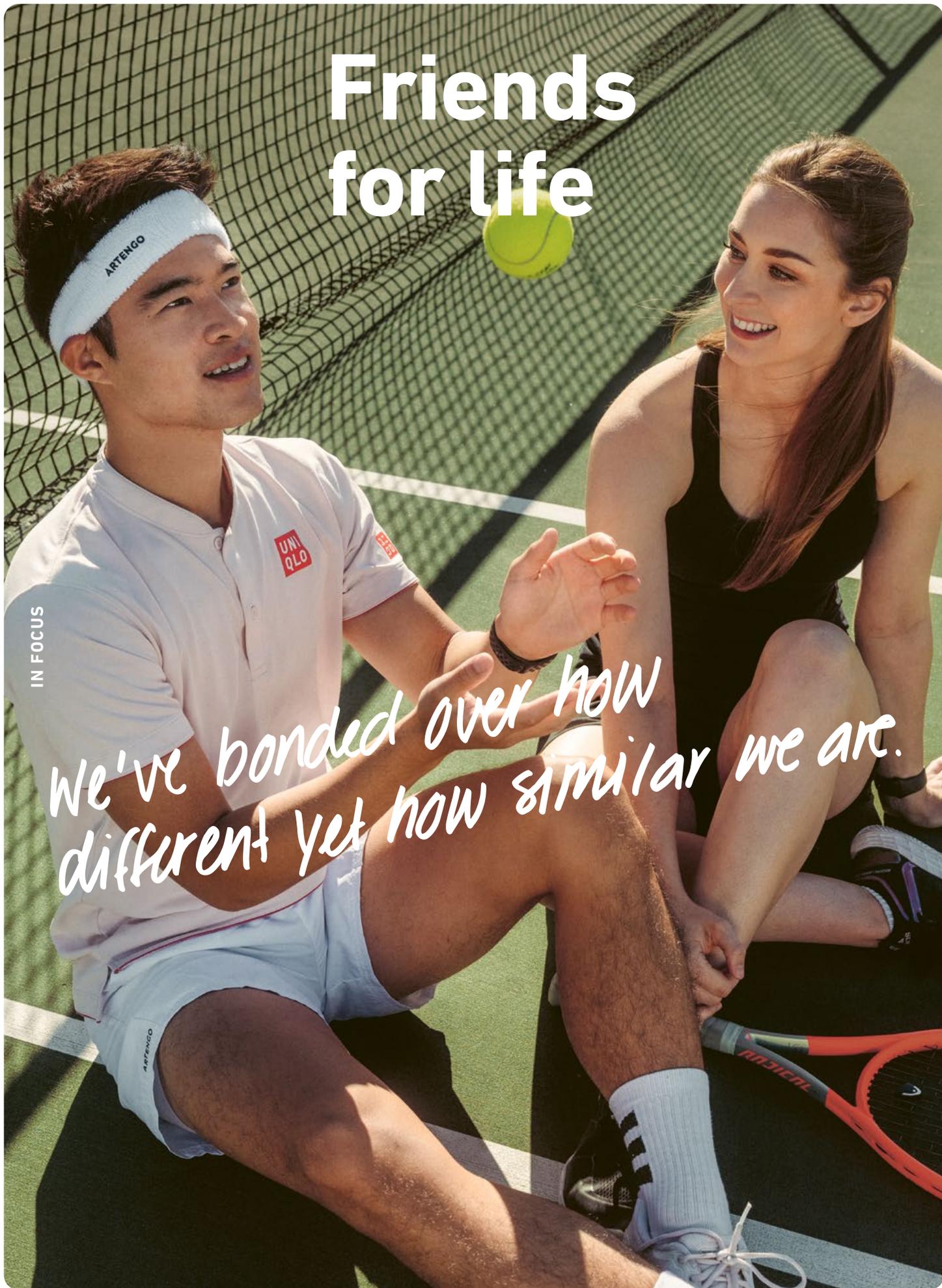
Further information and subscriptions:



Friends for life

IN FOCUS

*We've bonded over how
different yet how similar we are.*



In Internal news we asked you to get in touch to tell us about your friendships that began at ETH – and over 30 ETH members did just that. Read on for three stories of friendship that could not be more different and yet have so much in common.

A (virtually) unbeatable team

Lots of friends don't even remember how it all began. But that's not the case for Viola and Jinghao. Their story starts with cheese and wine – in unlimited quantities for ten Swiss francs per person. The third semester of their Bachelor's in mathematics had already begun when the two of them happened across this event that was being held by a student society. Both of them, quite independently, came to the same conclusion: you've just got to tuck in! They first spoke to one another at the bar in the CAB Building – "it was a pretty long conversation that is still going on today," says Jinghao. "It was friendship at first sight," adds Viola.

Four years have since gone by. Jinghao is now studying for a doctorate at the Seminar for Applied Mathemat-

ics and Viola is working as a student teaching assistant in the same research group while she completes her Master's degree. They meet for lunch almost every day, often cook together in the evening, go hiking at the weekend and catch up on the tennis court at least once a week.

Bound together by tennis

"I've rediscovered my love for tennis thanks to Jinghao," says Viola. The 26-year-old had stopped practising her childhood hobby as a teenager – until Jinghao told her shortly after they met that he wanted to take up tennis at the ASVZ. Viola went along too and, ultimately, it was tennis that brought the pair even closer together. "During the lockdowns we spent practically all our free time together on the tennis court. It really helped us through a difficult time and made our bond even stronger," explains Viola. In the meantime, the two have become a (virtually) unbeatable team: so far they have only lost once when playing doubles.

And they soon realised that they had more success when they worked together in an academic sense too. So, when Jinghao spent a year as an exchange student in London, it was studying together that both of them really missed. "He always gave me so much strength during exam periods," says Viola. "For months we could only Face-Time, and although it was practically every day, it just wasn't the same. I missed Viola a lot," says Jinghao.

When he returned, he initially moved in with Viola for a week – and quickly discovered that there actually was something about his best friend that he would change instantly if he could: the 24-year-old still insists that "Viola has the worst coffee machine in the world!"

The best of two worlds

Although the pair say themselves that they come from completely different worlds, you wouldn't notice it when speaking with them. They finish each other's sentences, laugh about the same things and even have similar mannerisms. And yet: "It is the cultural differences that make our friendship so rewarding," says the pair. Jinghao grew up in Shanghai, Viola in Hamburg. Neither of them moved to Switzerland until they started their studies at ETH. "It's unusual to talk about problems or express any criticism in a lot of Asian cultures," explains Jinghao, going on to say that Viola's direct and open manner has really helped him to communicate with his parents. "Viola has taught me to discuss even personal problems with them, and to say if something is bothering me. It's been incredibly valuable for me and my relationship with my parents," says Jinghao. "When I was at a real low point with my studies one time, it was Jinghao's ambition and discipline that pulled me through. I'm so grateful to him for that," adds Viola.

Neither of the pair knows what the future will hold professionally once they leave ETH, but "whatever happens in our lives over the coming years, we are sure our friendship will remain the same," says Jinghao. "And so will the unconditional support we give each other," adds Viola. "Hashtag favourite person."



30 years full of magic moments

It's a warm spring evening at the end of May when Jürg, Lukas and Peter enter the Bonnie Prince Pub near Zurich Central. They're meeting here to play darts and have a beer, just as they have countless times before.

Lukas is Professor of Photonics at ETH; Peter has worked for a former ETH spin-off for over 20 years; Jürg is a visiting scientist at ETH and has co-founded four companies, including

an ETH spin-off. The three met in the early 90s while studying for their doctorates at what was then the Laboratory for Field Theory.

Lukas: "It wasn't actually our work that we bonded over – it was coffee and darts. Our professor at the time gave us a lot of freedom, but one thing was set in stone: you had to show up to the two scheduled coffee breaks. And that's where we met for the first time – it was the sacred coffee break that brought us together."

Peter: "Yes, and I still remember how you breathed new life into the group when you first arrived. You were always so friendly, encouraging everyone to go for a drink. Then at some point,

you just put the dartboard on the wall. I admire you for how sociable you are."

Lukas: "But you were always such a great mentor on work trips abroad. I vividly remember sitting in a hotel room in Raleigh one evening and wanting to practise my presentation for a conference the next day. After just one sentence, you were lying on the floor laughing, saying 'Please stop, it's so bad, I can't listen anymore!'"

Peter: "Do you remember when we were playing pool there in that bar?"

↑ Lukas Novotny (56), Peter Regli (60) and Jürg Fröhlich (57) in front of the Bonnie Prince Pub (from left to right)

And then this guy came out of nowhere and started laughing at us because we looked so uptight? I think that's what was so funny about your presentation in the hotel room, that you seemed so uptight somehow ... But maybe we had just started drinking beers too early that evening. It was hilarious."

Lukas: "Then you said I should just relax and speak without notes the next day. And that's exactly what I did. It was good advice."

Peter: "Our road trips in the US were fantastic. We were never actually attending the same conferences, but luckily we were often over there at the same time. Like in 2000, when you were already living in the US ..."

Lukas: "Yes, you visited me quite a few times in the 16 years I spent over there, but there were some very long gaps in communication too. I'm not much of a letter writer."

Jürg: "Apart from the Christmas cards. Your wife always used to very kindly send news of what you'd been up to that year in the form of a poem in a Christmas card. So we always knew how you were and what you were doing."

Lukas: "And how did we meet again in Switzerland?"

Peter: "Hmm, at some point I found out you were back at ETH ..."

Jürg: "I asked you both if you wanted to play darts again sometime. I think it was 2013."

Peter: "And then we just picked up where we'd left off. I'm so pleased we were able to reconnect."

Lukas: "Yeah, me too. I think we all inspire each other as friends. I learn a lot from both of you. I'm inspired whenever Jürg tells me some philosophical story or other, or about something he's read. And we just have very different lives and different problems, but

our involvement in each other's lives makes us think about things we otherwise wouldn't."

Jürg: "I think there's something at the heart of every lasting friendship that makes it endure. We have already experienced so much together, and now that will continue. There's a closeness, a feeling of trust and openness that just make you feel comfortable."

Peter: "Yes, openness is a good word. I think we tell each other a lot."

Lukas: "We really trust one another, that's for sure. And we empathise. If one of you tells me about your problems, it affects me. I feel involved somehow."

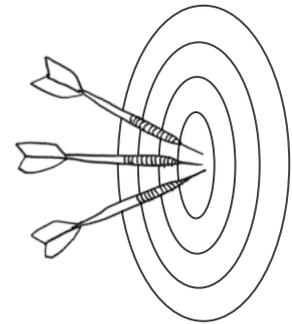
Jürg: "I think our bond comes from the fact that we still believe life can and should be fun."

Peter: "Yeah, that and testing the limits. Lukas loves to push those boundaries. I'd been in the research group for a couple of years and no one had thought of nailing a dartboard to the wall. But Lukas thought that was completely normal. Lukas finds lots of things completely normal. And I always found that really refreshing about him."

Lukas: "Yes, as long as it's legal, of course ..."

Jürg: "Well, Facility Services probably had a different interpretation of 'legal'. They threw a pretty big fit. But the dartboard was actually very helpful. If you'd been programming and got stuck on something, it was really relaxing to play darts for a while before going back to work, and suddenly you could pick up where you'd left off."

Peter: "Yeah, I can still picture those times. Lukas would always be holding a note with some equation or other on it when he was playing darts, and we'd discuss formulas while playing. And sometimes there would even be those



magic moments when you'd be discussing something, throw the dart without thinking and bam! You'd score a bullseye and solve the equation all at once. I'll never forget that."

Lukas: "Do you know what one of the most wonderful moments has been for me? When you, Peter, introduced us to your new love. I was so happy for you. Every time I see you now, you're beaming and still in the first flush of love. Knowing your history, seeing you so happy again really moved me."

Peter: "That's just brought something else to mind. When we first met, you were already with Loni; in fact I think you were already married. And you're still together – I think that's so romantic."

Jürg: "Honestly, I hope we can keep on meeting up and playing darts for as long as we are able to."

Peter: "Yeah, me too. I hope we can carry on just as we are."

“Thank you, ETH!”

These are the words with which Juliet, Stephanie and Iris started their email to the *life* editorial team after reading the appeal in Internal news. And every second you spend in their presence, you can tell just how grateful these three are to have found each other.

Juliet and Stephanie first met ten years ago in Office F19 of the ETH Main Building. Both had just started their jobs in the Registrar’s Office in Academic Services, where they were responsible for administrative tasks in the area of teaching and student advisory. They got to know each other better by sharing their lunch and coffee breaks.

Iris joined the same team three years later. “I actually didn’t intend to make new friends at work,” she remembers. At her last place of work, she had realised just how difficult it can be to say goodbye when people change jobs, which is why at first she didn’t join Stephanie and Juliet on those coffee breaks. But she couldn’t stick to her resolution for long. “I was really touched by their manner; they were so open and warm,” she says. The fact that all three had come from the travel industry only strengthened the bond between them.

Bound together by a coffee ritual

And so that morning coffee soon became a ritual that they found themselves looking forward to every Sunday evening. All three are in agreement: “It’s just invaluable, being able to talk about personal as well as professional matters at work – especially if things aren’t going so well.”

They first met up as a threesome outside of work for a housewarming at Iris’s new apartment. That was followed up by countless evenings spent in the garden over a drink, joint holidays and phone calls that went on for hours. But one thing has never changed: “We

know we can always rely on each other one hundred percent, and no topic is taboo,” says Juliet. They have never argued, and the thing they value most about one another is their honesty. They say that, thanks to this honesty, their friendship has helped them to grow as people. “Because they’ve both been honest with me about how I react to things, I’ve learnt to be more easy-going and mindful,” says Iris.

Nowadays, they could not imagine life without their friendship. “Just looking at each other is enough for us to know how the others are doing,” says Stephanie. Juliet laughs: “Well, your facial expressions don’t exactly make it hard, either!” It is their shared sense of humour that binds these three together. It seems they can’t spend five minutes in each other’s company without bursting out laughing.

Always there for each other

But there have also been difficult times and strokes of fate that the three have weathered together. One such time was three and a half years ago when Juliet was going through the darkest period of her life. She gave birth to twins, but, tragically, one did not survive, leaving an emptiness that cannot be put into words. As Juliet was lying in hospital a couple of weeks later, not actually wanting to see anybody, Iris and Stephanie suddenly showed up. “We knew it could backfire, and if she had told us to leave, we would have done so. But she was going through such an awful time, we just had to go to her. We couldn’t leave her to deal with that situation alone,” says Iris. “My heart skipped a beat when I saw the two of them. I was so happy,” remembers Juliet. “The support I got from them during that time was incredibly important to me.”

And in their working lives too, it’s this mutual support that they value most of all. “Not long ago, a student who



had fled Ukraine came to the counter in the Registrar’s Office. It was a very long and emotional conversation, and his story really touched me,” says Iris. She found it extremely helpful to be able to share what had happened with Juliet afterwards.

Although Juliet no longer lives in Zurich and Stephanie doesn’t work at ETH anymore, the three of them still meet up regularly. They all agree: “Because we used to see each other in the office every day, we now know one another incredibly well and the bond between us is so strong – you don’t come across that every day.” And finally: “It’s not always a given that you’ll find friends for life. It’s a huge bonus!”

Author
Anna Maltsev

Photos
Yves Bachmann

→ Stephanie Benz (38), Juliet Royston (44) and Iris Ruff (43) in Stephanie’s garden (from left to right)



*our friendship is all
about being able
to laugh and cry together.*

Does ETH need a quota for women in management positions?



For

Annegret Kern
Office of the President employee

ETH and other Swiss universities have been striving to increase the percentage of women holding management positions at their institutions for many years now. But according to the annual Equality Monitoring report published by ETH, the percentage of women in professorships grew only slightly, from 16.3 to 18 percent, between 2020 and 2021. It is also true that the “leaky pipeline” phenomenon has remained constant for years: after women graduate, they make up a smaller and smaller percentage of the workforce on each rung of the career ladder. And this is despite the considerable efforts that have been made, such as the Gender Strategy 2021–2024, which was adopted by the ETH Board to improve access to equal opportunities.

It is still mostly men who are in key positions: they lead appraisal interviews, head up teams and hire new people – the majority of whom are men. This phenomenon is called homosocial reproduction. People who hire others will usually pick candidates who are similar to themselves. After all, similarity breeds trust and predictability. But at the same time, this phenomenon has a terribly restricting effect on potential and talent. It is also simply unfair.

Introducing a quota for women gives us a real chance to cut through this cycle of unconscious prejudice and make a meaningful contribution to the work being done to improve access to equal opportunities. For one thing, having such a quota would give many

qualified women the opportunity to prove themselves and unlock their full potential. And at the same time, it would create more female role models – who would in turn give other women the confidence to believe they could hold a management position.

Together with the other measures put in place by ETH to provide more equality of opportunity, by increasing the percentage of women at management level, we could lay the foundations for a real cultural shift. However, change is only possible if diverse groups are adequately represented and are open to the strengths and weaknesses of other groups. The quota will force us to put our trust not only in similarities but also in differences.

“The quota will force us to put our trust not only in similarities but also in differences.”

In the best-case scenario, by introducing a quota for women at ETH, we will increase the percentage of women and change the culture so much that, a few years down the line, we’ll no longer need a quota. Then we will all have achieved our goal.

Whenever someone asks me if we need more women in management positions, my answer is quite clear: yes. At ETH and more generally too. But we have to consider what is the best way to achieve this goal. A quota for women would perhaps solve the problem in terms of numbers, but it would cause new problems at the same time.

On the one hand, every woman in a management position would be faced with questions and distrust: is she there just because of her gender or is it really because of her ability? And with that, we lock in the preconception that women can't (or don't have to) actually do anything at all. It would also run counter to the goal of distributing roles and diversifying fairly, with no particular gender characteristic being given preference or pushed to the fore. I – as someone who presents as female – would rather be selected based on my ability than my gender. In the worst-case scenario, introducing a quota for women could lead an employer who had felt forced to hire someone against their will to take out their displeasure on that new manager.

On the other hand, a quota would result in more women with weak leadership skills being placed in management roles simply to fulfil that quota, even if no suitable female candidates had applied. And as we all know, unfit leaders can have an enormously negative impact on the organisation as a whole and on their team members too.

Rather than having fixed quotas for women, it would therefore make more sense to exercise a preference for a female candidate if she had the same qualifications as her male peers. This, combined with the targeted promotion of women, could increase the number of women in key positions quickly. And over time, we would achieve the balance we are striving for.

In the long term, though, we need to move away from this binary distinction between men and women. A quota for women would not be a suitable way of

being inclusive towards trans, intersex and non-binary people. How would we treat a trans woman, for example, who had been socialised as a man her whole life? Would we exclude trans men from the quota or even introduce a separate

“In the long term, we need to move away from this binary distinction between men and women.”

trans quota? It would be better to just search for suitable leaders from across the whole spectrum of diverse gender identities. Diversification would then be guaranteed from the bottom up and there would be no need to act in line with quotas.



Against

Stephanie Habicht
IT Services employee

What do you think?
Join in the discussion in
Internal news:
ethz.ch/quota-for-women

A visit to Campus Info

A VISIT TO



“Whereabouts around here can I adopt a dog?” was one of the most unusual questions Nadine Elmer had heard in her seven years at Campus Info. But the 14-strong team was able to quickly find an answer even to this (the doctoral student had been trying to find the animal shelter on the Höggerberg).

And on this Tuesday morning in the middle of May, the staff at the Höggerberg campus counter are once again able to assist all the ETH members who drop by. Some want to send letters or collect packages, while a visiting professor comes to pick up his salary – since he, like many ETH employees, does not have a Swiss bank account. And while all of this is going on out front, the post is being sorted in the back room so it can be delivered to the various departments and institutes.

The biggest package so far has been a mattress that a student had ordered for his room on campus. The most fateful has been a package con-

taining plaster, which led to the building being evacuated. “Suddenly this white powder started trickling down the shelves and, since no one knew what it was at first, everyone had to get out of the building,” says Antonella Basoli, who has been working at Campus Info for 18 years now.

Evacuation with consequences

Then there was the time when the Zentrum campus was evacuated for a fire drill and some of the team got left behind by mistake when everyone forgot about the switchboard staff on floor D of the Main Building. As a result, they now have their own escape door.

On this particular morning, however, it’s surprisingly quiet here – both the phone line and the live chat, which was introduced a year ago. The team usually has to answer a whole range of questions, from straightforward enquiries about contact details to requests for information about specific research

projects, and sometimes the phone calls are downright bizarre. “One time a woman rang because she discovered an unidentifiable insect in her garden and was scared for her crop,” says Maja Däppen, who works at Campus Info. In the end they were able to identify the animal with the help of the Entomological Collection: it turned out to be just a large dragonfly larva, to the caller’s relief.

“The best thing about my work is being able to interact with other people.”

Enriching encounters

Whether they are working at the switchboard, at reception in the entrance hall or at the two counters – the thing that all Campus Info staff have in common is their love of interacting with other people. “That’s the best thing about my work,” agrees Catherine Burnat, who’s been assigned to work in the entrance hall today. “I remember this Chinese exchange student who always used to pop by for a chat last year. I think he felt lonely, and our talks seemed to help him. I just enjoy being able to help other people.”

→ www.ethz.ch/campus-info-en

Author
Anna Maltsev

Photos
Josef Kuster

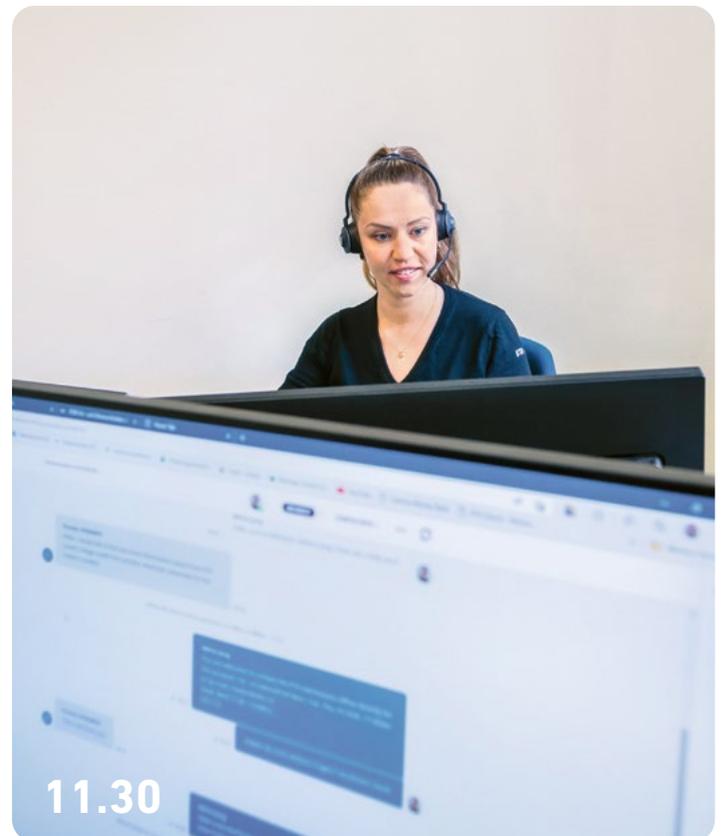
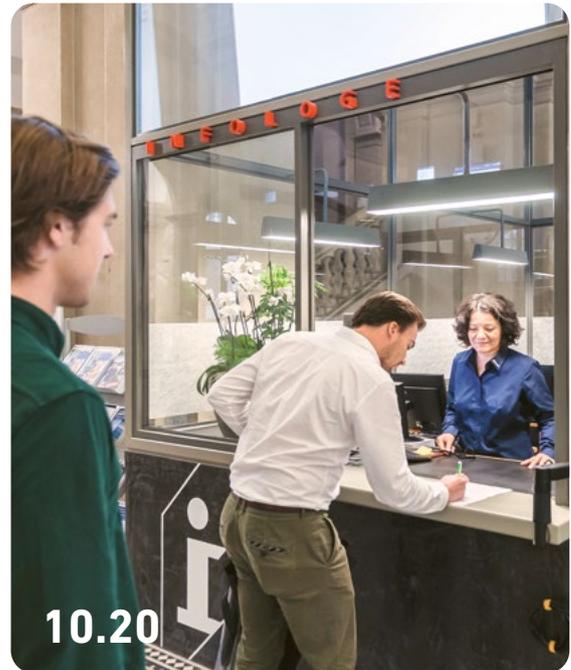


7.40 Every morning, Antonella and Bilgin's first job is to sort out whatever packages have been delivered.

8.15 An ETH employee collects her mail at the Höggerberg counter.

10.20 A researcher is looking for a meeting room "for high-ranking visitors from Brazil"; a student wants to book the video studio.

11.30 A caller has a question about a research project and cannot reach the professor – Maja manages to make contact with him, and he promises to get in touch with the caller.



PORTRAIT



Between the football pitch and the university

Patricia Gsell is the first female goalkeeping coach in the Swiss Football Association. The former international player trains commercial apprentices at ETH Zurich.

The national anthem rings out. You can see the pride and excitement on the faces of the 11 young footballers (all between 15 and 16 years of age) on the Swiss national junior team. It's not every day you get to wear the red jersey with the Swiss cross on the chest. Their opponents? Ireland. Amongst all the men standing along the touchline in tracksuits is one woman, who's every bit as tense: Patricia Gsell. The 32-year-old made her debut as a goalkeeping coach with the Swiss Football Association this May. She's the first woman to take up this role.

"At first, some people assumed I was the physiotherapist," says the former member of the Swiss national junior team. Unfortunately, a woman coaching men is still a rarity in the male-dominated world of football. But Patricia doesn't let this kind of prejudice bother her. And if they didn't know it before, by the time the Irish team has been soundly beaten 7-0, everyone on that pitch knows that the woman on the Swiss coaching team was responsible for the goalkeeper's brilliant performance – and not for the first-aid kit.

Monday evening with the national junior team in Sweden, Tuesday morning back in the office at ETH Zurich. Patricia Gsell has been shuttling between the football pitch and the university for over 13 years. She was still a pupil at the United School of Sports, the largest vocational school for sporting talent in Switzerland, when she came to ETH to train as a commercial employee back in 2009.

The international environment at the university appeals to Patricia. After completing her training, she stayed with the HR department, where she obtained a permanent position working in vocational education and training. After a couple of years, she even assumed responsibility for 24 commercial apprentices of her own. Not only is she jointly responsible for recruiting these apprentices but she also develops the course content and helps them in their day-to-day work.

A love of football discovered at five

Patricia Gsell grew up in Hirschthal in the Swiss canton of Aargau. As a child she spent a lot of time with her grandparents, who lived next to a football pitch. As a five-year-old, she would often watch other children playing football – until one day, when they asked her if she wanted to play with them and go in goal. "Who would have thought that ten years later I'd be making the leap into the top women's league in Switzerland," says Patricia, looking back.

For 14 years, she would play in goal in that league for Lucerne, GC Zurich and St Gallen, training four times a week and playing matches at the weekend. "During the season, there wasn't much breathing space for any-

thing else," remembers Patricia. She hung up her own football boots in 2018 due to an arm injury and moved from the goal to the touchline. She coached various teams for four years before once again making the leap to the national team, but this time as a coach and not a player.

Supporting young people

Patricia sees some parallels between her role as a goalkeeping coach and as an apprentice trainer: "I help young people to unlock their full potential – both on the football pitch and at ETH." It's just that the tone she uses on the pitch is sometimes a bit tougher and more emotional. "If I notice that the girls and boys aren't giving it their all during training or a match, I can definitely get louder to get them moving – it's all part and parcel of football."

Patricia's apprentices at ETH see her as understanding, supportive and really well organised: "Patricia puts her heart and soul into it. She was a huge support to me during the first year when it was all new and encouraged me to stick with it," says commercial apprentice Lena Kägi.

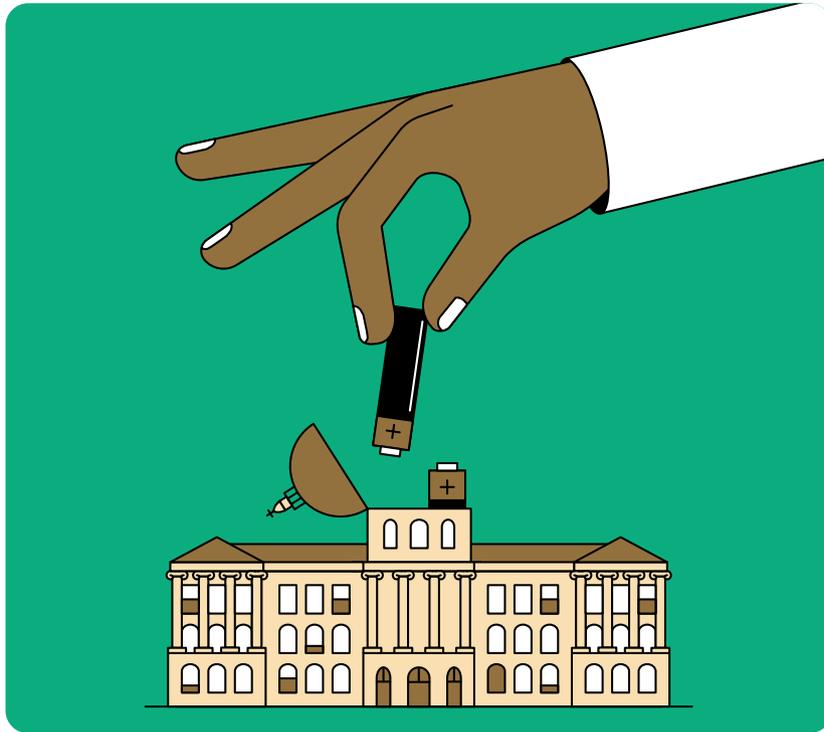
Patricia currently lives in Biel/Bienne. Football is still very important to her, but it's far from the be-all and end-all. In her free time, she enjoys hiking and, during the holidays, she travels the world. The 32-year-old has set foot on every continent except Antarctica. And the thing she loves to do most on these trips is to go diving. "When everything is weightless underwater, I can relax better than anywhere else. For me it's the best way of counterbalancing all the excitement of the football pitch."

← Patricia Gsell sees some parallels between her roles: "I help young people to unlock their full potential – both on the football pitch and at ETH."



Where does ETH get its energy from?

ASK THE EXPERTS



The climate crisis and the war in Ukraine are giving rise to questions about how energy is produced, traded and supplied. Political decision-makers are rethinking their energy plans, and companies and large institutions are being held to account too: they are being called on to reduce their energy demand and purchase power from sustainable sources. In 2021, ETH Zurich used 196 gigawatt hours (GWh) of energy at its locations in Switzerland. But what does that actually mean?

Illustration
Benjamin Hermann

Dominik Brem, Wolfgang Seifert:
All ETH locations need power for their building services and for various processes such as running machines for experiments; but they also need energy for heating.

Last year, all the Swiss locations together required 135 GWh of electricity. That is roughly the same as the power consumed by 27,000 Swiss households – equivalent to a small city! Most of the electricity purchased goes into research and IT. The Swiss National Supercomputing Centre in Lugano alone uses approximately 25 GWh of power every year.

Dominik Brem
Head of the Engineering
and Systems department

Wolfgang Seifert
Energy Officer
at ETH Zurich

The Winterthur municipal works supplies ETH's locations in Zurich with electricity comprising a mix made up of 92 percent renewable energy, the vast majority of which comes from hydro-power produced in Switzerland.

Around one third of all the energy supplied is used for heating. The Zurich locations are mainly heated via the city of Zurich's district heating network, by geothermal heat from ETH's very own energy grid and by natural gas. ETH purchases the natural gas from Swiss company Energie 360°; it originates from various EU countries as well as Norway and Russia.

ETH has been investing in a sustainable energy balance for many years now, one prime example being the energy grid it has developed on the Höggerberg campus. Several geothermal probe fields store excess heat in the ground during the summer months, before releasing it again during winter for heating purposes. The cooled underground stores are used for cooling in summer. The energy grid is expected to soon cover up to 90 percent of the Höggerberg campus's heating requirements.

What have you always wanted to know about the world of ETH?

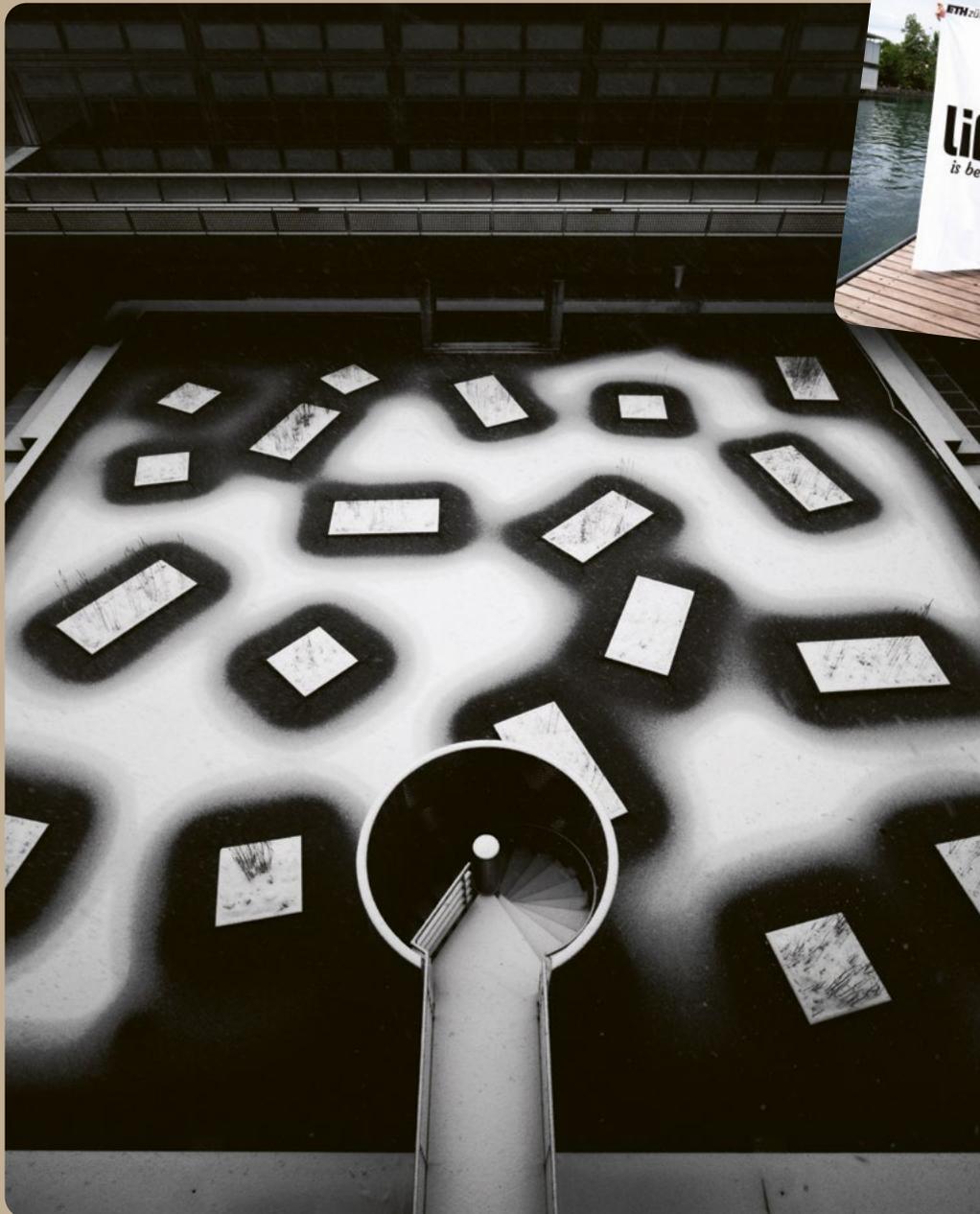
Please send your questions to
life@hk.ethz.ch

What is in this photo taken by Axel Schild?

Take part now!
Send us your snapshot
for the next issue:
life@hk.ethz.ch

Take a guess and email your answers to life@hk.ethz.ch.
With a bit of luck, you might win one of three exclusive
life bath towels!

Axel Schild was employed as a senior researcher at ETH until May 2022. At the workshop for the further development of *life* magazine, he provided a lot of valuable input - not to mention the first "snapshot".



SNAPSHOT

In the "Snapshot" column, we put the spotlight on unusual or unfamiliar places around the different ETH Zurich locations – all snapped by ETH members.

Mediamatics trainee interviews IT Services Head of Communications

DOMINOES



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In the next issue of *life*, Sabine Hoffmann will interview an ETH member of her choice.

Elena Stendardo
18 years old
Mediamatics trainee
Has been at ETH for two years

Sabine Hoffmann
feels 25 years old
IT Services Head of Communications
Has been at ETH for 20 years

In conversation with trainee Elena Stendardo, Sabine Hoffmann explains why she has never got bored at ETH, what the “break-time kitchen tour” is all about and what her advice is for girls who want to train for a technical profession.



Elena Stendardo: Sabine, if you had to describe yourself in three words, what would they be?

Sabine Hoffmann: Open-minded, inquisitive and with a positive mindset.

Elena: What is your educational and training background?

Sabine: Oh, varied! I did my *Abitur* [equivalent to the *Matura* in Switzerland] in Berlin, before going on to complete a condensed traineeship as an industrial clerk for clothing and textiles. And I have done two vocational education and training courses in Switzerland: one in marketing planning and one in PR. I still love to go on trips to improve my business English skills and get out of my comfort zone. I stay with different families and network with other communications professionals from local universities.

Elena: And what do you do at ETH?

Sabine: I am Head of Communications in IT Services and coordinate internal communications. But I'm also responsible for the communication of topics of interest to the public in the form of events, blogs or newsletters, for instance. And we have also established the IT-Women@ETH network, which is the first network at ETH aimed at women working in administrative and technical roles. So as a mediamatics trainee, that includes you too!

Elena: What can this network do for me?

Sabine: This network provides you with the support of over 140 female mentors from ETH and ETH-related organisations. We put a lot of emphasis on networking and interesting events. Together we are strong and can achieve really great things.

Elena: You have been at ETH for 20 years now. Do you never get bored?

Sabine: No, because there is so much variety at ETH! I get to deal with all sorts of different people, my managers are really open to new ideas and I am usually able to put those ideas into practice. One of these was our recent launch of an IT taster day for girls considering a traineeship in computer science.

Elena: And what would your advice be to girls who want to train for a technical profession?

Sabine: Go for it! Don't rule anything out and don't let yourself be deterred if parents or friends say "you can't do that" or "that's not for you". There is so much diversity in IT professions in particular, and as a woman you have excellent opportunities to find a job that's full of variety.

Elena: Have you never felt uncomfortable as a woman amongst so many men?

Sabine: No, never! Of our 360 employees, around 40 are women. I see myself as a “feel good manager” and I'm delighted every time a woman joins the IT Services family.

Elena: I've heard that you started a “break-time kitchen tour” recently. What does that involve?

Sabine: After two years of working from home, we have moved into the Octavo building, which has five different kitchens just for IT Services! During the pandemic we had virtual IT Services breaks. Now we've started a “break-time kitchen tour”, where we meet up in a different kitchen each time for a coffee. It's a good way of getting to know our way around the new building and our colleagues at the same time.

Elena: What are your interests outside work?

Sabine: I love the lake. In summer I'll swim from the Utoquai lido to the other side of Lake Zurich, have a cup of tea in Enge, then swim back again – sometimes with colleagues from ETH. Before Covid, I used to travel an awful lot and, even after 34 years in Switzerland, my hometown of Berlin is still my greatest passion.

Elena: If you could transform yourself into someone else, who would it be?

Sabine: A campaigner for change. I have the utmost respect for the women who fought and gained so much for us that we take for granted today. That's also why I'm proactive about helping to shape the future myself, whether through Publica, the Staff Commission or, indeed, IT-Women@ETH.



1957: music and dancing make our hearts soar – lots of ETH couples must have met at the Polyball back in the day.

This formal occasion is one of the oldest celebrations held at ETH: the ball, which was called *Akademie* at the time, first took place at the *Stadttheater* (now the Opera House) in 1897. Since 1948, the Polyball has been held annually at the end of November at ETH itself.

The togETHer staff party is a somewhat more recent tradition. This summer party, launched by the Staff Commission in 2005, is back again this year after a four-year hiatus. All staff are cordially invited to the Höggerberg campus on 26 August to celebrate with friends and family.

→ www.ethz.ch/together-en