

65

ANLIEFERUNG

How Tuemfal and Raihan
came to be at ETH



Save the date

"togETHER" staff party
Friday, 26 August 2022,
from 4 p.m.

The popular staff party
will be held on the
Hönggerberg campus again
this year.

Key figure

2,212

people embarked on a new role at ETH Zurich last year or returned to ETH after some time away. 1,753 of them were scientists, 390 technical and administrative staff, 18 professors and 51 apprentices. Those paid by the hour and research assistants were not included in this figure. As the latter are usually only employed for a year, the number joining – and also leaving – ETH is comparatively high, particularly in the case of scientific assistants.

Horizon Europe

#sticktoscience

With the Stick to Science initiative, universities, research institutions and scientific networks all across Europe are calling for Switzerland and the United Kingdom to be allowed to fully participate in the Horizon Europe research programme again as quickly as possible. ETH Zurich is among the initiators.

www.stick-to-science.eu →



Night of Physics 2022

Dark night, bright minds

Have you ever manipulated an atom or tried out a quantum sensor? The Night of Physics will be held on 17 June between 4 p.m. and 11 p.m. on the Hönggerberg campus. You can listen to lectures about the latest research findings or put on your lab coat and get involved with some hands-on experiments. You will also have the opportunity to ask researchers that nagging question you have always had about the universe. We've got a hugely varied programme for all ages – with a few surprises in store!

www.night-of-physics.ethz.ch →



IT Services

New Cloud Service Center

In many respects, the use of cloud services has helped us to overcome the difficult working situation during the COVID-19 pandemic. These cloud services will remain an integral element of everyday life at ETH, even after the pandemic has ended. With this in mind, IT Services have created the Cloud Service Center. Here, you can find information on the correct use of the cloud and access to the latest cloud services.

www.ethz.ch/cloud-service-center →



Anniversary

The first ETH crèche turns 50!

On 13 January 1972, KIKRI, the first ETH Zurich crèche, opened its doors for the very first time. It was initiated by a group of ETH students with the aim of encouraging parents to combine studies or a career with their family life. As one of the first crèches in Zurich, KIKRI became a trailblazer. Today, it is still operated by a parents' association. During this anniversary year, interested ETH members and alumni will be invited to learn about the association and its concept and to celebrate the crèche's successful first half-century.

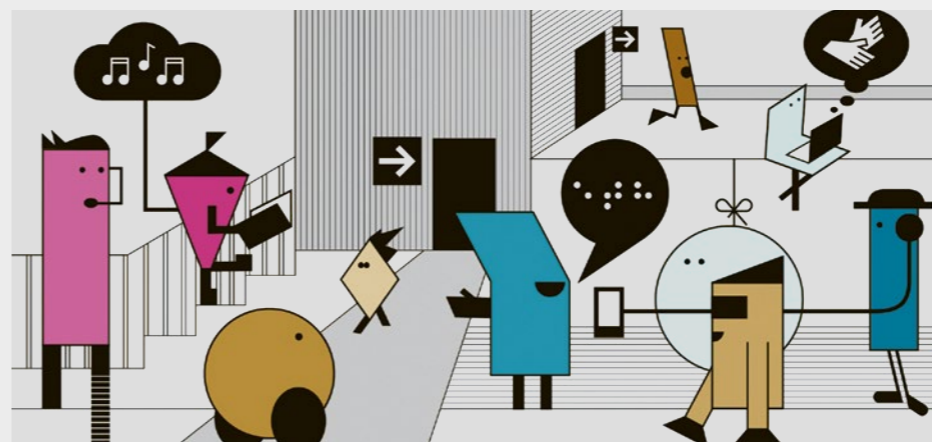
www.kikri.ethz.ch/en →

Barrier-free ETH

Public tours for everyone

With the Barrier-Free at ETH Zurich project, ETH aims to give people with disabilities or special needs access to its facilities without limitations wherever possible. It is also expanding its range of barrier-free public tours. In 2022, there will be wheelchair-accessible tours, tours translated into sign language and tours suitable for people with sight impairments. Take a look at the programme – the barrier-free tours are clearly labelled.

www.ethz.ch/fuehrungen →



Hönggerberg

New physics building

Wolfgang-Pauli-Strasse now looks desolate and the white Huber Pavilions are disappearing – the preparations for constructing the new HPQ physics building have begun on the Hönggerberg campus. In future, this building will be home to sensitive quantum research experiments that require a perfectly shielded environment – and much more! As two-thirds of the building will be underground, the construction team will excavate down to 28 metres. Wolfgang-Pauli-Strasse will eventually get its trees back, but they will line both sides rather than running down the middle. The Flora Ruchat-Roncati Garden, located behind the building, is also to be extended.



Publishing information

life – the ETH community magazine is a medium for internal communication at ETH Zurich and is published quarterly in German and English by Corporate Communications (CC).

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Tuemfal and Raihan
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(Photo: Nicola Pitaro)

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An opportunity for refugees – and for ETH

ETH Zurich started offering pre-apprenticeships for refugees last August. How are things going for the first two participants in the programme? And what are the next steps for the pilot project?

Text Anna Maltsev **Photos** Nicola Pitaro

Raihan Dargai spent four months in a Bulgarian prison. The 22-year-old recalls that, alongside the lack of food, it was the condescending attitude of the guards that bothered him the most. He wasn't in prison because he had committed a crime. As the Taliban gained increasing power in his home country, life became increasingly dangerous for the young Afghan. Six years ago, he decided to flee, which resulted in his being imprisoned through no fault of his own. It was a year and a half in total before Raihan arrived at the asylum centre in St. Gallen.

He now lives in Zurich, and last August started a pre-apprenticeship in operational maintenance at ETH. "I like doing installation work the most," says Raihan as he carefully sweeps up some wall plaster that has fallen on the floor. He has just finished mounting a paper towel holder on the wall of the new workshop in the Octavo building. Raihan is quiet, very polite and attentive and, given the short amount of time he has spent in Switzerland, speaks German extremely well. It is a sunny Monday morning in the middle of March. Today he has already repaired a door upstairs, replaced a light bulb in the stairwell and removed coffee stains from a carpet. He works in Facility Services three days a week and attends vocational school the other two.

The Swiss government started offering the pre-apprenticeship programme in various cantons in 2018 with the aim of promoting the integration of recognised

refugees and temporarily admitted persons. Each year, between 800 and 1,000 refugees complete the preliminary year-long course in order to acquire specific practical skills in preparation for an apprenticeship in Switzerland. Depending on requirements and the assessment provided by the school and trainers, participants can complete a normal apprenticeship at the same establishment or apply to a different organisation. Last year 60% of participants went on to start a real apprenticeship.

Gaining new specialists

The pre-apprenticeship programme was launched at ETH by Head of Vocational Education and Training Fabienne Jaquet, and

a pilot project was launched last summer. To start the programme off, two places were offered in operational maintenance. "We want to make a tangible contribution to inclusion and equal opportunities, both of which are part of ETH's strategic goals," explains Fabienne, who was keen to introduce the programme as quickly as possible.

There are advantages for everyone involved: "We are increasing diversity in the workforce, improving our intercultural skills and gaining prospective specialists who are highly motivated and identify strongly with ETH because they are very grateful for this opportunity," says Fabienne. "Without this programme, we



Raihan (left) and Tuemfal got to know each other at their German class.



probably wouldn't have been able to employ them because their language skills, for example, might not be good enough for a normal apprenticeship."

According to Raihan's trainer, Islam Alija, however, language is a sticking point, even in the case of the pre-apprenticeship programme. Refugees can only apply if they have already successfully completed the relevant canton's *Potentialabklärung* (assessment of potential), which involves demonstrating A2-level German proficiency. In Islam's experience though, participants still need a lot of support with administrative tasks, particularly at the beginning, and it can take a long time to explain things. In his opinion, it would therefore be beneficial if there was even more of a focus on language at the preliminary assessment stage and if the apprentices could attend additional German lessons during the programme.

Three new pre-apprenticeship places

This is confirmed by Fuat Veselji, who is training Tuemfal Weldegabriel, the second participant in the pilot programme. The 23-year-old Eritrean is taking part

in the pre-apprenticeship programme on the Hönggerberg campus. He arrived in Switzerland seven years ago. The first three years in the asylum seeker hostel were tough, he says. But things are going well now. "I can't say which part of the work I like the most because I enjoy it all," Tuemfal explains as he pushes a large grey rubbish container through the underground passages to the disposal point. His work includes cleaning and disposal as well as repairs, painting work and sanitation tasks.

"Starting in August, ETH will be one of the first organisations in Switzerland to offer a pre-apprenticeship culminating in the qualification of IT specialist."

Fabienne Jaquet, Head of Vocational Education and Training

According to Fuat, the whole team needs to work together for the pre-apprenticeship programme to succeed. There is extra work involved for everyone at the start, because participants need to learn about a whole range of cultural practices, including decision-making processes and hierarchies. But ultimately, the whole team benefits. "It really makes me happy to see the progress that Tuemfal is making and I wouldn't hesitate to get involved in the programme again," he says.

It has not yet been decided whether a pre-apprenticeship will be offered again this summer in Facility Services. "What is certain, however, is that starting in August, ETH will be one of the first organisations in Switzerland to offer a pre-apprenticeship culminating in the qualification of IT specialist in our IT Services department," says Fabienne, adding: "The young Iranian who got the place was already able to carry out programming independently on his taster day." Starting this summer, there will also be a pre-apprenticeship in logistics culminating in the qualification of logistics specialist in Campus Services, and another place for a commercial apprentice will be offered from August 2023 onwards.

ETH is currently looking into whether the programme can be expanded more rapidly due to the war in Ukraine. "We are working to create additional pre-apprenticeship places as quickly as possible," says Fabienne. Interested departments can contact Fabienne at any time.

Overcoming prejudices

Overall, everyone involved in the programme up to now is confident that it is making an important contribution to integration in the field of employment. According to Islam, it is also helping to overcome prejudices. "When you hear about this programme, you imagine having to explain every little thing to the refugees and you think it will take a long time for them to get integrated." But that couldn't be further from the truth: "Right from the beginning, in terms of his maturity, independence and manual skills, Raihan was much more advanced than the

regular apprentices, who are usually still teenagers." He only had to be shown how to do something once and he picked it up straight away. He was also integrated into the team incredibly quickly and is held in high regard by all his colleagues. "There was never any need for additional integration work," says Islam.

Raihan's life outside ETH is also very similar to the lives of Swiss people his own age: he shares a flat with two people from Switzerland and one from France, goes to cricket practice every Friday evening and enjoys meeting up with his friends.

On this particular Monday, he has arranged to meet Tuemfal for lunch on the Hönggerberg campus. The two men got to know each other in the German classes they took prior to the pre-apprenticeship programme. Tuemfal leads him straight to his favourite canteen – it is clear that the 23-year-old has no problems finding his way around campus. "They know what I'm going to order as soon as they see me," Tuemfal says proudly as they join the queue at Rice Up.

"Language is the key"

Raihan already knows that he will be able to stay at ETH after completing his pre-apprenticeship. In August he embarks on a three-year apprenticeship as a maintenance technician with a Federal VET Diploma (EFZ). Whether Tuemfal stays at ETH is not yet clear. Although he has received positive feedback from the school and from within ETH, his German is not yet at a sufficiently proficient level for the Federal VET Diploma, and ETH currently does not offer a two-year apprenticeship in operational maintenance leading to a Federal VET Certificate.

Tuemfal says that learning a new language from scratch is really hard for him. "In Eritrea I was a real man. Now I have to start all over again and I often feel like a little kid." It's not easy. "But you have to learn German!" says Raihan. "Language is the key, brother."

And as the two of them eat their chicken dishes in the Albert-Steiner-Garden, surrounded by other ETH members, it



becomes clear that there is another important thing that differentiates them from their Swiss colleagues: "The hardest thing is not being able to see your family," they both agree. They have only been in contact with their loved ones every few months, and the nature of their residence permit (for temporarily admitted foreigners) means that they are not allowed to leave Switzerland.

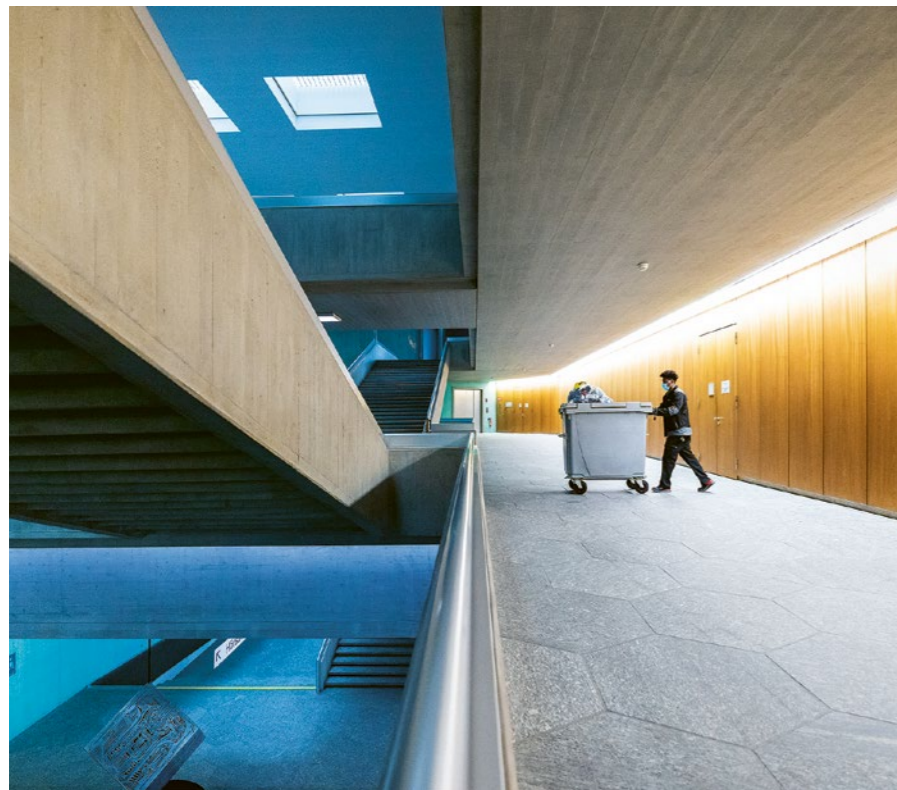
Despite this, however, they have never regretted their decision to flee. "In Afghanistan, I would never have had the safety, the freedom and the education opportunities I have here," says Raihan. "In my home country, a career as a caretaker isn't an option. But after the last six months, I know for sure that it's my dream job." ■

Find out more

Further information about the pre-apprenticeship programme is available here: www.ethz.ch/vocational-education →

You can find out what ETH Zurich is doing to support those affected by the war in Ukraine here: www.ethz.ch/solidarity →

Departments that would like to introduce a pre-apprenticeship programme can contact fabienne.jaquet@hr.ethz.ch at any time.





“There’s a strong entrepreneurial spirit throughout ETH Zurich”

Vanessa Wood talks to us about her first year as Vice President for Knowledge Transfer and Corporate Relations (VPWW), how she organises her domain and the projects she plans to implement with her staff.

Interview Roland Baumann, Christoph Elhardt **Photos** Gian Marco Castelberg

Professor Wood, what have you enjoyed the most about your new role as Vice President?

I’ve got to meet lots of interesting people, including many ETH professors, students, staff, and alumni, who are passionate about what they do and are making an impact on the world. I was pleased to discover a widespread excitement about turning scientific results from the lab into commercial products or start-ups. There’s a strong entrepreneurial spirit throughout ETH Zurich.

Why is it important to collaborate with industry partners?

For applied researchers, collaboration is essential to stay informed about the current practices in industry and the challenges it faces. At the same time, bringing industry and academic partners together and combining their unique strengths and perspectives can open up new directions for innovation within companies and stimulate new fields of scientific inquiry.

What is involved in good knowledge transfer?

It’s about matchmaking – finding the right partners for the right projects. Due to the diversity of research fields at ETH and the different types of partners we work with, we can’t rely on a one-size-fits-all approach. At the same time, we must streamline our offerings to make collaborations as easy and effective as possible for all involved.

Where does ETH stand in comparison to other universities in terms of knowledge transfer?

We’re strong, and that is important not only for ETH but also for Switzerland. 17 years ago, Silvio Bonaccio established ETH’s technology transfer office, “ETH transfer”, and he has done a fantastic job building up and leading this unit. In 2019 ETH transfer was named Tech Transfer Unit of the Year by Global University Venturing. Over the past decades, we have seen more

and more companies move to the greater Zurich area because of the ability to recruit ETH students and collaborate with ETH researchers. And the 145 ETH spin-offs that participated in a study published in 2020 have created 4,500 jobs and generated 900 million Swiss francs in annual revenue. The creation of a Vice Presidency for Knowledge Transfer and Corporate Relations highlights the commitment of ETH to strengthening these areas even further.

What are your priorities?

We are organising ourselves to respond to the rapid growth ETH is experiencing. In the past few years, for example, we have seen an exponential increase in the number of research collaborations and partnership agreements with industry, NGOs and government agencies, and each year, we have more and more inquiries from students and researchers wanting to protect their intellectual property and found companies.

Can you give us some details about your plans?

Last year, we took a close look at the entrepreneurial ecosystem at ETH and how we interact with our spin-off companies.

In January, we launched ETH Entrepreneurship, a new group led by Marjan Kraak, which has the responsibility to coordinate entrepreneurship activities and events at ETH, support entrepreneurs at ETH and serve as a point of entry for those seeking to interact with entrepreneurs at ETH. We involve the ETH community in this through an entrepreneurship advisory board with representatives from the competence centres, professors and student groups, such as the ETH Entrepreneur Club and ETH Juniors.

Meanwhile, within ETH transfer, we have established a dedicated Spin-Off Licencing, Equity, and Compliance group. As of May 2022 it will be responsible for granting the ETH Spin-Off label, negotiating term sheets and licenses with ETH spin-offs and managing the ETH equity portfolio.

Knowledge transfer to government also belongs to your domain. What are your plans in this area?

ETH is already very active in this area with an average of more than 400 exchanges per year among ETH community members and cantonal, federal and international policymakers and associations. These exchanges take place within professorships, departments, institutes and centres. A working group of faculty and staff met last year and made a series of recommendations to the ETH Executive Board. One which we immediately acted upon was to establish a public policy hub at ETH to be a central point of contact for inquiries, coordinating activities and supporting researchers in their engagement with policymakers. We are currently hiring a manager for this hub and assembling an advisory board, which will bring together members of the ETH community and external experts.

There is a lot going on. You are a vice president, professor and mother of a small girl. Where do you get all your energy?

I am a curious person and I enjoy learning new things and thinking about difficult problems. This makes being a professor and interacting with researchers from across the ETH a dream job for me. ■



“For applied researchers, collaboration is essential,” says Vanessa Wood about cooperation with industry partners.

A spring in your step

Movement – especially in the fresh air – is good for body and soul. The Zurich Academic Sports Association (ASVZ) offers a wide range of outdoor sports to suit all tastes.

Text Editorial team Photos ASVZ

Water sports

Have you ever rowed towards the city at sunrise? In springtime, Lake Zurich comes alive: once again, it's time for surfing, paddling and diving. There are even wakesurfing, wakeboarding and water-skiing courses for those who would rather ride in the wake of a boat. Sailing Students is one of the water sport highlights: the skippers are students, but other sailing enthusiasts can also get involved in the training sessions and trips.



Mountain sports

If you like to be up in the mountains, you'll find a wide range of activities on offer. Prepare yourself for spectacular trails while perfecting your cycling technique in our mountain bike training courses. Or enjoy magnificent panoramas on foot or roped up on high Alpine tours.

Team sports

Beach volleyball, flag football, ultimate frisbee and tennis: in addition to training sessions and friendly matches, these sports offer plenty of opportunities to take part in tournaments.

The classics

Whether you enjoy running or bicycle racing, you can build your stamina in a range of classes for various abilities – everyone is welcome. If you're competitive and like a challenge, the triathlon is right up your street.

Fitness and stamina

With functional outdoor training and the Natural Approach, you work out with virtually no equipment, mostly using your own bodyweight. An insider tip from the ASVZ: try the Natural Approach class at the Toni site while taking in amazing sunsets against an urban backdrop.

Body and mind

If you are looking for a peaceful way to recharge your batteries, why not try out one of the weekly evening walks or outdoor yoga at Irchelpark – or even combine the two!

Bushcraft

The ASVZ's latest sport offering is right on trend. You will experience nature in a sustainable way and learn outdoor skills such as starting a fire, building makeshift shelters or finding your way without a smartphone.

Find out more

You can find an overview of all the available sports at www.asvz.ch/sportarten →

The full schedule is available at www.asvz.ch/sportfahrplan →

“Research that takes people seriously”

What sort of research can be justified from an ethical point of view? Society has become more sensitive – a development that is affecting how research involving human subjects is viewed ethically. Here is how the Ethics Commission addresses the issue.

Text Karin Köchle, Florian Meyer **Illustration** Joanna Sleight, D-HEST

“At the time, ETH was accused of engaging in risky genetic research,” says Marino Menozzi, a researcher in the Department of Health Sciences and Technology. “Although ETH itself took the initiative to found its own Ethics Commission, the social environment and scepticism about the new technology definitely played a part in this decision.” Menozzi has been a member of the Ethics Commission since its founding. It is made up of people from a wide range of disciplines. Its main task is to evaluate all research proposals involving human subjects that do not fall under the remit of a cantonal ethics commission in terms of whether they are justifiable from an ethical point of view. On behalf of the Ethics Commission, the Vice President for Research decides whether to approve a research proposal that has been subject to evaluation, impose revision requirements or even reject it.

Why are ethics important in research?

Researchers must constantly strike a balance between the pursuit of scientific interests and compliance with ethical standards. “The pursuit of knowledge can adversely affect people and their right to freedom,” Menozzi explains. “Even the existence of scientific consensus does not automatically make a research proposal ethically correct.” This means it is all the more important that researchers have an independent body evaluate the possible implications of their actions. Not giving due consideration to the ethical aspects of research projects involving human subjects can have far-reaching consequences. The health of study participants as well as ETH’s reputation may be at risk of considerable harm.

Three levels of assessment

Peter Wolf, another longstanding member of the Ethics Commission, investigates how human motor learning can be optimised with technology at the Sensory-Motor Systems Lab. For many years, he has carried out experiments with a rowing simulator during which a test subject rows within a virtual environment while cameras and computers record their movements.

Wolf believes that there are three key levels when it comes to assessing research proposals like this from an ethical per-

spective: study participants, research and society. At the test subject level, researchers need to be aware of their responsibility to those participating in their study. This includes ensuring that the individuals in question are not deceived, that they grant their informed consent voluntarily, that the risk-benefit ratio is favourable and that no unnecessary data is collected. It is important to make sure that the test subjects are provided with all essential information in a language they can readily understand.

Scientific credibility is vital for research. This includes the use of reproducible methods, unadulterated data and disclosure of any conflicts of interest. When it comes to assessing research in terms of ethics, compliance with the relevant research ethics standards in the respective field must be ensured. A study must ultimately have a societal value.

Society, in turn, funds the research, and societal expectations can require research objectives to be re-examined and adjusted. All of these ethical aspects must be considered throughout the entire research process, from the planning and evaluation right through to the implementation of a project.

237 requests filed last year

Since the Ethics Commission was founded about 25 years ago, the number of research ethics approval requests has skyrocketed. While initially around one to ten requests were filed per year, 237 were filed in 2021. The first research proposals submitted to the Ethics Commission focussed primarily on any potential physical burden exerted on the test subjects, such as the effects of electromagnetic fields on the body or the impact of aircraft noise on sleep quality. The awareness of potential problems and the focus of the requests have since changed. Nowadays, they are much more likely to address the psychological stress that participants may suffer, for instance, when viewing disturbing images during a survey.

The Ethics Commission now also deals with research proposals involving the use of surveys. Such projects should preferably not gather personal data if it is not relevant to a study and could later be misused. Moreover, surveys are increasingly being conducted via social media. This means there is no longer any direct contact between the researcher and the test subject, which makes it difficult to ensure that the subject is



participating in the study voluntarily and to verify whether they have given their informed consent.

The fact that study participants are increasingly being recruited through crowdsourcing platforms like Amazon Mechanical Turk raises further ethical questions. Is the remuneration fair? Who volunteers to participate under these conditions, and what bias does this imply for the study?

Reflection and guidance in the face of new challenges

The globalisation of research is giving rise to new challenges: What do we do about human rights and varying ethical standards in different countries? How do we avoid creating dependencies in developing countries? What’s more, assessing the ethics of research proposals in artificial intelligence and machine learning may become even more complex. The Ethics Commission is anticipating an increase in requests in the fields of big data and medical data.

As new challenges emerge, the Ethics Commission is doing more than merely processing requests; it is also providing advice on ethically controversial developments in research involving human subjects and drawing up guidelines and recommendations. It is initiating and taking part in the necessary discussions and therefore playing a part in resolving ethical questions, rendering ethically problematic issues more transparent and generally raising awareness among researchers. Where appropriate, the Executive Board is informed of the results of these discussions. The Commission responds to external changes by optimising its processes and making them more efficient. It also offers assistance and provides new formats. Students and teaching staff can familiarise themselves with various ethical topics using the Ethics Resource Platform. In future, the digital Trial Intervention Platform (dTIP), which is currently under development, will give researchers access to specialists from different areas of medicine whom they can consult when assessing ethics approval requests.

Since the Ethics Commission was founded, research ethics has become much more tightly woven into everyday scientific work at ETH. In addition to higher awareness internally, there are also external reasons for this. For example, numerous specialist journals now require proof that an ethics approval request has been granted before they publish research results. In addition, financial backers such as the Swiss National Science Foundation or EU funding programmes impose ethical requirements when allocating funds. However, for Commission members Peter Wolf and Marino Menozzi it is clear that ethical questions are a key part of research and also need to be incorporated into teaching. ■

Find out more

ETH Zurich Ethics Commission
www.ethz.ch/ethics-commission →

Ethics Resource Platform (ETHicsRP)
www.ethz.ch/ethics-rp →

digital Trial Intervention Platform (dTIP)
www.ethz.ch/dtip-en →

Elisabete Correia
Cleaner

The queen of clean

Text Leo Herrmann Photo Florian Bachmann

"Students always make such a mess," smiles Elisabete Correia. For more than 15 years, she has made sure things never stay that way for long at the ETH Zurich Institute of Agriculture and Forestry (LFW), keeping lecture theatres, toilets, offices and labs gleaming over two storeys. And even though the students make a lot of work for her, she enjoys their company. "I feel like all of the university members appreciate me," the 43-year-old adds. She finds them in all kinds of situations on her rounds. One early morning, she encountered a sleeping doctoral student in his office. "He didn't even wake up. It's understandable – they work hard for their research," explains Elisabete. Even though her own work is also demanding, she is grateful for it. She particularly likes the job security, the smooth-functioning team and the set working hours.

Elisabete likes things clean – not just at work but also at home. For the mum-of-two, this sometimes means that her work doesn't stop when she clocks off. For a bit of work/life balance she likes to jump on her bike with her girls and husband – or on her skis in the winter. The rural surroundings of Forch, where the family lives, allow Elisabete to relax: "It would be too hectic for me in the city," she explains. She grew up with five siblings in a village in northern Portugal and at the age of 15 followed her father to Switzerland. "I originally thought it would just be a holiday," she remembers. But things turned out differently. She worked in a hotel in Zermatt for seven years before moving to Zurich. She sometimes returns to her hometown during the summer holidays: "But it doesn't always have to be the Algarve – the Greifensee is just as beautiful!" ■



Should the application process be anonymised?

As this topic attracted only contributions from the "For" camp, instead of an "Against" argument, Head of HR Consulting Lukas Vonesch has provided his perspective below.

Illustration: Kornel Stadler



For

Furkan Sami Oguz,
employee of the Chair of Applied
Macroeconomics

Imagine applying for a job and your name is not something "typically" Swiss like Jonas Meier, but Qendrim Koçi, or Blerta Halili instead of Lea Schmid. This alone reduces the likelihood of your being invited to the next round by up to 40 percent – despite the fact that you have Swiss citizenship and have submitted an identical application. That is exactly what a study by the University of Neuchâtel revealed three years ago, which was confirmed by an ETH study last year. This study evaluated the search and contact behaviour of recruiters on the largest Swiss job portal. The result? Applicants with a migrant background were contacted up to five times less frequently. What's more, there was a discrepancy for women in male-dominated jobs and vice versa.

We assume that this was largely attributable to unconscious discrimination. Origin and gender are associated with certain attributes, which can lead to generalisations about an entire group of people. Particularly when there are lots of applicants, recruiters spend very little time looking at each individual application. The process is like Tinder, where superficialities lead to incorrect assumptions and trick us into swiping right for a Jonas but not for a Qendrim. Or in the case of people who are similar to ourselves.

There are no further studies for the Swiss job market, but one thing is clear: if you can't even make it past the first hurdle, you won't have the chance to convince your counterpart of your skills on a personal level. But it's precisely this that would help to break down prejudices and bring about a gradual reduction in unconscious bias. After all, in a face-to-face conversation, it's what you say and how you behave that count, which is something you can influence – unlike your name, origin, gender or age. This is exactly where anonymised application processes come in, which are already the norm in many organisations in the USA and Europe.

The perspective of Lukas Vonesch, Head of HR Consulting

At ETH, we want to attract the very best. So there is no place for prejudice and discrimination in our recruitment process. Anonymised application processes promise many advantages and should be given a chance. However, they also have their limits. And the key to success is not in the application, but in our heads.

First of all, however, there is a misconception we need to clear up. At ETH, it's not HR that carries out the preselection process in recruitment – it's the person doing the hiring. Neither does HR make the decision about the appointment – all we do is provide support and advice.

Anonymous applications can help to limit unconscious prejudices. But they're not a cure-all remedy. Even if someone's age, gender and origin are hidden, previous jobs and educational background say a lot about a person – and can therefore also trigger unconscious biases. If too much information is anonymised, the application doesn't really mean anything anymore.

What's more, after the initial preselection, it is time to meet virtually or in person. At this point, any anonymity is lost and our own patterns of thinking come back into play.

There are therefore three factors that are key to a recruitment process free of prejudice. Firstly, we need to take a look at ourselves and identify our own unconscious biases. The most important thing, however, is to get a wide range of opinions on the applications. I would therefore urge anyone who hires people to involve others in the process, be open to different opinions and have a range of various people take part in the interviews. And make sure you invite candidates who might not seem like an obvious fit. Every time I need to hire someone, I shortlist a wild card candidate, i.e. I invite a person who doesn't meet all the requirements. People might surprise you, and it's worth being open to this.

Our recruiting team is open-minded and is neither for nor against anonymised applications. As the person doing the hiring, you decide on the application process, and if you want to try out anonymised applications, we would be happy to advise you. After all, we are all agreed on one thing at ETH: the more unprejudiced the application process, the better for the entire university.

What do you think of anonymous application processes? Have your say at: www.ethz.ch/anonymous-applications →

A new lease of *life*

UP CLOSE

life

COMING,
SOON!



July
2022

After our survey on internal communication, workshops with administration and research employees and numerous inspiring meetings, *life* magazine's makeover will finally be revealed in July!

New columns, a new look, new scope – *life* will get a new lease of life and place more of an emphasis on ETH members. There's lots to look forward to in the next issue – we are already excited to hear what you think.