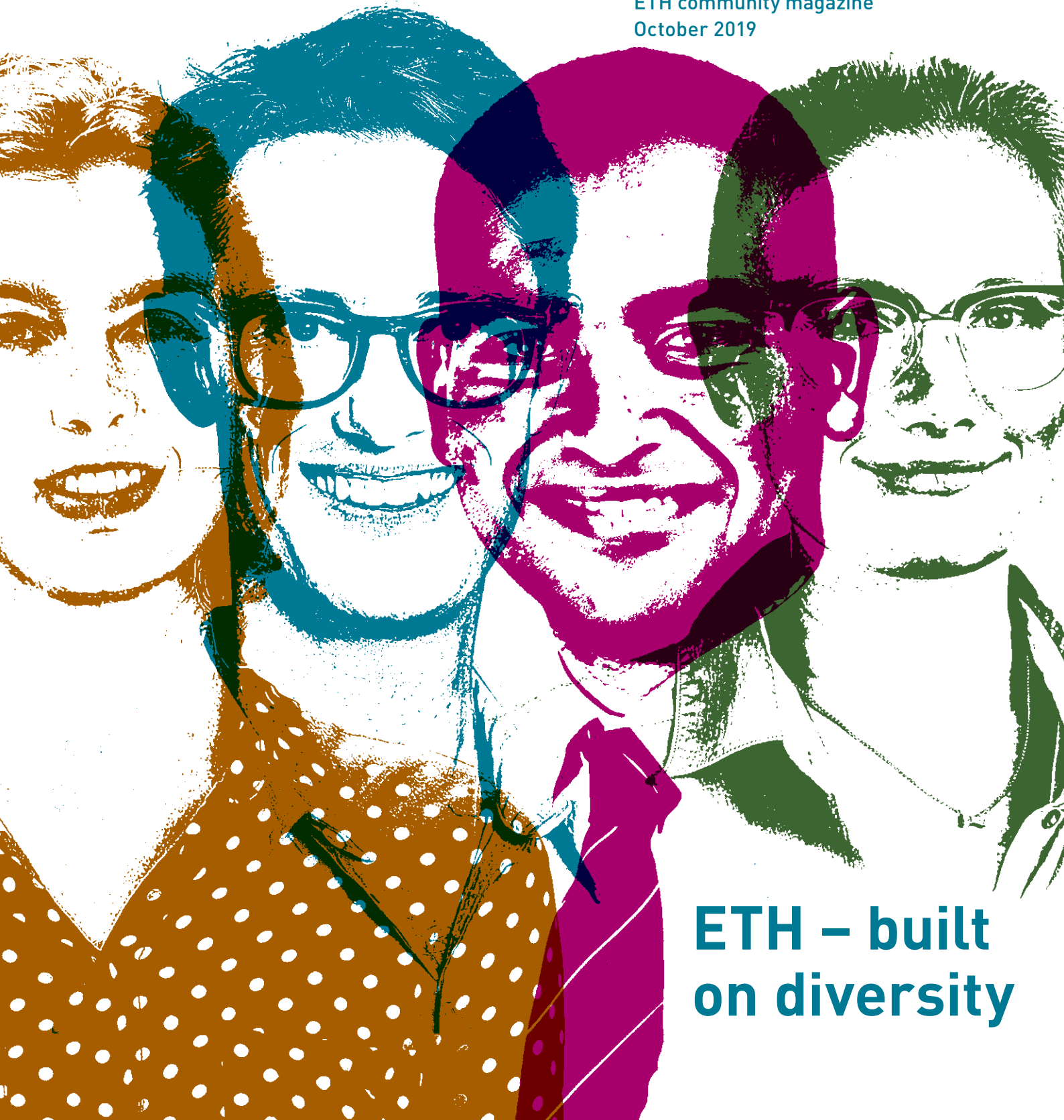


ETH zürich

life

ETH community magazine
October 2019



**ETH – built
on diversity**

Campus Info

New parcel service



What do you do if there's no one at home to take delivery of the parcel you're expecting, but you're not allowed to have it delivered to your ETH office address? The answer is simple – just use PickPost! There are two official PickPost points at ETH: one at Campus Info in the Main Building and one on the Hönggerberg campus. You can use these points to send and collect your parcels on weekdays from 7.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

www.swisspost.ch/pickpost →

Key figure

944

In the 2019 spring semester, 944 students from 15 departments attended the Introduction to Machine Learning course, making it the most attended ETH lecture of the 2018/19 academic year. The frontrunner from previous years, Mechanics 1, was pushed into second place with 748 students, closely followed by Mechanics 2 with 731 students. Probabilistic Artificial Intelligence finished just behind, with 648 students attending.

Concert series

Musical evenings in the Semper Aula

The days are slowly getting shorter and the evenings are getting colder. Fortunately, autumn also heralds the return of the monthly Music at ETH and UZH concerts. This year's concert series will open on 8 October with an evening of chamber music featuring Alissa Margulis, a multiple award-winning violinist. Tickets are available from locations including the Info lodge in the Main Building and cost 35 or 45 Swiss francs.

www.musicaldiscovery.ch/konzerte/1 →



Photo: Musical Discovery

Language Center

Language learning made easy

In today's world, being multilingual is considered an advantage in both personal and professional spheres. And with courses in 15 languages, the Language Center of the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich can help you achieve that. The Self-Access Centre (located on the Hönggerberg and Zentrum campuses) is the perfect place if you want to have a personal language consultation, learn in a relaxed setting at games events, or improve your skills in group sessions. You can also find an array of learning materials to help you prepare for language certifications.

The Hönggerberg Self-Access Centre is now located in the Architecture and Civil Engineering Library (HIL E2) with extended opening hours (Mon–Fri, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.).

www.sprachenzentrum.uzh.ch/slz →



Photo: Alessandro Della Bella

Volunteers wanted

Be part of the 2020 Cybathlon!

There are only a few months to go until the 2020 Cybathlon, which will see people with physical disabilities put the latest robotic assistive technologies to the test for a second time. The first Cybathlon in 2016 was a huge success – thanks in no small part to the dedication of over 600 volunteers. To make sure round two of the competition is another unforgettable experience, the organising committee is once again depending on the enthusiastic support of dedicated helpers.

www.cybathlon.com/volunteers →

Urban mining project

Ensuring valuable raw materials aren't left unused

Every mobile phone contains over 40 materials, including gold, silver and cobalt – raw materials that are being mined all over the world. Mining has led to economic growth in many countries, but has also had a devastating impact on the environment and forced mine workers into risky working conditions.

Do you have an old mobile phone lying around at home? Why not take part in ETH's urban mining project and recycle it? You could help to reduce your mobile phone's environmental footprint.

www.urban-mining-project.ch →



ETH+

Five initiatives selected

241 ETH members from every academic department and domain have participated in the second round of ETH+. The Executive Board wishes to use this funding tool to support unconventional research ideas and interdisciplinary dialogue. Out of the 25 ideas that were received, 5 were selected and will now be funded with 41.8 million Swiss francs. Topics ranged from living materials and artificial intelligence to quantum science.

The third round is starting at the beginning of October. This time around, project ideas will also be accepted from universities outside of the ETH Domain, as well as from industry and public administration.

www.ethz.ch/ethplus-initiatives →

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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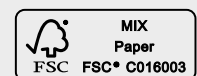
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ETH – built on diversity

Diversity, referring to the variety that exists within a group, abounds wherever many different people come together. ETH itself is very much an example of a cultural melting pot. But what does “diverse” actually mean, and how do people at ETH deal with it?



Text Franziska Schmid, Anna Maltsev

The most important thing to highlight when defining diversity is that the people who use the word tend to view the variety within a group in a positive light. In practice, this means that differences between people are recognised and celebrated –

“It’s not always easy to be a wheelchair user at ETH Zurich – the Main Building in particular presents a few challenges. This is now being worked on. I am very confident that it will be easier in the future.”

Basil Dias, D-GESS staff member



“People with mental illnesses are often misunderstood and avoided, which isolates them. To counteract this and to create a more diverse and inclusive environment at ETH and UZH, we set up the Mental Wellbeing Community, which aims to increase public awareness about mental health and offers peer support groups.”

Gracia Brückmann, D-GESS doctoral student

even seen as something that the whole group can learn from. As each individual is different, it is theoretically possible for a group to be as diverse as the number of its members, but it can be difficult to work on such a variegated level in practice. What this means is that we generally use six factors as a basis for categorising

people nowadays: ethnic background and nationality, gender, age, sexual identity and orientation, religion, and physical disability or mental illness. For places like ETH, these are considered the crucial aspects of identity.

International, young and male

In order to assess the diversity of ETH’s workforce, which numbers around 12,000, we first need to know a few facts and figures. The people who work at ETH come from 111 different countries – and among them, 52 percent or 6,260 employees do not come from Switzerland. The proportion of women has remained stable for the last 10 years at around 35 percent. Most employees are between 20 and 34 years old, and this represents the largest age group at around 7,500. As a comparison, only around 440 employees

“As a member of the Coptic Orthodox Church, I have no restrictions on practicing my faith at ETH. However, many of my fellow students have a hard time understanding how I can be doing a science degree while believing in a religion that they think science disproves. This leads to many discussions.”

Amir Mikail, D-MAVT student



are over the age of 60, showing that ETH is a young organisation. No figures have been recorded for the other three factors, perhaps because sexual identity, religion and the presence of a physical disability or mental illness are often considered to be very private items of information. But more on that later.

ETH President Joël Mesot believes one thing is clear: “There are many excellent reasons why diversity is important for ETH. We know from studies that diverse teams are more efficient, more successful and more creative, plus they can react better to unforeseen circumstances. But there’s even more to it than that. As a university, we act as a role model. For me, that means we need to create an

environment that is fair, in which a wide variety of people feel at home, feel accepted and can reach their full potential. We still have a lot to do in this area, which is why diversity is a top priority for us.”

ETH to become barrier-free

Building on this, the Equal! specialist unit – whose main focus has so far been equal opportunities for men and women – will be turning its attention more to diversity in the future. Some initiatives have already been launched, such as the “Barrier-free at ETH Zurich” project. These involve first analysing the infrastructure and administrative situation facing various groups: “We examine whether we can give additional support to ETH members

who have a physical disability or mental illness, follow a specific faith or are part of the LGBTQ+ community, for example,” says Renate Schubert, who is Associate Vice President for Equal Opportunities and a member of the project team.

But does that mean the concerns of women and their justified demands for equal opportunities will end up being drowned out? “No, quite the opposite, in fact! If ETH zeroes in on the needs of various groups – including the smaller ones – and if it identifies issues and actively seeks to make improvements, then we will develop a culture that will certainly benefit women too.” One example Schubert mentions is the eradication of prejudice. In future, ETH members who make personnel



“It’s common for a university to have a low average age. You notice this when you come to ETH Zurich – especially if you’re over 50. I enjoy working with many younger people. It is important to stay interested and open. I see that I can contribute my experience, perspective and composure and that this is valued.”

Lukas Vonesch, Head of Human Resources



“The proportion of women at ETH must be increased, especially from the postdoc level up. This is why we are working towards measures like ensuring that every department is required to implement the university’s Gender Action Plan.”

Iris Hordijk, D-USYS doctoral student and diversity officer of AVETH

decisions can take part in workshops, learning to recognise the stereotypes they hold about people and developing strategies for dealing with them.

Change through bottom-up initiatives

However, diversity cannot just be something that is decreed from above. This is why it is so important for ETH to promote its numerous bottom-up initiatives that are championing greater diversity and, above all, positive approaches to diversity. The Academic Association of Scientific Staff at ETH Zurich (AVETH), for example, has had a diversity representative, doctoral student Iris Hordijk, on its board since last November. “I feel that I have

integrated very well into my research group, but I’m convinced that we could be even more successful if we had more women on the team,” says Hordijk. As a result, Hordijk wants to use her position first and foremost to campaign for an increase in the percentage of women at ETH.

It is not just AVETH that is planning to expand its activities and establish an entire diversity team. Diversity groups have also popped up in various departments, such as the Department of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering. Since the beginning of the year, the group of around ten members has been trying to bring positive aspects of diversity and inclusion to life. It has

organised seminars to this end, on topics including the role of diversity in innovation and change, as well as social events like an international food bazaar.

“New ideas require friction”

There are also managers who are fully dedicated to increasing diversity. Among them is Ralph Spolenak, Professor of Nanometallurgy, who has brought together people from 12 nations in his group. Women make up 25 to 30 percent of the group (“Sadly far too low,” Spolenak says) and members range from 20 to around 60 years old. From a very diverse background himself, he is convinced of the positive effects that a highly mixed

“I experience moderate hearing loss, which can be a challenge during teaching or meeting in larger groups. While the atmosphere at ETH is supportive, it would be very helpful to have information about which spaces at ETH are adapted to help people with hearing loss – for example in terms of acoustics, specialised equipment like hearing loops, or microphones.”

Jake Alexander, D-USYS assistant professor





“The situation has improved for gays and lesbians both legally and socially in recent years. The area where I see the most room for improvement is in the acceptance and inclusion of trans*people.”

Riccardo Ferrario, D-MATH doctoral student and president of the z&h association

group of people can bring: “The key thing for me is being able to draw on different ways of thinking. Other social and cultural influences broaden my horizons and help me to reflect more on my own behaviour. New ideas require friction.”



“In the 21st century it is not enough to be a front-runner in breaking scientific barriers. A university is an academic and social community. I believe that ETH can do even more to promote inclusion and diversity, for example through events where topics such as gender, culture and integration are discussed.”

Gnanli Landrou, D-BAUG staff member

But Spolenak is equally aware of the obstacles – often, it comes down to who will fit well with whom. Diversity research has shown that cultural and linguistic differences can give rise to misunderstandings, potentially leading to individual team members feeling that their voice is not being heard or they are being forced to make significant adjustments. Therefore, the concept of diversity also poses many questions. Do I have to work more because my colleague has a mental illness? What if my prayer times overlap with group meetings? And do I now have to completely avoid pronouns with non-binary people – those who do not feel as if they belong to either gender?

Invisible minorities

Several associations are active in the academic landscape, advocating for more respect and inclusion at ETH Zurich regarding gender identity and sexual orientation. One of those involved is Riccardo Ferrario, doctoral student at ETH and president of z&h, which is an association for LGBTIQ+ students in Zurich. At ETH, he does not feel discriminated against because of his sexual orientation: “A lot has already been done to increase acceptance. We have good lines of communication with Equal! as well as Rector Sarah Springman, who always has a sympathetic ear for our concerns.”

People of faith and those with a physical disability or mental illness are a lot less vocal. *life* wants to give a voice to these people as well as other minorities, something which Joël Mesot fully supports: “Advocating for a group’s concerns and playing a constructive role automatically contributes to diversity at ETH – it makes our university a more varied and more exciting place to be.” ■

www.ethz.ch/diversity →

Appraisal interviews: necessary evil or untapped opportunity?

The arrival of autumn means that annual appraisal interviews are back on the agenda. Lukas Vonesch, Head of Human Resources at ETH Zurich, sheds light on whether this management tool is still fit for purpose, how useful it is to have a graded assessment, and what constitutes a valuable interview.

Many complain that annual appraisal interviews are tedious, meaningless and do nothing to help organisations. Are they even fit for purpose any more?

People are often critical of them, but I think we should actually use that feedback as an opportunity to improve them. Appraisal interviews should be tailored to each individual, and carried out thoughtfully and with respect – otherwise, they will end up being perceived as superfluous or just another routine task. But a valuable discussion is always worthwhile.

Wouldn't it be better for people to receive feedback from their manager or managers throughout the year, rather than just once towards the end of the year?

I think we need to have both real-time, concrete feedback and an annual appraisal interview, as the appraisal contains elements that are often lacking in the other discussions. It allows you to reflect on your working behaviour over a longer period of time – and if you're a manager, it lets you gain feedback from your staff and the chance to discuss development opportunities together.

Does ETH have any guidelines on whether and how to conduct appraisal interviews?

Yes – the ETH Personnel Ordinance (PersO-ETH) stipulates that managers must carry out an appraisal interview at least once a year. It also stipulates that the interview should take stock of how things stand, include support measures and assess performance. Moreover, the interview is intended to give staff an opportunity to provide feedback on leadership behaviour. This applies to all those who have a contract subject to the PersO-ETH; in other words, both administrative staff and most academic staff, including doctoral students.

What should I do if my manager fails to schedule an interview?

You should ask them to organise one and, if necessary, remind them that it is part of their responsibility as a manager to do so. If that still doesn't work, you can also contact the HR department.

Is it useful to grade staff performance?

The most important part is the discussion itself and the thoughtful feedback tailored to each individual. As a manager, you should focus on developing your staff rather than adopting a primarily critical stance. You should also think about how your employee's strengths can be put to even better use and how you can make progress together. A single grade is not a thorough assessment.

But at the end of the day, everything still revolves around the final grade that is sent to the HR department, doesn't it?

No. The interview is the real priority – that grade merely provides a classification and should not be the main focus of the appraisal. That's not to say that we shouldn't look at whether the evaluation form is still up to date and fit for purpose – and in fact, this is something we're doing already.

What impact does a good grade such as an A+ have on salaries?

People tend to overestimate how much assessment grades and salary are linked. It doesn't actually have any impact on most academic roles because those usually have fixed salaries. It's

really only administrative staff in the salary system who have their salaries managed in this way. A good assessment can have an impact on salary development, but there are multiple factors to consider and narrow pay bands. Depending on where your salary sits within the pay band for a specific role, you might not receive a salary increase even if you are awarded an A+.

Is there a set number of A+ grades that a manager can give within the team?

Some companies produce guidelines on this – particularly organisations with performance-related salary components. However, there are no specific rules governing how many A+ grades can be awarded at ETH. Nevertheless, there are a few individual departments in which grade distribution is discussed. But keep in mind, an A grade means that high expectations have been completely fulfilled – it's a very positive, strong statement that the person is doing far more than just enough.

“A valuable discussion is always worthwhile.”

Lukas Vonesch, Head of Human Resources

How can managers strike a balance between a rewarding discussion and blunt criticism?

It is good to be firm but fair, or, in other words, “soft on the people and hard on the problem”. This means approaching points of criticism objectively and using concrete examples. If someone realises that something has not gone well, you should accept that and trust them to make improvements. As a general rule, people will accept criticism more readily if it is given in conjunction with praise.

Staff members should still feel that managers are supporting them even if they’re receiving a critical review, isn’t that right?

Cases like that are the perfect time to clarify the expectations of both parties. The manager should ask the staff member what help they need from the manager in order to avoid similar situations in the future and improve things. Appraisal interviews often yield bright ideas, and this in turn builds trust and fosters a shared sense of responsibility.

What should staff members do to prepare for an annual appraisal interview?

The main thing is to actually do some preparation. These are some examples of questions you can ask yourself beforehand: What didn’t go to plan? Where did I come across major challenges? Where did I do well, and what would I approach differently next time? In which areas can I continue to develop? And, last but not least: What did my manager or managers do well, and where is there room for improvement?

And how do you prepare as a manager?

Sometimes I’ll take a short walk and look back on the past year, trying to remember particular instances that I can give specific

feedback on. But I also look forward and think about what the next one to three years are going to look like and what opportunities for development are available.

How should appraisal interviews be conducted so that both sides benefit from the experience?

From the manager’s perspective, the interview must be thoroughly prepared and carefully considered. The interview should be conducted in an honest and respectful manner, with a focus on development. It is vital that both sides have the chance to speak – ideally, the employee should speak for half the time. It’s also important to pay close attention to the other person and ask questions, as it’s not just about *speaking* to each other, but also really *listening* to each other.



“A single grade is not a thorough assessment.”

Lukas Vonesch, Head of Human Resources

How honestly should staff appraise their managers?

We should all give feedback in the same way that we would wish to receive it. The best way to do this is to use concrete examples of when you felt your manager supported you or you would have wanted things to be handled differently.

Looking back at your own career, have you made any mistakes in appraisal interview situations?

Yes, I made one mistake that ended up being a key learning experience for me. My mistake was that I hadn’t actually conducted one of these interviews before joining ETH, because I thought I was talking to my employees enough over the course of the year. Today, I no longer see the appraisal interview as a compulsory exercise that I need to carry out for my staff – instead, it’s an opportunity that benefits me as a manager. ■

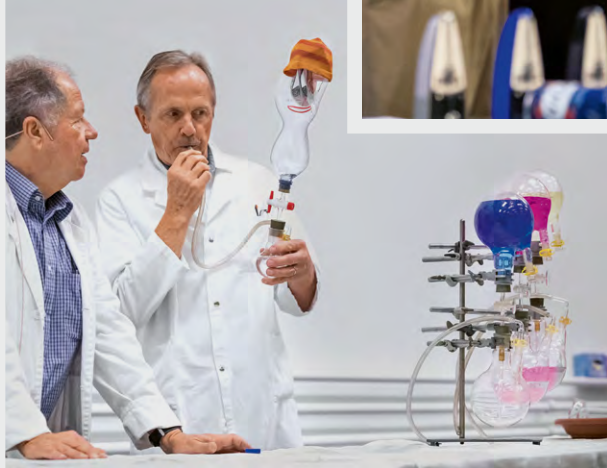
www.ethz.ch/leadership →

In a bewitching physics → lesson, physicists became magicians by creating balloons that wouldn't pop.



The audience ↑ gained surprising insights into the periodic table in an experiment-based lecture.

This year saw the return of a real Scientifica classic, in which two chemists demonstrated how different substances react with one another. →



Science facts to take your breath away

Text Editorial team Photos Alessandro Della Bella

The Scientifica 2019 event presented a showcase of "Science Fiction – Science Facts", attracting widespread interest. Around 400 scientists from ETH Zurich and the University of Zurich presented their research at more than 50 stands, in 34 short lectures and at a variety of shows.

www.ethz.ch/scientifica2019 →



Visitors had the chance ↑ to get actively involved at the exhibition stands.

There was also lots going on for little ones, with children given the opportunity to program their own robots in the Apollo 11 workshop. →



University rankings unlocked

In university rankings, ETH Zurich regularly places as the best university in continental Europe. But what does that mean? And what do these rankings actually reveal?

Text Florian Meyer **Illustration** Aurel Märki

University rankings created a real stir when they first came along, but the buzz around them has subsided somewhat over time. To quote Urs Hugentobler: “We’ve got the measure of them now.” Hugentobler has led the Institutional Research team at ETH since 2004, in a role that involves evaluating the university rankings for the Executive Board. Over the last few years, ETH has also optimised the processes that it uses to deliver information to the rankings publishers and to evaluate the results. “It’s a lot less labour-intensive than it was before,” says Hugentobler.

“Before” refers to the period after the turn of the millennium, when global university rankings emerged: the Shanghai Ranking in 2003, the THE rankings in 2004, the CWTS Leiden Ranking in 2007 and the QS rankings in 2010. What all these rankings had in common was the fact that they no longer focused on a single region, and instead aimed to rank universities worldwide using a common framework and present the results in a ranking list.

Rankings had already been widespread in the English-speaking world for some time at that point, providing information to students before they decided which degree to take. A precursor to them was the bibliometric analyses that examined the academic literature. The internet also helped to popularise rankings because it made global comparisons possible with a single click.

Internationalisation that makes sense

Hugentobler explains that the internationalisation of university comparisons is an inherently sensible development, as nowadays more students and researchers move around the world. “At first, university rankings changed pretty drastically from year to year because the methods used to compile them were not stable. Now, things have calmed down. If a rankings list changes significantly from one year to the next, that would raise a lot of questions.”

Nowadays, we follow THE (Times Higher Education), QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) – which partnered with THE until 2009 before striking out on its own with a separate rankings list – and ARWU (Shanghai Jiao Tong University) in particular. These rankings all use various indicators to compare teaching and research at different universities, as well as their public image. However, the rankings differ in the characteristics they record and their approaches to weighting.

Ranking methods vary widely

THE and QS incorporate teaching indicators (such as student-faculty ratio) and research indicators (such as publications), as well as financial and staff resources. These are tallied up and presented as one overall result for each university. The methods used typically consist of surveys in which lecturers, researchers and business representatives (in their capacity as potential employers) are asked to evaluate the universities that offer programmes in their specialist areas. “THE and QS base their rankings heavily on these reputation indicators – 30 and 50 percent, respectively,” explains Hugentobler.

In contrast to this, the Shanghai Ranking focuses on universities' peak achievements in research. They rank institutions based on characteristics such as academic prizes (Nobel Prize, Fields Medal and so on) or frequently cited publications. These are viewed as an indication of research quality. There are other alternatives for those who are interested in university research quality: "The Leiden Ranking is based purely on publications and their impact on the research community," Hugentobler says.

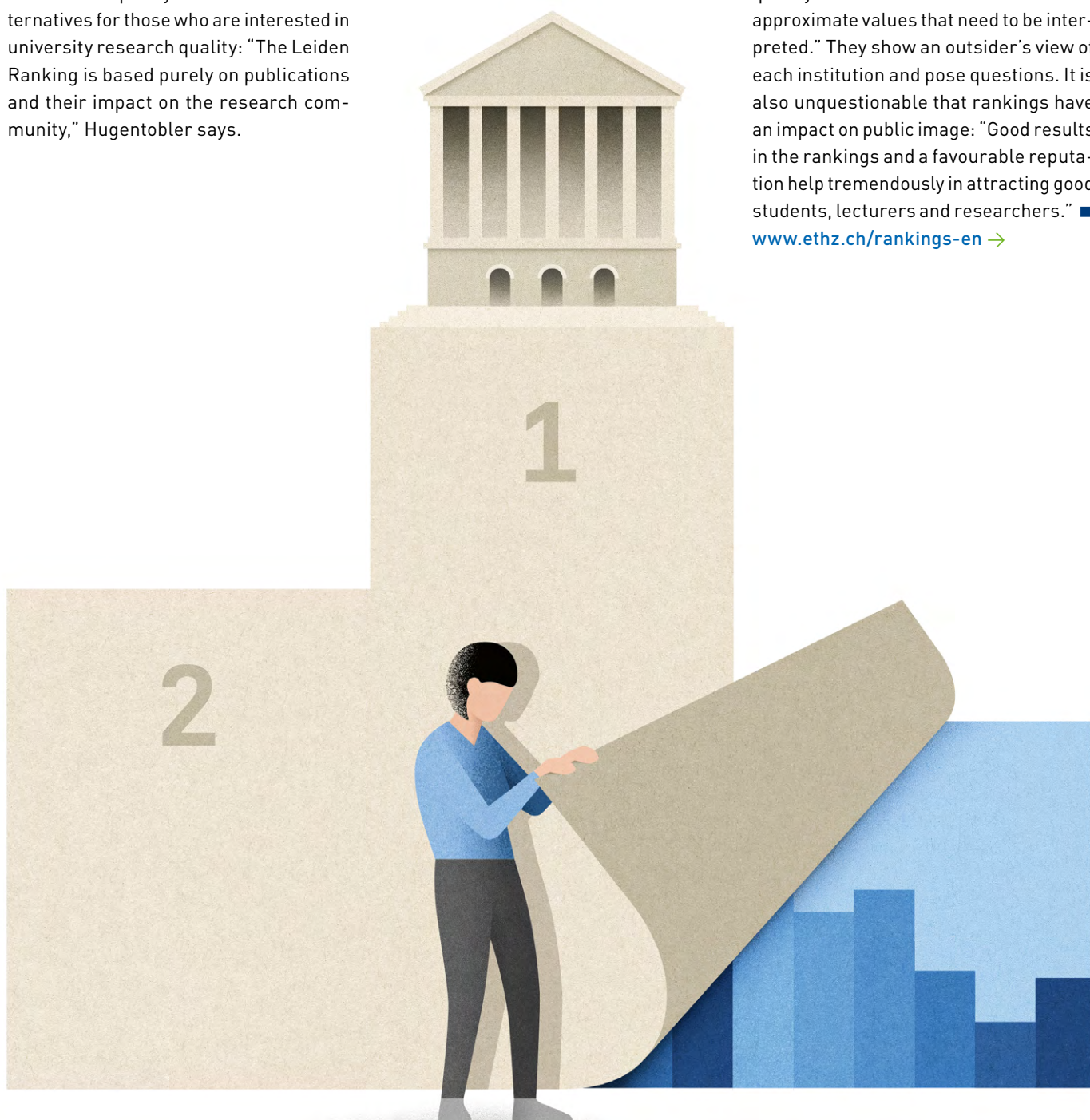
Good results help with recruitment

The multidimensional European U-Multirank is ideal for prospective students, as they can use it to compare and select universities according to various

criteria. This prevents certain misinterpretations that can arise when comparing institutions from different university systems.

Hugentobler says: "It is important to understand that none of the rankings can show exactly what teaching and research quality will be like. The indicators are approximate values that need to be interpreted." They show an outsider's view of each institution and pose questions. It is also unquestionable that rankings have an impact on public image: "Good results in the rankings and a favourable reputation help tremendously in attracting good students, lecturers and researchers." ■

www.ethz.ch/rankings-en →



Lukas Sigrist

Head of the School for Continuing Education

Keeping his cool in continuing education

Text Rebecca Lehmann **Photo** Florian Bachmann

Bern native Lukas Sigrist considers himself a connoisseur. For years now, he has had a keen interest in the various tastes and styles of beer. "I live for Belgian beer culture," he says enthusiastically. His favourite style of beer is the dark and malty quadrupel. "You need time to savour it properly," the 30-year-old explains. But the time that this ETH alumnus has for savouring beverages has become more limited since he took over leadership of the new School for Continuing Education in August, following his instrumental role in planning it. Teaching has always fascinated Sigrist, who is a chemist by profession: indeed, his favourite role during his doctorate in inorganic chemistry was supervising student work placements. "It was a great feeling to support young people in their development," says Sigrist, who now lives in Zurich. While completing his teaching diploma, he became involved in the Teaching Commission as part of the Academic Association of Scientific Staff at ETH Zurich (AVETH). Sigrist likens his career path so far to cogwheels, with each decision leading to the next one, and he now is going on to further training at his new post: a CAS in Leadership and Governance. Doing multiple things at the same time suits him. "I'm the kind of person who stays cool in a crisis," he says, before adding: "I have to be fully committed to what I'm doing." It is important to him to be authentic and have different perspectives, whether those have come from his time helping with the potato harvest during his national service or building a shelf in his workshop. His father, who was a full-time stay-at-home dad for him and his sister, was the one who taught him carpentry. And it was his father who taught him to savour his experiences. ■

www.sce.ethz.ch/en →

Raffael Iturrizaga
Office of Research Staff Member



Illustration: Kornel Stadler

DORA enables better research

The number of research publications is rising steadily, with research becoming more complex and more specialised at the same time. But another perceptible trend involves more and more processes being established with the aim of assessing research quality, which requires objectivity and transparency from reviewers. All of this means that the experts involved in publications are under growing time pressure.

Faced with this situation, it is perhaps no surprise that the scientific community began looking for solutions that encompass the many different aspects of what constitutes quality in research, making them easier to assess as a result. Their efforts ultimately paid off: today, whole batches of quality criteria – such as innovation, ability to withstand criticism, reproducibility and impact on the research field in question – can be transferred to a linear and quantitative scale and consolidated into a practical impact factor, or h-index. The scale has quietly become a mark of quality itself, evolving into a guideline for day-to-day research. We are now experiencing a focus on maximising the number of publications in journals that are considered to have a significant impact, but only restricted stocks of time and research funding. If a group concentrates too heavily on output purely for output's sake, as now appears to be the case, this will inevitably have a negative effect on research quality or the development of further issues for research. Both of these outcomes are at odds with ETH's objectives.

The DORA declaration aims to break this vicious cycle. ETH, along with a whole

host of other research institutions across the globe, signed the declaration in 2016. Developed in San Francisco, DORA – the Declaration on Research Assessment – recommends assessing researchers and their work according to quality criteria and doing away with assessments based on number of citations where possible. At ETH, this refusal to engage in a citation-based approach extends to academic appointments, internal funding allocation and recommendations for promotion.

With quantitative assessment of research still very widespread, however, a complete ban on citation-based assessment is probably not achievable in the foreseeable future. However, it is high time that the h-index culture is replaced by a publication culture that focuses on quality and aims to cultivate a sustainable research environment committed to the advancement of knowledge. Here at ETH, DORA is helping us to relieve the short-sighted pressure on researchers to publish, giving them more freedom to do what they are passionate about – generating new, well-founded and relevant research. ■

Raffael Iturrizaga

About the author

Raffael Iturrizaga works in the Office of Research, where he is responsible for research ethics. www.ethz.ch/research-assessment →

AVETH anniversary

The voice of scientific staff is turning 50

In the summer of 1969, just one year after the height of the 1968 student protests, doctoral students and assistants founded the Academic Association of Scientific Staff at ETH Zurich (AVETH). It gave members of scientific staff a voice and represented their interests to the university from that point on.

While its initial aim was to have a bigger say in university policy, its focus shifted to staff policy in the 1980s, followed by gender equality in the 1990s and finally the compatibility of work and family life in the 2000s. Nowadays, the supervision of doctoral students and the role of postdocs and more senior scientific staff are the subjects taking centre stage.

As we always have done, we keep our members up to speed with our developments and give them a networking platform through various events. Today, our communications have evolved from our magazine, *Der Mittelbauer*, into our AVETH News reports and we have even launched an employment service (eth-gethired.ch/en). The student associations in the departments have been helping us achieve our goals for a number of years now.

This year, we are celebrating our 50th anniversary with a series of workshops and informative monthly talks all about academic and social skills. The next talk will take place on 30 October and is entitled "Stereotype biases – what can we do?" All ETH members are very warmly invited to come along!

We would like to thank the students, professors, administrative and technical staff, and ETH Zurich itself for the work they have done with us, and we are excited to find out what the next 50 years have in store.



Martin Roszkowski, D-HEST doctoral student and president of AVETH

www.aveth.ch →



A warm welcome to our first years!

Around 4,600 new Bachelor's and Master's students started at the university on 16 September, the first day of the Autumn Semester. They have boosted the total number of ETH students to over 22,000 – a new record. The Association of Students at ETH Zurich (VSETH) is welcoming each newcomer, or *Ersti* in German, with a traditional "Ersti bag". Packed with useful information and lots of goodies like a reusable water bottle, the Ersti Guide and an invitation to take part in the ETH Instagram competition (@ethzurich), it gives new students everything they need to get off to a great start in their studies. (Photo: Gian Marco Castelberg)

www.vseth.ethz.ch →