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## **The Federal Council's Strategic Objectives for the ETH Domain for the Period 2025–2028**

Dated 21 March 2025

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### **1 Introduction**

<sup>1</sup> The ETH Domain comprises the two Federal Institutes of Technology in Zurich (ETH Zurich) and in Lausanne (EPFL) as well as the four research institutes: the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI), the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL), the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology (Empa) and the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (Eawag). The ETH Board is the strategic management and supervisory body of the ETH Domain. The ETH Domain institutions are autonomous public-law institutions established by the Swiss Confederation and have their own legal personality.

<sup>2</sup> The purpose and basic mandate of the ETH Domain are set forth in the ETH Act of 4 October 1991<sup>1</sup>. Within this framework, the ETH Domain's principal tasks include in particular the education and continuing education and training of students and specialists in scientific and technical fields, the expansion of scientific knowledge through research, the support of young scientists, the provision of scientific and technical services, the performance of public outreach work and the utilisation of its research results. It takes the country's needs into account.

<sup>3</sup> The ETH Domain is owned by the Swiss Confederation. Based on Article 33 of the ETH Act, the Federal Council defines the strategic objectives of the ETH Domain. Both the timelines and content of these objectives are aligned with the Federal Decree of 24 September 2024<sup>2</sup> on the expenditure ceiling for the ETH Domain for the period 2025–2028, and the objectives set priorities within the main tasks and the institutional development of the ETH Domain. The ETH Domain reports to the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER). The role of owner is performed by the EAER and the Federal Department of Finance (FDF).

<sup>1</sup> SR 414.110

<sup>2</sup> Federal Gazette 2024 2531

## 2 Strategic focus areas

*Objective 1: Teaching:* The ETH Domain provides research-based and skills-centred teaching which is first-rate by international comparison.

The Federal Council expects the ETH Domain:

- 1.1 to offer high-quality education and continuing education and training adapted to social, economic and scientific requirements;
- 1.2 to offer a solid basic disciplinary education in its study programmes and to pursue an approach geared towards inter- and transdisciplinary cooperation and sustainable and ethical action;
- 1.3 to keep up with current developments, including in digitalisation and artificial intelligence;
- 1.4 to use innovative forms of teaching, learning and assessment and offer its students support with completing their studies successfully;
- 1.5 to use concrete measures to implement and further develop its strategy regarding the development of student numbers<sup>3</sup>;
- 1.6 to increase the proportion of women and promote diversity among students and doctoral students.

*Objective 2: Research:* The ETH Domain maintains its leading international position in fundamental and application-oriented research.

The Federal Council expects the ETH Domain:

- 2.1 to pursue its Strategic Areas<sup>4</sup>, take account of new research requirements, disruptive technologies and social challenges in its research activities, and also define posteriorities;
- 2.2 to continue research activities in the area of energy, oriented towards the Federal Government's Energy Strategy 2050<sup>5</sup>;
- 2.3 to make optimal use of the complementary competencies and synergies of the ETH Domain through interdisciplinary cooperation;
- 2.4 to take care that its research initiatives utilise synergies with those of the federal policy research and that coordination takes place to avoid duplication;
- 2.5 to promote ethical behaviour and the maintenance of scientific integrity, good scientific practice and awareness of the issue of knowledge security in all

<sup>3</sup> The strategy regarding the development of student numbers of December 2022 may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.ethrat.ch](http://www.ethrat.ch) > News & Publications > Publications > 6.06.2023 Publication "Strategy regarding the development of student numbers in the ETH Domain".

<sup>4</sup> The Strategic Plan 2025–2028 of the ETH Board for the ETH Domain dated June 2022 may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.ethrat.ch](http://www.ethrat.ch) > News & Publications > Strategic Plan.

<sup>5</sup> The Federal Government's Energy Strategy 2050 may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.bfe.admin.ch](http://www.bfe.admin.ch) > Policy > Energy Strategy 2050.

forms of cooperation, particularly with regard to cooperation with international and industrial partners;

- 2.6 to promote Open Science practices, taking into account the national Open Access Strategy and Open Research Data<sup>6</sup> Strategy.

*Objective 3: Research infrastructures:* The ETH Domain develops, builds and operates research infrastructures.

The Federal Council expects the ETH Domain:

- 3.1 to establish, sustainably operate and further develop research infrastructures of national and international significance, and to make them available to researchers from science and – subject to the charging-on of costs – from industry;
- 3.2 according to its own priority-setting, to carry out projects in accordance with the Swiss Roadmap for Research Infrastructures<sup>7</sup>;
- 3.3 to participate in international research infrastructures in accordance with its own defined priorities and within the framework of the available financial resources.

*Objective 4: Knowledge and technology transfer (KTT):* The ETH Domain strengthens Switzerland's innovation capacity and competitiveness.

The Federal Council expects the ETH Domain:

- 4.1 to work closely with partners from industry, public administration and other areas of society;
- 4.2 to create favourable conditions for KTT and for the founding of spin-offs, and promote entrepreneurial thinking and action among its members;
- 4.3 to maintain a dialogue with society, make scientific findings accessible to a broad audience, and carry out the tasks assigned to it by the Swiss Confederation by ordinance;
- 4.4 to take account of the official languages in its institutions' communications in accordance with the provisions of the Languages Act of 5 October 2007<sup>8</sup> and the Languages Ordinance of 4 June 2010<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> The national Open Access and Open Research Data strategies may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.sbfi.admin.ch](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch) > Higher Education > The Institutes of Higher Education > Higher Education Policy Topics > Open Science.

<sup>7</sup> The Swiss Roadmap for Research Infrastructures 2023 may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.sbfi.admin.ch](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch) > Research and Innovation > Research and Innovation > Swiss Roadmap for Research Infrastructures.

<sup>8</sup> SR 441.1

<sup>9</sup> SR 441.11

*Objective 5: Cooperation and coordination:* The ETH Domain plays an active role in shaping the Swiss higher education area. It nurtures strategic alliances and coordinates with the other participants.

The Federal Council expects the ETH Domain:

- 5.1 to strengthen teaching and research cooperation with other participants, and participate in the coordination of the entire Swiss higher education sector and the appropriate allocation of tasks in particularly costly areas<sup>10</sup>;
- 5.2 to complete the review of its structure and organisational form with forward-looking resolutions;
- 5.3 to cooperate via the Swiss Support Center for Cybersecurity with the relevant federal agencies (National Cyber Security Centre) and the cantons within the framework of the National Cyberstrategy (NCS)<sup>11</sup>, make its expertise also available to industry and charge the costs to the beneficiary agencies and companies;
- 5.4 to cooperate via the Swiss Data Science Center<sup>12</sup> with the Data Science Competence Center of the Federal Statistical Office within the framework of the Federal Data Science Strategy;
- 5.5 to consistently implement its strategy for associated locations of the ETH Domain<sup>13</sup>.

*Objective 6: International positioning and cooperation:* The ETH Domain strengthens international cooperation and maintains its international competitiveness.

The Federal Council expects the ETH Domain:

- 6.1 to create favourable conditions for bottom-up initiatives in international cooperation and to strengthen its position further through the use of strategic alliances and networks with higher education institutions, research institutions and companies worldwide;
- 6.2 to foster international institutional partnerships to promote the mobility of students, researchers and administrative and technical staff;
- 6.3 based on Article 28 of the Federal Act of 14 December 2012<sup>14</sup> on the promotion of research and innovation in bilateral research cooperation in accordance

<sup>10</sup> In accordance with the Higher Education Act of 30 September 2011 (SR **414.20**).

<sup>11</sup> The National Cyberstrategy of 2023 may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.ncsc.admin.ch](http://www.ncsc.admin.ch) > NCS Strategy > National Cyberstrategy NCS.

<sup>12</sup> The Federal Data Science Strategy of 2 December 2022 may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.bfs.admin.ch) > Data Science & AI > Overview > Data Science Competence Center > Further information > Publications > Federal data science strategy.

<sup>13</sup> The strategy for associated locations of the ETH Domain of 19 May 2022 may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.ethrat.ch](http://www.ethrat.ch) > News & Publications > News > 3.10.2022 News “Strategy for associated locations of the ETH Domain”.

<sup>14</sup> SR **420.1**

with Switzerland's International Strategy on Education, Research and Innovation<sup>15</sup>, to continue to play an active role and contribute with its expertise to the responsible internationalisation of Switzerland as a science hub.

### 3 Financial and infrastructure-related objectives

*Objective 7: Funding sources and use of funds:* The ETH Domain expands its financial base and ensures that funds are used efficiently and in accordance with the defined strategy.

The Federal Council expects the ETH Domain:

- 7.1 to use the federal contributions in a timely and targeted manner for teaching, research and the transfer of knowledge and technology;
- 7.2 to actively manage the reserves (with and without internal earmarking) and reduce the total amount of reserves to below CHF 800 million (upper limit) by the end of the period 2025–2028 for the Federal Government's Education, Research and Innovation (ERI) policy;
- 7.3 to review the upper limit for the reserves with the owner, in order to reduce it further for the next ERI period (2029–2032);
- 7.4 to pool the liquid funds at institutional level (cash pooling) and prepare an ongoing liquidity plan for at least twelve months, which it updates regularly;
- 7.5 to prepare an ongoing planned income statement (budget year + 3 more years), which it updates annually;
- 7.6 to periodically review the opportunities for increasing revenue and review the contributions made by students;
- 7.7 to increase the share of third-party funds in its financing, charging where possible for indirect costs that are not covered.

<sup>15</sup> Switzerland's International Strategy on Education, Research and Innovation of July 2018 may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.sbfi.admin.ch](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch) > Publications & Services > Publications > Data Base Publications "Switzerland's International Strategy on Education, Research and Innovation".

*Objective 8: Real estate management and sustainability:* Under the direction of the ETH Board in its role as a Federal Construction and Real Estate Authority, the ETH Domain is responsible for the optimal management of the real estate and property owned by the Swiss Confederation and for preserving their value and function.

The Federal Council expects the ETH Domain:

- 8.1 to support the Federal Government's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030<sup>16</sup> and the Federal Government's Energy Strategy 2050<sup>17</sup> through appropriate measures and participation in programmes, and to report the relevant energy and environmental data;
- 8.2 to have a plan for aiming for net-zero emissions by 2040 in accordance with Article 10 para. 4 of the Federal Act of 30 September 2022<sup>18</sup> on Climate Protection Goals, Innovation and Strengthening Energy Security;
- 8.3 to provide regular updates on real estate projects during meetings with the owner;
- 8.4 to keep consolidated real estate accounts and operate an internal control system.

#### **4 Human resources and pension policy objectives**

*Objective 9: Working conditions, equal opportunities and young scientists:* The ETH Domain is an attractive and socially responsible employer.

The Federal Council expects the ETH Domain:

- 9.1 to support its managers through continuing education and guidance and thus promote respectful interaction at all hierarchical levels;
- 9.2 to support employees in their development and further their continuing education and career planning;
- 9.3 to maintain its competitiveness as an employer by offering flexible working arrangements;
- 9.4 to promote diversity and equality, with due regard to the Swiss Confederation's Gender Equality Strategy 2030<sup>19</sup>, and to increase the proportion of women, especially in management positions and decision-making bodies;
- 9.5 to encourage and support young scientists and prepare them for a career in research and teaching in a global environment and for careers outside academia in industry and administration;

<sup>16</sup> The Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.are.admin.ch](http://www.are.admin.ch) > Sustainable development > Strategy and Reporting > 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy.

<sup>17</sup> The Energy Strategy 2050 may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.bfe.admin.ch](http://www.bfe.admin.ch) > Policy > Energy Strategy 2050.

<sup>18</sup> **SR 814.310**

<sup>19</sup> The Gender Equality Strategy 2030 of 28 April 2021 may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.equality2030.ch/en/](http://www.equality2030.ch/en/).

- 9.6 to adhere to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment<sup>20</sup> when assessing academic careers in connection with appointments and promotions;
- 9.7 to encourage the recruitment of people with a restricted ability to work or perform certain tasks, and to ensure their professional integration;
- 9.8 to promote the training of apprentices in various professions;
- 9.9 in the event of a shortfall in the occupational pension funds that requires remediation, to notify the owner as early as possible of the measures planned.

## 5 Risk and compliance management

*Objective 10: Risk and compliance management:* The ETH Domain has appropriate risk and compliance management systems that are guided by established standards.

The Federal Council expects the ETH Domain:

- 10.1 to maintain and continue to develop a risk management system guided by ISO 31000 and a compliance management system (CMS) guided by ISO 37301, and to keep the owner informed about the most important corporate risks and the key areas in the CMS.

## 6 Cooperation and participation

<sup>1</sup> Based on Article 3a of the ETH Act, ETH Zurich, EPFL and the research institutes may, in order to carry out their tasks, set up or hold shares in companies or cooperate in other ways with third parties in line with the Federal Council's strategic objectives for the ETH Domain and with the directives of the ETH Board dated 9 July 2014<sup>21</sup> on participations in companies in the ETH Domain (ETH Domain participation directives). The ETH Board is responsible for the strategy governing the ETH Domain's participations.

<sup>20</sup> The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at [www.sfdora.org](http://www.sfdora.org).

<sup>21</sup> The ETH Domain participation directives of 9 July 2014 may be downloaded (in German) from the Internet free of charge at [www.ethrat.ch](http://www.ethrat.ch) > ETH-Rat > Governance ETH Bereich > Wesentliche Rechtsgrundlagen > 2. Audit und Finanzen

<sup>2</sup> The Federal Council expects the ETH Domain to disclose its participations as part of its reporting activities and to report on the purpose of these participations in the context of the strategic objectives and on the associated risks. It informs the owner at an early stage about strategic cooperation projects and participations that entail a financial commitment, have a foreign connection or entail risks for the ETH Domain or the Swiss Confederation.

## **7 Modification of the strategic objectives**

<sup>1</sup> If necessary, the Federal Council may modify the strategic objectives during the period of their validity.

<sup>2</sup> It makes decisions on modifications after consultation with the ETH Board.

## **8 Reporting**

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Article 34 of the ETH Act, the ETH Board submits to the Federal Council along with its Annual Report a report on attainment of its strategic objectives during the previous year. It collects the data and key figures required to produce this report.

<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the ETH Board engages regularly in dialogue with representatives of the Swiss Confederation in the course of the year, specifically in discussions with the owner that usually take place semi-annually.

21 March 2025

On behalf of the Swiss Federal Council

The President of the Swiss Confederation:  
Karin Keller-Sutter

The Federal Chancellor: Viktor Rossi