

Equal opportunities and Diversity at Empa

Action Plan 2021 – 2024

Steering Committee Equal opportunities at Empa

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Action Plan 2021 - 2024

Review of the Action Plan 2017 – 2020



Fig. 1 Development in the proportion of women in the ETH Domain (from: ETH Board Annual Report 2019).

Empa has been working on the subject of equal opportunities since the 1990s, and for more than ten years, it has set out measures and actions in plans to support equal opportunities. One of the main concerns in the action plans is to increase the proportion of women in leading positions. This is necessary because the proportion of women in the STEM professions (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), which dominate at Empa, is generally rather low, and is even declining significantly in leading positions. In 2018 the proportion of female professors at ETH Zurich attended 13% (full and associate professorships), while the proportion of women in doctoral and post-doctoral positions reached still over 30%.¹ This clearly demonstrates the *Leaky pipeline* (continuous decrease in the proportion of women in higher management levels). The proportion of women at Empa has risen barely over the last four years, but by 2019, it did increase significantly to 30.4 percent (Fig. 1). Among doctoral and post-doctoral students, the proportion of women in 2019 was 33 (2015: 32) and 34 (2015: 28) percent respectively, and thus even higher than at ETH Zurich (32 and 31 percent respectively). The marked increase in the number of female postdocs is partly due to the women's quota in the COFUND postdoc programs named in the last Action Plan, which Empa did even significantly exceed. Other measures taken to support the careers of young female scientists were the promotion and active application to the *Fix the Leaky Pipeline (FLP)* and the *CONNECT* program of the ETH Domain. They support on one hand a scientific career, and on the other hand make it easier to enter a career in industry. The ETH Board approved 2020 the new round of the *FLP program* for the period 2021-2024 supported by the institutions. For the prolongation of the *CONNECT program* a solution is in preparation.

In addition, a number of women took part in management training courses. However, the leaky pipeline on the level of Empa's group and lab leaders has barely changed: There was an increase from 13 to

¹ ETH Zürich, [Gender monitoring 2018/2019, Executive Summary](#).

16 percent in the proportion of female group leaders, while the proportion of lab leaders stagnated at a low level (13 percent). On the other hand, the proportion of women in the Empa's directory board has risen to 28 percent.

In the area of human resources, Empa has received the *HR Excellence in Research* prize. Empa offered young scientists career-supporting courses in the PhD program. In 2020 Empa launched the Restart Support, which offers young researchers the possibility of support after maternity or other long periods of absence (Empa Management Manual MHB 3.2.20).²

On the subject of diversity and respectful behavior, Empa can mention in particular the Respect Campaign of 2019,³ which led to a new *Code of Conduct* that defines unacceptable behavior and sets out the measures to be taken.⁴ The Respect Campaign reminds all Empa employees of how they should treat each other at Empa and what values Empa represents.

Introduction

[Abbreviations: EOD = Equal Opportunities Delegate / SCC = Steering Committee / DIR = Board of directors / HD = Head of Department / HR = Human Resources / HL = Head of Laboratory / MA = Employees]

The ETH Board has set 2019/2020 targets for the new gender strategy 2021 - 2024, which have an impact on the goals and measures of the action plans. The following objectives should be achieved:

- The budget for equal opportunity measures in the ETH Domain amounts to 0.5 percent of the total budget.
- Increase the proportion of women in research and teaching, especially for PhDs and postdocs, in management positions and decision-making bodies. Formulation of quantitative targets, but no quotas.
- Increase the proportion of women among apprentices and in management positions in the administrative and technical fields (quantitative goal's).
- The institutions implement the Equal Opportunity strategy through appropriate measures in their action plans.
- The institutions monitor the measures and report to the ETH Board every two years.
- For management and staff, orientation on stereotypes and prejudices (unconscious bias) will be mandatory

The following action plan describes measures and projects intended to strengthen the institutional anchoring of equal opportunities and diversity. The objectives are to achieve a broad awareness of the issue among the employees, a balanced gender ratio in strategic committees and in management positions, attractive working conditions that enable all employees to combine work and family life with other areas of interest, and an appreciation of the great cultural diversity.

Empa attaches great importance to its multifaceted character as a federal, but also international research institution. Accordingly, this Action Plan takes an in-depth look at the focus area of *Diversity*

² <https://www.empa.ch/documents/1138725/1145609/MHB-3.2.20+Restart-Support+E/08d99c3d-0bfb-46a6-ab5f-9cb6c267cc8b>

³ <https://www.empa.ch/group/empa/respect>

⁴ <https://www.empa.ch/group/empa/code-of-conduct>

and Inclusion, a subject underrepresented in the last Action Plan. This gives greater weight to the concerns of diversity and inclusion of all employees, while expressly opposing any form of discrimination. This topic has become increasingly importance in recent years and is now partly used as an umbrella term, of which equal opportunities for women and men is a subset.

The action plan defines the main strategic fields of action with five thematic priorities:

- Anchoring equal opportunities at Empa
- Respectful behavior at Empa
- Equal opportunities for all, especially for women in management positions
- Life-Domain Balance between work and private life
- Diversity and Inclusion

The group "New Action Plan 2021 - 2024" preparing the Action Plan did consist of the Equal Opportunities delegate (EOD), three women and three men from different departments. They are parents, young, critical employees from scientific and technical professions and some of them work in the Staff Council or in HR. When finished, the EOD presented the Action Plan to the Steering Committee on Equal Opportunities and Diversity (SCC). This committee assumes authorship and responsibility together with the EOD. Afterwards the board of directors (DIR) approved the Action Plan.

The SCC consists of a member of the DIR, of the HR, of the staff council, of the employees, the EOD and a lab head and delegates from all sites of Empa. Thus, all interest groups are represented. The broad anchoring of the SCC makes it possible to recognize different needs in good time and to take appropriate measures. It attaches importance to equal representation of men and women.

Actions 2021-2024

Focus area 1: Anchoring equal opportunities and diversity at Empa

The responsible parties intend that all employees should know this document in order to involve the entire Empa workforce more closely in its implementation. The aim of the public discussion and application of the Action Plan is to create diverse teams with employees of different ages, genders and nationalities. Once the board of directors has put into effect the Action Plan, it will be presented at the next Leadership Forum. The text will be published in German and English on the Empa Intranet/Internet site Equal Opportunities. Various actions will be taken to motivate employees to read and deal with it.

In the future, role models for minorities should be actively represented on Empa's Intranet/Internet sites. In order to generate more input for the topics of equal opportunities and diversity, the Equal Opportunities Steering Committee is to be given broader support and work on joint subjects. Mention of diversity and equal opportunities by the Director or members of the board of directors at staff events should underline the importance of the topic.

No.	Action	in charge	Date
1.1	Enlargement of the SCC steering committee (including one person per site)	SCC	Q1 2021
1.2	Four meetings of the SCC per year or a topic day and two meetings	SCC	yearly
1.3	Announcement of the action plan after entry into force (posters, videos)	EOD	1 st half 2021
1.4	The director/members of the board of directors address diversity at staff events.	DIR	ongoing
1.5	<i>Highlight Stream</i> concerning minorities on the Equal Opportunities intranet site	EOD, Lab Communication	From mid-2021

Focus area 2: Respectful behavior at Empa

Empa owes its strength not least to its diversity, with the proportion of foreigners rising from 40 to 45 percent since 2016. People from a wide variety of backgrounds and with a wide range of tasks are researching and working here. Empa's principles are respect and responsibility, open communication and a fair conflict culture, integrity and honesty. To achieve outstanding results respectful interaction with one another are the base. Disrespect, discrimination, bullying, threats, harassment in any form or even violence have no place at Empa.

Supervisors have a special role to play here: as role models, they have to pay particular attention to respectful behavior.

In order to protect minorities, including women, from learned stereotypes, such patterns should be regularly addressed. This includes regular and voluntary unconscious bias training (courses, online testing) for all employees and for managers, as in the current management-training program. The courses can be selected and conducted in cooperation with other research institutes in the ETH domain.

No.	Action	In charge	Date
2.1	Annual awareness-raising on unconscious bias for all employees (courses, online tests)	EOD	yearly
2.2	Making the <i>Code of Conduct</i> known	HR	ongoing
2.3	Recurring campaigns on the subject of respect	HR	Every two years

Focus area 3: Equal opportunities for all, especially for women in management positions

Empa's understanding of gender equality is gender neutral. Empa would like to arouse interest in STEM professions among girls from middle school onwards, for example on the Future Day. It promotes the proportion of women in the various apprenticeships and is trying to achieve 50 percent. It promotes young female scientists by supporting appropriate programs such as the ETH Domain's *Fix-the-leaky-Pipeline* program⁵ and career-supporting courses.

Empa is actively working to increase substantially the proportion of women in strategic committees and management positions. Wherever possible, management positions should be filled by women. Where men and women are equally qualified, women will be preferred. The proportion of women among the head of labs (28, of whom only two are women) is currently 7 percent. However, since little influence can be exerted in this area (partly because of the small number of replacements in the coming years), this is not a separate item in the action plan. All other management functions (board of directors, centers, Foko A, and department of Corporate Services) show in part much higher proportions of women.

We advance⁶ is an organization of the Swiss industry for the promotion of women in management positions. It offers a declaration of commitment, a mentoring programme and further training on skill building for women as well as events with role models. Depending on the level of commitment and the services desired, membership costs between CHF 5,000 and 25,000. A membership of this kind enables Empa to establish a broad connection with Swiss industry and provide ideas on the subject of diversity and the advancement of women.

No.	Action	In charge	Date
3.1	Presenting profession variety on the Future Day	EOD	yearly
3.2	Support of the <i>Fix-the-leaky-pipeline</i> program of the ETH Domain	DIR	yearly
3.3	In the apprenticeships, the girl/woman ratio shall reach 50 percent.	DIR	yearly
3.4	Aspire a membership in <i>We advance</i> ; check interest and benefits for one year	SCC	Pilot phase until spring 2022
3.5	In the case of vacancies for management positions, active efforts were made for one third of women on the final shortlist of three to five people.	HR	ongoing
3.6	Offer temporary leadership opportunities (large projects) to enable young women to gain leadership experience	HR/DIR	ongoing

⁵ <https://www.fix-the-leaky-pipeline.ch/>

⁶ <https://weadvance.ch/>

Focus area 4: Life domain balance between work and private life

Empa promotes flexible working time models (flexible working hours, telework/home office, part-time). They make it easier to combine work and family life, as well as care work for children and elderly or sick persons. Empa makes this possible in all positions and for all genders. At the end of 2019, 21% of Empa employees were working part-time, 38% of all women and 14% of all men. The various working time models allow shared childcare and care of relatives.⁷

The Empa ensures that there is an adequate supply of childcare places. In keeping with a long tradition, it supports the Empa/Eawag Children's Pavilion Interest Group at its Dübendorf site, both financially and in terms of personnel. At the St. Gallen and Thun sites, individual childcare places are subsidized. Breastfeeding rooms are available to mothers of small children in Dübendorf and St. Gallen (SH 322 and in St. Gallen VB J3.11). The contact person for use is the reception in Dübendorf and St. Gallen. If both parents are employed in the ETH Domain, it is possible to distribute half of the maternity leave freely to both parents.

PhDs and postdocs with children under 18 months of age who are enrolled at ETH Zurich can apply three times a year for a Robert Gnehm Grant⁸ to support childcare during conference attendance. PhDs and Postdocs funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) can apply for a Flexibility Grant⁹, which partly covers the costs of childcare and partly finances salaries' for support staff, allowing a reduction in workload. Empa has now introduced a Restart Support, which gives the opportunity to apply for support for a limited period after maternity or other reasons for absence (for details see review).

No.	Action	In charge	Date
4.1	Support for fathers and mothers so that they can resume their old workload after having children (employment level reduction; max. four years)	HR/Lab	ongoing
4.2	Working towards an extension of paternity leave	HR	
4.3	Parental leave can be extended to a maximum of one year. The extension takes the form of unpaid leave, e.g. a sabbatical. The regulations of the PVO ETH Domain paragraph 52a apply.	HR/Lab	
4.4	People with caring responsibilities can profit from flexible employment models as a partial form of work.	HR/Lab	
4.5	Initiate group of young parents from Empa and Eawag (knowledge exchange)	EOD	1 st half 2021

⁷ Zur generellen Situation von Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf in der Schweiz und den Entwicklungen in den 20 letzten Jahren s. Vortrag Christina Seyler 2019.

⁸ <https://ethz.ch/services/de/anstellung-und-arbeit/arbeitsumfeld/chancengleichheit/beratung-und-information/vereinbarkeit-von-familie-und-beruf/robert-gnehm-grant.html>

⁹ <http://www.snf.ch/de/foerderung/ergaenzende-massnahmen/flexibility-grant/Seiten/default.aspx>

Focus 5: Diversity and Inclusion

Empa cultivates multicultural diversity and respectful interaction between cultures. It promotes diverse teams with committed employees regardless of gender, sexuality, skin color, ethnicity, nationality, disability, age or origin.

With almost half of its employees coming from other nations, Empa is very diverse. The Internet and Intranet presence is bilingual throughout (English and German), and internal events at all levels are held in English or German with English slides.

The Empa website contains numerous references to life at the three sites in Dübendorf, St. Gallen and Thun, with references to the crèche and guesthouses. Language courses start on an ongoing basis (German, English, more if required).

No.	Action	In charge	Date
5.1	Stand on Diversity (intercultural competence) and Equal Opportunity at PhD Day	EOD	yearly
5.2	Increase the visibility of the cultures	Communication	ongoing
5.3	Put a culture-specific Do's and Don'ts brochure on the Internet site Equal opportunities	EOD	autumn 2021
5.4	Launch Postdoc circle with annual meeting with industry partners in cooperation with PSI	EOD and Postdoc-group	autumn 2021
5.5	Set up gender-neutral toilets	DIR	from 2021