

Equal opportunities and diversity at Empa

Action Plan 2017 to 2020

Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities at Empa

1. In brief

Over the past years Empa has been continuously engaged in encouraging equal opportunities and diversity. These concepts are now firmly anchored in the institution's corporate culture. With its 29% female employees and around 40% non-Swiss staff (originating from more than 55 countries), Empa staff demonstrates a high degree of diversity.

In recognition of these efforts, in 2015 the institution was for the third time awarded the "Best-Practice" rating in the "Familie UND Beruf" category. In addition, in the same year Empa was awarded the "Prix Balance ZH" by the Canton of Zurich for its exceptional engagement in the areas of equal opportunities and diversity.

In this action plan measures and projects will be defined which are intended to reinforce the degree to which equal opportunities and diversity are anchored in Empa's culture. The plan is dedicated to inculcating a high level of awareness of these topics amongst the institution's staff, encouraging a balanced gender ratio in strategic committees and leading management positions, and creating attractive working conditions which facilitate the harmonization of professional and family activities while encouraging a high degree of cultural diversity for all employees.

2. Introduction

Empa recognises, and wishes to promote to the full, the potential of its staff members whilst creating a climate of optimal collaborative effort. Its activities are aimed at nurturing in all employees the same high level of self-esteem and offering staff the best possible opportunities for personal development. Attractive and family friendly working conditions allow the harmonization of professional and private life.

The action plan defines four thematic focal points covering the most important strategic areas of action.

1. Reinforcing and enhancing awareness among all staff members of Empa's firm cultural anchor for equal opportunities and diversity
2. Ensuring a substantial increase in the proportion of female staff in strategic committees and leading management roles
3. Supporting and encouraging flexible working-hour models which make it possible to harmonise occupational and family duties and activities at all levels and for all genders.
4. Fostering and cultivating multicultural diversity and the respectful interaction between cultures.

The action plan has been created, drafted and released by Empa's Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities and Diversity (SCEO), the Delegate Equal Opportunities (DEO) and the Board of Directors (BD).

The SCEO is made up of one member of the Board of Directors, the DEO, the Head of Human Resources, Heads of Laboratories and Staff Representatives. The wide range of backgrounds of the SCEO membership

ensures that differing requirements and points of view are recognised in a timely manner, allowing appropriate corrective measures to be taken.

3. Actions 2017-2020

Abbreviations used:

DEO = Delegate Equal Opportunities / SCEO = Steering Committee Equal Opportunities / BD = Board of directors / HD = Head of Department / HR = Human Resources / HL = Head of Laboratory / ST = Staff

Focal point 1

Reinforcing and enhancing the awareness among all staff members of Empa's firm cultural anchor for equal opportunities and diversity

To date knowledge of Empa's Action Plan 2014 – 2016 was limited to the Board of Directors, the Human Resources Department, the Delegate Equal Opportunities and the Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities. Senior staff members, primarily laboratory heads and group leaders, have been discussing and deliberating the concepts of equal opportunities and diversity through management seminars. In order to involve the entire Empa staff in the implementation of these ideas, this document will now be made known to all employees. Open discussion groups and action plan implementation activities will be organised, aimed at diverse teams of employees of various ages, genders and nationalities. Progress is to be acknowledged by means of annual "Best Practice" nominations. It is to be noted that Best Practice does not mean solely achieving the highest proportion of female positions in a team, but involves original and significant steps in terms of enhancing diversity.

No.	Action	Overall control	Deadline
1.1	The action plan 2017-2020 is approved by the board of directors.	DEO	April 2017
1.2	The action plan 2017-2020 is introduced at the leadership forum.	DEO	June 2017
1.3	Departments are invited to take suitable measures and to creatively extend the action plan.	DEO	annual
1.4	The DEO reports on progress and problems in the Leadership's forum every year. Best Practice nominations are announced.	DEO	annual

Focal point 2

Ensuring a substantial increase in the proportion of female staff in strategic committees and leading management roles

Whenever possible, women should be appointed to leadership positions. When a male and female contender for a management role has equivalent qualifications, then the female applicant will be given preference.

At the end of 2016 the proportion of female employees at Empa was 29%. While the institute is striving to achieve a proportion of 30% and more, this target is not easily reached – the proportion of women students at the ETH has stagnated at around 30% since 2003 (see Gender Monitoring der ETH-Zürich, September 2016). The proportion of female staff at the ETH was 35% in 2015, however. Over the period 2012 to 2015 the proportion of female employees in the ETH-Domain varied within single figure percent values.

The fraction of women occupying leading management roles at Empa is far below 30%. The highest value is reached in the Board of Directors where the proportion of female members is 29%. At the laboratory and group-leader level the value sinks at times to around just 10%, and few women are members of the Research Commissions. Whilst the appointment of just one woman to the Board of Directors or to one of the Research Commissions would lead to a marked increase in gender proportion, at the laboratory and particularly at the group leader level the situation is far more difficult, since it would require a much larger number of female appointees to result in a significant proportional increase. It is therefore reasonable in the first instance to aim at a target of 15% of female employees in positions of authority at all levels.

Since Empa employs many non-Swiss female staff members, one possibility, in theory at least, would be to exploit the higher relative proportion of female scientists in the EU. An increase of 1% or more would - from this point of view - represent a real breakthrough, assuming that any increase was to be sustained over the long term.

No.	Action	Overall control	Deadline
2.1	For every open management position which is publicly advertised and chosen by a Selection Committee, at least one female applicant should be placed on the short list of candidates. If this aim is not reached then potential female candidates should be actively contacted and invited to apply for the open position.	HR	ongoing
2.2	To make leadership positions for women more attractive, female staff who has not yet been involved with leadership duties will be allowed to attend basic leadership courses.	HR	
2.3	Empa staff members should be asked during interviews if there are any obstacles at the institution hindering women staff in achieving their career goals. A master thesis project in involving this topic is aimed at clarifying the situation.	DEO	
2.4	Empa will encourage the advancement of young female researchers by continued support for the program "Fix the leaky pipeline" in the ETH domain. Steps will be taken to improve recognition of this program within Empa.	DEO	ongoing
2.5	Empa will promote the increase in number of women postdocs by employing at least 30 percent female members in the COFUND program.	COFUND	application opened in spring 17

Focal point 3

Supporting and encouraging flexible working-hour models which make it possible to harmonise occupational and family duties and activities at all levels and for all genders. Empa also provides for adequate numbers of day-care nursery places.

One of Empa’s traditional activities, going back many years, is the provision of its day-care nursery (“Verein Kinderpavillon”) on the Duebendorf site, supported financially and in personnel terms by Empa and Eawag. At the St Gallen and Thun sites individual day-care places are available at subsidised cost. Dedicated rooms in Duebendorf and St Gallen offer nursing mothers the opportunity to breastfeed their babies. When both parents are employed within the ETH-Domain, maternity leave can be divided equally between father and mother if the parents so wish.

PhD and postdoctoral students enrolled at the ETH who have infants below 18 months of age may apply three times annually for a Robert Gnehm Grant to cover child-care support when they are participating in conferences and seminars.

Empa supports flexible working hour models (flexitime, telework, part-time work). Just less than 30% of all Empa employees work on a part-time basis – nearly 50% of all female staff and 16% of all male staff. The range of different working-hour models available assists parents, to look after the children and employees to care as well after other family members.

No.	Action	Overall control	Deadline
3.1	Empa aims at being recognised with the 'HR Excellence in Research' award of the European charter for research institutions. The institution adheres to the principles of the EU initiative HRS4R «Human Resources Strategy for Researchers» and strives to achieve and maintain progressive terms of employment and basic conditions (Charter & Code). The award brings international visibility and internal and external credibility – for details see the website EURAXESS HRS4R.	HR	Reached in October 17
3.2	Continuing education and coaching is offered to young (female) scientists to encourage the independent development of their careers. (Career in Industry courses)	HR	

Focal area 4

Fostering and cultivating multicultural diversity and the respectful interaction between cultures

With staff drawn from 55 different nationalities, Empa is a diverse cultural entity. The institute's webpages are offered in English and German, and internal events at all levels take place either in English or in German with English slides provided.

However, it is often forgotten in daily life that Swiss-German during the coffee break is an "insider" language. Problems are often also caused by misunderstandings due to multicultural differences between doctoral students and laboratory personnel.

A large amount of information and tips on living at the three Empa sites, Duebendorf, St. Gallen and Thun, is available on the institution's webpages, covering details on childcare and guesthouses. Language courses (German, English, French, and Italian) are available on a continuous basis.

No.	Action	Overall control	Deadline
4.1	To nurture and encourage multicultural networking, an opportunity for regular, informal meetings shall be created. This could, for example, be promoted with a bar opening from 17-20 h in the NEST building for say one evening per week or two evenings per month, as necessary.	leeu	March 17