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Federal Act on the Federal Institutes of Technology (ETH Act)

of 4 October 1991 (Status as of 1 January 2022)

The Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation,
based on Articles 63a paragraph 1 and 64 paragraph 3 of the Federal Constitution¹,
and having considered the Dispatch of the Federal Council dated
14 December 1987^{2,3}

decrees:

Chapter 1 General Provisions

Art. 1 Scope

¹ This Act applies to the Federal Institutes of Technology Domain (ETH Domain) comprising the following:

- a. the Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETHZ);
- b. the Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL);
- c.⁴ four research institutes (EMPA, EAWAG, PSI and WSL).

² These institutions are subject to federal control.

Art. 2 Purpose

¹ The two federal institutes of technology and the four research institutes within the ETH Domain shall:

- a. educate students and specialists in scientific and technical fields and ensure continuing education and training;

AS 1993 210

¹ SR 101

² BBl 1988 I 741

³ Amended by No I of the FA of 17 June 2011, in force since 15 Nov. 2011 (AS 2011 4789; BBl 2011 757).

⁴ Amended by No I of the FA of 21 March 2003, in force since 1 Jan. 2004 (AS 2003 4265; BBl 2002 3465).

- b. expand scientific knowledge through research;
- c. support junior scientific staff;
- d. provide scientific and technical services;
- e.⁵ ensure a dialogue with the public;
- f.⁶ exploit their research findings.

² They shall take account of Switzerland's needs.

³ They shall discharge their remit at an internationally recognised level and encourage international cooperation.

⁴ The guiding principles for teaching and research are respect for human dignity, responsibility in the use of natural resources and the environment together with an evaluation of the consequences of technological applications.

Art. 3 Cooperation and coordination

¹ The two federal institutes of technology and the four research institutes within the ETH Domain shall work with other domestic and foreign education and research institutions. They shall encourage the exchange of students and scientists and the mutual recognition of studies and qualifications.

² For this purpose, they may sign agreements under public and private law.

³ They shall coordinate their activities and within the scope of federal legislation shall contribute to coordination of the Swiss higher education sector and research activities. They shall take part in the coordination of higher education policies at national level and share tasks in particularly cost-intensive areas.⁷

⁴ The two federal institutes of technology shall notify the Swiss Conference of Higher Education Institutions of their average teaching costs per student.⁸

Art. 3a⁹ Cooperation with third parties

The two federal institutes of technology and the four research institutes within the ETH Domain may set up or hold shares in companies or cooperate in other ways with third parties in pursuit of their remit within the scope of the strategic objectives

⁵ Inserted by No I of the FA of 21 March 2003, in force since 1 Jan. 2004 (AS 2003 4265; BBl 2002 3465).

⁶ Inserted by No I of the FA of 21 March 2003, in force since 1 Jan. 2004 (AS 2003 4265; BBl 2002 3465).

⁷ Amended by Annex No II 3 of the Higher Education Act of 30 Sept. 2011, in force since 1 Jan. 2015 (AS 2014 4103; BBl 2009 4561).

⁸ Inserted by Annex No II 3 of the Higher Education Act of 30 Sept. 2011, in force since 1 Jan. 2015 (AS 2014 4103; BBl 2009 4561).

⁹ Inserted by No I of the FA of 21 March 2003 (AS 2003 4265; BBl 2002 3465). Amended by No I of the FA of 30 Sept. 2016, in force since 1 May 2017 (AS 2017 151; BBl 2016 3089).

set by the Federal Council for the ETH Domain and the instructions given by the ETH Board.

Art. 4¹⁰ Structure and autonomy of the ETH Domain

¹ The ETH Domain shall report to the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER)¹¹. The ETH Domain is independent in the way it regulates its affairs, subject to compliance with this Act.

² The ETH Board is the strategic management body of the ETH Domain.

³ The two federal institutes of technology and the four research institutes within the ETH Domain shall fulfil those responsibilities not expressly assigned to the ETH Board.

Art. 4a¹²

Chapter 2 Federal Institutes of Technology

Section 1 Status and Duties of the Federal Institutes of Technology

Art. 5 Autonomy

¹ ETHZ and EPFL are autonomous public-law institutions established by the Confederation and have their own legal personality.

² Each is independent in the regulation and administration of its affairs. Each has equal status and the individual characteristics of each shall remain intact.

³ They shall enjoy freedom in terms of teaching, learning and research.

⁴ ...¹³

Art. 6 General objectives

The two federal institutes of technology shall prepare their students to carry out independent work using scientific methods. They shall encourage cross-disciplinary thinking, personal initiative and a willingness to continue in education and training.

¹⁰ Amended by No I of the FA of 21 March 2003, in force since Jan. 2004 (AS **2003** 4265; BBI **2002** 3465).

¹¹ Term in accordance with No I 9 of the O of 15 June 2012 (Reorganisation of the Departments), in force since 1 Jan. 2013 (AS **2012** 3655). This amendment has been made throughout the text.

¹² Inserted by Annex No 3 of FA of 23 June 2006 (New Insurance Number for Old-age and Survivors' Insurance) (AS **2007** 5259; BBI **2006** 501). Repealed by Annex No 9 of the FA of 18 Dec. 2020 (Systematic Use of the OASI Number by Authorities), with effect from 1 Jan. 2022 (AS **2021** 758; BBI **2019** 7359).

¹³ Repealed by No I of the FA of 21 March 2003, with effect from 1 Jan. 2004 (AS **2003** 4265; BBI **2002** 3465).

Art. 7 Scientific disciplines

¹ The two federal institutes of technology shall teach and conduct research in engineering sciences, natural sciences, architecture, mathematics and related disciplines.

² They shall integrate the humanities and social sciences into their activities.

³ They shall encourage cross-disciplinary teaching and research.

Art. 8 Teaching

¹ The two federal institutes of technology shall discharge their teaching duties in particular by:

- a.¹⁴ educating students in specialist studies at university level leading to academic titles;
- b. offering the opportunity for doctorates;
- c. providing postgraduate courses and other continuing education;
- d. organising special courses;
- e. offering courses for those returning to the employment market.

² In order to do this, they shall rely in particular on the research work of the teaching staff.¹⁵

Art. 9 Research

¹ The two federal institutes of technology shall discharge their research duties by:

- a. conducting scientific studies;
- b. participating in national and international research projects.

² They shall take account of the needs of teaching.

Art. 10 Services

¹ The two federal institutes of technology may take on teaching and research assignments and render other services provided they are compatible with their primary responsibilities in teaching and research.

² If services can be provided equally well by the private sector, the two federal institutes of technology shall not distort competition.

¹⁴ Amended by No I of the FA of 21 March 2003, in force since 1 Jan. 2004 (AS 2003 4265; BBl 2002 3465)

¹⁵ Inserted by No I of the FA of 21 March 2003, in force since 1 Jan. 2004 (AS 2003 4265; BBl 2002 3465)

Art. 10a¹⁶ Sale of energy

¹ The two federal institutes of technology and the research institutes may sell at market prices energy produced by their own installations or any energy purchased for their own consumption that remains unused.

² The Federal Council shall regulate the use of the proceeds of such sales.

Art. 10b¹⁷ Quality assurance

¹ The two federal institutes of technology shall review the quality of teaching, research and services at regular intervals and are responsible for sustainably maintaining and improving quality.

² They shall create and operate a quality assurance system under Article 27 of the Higher Education Act of 30 September 2011¹⁸.

³ They shall obtain institutional accreditation.

Art. 11 Social and cultural services

¹ The two federal institutes of technology shall establish social and cultural services for the benefit of their members or participate in existing services. They shall introduce measures to facilitate childcare.¹⁹

² They may grant scholarships or loans.

³ They shall encourage university sport.²⁰

Art. 12 Languages

¹ The two federal institutes of technology shall provide instruction in German, French and Italian and, depending on usage in teaching and research, English as well.²¹

² The Executive Board may authorise other languages of instruction.

³ The two federal institutes of technology shall support Swiss national languages and encourage the understanding of associated cultural values.

¹⁶ Inserted by No I of the FA of 19 March 2021, in force since 1 Nov. 2021 (AS **2021** 603; BBl **2020** 715).

¹⁷ Originally Art. 10a. Inserted by No I of the FA of 21 March 2003 (AS **2003** 4265; BBl **2002** 3465). Amended by Annex No II 3 of the Higher Education Act of 30 Sept. 2011, in force since 1 Jan. 2015 (AS **2014** 4103; BBl **2009** 4561)

¹⁸ SR **414.20**

¹⁹ Amended by No I of the FA of 21 March 2003, in force since 1 Jan. 2004 (AS **2003** 4265; BBl **2002** 3465).

²⁰ Inserted by No I of the FA of 21 March 2003, in force since 1 Jan. 2004 (AS **2003** 4265; BBl **2002** 3465).

²¹ Amended by No I of the FA of 21 March 2003, in force since 1 Jan. 2004 (AS **2003** 4265; BBl **2002** 3465).