

Manifesto October 2024

WE are shocked – time is up!

As a public and taxpayer funded institution, ETH must provide a fair and equitable study and work environment free from mobbing, bullying, sexual harassment, and discrimination (Gleichstellungsgesetz). Furthermore, the Swiss Academies have recognized discrimination and harassment as violations of scientific integrity (1); ETH has adopted these guidelines, they must be respected and enforced.

However, reality does not reflect ETH's self-proclaimed commitment to these values. Students and staff members who are affected by mobbing, bullying, discrimination or sexual harassment often feel left alone and lack confidence in internal ETH procedures. They thus turn to external organizations (like Speak-Up in Academia) or social media and sometimes report incidents only after they leave ETH.

A recent Tagesanzeiger article (30/08/2024) reports ETH's lack of action despite eight parties raising allegations against one professor (2). It follows a number of other reports of bullying and harassment (3). ETH's (non)response to these allegations continues to be inadequate and unprofessional. There is a prevailing impression that ETH is again adopting a 'wait and see' approach, hoping that the headlines will fade, so it returns to business as usual.

It is of utmost urgency that we address the regular incidences of complaints against (primarily male) faculty and challenge ETH's improper handling of complaints (3). In fact, dissatisfaction with ETH's grievance procedures has been voiced in numerous letters to ETH leadership and in internal discussions (4). Apparently, ETH's leadership is not protecting students and staff adequately and it is not listening to organizations and individuals like us. We have no choice but using this public channel to demand that ETH protects its students and staff.

It is our collective responsibility to hold ETH accountable.

It is OUR turn to be SHOCKED.

While Respect campaigns may play a part in changing the culture, accountability through reliable reporting, investigation and disciplinary action are necessary to fighting sexual harassment, discrimination, mobbing and bullying. Consequences are necessary if ETH Zürich's policies are to be more than just window-dressing.

We therefore urgently demand:

Decisive follow-up on reports of mobbing, bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination with investigations and disciplinary actions.

A public annual summary of incidents of mobbing, bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination reported to internal and external agencies that includes reporting of the proportionate actions taken by the executive board.

An anonymous and external reporting tool for incidents concerning mobbing, bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination under the whistleblower protection act (BKMS), such as established at Uni Luzern or Eidgenössische Finanzkontrolle (5).

A legal fund to be established by ETH Zürich covering the complainant's legal costs as well as public disclosure of funds ETH expends in legal processes related to mobbing, bullying, discrimination, and sexual harassment.

Public disclosure on the time to doctoral degree completion, rates of successful degree completion at a level of disaggregation (e.g., for individual Institutes within Departments) as well as annual reporting on reasons for Ph.D. students, academic staff and (female) assistant professors leaving ETH on their own.

Leadership needs to lead. We demand ETH's leadership to take a personal role to send a clear message to perpetrators that such behavior is not condoned and will have consequences.

As endorsing organisations and individual signatories, we put the ETH leadership on notice that we will continue to focus public attention on these problems until the ETH work and study environment is free from mobbing, bullying, sexual harassment, and discrimination.

References:

- (1) <https://akademien-schweiz.ch/en/themen/scientific-culture/scientific-integrity-1/> (14/10/2024)
- (2) <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/eth-hochschule-ist-schockiert-ueber-vorwuerfe-gegen-professor-849003779879> (14/10/2024)
- (3)
 - (a) D-ARCH <https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/respektloser-ex-professor-sexuelle-belaestigung-an-der-eth-bericht-nennt-erstmal-detailliert> (14/10/2024)
 - (b) D-ITET <https://www.limmattalerzeitung.ch/limmattal/zuerich/zuerich-ausgenutzt-ingeschuechtert-abgekanzelt-neuer-verdacht-auf-mobbing-bei-der-eth-Id.2556648> (14/10/2024)
 - (c) D-MTEC <https://tsri.ch/a/methoo-ehemalige-mitarbeiterinnen-werfen-eth-professor-sexismus-vor-machtmissbrauch-anonyme-meldungen> (14/10/2024)
- (4) see for example https://wins.ethz.ch/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Open-Letter-to-ETH-Board_WiNS.pdf (14/10/2024).
- (5)
 - (a) Universität Luzern, Anonymous Reporting System, https://www.bkms-system.ch/bkwebanon/report/clientInfo?cin=94wAUP&c=-1&language=ger_CH (14/10/2024).
 - (b) Eidgenössische Finanzkontrolle, Anonymous Reporting System, https://www.bkms-system.ch/bkwebanon/report/clientInfo?cin=5efk11&c=-1&language=ger_CH (14/10/2024).