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Herrn  
Prof. Dr. Ulrich Weidmann  
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### **Feedback to the Consultation: Recommendations on framework conditions for scientific positions and development of postdocs and senior assistants at ETH Zurich**

Dear Prof. Weidmann

The KdL is grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback on the SL “Recommendations on framework conditions for scientific positions and development of postdocs and senior assistants at ETH Zurich“. This consultation addresses a critical topic at ETH Zurich within the context of promoting early scientific development, and we welcome this endeavor to clarify and strengthen the career prospects and opportunities for this key group mid-career researchers and middle management.

With the growing importance of this group for supporting research, funding acquisition, and teaching, we consider that ETH should grasp this opportunity to become a world leader in progressive policy on development and supporting Post-doc careers, but also importantly gender balance and equality. Furthermore, while the current document recognizes the value of international experience, we would encourage modification of these recommendations to also accommodate the practical reality of career development within ETH, as well as the value of different e.g. industrial experience to enrich personal, character, and career development.

Specifically, the KdL would suggest:

- Recommendations 5 & 6: To further support progressive policy on equal rights and gender equality, the KdL would strongly advise the inclusion of paternity leave – and not only maternity leave – with a much clearer formulation that ETH strongly supports compatibility between returning to work and home life. Specifically, longer maternity/paternity leave should be allowed if requested.
- Importantly, ETH should strive to present regulation that the entire time period of leave taken for paediatric care should not be removed from the 12-year maximum period of employment at ETH – **either for mothers or fathers**. It would also be worth considering whether concrete rules should be put in place for promoting compatibility (in accordance with Recommendation 6), such that ETH presents a strong statement on progressive policy.
- In light of improvement to the gender equality formulation above, clarity should be achieved between recommendations 4 & 5 regarding the maternity (and paternity) leave. Here, a better

formulation of ETH's aims to combine and coordinate home and work life should be presented as a strong and overriding statement.

- We appreciate the support provided by Recommendation 8 – and would even suggest that the concept of mentors be made more concrete, possibly with the advice that the mentor is not the person who hired the postdoc (or at least in addition to the direct Prof). In this manner, ETH would support a greater level of perspective and privacy, for discussions on their future careers after ETH.
- In order to strengthen the support provided by ETH to better develop and prepare postdocs and senior assistants for their careers post-ETH, we would encourage the availability and attendance of targeted management and training courses, as well as experience breaks (including possible short sabbaticals) to broaden their networks within final the years of the post-doc's employment.
- For the majority of ETH professors, the employment of a senior scientist is a major and critical decision that will influence the running and success of their labs for the remainder of their tenure. It is therefore an extremely risky decision to employ someone external, with whom the professor may have had little or no collaborative working experience. As a result, we would advise that the practical reality of employing senior scientists at ETH be recognised through reworking the Table (on P5) to indicate the relationships (and possible moves) between positions, including at least a dotted line from the positions of postdocs and senior assistants up to the level of senior scientist. In this respect, the compatibility of Rec 3 and Rec 1 should be checked.

To conclude, the KdL strongly supports the ETH initiative to promote the career development of postdocs and senior assistants. We hope that our recommendations are able to further reinforce strong and progressive policy on this topic within ETH. Should you have further questions or wish for further consultation on this topic, please do not hesitate to get back to me. Until then, I remain,

yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ulrike Lohmann', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ulrike Lohmann, President of the KdL

Discussed and approved: KdL meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020