

***student
sustainability
commission***

Review of ETH Sustainability Report

2019/2020

On behalf of the students concerned about the role ETH plays in sustainable development and education, the members of the Student Sustainability Commission (SSC) have written this review on the Sustainability Report released on 10 May 2021 by ETH Sustainability.

SSC is a commission of the ETH Student Association (VSETH), with a focus on sustainability issues. The commission is divided into three groups: Communications, Events, University Development. The Communication team manages our social media channels and the website to help students become active in sustainability issues or living a more sustainable life and to promote our events, work and positions. The Events team organizes talks and events mostly for students to show them different perspectives of sustainability issues. The University Development team creates projects to tackle sustainability issues on Campus, to transform education and to help ETH become an example for other institutes when it comes to sustainability and social impact. The team consists of three subteams: Divestment, Food and Mobility. This review was written by members of the University Development team. The team works closely with ETH Sustainability and our members are student representatives in the Environmental Commission, the Catering Commission and the ETH Mobility Project Management.

SSC has reached out to other organizations to include their thoughts where their expertise is highly valuable. We are thankful to the ones who provided positive feedback to our call! With their input, we could greatly improve the document overall. We have received answers from AGN, the Sustainability Working Group of D-ARCH; SeedCity, the community garden on Hönggerberg campus; VELOVE, the cyclists' student association; Ariane Wenger, who was conducting the survey for students on the flight reduction project of ETH this year; Stella Harper, board member of the University Politics team of VSETH. Also, we would like to thank AVETH for supporting our review.

This review is addressed to ETH Sustainability, the Board of ETH and all decision-makers to reflect on the efforts made to make ETH a more sustainable institute. These points show the opinion of students who work passionately on these topics alongside their studies to transform ETH. The reason for this review is to open discussions between the representatives of ETH and the students to reach the set goals until 2030.

RESEARCH

Two of the goals mention ethical norms but only towards experimental research on human and animal subjects. No mention is made of any other **ethical rules for research, e.g. military projects or fossil fuel utilization**. These stand at the heart of the policies of ethics commissions at other universities. Surprised by this contrast, SSC would like to know whether the focus on human and animal subjects at ETH stems from the deepened strategic focus on *Health & Medicine*, as specified in the ETH Strategy and Development Plan [1]?

Furthermore, we would like to know the extent to which research evaluation based on these rules really contributes to sustainability. Are **key ethical questions**, such as the implications of AI development in military contexts, truly at the core of the Ethics Commission's discussions or does the evaluation focus primarily on procedural data handling at the end of the day? If so, including these rules in the statistics of the Sustainability Report could present an overly positive picture of ethical considerations in research at ETH.

We strongly believe that **interdisciplinary research** is not only a driving force for innovation in research but indeed can help achieve goals of sustainability. Merging disciplines has the potential of furthering gender balance, for example by increasing the number of women in physics by bringing females from biology into the intersection of biophysics. Interdisciplinary approaches could also help ETH develop without necessarily increasing student and staff numbers and hence expanding the campus. Therefore, we are glad to see that ETH is pushing the interdisciplinary **ETH+** project forward.

The increasing number of collaborations with peer institutions shows that physical presence is not necessary for the projects to develop. The chart does not mention if **digital collaborations** are going to play an important part in the future.

In the Knowledge transfer part, **startups and social impact** is mentioned. Master's programmes should not only enable students to excel in the academy and the industry but should also give them insights into starting their own companies. The nationwide Innosuisse program is advertised occasionally but the promotion of ETH transfer should be more active among students. Given this and the fact how the startup scene has been evolving globally, we would like to see some evidence that the increasing number of startups and especially sustainability/social startups are related to the work of ETH transfer. Looking at the bar chart (page 24) between 2007 and 2018, the change in the numbers is negligible. **Oxara** was mentioned in this part but not in the section on campus development. Is there a plan to use their technology when it comes to renovation or building projects? The inclusion of **Planted** in the mensa is very encouraging for students developing ideas in Food Science.

To help future projects alike, ETH could introduce **voluntary contributions** from students by simply adding to the currently existing 'fees' section in mystudies, dedicated to a sustainability fund. Also, institutes could pay after their PhD students into this fund or into a carbon compensation pot with an equivalent of less than 1% of total wages. This should not be deducted from the salaries but paid on top of it and it should be voluntary at the introduction.

[1] <https://ethz.ch/en/the-eth-zurich/portrait/strategy.html>

EDUCATION

Regarding education for sustainable development, the existing initiatives are supported by SSC. For example, the **ETH Talent project** (p. 34) sets the long-term goal of engaging students with society, thus preparing them to face the reality of life in the 21st century, with its problems more complex than those encountered in the lecture hall environment. Also, the report lists departments and **degrees that specialize in sustainability** (p. 36). Again, we welcome the training of such experts. However, we would like to offer ideas to two unaddressed fields of action.

Firstly, we would like to see more investment in **permanent platforms that provide projects in sustainability with rooms and facilities**. In other universities, green offices have been initiated towards this aim [1]. Luckily, there exists an immediate possibility for ETH to offer such a platform to its students: In 2021, with the collaboration between most of the major higher education institutes of Zürich, the co-working space **ZKSD** [2] is going to open its doors to projects related to sustainability. So far, ETH has not been actively involved in this project even though they have a chance to be active and there is nothing similar planned for ETH in the near future. Additionally, this platform is intended to also bring professors and students together to exchange ideas and work on joint real-world projects outside of the usual university context.

Secondly, the report does not talk about how ETH wants to improve the **sustainable thinking of students in general**. We are aware that mandatory sustainability courses do exist at the bachelor's level in certain institutes. Of course, one does not wish to force students to attend sustainability-related courses in all departments. This is neither effective nor considerate of the students' choice of discipline. At the same time, there is a wide offer of voluntary courses that, indeed, have already been compiled in the Sustainability Course Catalogue [3]. Yet currently, this catalogue is widely unknown. One solution we see is the integration of this catalogue into mystudies or highlighting courses directly in the VVZ. This idea has already been brought up in internal discussions of several departments, such as D-MAVT, D-ITET or D-PHYS. We are also aware that there is an abundance of extracurricular offers, such as summer and winter schools, student competitions, collaboration platforms etc. These are even spearheaded by the highest levels of ETH, such as in the case of the ETH Week. However, all these efforts are only of interest to students already interested in sustainability. Reaching the ones outside of the bubble is the next level we wish to see addressed.

Understanding education in a broader sense can help achieve this aim: Indeed, ETH does not only educate via the courses students take but also **shapes their worldview** through information obtained, conversations held, passions developed on its physical and digital campus. These activities live through the interactions students experience, how they **connect to their peers** and other fellow humans. Thinking along these lines, we at SSC have noted the following: On social media such as Facebook, student groups at ETH are present to a much lesser extent than their associations at other universities. While we welcome this status quo from the perspective of digital data collection and related issues, it does, unfortunately, imply less visibility and exchange.

[1] <https://www.greenofficemovement.org/green-office-case-studies/>

[2] <https://blog.zhaw.ch/sustainable/tag/zuerich-knowledge-center-for-sustainable-development-zksd/>

[3] <https://ethz.ch/en/the-eth-zurich/sustainability/education/sustainable-vvz.html>

Luckily, ETH Sustainability has launched an 'ETH alternative' to such social media platforms: **ETH Point** [1]. We believe Point bears significant potential in fostering connections between students outside of their usual social circles, i.e. their department and year group at ETH or flatmates at home. In particular, Point offers the possibility of building communities around topics of sustainability - be it food sharing, AI ethics, seasonal cooking, books on feminism or novel materials for energy-efficient computer chips. Making such communities visible on Point can **draw the attention of students currently outside of the 'sustainability bubble'** to such ideas and activities in a positive, socially engaging manner. Such network effects that are well-known from existing social media might well be the strategy we need to root sustainability in the mindset of every ETH student. To truly make Point thrive as a digital community hub for ETH, this platform must be promoted to a much greater degree. We are sad that at present Point is virtually unknown amongst students and we hope for a large-scale campaign led by the Executive Board.

As shown in the report, the **number of students** at ETH has increased over the years. We would like to know how much increase is expected in the next 10 years in the number of students. The answers to such questions have significant implications for sustainability: Will ETH grow its campus? Rely more on digital education? Is expansion taken into account in strategic plans for energy consumption etc.? We hope to see such considerations addressed more explicitly in future reports.

It is also worth noting that the **ratio of staff to students** has decreased which is not beneficial for education, in particular supervision of research projects. As mentioned in the same section, this ratio is currently simply balanced by other staff.

We believe the initial transition to **digital education** was excellent given the size of the task. We have finished three online semesters, however, there are four points to be criticized.

Firstly, we feel the drop in **innovation** is incompatible with the goals stated by the report. This problematic drop is illustrated by the failure to retain audiences in lectures and other classes. Indeed many students shifted to following lectures in 'podcast' mode. Even though this was an effective learning strategy for some students, this modus operandi was often established without being agreed upon or even discussed between lecturers and students, leading to a widespread feeling of detachment on both sides.

Secondly, there was a lack of **financial support** for students during the pandemic. Many have lost their part-time jobs, especially in service and catering, but had no ease of burden with paying the increased tuition fees. This made ETH less inclusive for students with insufficient financial support.

Thirdly, we welcome that most **services** have been adopted in an **online** format but after the first month of the pandemic, these have not been actively introduced to students. Keeping the students physically active, informing them about their opportunities in case of hardship and with the active promotion of these offers, the mental well-being of the students could have been improved.

[1] <https://www.point.ethz.ch>

Fourthly, the report explicitly specifies '*increasing the number of **exams offered online***' as a goal in education. However, ETH publicly communicated its decision to keep many exams off-line in order to '*keep the extraordinary image of ETH*'. We would like to see an explanation of this conflict of interests and also a more detailed motivation of how this goal contributes to sustainability.

Overall, we believe **digital education** to be a key factor in the future of university development due to its potential for a stronger inclusion of disadvantaged social groups as well as its role in questions of campus growth and resource consumption. Therefore, we hope to see these discussions deepened in future semesters, together with student representatives.

The **mental well-being** of students has never been more important and the results of #wiegETHs should be implemented and discussed openly. The pandemic should shine the light on this problem, which affected every student. Many are not aware of the opportunities and services that exist at ETH. This should be communicated more clearly so that one is able to access help and support without any hindrance. Studies say that researchers suffer the most with the immense pressure, so ETH should actively advertise and expand offers for regular individual, in-person coaching/therapy. We believe that giving support to students can help them excel both in their academics as well as on a personal level.

Supporting the best students is something we also believe in. Additionally, the number of Excellence Scholarships has dropped despite the increased number of applicants. We believe that restructuring the **scholarships** could help not only the very best but also the other exceptional students who were carefully selected to join ETH. This could make ETH a more inclusive institution. Also, it is important to mention that some international students join ETH to take the ultimate opportunity despite having an insufficient budget. As the majority of international students are master's students, their lifetime at ETH is around 1.5-2 years. There are social scholarships at ETH [1] (not mentioned in the report) but master's students cannot use them in the first year, meaning that this form of scholarship is not suitable for international master's students for whom it was designed. This puts an enormous burden on these few students.

[1] <https://ethz.ch/students/en/studies/financial/scholarships/cost-of-living.html>

CAMPUS

PEOPLE

We welcome that the discussion on the structure of ETH mentions **VSETH and SSC** specifically. An added section on the extent to which and ways how staff and students can deliver inputs could show how democratic and bottom-up the structure is at ETH.

The report mentions '*individual responsibility at all levels*' in the case of **rETHink** but it remains unclear what this actually means. Are there campaigns to help the individuals tackling these responsibilities? In this context, we want to reemphasize the need for a cultural shift towards sustainability within the ETH community, as mentioned in the previous section on Point. This can be linked to rETHink through its focus on team spirit. Without a doubt, this bottom-up approach of the community must, however, go hand-in-hand with a top-down initiative that sends a strong and clear message to this community.

As there are printed facts from the previous *#wiegETHs* campaign on campus, it would be great if the last campaign would be communicated more openly. **Mental well-being and health** were the topics of ETH Week this semester, so the reports should be communicated as soon as possible. Tackling the loneliness and separation on Campus, ETH Lunch Lottery was very welcomed by SSC. This could be kept in the future to bring staff and students closer together.

Considering **gender balance** at ETH, has the new focus on medicine and interdisciplinary research increased the proportion of women at ETH? Is there a guideline in selection (student/staff) regarding gender? The efforts made to help women in science is appreciated by SSC and we believe that appealing to school-age kids is the best way to increase the proportion of women at ETH but it only has an effect in the long run. As the increase of the balance was not met, how would ETH change its strategy? How does ETH compare to the very best of technical universities around the world in that matter? Another aspect that could be interesting is how the proportion of women among international students and Swiss students compare.

Extra hours and overtime do not exist in research. This is mostly due to the fact that researchers do not clock their working time. ETH is a very flexible working place, but overtime is mostly not regulated. We think it is a general problem in the scientific field and not ETH specific, but we find it unjust to include this in the report.

Given the size of the institute (one of the biggest employers in the ZH area), **business standards** applied at multinational companies could be looked at. For the better integration of researchers, German language education could be provided for free as on the given price, the current offers are not attractive enough, even though the prices are much lower than on the market.

ENVIRONMENT

SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

We highly appreciate that ETH Zurich is showing interest in the topic of material reuse by joining the **Madaster**-network. We are looking forward to ETH using its role as a Kennedy Partner to develop the material passports further, to a state at which they are a core element in the process of direct reuse of building materials. While registering the materials of the existing buildings and projects online is great, we expect ETH to communicate a clear strategy for the inclusion of reused materials in new building projects and to make sure that administrative burdens are lowered. We see Madaster not as a project for the future, but as meant for today. To understand what is already there and how this could be transformed into new forms needed. For the procurement of new materials and the assembly of those, we expect clear **guidelines** and a reference to **certificates** such as cradle-to-cradle.

We are pleased that ETH aims to reduce the overall footprint of the buildings. However, we are not convinced by the label **MINERGIE** as a symbol of progress in this regard, as it has been prescribed by the federal government for public buildings since 2012, which means that ETH Zurich is far from playing a pioneering role. As we see the need to commit to some labels we would like ETH to consider **SNBS Hochbau** for all new buildings. Furthermore, we expect a more comprehensive view of the built campus as a whole to develop it along the 'SIA-Effizienzpfad Energie' towards a 2000-watt-area. This goes for the Campus Höggerberg, as well as for the Basel site and the Campus Zentrum.

Connected to this we value the participation of ETH in the development of the **Zurich City university district**. However, we would like to see ETH playing a more active role in the process to improve mobility, accessibility and connectivity around the main building (HG). Being an active partner in the project could give ETH the opportunity to shape it to the needs of its members and to have some control over the use of energy and space.

BIODIVERSITY

We are delighted to see **biodiversity** addressed for the first time in the sustainability report, even though in a very short manner. This topic is also related to the **green spaces** around the campus. ETH Höggerberg is close to nature and has plenty of green space to offer but this is not true for Zentrum. Cooperating with neighbouring properties to connect green spaces could also improve the area of offered green spaces. Where green spaces are limited, alternatives should be looked at to improve biodiversity. This could include vertical greening, leaving the biomass in the gardens to provide beetles with shelter and to reduce transportation. Alternatively, ETH could contact **SeedCity** to handle compost material.

It was not mentioned in the report but the use of **pesticide killers** could limit biodiversity. Considering tolerating a certain amount of pests would not only improve the number of these animals but also the beneficial ones who feed on them.

The topic could be deepened by more **actively involving students**, for example in the wild bee project or light bulb project. Indeed, we see large potential in deepening the sense of 'campus'

amongst students, including its biodiversity, as we are returning to ETH Zentrum and Hönggerberg after three online semesters.

ENERGY

We are impressed by the innovative **Anergy Grid** and value the pioneering role ETH has played by starting this project as early as 2006. Since it is a system based mainly on the use of electricity, its production is of great importance. However, according to the figures published in the report, even in 2026 only half of the electricity needed to operate the Anergy Grid will be produced on campus. With regard to this slow progress in increasing the electricity produced on campus and the simultaneous inability to reduce the normalised energy demand by energy-consuming area within the past decade, we are worried that ETH Zürich might encounter difficulties in reaching CO2-neutrality by 2030.

If the electricity demand for other uses and properties besides the campus Hönggerberg is taken into account, the picture becomes even more drastic. We do not see the pure **purchase of electricity** as an adequate solution, since ETH has a model function and this would not be responsible from an ecological and infrastructural point of view. Especially if ETH were to continue not to purchase an electricity mix from 100% renewable sources, as it has been the case for the last two years. A development that is absolutely unacceptable for us.

But to be able to react to the **developments** more profoundly the report would have to provide the readers with more detailed information about upcoming projects, like the new chillers with waste heat recovery planned for 2022 and the related side-effects expected.

In general, we would like to suggest specific support of the development and scaling of renewable energy solutions, especially on electricity supply through pilot projects or a task force on one hand. And on the other hand, a detailed understanding of the energy consumption pattern could help engaged people and initiatives at ETH to find solutions to reduce the overall energy demand.

Some **specific comments** on the report: The total **energy demand** of ETH, comprised of energy and heating, has been relatively constant since 2012. Unexpectedly, the COVID pandemic had no decreasing effect on heat and electricity consumption, however, this can be easily explained by the upkeep of the buildings during this time. However, the energy demand per FTE (full-time equivalent) has seen a significant decrease, which looks like an increase in efficiency at the first glance. But if you take into account the shrinking area per FTE this is no longer the case. We, therefore, see the use of **FTE as a reference value** in this case as not appropriate and misleading. It remains an open question how the absolute energy demand is likely to develop in the future. One aspect worth pointing out is that so far, a substantial amount of energy (24.5 GWh in 2020) was sold to third parties for heating purposes.

With respect to **heating**, the renewable energy percentage has decreased over the last years due to infrastructure-related works. This trend is said to be reversed by 2022.

GREEN HOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

We are informed of the **NettoNull working group** which met in FS21 and wrote an internal White Paper concretizing on the aim of making ETH more sustainable by reaching net zero emissions

by 2030. This being said, we highly appreciate the fact that a working group, led by Reto Knutti and Christine Bratrich, was established in order to develop strategies for the **goal of net-zero emissions by 2030**. SSC was represented in this working group through Anna Knörr.

Not only are we looking forward to an **ambitious strategy** with strict and effective cuts of emissions in all three scopes combined with carbon capture and storage (CCS), i.e. negative emissions, and transparent compensation certificates only for unavoidable emissions. We also call for **clear external communication** of this strategy, the creation of a **permanent working group** to push its implementation and **easy access to data for departments** wishing to take on proactive roles, such as D-PHYS, D-ARCH, D-BSSE, D-MAVT or D-BAUG. Overall, we wish to see the ambition of serving as an example for other institutions and parts of our future carbon-neutral society.

MOBILITY

The **flight reduction initiative** of D-PHYS is a great step forward but decisions should be well communicated among students. Some departments introduced a carbon tax (the revenues were reinvested in young scientists and sustainability), although it is not stated which departments or what investments were made. Video conferencing jumped from 2408 to 868 301 meetings and flights were reduced by 77%. It is easy to see that the **pandemic** was the main source of **emission cuts** and that the only other measure was vague and needs a more concrete outline.

Based on the results of the survey by Agnes Kreil [1], in terms of awareness, **78%** of interviewed ETH professors said they were **willing to reduce personal air travel** (36% have already done it because of this project). The flight reduction project was a finalist in the International Sustainable Campus Excellence Awards 2020. This shows that there has been a change in mentality amongst ETH professors, and in that respect, the project has been successful.

Based on a recent survey by the PhD student Ariane Wenger [2], only about **half of the students know about the air travel project** even though their approval rate is very high with some thinking that the 15% reduction is not ambitious enough. **Support from students** for various emission reduction measures to reduce professional air travel **is high**, and the most supported measures are support and assistance in booking alternatives (e.g. funding first-class train travel for long train trips), mandatory restrictions (e.g. mandatory over-land travel in Switzerland and or for trips shorter than a specific duration), and investments into virtual communication (e.g. investment into virtual events and studios).

The **Campus mobility project's** main contribution to sustainability is the electrification of the ETH Link. This is a good initiative that shows that concrete ideas can be successfully implemented and have positive consequences. In view of the change towards carbon-neutral mobility which will go along with electric vehicles playing a major role in transportation, some larger developments in public charging infrastructure will be needed in the next years as it is not planned to have a complete shift towards public transportation only.

[1] <https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/associates/services/organisation/Schulleitung/mobilitaetsplattform/Artikel/Attitudes%20toward%20professional%20air%20travel%20at%20ETH%20Zurich%202020.pdf>

[2] Wenger 2021, unpublished

Unfortunately, the report only talks about **biking** in the 'Goals' section. ETH supports students with affordable PubliBike subscriptions and helps financing biking groups. The support towards **VELOVE**, the student's bike association is very much appreciated by the students. With the help of ETH, a free DIY bike repair service is available to all on both ETH Höggerberg and Zentrum. Not only do they help the community but they promote a sustainable form of transportation, healthy and active lifestyle. With the pandemic, more and more students started using bikes to commute to ETH. Using the PubliBike system, the issue with the **lack of bike parking** spaces is not as apparent as using one's own bike. With students returning to campus, ETH should have a plan on expanding the number of secure bike parking spaces. Before the pandemic, many students did not know about the PubliBike offer, this could be communicated better.

PAPER CONSUMPTION

Concerning paper consumption, it would be important to mention how **sustainable recycling** paper is at ETH. FSC was mentioned in this section as a label for paper used on Campus but it would also be important to know if the recycling happens in-house or externally and if it meets any sustainability standards. The data in the text and the table do not match, so it is a bit confusing which values are correct.

It would be important to see if there was any effect of introducing unlimited printing for staff in terms of **paper consumption**. What we miss from the report is what steps have been and will be taken to work on a further decrease; we can think of giving students and employees incentives to limit their printing and paper use. Are there incentives for employees to switch to digital solutions?

RECYCLING AND WASTE

The **goal of the last report** - recycling 50% of waste volume - is clearly stated as '**not achieved**' but there are no reasons explained and no ideas suggested. We would like ETH to explain in detail what kinds of waste is produced, how much, and how they are working on reducing waste production and on increasing recycling.

A challenge mentioned is the increase of ETH members, generating more waste. We would like ETH to think more about **waste management when expanding its community** by, for example, improving its recycling stations, or proposing recyclable alternatives wherever it is feasible.

The increase of waste is also dependent on the **consumer's options** around the campus. The shops in the surroundings, such as Coop or Avec, offer nearly only packaged products, generating a big amount of waste. ETH has to propose better alternatives to its community or impose restrictions on packaging to the shops that are in its buildings.

On page 71 of the report, the figure with the percentages of recycled waste in the main buildings is not really relevant. Indeed, we think that it is **hard to compare buildings** based on the percentage of volume they recycled as each building has different types of waste, recyclable or not, and also different total amounts of waste. It would have made more sense to compare, for instance, the types and amounts of waste produced in each building, and how well their recycling is managed.

ETH produces a significant amount of waste through the disposal of unwanted lab/office equipment. The report does not talk about these in detail, therefore it would be interesting to see how much **avoidable** electric **waste** ETH produces. There are student initiatives at ETH specifically focusing on equipment redistribution, repairing electrical devices and reuse of material. **EquipSent, Bastli and SecondBlends** are all student groups that ETH could contact to establish mutually beneficial cooperation on reducing avoidable waste. ETH should force labs to separate still working but unwanted equipment from the discarded items and create an internal channel or use Point to give them away.

FOOD

We do not agree that we are 'on track' (p. 98) with food goals at ETH. Even though important first steps have been made in developing recommendations for catering companies to reduce packaging and substitute disposable with reusable dishes, their **actual implementation**, as well as information campaigns aimed at staff and students, are being **delayed**. The **Covid crisis is no excuse** since peer universities have carried out major advances.

On recent developments: although the reshaping of offers and the production in the mensa is welcomed by SSC - as it has happened in other institutions [1] -, we are **not satisfied** with the way the **menu price changes** have been carried out. The lack of **communication** towards the students, especially SSC, where many work on mensa and food-related topics and have introduced their projects to catering companies and ETH Sustainability, is not acceptable.

The most alarming part of the decision was the **argument and the lack of assurances**. Since **2008**, there has been nearly **no inflation** [2] in Switzerland according to the official data. Looking at the Consumer Price Index (CPI) between January 2008 and August 2021, there has been a 10% **decrease in the price** of vegetables, a 6% decrease in fruits, a 5% decrease for fish and a 5% increase in the price of meat products (of which poultry had a 7% price decrease). In this period, the mensa has **reduced the portion size** (this decision is important to reduce food waste), **removed the sides**: salad and apple sauce are only occasional offers.

Since 2008, there have been bad seasons before this one, so no price increase should be justified by a single bad season. When the prices normalize after the pandemic, we expect ETH to **set lower prices**.

As long as the menus do not have macronutritional criteria, we cannot state that the choice is only based on a matter of taste, therefore we cannot tax the ones who want to eat the meat menu. At UZH, **macronutritional criteria and fact sheets** help people to choose the vegetarian/vegan menu over one including meat. Offering **poultry and fish over red meat** would not only reduce the price of the menu compared to the level in 2008 but would make it more sustainable.

According to the new **Sustainability Programme** for catering companies, the **meat portions** are going to be **reduced to 50g / plate** for any restaurant partaking in the project. How would ETH justify the same 1 CHF increase for the regular menu when the amount of the meat is going to be reduced to less than half of the current offer, especially that the refill does not include meat?

[1] <https://www.zhaw.ch/de/ueber-uns/aktuell/news/detailansicht-news/event-news/nachhaltig-essen-ohne-verzicht/>

[2] <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/prices/consumer-price-index.html>

A topic that was greatly missing from the news is that whether the increased prices cover healthier and more sustainable raw materials, such as local, ecological or fair trade products.

We have been **demanding changes** at the mensa and restaurants, and we are disappointed that ETH raised more questions with their communication than providing answers. This could hinder the acceptance of sustainability projects in the future. The current decision lets students and staff pay the entire bill without telling them what they can gain from it or giving them solid reasons to do so. This only puts the catering companies in a comfortable position and it does not help long-term sustainable thinking. We believe that education is the way towards sustainable thinking and not forcing students financially into decisions.

Overall, we would like to emphasize the high student interest and willingness to engage in this topic. SSC now also holds the main student representative seat in the Catering Commission. We are looking forward to actively deepening discussions there. This dialogue would also be greatly facilitated by **giving ETH Sustainability a permanent seat in the Catering Commission**.

Some concrete points: An important next step is making initiatives like the **reBOX** program the **default option** at all restaurants, canteens and food trucks rather than an active choice. In the long run, we would like to see that catering services charge customers for disposable packaging options. The fee could motivate people to invest in reusable options and to help recycling projects. An idea of ours has been to change the communication on **disposable coffee cups**. Changing the standard price to the one with reusable cups could change the standards for ETH members as they would understand that disposable cups are in fact not free and have an impact on the environment.

Next to such highly visible initiatives for reusables, it is vital that the sustainable catering programme at ETH focuses also on readily available meals that take into account **CO2 emission**, animal welfare and other criteria.

A **macronutritional standard** for every menu should be in place, meaning that both the vegetarian/vegan and the meat menu should reach certain criteria of calories, fibre, protein and fat. The caterers should communicate the macros on their menus, similar to the menus at UZH mensa to encourage people to choose a vegetarian/vegan alternative. Offering **poultry and fish over beef and pork** is a good compromise in offering meat but reducing the carbon footprint of the menus.

The idea of offering free meals to **students in need** was welcomed by ETH Sustainability and the catering companies. Also, the catering companies were open to joining Foodsharing in order to reduce their **food waste**. An alternative is that students in need could pick up the leftovers instead of the Foodsharing community, so they can have lunch for the next day. Similar to the mensa at UZH, ETH could offer **'Reste' menus**, selling leftovers at a reduced price.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

ETH sources an increasing share of its **funding from third parties**. However, the report does not mention who they are. What companies are excluded from being possible donors to ETH? Does ETH accept funding from companies in the fossil fuel sector? Wouldn't this undermine ETH's efforts to become carbon neutral and to divest their funds from exactly these companies? The source of the third party needs to be discussed, including a clear pathway to make it more sustainable. Concerning **public funds**, they are not invested by ETH but entrusted to the Swiss Federal Treasury. What steps is ETH undertaking to encourage the Swiss Federal Treasury to make their investment practices more sustainable?

'ETH Zurich defines sustainability according to currently valid ESG criteria.' What **ESG criteria** exactly is this referring to, and what kind of fossil fuel investments are still included? Please provide a specific link to the definition of the ESG criteria used. In our view, ESG criteria are poor metrics for sustainable/1.5°C aligned investment practices. Due to the inclusion of governance structures and other factors, environmental aspects are often diluted. A commitment to a standard like the FNG label could be worthy instead.

'Under the current investment strategy of ETH Zurich, the funds have to be invested mainly directly or indirectly in stocks or bonds.' Where is the **current investment strategy** of ETH documented? Please provide a reference. In our view, a 'best-in-class' investment strategy is not appropriate for sustainable finances. The most ecological coal mine is still a coal mine and should be excluded from potential investments. A more suitable approach would be based on a **'best-in-service' assessment or the use of exclusion criteria** such as fossil fuel divestment.

The fact that: *'Investments in companies that are engaged in the exploration of fossil fuels, or generate revenues with it, currently account for less than 1% of the ETH portfolio'*, and *'ETH Zurich strives to reduce that share to zero if such products become available to its asset managers'* we acknowledge as a first good step towards fossil fuel divestment. However, we think that ETH should use **when, and not if** – indicating that this is a matter of time, not of conditionality. We invite ETH to actively engage with the asset managers to search for suitable products or, if necessary, to create them, like for the Uni of Lausanne. Furthermore, the fact that fossil fuel extracting industries make up only 1% of the portfolio clearly indicates that excluding them from the investment horizon would not create a large diversification risk. Thus, divestment from fossil fuels is the only valid conclusion from an ecological, moral and financial perspective.

Based on this, we encourage ETH to **commit to a well-defined divestment schedule**. This would increase the pressure on the asset managers to complete the transition and send a valuable signal to the public.

DIALOGUE

We appreciate the efforts in previous years to lead ETH out of its 'ivory tower' and engage with the public in dialogue. The topic of sustainability, however, should be made more prominent, especially in the specific case of climate action and the **goal of a carbon-neutral university in a carbon-neutral society**.

Furthermore, we believe **dialogue with the young members of society** harbours untapped potential. Developing formats in which ETH students teach sustainability basics to young students at Kantonschulen, for example, could have a major long-term impact in advancing sustainability in society.