



Ombudspersons of ETH Zurich

Dr. Peter Frischknecht (until 31.8.2022)

Martin Hohmann (from 1.3.2022)

Dr. Margrit Leuthold

Jonas Nakonz (from 1.9.2022)

Prof. em. Annette Spiro (from 1.9.2022)

Lawyer Kathrin Teuscher

Prof. em. Dr. Gerhard Tröster (until
31.3.2022)

Zurich, February 17, 2023

Ombudspersons of ETH Zurich Yearly Report 2022

Personnel

Prof. em. Dr. Gerhard Tröster and Dr. Peter Frischknecht have resigned from office after many years of service as of March 31 and August 31, 2022, respectively. The cooperation with them was very much appreciated.

Three new ombudspersons were elected by the school management upon recommendation by the University Assembly: Martin Hohmann (psychologist) took office on March 1, 2022, Prof. em. Annette Spiro (professor emeritus at the ETH Department of Architecture) and Jonas Nakonz (independent mediator) on September 1, 2022.

Statistics 2022

	2022		2021
Total Cases	127		106
	Cases	Percent	Percent
PhD	44	35%	34%
Administrative and technical staff	28	22%	27%
BA / MA Students	19	15%	13%
Professors	13	10%	8%
Postdocs	11	9%	12%
Others	9	7%	0%
Senior scientists	3	2%	6%

Female	65	51%	36%
Male	62	49%	63%
Other	0	0%	1%
German speaking	68	54%	66%
Other languages	59	46%	34%
Low effort	86	68%	62%
Medium effort	27	21%	23%
High effort	14	11%	15%

In 2022, the ombudspersons handled significantly more inquiries than in the previous year (a total of 127 inquiries vs. 106 inquiries in the previous year). Over the last 5 years, the number of inquiries to ombudspersons has grown faster than the number of ETH members.

Relative to the respective "population" at ETH, most requests for advice came from professors (2.5% of all professors) and doctoral students (1%). In absolute numbers, doctoral students accounted for the largest share, followed by administrative and technical staff. There were about the same number of requests from women as from men. Against the background of the proportion of women at ETH of 33% (students) and 35% (employees), this means that women contacted the ombudsman's office about twice as often.

Almost 70% of the inquiries could be settled with little effort (< 1 day) in 2022; in about 20% of the situations, various discussions and clarifications were necessary, which involved an effort of 2 to 3 days. In about 10% of the cases, the effort was high and extended over a longer period of time.

The inquirers usually choose a single ombudsperson based on their profile. Preferences according to gender or statuses were not discernible in 2022. The ombudspersons without a previous connection to ETH received a slightly higher proportion of inquiries compared to the other ombudspersons.

Further activities of the ombudspersons

ALEA Award: Margrit Leuthold participated as a member of the jury of the "Art of Leadership Award" ALEA.

International networking: Ombudspersons met on 26 October 2022 for an exchange of experiences with Josef Leidenfrost, President of the European Network of Ombuds for Higher Education (ENOHE). ETH membership in this organization is under discussion.

System Design: The ombudspersons actively participated in various workshops as part of the "System Design" process to improve the complaint and conflict management processes at ETH.

Unconscious Bias: The Ombudsperson Office organized a further training on the topic of "Unconscious Bias", with the expert Prof. Gudrun Sander, HSG. The workshops sensitized us in the perception of institutional problems, the further training with regard to personal unconscious biases.

Confidentiality: Members of the ombudsman's office met Brigitte Tag, professor of criminal law at the University of Zurich, for an exchange on the subject of confidentiality.

Insights from the ombudspersons' work

The new doctoral ordinance of November 23, 2021 was an important step towards reducing the dependency of doctoral students on their supervisors. However, at the end of 2022, implementation has not yet been fully carried out in isolated cases. The same applies to the new onboarding processes for professorships and assistant professorships. The ombudspersons will continue to monitor implementation closely.

Many people seeking advice are unsure which contact points they should turn to. A sharpening of the profiles would be central. Moreover, despite many efforts, trust in the institutions seems to remain relatively weak; in particular, whether contact points really guarantee confidentiality and whether reports really lead to consequences. Through its independence and strict adherence to confidentiality, the ombudsman's office contributes to strengthening trust.

The ombudspersons