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ETH Zurich to boost theoretical basic research

50 Million Swiss Francs for Institute of Theoretical Studies

Zurich, 15 May 2013. **ETH Zurich is setting up a new Institute for Theoretical Studies which will offer sabbatical placements to top academics from all over the world. This has been made possible thanks to two outstandingly generous donations made by ETH alumnus Max Rössler and the Walter Haefner Foundation, each of whom have pledged 25 million Swiss francs to ETH Zurich Foundation.**

For as long as ETH Zurich has existed, it has upheld some of the greatest theoreticians amongst its ranks. Academics such as Albert Einstein, Wolfgang Pauli, Hermann Weyl, Niklaus Wirth and many more have taught and researched in Zurich, broadening theoretical principles in the fields of physics, chemistry, mathematics and computer science, and thus contributing towards significant innovations. The importance of mathematics has continued to rise in a world shaped by technology and digitalisation. Manifold aspects of our daily routine are based on mathematical principles without us even knowing it. GPS technology which is integrated into every smartphone would be just as unthinkable without Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity as modern information technology would be without quantum mechanics or storage media like DVDs without the error correcting codes which are based on number theory.

The new Institute for Theoretical Studies (ETH-ITS) aims to advance this tradition of establishing theories and reinforce ETH's academic base. ETH President Ralph Eichler has been planning for some time to create a centre for theoretical studies where the brightest minds can get together and engage. "With two generous donations, we can now turn our plans for ETH-ITS into reality," comments Ralph Eichler. "A warm thanks to Max Rössler and the Walter Haefner Foundation for their trust in ETH and their vision of its future."

A Permanent Meeting of World-class Minds

The new Institute for Theoretical Studies will invite top academics from the fields of mathematics, theoretical natural sciences and theoretical computer science to ETH Zurich and offer them a sabbatical placement for a period of up to one year. Between four and six Senior Fellows will be appointed to inspire ETH researchers and students, providing additional stimulation and enrichment to Zurich's higher education landscape.

"With this new institute, ETH aims to organise a permanent world-class meeting for researchers," says Ralph Eichler, alluding to "Weltklasse Zürich", a track and field event that attracts world-class athletes to Zurich every year. The fellows will come to ETH upon recommendation by an academic advisory council and will be able to carry out their research with the utmost level of freedom. Outstanding

young academics may also apply to come to the ETH-ITS and work alongside the experienced Senior Fellows.

The Start of the Value Chain

For several years now ETH Zurich has been investing heavily in interdisciplinary research centres. Centres of competence have been set up for integrated risk management, a world food system, sustainable building and pharmaceutical technology, to name just a few. The aim of these centres, some of which have been set up in close collaboration with private industry and other external partners, is to develop new approaches to tackle pressing societal challenges. According to ETH's President, however, the idea behind the new institute is at the start of the academic value chain. The fellows, says the President, will help the institute to enhance theoretical basic research at ETH.

Contribution to ETH and Beyond

The new institute will occupy a special position within the structure of ETH Zurich and will be under the direct control of the President. It will supplement the Swiss Federal Council's performance mandate for the ETH domain and be privately funded. The ETH Zurich Foundation found two benefactors who were inspired by the idea to set up the ETH-ITS: Max Rössler and Martin Haefner both studied mathematics at ETH and still enjoy close ties to their Alma Mater to this day.

"With its commitment to researchers of international acclaim, we would like to support ETH in its endeavour to continue setting new standards in theoretical basic research," said Martin Haefner, representing the Walter Haefner Foundation. Max Rössler added: "ETH left a lasting impression on me. I consider it a noble obligation to give something back to the university and to assist ETH in attracting the best talent and breaking new ground in fields such as basic research."

First Institute Director Appointed

The new institute will be located in the city centre. ETH-ITS operations will be managed by a Director who will receive the assistance of an Academic Advisory Council consisting of ETH representatives and external academics. Ralph Eichler has already appointed the first Director of the new ETH-ITS: Giovanni Felder, who has been Professor for Mathematics at ETH Zurich since 1996. The two donations have laid the foundation for a visionary idea which will enhance the international reputation of ETH Zurich as a place of free academic thought and will also have a positive impact in Switzerland, says ETH-ITS Director Giovanni Felder.

Further information

ETH Zürich
Roman Klingler
Head of Media Relations
Phone: +41 44 632 41 41
mediarelations@hk.ethz.ch

ETH Zürich Foundation
Dr. Donald Tillman
Managing Director
Phone: +41 44 633 69 60
donald.tillman@ethz-foundation.ch

The Walter Haefner Foundation is a charitable foundation run by the family of AMAG founder Walter Haefner. It supports non-profit activities related to education, culture and charity. The Walter Haefner Foundation has provided support to ETH Zurich on several occasions in the past through donations made to the ETH Zurich Foundation. Walter Haefner's son, Martin, studied mathematics at ETH Zurich, graduating in 1980. Martin Haefner is Executive Chairman of Careal Holding/AMAG and Vice President of the Walter Haefner Foundation's Board of Trustees.

Dr. Max Rössler studied mathematics at ETH and also wrote his PhD at ETH in 1966. After working as a guest researcher at Harvard University, Max Rössler returned to ETH, where he spent approximately ten years working as a researcher and lecturer. He then went into private industry and made a name for himself as a successful portfolio manager in the field of asset management. He has supported the ETH Zurich Foundation before, making a generous donation in 2007. Since 2009 ETH Zurich has been awarding the Rössler Prize once a year to recognise the achievements of outstanding young professors. The Rössler prize is presented at the exclusive Thanksgiving event held by ETH and ETH Zurich Foundation.

ETH Zurich is one of the leading international universities for technology and natural sciences. It is well-known for its excellent education, ground-breaking fundamental research and for putting its new findings directly into practice. Founded in 1855, ETH Zurich today has around 18,000 students from over 100 different countries, 3,800 of whom are doctoral students. It offers researchers an inspiring working environment and its students a comprehensive education. 21 Nobel Laureates have studied, taught or conducted research at ETH Zurich, underlining the institute's excellent reputation
www.ethz.ch

The **ETH Zurich Foundation** unites companies, private individuals, foundations with ETH Zurich. As the leading technology and science foundation, it supports the university in achieving its most important strategic objectives in education and research. Funding partners benefit from access to bold, high-quality partnerships with one of the best universities anywhere in the world, and the opportunity to work together to push boundaries.
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