

Transparent working hours

Lukas Vonesch, Head of Human Resources at ETH Zurich, explains the reasons behind obligatory time tracking and its benefits.

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Mr Vonesch, why has ETH decided to introduce obligatory time tracking?

Lukas Vonesch: At universities like ETH, the focus is on the quality of our work. In that respect, the subject of working hours isn't really a priority. This measure is being introduced primarily for financial reasons. As a state-funded university, ETH is subject to the requirements of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSASs). To meet these requirements, ETH must provide transparent documentation of its employees' working hours at the end of each year.

When did this requirement come into force?

The new accounting standards have been in force since the start of 2015. For the last two years, ETH has been able to document working hours on the basis of simulations as an interim solution. With ETHIS, we now have a simple solution for individual documentation.

Why is time tracking regulated differently for different categories of staff?

The time tracking requirement essentially applies to all ETH employees who are subject to the ETH Personnel Ordinance. At ETH, however, we have staff working in lots of different roles. We have therefore found a solution which does not restrict employees' independence in terms of working hours and which can be applied to different ways of working. Non-managerial administrative staff have to document their working hours in addition to absences for legal reasons.



Photo: Pixstudios, Katrin Zehnder

“The new regulation can improve the common understanding of our work.”

Lukas Vonesch,
Head of Human Resources

How does keeping a daily record of attendance and absence help ETH employees?

ETHIS gives employees a good overview of absences and, where necessary, hours worked. The documentation also serves as a useful basis for open, transparent conversations between employees and their supervisors.

Is there a risk that the new regulation will increase the “pressure to perform”?

On the contrary: I think it could improve the common understanding of our work

and the targets to be achieved. I don't think the new requirement will at all affect our culture of trust or the flexibility of day-to-day work.

How can ETH employees minimise the amount of work involved in time tracking?

Employees can record their working hours in different ways. They can either enter periods of time to the nearest minute or hour, or they can use a “sample week” in which their normal working hours are stored in ETHIS. ■

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