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Prof. Dr. Olaf Kübler, Präsident ETH Zürich
Prof. Dr. Albert Waldvogel, Delegierter des Präsidenten
Prof. Dr. Gerhard Schmitt, Vizepräsident Planung
ETH Zentrum
CH-8092 Zürich

April 18th, 2005

Dear Mr. President, Professor Schmitt and Professor Waldvogel,

Science City ETH Zürich is a wonderful vision and a great opportunity for the ETH to create a unique environment. But how should we imagine this "city quarter for intellectual culture"? The exhibition "Science City ETH Zürich" in the HIL-building and the brochure that was published under the same name last year give us a first impression. There are architectural drafts and living spaces created by computer graphics and populated with virtual people. More concrete we see the plans for the new sports center and the Information Science Lab that is going to be built this year. Beyond this, however, Science City remains still somewhat elusive.

The signing parties of this letter have the goal that the vision of Science City is taken also as an opportunity to improve the working and living conditions of the ETH-affiliated families. An environment should be created that will better combine working at the ETH with family life. The topic of childcare plays a crucial role in achieving this goal. The current situation in German Switzerland and particularly in Zürich makes it almost impossible for both parents of school-age children to pursue a full-time professional career. Once the preschool-age of their children has passed, these parents are confronted with the question of how to provide care for their children outside the family home during the time they are at work. The available options are very inadequate: schools are assigned according to home address (not work address!), only very few day schools exist and only in certain city quarters, private schools are not only expensive but also often support certain educational ideologies. As a result the children are put through a patchwork of care: school, "Hort", nanny/aupair etc. In many cases the parents have to shuttle their children to and from the different care places. The typical workday combined with family obligations creates an organizational marathon that negatively influences both work efficiency and the children's wellbeing.

We suggest integrating schools on the ETH-campus. Several possibilities exist that should be discussed, for example a school connected with a "Mittagstisch" and afternoon tutoring/activities or a day school. Already now, the ETH has at its disposal an excellent infrastructure to tackle such a project: the competence center for childcare of the ETH and the University of Zürich. It certainly makes sense to take advantage of these existing structures.

Adequate childcare and the according infrastructure is also an essential prerequisite to increase the percentage of women in scientific research and education. Should the Science City Initiative not have as one of its goals the support of women in the sciences?

Furthermore, it should be very attractive for the ETH to integrate schools into the campus. An institution with a vision for the future and the goal to create an "intellectual quarter" must by definition support the care and education of the youngest generation. The interplay between school and university is not only stimulating, but also a great investment into the future, and is, in light of the decreasing student numbers in many scientific areas, a valuable measure to reverse the trend. Where, after all, will we find the scientists of tomorrow?

Including city-like structures as for example schools or after-school daycare centers will enhance the "city" character of Science City. The integration of the surrounding quarters "Höngg" and "Affoltern" will be improved, if children from these quarters could also attend the schools.

We want to hereby urge the responsible parties not to postpone the planning of schools to later stages of Science City building, but to make it one of its priorities and thereby support a family-friendly Science City. The need and the necessity are undisputable.

We suggest creating a working group "Science City Schools" as soon as possible that can work together with a panel of experts on the realization of this idea. The "Stiftung für Kinderbetreuung", KiHZ, is familiar with this topic and is already in contact with a group of experts on day schools in the Kanton Zürich. We want to urge the responsible project manager to arrange a meeting with the already existing working groups of the KiHZ to draft an outline for this important project.

We look forward to your reply!

Sincerely,

The Undersigned