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Conclusion of the administrative enquiry at CSCS in Manno

Co-direction for further growth

Manno, February 26th, 2007. ETH Zurich is devoted to enabling CSCS in Manno to continue to grow as a national supercomputing centre. The co-direction between Dr. Marie-Christine Sawley and Professor Marco Baggiolini (new) will make this possible.

In the spring of 2006 eight employees of CSCS in Manno signed a letter demanding that the director and head of administration step down. The president of ETH Zurich at the time ordered an administrative enquiry to clarify the accusations. Organizationally CSCS reports to ETH Zurich. The enquiry revealed that in the working conflict the management was at times not fully master of the situation and that there were weak points in the management that must be corrected.

Good marks from the Peer Review

The Peer Review, held independently from the administrative enquiry during the summer of 2006, gave the CSCS management a good technical and scientific evaluation. The peers came to the conclusion that “the current management has done an excellent job of re-engineering the organization”. According to the peers, the current CSCS has made significant progress in comparison to CSCS as they found it during the last evaluation in 2002.

The conflict we’ve mentioned was also the result of a largely un-conciliatory attitude of certain employees. During a press conference in Manno the a.i. president of ETH Zurich, Professor Konrad Osterwalder, appealed to “all forces of good will to let go of past conflicts and allow a new beginning at CSCS”.

Medienmitteilung 8

Well-aimed reinforcement of the management

For this new beginning Professor Marco Baggiolini, former president of the Università della Svizzera Italiana (USI), has been brought on board. Together with the current director, Dr. Marie-Christine Sawley, he will co-direct CSCS. Konrad Osterwalder explained that, "We consider it a stroke of good fortune, that with Prof. Baggiolini we have been able to find a person firmly anchored in Ticino and throughout Switzerland, who is prepared to support the further growth of CSCS in this important stabilizing phase". On the one hand the chosen solution stands for continuity in the areas where the centre has already undisputedly shown good work, on the other hand, the management structure of CSCS will be strengthened in specific areas.

Location Manno confirmed

Konrad Osterwalder underlined the importance of CSCS for the national university and research landscape. He referred to the message to parliament from the federal government on the promotion of research, education and innovation 2008 -2011, in which CSCS is explicitly named as the national supercomputing centre. The message also clearly states that the most powerful supercomputer shall at all times be situated at CSCS and that the centre will continue to be managed by ETH Zurich.

According to the president of ETH Zurich further important investments will be necessary for the realization of the national strategy in the area of high performance computing (approx. 150 Mio. CHF for the period 2008 -2011). Co-director Marco Baggiolini emphasized the fact that perspectives for further growth at CSCS are good. Co-director Marie-Christine Sawley welcomes the collaboration with Prof. Baggiolini: "As a team we will be able to make the necessary technological and scientific developments for the fulfilment of the national strategy more efficiently and build on the good results from 2004 - 2007".

Further information

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CSCS

Is the national centre for supercomputing and employs around 40 people, of which 15 scientists. High Performance Computing, HPC, is an area of computational scientific calculation that requires high compute capacity in order to calculate simulations or analyze complex data. CSCS works with both ETH, other Swiss universities, PSI, CERN, MeteoSwiss and other research institutions.

Prof. Marco Baggiolini

Is an internationally recognized immunologist. After his studies in medicine he worked as an assistant in Basel, Bern and the Rockefeller University in New York with Nobel Prize winner Christian de Duve. From 1970, he managed the research and development program at Sandoz Basel for over ten years and in 1983 was appointed as full professor and director of the Theodor-Kocher-Institute of the university of Bern. It was here that he developed, together with his colleagues, a new class of proteins (known as chemokines), which regulate the function of the leucocytes in the immune defence. As a member of the research council of the Swiss National Science Foundation he was responsible for priority programs in research and the national centres of competence. He received numerous national and international prizes for his research. Between 1996 and 2006 he was the president and rector of the Università della Svizzera Italiana.

Dr. Marie-Christine Sawley

Has worked in the field of high performance computing for the past 20 years. She obtained her doctorate in plasma physics from the EPFL in 1985 and completed her post-doc at the University of Sydney. Mrs. Sawley managed the user support for the first national supercomputer and follow-up systems up until the year 2000. She has been a member of various national and international working groups on the subject of HPC. In 1997 she completed the Mastering Technology Enterprise Program at the IMD in Lausanne. Thereafter Mrs. Sawley was responsible for setting up various partnerships between the EPFL and private industry before taking over as director of CSCS in 2003.