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IT Services at ETH Newsletter

Deutsch

Dear Reader



The number of electronic exams taking place at ETH Zurich is steadily increasing. Despite the many advantages they offer, online exams require enhanced infrastructure and reliable cooperation between all participants. More under the heading "Success through cooperation".

Our new generation of high performance computing is equally the product of fruitful cooperation within the project team. The new clusters support aspects of cloud computing with the goal of providing the flexibility needed to fulfill the computing needs of ETH scientists. Slightly less evident, but equally beneficial is our newly established contract management system for IT contracts. The system provides an automatic reminder when contract renewal is due and also allows a better overview of concluded contracts.

Wishing you an enjoyable read,

Reto Gutmann
Director of IT Services

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→ New EULER cluster at ETH

The EULER cluster, named after the famous Swiss mathematician and physicist Leonhard Euler (1707-1783), marks a new milestone in the history of high performance computing (HPC) at ETH. Built on the 14 years of experience gained with the Asgard, Hreidar, Gonzales and Brutus clusters, EULER delivers more computing power than all those clusters combined. However, what makes EULER truly unique is its mixture of traditional "bare metal" and innovative "virtual" technologies in a single HPC cluster.

"Bare metal" is still the best solution for large-scale simulations and applications where peak performance is critical. Virtualization is also growing in significance since it is versatile and opens up new possibilities which cannot be implemented with traditional technologies. Internally, virtualization is used to simplify the design and operation of EULER and externally to offer "cloud computing" services to the scientific community of ETH. This allows, for example, a research group to rent computing capacity on EULER for a certain time, or even to reconfigure a part of the cluster to run Windows applications - something that would be impossible on a traditional Linux cluster. This flexibility will allow IT Services to fulfill the computing needs of scientists who, until now, were unable to use the central clusters of ETH, either for technical or financial reasons. More information on the [ITS blog](#).

Dr. Olivier Byrde, Manager High Performance Computing (HPC), ITS SIS



Blackboard meets display: Christian Bolliger and Olivier Byrde (from left) with the Euler formula and Leonhard Euler portrait on the 10 franc bill.

→ Success through cooperation

Online exams have become an essential part of the examination routine. Electronic exams are much more than simple multiple-choice tests. In addition to this closed form of examination there are also semi-open formats such as gap-texts and open questions which require completing tasks in third-party applications e.g. Excel, MATLAB or R. Approximately 4000 individual marks are given "online" every semester, with the trend pointing upwards.

Despite increasing popularity, online exams pose a challenge. Highest priority is that everything should function smoothly; anything else would be much too stressful for the nervous examinees. With their various basic and support services, the ITS provides solid and reliable technology. Based on this, the LET professionals (Educational Development and Technology) develop online exams centrally for the whole ETH and support the faculty expertly. Finding enough space with the necessary infrastructure for testing 500 or more students is as much of a challenge as those that faculty and students, LET and ITS face. For this reason, the two units, Services and Real Estate, in addition to various Rectorate units, e.g. Examinations Office and Room Reservation, are also heavily involved. With so many participating parties, there is only one central key to success: "trust and cooperation." Hence, the "line" symbol fittingly represents not only "on-line", but also "jointly spanning the network for successful implementation of online exams, every semester, year after year." Visit the [ITS blog](#) for more details.

Reinhard Hess, Manager, Managed Services at ITS Service Delivery, ITS SDL



"on-line": Bengt Giger, Client Delivery, ITS BD, and Jan Hacker, Managed Services, ITS SDL, (from left) "extending lines" in preparation of exams.

→ Online contract management

With the new online contract and procurement management system (xRM), the ITS division IT Procurement & Portfolio (PPF) has created a promising solution for supplier management and systematic filing of their supplier contacts and contracts. The system supports today's procurement processes through central electronic filing of new contracts and procurements, allowing process controlled, transparent and comprehensible administration, from tendering to contract conclusion. Additionally, paper and electronic contract and procurement documents currently filed at various locations will also be transferred to this new, structured, user friendly environment.

Have you ever mislaid or forgotten a contract only to discover years later that the supplier no longer exists? In the future this will be prevented because every contract filed will include the termination and reminder date. Once the defined lead time arrives the responsible employee will be notified regarding renewal, extension or termination. The new system links external suppliers as well as ETH in-house buyers and customers to the related contract. Easy access and comprehensible overview of all the available data will also promote budget controlling: annual license, maintenance or contract fees can easily be retrieved from the system. Interested to find out more about the use of our online contract and procurement management system? Visit the [ITS blog](#) or contact Jürg A. Häubi or Dordaneh Arangeh, Division Head ITS PPF.

Jürg A. Häubi, Manager Order & Contract Management, ITS IT Procurement & Portfolio



Jürg A. Häubi, Order & Contract Management, and Pius Baumann, Portfoliomangement, regaining control of the paper-based archive.

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