



Practice-oriented courses in spite of the pandemic

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Topics: Organisation & Staff

Eawag's practice-oriented courses (known as PEAK) provide training for professionals. Isabelle Schläppi of the PEAK Office looks back over a year marked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

What courses does the PEAK programme offer?

Isabelle Schläppi: In 2020, nine training courses were planned, including three in French-speaking Switzerland. Our selection of topics is guided by new ordinances which need to be implemented – for example, in relation to the construction of fish migration structures or outcome evaluation for restoration projects. We also aim to communicate new research findings to practitioners. So surface water assessment and pollutant inflows and elimination were also important topics.



Isabelle Schläppi is in charge of the PEAK Office.
(Photo: Peter Penicka, Eawag)

But everyone's plans were disrupted by the coronavirus – what did this mean for Eawag?

The need for specific training for professionals still existed in spite of the coronavirus. So it was important for us to ensure that knowledge transfer could still take place. A third of our courses were switched to online or hybrid formats. We managed to do this successfully thanks to the dedication and flexibility of all concerned. But practical training in the field had to be postponed to 2021.

You also offered three courses in French-speaking Switzerland. How did they go?

Both Eawag and professionals in French-speaking Switzerland are keen to have PEAK courses there. Even if it involves more effort for us, we would like to meet this demand. But it's important to find experts with a good local network to run the courses. We managed to do that, and two courses were successfully held online. For this, we were supported by EPFL, the University of Lausanne and other local partners.

How has PEAK been changed by the events of 2020?

Our assessment is positive: the new online and hybrid formats have proved successful, and we'll continue to use them if possible. As a result of this experience, we're more flexible and can still offer most of our programme, which is appreciated by our professional audience. But it remains important for us to offer a wide variety of non-virtual courses, so that participants can interact and network in person.

Cover picture: Daria Filatova

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