



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2016–2019

**ABRIDGED
VERSION**

INTRODUCTION

Every four years since 1997, the Federal Council has defined its policy priorities in the implementation of sustainable development and adopted them in the Sustainable Development Strategy. In what is now its fifth Strategy, applicable to the 2016–2019 period, the national government has once again strengthened its commitment to this area.

At the core of the Strategy is the Action Plan, based on a long-term vision of life – and the way we live together – in Switzerland. Derived from this vision are goals to be achieved by 2030, as well as the measures which the Federal Council plans to implement during the current legislative period. The Strategy also indicates the contribution that Switzerland will make towards achieving the United Nations' global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Strategy provides a reference framework for the direction in which Switzerland should develop in important areas in the years ahead. Its aim is to support the establishment of a coherent policy on sustainable development.

This abridged version of the Sustainable Development Strategy outlines the key principles of sustainable development and explains the nine action areas of the Action Plan.



WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

When referring to sustainability, the Federal Council applies the definition that enjoys broad international consensus: that the current generation should meet its needs in a way that does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Development is sustainable when it takes equal account of the three dimensions economic efficiency, social solidarity and environmental responsibility.

Two mutually complementary aspects are of key importance in this definition of sustainability:

- the fact that there are limits to what global ecosystems can bear, and
- the ethical imperative that the essential needs of all people must be satisfied, particularly those of the poorest.

Humanity must take greater responsibility for the future, and must do so on the basis of equity between generations and global regions. In view of its financial and technical resources, Switzerland believes it has an obligation to do more than its share in this regard.

The Federal Council regards sustainable development not as a selective element of sectoral policy, but as an overarching principle: a requirement affecting all areas of policy at Confederation level. Each and every political decision should factor in the three dimensions of sustainability, and its impact should be considered carefully.

Switzerland can only find lasting solutions to current and future problems if all of those concerned think and work together in a spirit of partnership. With the many powers that lie with the cantons and communes, this also includes all three levels of government. At the same time, the private sector and civil society are also of central importance and are called upon to make their contribution to the sustainable development of our country.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE STRATEGY

For sustainable development policy to have a long-term effect, all of the actors concerned must be pulling in the same direction: decision-makers at all levels of government, as well as partners from the private sector, civil society and the scientific community. For this reason, they were all included from the beginning – in the form of a stakeholder dialogue – in drafting the current Strategy. The aim of this dialogue was to achieve as broad as possible a basis of support for the Action Plan and to begin laying the foundations for its coordinated implementation, even at this early stage.

The participating stakeholders discussed their interests, outlooks and objectives in the context of sustainable development and expressed how they would like to see these incorporated in the strategy. They were joined at the table by representatives of civil society, of business, members of the scientific community, cantonal and communal authorities and representatives of the federal government.

The outcomes of this constructive process helped to identify the most important areas in which urgent action is required.

National context for sustainable development policy

Sustainable development is set down in several provisions of the Federal Constitution. It is one of the overarching objectives of the Confederation, along with common welfare, internal cohesion and cultural diversity. Many other sections of the Constitution also implicitly presuppose sustainable development. These include the long-term preservation of natural resources, a commitment to a just and peaceful international order, the promotion of welfare, respect for human rights and assistance in the alleviation of need and poverty in the world.

The Strategy has been an integral part of the Federal Council's Dispatch on legislative planning since 2009. With its inclusion, the Federal Council underlined the growing importance that it attaches to sustainable development and bound the two strategic instruments even closer together. However, while the legislative planning programme describes the government's major projects for a given four-year legislative period, the Sustainable Development Strategy is geared to a longer time horizon.

International context for sustainable development policy

Global challenges of increasing scale can be managed only by a concerted effort on the part of the international community. Alongside almost all of the world's heads of state and government, in September 2015 the Federal Council adopted the

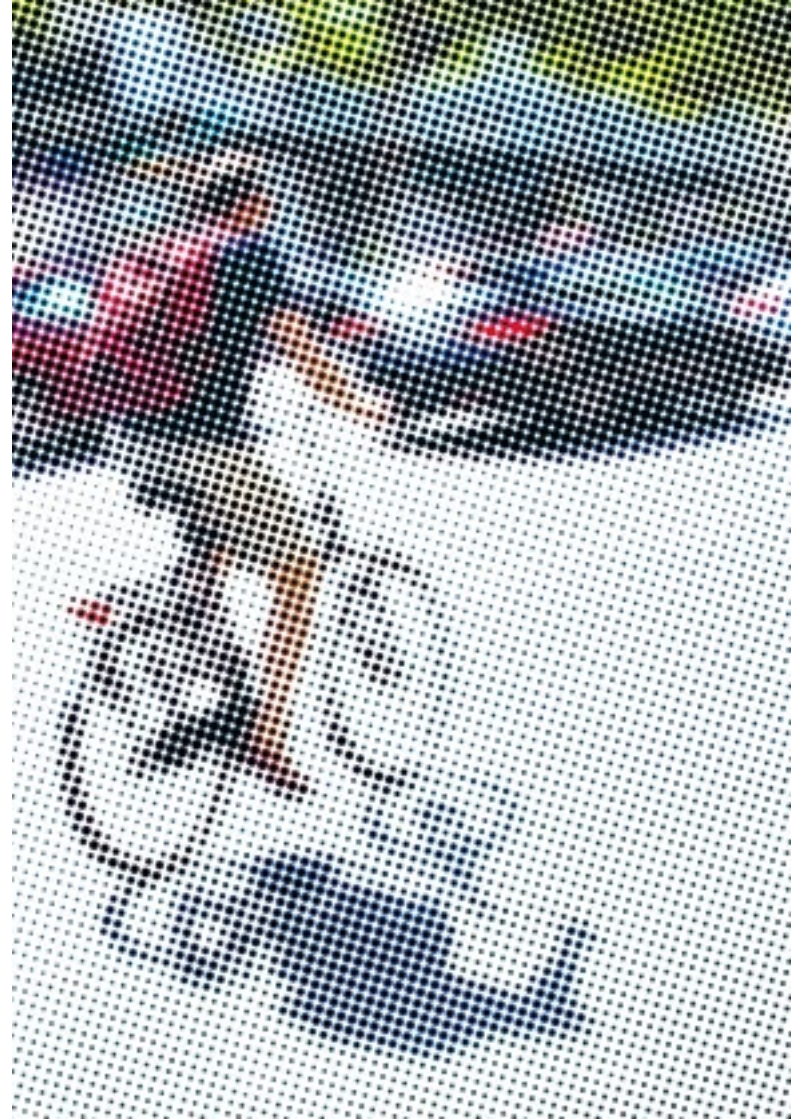


United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda is based on the resolutions of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and formulates 17 global Sustainable Development Goals. Switzerland was a strong advocate of the 2030 Agenda as it was being drawn up and helped to shape many of its points.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) form the core of the 2030 Agenda. Encompassing the social, economic and ecological development of the planet, they apply to all countries. These ambitious goals are formulated in very broad terms (see overview on next page) and then broken down into 169 specific sub-goals. They are the successors to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which remained in effect until 2015.

The 2030 Agenda is not legally binding, but it does provide an important reference framework for all nations – including Switzerland. The Federal Council takes it seriously and is committed on both the national and international levels to the Agenda's implementation. Its future intention is to align Switzerland's Sustainable Development Strategy as comprehensively as possible with the 2030 Agenda and gradually to harmonise the country's own sustainability goals with the SDGs.

As the UN body in charge, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It meets regularly and reports to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Switzerland is actively involved in these international bodies and will report regularly on its progress. The first national report is scheduled for submission to the UN in 2018.



An overview of the Sustainable Development Goals

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

THE 2016–2019 ACTION PLAN

The Sustainable Development Strategy's Action Plan is structured into nine themed action areas that are particularly important to sustainable development. The Action Plan sets out a long-term vision, goals up to 2030 and specific measures that the Federal Council would like to implement during the current legislative period. The measures make no claim to completeness. Rather, they represent areas of focus in the individual policy areas.

For each action area, the vision describes the ideal situation that is being targeted for a sustainable Switzerland. Although the vision is not binding, it still indicates the direction in which Switzerland should develop in the long term. Drawing on this, the Action Plan identifies the key challenges for the nation and describes the goals that the Federal Council would like to attain by 2030. These goals are not legally binding either and allow a degree of scope for their implementation.

To provide an overview, the action areas are presented below in very heavily abridged form. Details of the vision, goals and measures can be found in the full version of the Sustainable Development Strategy, or at www.are.admin.ch/sne.

Consumption and production

The environmental impact of consumption has reached a level which exceeds that which the natural environment can sustainably bear. The goods and products which the people of Switzerland own and use demand enormous amounts of energy and natural resources. Furthermore, many of them are manufactured under poor working conditions in the countries in which they are produced.

One of the Confederation's goals is therefore to improve consumers' understanding of the environmental and social impacts of their consumption. For their part, Swiss companies should fulfil their social responsibilities both at home and abroad. The aim is energy- and resource-efficient production which not only makes more sparing use of resources but also closes materials cycles, for example by recycling.

Particular importance is attached to foodstuffs, which account for more than one third of global energy consumption and a large proportion of carbon dioxide emissions.

Urban development, mobility and infrastructure

The space occupied by urban development and transport infrastructures has been growing for decades. The result is that Switzerland is losing valuable agricultural land, and nature is suffering from the unrelenting pressure on the landscape. For us humans, less nature means a lower quality of life, and the country's appeal as a tourist destination also suffers. Switzerland's uncultivated and agricultural landscapes should therefore be preserved and largely protected from further development. Wherever possible, new housing should occupy existing settlement areas. The Confederation's spatial planning concept is based on small urban centres which combine housing, workplaces, leisure areas and cultural amenities. Smart, needs-based transport planning should reach all sections of the population in all parts of the country and ensure safe and reliable travel from A to B.

Rising traffic volumes and the growing demand for living space go hand in hand with an increase in energy consumption. New buildings should therefore be energy-optimised and built in accordance with sustainable construction standards. Existing structures should be renovated, while also respecting the rules on the protection of historic buildings.

Energy and climate

A large proportion of the energy consumed in Switzerland originates from non-renewable sources. This impacts primarily on the climate and the environment. Comprehensive action on energy is essential to limit global warming to the international target of 2°C compared with pre-industrialisation levels. The energy supplies of the future should be based on safe, renewable sources which emit little, if any, carbon dioxide. There should be a significant increase in domestic energy generation from renewables.

Switzerland aims to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to half the 1990 level by 2030. To achieve this, each individual would have to consume a third less energy than they did in 2000. Electricity use would also have to be cut by 10% during the same period. A number of promotion programmes and regulatory instruments – in the construction and mobility fields, for example – already exist to help the country achieve this target.

And yet the impacts of climate change are already being felt. The Strategy thus also addresses the natural hazards that arise as a result. Targeted monitoring is intended to prevent risk and protect natural habitats.

Natural resources

Switzerland's natural resources include the soil, air, water and forests, as well as renewable and non-renewable raw materials. The country is currently using more of these resources than sustainable development would actually permit – as sources of energy or materials, for example.

Switzerland's air and watercourses are now much less polluted by harmful chemical substances than was the case several years ago. However, micropollutants such as residues from medications, or fine particulate matter, continue to threaten water and air quality respectively. Biodiversity levels are also unsatisfactory, having been on the decline for years now. The Confederation is planning to strengthen the network of reserves in order to secure biodiversity in the long term and even to encourage new and returning species. These protected areas will also provide safe habitats for endangered species. The soil should also be managed more sensitively to allow it to maintain its function. This affects agriculture, in particular, the development of which should be more closely aligned with environmental criteria.

Around 70 per cent of the Swiss population's resource consumption nonetheless takes place abroad. The Confederation therefore intends to become an even stronger international advocate of sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

Economic and financial system

Switzerland's prosperity is rooted in a robust and well-functioning economy that is characterised by its quality, integrity and stability. This economy depends on the best possible operating conditions to be productive and to hold its competitive ground internationally. The Confederation creates this framework by balancing the public-sector budget and pursuing an economic policy which targets growth, increasing labour productivity and resilience while respecting the tolerance limits of natural systems.

The business sector is an important partner in reducing the burden on the earth's overstressed biocapacity. The Federal Council is therefore counting on the commitment of Swiss companies and itself is creating the right conditions in which to strengthen the green economy, conserve resources and improve efficiency – conditions which will continue to be improved in dialogue with the scientific community and society. Present generations cannot be allowed to live at the expense of future generations.

Furthermore, the Confederation is committed both nationally and internationally to stabilising the financial sector. For example, it is engaged in the fight against unethical and illegal flows of funds – such as those originating from tax evasion, money laundering and corruption – and is taking preventive action against them.



Education, research and innovation

Switzerland is one of the world's leading scientific nations. Education, research and innovation (ERI) are regarded as the foundations of common welfare, social cohesion and the country's competitiveness. Sustainable development also demands a good level of education. Switzerland's ERI system should give the population the capacity to recognise the importance of sustainable development and play an active part in the form it should take.

The Confederation is therefore planning to embed sustainable development even more firmly in the Swiss education system and to expand teaching from compulsory education into all other areas. Sustainable development will thus become a more important part of the curricula at vocational colleges and academic high schools in the future.

Switzerland also supports schemes to strengthen sustainable development abroad, playing an active part in the relevant UN and UNESCO programmes. One of the key principles here is to prevent discrimination: no individual may be excluded from the education system on the basis of physical or mental characteristics, gender, or social, economic or cultural background.

Social security

Social security systems should enable the entire population to participate in the social and economic life of the country. The number of people of retirement age has been rising in proportion to the working population for many years. This demographic trend puts social security systems under pressure and is a challenge for social policy. Future generations must not be forced to pay the costs of Switzerland's well-developed social safety nets, such as the AHV old-age and IV disability pensions.

In Switzerland, around eight per cent of the population lives below the poverty line. Those affected, and those at risk, should be able to integrate themselves into the working world and society. Better coordination between social security mechanisms should prevent people falling into the poverty trap.

Considerable progress has been made in recent years with the integration of those living with physical disabilities. However, there is still much to be done with regard to the inclusion of those with mental conditions. Vulnerable individuals such as asylum seekers must also be integrated more effectively. Their situation should be improved by distributing asylum seekers fairly between the cantons, by means of fast, efficient asylum procedures, and by effective protection under the law.



Social cohesion and gender equality

Social cohesion is a priority issue for the Federal Council, which is committed to strengthening this aspect of national life in Switzerland. Every member of the population should have the same opportunity to develop both personally and professionally, to participate in the social life of the country and to have their voice heard at the political level. Social barriers and discriminatory structures must be dismantled.

Relationships between the sexes, generations, religions, regions and language communities should be characterised by equality and respect. The differing cultures that exist within Switzerland's borders should learn from and enrich each other. Particular importance is attached to mutual acceptance and tolerance. Problems that stem from a lack of integration on both sides must be reduced, and the costs that result from those problems must be minimised.

The Confederation is also creating frameworks for equal rights. Action is required in particular with regard to the current gender wage gap. The Confederation also aims to encourage mutual understanding between the generations and to protect people more effectively from domestic violence and oppression within the family.

Health

The Swiss population has never been in better health. Risks still exist, however, and new ones are emerging all the time, accelerated by global trends and spread by travel. Mental illness is also on the rise, caused by factors such as excessive workplace stress. Addiction is a further problem. The Federal Council would like to reduce the incidence of these non-communicable diseases in particular, and prevent early deaths. In view of the ageing population, action is also needed on staffing and funding to maintain the level of health care provision in the long term.

Up to now, our health care system has been designed primarily to cure disease. In the future, the Confederation aims to do more in the fields of prevention and health promotion. One target, for example, is to reduce the proportion of the population that does not take enough exercise by ten per cent compared with 2015. People should also learn more about how to look after their own health.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Confederation intends to lead by good example. It therefore factors the principles of sustainable development into all of its activities – such as environmental conservation in everyday operations, procurement, property management and human resources. The Confederation has had a resource and environmental management system, RUMBA, in place since 2006. This government-wide system has succeeded in reducing environmental impact per full-time equivalent by almost a quarter in just eight years. A further target is to improve energy efficiency within the Federal Administration, the domains of the Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology and government-run companies by 25 per cent by 2020.

The Confederation follows a collaborative approach and supports its partners in implementation

The Confederation is improving the foundations for sustainable development throughout the country with support for other actors, for example, and by initiating and coordinating activities. One such initiative is the Forum for Sustainable Development, which is designed to network representatives of the Federal Administration with those from the cantons, regions, cities and communes. The dialogue between all stakeholders will continue under the aegis of the 2030 Dialogue for Sustainable Development platform. It is intended to strengthen cooperation between

the actors concerned and promote the more effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Confederation also provides implementation tools, such as sustainability assessments of political initiatives or action. Such assessments help to optimise the sustainability of such undertakings, whether at the strategic, planning, programme or final project level. The method centres on the systematic capture of a project's direct and indirect impacts. A sustainability assessment allows various options to be compared, highlights conflicting objectives and, from its findings, lays the foundation for coherent political initiatives.

Since 2003, Switzerland has used the MONET system of indicators to monitor its progress on sustainable development. The indicators highlight how the country has developed in certain key areas. In addition, around 20 cantons and 20 towns and cities collect sustainable development data as part of a voluntary programme known as the Cercle Indicateurs. Its core remit is to conduct regular reviews of sustainable development at the strategic policy level.

At the local level, the Sustainable Development Promotion Programme provides direct, practical support for sustainability processes and projects. As part of this, the Confederation has put together a series of good practice examples and organises regular discussions between representatives of the cantons and communes. Sustainable neighbourhood development is an important issue here, because it is at this level that the imple-



mentation of the principles of sustainable development holds particular promise.

International commitment

The Confederation is strongly committed to sustainable development worldwide through international cooperation and foreign policy (including economic policy). Key elements include the elimination of extreme poverty in all its forms, combating global risks, the alleviation of need, the conservation and sparing use of natural resources, compliance with planetary tolerance limits, peace promotion, inclusive societies and respect for human rights.

With this in mind, the Confederation is also committed to establishing a comprehensive, coherent, effective and efficient governance framework to facilitate sustainable development at all levels, from global to local. In this way, in addition to its domestic policy efforts Switzerland is making a real contribution to the implementation of the 2030 agenda internationally.

LINKS AND FURTHER READING:

2030 Dialogue (d/f/i): www.agenda2030.admin.ch/2030dialogue
Sustainable Development Forum (d/f/i): www.aren.admin.ch/forumne
MONET: www.monet.admin.ch
Cercle Indicateurs (d/f/i): www.aren.admin.ch/cercleindicateurs
Sustainable Development Promotion Programme (d/f/i):
www.aren.admin.ch/foerderprogramm
Sustainability processes (d/f/i): www.aren.admin.ch/prozesse
Good examples (d/f/i): www.aren.admin.ch/gutebeispiele

Swiss Federal Council: **Sustainable Development Strategy 2016–2019**,
FOBL, Vertrieb Publikationen, 3003 Bern, Art. no. 812.082.e

Interdepartmental Sustainable Development Committee (ISDC): **Sustainable Development in Switzerland – A guide, 2012**, FOBL, Vertrieb Publikationen, 3003 Bern, Art. no. 812.054.e

All of the publications mentioned here may be ordered as print version or downloaded in pdf format on www.aren.admin.ch/publication

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