



Concept Note

Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Switzerland

Establishing a SDSN node for Switzerland

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SDSN: A global initiative

In 2012, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) to mobilize global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical problem solving for sustainable development, including the design and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the Paris Agreement on climate change. Following their adoption, SDSN is committed to supporting the implementation at local, national, and global levels.

To this end, SDSN works with partners in academia, government, business, civil society, and the United Nations to promote practical solutions and transformations for sustainable development. SDSN mobilizes universities and other knowledge institutions around the world for the implementation of the goals and promote the exchange of lessons and learning.

The activities of SDSN focus on: (1) providing analysis and recommendations to support the implementation of the SDGs, (2) bringing together a global network of problem solvers, *inter alia* through thematic networks, (3) developing solutions initiatives and long-term transformation pathways, and (4) fostering education for sustainable development.

A unique Leadership Council, comprised of some 100 global leaders on sustainable development, governs the SDSN. Currently, SDSN counts more than 500 member institutions from over 80 countries, and more than 20 national and regional SDSNs.

Slow implementation of the SDGs in Switzerland

With the Agenda 2030, industrialized countries are equally obliged to achieve the goals and targets as are developing and emerging countries. Therefore, Switzerland needs a network that initiates and accompanies transformative social, technological and environmental change towards sustainable development. Preparatory work in Switzerland for the implementation of the SDGs and the Paris Agree-

ment has started – although the efforts are still hesitant. Government agencies such as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Federal Office for Spatial Development have taken the lead, while other, important ministries such as the State Secretariats for Economic Affairs and for International Financial Matters are mostly absent from the debate. Political will in the parliament is weak and the institutional set-up is not (yet) conducive to finding transformation pathways in an effective and integrated manner. Furthermore, government funding for research on transformation pathways towards sustainability is limited. To close this gap, dialogue between policy makers, science, civil society and business urgently needs to be set in motion.

Our vision

SDSN Switzerland mobilizes universities, research centers, civil society organizations, business and other knowledge centers to create and implement transformative solutions to achieve the Agenda 2030 and Paris Agreement in Switzerland and beyond. SDSN Switzerland delivers value to its members and partners around the following 3 objectives:

- **Shape multi-stakeholder dialogue:** Accelerate continuous exchange of ideas and experiences, and create thinking spaces for academia, government, business and civil society to foster systemic solutions, build commitment and mobilize action.
- **Foster sustainable development solutions:** Harness scientific and transdisciplinary knowledge to generate new evidence-based solutions, integrated policies and systemic change, including through joint learning journeys.
- **Advise decision-makers:** Offer evidence-based advice to decision-makers in politics, business and society to fill policy gaps and motivate normative change.

Members and partners

SDSN Switzerland brings together world-class science (Switzerland ranks No. 1 in the Global Innovation Index), responsible and innovative business and impact-oriented civil society organizations to build partnerships and accelerate transformation pathways towards sustainability. Our members and partners play a key role in exploring ways for co-constructing knowledge and solutions at scales.

- **Members:** Universities, universities of applied sciences, research centers, civil society organizations and other knowledge centers, such as think tanks and social enterprises that are engaged in sustainable development. Members of the global SDSN are invited to be members of SDSN Switzerland.
- **Partners:** Organizations that support the vision and objectives of SDSN Switzerland, but are not member of the global SDSN, are invited as partners. Besides universities, research centers, civil society organizations and other knowledge centers, partners can also include business, foundations, associations and international organizations.
- **Networks:** SDSN Switzerland establishes collaboration and seeks synergies with existing and newly built networks and initiatives that foster sustainable development, including around “Genève Internationale”, the Swiss startup sector, and philanthropic organizations based in Switzerland.
- **Government:** SDSN Switzerland seeks to include in its thematic work and activities government agencies at the federal, cantonal and municipal level, in particular those who play a role in implementing the SDGs.

From 2017, institutions will be invited to join the SDSN Switzerland as members and partners.

Governance

SDSN Switzerland has a governance structure that is lean, transparent, facilitates collaboration with members, partners, networks and government structures, and mobilizes know-how and resources for sustainable development solutions.

- **Leadership Council:** Includes up to 12 representatives from member and partner organizations. They meet 2-3 times per year. The Leadership Council serves to increase the visibility and reach of the network, provide intellectual leadership, stimulate dialogue, and support the mobilization of resources. CDE and Biovision as the National SDSN Centers (initially for 3 years) will be represented in the Leadership Council at the highest possible level and take an active role.
- **Co-Chairs of the Leadership Council:** Provide strategic leadership and guidance on activities

undertaken by SDSN Switzerland. Together with the Managing Director and the representative(s) from the National SDSN Center, they form the **Executive Committee**.

- **Secretariat:** Coordinates the day-to-day business of SDSN Switzerland, including its program of work. It facilitates thematic initiatives and the mobilization of resources. It liaises with member and partner organizations in Switzerland, as well as with the global SDSN secretariat. It is managed by a Managing Director, and is appropriately staffed to support her/him.

Our focus areas for solutions initiatives

SDSN Switzerland will take a systemic, transdisciplinary approach to shaping solutions initiatives. Based on the most urging challenges and opportunities for Switzerland, including the findings from the 2017 gap analysis by the Swiss government, the network will facilitate and motivate the uptake of transformative solutions initiatives and pathways that ideally bring positive change to society, business and the environment. These solutions initiatives can include new technologies, business models, institutional mechanisms, policy and normative frameworks, that accelerate transformation and bring continuous incremental improvements towards sustainability in Switzerland and globally. The focus areas are:

- **Governance systems:** Develop transformative approaches and innovative institutional set-ups e.g. to enhance policy coherence within Switzerland and internationally, to strengthen participatory democracy for the transformation.
- **Finance systems:** Develop transformative approaches and create levers to shift towards responsible and sustainable investments, incl. in asset management and commodity trading.
- **Natural resources:** Develop transformative approaches e.g. to reverse loss in biodiversity, to sustainably manage the use of land and landscapes, to protect mountain ecosystems.
- **Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP):** Develop transformative approaches e.g. to create sustainable food systems, to improve sustainable waste management and reduce Switzerland’s global footprint.
- **Sustainable infrastructure:** Develop approaches to meet the interlinked goals of universal energy access, sustainable transportation and cities (incl. rural-urban linkages), and the elimination of fossil carbon emissions.

Solutions initiatives will be developed within thematic groups of SDSN Switzerland, that operate across one or more focus areas and systems. Thematic groups will engage the leading experts and resources from academia, business, government, civil society and international organizations.

Vision to Action

Shape multi-stakeholder dialogue

- **Swiss Sustainable Solutions Conference:** The annual conference of SDSN Switzerland brings together key actors to identify and promote national solutions initiatives to strengthen transformation pathways towards sustainability in Switzerland. The conference also serves to shape the network's agenda, showcase successes, share experiences and strategies, and promote joint learnings.
- **Localize the SDGs:** Smaller events, workshops and podium discussions with members, partners and networks support the localization of the Agenda 2030 in Switzerland. Existing and new research, best practice, innovations, as well as education opportunities in sustainable development are highlighted, *inter alia* through media work and the website (www.sdsn.ch).

Foster sustainable development solutions

- **Swiss solutions initiatives:** SDSN Switzerland identifies and implements solutions initiatives, drawing on the expertise and existing, transdisciplinary work of its members, partners and networks. The identification of solutions initiatives can also be done through screening exercises, public calls or other innovative engagement methods.
- **International solutions initiatives:** SDSN Switzerland engages in the dissemination of results from international solutions initiatives. This includes synthesizing and adapting the results to the Swiss context, and offering recommendations and ways forward to decision-makers. Members, partners and networks are encouraged to participate in international SDSN solutions initiatives. Knowledge exchange within the global network will enhance our own reflections regarding transformation.
- **Teach sustainable development:** Several universities and higher education institutions already offer minor and major study programs in sustainable development (e.g. CDE, University of Basel, ZHAW). SDSN Switzerland will encourage the uptake of sustainable development teaching in the curriculum of its members, partners and networks, and will also offer joint learning opportunities, in collaboration with SDG Academy.

Advise decision-makers

- **Take part in consultations:** SDSN Switzerland offers insights, innovations and evidence-based solutions during national and local policy formulation processes as practical recommendations and calls for (immediate) action to implement the Agenda 2030.
- **Issue publications and briefs:** SDSN Switzerland contributes to a factual debate with publications and issue briefs with the aim to support decision-makers in politics, business and society to better access and process academic findings and recommendation for their work.
- **Resources for sustainable development research:** Through awareness raising and targeted communication, SDSN Switzerland will encourage decision-makers in politics, business and society to call for more investments in the research and exploration of transformation know-how towards sustainable development and global public goods, e.g. through the Swiss National Science Foundation programs.

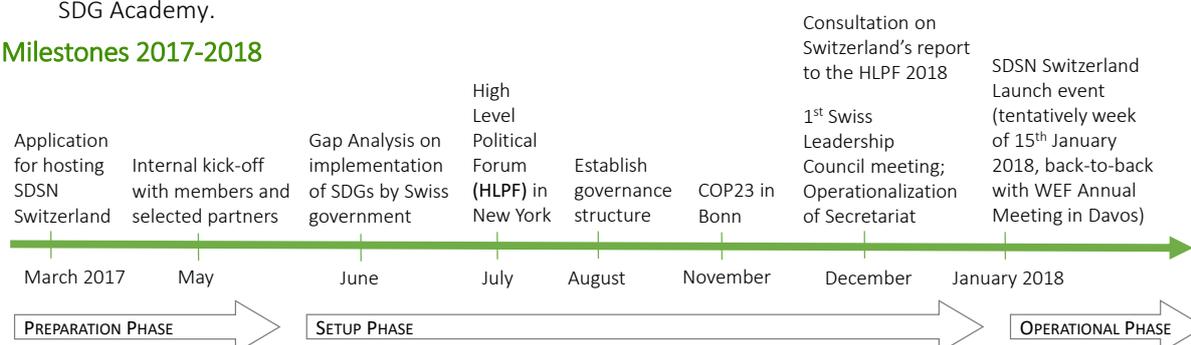
Deliverables 2017

- SDSN Switzerland Launch Event
- Launch 1 solutions initiative
- Contribute to gap analysis on SDG implementation, and report to the 2018 HLPF by the Swiss Government
- Add members and partners to SDSN Switzerland, and extend network
- Establish governance structure, incl. multi-year program of work, Secretariat, communication channels, resource mobilization strategy
- Contribute to discussions around HLPF 2017 and COP23

Deliverables 2018

- Swiss Sustainable Solutions Conference
- Workshops and events with members, partners and networks
- Launch at least 1 solutions initiative
- Disseminate and break down to Swiss context at least 1 international solutions initiative (e.g. ATPI, DDPP, World in 2050, etc.)
- Contribute to update of Swiss Sustainable Development Strategy 2020-2023

Milestones 2017-2018



Resources

SDSN Switzerland has secured an initial core budget of 1.5m CHF for 3 years (including third party contributions and matching funds).

The core funding will guarantee the incubation and basic services such as the operation of a Secretariat (Managing Director, additional staff, equipment, travel), events and conferences (incl. the launch of SDSN Switzerland), some thematic work (research for solutions initiatives, publications) and public relations (website, media work).

Additional funding will be secured through a resource mobilization strategy, in particular for activities such as solutions initiatives, teaching sustainable development and additional dialogue opportunities, as needed. The lead will be with the executive committee. Potential funding partners include foundations, government agencies, impact investors and academia (in-kind contributions).

Because of their proven track record in successfully managing multi-million dollar projects, both CDE and Biovision possess the administrative and operational capabilities to house a Secretariat, and to launch, facilitate and administer – together with member and partner organizations – projects under the umbrella of the SDSN.

Hosting Organizations

The Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern is a leading institution in Switzerland on research for sustainable development. Its overarching goal is to produce and share knowledge for transformations towards sustainable development in cooperation with partners in the global North and South. CDE conducts research to develop innovative concepts and solutions for the sustainable use of land and water resources. It also offers a range of services for planners and decision-makers that are closely linked to research.

One of CDE's central concerns is to foster dialogue between science and society while contributing to global debates on sustainability and development. In line with the University's mandate to promote sustainable development, CDE offers various courses of study in sustainable development. CDE and its 100 staff build on long-running partnerships and networks from research, policy, civil society and government organizations in Switzerland and internationally. The CDE maintains permanent partner and cooperation networks in Southeast Asia, East Africa, the Horn of Africa, Central Asia and Latin America. In Switzerland, CDE runs a formal and active cooperation with the Universities of Basel, Zurich, Lausanne and Geneva, the ETH Zurich, as well as research centers such as the Swiss TPH, swisspeace and The Graduate Institute in Geneva. CDE is also prominently involved in different commissions of the Swiss Academies, such as ProClim, KFPE, td-net and others. Internationally, CDE cooperates with different

research institutions from the CGIAR system (e.g. ICRAF, CIAT, IWMI, CIFOR).

With regard to the Agenda 2030 CDE is prominently involved nationally and internationally. The CDE Directors represent the science community in the Swiss interdepartmental committee for the implementation of the Agenda 2030. Internationally the CDE Directors were members of the task force of the Swiss Government for the negotiations and implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. In addition, Prof. Peter Messerli was recently selected as co-chair to lead the group of scientific experts tasked with drafting the upcoming UN Global Sustainable Development Report.

CDE Strategy 2016-2021: <http://bit.ly/2IPusfC>

Biovision – Foundation for Ecological Development combats hunger and poverty at their roots, and is committed to the dissemination and application of ecological methods that sustainably improve living conditions in Africa whilst also conserving the environment. Biovision renders *help for self-help* and promotes ecological thought and action in both North and South.

Biovision has been participating in the negotiations of the Agenda 2030, and together with partners actively advocated for an ambitious SDG 2 “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture”. As a result, Biovision can capture the transformative power of the Agenda 2030 and the political processes that will support such a transformation. Biovision is the only Swiss NGO with a general consultative status at the ECOSOC of the United Nations.

In Switzerland, Biovision is known for conducting a constructive dialogue with different stakeholders from politics, science, society and business, for example as a member of the Swiss national FAO committee, or the multi-stakeholder 10YFP – Sustainable Food Systems Program. Professional public relations accompany these dialogues. Through its interactive exhibition CLEVER, Biovision also sensitizes consumers about their shopping behavior (as a contribution to sustainable consumption under SDG 12).

Biovision is an officially certified non-profit organization located in Zurich, Switzerland with 32 people directly employed. Of the total of 8.4m CHF of funds (2015), 35 per cent were contributed by private non-member-donors, 9 per cent by member-sponsors, 12 per cent by private legacies, 26 per cent by institutional donors (businesses and foundations), and 18 per cent by public institutions.

In 2013, Biovision and its founder and President Hans R. Herren received the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize. Biovision is a member of SDSN since 2016.

Biovision Strategy 2016-2020: <http://bit.ly/2kwsTCj>