

Project Brief

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Project: EU citizens in Switzerland: your voice, your opinion!

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Climate, migration and digital policies for the common good

Crowdsourced ideas for a more sustainable future in
Europe

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With the support of



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Introduction

A participative process including the perspectives of foreign citizens living in Switzerland, and EU citizens in particular, into the public discourse about the shared future between Switzerland and the EU.

Whether it concerns the fight against climate change, management of migration, or the use of AI systems, the European Union (EU) and Switzerland face many challenges in the decades to come. Sustainable solutions to these challenges will have to be found beyond national borders and require strong cooperation between Switzerland and the EU. Indeed, while Switzerland is not a Member State of the EU, its geographical position and economic ties to its European partners make close and constructive relations with the EU a crucial element of its foreign policy. But what should the shared future between Switzerland and the EU look like in the decades to come? How can we find transnational solutions to major challenges such as climate change, migration, and the use of data and AI systems for the common good? These important questions concern both Swiss and foreign citizens living in Switzerland - in particular EU citizens.

This is why we asked foreign citizens living in Switzerland - who are traditionally excluded from the political debate - to share their

perspectives with us on three policy areas that will be extremely relevant in shaping our collective future: climate, migration, and the use of data and AI technologies. As these areas require bold visions and related policy measures in the decades to come, our process focused on the respective visions of (1) achieving climate neutrality, (2) turning migration into a phenomenon perceived and lived as an opportunity rather than a problem to be solved, and (3) ensuring that data and AI systems are being used to achieve a more sustainable future while protecting citizen's data privacy and security.

About the project

EU citizens living permanently in Switzerland make up approximately 16% of the total population (incl. EFTA and UK)¹ and can hence be considered the biggest expatriate community in Switzerland. A large part has been living in Switzerland for many years, pays taxes, and is an essential part of society. Nevertheless, EU citizens in Switzerland have very limited opportunities to take part in decision-making processes and their voice is hardly or not at all perceived in the public discourse. The goal of foraus' project "EU citizens in Switzerland: your voice, your opinion!" is to tackle this democratic deficit and include ideas of non-Swiss citizens living in Switzerland in the political debate, with the goal of allowing their voices to be heard in the public discourse about the shared future between Switzerland and the EU. In total, three participatory workshops were conducted with experts and citizens living in Switzerland, thereby collectively identifying major challenges in the fields of (1) climate policy in Basel, (2) migration policy in Zurich, and (3) data and AI systems governance in Geneva. During each workshop, overarching visions were defined for each thematic area. Participants then focused on subtopics in smaller working groups identifying existing challenges and defining policy solutions for the future, which should be taken up by decision-makers in Switzerland and the EU. The ideas were uploaded on foraus' policy innovation platform Policy Kitchen - where they are available to consult. foraus' project team then synthesised and further complemented them. This project brief is the final result of this process.

In the following chapters, each theme is analysed separately by first introducing the status quo in Switzerland and the EU in terms

of regulation and policies. Afterwards, the subtopics discussed in the workshops and recommendations made by participants are discussed in more detail. Finally, the main recommendations made to decision-makers are outlined in a concluding chapter. The identified challenges and proposed measures should be understood as possible solutions to reach the ambitious visions set during the participative process. It is not the ambition of this project to propose an exhaustive list of necessary measures and actions. ●

2. Reaching climate neutrality by 2050

The mobility sector and food systems make up more than half of Europe's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. European-wide measures to reduce their carbon footprint will greatly support the fight against climate change.

Climate neutrality in Switzerland and the EU: a shared objective

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges humanity faces today. It is a direct consequence of human activities and the unprecedented increase in GHG emissions they caused in the past decades. Extreme climate conditions resulting from climate change are affecting citizens all over the globe, including those living in Europe. They will increasingly disrupt our everyday lives and cause displacement. While climate-related policies began to be implemented in the past century, more needs to be done to address and revert rising temperatures today, with the goal of transitioning to lower greenhouse gas GHG emission levels.

Both within the EU and Switzerland, the policy discussion about the fight against climate change and GHG emissions caused by human activity is at an advanced stage. At the national level, Switzerland has put in place a set of climate-related goals to be achieved by following the "long-term climate strategy for Switzerland".² With this strategy,

the Federal Council has set a net-zero target in 2019, with the aim to achieve net-zero greenhouse emissions by 2050. At the European level, the EU Green Deal was adopted by the European Commission in 2020 and consists of a set of proposals to achieve the same goal, thereby effectively allowing Europe to become the first climate-neutral continent.

Switzerland and the EU already share many environmental targets and policies and cooperate closely in environmental matters. Indeed, Switzerland has been a full member of the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET) since 2006. In addition to that, relevant EU legislation is also incorporated into Swiss legislation, both through bilateral agreements, the principle of equivalence, and independently in order to eliminate trade barriers. Other than the EEA's agreements, these include, for example, the interlinkage of the Swiss and European emission trading systems, the European ecolabel and resource efficiency system, and a bilateral Agreement on air transport.³

Status quo

The Green Deal is at the heart of the EU's action to counter climate change.⁴ It consists of a set of proposals adopted by the European Commission with the ambitious goal of reducing carbon emissions by 55% compared to 1990 levels by 2030 and achieving no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, effectively making Europe the first climate-neutral continent worldwide. It is built on a set of 10 major focus areas which are strongly interlinked between themselves. Two important areas are mobility and food systems.

In Switzerland, current environmental regulations are detailed by the Federal Act on the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (CO2 Act), which enacts its own measures as well as implements other agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) goals.⁵ In a referendum held in 2021, a thin majority of the Swiss population refused the amendment to the CO2 Act. This amendment would have implemented further measures to decrease GHG emissions in Switzerland by 2030 by imposing stricter regulations and taxation of private jets, frequent flyers, and fuels while incentivizing the use

of clean energies. A much less ambitious revision proposal has been presented by the government in September 2022. During the same month, the counter-proposal to the so-called “Glacier-Initiative” adopted by Parliament set additional more impactful measures in terms of emissions reduction with up to one billion CHF in financing for heating renovation over 10 years in Switzerland and a net zero emissions goal to be achieved by 2040 for public administrations and affiliated companies at national and cantonal levels.

Spotlight on mobility and food systems

Scenario from climate workshop

It is 2050 and climate neutrality was achieved in Switzerland and in the EU.

The participants focused on two main areas of action to reach climate neutrality: (1) mobility and (2) food systems. In the following section, the respective areas are first introduced before discussing the targeted policy measures needed to achieve the set goal of climate neutrality. Being two of the founding pillars of the EU’s Green Deal, these are two sectors that must be addressed multilaterally in order to achieve the best possible outcome.

1. Mobility

Mobility is one of the key sectors that must be transformed to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. According to the EEA, in 2019 the transportation sector accounted for more than 30% of Europe’s GHG emissions with 23% alone under domestic transport (the rest is related to international aviation and shipping).⁶ Almost 75% of these emissions are related to road transport, with individual car traffic taking the lion’s share. While GHG emissions decreased in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, they kept increasing in the period between 2013 and 2019, and it is estimated that if current regulations by Member States are not improved they will drop below their 1990 levels only in 2029.⁷ According to the European Green Deal, all sectors of transportation need to be decarbonized by 2050. The transportation sector as it is today is a central part of Europe’s business sector and its import/export routes.

In relation to this relevant sector, in 2020 the European

Commission presented the “Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy”⁸, which together with its subsequent Action Plan, is the guiding strategy to transform the European transport sector into a more sustainable system and reduce transport-related greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2050. It builds on three main pillars - sustainable, smart, and resilient mobility - and includes targets and measures that the Member States pledge to implement, including the increase of green energy sources, the improvement of the rail transportation sector, and the restoration of European biodiversity.⁹

Tackle aviation transportation

Participants have envisioned a future in which by 2050 there will be credible and more sustainable alternatives to aviation transportation within Europe. The vision also includes the achievement of climate neutrality in aviation technologies, with a reduced impact both on the environment and quality of life and improved energy usage (electricity and synthetic fuels). A number of actions including the ban on short-haul flights and the promotion of non-flight travel were proposed. More specifically it was recommended to:

- **Impose a ban on short-haul flights and support regulation of long-haul flights:** following France’s recent ban on flights that can be substituted for a train ride of 2,5 hours or less¹⁰, Swiss and EU decision-makers should go one step further and explore pathways to adopt an even stricter ban on short-haul flights that can be substituted by train rides of less than 6 hours at the EU and Swiss levels based on existing demands made by climate activist groups.¹¹ This should be accompanied by measures such as economic incentives to citizens that decide to partake in railway transportation instead of aviation and daily travelcards as accompanying measures. Regulating long-haul flights is also key to achieving necessary GHG emissions within the transport sector in the decades to come.
- **Create credible alternatives to aviation:** encourage train rides as the main option for travelling both for work and leisure, by introducing incentive measures and subsidies for travellers both in Switzerland and the EU. Additionally, connections and punctuality should be strengthened within the EU by introducing measures to boost railway traffic by 2050, as outlined in the “New

Action Plan: boosting long-distance and cross-border passenger rail" published by the European Commission in 2021.¹²

- **Increase affordability of public transport:** within and between European countries, mobility by train and other public transport means should be made more affordable and accessible to all passengers through subsidised ticket schemes, for instance by following Germany's experiment of a discounted general transport fare ticket. Switzerland in particular should consider subsidising schemes to make train transport more affordable, as its train prices are amongst the highest in Europe.¹³

Increase the use of clean energy sources in the transportation sector

Participants also envisioned the implementation of policies that would encourage a detachment from fuel and an increase in the use of clean energy sources in the transportation sector. A set of policy actions that include the imposition of taxes on fuel usage and the abolition of fuel subsidies was proposed. The discussion also focused on technological solutions, policy cohesion, and sustainability standards of the transportation sector. More specifically the participants formulated the following recommendations:

- **Substantially increase sustainable freight transportation:** take measures to reduce the current fuel-based transportation of up to a quarter of the EU's GHG emissions. For instance, by doubling freight transportation by 2050 and promoting low-carbon fuel-based transportation when it is impossible to switch to freight transportation.
- **Impose a progressive ban on fossil fuel transport means and broaden technological variety in the automotive industry:** progressively phase out and ban usage of fossil fuel transportation means and encourage the usage of electric means of transport both in the EU and in Switzerland. For instance by providing incentives for buying more efficient vehicles as outlined by governmental measures in Switzerland.¹⁴
- **Address increasing demand for charging stations across Europe:** foster the perception of electric vehicles being the "new normal", for instance through the installation of free and available charging stations across EU Member States and Switzerland.

Both the EU and Switzerland should work towards the creation of a comprehensive and official “European map of available charging stations” similar to currently available private services such as “chargemap.org”.¹⁵

- **Drastically reinforce taxation schemes on fuel usage and abolish fuel subsidies:** according to a report published by the Directorate General for internal policies of the European Parliament¹⁶, fossil fuel subsidies in the EU range between €39 billion to over €200 billion yearly. To meet climate goals, the EU and Switzerland should explore possible pathways to decrease fossil fuel subsidies, for example by imposing tighter regulations on current fossil fuel subsidies¹⁷ and increasing investment in green energies and their promotion by subsidising those companies that wish to invest in renewable and green energy.

2. Food systems

Sustainable food systems are one of the major focus areas of the EU’s Green Deal as they are crucial to reach climate neutrality. Indeed, in order to tackle climate change and reduce GHG emissions, the current agri-food industry and its system must be redesigned in a sustainable, healthy and resilient fashion. In Europe, GHG emissions from agricultural production represent nearly one-third of total emissions. They are expected to decline by only 5% by 2030 if no new measures are implemented.¹⁸ Furthermore, food waste in Europe amounts to about 20% of total production, and it generates about 6% of GHG emissions.¹⁹ To set out the foundations to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, the EU presented the Farm to Fork strategy, which through a series of regulatory and non-regulatory initiatives aims to promote more sustainable, healthy, fair, and environmentally friendly food systems by increasing organic farming in the EU by 25% by 2030.

In Switzerland, the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG) is responsible for sustainability, the agricultural market, and trade. The FOAG, together with other stakeholders, is also contributing to the acceleration of the “transition to more sustainable consumption and production patterns in agriculture and the food industry”, using a similar approach to that of the Farm to Fork strategy: the goal is to educate the public on sustainability in food production and food

waste by improving “awareness among the general public, increase capacity and provide access to knowledge and information”.²⁰ Through its “2030 Sustainable Development Strategy”, published in June 2021, and for the first time in history, Switzerland dedicated an entire section to food systems transformation and committed to cutting by one-third its GHG emissions related to food demand in Switzerland, cutting food waste by half compared to 2017 figures, and increasing portion of the population consuming a healthy, balanced and sustainable diet from 10% to 30%.²¹ As a consequence, a national food waste action plan was also adopted in the Spring of 2022.

Food waste, food transport, and incentivization of local food production

Participants focused on local and seasonal food production with measures aiming at reducing food waste, addressing negative externalities linked to food transportation, and incentivizing the consumption of healthy and sustainable food. There was a general agreement that a switch towards more sustainable and natural food production systems must be supported through the engagement of different sectors and stakeholders. More specifically the participants recommend to:

- **Explore measures to reduce GHG emissions caused by food transportation:** increase freight railway capacity and provide incentives for food travelling via railway, as outlined by the European Commission in its four proposals meant to modernise the EU's transport system, and explore collaboration of Switzerland within EU initiatives in the field.²²
- **Take measures to reduce food waste:** promote clear regulations on the use of expiration dates (eg. the “best before” vs “use by” distinction²³) and address sorting actions of products that are not determined optimal for sale (eg. by unusual size or shape) both in Switzerland and the EU.
- **Incentivise sustainable & local food production and consumption, especially targeting animal farming and sustainable soil management:** on the one hand, foster sustainable and local food production among European farmers in EU Member States and in Switzerland, for instance by providing economical incentives for production and financial investment in sustainable practices

as outlined by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).²⁴ On the other hand, incentivize local seasonal and healthy food consumption through incentives such as increased taxation of food imports or subsidies for locally produced food, and measures aimed at reducing animal farming, a major driver of GHG emissions in the sector. ●

3. Migration in 2050: an opportunity for society

No country can solve migratory challenges on its own: multilateral efforts are needed to turn migration into an opportunity for Europe.

Solving migratory challenges together: future outlooks

Migration is not a new phenomenon in Europe and has been part of its history, whether it was welcomed or rejected by local populations. In the past decades, migration and asylum policies became a strongly debated topic, both in Switzerland and the EU. While migration has the potential to boost the economy and tackle labour force shortcomings, a human-centred and sustainable European migration and asylum system is needed to avoid people from suffering and countries being overwhelmed.

The EU has various migration and asylum mechanisms in place, and Switzerland is participating in a number of them, through its Schengen Association Agreement²⁵, which led to the abolishment of internal border controls, and the Dublin Association Agreement²⁶, which defines the country responsible for examining asylum requests. Furthermore, it participates voluntarily in a number of EU migration instruments, such as the European Asylum Agency (EUAA).²⁷

However, following the increase in migration in the 2014-2016 biennium²⁸ and as a result of the ongoing disputes between Member States (particularly between Mediterranean and Eastern European Member States) the Common European Asylum System suffered paralysis, which resulted in tensions and a political crisis among certain Member States.²⁹

Status quo

EU migration and asylum policies are in the process of being reformed: the European Commission presented its New Pact on Migration and Asylum³⁰ in 2020 as well as the New Schengen Strategy³¹ in June 2021, with the aim to enhance and foster cooperation within the European Union. While it is still being debated, the New Pact is a policy instrument meant to deeply reform the common asylum policy. By addressing Member States' interdependence in relation to migration policies and decisions in the long run, the proposed new framework is meant to provide increased certainty, clarity, and decent reception conditions for individuals arriving in the EU.

Aside of the Schengen and Dublin Association Agreements, the Swiss foreign policy on migration towards non-EU third countries is built upon the Report on International Cooperation on Migration³², which was approved by the Federal Council in February 2011. Asylum policies are amongst others regulated by the Asylum Act as well as the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act, which defines the conditions to obtain asylum and support the integration of foreign nationals in Switzerland.³³ Nevertheless, while Switzerland is not a member state of the EU, it is part of the Schengen area, allowing freedom of movement within EU borders, and cooperates with other Schengen countries with regard to the management of migratory flows through the Dublin Agreement and other voluntary participation mechanisms.

Spotlight on the perception of migration and equal treatment

Scenario from migration workshop

It is 2050 and Europe was able to turn migration into a phenomenon largely seen and lived as an opportunity in the area, with no more ad-hoc crisis situations linked to migration flows in Switzerland and the EU.

To discuss the steps needed to achieve this scenario, participants focused on two main areas of action: (1) perception of migrants and (2) fair integration. The improvement of the perception of migrants and local integration measures pertain to a larger extent to the responsibility of each Member State and should therefore be achieved through nationally implemented policies. Yet, equal treatment policies, such as regulations for the movement of third-country nationals between Member States and the standardisation of work permits (currently a national competence) could be approached and implemented multilaterally through common agreements. In the following paragraphs, the proposed ideas in that sense are outlined.

1. Perception of migrants

Tackling negative perceptions of migrants and asylum seekers among the local population is an important factor for human-centred and successful management of migration. Yet, according to a report by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), no European country has a policy in place to fight hate crimes, violence, xenophobia, and discrimination against migrants.³⁴ The report also showed that countries with policies of this kind are also more likely to provide migrants with fair treatment, regardless of their status.³⁵ Policy steps are needed to foster a shift in the perception of migration, which depends strongly on the management of migration policies applied in Europe.

Modify the perception of migration

Participants focused on the negative connotation of migration in the public discourse, wishing to implement policy solutions to change this by 2050. They envision the achievement of a positive view on the narrative surrounding migration and migrants across all societies in Europe: migration should be seen as beneficial to society and migrants should be included and seen in the society they are part of. Measures taken include three areas of focus during one's lifetime (child, young adult, midlife) and see the implementation of various measures taken by the state, detailed below:

- **Monitor public opinion on migration:** invest in independent research that focuses on analysing the perception of migration among citizens, for instance, by financing projects such as the

“Migration data portal”³⁶ and the conduct of yearly analysis.

- **Change the perception of migration:** at the national level, implement policies that foster a positive view and narrative of migrants and migration with the goal to allow the general population to understand migrants as human beings experiencing difficulties in their country of origin, for example by using existing studies such as the “Intercultural Policies in European Cities”³⁷ and the Council of Europe’s (COE) “Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC)”³⁸ as guidance for programs promoting cultural exchange and integration of migrants. More practically, steps provided by the Global Forum on Migration and Development in their guidance document on “Shaping the Public Narrative on Migration and Migrants”³⁹ could be followed through awareness-raising programs targeting country nationals at different stages of life:
 - (1) during infancy, with the promotion of educative stories to be read in kindergarten and elementary school;
 - (2) for youths, through the implementation of a nationally sponsored program that encourages high school students to spend a human-diversity program of 6 months in their national country or abroad as part of their obligatory school education;
 - (3) at a later stage of life, implement different immersive programs to allow the older generation to understand migratory patterns and motives behind such choices.

2. Fair treatment and integration

Member States often find it difficult to agree on common policies to adopt with regard to intra-European mobility of non-EU migrants. While nationals of Schengen states benefit from full freedom of movement within the Schengen area, the right to free movement of third-country nationals is more restrictive. Indeed, third-country nationals who hold a valid residence permit or a visa have the right to move freely within the Schengen area for up to three months (within a six-month period). Yet, specific national legislation applies regarding the rights of these nationals in relation to taking up residence for a period exceeding three months in another EU Member State.⁴⁰ New agreements and regulations facilitating the free movement of

third-country nationals within Schengen could ensure more equal treatment and show positive outcomes in the long term. Building more legal pathways for migration is another interesting policy avenue for future European migration policies that could leverage the potential of migration for European societies which are ageing and in specific areas such as healthcare while avoiding migrant populations taking great risks via irregular migration pathways.

Legal pathways to migration and integration measures

Participants envisioned a future in which migrants are treated fairly as a new and beneficial part of society: double standards and discrimination no longer exist and migration is seen as a chance for social contribution, and movement inside the Schengen area is facilitated, and the working conditions and permit types improved. Participants also discussed the existing categorization of migrants (e.g. distinguishing between the skill level of migrants) and differences in treatments. Finally, the legal pathways of migration were touched upon. More concretely, the following recommendations were made:

- **Promote safe and legal pathways for education- and work-related migration:** build upon efforts taken up under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum to simplify the admission and residence conditions for third-country workers via the recast of the current Single Permit Directive 2011/98/EU⁴¹, a legal instrument ensuring non-exploitation and equal treatment of migrants in comparison to member-state nationals with regards to working conditions (e.g. pay, health and safety, trade union membership, social security, education, and vocational training and tax benefits). Build strong partnerships with third countries based on short- and medium-term needs related to labour market forces and support migration of targeted populations for study, training, and work, in close collaboration with labour market institutions, social partners, employing organisations, and education institutions. The so-called “Talent Partnerships”⁴² announced by the European Commission with Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia form a good starting point, which should be followed by consistent assessments of labour market needs and workforce pools in other third countries.

- **Explore the possibility of removing the differentiation between high-skilled and low-skilled migrants (e.g. seasonal workers and posted workers):** include all types of third-country nationals under the regulations of the Single Permit Directive and unify legal pathways to migration within the Member States, or by standardisation of requirements to obtain the EU Blue Card.⁴³
- **Promote integration measures within society:** foster the involvement of broader society and follow a bottom-up approach to identify integration needs, which would allow migrants to achieve long-term integration, have their needs met, and evolve in society and their lives, for example by promoting the adoption at the national level of the 11 “Common basic principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union”.⁴⁴ ●

4. Digital policy: data and AI systems for the common good

Regulating data and AI systems with a human-centred focus will allow our society to maximise positive outcomes while respecting citizens' right to privacy.

Maximising the contribution of data and AI systems to sustainability

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data-driven systems are increasingly becoming part of our everyday lives, transforming our societies in the years and decades to come. Regulating these, as well as providing the population with the right skill set needed to navigate the digital world, are fundamental steps that must be implemented within Switzerland and Member States to ensure their potential is fully leveraged for the public good while citizens' integrity is protected. The European Union recognizes the potential and importance of AI technologies but wishes to regulate their use due to concerns that have arisen with regard to the safety and protection of fundamental rights. Legislative proposals around the use of data and AI systems are currently being discussed for implementation at the European level but also within Member States. These regulations are expected to have a global impact, and as such will be the first of their kind, possibly triggering

the implementation of similar regulations worldwide.⁴⁵ The goal is to approach AI and data-driven technologies with standards of trust, transparency, and excellence which ensure the safety of use and fundamental rights.

Status quo

At the EU level, relevant legislative proposals linked to data and AI governance include the European Strategy for Data⁴⁶ – through which the EU presented its action plan in 2020 to create a single market for data around ten strategic fields: health, agriculture, manufacturing, energy, mobility, the financial sector, public administration, skills, the European Open Science Cloud and the crosscutting key priority of meeting the Green Deal objectives.⁴⁷ This has been followed by multiple legislative proposals: the AI Act, for instance, meant to address different levels of risk of AI technologies⁴⁸; the Data Governance Act (DGA), whose goal is to facilitate the sharing of data across the EU and different sectors while increasing trust and transparency⁴⁹; and finally the Data Act, necessary to foster data sharing between businesses and governments for public interest reasons.⁵⁰

In Switzerland, the situation is similar: a number of bodies are being put in place, such as an AI Competence Network, and strategies are being enacted, such as the Digital Switzerland Strategy. While AI technologies bear enormous potential, their use could have negative impacts if not used and regulated according to strict data safety and protection norms. For this reason, a number of regulatory acts are currently being discussed, with relevant legislative proposals linked to data and AI systems governance.

Spotlight on education & data literacy

Data & AI systems workshop

It is 2050, and data and AI-driven technologies are being used to solve societal challenges while respecting citizens' data privacy and security both in Switzerland and the EU.

To discuss the steps needed to achieve this scenario, participants focused on two main areas of action: (1) Education and data literacy and (2) Check and balances in this area. While regulation of data and

AI is still in its infancy, how states regulate these sectors today will be extremely important for setting a foundation for a just digital society.

1. Education and data literacy

In order to empower citizens to understand how data and AI-based technologies work, basic digital skills are needed as the foundational pillar of digital literacy. However, according to Eurostat, in 2021 only 54% of the European population aged 16-74 declared to have at least basic digital skills.⁵¹ Furthermore, levels of digital skills are not evenly distributed among Member States: the Netherlands and Finland are leading with around 80%, while Bulgaria and Romania are only at around 30%.⁵² The European Union has implemented a series of programs directed at European youth to fill the digital gap and empower younger generations to confidently move in the digital age. These include, for example, the European Training Foundation (ETF)⁵³, which is a public-private partnership for inclusive skill development; the EU4Digital⁵⁴, which focuses on addressing the digital skills gap; and DigitalEurope⁵⁵, a trade association that represents digitally transforming industries in Europe. In Switzerland, ongoing educational programs include the “Education & Skilled Workforce” programme within the Digital Switzerland strategy⁵⁶, and the digital literacy programme P-8 “Strengthening of digital skills in teaching” of swissuniversities, funded by federal contributions.⁵⁷

Data literacy & education, digital governance, and increased awareness

This idea focused on the promotion of data literacy in schools and for citizens, which are in turn able to become aware of the use and protection of their data, their digital rights, and the possibility to propose binding initiatives or referendums on these topics. Furthermore, participants envisioned a future in which big data companies are monitored and obliged to give data owners a say on their data. The objective is a society in which individuals have control over their data and at the same time are aware users, and this would be achieved through the following visions:

- **Educate the youth with digital literacy skills and on data and AI:** include digital capabilities in the civic-formation curriculum in schools in Switzerland and the EU, for instance by creating

hands-on and interactive programs and knowledge-sharing platforms that are accessible by students through computers provided in-loco at the school.

- **Provide free and accessible knowledge banks as well as data and AI courses:** finance universities to increase their data and AI-related MOOCs offer, for instance by creating an online network of knowledge sharing between Swiss and European universities, for example, the 4EU+ European University Alliance, which currently has available a free online course on "Thinking AI: Bringing together ethical, legal and social aspects of AI"⁵⁸ and promotes many virtual learning mobility possibilities for students. Strengthen existing and developing initiatives and public-private partnerships such as the EU4digital and the European Training Foundation (ETF), for example by mandating the creation of knowledge banks accessible to everyone.
- **Implement a European framework for digital literacy:** explore possible pathways for the implementation of a common European framework for digital literacy among EU Member States in collaboration with Switzerland.
- **Ensure general availability of data and AI knowledge:** explore necessary measures to ensure that the population has easy access to their "digital basic rights", for instance by creating guidance sheets both at the national and European levels, and ensuring that these documents are easily accessible.
- **Ensure data privacy and security:** allow citizens to have full control over their data privacy and security through adequate regulation both in Switzerland and the EU.

2. Checks and balances

Governments began to adopt AI regulations and policies with the goal to maintain a form of social control over digital technologies and protect the data privacy of citizens as well as increasing transparency in the way the data is used, while still allowing and promoting the expanding use of these new technologies.

In the EU, the AI Act is currently being discussed, with the goal to ensure safety and fundamental rights while implementing an approach meant to achieve the use of AI technologies that is human-centred and built on transparency and trust.

The sectors that must be addressed are mainly related to legal aspects such as the traceability and location of data, surveillance, and manipulation, but other aspects such as the “human-machine relationship” and the protection of fundamental rights must also be considered.

Clear regulations and implementation of a public observatory on data usage

Participants envisioned a future in which there is no governmental control over citizens' data, covering health, judicial, and personal movement. The vision called for the establishment of an independent commission that would be responsible for monitoring the storage and use of data, to ensure that there is no misuse in place. Furthermore, participants called for countries to store data labelled as ‘critical’ (e.g. health data) on European clouds, to avoid external interference by other actors.

Participants' ideas also centred around a data vision for 2050 in which there is an individual-centred data society, that empowers citizens to have control over their data and to be informed and aware of their digital data rights and obligations. This vision sees data as no longer being a lucrative business and recommends different policy steps needed to achieve this objective, such as:

- **Control external data storage for sensitive and critical data:** any risk related to interference and data leaks could be diminished, for instance by restricting the storage of citizens' sensitive data exclusively to regulatory spaces considered equivalent to European data privacy and security norms.
- **Ensure inclusion of civil society and academia in monitoring bodies:** complement existing data protection bodies through an independent commission composed of civil society and academic experts to avoid misuse of personal data by government entities.
- **Strengthening of data governance efforts in Switzerland:** reinforce already established channels at the Federal Office of Communications, for instance by establishing a public observatory, liaising with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and annually updating Swiss stakeholders on legislative developments in the EU around data and AI systems governance.

5. Policy pathways for a sustainable future

Foreign citizens living in Switzerland have relevant and constructive recommendations to make about the shared future between Switzerland and the EU in the areas of climate, migration and digital policies. Their voices should be heard!

Achieving the three visions stated at the beginning of this participatory process is not straightforward and certainly goes beyond the non-exhaustive list of policy pathways defined by citizens and experts who took part in it. The recommendations summarised below are only some amongst the many policy measures that should be taken. Yet, the contributions made by participants in each of our three focus areas made it clear that foreign citizens living in Switzerland, and EU citizens, in particular, should be further included in ongoing foreign policy discussions about the shared future between Switzerland and the EU. They are aware of the current challenges our society is facing and have relevant and constructive policy recommendations to add to the public debate! Hence, their voices and opinions should be heard.

The sectoral approach of this participatory process provided important learnings in three major policy areas. First, in order to achieve climate neutrality in Europe, we must move towards more sustainable mobility and transportation practices, shift to more

sustainable food systems and rethink the way we organise our economies. Second, migration can be turned into an opportunity for European societies if the right accompanying measures are taken regarding legal pathways for migration, integration, and perception of migrants as it has the potential to provide solutions to challenges linked to demographic trends, future labour market shortcomings and ensure we live together as a society based on solidarity in which people understand and care about each other. Third, in the policy area of data and AI systems measures are needed both regarding education and regulation. Achieving greater data literacy within the European population will be central to ensuring prosperity and continued innovation and competitiveness both in Switzerland and the EU, to allow citizens to navigate cyberspace confidently and be aware of their digital privacy rights. From a regulatory perspective, a sound system of checks and balances around the use of personal data is needed so that emerging AI-driven systems provide support in achieving a more sustainable future instead of harming individuals. Our shared future depends to a large extent on how the above-mentioned focus areas will be addressed politically by decision-makers in Switzerland and the EU in the decades to come. The crowdsourced sectoral recommendations summarised below in Box 1, provide a good starting point for an inclusive public debate. ●

Box 1: Main recommendations for a sustainable future in Europe

Climate

Mobility

- Substantially increase sustainable freight transportation and promote low-carbon fuel-based transportation when it is impossible to switch to freight transportation.
- Impose a progressive ban on fossil fuel transport means and broaden technological variety in the automotive industry by encouraging the usage of electric means of transport and increasing the availability of free and available charging stations across Europe.
- Drastically reinforce taxation schemes on fuel usage and abolish fuel subsidies.
- Impose a ban on short-haul flights on the European continent and support regulation of long-haul flights.

Food systems

- Cut food waste in the EU and Switzerland by 75% and achieve substantial cuts in GHG emissions linked to food systems through increasing freight capacity for food transport and the regulation of food waste.
- Incentivise sustainable food production, especially targeting a reduction of animal farming and sustainable soil management by providing economic incentives for food producers and financial investment in sustainable farming practices as well as incentive measures on the consumer side (e.g. taxation of food imports or subsidies for locally produced food).

Migration

Perception of migrants

- Invest in independent research that focuses on analysing the perception of migration among citizens.
- Change the perception of migration through programs promoting cultural exchange and integration of migrants as well as awareness-raising programs targeting country nationals at different stages of life and confronting them with migrants' perspectives and experiences.

Legal pathways and integration measures

- Promote safe and legal pathways for education- and work-related migration through partnerships with third countries based on assessments of labour market needs and workforce pools in other third countries.
- Explore the possibility of removing the differentiation between high-skilled and low-skilled migrants and of unifying legal pathways to migration within the Schengen area.
- Reinforce national integration measures based on needs collected by civil society actors and relevant organisations working with migrants at the national level.



Data and AI systems

Education and data literacy

- Educate the youth with digital literacy skills and on data and AI through civic-formation curriculums in schools. Additionally, provide free and accessible data and AI courses and knowledge repositories to the larger population.
- Implement a European framework for digital literacy.
- Allow citizens to have full control over their data privacy and security through adequate regulation.

Checks and balances

- Control data storage and handling of sensitive and critical data outside of EU regulatory space.
- Complement existing data protection bodies through independent commissions composed of civil society and academic experts to avoid misuse of personal data by government entities.
- Strengthening of data governance efforts in Switzerland within the public administration.

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