

ifa ECP Monitor Country Report

Switzerland

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1. External cultural policy objectives in geopolitical context

Switzerland is a small land-locked country in South-Central Europe with a population of 8.5 million. Despite its modest size, Switzerland is among the most developed and wealthy nations in the world. It is one of the wealthiest countries with a GDP per capita of €76,200 and placed 16th in world trade in 2019 (Table 1). Finance and banking are key industries and Swiss science and engineering are world-renowned. Switzerland is especially known for its independence, stability, and neutrality. As a result, it hosts the global headquarters of many international organizations, from the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The country is consistently at the top of many global rankings. In the Global Innovation Index, for example, Switzerland has topped the list for more than five years in a row (GII, 2020). The Soft Power 30 index places Switzerland 6th in 2019 as one of the most trusted nations in the world (Portland, 2019). With 146 posts, the Swiss diplomatic core is certainly not the world's largest, but still ranked 17th globally in 2019 (Lowy Institute, n.d.) (Table 1).

Table 1: Switzerland's geopolitical and geo-economic position

| | 2019 | % change since 2015 | |
|---------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|----|
| Population (millions) / ranking | 8.57 / 99 th | 8.28 | 3% |
| GDP ranking | 20 th | 19 th | |
| GDP per capita | €76,200 | 0 | |
| Cultural economy (%GDP) | 0.4 ⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾ | 0 | |
| Education economy (%GDP) | 5.6 ⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾ | 0 | |
| R&D economy (%GDP) | 3.29 ⁽²⁰¹⁷⁾ | - 0.08 | |
| Media economy (%GDP) | 0 ⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾ | 0 | |
| Geopolitical position | | | |
| Hard power rank | 0.5259 / 30 th ⁽²⁰²⁰⁾ | n/a | - |
| World trade rank (\$ million) | 16 th / 876,077 | 16 th / 761,016 | - |
| Soft power rank | 77.04 / 6 th | 67.52 / 7 th | ↑ |
| Diplomacy rank | 17 th | 16 th ⁽²⁰¹⁶⁾ | ↓ |

Sources: Eurostat, World Bank

Politically, the Swiss state is a confederation made up of 26 cantons, each with their own constitution and government. The federation prides itself on cultural diversity, and German, Italian, French, and Romansh languages are all official national languages. In that sense, it is difficult to determine a single national and coherent ECP approach. Also, compared with other

countries with more active and concerted ECP strategies, Switzerland appears to have opted for a reserved, low-key approach. However, with ample assets like world-leading academic institutions and rich cultural and artistic heritage, has many important advantages in ECP. Related to its strong university system, Switzerland boasts innumerable cultural and scientific contributions that are disproportionate to its modest size. For example, the Swiss have won more Nobel prizes and registered more patents per capita than any other nation (US News, 2020).

Table 2: Government spending on ECP fields as a % of total outlays

| | 2019 | % change since 2015 |
|-----------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Culture | 1.20 ⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾ | 0 |
| Education | 16.50 ⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾ | 0.10 |
| R & D | 2.85 ⁽²⁰¹⁷⁾ | 0.20 |
| Media | 0.10 ⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾ | 0 |

Source: Eurostat

As a percentage of total government expenditure on education, Switzerland is the leader in Europe, ranking second after Iceland, with as much as 16.5 % of the state budget reserved for the development of education. Taking into consideration the size of the Swiss economy and when translated into absolute figures, Switzerland is a frontrunner in this field. Similarly, the country's renowned status in innovation and research comes as no surprise considering that 2.85 % of state resources go into scientific and research structures. Among OECD countries, in 2017 the support for R&D translated into 3.29 % of total gross domestic product, second only to Sweden (with 3.36%) and placing above Japan (OECD, 2021).

2. External cultural policy: an overview

Switzerland's domestic and foreign policies are closely interlinked. The constitutional objectives center on promoting democracy and the rule of law, dialogue and diversity, sustainable development, and human rights and humanitarian principles (FDFA, 2016). Neutrality is an important aspect and gives the country greater room for manoeuvre in an increasingly uncertain world. These factors guide the Swiss external cultural policy as well.

Cultural promotion is anchored as a national objective in the Swiss Constitution. One of the goals is to strengthen cohesion and cultural diversity in Switzerland, to create favorable conditions for the production of arts and culture, and promote Swiss cultural activities abroad (Bundesrat, 2009). Compared to domestic cultural policy, the promotion of Swiss culture abroad is closely linked with the economic growth. The *Culture and Economy* promotion strategy calls for an increased visibility of Swiss creators and enabling them easier access to international markets. One example is the international positioning via the "Swiss Games" and "Design Switzerland" labels (FOC, 2020). Other measures for the dissemination of culture abroad include strengthening presence at important international festivals and platforms and fostering collaborations. New partnerships have been initiated that increase opportunities for

Swiss cultural production, like the South American exchange program “Coincidencia” and joint funding projects with French and German partners (ibid.).

ECP activities abroad are mainly coordinated through the Federal Office of Culture (FOC), the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), and the Swiss cultural promotion institution, Pro Helvetia. Within the Foreign Affairs department, Presence Switzerland (PRS) is responsible for Switzerland’s official communication and presence abroad (FDFA, 2020a). International cooperation and development are also integral parts of the country’s ECP activity. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has the mandate to support cultural projects in the framework of development cooperation. Education is another priority and covers both basic education and vocational skills development. The implementing agency SDC pledged to increase its commitments to education by 50% in the period 2017–2020 (SDC, 2017).

An important political aim of the Swiss ECP is the promotion of a positive perception of Switzerland abroad. In that sense, strategic communication is key to Swiss external cultural policy. This is evident from the merger of the Cultural Foreign Policy Centre with Presence Switzerland in 2012 in the General Secretariat under the direction of Presence Switzerland (PRS). The aim is to coordinate cooperation between specialized departments and Swiss representations abroad (FDFA, 2020b). Additionally, targeted communication should safeguard Swiss interests abroad and promote a positive perception of the country. In its Switzerland Image Monitor, PRS reports that the country is highly regarded as a business and innovation hub, and renowned for its direct democracy and high standard of living (PRS, 2020). With an internationally recognized profile, Switzerland can showcase its excellence and establish stronger partnerships. For example, as an important location for science and innovation, the “Digital Switzerland” strategy is designed to raise the country’s profile in digital foreign policy and scientific diplomacy (Cassis, 2019; FDFA, 2020a).

Table 3: Key ECP Statistics for Switzerland

| | 2019 |
|---|--|
| Number of countries with ECP activities | at least 120 ^(Pro Helvetia) |
| Total number of institutions abroad | at least 46 ¹ |
| Total number of FTE staff engaged in ECP activities | at least 521 ² |
| Government financial support (€ million) | about 100 ³ |
| Total expenditure of all ECP operators (€ million) | - |
| Comparative ECP ranking | minor |

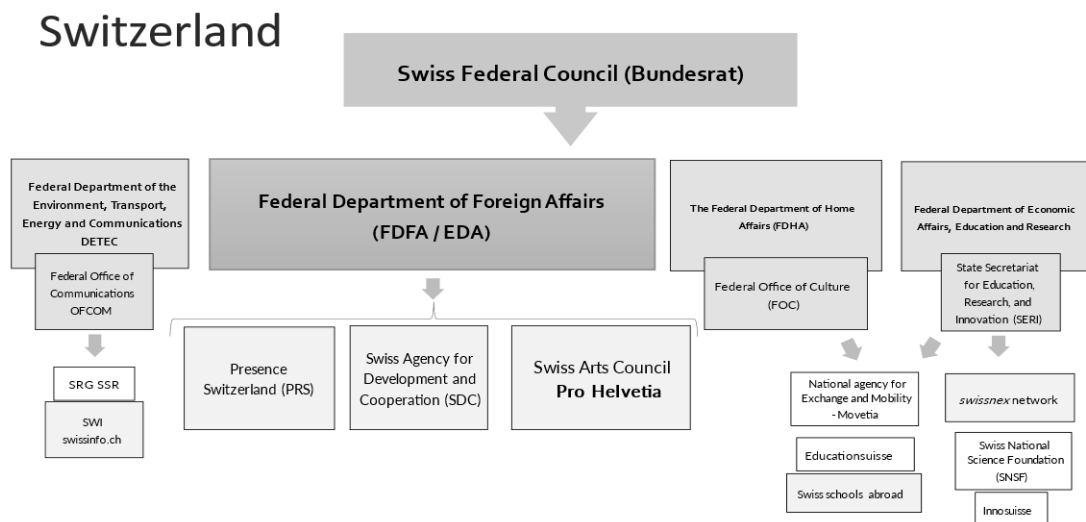
¹ The number is based on the sum of offices and branches of Pro Helvetia, swissnex network, Swiss schools and supported locations abroad. However, the FDFA reports a total of 170 diplomatic representations abroad, (FDFA 2020).

² Pro Helvetia, swissnex and Swiss science counsellors, Swiss teaching staff abroad, and SWI staff combined.

³ Estimation based the sum of expenditures: Pro Helvetia, PRS, Swiss schools abroad, swissnex, ESKAS scholarships, SWI.

Figure 1: Institutional map of Swiss ECP

Switzerland relies on a strong external network of around 170 representations worldwide (FDFA, 2020a).



3. Fields of ECP

3.1. Culture and the arts

Cultural relations program is based on two axes: institutional cooperation and the promotion of Swiss culture and arts abroad. The first is the responsibility of the Federal Office of Culture (FOC) and second of Pro Helvetia. (FOC, 2020). At local level, cantons and cities also play an important role in international cultural exchange. The City of Zürich is an international hub for the arts and sciences. Similarly, the Swiss-Italian town of Locarno, with its annual film festival, is considered the world capital of auteur cinema. Another example is Art Basel, one of the leading arts fair of its kind with annual exhibitions in Miami, Hong Kong, and Basel. While many of these festivals and programs are independent, there is also a diplomatic element. The Montreux Jazz Festival, for instance, collaborates with Presence Switzerland, thus taking part in the country's nation branding strategy (Rodriguez Cañabate, 2019).

Pro Helvetia, a foundation under public law established in 1939, is active in 120 countries today. The organization employs around 100 (80 FTE) staff and maintains a physical presence in Cairo, Johannesburg, New Delhi, Shanghai, and Moscow. Another important part of Switzerland's cultural network includes the Center Culturel Suisse in Paris (est. 1985) and 3 other partner institutions abroad: the Istituto Svizzero (IS) in Rome and its branch in Milan, the Swiss Institute in New York and swissnex San Francisco (FOC, 2020; Pro Helvetia, 2020a).

The Swiss Parliament grants Pro Helvetia a multi-year framework budget as defined in the "Federal Cultural Policy Statement – *Kulturbotschaft*" (Pro Helvetia, 2020b). The arts coun-

cil received 210.9 Swiss francs for the 2016-2020 period which translated into an annual budget for Pro Helvetia of around CHF 40 million in 2019 (around €38 million) (FOC, 2020; Pro Helvetia, 2020a). With these resources, Pro Helvetia is able to support around 5,000 cultural events annually, but these are mostly confined to Europe and Switzerland. However, the cultural exchange program involves partners from over a hundred countries. For example, from 2017 to 2020, the “Coincidencia” initiative (budget: CHF 2,7 million) aims to strengthen Swiss-South American exchange. Following good results, Pro Helvetia announced the opening of an additional branch in the region (Pro Helvetia, 2020a, 2020c, n.d.).

Table 4: Key statistics on culture and the arts

| <i>Pro Helvetia</i> | 2019 | 2015 |
|--|--|--|
| Number of countries present | 120 | 97 ⁽²⁰¹⁶⁾ |
| Number of institutes (including offices and partners) | 9 ⁴ | 8 |
| Number of FTE staff | 80 | 90 ⁽²⁰¹⁶⁾ |
| Number of artists in exchange programs | 45 | - |
| Budget (€ million) | 38.13 | 33.58 ⁽²⁰¹⁶⁾ |
| Government financial support (€ million) | (2016-2020) Pro Helvetia framework budget: 190 | -Presence Switzerland: 7.9 ⁽²⁰¹⁶⁾ |

The SDC agency is also committed to ECP. In the context of international development, arts and culture are perceived as powerful drivers of social change. The policy has three parts: fostering interculturality, support to local culture projects in the partner countries, and promotion of foreign artists to Swiss and international audiences (SDC, 2021).

3.2. Language

When it comes to language promotion, Switzerland presents a special case. There are four languages which formed the national consciousness: French, Italian, German, and Rhaeto-Romanic (Romansh)⁵. The confederation is often cited as a success story for handling its cultural and linguistic diversity. More than three fifths speak the Swiss-German dialect, one fifth French, fewer than one tenth speak Italian, and the number of Romansh speakers is declining. Even though the four linguistic communities are very homogenous and confined within their regions, the Swiss are exposed to a great degree of plurilingualism. According to one study, almost two-thirds (64%) of Swiss use more than one language at least once a week (SWI, 2016). Additionally, more than 20 per cent of the population are of foreign origin and have introduced their own languages (Kuzelewska, 2016).

⁴ Apart from its branch, Centre culturel suisse in Paris, Pro Helvetia participates in the funding of the programmes of 3 Swiss cultural institutions located abroad. The Istituto Svizzero di Roma (ISR) and its branch in Milan, the Swiss Institute in New York, and is also the partner of Swissnex San Francisco in their cultural programming, (Pro Helvetia 2017).

⁵ German, French, and Italian are official federal languages. Romansh is an official federal language in communication with Romansh speakers.

The language policy is determined at the federal level, but the actual practice is left up to the cantons. The overarching principle is the peaceful co-existence and equality of federal languages. A symbolic example is the use of a neutral Latin name of the confederation - *Confederation Helvetica* - in many contexts in order to not give preference to individual languages (ibid.). In essence, this means that Switzerland does not have conventional language promotion policies abroad. If there is support for one of the four languages, it is reduced to cantonal cooperation. One example includes the mobility of language teaching staff through *Movetia*, the national agency for exchanges and mobility in the education system. Additionally, the network of Swiss schools abroad is traditionally German-speaking since the schools were mostly founded by German-speaking Swiss (Table 5).

Table 5: Key figures on language promotion

| | 2019 | 2015 |
|---|--|---|
| Number of countries where courses are offered | 10 ⁶ | - |
| Number of students enrolled | | |
| In-class | n/a | - |
| Online reach | - | - |
| Number of candidates for language qualifications | n/a | - |
| Number of language teachers <small>Movetia Language Assistance Program</small> | 72 incoming language teachers 36 outgoing | ⁽²⁰¹⁷⁾ 62 incoming 38 outgoing |

3.3. Primary and secondary education

Switzerland supports 18 Swiss schools abroad in ten countries (Education Suisse, 2019). These are non-profit private schools which are attended by Swiss nationals and children from the host country. The education is strongly bicultural and at least bilingual. Each school abroad has its own patron canton and teaches Swiss curricula. In 2015 with the introduction of the Swiss Schools Act, the confederation was given authority to support establishment and development of new schools. It can co-finance new establishments up to 50% or a maximum of CHF 3 million (around €2.7 million) (FOC, 2016). The total federal support for education abroad amounted to CHF 15 million (around €17 million). Apart from the Swiss schools network, the government supports an additional 11 locations with teaching staff and additional funds.

The Federal Office of Culture (FOC) is responsible for the implementation of Swiss education abroad (Swiss Schools Act) and educational supervision is the task of the patron cantons (Bundesrat, 2018b). *Educationsuisse* is an umbrella organisation that represents the interests of Swiss schools abroad. It is supported by the confederation for its various activities like

⁶ Refers here to the presence of Swiss schools abroad. Swiss schools abroad are traditionally German-speaking, as they were founded almost entirely by German-speaking Swiss, (FOC 2016). However, the program is multilingual.

recruitment of Swiss teachers or advice services for graduates who want to continue their education in Switzerland (FOC, 2016).

The Swiss international schools serve a dual role. On the one hand, they educate the Swiss abroad and the local children. Also, these are places where Swiss values and culture can be encountered and communicated to the local community. The confederation's strategy is to further develop and expand the school network abroad, especially in emerging market countries (FOC, 2016).

Table 6: Key figures on primary and secondary education

| <i>Swiss schools abroad</i> | 2019 | 2015 |
|--|--|---|
| Number of countries | 10 | - |
| Number of schools | 18 | 17 |
| Number of students | 8,077 | 7,823 |
| Number of staff / teachers | 260 | 276 |
| Budget (€ million) <small>educationsuisse</small> | 2.21 | 2.5 |
| Government financial support (€ million) | Federal support to education- suisse: 0.30 Support to 11 locations with- out Swiss schools: 0.52 Total federal support to Swiss schools abroad: ca 18.3 | Federal support to education- suisse: 0.32 Federal support to locations without Swiss schools: 1.31 Total federal support to Swiss schools abroad: ca 19.3 ⁽²⁰¹⁶⁾ |

3.4. Tertiary education and science

Swiss universities regularly take top position in world rankings, sometimes even surpassing those from the U.S. and the U.K. This is especially true of engineering, technology, and natural sciences. For instance, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology of Lausanne (EPFL) and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zürich (ETH) are among the top ten in these areas (QS World University Rankings, 2020). Such reputation attracts international students from around the globe. A total of 54,279 foreign students chose Switzerland as their study destination in 2018 (UIS, 2020) (Table 8).

Table 7: Key figures on tertiary education

| | 2019 | 2015 |
|--|--|--------------------------|
| Number of countries | 109 ⁷ | - |
| Number of students | | |
| Number of foreign students ⁸ | 54,279 ⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾ | 50,591 |
| Number of students at transnational higher education (TNE) | - | - |
| Number of government scholarships awarded (ESKAS) | 381 ^(2019/20) | 353 |
| Budget (€ million) | - | ESKAS: 8.72 ⁹ |
| Government financial support (€ million) | International mobility and Cooperation Programs ⁽²⁰²¹⁻²⁰²⁴⁾ 185 | |

In terms of Switzerland's international education and research strategy, the main objective is to secure Switzerland's top position in these fields. The promotion of international cooperation is of growing importance. For the years 2021-2024, the Swiss Federal Council has approved CHF 200 million (around €185 million) for this purpose.

Each year the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) awards the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships for Foreign Scholars and Artists (ESKAS). The scholarship scheme is available to all foreign nationals from states with which Switzerland maintains diplomatic ties. The support primarily targets post-graduate researchers (MA, PhD) with the aim of establishing long-term scientific cooperation (Bundesrat, 2018a). From 1996 to 2015, 2430 foreign students were recipients of this prestigious scholarship (SERI, 2018). In total, in the academic 2019-2020 foreign students made up 30% of all students and 56% of doctoral graduates (OECD, 2019).

Another focus is to support education mobility and institutional cooperation. This involves individual international study, training, and continuing education for all students as well as for teaching staff. For this reason, a national agency for exchange and mobility (SFAM) and its promotion agency *Movetia*, were established in 2016. Thanks to the joint sponsorship of the Confederation and the cantons, *Movetia* can support a wide array of mobility and exchange activities, both at the national and international level (Bundesrat, 2020). One of them is the Language Assistants Program aimed at language teachers from Switzerland or abroad who would like to teach their mother tongue.

⁷ Government Excellence Scholarships for Foreign Scholars and Artists (ESKAS).

⁸ Data based on Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students | UNESCO UIS. (2020). Retrieved 2 September 2020, from <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>.

⁹ The total awarded amount for the ESKAS scholarships.

Table 8: Key figures on science and research

| | 2019 | 2015 |
|--|--|---|
| Number of countries | swissnex: 4 | 4 |
| Number of institutes | - swissnex: 8 ¹⁰ - Swiss National Science Foundation SNSF - Innosuisse | - swissnex: 5 - Swiss National Science Foundation SNSF - Innosuisse |
| Number of researchers / staff | swissnex: 79 staff | - |
| Number of projects | - SNSF: 5,866 project collaborations -Innosuisse: 66 int. projects | SNSF: 4,599 project collaborations |
| Number scientists in exchange programmes | SNSF: 668 ¹¹ | SNSF: 772 |
| Budget (€ million) | - SNSF research funding int. cooperation: 14.24 -Innosuisse: 200.53 - swissnex: 11.6 | swissnex: 8.3 |
| Government financial support (€ million) | swissnex: 4.86 ⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾ | swissnex: 5.6 |

Science diplomacy is arguably the most important aspect of Swiss ECP. In the field of science and research Switzerland performs extremely well. Some of the most important success factors were the high-quality education system, efficient funding by the state, as well as involvement of the private sector. In 2017, two thirds of the GDP share in research and development were contributed by the private sector (SERI, 2020). Additionally, Switzerland is known for its welcoming business culture. On average, around 300 startups are founded here every year (Swiss Startup Radar, 2018). Simultaneously, such cross-border collaborations give Swiss actors access to international networks and return significant economic benefits to Switzerland.

The small country depends heavily on (international) brain power and nurtures very close ties with the finest knowledge networks around the world (Schlegel, 2014). A very good example is the Swiss science diplomacy network, *swissnex*. *Swissnex* is managed by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) in cooperation with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). Currently, it consists of 5 main branches: Boston (2000), San Francisco (2003), Shanghai (2007), Bangalore (2011) and Rio de Janeiro (2013). Additionally, Swiss science counsellors in embassies¹² are delegated to 19 locations worldwide. Speaking of regional focus, the BRICS countries and Asia are of particular interest (SERI, 2015).

¹⁰ Swissnex network counts 5 outposts (Boston, San Francisco, Shanghai, Bangalore and Rio de Janeiro). Another 3 outposts have been established in New York (swissnex Boston), São Paulo (swissnex Brazil) and Guangzhou (swissnex China), (Stoumann & Gøgsig Randrup, 2020).

¹¹ The number of SNSF mobility fellowships worldwide.

¹² Swiss science counselors are usually diplomats fully integrated in the work of the embassy.

The science and technology outposts should connect Switzerland with the world's most important innovation hubs. *Swissnex* Shanghai, for instance, collaborates not only with the Chinese government and Swiss universities and researchers, but also other ECP actors like Swiss Business Hub, Presence Switzerland, and Pro Helvetia (Schlegel, Jacot, & Fetscherin, 2011). In 2019, the *swissnex* network organized more than 340 events with the involvement of more than 180 Swiss partners (swissnex, 2020). The overall budget for that year was around CHF 13 million. As a public-private initiative, *swissnex* receives funding from the Swiss government for basic infrastructure and staff. The remaining two thirds of the budget are provided by other public and private partners (Schlegel, 2014; Stoumann & Gøgsig Randrup, 2020).

Other important federal funding body in R&D is the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). SNSF strives to promote the global positioning of the Swiss research community. In 2019, the research funding towards international cooperation reached CHF 15.8 million (around €14 million) (SNSF, 2020). Apart from SNSF, *Innosuisse* is a federal agency tasked with promoting science-based innovation in the interest of economy.

Lastly, Switzerland's successful research cooperation is evident through its participation in various international organizations. As an associate member since 2004, Switzerland has participated in many EU research framework programs, like EUREKA. It is a member of several international research organizations such as the European Space Agency (ESA), and the world's largest physics laboratory, CERN, is based in Geneva (SERI, 2020).

3.5. Foreign Media

Switzerland's presence in the international media landscape is very limited. The only outlet which could fall under the scope of international media is the web-hosted SWI¹³. It is the successor to Swiss Radio International (SRI), which stopped broadcasting in 2004. The former international shortwave radio gained respect for its neutral reporting during the Second World War and the Cold War (SWI, 2004).

The multimedia SWI (*swissinfo*) is the international unit of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SBC). It was launched in 1999 and today publishes in 10 languages with a potential audience of 75% world population (SWI, 2020a). SWI is commonly used an information channel for Swiss living abroad¹⁴ but it also provides foreign audiences with a glimpse of Swiss current affairs, society, and culture. In terms of financing, *swissinfo* receives a half of its budget from the license fees, and another half is covered by a federal grant from the Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM). For the financial 2019, SWI reported expenditure of around CHF 18 million (SWI, 2020b) (Table 10).

¹³ Other services for foreign audiences include tvsvizzera.it, TV5 Monde, and 3Sat.

¹⁴ In 2019, there were 770,900 Swiss citizens living abroad (FDFA, 2020c).

Table 9: Key figures on foreign broadcasting

| | 2019 | 2015 |
|--|--|---|
| SWI swissinfo.ch | | |
| Number of countries broadcasted to | Reach: 75 % of world population | - |
| Number of languages | 10 | 10 |
| Number of channels ¹⁵ | 1 | 1 |
| Audience / Unique visitors (monthly average) | 1,236,658 | 748,000 |
| Audience / Visits (monthly average) | 2,489,000 | 1,561,000 |
| SWI Plus app downloads | - | 149,902 ⁽²⁰¹⁶⁾ ¹⁶ |
| Budget (€ million) | 16.36 | 16.62 |
| Number of countries broadcasted to | Reach: 75 % of world population | - |
| New Media | | |
| Social networks following | - swissinfo.ch: Facebook: 1,369,168 Weibo: 466,564 YouTube: 112,984 Twitter: 99,686 WeChat: 29,118 Instagram: 24,782 VK.com: 16,417 | - swissinfo.ch: ⁽²⁰¹⁶⁾ Facebook: 954,727 Weibo: 459,968 YouTube: 28,126 Twitter: 41,662 WeChat: 16,732 Instagram: 1,159 VK.com: 7,481 |
| | - houseofswitzerland.org ¹⁷ Facebook: 101,130 Twitter: 50,015 Instagram: 11,509 | |

¹⁵ SWI swissinfo.ch is one of four news and broadcasting channels mandated to provide a service for foreign audiences. The others are: tvsvizzera.it, TV5 Monde and 3Sat, SWI (2020).

¹⁶ TV app, Android, iOS, Windows platforms combined.

¹⁷ This website is operated by Presence Switzerland, a unit of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs that is responsible for maintaining the Swiss image abroad.

4. Challenges and future outlook

Although Switzerland is a small state, it enjoys a very positive perception abroad which is closely correlated with its external cultural policy and effective strategic communication. Especially through its science and innovation output, Switzerland earned a reputation for excellence which most other countries can only envy. On top of that, it sets an example for small countries which by means of soft power hope to achieve great success in foreign policy. Not only does it attract the world's greatest talents, but it is also highly trusted around the world and recognized for its democratic and liberal values. However, for a country of only 8.5 million, it is difficult to believe it can match the performance of other major ECP players like the U.S. and China, or even European neighbors like Germany and France (Portland, 2019).

Switzerland is very successful in promoting a positive image of the country abroad. Swiss exports, innovation, and the Swiss people enjoy a very good reputation. Switzerland's image is frequently associated with its status as a financial center. On the other hand, there are also negative stereotypes, like the handling of past tax-related scandals (PRS, 2020). Moreover, the dissemination of Swiss culture as one of the primary goals of the ECP has so far had modest success. Swiss contemporary cultural production and cultural heritage are barely known abroad. Opinions of Switzerland as a tourist destination are hampered by its extremely high cost of living: people would like to visit – if money were no object (PRS, 2020).

The Swiss higher education and research are highly competitive internationally. Its universities regularly rank at the top of many indices. Moreover, Switzerland occupies a leading position in research, technology, and innovation. However, Switzerland should not rest on its laurels. Promoting higher education and research will be a long-term process in an increasingly competitive landscape. Some of the disadvantages that discourage international students from coming to Switzerland are very high costs of living, few scholarships for bachelor studies, as well as difficult admission for nationals of some countries.

While the confederation can take pride in its multicultural and rich heritage, it must also deal with very different cantonal and local circumstances. To sidestep its regional and linguistic fragmentation, the country will need to develop a "One-Switzerland" approach which involves all national stakeholders and offers targeted and coherent policies (FDFA, 2019).

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Imprint

The External Cultural Policy Monitor

Developed by Helmut K. Anheier, Hertie School & UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, and ifa Competence Centre. Supervised by Helmut K. Anheier. Coordinated by Sarah Widmaier for ifa.

Preferred citation

Markovic, Darinka (11/2021). "Switzerland. Country Report," in: Helmut K. Anheier and ifa (eds.). The External Cultural Policy Monitor. Stuttgart: ifa.

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the ifa.

Publisher:

ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)
Charlottenplatz 17,
70173 Stuttgart,
Postfach 10 24 63,
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www.ifa.de

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17901/ecp.2021.060>