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Strategy for Communication Abroad

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Contents	Page
1. Background	3
1.1. The constitutional objectives of Swiss foreign policy	3
1.2. The mandate for Switzerland's communication abroad	3
1.3. Switzerland's image abroad	4
1.3.1. The current perception of Switzerland abroad	4
1.3.2. Opportunities and risks for Switzerland's communication abroad	4
1.4. Key challenges for Switzerland's communication abroad	5
2. Objectives and priority areas of communication abroad	5
2.1. Strategic objectives	5
2.2. Target groups	6
2.3. Priority areas	7
2.3.1. Switzerland's role in Europe	8
2.3.2. Switzerland's political system	9
2.3.3. Swiss solidarity and sense of responsibility	11
2.3.4. International Geneva	12
2.3.5. Education, research and innovation (ERI)	13
2.3.6. Economy and competitiveness	14
2.3.7. Tourism	15
2.3.8. Environment, Transport and Energy	17
2.3.9. Finance and taxation issues	18
2.3.10. Culture	19
2.3.11. Sport	21
2.4. Coordination and coherence	22
2.5. Exceptional situations and image crises	23
3. Instruments of Presence Switzerland	23
3.1. Monitoring and analysis	23
3.2. Platforms abroad	24
3.2.1. Communication projects of the Swiss representations	24
3.2.2. Major international events	24
3.3. Platforms in Switzerland	25
3.3.1. Foreign delegations	25
3.3.2. Events in Switzerland with an international dimension	25
3.4. Digital platforms and social media	25
3.5. Information and communication materials and promotional products	26
4. Evaluation	26



1. Background

1.1. The constitutional objectives of Swiss foreign policy

The constitutional objectives of Swiss foreign policy are to safeguard and promote the interests and values laid down in the Federal Constitution. These objectives and their implementation within the framework of the Foreign Policy Strategy 2016–19 provide a broad and stable frame of reference for Swiss foreign policy during this legislative period and for the Strategy for Communication Abroad 2016–19. The objectives of Swiss foreign policy are defined in Art. 54 and Art. 2 of the Federal Constitution: The Swiss Confederation "shall protect the liberty and rights of the people and safeguard the independence and security of the country; (...) promote the common welfare, sustainable development, internal cohesion and cultural diversity of the country; (...) ensure the greatest possible equality of opportunity among its citizens; (...) [and] is committed to the long-term preservation of natural resources and to a just and peaceful international order" (Art. 2 of the Federal Constitution).

With regard to foreign affairs, the Federal Constitution states (Art. 54 para. 2): "The Confederation shall ensure that the independence of Switzerland and its welfare is safeguarded; it shall in particular assist in the alleviation of need and poverty in the world and promote respect for human rights and democracy, the peaceful co-existence of peoples as well as the conservation of natural resources."

Good international relations are a key element in safeguarding these interests and values. In today's information and communication society, maintaining these relations requires more than just good foreign policy. Specific measures are needed to communicate and explain Swiss foreign policy abroad.

1.2. The mandate for Switzerland's communication abroad

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs' (FDFA) communication abroad uses public relations tools to support the safeguard of Switzerland's interests abroad, in compliance with the Federal Act and Ordinance on the Cultivation of Switzerland's Image Abroad (SR 194.1, SR 194.11). On the basis of the Federal Act, the Confederation, or more specifically the FDFA, transmits general knowledge about Switzerland, fosters understanding for the country and portrays its diversity and attractiveness. These tasks are laid down in the Ordinance and comprise of the following:

- promoting the visibility of Switzerland abroad;
- presenting Switzerland's political concerns and positions to a foreign public;
- expanding and nurturing Switzerland's network of contacts with decision-makers and opinion-leaders abroad;
- monitoring and analysing the perception of Switzerland abroad, and reporting on this to the Federal Council and the bodies with responsibility in specific fields;
- managing Switzerland's participation in major international events (World Expos and Olympic Games);
- submitting communication concepts and messages to the Federal Council in the event of threats to Switzerland's image or crises affecting it.



The Foreign Policy Strategy 2016–19 approved on 17 February 2016 expresses the Federal Council's intention to continue measures for communication abroad aimed at a positive perception of Switzerland. Art. 3 of the Ordinance states that the focus of communication abroad should be laid down every four years in the Strategy for Communication Abroad that is passed by the Federal Council. Communication activities abroad will be financed with the FDFA annual budget as well as with additional funds for World Expos and Olympic Games.

1.3. Switzerland's image abroad

1.3.1. The current perception of Switzerland abroad

The perception of Switzerland abroad is currently positive in most areas. It has remained stable and is not subject to short-term fluctuations. Switzerland consistently ranks highly in areas such as governance, scenic beauty, quality of products and services, and for its standard of living and business environment. This is shown by Swiss image studies and comparative international indices (e.g. Nation Brands Index). The image of Switzerland held by the general public abroad continues to be strongly influenced by traditional stereotypes such as quality products, beautiful and pristine landscapes, chocolate and cheese, good services and the financial centre. There is less public awareness of Switzerland's strengths in areas such as research and science, innovation, education and culture, even though the country has many advantages in these sectors.

Switzerland as a whole tends to be viewed more critically by the foreign media than by the general public, as a systematic analysis of foreign media reporting on Switzerland shows. Furthermore, there is a greater media focus on financial and tax issues and relations with the European Union (EU).

In addition to those areas that are viewed largely positively, the perception of Switzerland abroad is influenced by sensitive issues that may attract negative attention. These include developments in the areas of finance and taxation as well as the possible threat to Switzerland as a business location and to the quality of Swiss products from increased competition, the strong Swiss franc and pending political decisions. Additionally, Switzerland is viewed critically for its role in the commodities trade, as a centre for art dealing, and for certain international sport associations based there (notably FIFA).

1.3.2. Opportunities and risks for Switzerland's communication abroad

In the assessment of the Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2016–19, the current international climate is marked by political instability and uncertain global economic prospects. One consequence of this is increased international political, economic and social competition. For Switzerland to hold its own in such a context and safeguard Swiss interests at the international level it must make greater efforts in the area of communication abroad.

Switzerland is generally well placed as one of the world's most innovative, competitive and politically stable countries. Switzerland is also viewed very positively in many other areas. This provides a solid basis for communication abroad to actively promote



the strengths and assets of Switzerland in the coming years despite the challenging global context.

However, there are also economic factors that make the work of communication abroad harder. The global competition is increasing in terms of products and services, putting Switzerland's competitiveness to the test. Furthermore, the high cost structure (strong Swiss franc) disadvantages Switzerland competitively on the closely linked international markets. This poses a major challenge to the export economy and tourism in particular. Uncertainties on the further development of Switzerland's bilateral relations with the EU are also weakening Switzerland as an economic hub.

1.4. Key challenges for Switzerland's communication abroad

In this environment of increased competition, communication abroad will focus in the upcoming years on raising awareness of the strengths of Switzerland, presenting it increasingly as a country of innovation and tradition with a high standard of living in an attractive business location, further promoting its positive image. In areas where policy and future direction are clear, Switzerland's strengths are to be actively communicated. Where political decisions are pending, communication messages must be prepared and delivered in coordination with the relevant offices so as to positively influence the perception of Switzerland and limit any negative impact on its image.

Communication abroad will also have an increased focus on identifying synergies for the strengthening of the image of Switzerland, pooling the assets of the different actors, and then building up strategic partnerships to benefit Switzerland and Swiss interests.

2. Objectives and priority areas of communication abroad

Switzerland is part of an increasingly globalised information and communication society. In this setting projecting a positive and nuanced image of Switzerland abroad is not an end in itself: it is an important instrument in competing internationally for influence and promoting Switzerland as an attractive location. It also influences factors including the country's scope for foreign policy action, investment, economic, scientific and cultural exchange and tourism. Communication abroad is therefore focused on shaping the image of the country abroad to its advantage rather than leaving this to other actors to determine according to their own agenda. With this in mind, the next chapter sets out the strategic objectives, thematic priorities and coordination mechanisms of communication abroad, as well as its role in exceptional situations and where Switzerland's image is threatened.

2.1. Strategic objectives

The objectives of communication abroad are based on the mandate defined in the Federal Act and Ordinance on the Cultivation of Switzerland's Image Abroad. The following overarching strategic objective has been set for the strategy period 2016–19:



Overall strategic objective

Communication abroad supports the protection of Switzerland's interests abroad. It analyses the perception of Switzerland abroad and anticipates opportunities to improve this as well as threats to the country's image. It communicates Switzerland's policies and positions to its target groups in a coherent and tailored way using the appropriate channels. It promotes Switzerland's strengths and contributes to a positive and nuanced perception of Switzerland abroad. A positive image may influence decisions taken abroad and help Switzerland safeguard its interests at an international level.

On the basis of this overall strategic objective the strategy for communication abroad has set three secondary perception objectives that specifically aim to influence these decisions positively.

Strategic perception objectives

1) Switzerland is perceived as an innovative and competitive country

This includes in particular perceptions of Switzerland's skills, output and competitiveness.

2) Switzerland is perceived as a country that shows solidarity and a sense of responsibility

This includes in particular perceptions of Switzerland's values and norms and its willingness to act responsibly towards people and in its use of natural resources.

3) Switzerland is perceived as a country with a high standard of living and an attractive business environment

This includes in particular perceptions of living conditions in Switzerland and of the attractiveness of the country, including as a business location.

2.2. Target groups

The target groups defined in the previous communication strategy (opinion leaders abroad, foreign media and the general public abroad) have proved to be appropriate and are to be retained. Promoting a positive image of Switzerland abroad also includes influencing decision-making in the interests of Switzerland, therefore opinion leaders and decision-makers from the fields of politics, business, academia, culture and civil society are an important target group for communication abroad.

The perception of Switzerland abroad is strongly influenced by media reporting. From the perspective of communication abroad, foreign media (particularly leading media) are not just a communication channel but also an influential actor in their own right, acting as an opinion former and multiplier. For this reason, the media comprise a distinct target group for the messages of Switzerland's communication abroad.

The activities of communication abroad are also aimed at a broad foreign public. The goal is to foster this target group's general knowledge and appreciation of Switzerland and produce understanding for the country's attitudes and positions. In all communication activities abroad the target groups will be more precisely defined and prioritised before the project launch in accordance with the objective, theme, message and context.



2.3. Priority areas

To promote a positive and nuanced perception of Switzerland abroad, the strategy will focus on communicating the strengths of Switzerland using the thematic approach that proved effective in the previous strategy period. The catchy motto, 'Strengthening the strengths', summing up the focus on seizing opportunities, will continue to be used.

This does not mean ignoring sensitive topics that are liable to attract considerable attention abroad but also be viewed in a critical light. That would undermine the credibility of communication abroad. However, we must avoid further raising the level of international attention paid to these issues, one-sided representations or views through our own communication activities. Potentially negative issues will therefore be closely monitored using the appropriate instruments. If and when there is a need for communication in a particular case, the means and manner of communication will be decided in consultation with the relevant federal authorities (departments and specialist agencies, Federal Chancellery, representations abroad) and other actors. In such cases the content, messages, target groups and communication channels will also be coordinated with the actors involved to achieve maximum coherence. Even with sensitive topics positive aspects should be highlighted whenever possible.

The following priority areas reflect the interests of the Federal Council, the federal departments and the Federal Chancellery, the potential for communication abroad as well as current national and international developments in these areas. A frame of reference is provided by the Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2016–19 with its thematic priorities (relations with the European Union and the EU/European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries, relations with global partners, peace and security, sustainable development and prosperity) as well as the key strategic documents and messages of the Federal Council and departments in the relevant areas.

The broad range of thematic priorities reflects the considerable influence that many policy areas have on the perception of Switzerland abroad. Given the diversity of the target groups and contexts, it also allows communication activities in the target countries to be as thematically tailored as possible. Furthermore, the range of thematic areas reflects the fact that many federal offices and institutions, in fulfilling their tasks according to their mandate, also greatly influence the image of Switzerland abroad. Including these thematic areas in the current strategy allows synergies to be exploited where appropriate. For instance, joint activities may meet the perception objectives of communication abroad as well as the objectives of partner organisations (e.g. in tourism and culture). Depending on the situation, communication abroad may be involved in planning or supporting the foreign communication measures of cooperation partners in the different thematic areas or use its channels to publicise ongoing communication activities.

In this strategy, as in the previous one, the geographical focuses of communication abroad are not rigidly defined. Rather these will be decided on the basis of Switzerland's interests, specific communication needs in the priority areas, and the opportunities that arise in the strategy period (e.g. major events). Geographical focuses will also reflect the different priorities of partners within and outside the Federal Administration.



In the following subchapters the 11 priority areas are outlined. In each case four aspects are considered from the perspective of communication abroad: what is the importance of the area for the current perception of Switzerland abroad; what potential does it have with regard to the foreign perception of Switzerland; what contribution does the area make to reaching the strategy's objectives; and what are the guidelines of communication abroad for this area. The communication activities mentioned serve as examples.

The detailed planning will follow in periodic action plans drawn up with partner organisations and Swiss representations abroad. This allows for the fact that although some occasions such as major international events or anniversaries are fixed far in advance, many communication activities abroad are planned and organised only one to two years ahead. This applies particularly to the communication activities of the Swiss representations abroad that are planned annually.

2.3.1. Switzerland's role in Europe

Importance for Switzerland's image abroad

Switzerland is part of Europe and has close political, economic and cultural ties to the other European countries and particularly to its neighbours. A strong and effective Europe is in the interests of Switzerland, and the country plays its part in achieving this. The European Union (EU) is Switzerland's most important partner. For these reasons, the Federal Council's Foreign Policy Strategy 2016–19 prioritises the objective of consolidating and renewing the bilateral approach, ensuring a good relationship with the EU, and promoting close ties with the EU/EFTA states and Switzerland's neighbours in particular.

According to an image study by Presence Switzerland, Switzerland has a predominantly good and stable overall image among the general public in Europe. Swiss policy on Europe in its narrow sense tends to be associated abroad with political decisions. A European policy issue may at times – for example in the context of a popular vote – attract considerable interest and sometimes criticism, particularly when other European countries, and above all Switzerland's neighbours, are directly affected by the decision taken.

The perception of Switzerland in Europe is also affected by the country's positions and actions in areas other than European policy. For instance, Switzerland is making a substantial contribution to a pan-European transport policy with the construction of the New Railway Link through the Alps (NRLA) and the Gotthard Base Tunnel. This contribution received broad and positive media coverage in, and even beyond, Europe on the occasion of the Gotthard tunnel opening event in early June 2016. Switzerland is also working with the EU to address the refugee crisis and, relative to its size, has taken in a substantial number of refugees. Innovative Swiss approaches to asylum policy have generated public interest and positive media coverage in Europe. In neighbouring countries in particular, bilateral relations and regional cross-border cooperation on cross-border commuters and transport issues (e.g. Zurich, Basel-Mulhouse and Geneva airports) also affect Switzerland's image.



Potential for the image of Switzerland

Switzerland is an important political, economic and cultural partner for the EU, member states of the EU (especially neighbouring countries) and the other countries of Europe. For this reason Switzerland's behaviour and the positions it adopts in its European policy, as well as in many other political areas where it is closely connected with other European states, have considerable potential to affect the country's image. How great this potential is in any specific case depends on the issue and the degree to which the other European countries and their people are affected.

Role in achieving the strategic objectives

A predominantly negative perception of Switzerland has the potential to compromise Switzerland's interests with the EU. On the other hand, a largely positive and respectful perception may help in achieving bilateral and international objectives. Good and stable relations with the EU, its member states and other European countries, as well as Switzerland's activities in a variety of policy areas, affect its perception as an innovative, competitive country – yet one that also has a sense of solidarity and responsibility. Therefore Switzerland can position itself as a country that is actively engaged with the EU in overcoming common challenges at the European and global level – despite not being an EU member.

Communication abroad guidelines

Looking ahead, communication abroad will support the Federal Council communication strategy as required in this thematic area through monitoring services and communication activities, including the organisation of delegation visits and reports on the activities of Swiss representations in the EU countries and Brussels. These measures would be coordinated closely with all participating federal agencies. Their aim would be to share facts, for instance about the high percentage of persons from the EU/EFTA area living in Switzerland as a result of the free movement of persons, and to inform about political concerns and processes in Switzerland, thereby increasing understanding for Swiss positions and decisions.

In addition, the cooperation in other policy areas between Switzerland and the EU, the EU member states and other European countries offers numerous opportunities for communication activities to adequately showcase Switzerland's constructive contribution to a Europe that is strong and effective in economic, political and scientific terms.

2.3.2. Switzerland's political system

Importance for Switzerland's image abroad

Switzerland's political system based on the pillars of direct democracy - concordance and federalism is very important for the image of Switzerland. It is characterised by stability and the many opportunities for political participation the people enjoy. There is great interest abroad in direct democracy in particular – frequently triggered by popular votes – and this is likely to increase following the British referendum on membership of the European Union. Brexit has prompted a high level of interest abroad in Switzerland's political culture of direct democracy and its numerous referendums. Generally



the perception of Swiss direct democracy is positive – particularly among the general public. Foreign media often stress the opportunities the Swiss people have to participate in the political process, above all on topics with international relevance or relevance for other countries. National or cantonal popular votes and associated campaigns may in certain cases prompt a negative perception of Switzerland, depending on the political importance of the issue in other European countries.

Potential for the image of Switzerland

Following the British referendum on membership of the EU there is a high level of foreign public interest in Switzerland's political system, in which direct democracy in general and popular votes in particular are well established and taken for granted. The interest abroad in direct democracy in this and similar contexts may be used to increase awareness of Switzerland's political culture and its credibility. It may also be used to inform about the Swiss political system and processes. Awareness-raising and credibility are key aspects of political communication. Depending on the issue at stake, popular votes may also be used to present the innovative and responsible approaches taken by Switzerland. Areas where Switzerland has a high level of competence, e.g. rule of law, fighting corruption and governance in general, may be topics for communication abroad. At the same time it should be made clear to the foreign audience that the Swiss political system has evolved over a long period of time and cannot simply be applied in different contexts. Information about sensitive subjects that may attract a high level of attention and perhaps criticism must be presented in a matter-of-fact way, explaining Swiss decisions and positions, and where possible fostering understanding and support for Switzerland.

Role in achieving the strategic objectives

Switzerland's highly developed political rights and opportunities for citizens to have a say on specific issues (e.g. level of tax, introduction of a minimum wage, holidays for employees) create an overwhelmingly positive perception. The political system is one reason why Switzerland is seen internationally as a country with a high standard of living and an attractive business environment, where citizens lay the foundation of the state as responsible and politically mature.

Communication abroad guidelines

The central message of communication abroad in this thematic area is that Switzerland has an open political culture based on consultation, where the people have the right to self-determination and are involved in decision-making processes. The increased international attention that Switzerland's political system and political culture in general have received since the Brexit vote may be used to make the Swiss political system better known through various activities. Measures that may be appropriate include invitations to foreign delegations, and activities at Swiss representations abroad aimed at representatives of politics, media, business and academia. Popular votes in Switzerland, and the successful completion of projects legitimised by a popular vote offer regular opportunities to spread the above-mentioned positive message abroad in cooperation with the Federal Chancellery or the responsible departments. Depending on the target audience, possible communication methods include projects run by rep-



representations abroad, delegation visits and social media activities. Foreign media reporting of popular votes that are very likely to attract attention (e.g. the popular initiatives “Reparation for contract children and victims of compulsory social measures (Reparation Initiative)” and "Out of the cul-de-sac – avoid reintroduction of immigration quotas") will continue to be observed and analysed as part of ongoing media monitoring.

2.3.3. Swiss solidarity and sense of responsibility

Importance for Switzerland's image abroad

Switzerland's international commitment to peace and security, respect for human rights and international humanitarian law and sustainable development is a long-standing tradition. In the Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2016–19 the Federal Council states that Switzerland will build on its commitment to peace and security, lend impetus to a viable and just international order, and commit itself to achieving a world without poverty.

Switzerland's efforts in these areas are highly praised abroad. Certain issues regularly receive attention and recognition in the international media and from the general public. Examples are Switzerland's chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2014, its emergency humanitarian aid to crisis areas (e.g. Syria, Ukraine), its development cooperation work, its human rights commitment, the hosting of international conferences, and its protecting power mandates. However, the full extent of Switzerland's commitment is not always recognised by the foreign public, therefore its potential to positively influence the country's image is limited. To some extent there may be good reasons for Switzerland to deliberately avoid drawing public attention to its commitment, for instance where absolute discretion is required in mediation activities.

Potential for the image of Switzerland

From the point of view of communication abroad many of Switzerland's activities in this thematic area have an untapped potential to positively influence the image of Switzerland abroad. There are many good examples that demonstrate Switzerland's solidarity and sense of responsibility clearly and effectively. These include good offices (e.g. mediation, facilitation, protecting power mandates), the promotion of human rights and human security, Switzerland's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to a world without poverty and sustainable development (e.g. in the use of water), its engagement within international organisations such as the UN and OSCE – particularly in the current refugee crisis – its humanitarian aid activities, and its humanitarian policy to alleviate need on the ground. A positive image is created not just by the concrete results of activities but also by certain types of expertise. However, it should be noted that certain commitments abroad (e.g. in the field of human rights) may also be viewed critically – particularly in the countries directly affected.



Role in achieving the strategic objectives

Switzerland's commitment shows that based on its values and its foreign policy objectives and interests, the country supports peace, security, sustainable development and a just international order. Focused communication helps ensure that all the target groups of communication abroad view Switzerland as a country with a sense of solidarity and responsibility.

Communication abroad guidelines

Communication abroad seeks, with the necessary discretion and diligence, to raise Switzerland's profile as a bridge-builder with specific expertise in areas including mediation, governance and democracy, dealing with the past, and health and water. The message to be communicated is that Switzerland as a responsible actor is playing its part in resolving common global challenges – especially in the current crisis context. This is a key message, both at the European and the international level, not least in view of Switzerland's candidature for a temporary seat on the UN Security Council in 2023–2024. Communication activities will be devised in consultation with the departments, specialist agencies and institutions (including the FDFA's Directorate of Political Affairs, the SDC, the EAER/SECO and S-GE) and in line with their priorities. Communication abroad should exploit the unforeseen opportunities that arise in this thematic area. Additionally there are events and occasions planned far in advance that can be used for communication purposes, for example when the UN General Assembly reviews progress in the 2030 Agenda, scheduled for 2019, and communication activities connected to the above-mentioned candidature of Switzerland for a temporary seat on the Security Council.

2.3.4. International Geneva

Importance for Switzerland's image abroad

International Geneva is a leading centre of global governance, and also symbolises Switzerland's role as the host country of international organisations and diplomatic conferences. Although it is an important instrument of Swiss foreign policy, International Geneva has only a limited influence on the image of Switzerland. High-ranking conferences (such as that on Syria) regularly attract extensive and generally positive media coverage. The role of Geneva as the headquarters of UN bodies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also attracts attention, albeit to a far lesser extent. However, a direct connection is rarely made to Switzerland and its strengths in the key areas for International Geneva (i.e. peace, security, disarmament, humanitarian law, human rights, migration, labour, trade, health, environment and sustainable development).

Potential for the image of Switzerland

The Federal Council and Parliament wish to raise the profile of Switzerland as a host country and boost the image of International Geneva. The areas of importance to International Geneva are also of interest abroad and at least some of these have the potential to attract media and public attention. The main challenge from the perspective of communication abroad is to make a direct connection to the concrete achievements and contributions of Switzerland. Therefore, the potential for



Switzerland's image is to be found in areas where Switzerland plays an active role and this can be presented in an appealing way through the example of specific activities.

Role in achieving the strategic objectives

Active communication on Switzerland's role and achievements in the area of International Geneva will contribute to reinforcing the perception of Switzerland as a country with a sense of solidarity and responsibility.

Communication abroad guidelines

Communication abroad should place the focus on Switzerland's contribution to overcoming international challenges. In accordance with the communication abroad guidelines on Swiss solidarity and sense of responsibility, Switzerland's profile as a bridge-builder and campaigner for dialogue as a means of overcoming challenges should be raised. A secondary focus may be the extraordinary concentration of relevant actors (international organisations, NGOs, diplomatic representations and from the fields of science, business etc.) that lends value to Geneva as a location. Communication messages and activities will be coordinated with the relevant state, private and international actors (e.g. leading departments and offices, the United Nations Office at Geneva, international organisations etc.). The best communication platforms for International Geneva are events (eg. high-level meetings) in which Switzerland makes an important contribution with publicity potential, and conferences with an international resonance that are attended by members of the Federal Council. To raise the foreign public's awareness of the importance of International Geneva there should also be cooperation with Switzerland's representations in other centres of global governance.

2.3.5. Education, research and innovation (ERI)

Importance for Switzerland's image abroad

Switzerland has a highly effective research and innovation system and regularly takes top positions in international research and innovation rankings. In the field of education too Switzerland is an excellent location both for universities and vocational training. The achievements of Swiss bodies and institutions in these fields are highly regarded abroad, particularly by specialists. This is demonstrated by media analyses, image studies and the evaluation of visits by delegations covering issues such as innovative technologies and products, international university rankings and the dual-track professional/vocational training system. However, the contribution of this area to a positive perception of Switzerland is limited by the fact that ERI does not receive much public or media attention abroad.

Potential for the image of Switzerland

Owing to the positive perception potential of ERI and Switzerland's very strong competitive position, this thematic area will continue to be a focus of communication abroad. The interface between research, innovation and business in particular offers a wealth of interesting stories that can be used for communication purposes. The success of start-ups with new business ideas and the commercialisation of science-based innovations are examples that illustrate Switzerland's strength in the ERI area.



Role in achieving the strategic objectives

Switzerland's skills in the area of ERI already contribute much to the perception abroad of Switzerland as an innovative, competitive country with a high standard of living and an attractive business environment. Ensuring that these strengths are better promoted using the instruments of communication abroad will have a positive effect on the image of Switzerland. It will also raise the country's reputation as a centre of education, research and innovation and make those involved in ERI more attractive as potential partners in international cooperation. Increasing awareness of Switzerland's strengths in ERI will also help diversify the country's image.

Communication abroad guidelines

Communication abroad should publicise Switzerland's strengths as an ERI location by focusing on specific projects (e.g. Solar Impulse) that illustrate these well and also resonate with the media. To this end, Presence Switzerland will collaborate closely with the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) to develop a communication strategy for the ERI branch that will highlight, for example, start-ups at the interface of science and business, and innovative approaches such as dual vocational training models. This should be done with the close involvement of state and private actors from the science and business communities, education and the public sector (universities and universities of applied sciences, SERI, Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI), Swiss National Science Foundation, Swiss Federal Office of Energy (SFOE), private companies). The priorities must be agreed with these stakeholders and take account of their thematical and geographical focuses. Ideal platforms for cooperation in the coming years include Switzerland's participation in major events (e.g. Expo 2017 Astana with swissnex and – subject to the agreement of Parliament – Expo 2020 Dubai), visits by delegations and social media.

2.3.6. Economy and competitiveness

Importance for Switzerland's image abroad

The image of Switzerland abroad depends largely on a person's direct or indirect (consumption, travel, media reporting) experience of Swiss products, services and the country itself. The proverbial reliability of Swiss watches, the precision and top quality of industrial and technological goods, renowned products such as Swiss chocolate and cheese, as well as the diversity and scenic beauty of Switzerland are known and appreciated worldwide. The image of Switzerland benefits from the vibrancy of the Swiss economy and its flagship industries. In turn, Switzerland's positive image and strong brand ('Swissness') give added value and are an important factor in the success of the export industry (country-of-origin effect) and tourism.

Potential for the image of Switzerland

Switzerland is among the most competitive countries in the world. Swiss products and services are perceived abroad as high quality, reliable and innovative. Yet the Swiss business location is under pressure. Global structural changes and increased competition, the strong franc and the uncertainty over economic development linked to the outcome of recent popular votes, pose a challenge to companies in Switzerland



and threaten the country's positive image as a business location. Against this background, it is essential to make the most of potential synergies between high quality of Swiss products and the good image of Switzerland. Swiss quality products from the agricultural, industrial and service sectors should be used to promote a positive image of the country.

Role in achieving the strategic objectives

The competitiveness of Switzerland as a business location, its good reputation and the high quality of Swiss-made products and services are key factors in the perception abroad of Switzerland as an innovative and competitive country with a high standard of living and an attractive business environment. At the same time the strength of the Swiss brand helps Swiss companies position their products and services optimally on the international market. Thus, the positive perception of Switzerland helps promote prosperity and protect Switzerland's interests abroad.

Communication abroad guidelines

Communication abroad should highlight the strengths of the Swiss economy (competitiveness, innovation) illustrating this with examples of successful, innovative start-up companies and the world-class quality of Swiss products and services from the luxury goods, tourism, pharmaceuticals, machine industry and agricultural sectors since these are crucial for the image of Switzerland abroad. It should do so in close cooperation with state and private stakeholders from business and the public sector (companies, trade associations, Federal Office for Agriculture, SECO, the cantons, S-GE, Switzerland Tourism etc.). The focus areas should be decided jointly with these actors, and take into account their core business or thematical and geographical focuses. Ideal platforms for cooperation in the coming years include Switzerland's presence at major events (House of Switzerland at the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil, the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea and – subject to a positive political decision – the 2020 Olympic Games in Japan, the Swiss Pavilion at Expo 2017 Astana and – subject to the approval of Parliament – at Expo 2020 Dubai), where the presentation of Swiss products can be optimally combined with the messages of communication abroad. In addition, communication abroad will cooperate closely with the other federal instruments, including location and tourism promotion.

2.3.7. Tourism

Importance for Switzerland's image abroad

Mountains, snow and winter sports, beautiful landscapes and a pristine environment are strongly associated with the image of Switzerland abroad, as population surveys regularly show. These positive associations are trump cards for Switzerland both for its attractiveness as a travel destination and for the perception of the country overall. This positive image is somewhat undermined by Switzerland's reputation as an expensive country with high prices.

The autonomous tourism promotion organisations (Switzerland Tourism, local and regional organisations) play an important role in communication abroad given the strong impact of tourism on the perception of Switzerland in other countries. In the



tourism branch as in the economy as a whole, there is a very clear and mutually beneficial correlation between tourist appeal and the good image of Switzerland. In recognition of this, Presence Switzerland is already working closely with tourism bodies, notably Switzerland Tourism. The joint activities held this year at the House of Switzerland during the Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro are an example of this. Brazil is a strategic growth market for Switzerland Tourism and is also the focus of a communication abroad programme for 2014–16.

Potential for the image of Switzerland

Direct experience of a country from visiting it as a tourist or on business is one of the factors that most influences personal perception. Typical scenery, cities and tourist attractions define a country's image and are strongly associated with it. In light of that, the tourism branch has great potential to positively influence the perception of Switzerland abroad. In many cases, Switzerland's tourist attractions (from mountain peaks to the Zurich Street Parade) also have media appeal and can be used by communication abroad as positive images with emotional connections. For this perception potential to be fully exploited, competing destinations must differentiate themselves, and high prices must be offset by the excellence of the services provided.

Role in achieving the strategic objectives

Switzerland's qualities as a tourist destination and the variety it offers – countryside and cities, leisure and business tourism – contribute greatly to the foreign target group's perception of Switzerland as a country with a high standard of living and an attractive business environment. This range could be further extended through the addition of specific types of tourism, for instance sustainability or hybrid tourism (e.g. a combination of medical and tourist services), which would be positive for Switzerland's image as an innovative country with a sense of responsibility.

Communication abroad guidelines

Communication abroad should actively exploit Switzerland's appeal to tourists. The tourism promotion measures of the autonomous tourism agencies with their own mandates (e.g. Switzerland Tourism, local and regional tourist organisations) will continue to be the primary tool for this. But tourism is also important for the image promotion conducted by Presence Switzerland. Therefore, the synergies between image promotion and tourism promotion should continue to be exploited through joint activities. This should occur in close cooperation with state and private actors (SECO, Switzerland Tourism, individual destinations and branch associations). Priorities should be decided together with these stakeholders and take into account their thematical and geographical interests and focuses. Ideal platforms for cooperation in the coming years include Switzerland's participation in major events (House of Switzerland at the Olympic Games in Brazil in 2016, in South Korea in 2018 and – subject to a political decision – in Japan in 2020, the Swiss Pavilion at Expo 2017 Astana and – subject to the approval of Parliament – at Expo 2020 Dubai) where the presentation of Switzerland as a tourist destination can be optimally combined with the messages of communication abroad.



2.3.8. Environment, Transport and Energy

Importance for Switzerland's image abroad

Switzerland has a progressive environment, transport and energy policy. In relation to climate protection, Switzerland has shown that it is possible to have lower emissions despite economic growth and an increased population. The objective of moving transalpine traffic from road to rail is aimed at sustainability. The quality and punctuality of public transport, the well-developed infrastructure, and the people's contribution to the high recycling levels in Switzerland are recognised abroad and contribute to the positive image of Switzerland, as do visionary projects like Solar Impulse. The effectiveness of Switzerland's environmental policy is seen in the unspoiled and protected countryside, and the pristine rivers and lakes that are also important for tourism. Image studies show that Switzerland's commitment to environmental protection is generally regarded positively. However, they also show that the level of awareness abroad of Switzerland's environment, transport and energy sector could be higher.

Potential for the image of Switzerland

Switzerland's efforts in this thematic area often relate to issues that pose a challenge not just to it but to all countries: the climate and dealing with natural disasters, ensuring a sustainable and economically viable energy supply, sustainable use of natural resources and responding to growing mobility needs. These are global issues that affect everyone and that will continue to be a focus of attention in future, both at the European and the international level. Therefore, this thematic area has great potential to positively influence the perception of Switzerland abroad. As in other areas, the challenge here is to generate sufficient public and media attention. However, as the opening of the Gotthard Base Tunnel at the beginning of June in 2016 showed, this is perfectly realistic if the occasion is right.

Role in achieving the strategic objectives

Progressive policy approaches and illustrative examples from the environment, transport and energy sectors that interest the foreign target audience are good ways of positioning Switzerland as an innovative, competitive country with a sense of responsibility and solidarity, a high standard of living and an attractive business location.

Communication abroad guidelines

Switzerland regularly succeeds in combining sustainability and environmental protection with economic benefit. The key message of communication abroad should be that Switzerland is ready for the challenges of the 21st century and can help find modern and innovative solutions to local and global challenges. This may make reference to the many companies or research, pilot and flagship projects in the cleantech area, innovative transport or smart energy projects. Swiss investors and financial institutions also play an important role through their efforts to make the financial system more sustainable and to create incentives for facilities that protect the environment and conserve resources. This role may be publicised by communication abroad. Priorities should be defined in cooperation with state and private actors from



academia, business and the public sector (e.g. universities and universities of applied sciences, Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), Federal Office of Transport (FOT), SFOE, SwissEnergy, CTI etc.), and take into account their thematic and geographical interests. Following the opening of the Gotthard Base Tunnel, opportunities for publicity may be presented by the completion of work on the Ceneri Base Tunnel and the expansion of railway infrastructure by 2020. Ideal communication platforms are Switzerland's participation in Expo 2017 Astana (with the theme of 'Future Energy') and – subject to the approval of Parliament – in Expo 2020 Dubai (with the theme of 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future'), the international Watt d'Or travelling exhibition, visits by delegations, bilateral network events such as the Swiss–US Energy Innovation Days, the Swiss–UK Cleantech Meeting in London, the World Resource Forum WRF and the international specialist congress on living with natural risks (Interpraevent), as well as social media.

2.3.9. Finance and taxation issues

Importance for Switzerland's image abroad

Switzerland's financial centre and the taxation issue occupy a central role in the international perception of Switzerland, as the volume of foreign media coverage shows. In recent years the Swiss financial centre has often conveyed negative images and messages (e.g. financial crime, cases of tax evasion, criminal proceedings against big banks etc.). This has resulted in a high level of sustained and critical political and media coverage abroad with a correspondingly negative influence on the perception of Switzerland. Thanks to the adaptation of certain framework conditions to international standards, there has been some improvement in coverage in the past two years.

Potential for the image of Switzerland

The legal changes that have been or are in the process of being made (e.g. agreement on introducing the automatic exchange of information (AEOI), implementation of too-big-to-fail provisions that lead the way internationally, changes to the Federal Act on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, passing of the Federal Act on the Restitution of Assets illicitly obtained by Politically Exposed Persons, revision of the Swiss criminal law on corruption) are increasingly noted and welcomed abroad. This situation creates the potential for more active communication of the progress made in efforts to make the Swiss financial centre a global leader that has international acceptance, and in tackling corruption at the national and international levels. At the same time Switzerland's qualities as a financial services centre may be highlighted.

Role in achieving the strategic objectives

Communication abroad should help ensure that Switzerland is viewed as a stable, innovative and competitive financial centre with excellent conditions under the accepted international framework, and as an innovative and competitive country that acts responsibly.



Communication abroad guidelines

Switzerland's globally oriented financial centre has close links to the international environment. For Swiss financial policy this means taking into account the international setting and multilateral standards when drawing up a national framework – while also making the best use of the available room for movement. On the other hand, an active Swiss commitment is required at the international level, in particular in creating and implementing regulatory standards that are relevant to the Swiss financial centre.

Against this backdrop, communication abroad seeks to help convey the message that the Swiss financial centre is competitive and attractive while also being transparent with respect to international standards. But it also recognises that especially in Europe and the USA, the perception continues to be critical. The final report of the group of experts on the further development of the financial market strategy, which was acknowledged by the Federal Council on 5 December 2014, recommended taking active communication measures to address this, and coordinating these with the relevant partners inside and outside the Federal Administration (e.g. Federal Department of Finance (FDF)/State Secretariat for International Financial Matters (SIF), Federal Office of Justice, financial branch, Swiss Bankers Association). The peer reviews and generally positive assessments of the Global Forum and the Financial Action Task Force, for instance, could be used to show that Switzerland's efforts are generally internationally recognised. Switzerland's actions in blocking the accounts and returning the assets of dictators, as well as in tackling corruption, may be used to highlight the fact that Switzerland plays an important role internationally in these areas. Fintech and green finance initiatives may be used to demonstrate that Switzerland has the potential to turn the increased digitisation of the financial world into a long-term competitive advantage, thanks to its technological expertise, favourable conditions and strong financial sector.

2.3.10. Culture

Importance for Switzerland's image abroad

As image studies and perception analyses by Presence Switzerland show, media coverage of Swiss culture abroad is generally positive, but limited. It should be noted though that culture is not the main focus of most media outlets. However, Swiss creative artists who are successful abroad do have a positive influence on the perception of Switzerland. Major cultural events with an international dimension, such as the Montreux Jazz Festival, Art Basel and the Film Festival Locarno also bolster the image of Switzerland as a country with a rich cultural diversity. In addition, living traditions that reflect Swiss culture contribute to a positive image of Switzerland abroad and are often seen as intrinsic to Swiss identity.

Potential for the image of Switzerland

The image of Switzerland abroad would benefit if Swiss culture were to gain greater visibility. Switzerland's neighbours and various other countries promote culture as a central element of their 'soft power' at the international level. Switzerland also has trump cards it can play to promote its image abroad as a creative country. Culture has the potential to raise and diversify Switzerland's profile abroad, for instance when



combined with innovation and the promotion of cultural diversity. As a laboratory of thought and experimentation, culture is also able to speak to different age groups, particularly youth, ensuring the country's long-term appeal.

Role in achieving the strategic objectives

Many Swiss creative artists convey the image abroad of Switzerland as an innovative and competitive country. The quality, originality and diversity of Swiss cultural output help bolster this reputation. Increased visibility for cultural platforms with an international dimension, contemporary culture and living Swiss traditions would promote the perception of Switzerland as a country with a high standard of living and an attractive business location that also offers a range of high quality cultural activities. This would highlight Switzerland's ability to combine respect for tradition with an appreciation of innovation and contemporary creativity.

Communication abroad guidelines

In the context of communication abroad, Presence Switzerland uses communication tools to promote the Swiss cultural projects with the greatest potential to attract media interest abroad. It does so in coordination with government actors, cantons, cities and communes. It prioritises projects that can be presented by means of existing high-visibility platforms, such as festivals, the House of Switzerland at international sporting events and the Swiss Pavilion at World Expos. Support takes the form of communication activities that are appropriate for the country in which the event is taking place and match the project's potential to influence the image of Switzerland there.

Presence Switzerland also complements the communication activities of federal government cultural institutions. It holds regular meetings with the Federal Office of Culture (FOC) and Pro Helvetia to optimise its involvement and maximise synergies at the strategy level. Particular attention is paid to countries that Switzerland considers offer unique potential, where it maintains cultural offices or where it provides substantial support to Swiss creative artists through international cultural platforms. In these special cases Presence Switzerland and the relevant Swiss representations abroad liaise with the FOC and Pro Helvetia to establish cooperation where possible. Special attention is focused on innovative areas, for example design and digital culture. Also of particular interest to communication abroad are cultural projects that lend themselves especially well to social media. Presence Switzerland seeks to link the various cultural actors with an international presence on social networks in order to create synergies in this area.

Lastly, cooperation will be continued with Swiss cultural platforms whose activities attract a high level of media attention abroad. Presence Switzerland will endeavour in cooperation with the FOC to include living traditions more in communication abroad, drawing on the FOC 'Living Traditions in Switzerland' list. It will take a broad approach that includes innovative elements and aspects of Switzerland's political culture. This new emphasis will be seen particularly in the context of the House of Switzerland at major sporting events and the Swiss Pavilion at World Expos, as well as on the FDFA's social media sites.



2.3.11. Sport

Importance for Switzerland's image abroad

Sport is a major factor contributing to the good perception of Switzerland abroad. Sporting personalities Roger Federer, Stan Wawrinka and Lara Gut, as well as the victories of Swiss tennis players, skiers and footballers contribute to a very positive perception among the target groups.

Potential for the image of Switzerland

Sport plays an important role in a country's image, particularly when its athletes compete at major international sporting events. These events, which are generally viewed positively, are guaranteed a high level of media coverage, and appeal to broad sections of the population. For Switzerland this offers great potential for communication.

Role in achieving the strategic objectives

The media and the general public make a clear association between a country's values and the people who exemplify them. This dynamic is also seen in sport. The high visibility of our athletes adds to the perception of a competitive Switzerland. Furthermore, through the engagement of many sportsmen and women in outdoor disciplines (snow sports, mountain biking) positive images of Switzerland are conveyed that are important for the perception of Switzerland as a country with a high standard of living and an attractive business location. The image of an athlete, and by extension that of a country, is based not only on results achieved but also on values projected. Willpower, endurance and fair play are examples of values that can be used in an effective communication strategy that engages the emotions.

Communication abroad guidelines

Presence Switzerland will continue to use the House of Switzerland at international sporting occasions to bolster Switzerland's image. Following the Rio 2016 Summer Olympics, the next venue for the House of Switzerland is the PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympics. The 2020 Winter Youth Olympics in Lausanne will also be the target of a communication campaign that will be drawn up in 2019. The FDFA is expected during the current legislative period to present proposals to the Federal Council on the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics and the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics.

In consultation with the Federal Office of Sport (FOSPO), Presence Switzerland will further ensure communication activities abroad integrate international sporting events taking place in Switzerland, and the presence of international sports federations in Switzerland, using the example of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Lastly, Presence Switzerland will develop a social media strategy that involves well-known Swiss athletes as well as young talent.



2.4. Coordination and coherence

The key importance of close cooperation with the various bodies involved in communication abroad that have a significant influence on the perception of Switzerland abroad has been covered in the preceding subchapters. In today's competitive environment it is essential to communicate abroad in a coordinated and coherent manner in order to achieve maximum credibility and effectiveness.

Within the Federal Administration cooperation with the leading departments, the responsible specialist offices and the Federal Chancellery is to be further increased. The interdepartmental working group (IDWG) on communication abroad led by the secretary-general of the FDFA and the Federal Chancellery has proven effective as a strategic coordination body and will continue in an augmented form. All federal departments as well as the Federal Chancellery are represented on the IDWG. In addition to the Federal Chancellery, the IDWG comprises the following federal agencies outside the FDFA that play a role internationally in communicating on the priority areas of this strategy:

- Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA):
General Secretariat FDHA, Federal Office of Culture FOC, Federal Office of Public Health FOPH, Federal Social Insurance Office FSIO
- Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP):
General Secretariat FDJP, State Secretariat for Migration SEM
- Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS):
General Secretariat DDPS, Federal Office of Sport FOSPO
- Federal Department of Finance (FDF):
General Secretariat FDF, State Secretariat for International Financial Matters SIF
- Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER):
General Secretariat EAER, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI, Commission for Technology and Innovation CTI
- Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC):
General Secretariat DETEC, Federal Office of Transport FOT, Federal Office for the Environment FOEN, Swiss Federal Office of Energy SFOE

S-GE, Switzerland Tourism and Pro Helvetia will join the IDWG on communication abroad for the coming strategy period to enable closer and more coordinated cooperation with these organisations. At the operational level the cooperation of Presence Switzerland with the bodies represented in the IDWG will be coordinated bilaterally or with the organisations involved in the project. Close cooperation with the Swiss representations abroad (embassies, consulates general and honorary consulates, Swissnex, Swiss business hubs and Switzerland's cultural antenna offices) remains a key aspect to ensuring a coherent communication abroad strategy.



Other public and private actors from business, academia, culture, sport and tourism also have a strong influence on the perception of Switzerland abroad. At the same time, they often benefit from Switzerland's good, strong image. For this reason, Presence Switzerland will continue, and in some cases intensify, its cooperation with public and private actors such as cantons and cities, universities, universities of applied sciences and federal institutes of technology (ETH Zurich, EPFL Lausanne), companies, sectoral organisations and federations, and private persons. This may be in the form of ad hoc cooperation on specific projects or longer-term cooperation through public-private partnerships. Depending on requirements and opportunities, communication abroad may work with other relevant organisations and persons in Switzerland and abroad to implement this strategy.

2.5. Exceptional situations and image crises

Foreseeable or unforeseeable events may damage Switzerland's reputation abroad and threaten its image. This in turn may result in Switzerland's interests abroad being harmed. Presence Switzerland cannot generally prevent these crises, but its instruments may help to anticipate them, reduce their impact and limit their damage.

The political authorities, i.e. the Federal Council and the leading competent departments, have responsibility for managing extraordinary situations and image crises. Overall responsibility for communication also lies with the Federal Council, the competent department and the Federal Chancellery, namely the Federal Council spokesperson who, according to Art. 10a of the Government and Administration Organisation Act (SR 172.010), coordinates the information activities of the Federal Council, the departments and the Federal Chancellery.

With its monitoring and analysis capacity (issue monitoring) Presence Switzerland plays a role in early warning and thus crisis prevention. It analyses the development of exceptional situations from a communication point of view, advises in particular on the appropriate communication strategy for Switzerland's perception abroad, and helps draw up corresponding communication concepts. It also makes available its platforms, communication channels and activities, as well as its network of contacts. Presence Switzerland coordinates its actions with the departments and specialist offices affected by the crisis (e.g. FOPH, SIF, FOJ, SECO, SFOE etc.) and with the Federal Chancellery.

3. Instruments of Presence Switzerland

3.1. Monitoring and analysis

The instruments of monitoring and analysis of the perception of Switzerland abroad are used to establish the strategic parameters of communication abroad, identify thematic areas likely to attract high levels of positive attention, and detect potential image crises at an early stage.

The key instruments are the continuous monitoring of media reporting abroad, regular surveys on the development of the perception of Switzerland abroad, and international comparative image studies.



Tools include the systematic and ongoing analysis of foreign media reporting (weekly, quarterly and annual analyses). In addition, in-depth special analysis is carried out for interested Federal Administration units on specific and sensitive topics, as well as current developments and events that could have a big impact on the international perception of Switzerland. Image studies are also carried out abroad and analysed in detail.

3.2. Platforms abroad

3.2.1. Communication projects of the Swiss representations

Switzerland's broad reach and its comparatively dense network of representations abroad play a central role in the successful implementation of the strategy of communication abroad. Presence Switzerland actively supports the foreign network in developing and implementing appropriate communication projects tailored to the individual country. This allows the priority areas of the strategy to be communicated on a relatively large scale to local opinion leaders and multipliers, raising their awareness of Switzerland's strengths.

Cooperation with the Swiss representations is to be strengthened. Presence Switzerland will support them in the future by drafting country-specific annual plans and communication strategies in close consultation with the local partner organisations of communication abroad. This will ensure the necessary coherence of all communication projects in a given country. On the other hand, given their staffing limitations, the representations will continue to have at their disposal a range of standard events and prepared communication tools dealing with the priority areas of communication abroad. Lastly, Presence Switzerland will actively inform, advise and train the representations in sponsoring and social media. The representations' communication projects all make a notable contribution to fulfilling the perception objectives of the strategy of communication abroad.

3.2.2. Major international events

Presence Switzerland organises Switzerland's participation in major international events, e.g. at World Expos (Swiss Pavilion) and Olympic Games (House of Switzerland). World Expos and Olympic Games are effective public relations and media platforms that allow Presence Switzerland to reach a broad public over a set period of time. Other international events may also be considered as platforms for Presence Switzerland if they offer specific opportunities for communication abroad.

Over the strategy period 2016–19 Presence Switzerland will be in charge of the Swiss Pavilion at the World Expo in Kazakhstan (2017) and the House of Switzerland at the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea (2018). In 2017 the Federal Council will present its dispatch to Parliament on Switzerland's participation in Expo 2020 Dubai and is expected to decide on an application from the FDFA for a Swiss presence at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo.



3.3. Platforms in Switzerland

Communication does not just take place beyond Switzerland's borders. Activities within Switzerland are also an important element in implementing the strategy of communication abroad.

3.3.1. Foreign delegations

Extending invitations to foreign delegations ensures that opinion leaders from politics, management and business, as well as the foreign media are familiarised with the priority areas of communication abroad. Organising background talks for correspondents from international media who work in Switzerland meets the same objective. Both the background to sensitive topics and the country's strengths must be communicated. In both cases Presence Switzerland normally takes the lead and plans these events in close cooperation with Swiss representations abroad and the relevant institutions and partner organisations in Switzerland.

3.3.2. Events in Switzerland with an international dimension

Major international events and prominent institutions in Switzerland, such as the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, ETH Zurich, EPF Lausanne, Art Basel and the 2020 Winter Youth Olympics in Lausanne offer considerable potential for Switzerland's communication abroad. Presence Switzerland seeks to increase cooperation with these and similar institutions and events in the area of communication, in particular on the use of social media.

3.4. Digital platforms and social media

Digital platforms, especially social media, are important communication channels for states and institutions and their representatives. They enable focused and direct communication with select targeted groups, whether it's the media, decision-makers or the general public.

In 2016 around 30% of Swiss representations abroad had one or more social media accounts. These are administrated by the representations themselves following guidelines from the head office in Bern. By international comparison, Switzerland does not have a strong presence on digital platforms. European countries of a comparable size are more active and have a larger social media community than Switzerland does. Bigger international actors that are more advanced in this area (e.g. the USA and the United Kingdom) use digital platforms specifically to promote their interests using a variety of approaches. It should be noted that digital platforms complement traditional methods of communication. Digital activities strengthen communication messages and also help in reaching specific target groups and analysing their attitudes and needs.

Strengthening its digital presence in connection with major international events and at its representations abroad will enable Switzerland to be more effective in the area of public diplomacy. Content should be focused on positioning the priority areas of the current strategy with the respective target groups.

A greater presence in the digital communication sphere would also boost Switzerland's image as an innovative country. Switzerland is a world leader in terms of use of



information and communication technologies in business, and could strengthen its image as a high-technology country through increased use of social media.

To achieve the goal of developing and expanding Switzerland's digital presence internationally, Presence Switzerland is assuming a greater role as a competence centre for internal digital training and the creation of multimedia content for the representations abroad. In the field of digital communication aimed at an international public, Presence Switzerland is increasing its cooperation with federal bodies in gathering content from different areas and developing content and messages for social media. Presence Switzerland ensures it has the necessary means and instruments to perform this function.

Furthermore, Presence Switzerland is working more closely with private stakeholders active in digitisation – particularly start-ups – and the national research centres in this area, namely ETH Zurich and EPF Lausanne. In this way, Presence Switzerland can benefit from existing networks and skills and at the same time contribute to a better international perception of Switzerland in this area.

3.5. Information and communication materials and promotional products

The purpose of the information and communication materials is to present specialised content in forms that are appropriate for the topic and suited to the target audience (general public, opinion leaders, media). Sensitive subjects (and challenges) should be presented in a differentiated way. The promotional products are designed to appeal to the target audience at a visual, more emotional level. Different promotional products are available for different target groups and occasions.

4. Evaluation

Communication abroad uses public relations tools to further the interests of Switzerland abroad and promote a positive and nuanced image of the country. In accordance with the perception objectives defined in this strategy, communication abroad seeks particularly to ensure that Switzerland is perceived abroad as an innovative, competitive country with a sense of solidarity and responsibility, a high standard of living and an attractive business location. The focus of communication is therefore on Switzerland's strengths in the different thematic priority areas.

To analyse changes in the perception of Switzerland regular surveys are conducted abroad that also take account of the perception objectives. In addition, the communication activities of Presence Switzerland are regularly evaluated. This involves reviewing the communication activities conducted or supported by Presence Switzerland and checking whether these correspond to the mandate of communication abroad and to the objectives and thematic priorities of the strategy in force.

The second step is to check whether specific activities have been effective in changing the target audience's perception of Switzerland. Visitors to major exhibitions (e.g. World Expos) and members of visiting delegations are surveyed and the proportion of those with a more positive or nuanced image of Switzerland after such an event is calculated. These calculations are also included in the results-oriented monitoring of goal attainment in the New Management Model for the Federal Administration (NMM).



For communication projects abroad that are implemented with the representations on the basis of target agreements and annual planning, the representations concerned are required to provide evaluation reports on how the activities were implemented and assessed.

Furthermore, the activities and projects of Presence Switzerland – for example in connection with Switzerland's participation in the London 2012 Summer Olympics and at Expo Milano 2015 – are monitored regularly by FDFA Internal Audit, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) and the Finance Delegation.