

A new narrative on the relationship between Switzerland and the EU

(Vorschlag einer Arbeitsgruppe (siehe Seite 10) unter Leitung von Anne Berner)

In brief

Switzerland is located in the heart of Europe and the European Union (EU). It is as European as all other countries on the continent. The country even has closer economic, cultural and linguistic ties with its neighbours and the EU than most of the other EU member states with each other. A constructive, reliable and viable relationship between Switzerland and the EU is therefore of great benefit to both parties.

In addition to geographical aspects, Switzerland and the EU are also connected by their joint values. Both sides form a community of values and destiny. They share many joint challenges on a European or even global level that can only be resolved independently to a limited extent by the individual countries. Meaningful cooperation is required to overcome such cross-border challenges.

Switzerland is looking to work together with its European neighbours. It wants to bring its many different strengths to the table in its relationship with the EU and contribute towards solving problems they both face. Switzerland's strengths go beyond its strategically important location in the heart of Europe and its economic power and resilience – above all, the country has a political system built on independence, stability, direct democracy and federalism.

The further development of the bilateral cooperation requires a mutual readiness to make concessions. This has been possible in the past, as demonstrated by existing bilateral agreements and many neighbourhood treaties.

Switzerland wants to be treated fairly and as a partner of equal footing by the EU. To do this, the EU has to dispense with shows of force and Switzerland an excessive number of exemptions. The goal is to achieve balanced bilateral relationships that benefit both sides.

In reaching this goal, Switzerland does not want to give up its distinctive political features – which play a critical role in the economic and social success of the country. A close partnership does not mean dispensing with one's own values. The Swiss population still wants the possibility of deciding their constitution and laws for themselves as before – not only *de jure*, but also *de facto*. They also want to maintain their federal structures.

The federal structures and direct democracy mean political decision making in Switzerland is a complex and time-consuming undertaking, but also leads to closer relationships with the people. A closer partnership with the EU must not lead to the loss or watering down of these independent structures. While adopting the laws and regulations of the EU often makes sense, Switzerland will always insist on its right to opt out in some cases.

The parallel existence of different political structures will be possible if the diversity within Europe is seen as an opportunity to be exploited. This viewpoint lays the foundations for a Europe in which there are various degrees of association. In addition to the core members with their strong integration and joint currency, there would then also be place for countries with a looser connection to the EU. This promises added innovation and prosperity for everyone in Europe.

In a closely linked Europe, complete governmental autonomy is neither realistic nor desirable. Partnership and cooperation are necessary in order to overcome joint challenges. Switzerland is ready to make an appropriate contribution towards solving these challenges in line with the principles of good neighbourly relations. It strives for a fair relationship with its European neighbours while maintaining its sovereignty under international law.

For further negotiations between Switzerland and the EU, this means the following:

- Fundamental readiness for legal harmonisation in existing and future bilateral areas of cooperation where this is necessary for a functioning domestic market and where sensitive political concessions are not required on the part of Switzerland. In other words, Switzerland must have the possibility to opt out, and is prepared to pay appropriate – but exclusively monetary – compensation in the event of resulting, plausible damage to the domestic market.
- Fundamental readiness for new dispute settlement proceedings, but with no concessions in sensitive, fundamental political issues and thus no subordination to the adoption of legislation that affects our political understanding, or to dispute resolution under the European Court of Justice (ECJ).
- Fundamental readiness to actively support the EU in those externalities from which Switzerland benefits, even though it is not a member of the EU itself.

1. Initial negotiation situation

After Switzerland voted not to enter the EEA in December 1992, the EU and Switzerland agreed to check within two months whether relationships could be expanded based on bilateral agreements. Negotiations on the Bilateral Agreements I started in November 1993. Soon after they were approved by the Swiss electorate in 2000, negotiations then began on the Bilateral Agreements II. Following the approval of the final element of the Bilateral Agreements II in September 2005, the Swiss Federal Council declared the desirability of a framework agreement intended to create a solid legal basis for the bilateral approach.

At the same time, the EU also expressed its desire to add the dynamic adoption of legislation (as seen *de facto* in the Aviation Agreement [Bilateral Agreements I] or *de jure* in Schengen/Dublin [II]) and a new dispute settlement mechanism to the new agreements. This was then also negotiated in 2007 in the revised Customs Security Agreement. However, as there was no uniform concept within Switzerland on the future direction of Swiss EU policy, the Federal Council did not proceed with the framework agreement. The parties only started negotiations in 2013 once the EU formally requested the formation of a new institutional basis for the Bilateral Agreements.

Just as the process was beginning, the adoption of the federal popular initiative against mass immigration in February 2014 meant that negotiations became bogged down. This was followed two years later by Brexit, which led to further delays. By leaving the EU, London had to find a new mode of partnership with Brussels. Brexit raised similar institutional issues on the adoption of legislation and dispute settlement as seen during negotiations with Switzerland. As a result, the EU was not prepared to make many further concessions to Switzerland in order to not negatively prejudice negotiations with Great Britain. Following this logic, the EU exerted constant pressure on Switzerland towards achieving a quick conclusion of negotiations. From a tactical perspective, a hard agreement with Bern would have been beneficial to the EU in negotiations with London. In November 2018, the EU concluded negotiations with both Switzerland and Great Britain with draft agreements. However, both of these were then subsequently rejected by the competent authorities in London and Bern.

In the opinion of the Federal Council, there was a lack of sufficient balance in the draft institutional framework agreement (InstA), meaning they decided not to sign. As a result, an internal domestic consultation was started in 2019. Although fundamental issues were raised during this consultation, the Federal Council identified only three technical areas where clarifications were necessary in its letter to the EU Commission in June 2019 – wage protection, state subsidies, and the Citizens' Rights Directive.

Due to the vote on the Limitation Initiative, these clarifications were only addressed for the first time in autumn 2020. However, these did not progress to the Federal Council's satisfaction, raising fears that the result of the negotiations would be rejected in a public referendum. In May 2021, the Federal Council then decided to no longer proceed with negotiations.

After the Federal Council presented its new approach for future political cooperation with Europe in February 2022, the FDFA started to explore bilateral relationships with its European counterparts in March 2022. Although not officially designated as such, these are based on the approach of the Bilateral Agreements III.

In doing so, the Federal Council also followed suggestions made at the European Forum at the end of 2021.

2. The problem – a relationship in the balance

Switzerland is located in the heart of Europe. It is part of the geography, history and culture of the continent. A constructive, viable relationship between Switzerland and the EU member states is of great benefit to both parties. This view is shared by the Swiss electorate, as has been seen repeatedly in their voting behaviour over the years.

However, the political mood between Switzerland and the EU has dampened in recent years. One reason for this is that the Federal Council saw no sense in proceeding with long-running negotiations on an institutional framework agreement and stopped the process in May 2021.

The EU is continuing in its efforts to bring Switzerland back on board in agreeing on a framework agreement. It is doing this not only with populist methods, such as accusations of cherry picking. Tangible pressure and other measures are also being used. Examples of this include the non-recognition of stock market equivalence, not updating the agreement on dismantling technical barriers to trade (MRA) and the exclusion from the Horizon research program.

Moreover, relationships with Switzerland are not currently a high priority in Brussels. Of far greater urgency to the EU are problems such as the fragile euro, violations against the Maastricht Treaty, the divergent powers within the Union, climate change, energy supply and – in connection with the war in Ukraine – issues related to security policy.

Despite years of effort, the fact is that it has not been possible to make existing bilateral agreements more legally compatible and fit for the future. The EU's insistence on virtually unconditional freedom of movement remains a bone of contention. Controlling immigration exclusively via the labour market and the demands for its further development are problematic for Switzerland. This is because its appeal is unusually large due to the prosperity gap with the EU.

Exploratory discussions on further negotiations are currently ongoing. However, the Federal Council does not have a new mandate for negotiations. Switzerland is still a long way away from reaching a joint understanding of how its relationship with the EU should proceed. Clarifications are necessary on a domestic level on what Switzerland wants and what it is prepared to offer (and where it draws the line).

3. What is needed – a new narrative

Switzerland should make a fresh attempt at achieving a bilateral relationship that is legally compatible

and fit for the future – and it should put forward its strengths more prominently in discussions.

Until now, discussions about the bilateral relationship were often dominated by slogans and buzz words. These are neither constructive nor promising foundations for negotiations, and should be replaced by a new narrative.

The goals of this narrative are as follows:

- To tie in with Switzerland's self-image
- To take into account Switzerland's strengths and willingness to cooperate
- To demand fair treatment and negotiations
- To understand diversity as a strength in reaching good solutions

The narrative is intended as a way of demonstrating how Switzerland should understand and express its relationship with the EU. Switzerland has to learn how to articulate itself in its own language instead of repeating the language of EU officials and diplomacy. The narrative should make the current situation understandable, show confidence within civil society, be founded on a value-driven self-image with a broad cultural foundation, and offer orientation for future action. The narrative should not start campaigns, but instead offer a platform for targeted discussions between interested parties from politics, business, civil society and the media.

What has to be taken into account when drawing up a narrative like this? Issues to explore include what connects Switzerland and the EU (*Chapter 4*), where there are differences (*Chapter 5*), how these differences can be overcome (*Chapter 6*) and areas of particular importance from a Swiss standpoint when building these bridges (*Chapters 7 and 8*). Finally, the possible impacts of the narrative on further negotiations should be examined (*Chapter 9*).

4. What connects the two parties

a. Geographical proximity and joint values

As a country in the heart of Europe, Switzerland is influenced by many different languages and cultures – as is the continent as a whole. Many joint values are shared. These include – in varying levels – freedom, human rights, democracy, pluralism and tolerance. This is in addition to the joint tradition of largely free trade.

Switzerland thus has close ties with Europe. This applies in particular to relationships with neighbouring regions. These close links are not disputed by Switzerland or its neighbours. On the contrary, the regions often speak the same language and are joined by special institutions and agreements – such as the Regulation of the Rhine, for example. The existing bonds with neighbouring regions are thus far more intensive than those with EU headquarters in Brussels, where Switzerland is of lesser importance.

As a result of the close economic, societal and cultural ties, Switzerland is at least as European as the other European countries. This applies to business in particular. For centuries, Switzerland and other European countries have traded with each other actively. Around half of all Swiss exports and imports are connected to European countries. Scientific partnerships, cultural exchanges, tourism, personal cross-border relationships, cross-border commuting and immigration also bring the two parties together.

b. Joint challenges

The close links between Switzerland and the rest of Europe show that complete autonomy in all areas is neither realistic nor desirable. Sensible cooperation is required, not least because the European countries form a community of destiny in addition to their shared values. Various problems such as climate change, energy transition, migration, digitalisation, military security, cybersecurity and organised crime can only be resolved independently to a limited extent by the individual countries. This is in addition to the ageing population in Europe. As a result, the economy is faced with the problem that there could soon be a shortage of skilled workers. At the same time, many people from Africa and Asia want to find jobs, prosperity and happiness in Europe and in Switzerland. How can this be controlled as part of agreements? And how can democracy be strengthened?

In all partnerships, there must be an understanding that Switzerland – together with all other countries – is responsible for solving problems itself if it is able to do so. This is in line with the basic principles of federalism and subsidiarity. However, certain challenges can be solved better and faster through appropriate cooperation instead of each country trying to do things on its own. This is why Switzerland wants to actively bring its strengths to the table, both globally and in Europe in particular.

Over the past 200 years, Switzerland has been repeatedly affected by economic and political developments outside the country. Compared to the past, the challenges of today stop less and less at federal borders. They are increasingly of a European and global nature.

On a geopolitical level, an increasing polarisation between the US and China is evident. The question arises as to which role and position Europe – and within Europe, Switzerland – should adopt. Since the Second World War, Switzerland has benefited from the security offered by NATO across western Europe and only makes modest contributions here (although higher per capita than some EU members).

5. What separates the two parties

a. A varied history

Notwithstanding their similarities, Switzerland and the rest of Europe also have their differences, among other things as a result of their varied history since the 17th century.

In almost all European countries except Switzerland, absolutism became an important form of government. However, no absolutist centres of power were able to establish themselves in the Swiss Federation in the early modern era. As a political entity, Switzerland has therefore remained strongly decentralised and with a communal character to the present day. Based on this, a modern federal state has developed since the 19th century that brings together federal-decentralised and direct-democratic institutions.

Both elements – federalism and participatory democracy – are key factors in the identification of the Swiss government.

b. Different political structures

The Swiss concept of statehood has been shaped by federalism for centuries. Only the most important joint interests are delegated to the highest level of government. Federal division promotes closeness between authorities and the people and – together with direct democracy – results in complex and time-consuming political decision making. The electorate wants to keep political leaders under control and not simply give them free rein to do everything themselves. This

requires time and communication.

For centuries, Switzerland has done well under this system of political control. As a result, it sees no reason to change these institutions due to the EU. Indeed, there is the fear that a closer partnership with the EU could lead to the loss or watering down of these independent political structures and direct-democratic processes. As a result, institutional integration in – or closer alignment with – a constantly changing EU legal system is considered problematic from a Swiss perspective. Due to the impact of the militia concept (Miliz) on politics and the strong focus on the preferences of the people, Switzerland cannot and does not want to follow every regulation set by the EU.

In the EU, the political situation has changed significantly over the past few decades – and in a completely opposite direction. Once based on subsidiarity, the system of alliances has taken on a more centralised structure – particularly since the introduction of the euro and the financial crisis of 2008/2009. The war in Ukraine and the energy crisis may lead to an even more centralised government and majority decisions without the possibility of veto.

The changing self-image of the EU and its trend towards more centralisation is at loggerheads with the concept of statehood seen in Switzerland. This explains why the EU is insisting that there should be no expansion of bilateral cooperation until these institutional issues are resolved.

6. How these differences can be overcome

a. Fair cooperation

For any mutual partnership and cooperation to proceed, both Switzerland and the EU will have to make concessions. The Bilateral Agreements are proof that a reconciliation of interests can succeed. Quantification and visualisation of the benefits for both sides would be helpful here.

As the smaller of the two parties, Switzerland can only negotiate successfully if it has good arguments to offer. It has to bring its strengths to the table effectively and communicate these skilfully.

Negotiations can then only bring benefits to both sides and a fair reconciliation of interests if they demonstrate the willingness to solve joint challenges jointly and local problems locally. Switzerland's sovereignty under international law has to be respected here. Agreements with neighbouring countries in cross-border regions show that this is possible.

Fairness dictates that the EU has to dispense with shows of force and Switzerland an excessive number of exemptions. The goal must be to hold balanced negotiations on an equal footing. Switzerland wants to be treated as a partner, not as a small country that is forced into things by the powerful EU using "all or nothing" arguments that are not compatible with its own values and democratic systems.

How negotiations could proceed in this direction was highlighted on different sides during 2021 as part of the Bilateral Agreements III. Suggestions were made here to expand negotiations in order to create added scope for a balanced package. In addition to the classic topic of trading goods and services, other aspects would then have to be included, such as services in the fields of security, climate change mitigation, energy supply, water supply and healthcare. Each side should demonstrate what they could provide in which area and how these could be evaluated. The budgets remained separate during this approach, as did the freedom of choice, ownership and pluralism. The Federal Council accepted this idea in principle, but did not take it further.

b. Using diversity as an opportunity

With between 150 and 200 languages spoken, probably one of the most underestimated strengths of Europe is its diversity. This spans cultural, societal, economic and political fields and not only promotes competition and trade, but above all innovation and resilience. This diversity should be identified as an opportunity and exploited. The goal must be for each country to be able to demonstrate, use and contribute its strengths as part of a European community.

Significant opportunities arise for the further development of Europe as a result of this diversity – provided different levels of association with the EU are possible for European countries.

On one hand, a forward-looking Europe would firstly consist of core countries such as Germany and France, who are strongly integrated on an economic, political and institutional level and share a common currency. On the other hand, there are also countries with a lower level of integration.

The second group includes countries such as Italy or Spain, who do not want to or are unable to achieve strong political and economic integration with a common currency and joint regulations (such as the Maastricht Treaty). A third group includes countries that want even less political and legal integration than the second group, such as Great Britain and Switzerland. Finally, a fourth group consists of countries that are of certain strategic importance for Europe but have even looser associations, such as Turkey and countries in North Africa.

The parallel existence of different levels of integration would promise added diversity, innovation and prosperity for Europe as a whole, and would also make it easier for smaller countries to help shape the further development of Europe on an equal footing.

7. What Switzerland has to emphasise more – its own strengths

Within Europe, Switzerland – like any other country – has a number of its own specific advantages. It is perceived as a country with a high degree of economic expertise, great innovative strength, excellent research, some of the world's top universities, global openness and political independence. These trump cards must be played. Switzerland should be more aware of its strengths and bring these to the table in a confident and focused way in negotiations with the EU.

One of Switzerland's biggest strengths is its economic power. Despite its small size, it has developed into a leading economic nation – not least because it adopted a global outlook in its trade relationships from an early stage. It is home to companies of major international importance. Many companies have earned top positions in Europe and even worldwide, particularly in the pharmaceutical, MEM and financial sectors. The economy is also broadly diversified. This means it is more resilient against structural or economic upheaval. Moreover, the moderate fiscal policy and debt brake ensure strength and room for manoeuvre on an economic level in difficult times.

Another success factor is social partnership. Problems between employers and employees are resolved directly instead of via politics, thus ensuring the culture of consensus and decentrality of the social system are also reflected in the workplace. Switzerland also has a dual education system that works well and is seen as a model by many countries.

Further strengths include its geographic location, topography and unspoiled environment. Many key infrastructures such as flight paths, railway lines, roads, power lines and gas lines – from north to south and from west to east – run through Switzerland. Switzerland is also one of Europe's key water sources, with the Alps feeding the Rhine, Rhone, Danube (via the Inn) and Po (via Lake Maggiore) and also acting as dams for generating electricity and reservoirs for supplying drinking water.

Finally, many people envy Switzerland's stable, direct-democratic and federal political system. This system is also one of its strengths. It has shaped Switzerland and resulted in it becoming one of the world's most prosperous countries.

8. What Switzerland has to keep in place – sovereignty and federal structures

A close partnership must not be mistaken for giving up one's own values. While a clear majority in Switzerland are in favour of a regulated, viable and forward-looking relationship with the EU, they also want Switzerland to still have the possibility of maintaining – or even expanding – its own independent political system. They do not want to see a watering down of Switzerland's distinctive political features and structures due to the partnership with its neighbours and the EU. Despite close cooperation with the EU, the Swiss people instead want to have the possibility – not only *de jure* but also *de facto* – of deciding on their own constitution and laws themselves, while maintaining the federal structures with distinct responsibilities for cantons and municipalities.

As a high-price, high-wage country with around 30 percent of its population born abroad, a small, densely populated Switzerland also does not want to grant free access to an uncontrolled number of people from Europe and the rest of the world, nor does it want to allow them access to its social systems and collective capital without making the appropriate contributions.

While adopting the laws and regulations of the EU often makes sense, Switzerland insists on its right to opt out in some cases. As EU laws are constantly developing – and the direction is unclear – the possibility of selective non-adoption of EU law is required. The goal of the Swiss policy must be to gain the necessary acceptance of this demand at EU level.

9. Conclusions from the narrative for further negotiations

A constructive, reliable and viable relationship between Switzerland and the EU is of great benefit to both parties. The further development of the bilateral cooperation thus requires a mutual readiness to make concessions. Negotiations aim to achieve a fair reconciliation of interests in order to establish balanced bilateral relationships that benefit both sides. To do this, the EU has to dispense with shows of force and Switzerland an excessive number of exemptions.

In negotiations, both sides should pursue a (not necessarily pecuniary) cost-benefit optimisation. Ideally, negotiations will be conducted in such a way that one side only has to make few concessions in those topics that are important to them, while these topics then bring significant benefits for the other side. The accumulated cost-benefit aspects of the individual topics under negotiation should bring minimum costs and maximum benefit for both parties. As compromises are not necessarily possible in every single area, there is a better chance of achieving a balanced result if agreements are concluded in parallel – in other words, as part of a package (e.g. Bilateral Agreements III).

The goal is to maximise the overall benefits resulting from mutual, largely obstacle-free market access and the various cooperations in place. On one hand, Switzerland will then have to address the EU's

concerns in this regard. On the other hand, the EU will also have to show flexibility in sensitive issues that either affect the political understanding of Switzerland as a non-member or objectively measurable specifics, and which *de facto* have no impact on the functioning of the domestic market. For Switzerland, this also means being strict – not where only certain market interests in individual branches are affected, but instead in fundamental issues (for example, federalism, worker participation and the system of government) as detailed in the narrative.

If this logic is followed, Switzerland should fundamentally accept legal harmonisation in areas where it has a direct, immediate connection with the domestic market – the maxim to follow here is as much diversity as possible with as much harmonisation as necessary. Specifically, this requires the possibility of making exemptions in cases where important interests are affected, such as wage protection or sensitive political topics. However, if no sensitive issues are affected, there should be no fundamental obstacles to the adoption of specific EU regulations on state subsidies. In terms of freedom of movement, the Citizens' Rights Directive could also be accepted, at least in part, but only if it is possible to reconcile suitable, binding measures against excessive strain being placed on the social security system. Only those who have acquired the appropriate rights through corresponding contributions should have access to the social security system.

Moreover, a modernisation of the 50-year-old free trade agreement as desired by the EU – in which services could also be included – may be considered, but must not be subject to the institutional regulations of the agreement on market access.

If Switzerland rejects the modernisation, they may give up important room for manoeuvre that could be needed in other areas. Furthermore, partnerships in new areas such as security, cybersecurity, climate change mitigation, energy supply, water supply and healthcare should be examined, and the proven cooperations in areas such as research (some of which have been suspended by the EU) continued.

In terms of smooth operation of the domestic market, Switzerland can firstly agree to the basic principles of a dynamic (but not automatic) adoption of legislation, but with the added possibility of opting out – particularly in connection with the aforementioned sensitive political issues. In doing so, it would be making a major concession to the EU – in a departure from the applicable, agreed bilateral approach. Although controversial from a political standpoint, this would be acceptable inasmuch as the currently sensitive points would be removed *ex ante* from the adoption obligations and exceptions would only be possible for points considered sensitive in future. Meanwhile, this opting out would certainly allow the EU to better advance its efforts on the domestic market compared to what would be the case if limited to a free trade relationship. However, by accepting the basic principles of a dynamic adoption of legislation, the EU's blocking of updates to existing agreements would have to be forfeited. In particular, the restrictions to the mutual agreement on dismantling technical barriers to trade (MRA) would have to be quickly lifted.

Secondly, Switzerland can also agree to EU demands for a new dispute settlement process in order to ensure that solutions to bilateral differences do not become endlessly drawn out. Balanced compensatory measures as required by the EU appear to be a suitable way of achieving this. However, this should be exclusively monetary in nature.

Thirdly, a court of arbitration subordinate to the European Court of Justice (which would only be able to check the proper balance but would not have the right to interpretations of EU legislation) is neither acceptable for Switzerland nor required by the EU. This non-subordination to the ECJ must apply in general, not only in the field of wage protection.

Both sides benefit greatly from mutual market access, more so the EU (in absolute figures) with a significant surplus in terms of the movement of people and goods, services and truck transit traffic. In addition to existing cooperations, both sides can also benefit greatly from future ones in the fields of power supply, climate change, healthcare, digitisation, security or cybersecurity, not to mention close research partnerships. Switzerland also benefits indirectly from the EU, for example in its efforts to create stability and legal security in Europe. With this in mind, it appears reasonable for Switzerland to contribute to these efforts with cohesion payments or other measures.

To summarise, this new narrative raises the following important conclusions for further negotiations between Switzerland and the EU:

- Negotiations should aim towards establishing a fair reconciliation of interests and balanced, viable bilateral relationships that are beneficial to both parties.
- Legal harmonisation in the agreements that affect Switzerland's participation on the EU domestic market should be accepted in general, provided this is essential for a functioning domestic market and does not affect any of Switzerland's critical areas.
- In critical areas, Switzerland requires the possibility of opting out.
- In case of the non-adoption of EU law with plausible damages to the EU, compensation of an exclusively monetary nature should take effect.
- Subordination to the ECJ in the adoption of legislation and dispute resolution must be rejected in general, not only in wage protection.
- A partial acceptance of the Citizens' Rights Directive is possible, but only if access to the Swiss social security system is granted based on performance and contributions.
- A modernisation of the 50-year-old free trade agreement could be considered, but must not be subject to the institutional regulations of the agreement on market access.
- Additional partnership agreements that are of mutual interest should be explored.

The working group included the following members:

- Anne Berner (Chair), former Finnish minister, board member
- Georges Baur, senior research fellow at the Liechtenstein-Institut, former Assistant Secretary General at EFTA
- Heinz Buhofer, businessman, former Chair of the Board of Directors at V-Zug
- Hans Hess, businessman, former Chair of Swissmem, Chair of the Board of Directors industry
- Konrad Hummler, businessman, Chair of the Civil Society Association, former Chair of the Board of Directors at NZZ
- Christoph Schaltegger, professor and dean at IWP University of Lucerne, professor at IFF University of St. Gallen
- Gerhard Schwarz, Chair of the Progress Foundation, former director at Avenir Suisse, former Deputy Chief Editor at NZZ
- Oliver Zimmer, historian and author, former Professor for Modern European History at Oxford University (2005 to 2021)

Prof. Michael Ambühl assisted the working group in an advisory capacity.