Digital Manifesto for Switzerland

In global terms, Switzerland should be playing a leading role in the digital transformation: the country has shown it can pick up on technological and social change, put this to good use, and grant it democratic legitimacy. This is a key condition if the population is to see the potential of digitization and play its part in this kind of change, which represents such a great opportunity for Switzerland as a place to do business.

The present Digital Manifesto for Switzerland was put together by 50 visionaries, entrepreneurs, academics, politicians, and pioneers – together with Johann Schneider-Ammann, the President of the Swiss Confederation, during a workshop in Bern. It is intended to serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for business, politicians, and wider society, thereby helping the digital transformation succeed in Switzerland and allowing the country to assume a leading role worldwide in this area. The aim is for Switzerland to create jobs with high levels of added value and secure its prosperity in the process.

The Digital Manifesto is inspired by the idea of making Switzerland the "home" of all things digital, which is based in turn on the idea of freedom and people using their own initiative. These values have become firmly embedded in our national consciousness and are responsible to a considerable degree for Switzerland's economic success. Freedom and initiative are the two guiding principles for the Digital Manifesto and therefore the digital transformation in Switzerland.

In order to ensure the digital transformation is as successful as possible, society, politicians, and legislators must get behind it and set the course for what is required in terms of infrastructure, education, research, innovation, and business. Any new jobs and prosperity will depend on this. The Digital Manifesto sets out a series of propositions for each of these areas and goes on to derive specific ideas, measures, and requirements from these.

We are convinced we have the ideal conditions – thanks to world-leading research institutions, a stable political system, a high quality of life, a network of international relationships, and our manageable size – to make Switzerland a major player in international digitization.
Executive summary:

The Digital Manifesto is a concept, a vision for a digital Switzerland. If the requirements under the various complementary areas of infrastructure, education, research, innovation, and business are satisfied, this will see the emergence of a solid and sustainable structure capable of securing and boosting jobs and prosperity for the future too. In order for this to happen, wider society and politicians will need to buy into this process. And there must be no dilution of the two fundamentally Swiss values of freedom and initiative.

It is important that all the players involved in the digital transformation team up and engage in a continuous dialog with wider society. Business, politicians, and academics need to pinpoint the opportunities and potential for Switzerland in the coming years, as well as the challenges.

Digitization is having an impact on the entire economy and the whole of society, so it will make certain demands of politicians too. Regulations "detrimental" to digitization must be avoided at all costs – any legislation must not hinder innovation or new ideas. It should be drafted with a view to being neutral toward both new and existing business models. The state should look to become more of a partner in the digital revolution.

Infrastructure such as safe and reliable ultra-fast broadband networks and readily available and secure data centers and data clouds provide the foundation for a digital economy and society. Data is becoming an increasingly important factor in production. The state is creating the right conditions for business to generate added value through intelligent use of data. And the state must also adopt a pioneering role with its own data.

Education and creativity are Switzerland's raw materials. Children and youngsters need to understand and learn the principles of the digital world, how to create and work with digital content, and how to behave responsibly in the digital world. Other factors in achieving success will be continuous professional development and ensuring everyone is involved in a process of lifelong learning to improve their digital expertise.

Switzerland should look to become the world-leading research center for the digital transformation. The transfer of knowledge and technology between universities needs to be stepped up and improved. Switzerland should provide the two Institutes of Technology supported by the Swiss Confederation (in Zurich and Lausanne) with some CHF 2 billion for basic research into new technologies and their applications.

Innovation is about more than just developing new technologies, products, processes, or business models. Innovation is achieved by pooling together various types of expertise and promoting openness and communication between all involved. A privately managed and financed fund for the future should ensure start-ups have sufficient capital and expert knowledge at their disposal.

Digital business models are international by nature. Business strategies that stop at national borders have little prospect of success. Established companies are being asked to check how their business models work in the digital environment and to adapt to the new circumstances. Support for and collaboration with start-ups represent important elements in this process.
Society

It is important that all players in the digital transformation team up and engage in a continuous dialog with the wider population. Business, politicians, and academics need to pinpoint the opportunities and potential for Switzerland in the coming years, as well as the challenges.

Premises

- Digitization and new technologies are important for our economy. This is the only way we can remain competitive and secure our long-term prosperity.
- However, the digital transformation is also creating a degree of uncertainty among the population. Many people fear they may be forced out of the labor market as a result of digitization. There are also concerns about the use of personal data. It is up to politicians, business, and academics to take these anxieties on board and highlight what the options are for the future.
- It is a fact that certain jobs will be lost through the digital transformation – this has always been the case in previous technological revolutions. Economic history also shows, however, that previous technological revolutions in Switzerland have never led to any persistent, substantial increase in unemployment. Quite the opposite: new professions, jobs, businesses, and industries have emerged instead.
- Ultimately, the positive aspects have tended to dominate with each wave of structural change. The digital transformation is creating numerous jobs capable of generating significant added value, which will eventually secure high levels of prosperity for Switzerland.
- Digitization does not recognize national borders. Swiss companies are already tightly integrated within various world markets. So conditions are ripe for combining the benefits of globalization and free trade with digitization.

Requirements/Measures

- Uncertainty creates resistance. This is why there needs to be a continuous dialog with the population. The decision-makers and digital players from politics, business, and academia have a duty to show, both clearly and comprehensively, the possibilities, opportunities, and challenges the digital transformation offers business, the population, and Switzerland as a whole.
- Switzerland must raise public awareness of success stories and flagship projects: it is important to have companies, research initiatives, inventors, and pioneers that the country is proud of and whose reputation extends beyond Switzerland. And these must not go unnoticed. Everyday examples of best practice can illustrate how certain technologies are seeing the emergence of new professional requirements, jobs, and prospects.
- As regards the world of work, the digital revolution requires employees to show significant flexibility and adaptability. The onus is on business and the state to support them by ensuring there are suitable training and development opportunities, raising awareness, and providing information through things like "open knowledge platforms".
- The fourth industrial revolution must not divide society. Digitization must not shut people out on the grounds of their age, level of education, gender, health, or digital skills, or shut out organizations for reasons of size. The aim should be to create think tanks and centers of innovation to estimate the possible consequences of the digital transformation and develop suitable opportunities to respond to these.
- Switzerland has been a world leader for years when it comes to innovation. But despite its tremendous spirit of inventiveness, the country is pretty risk-averse and is not among the leading lights in terms of developing new business ideas and business models. In order to compete in the digital world, Switzerland needs to be braver when it comes to taking risks.
- Switzerland needs to engage in global exchange and collaboration in the areas of politics, academia, and business with those countries leading the field in digitization.


Politics and legislation

Digitization is having an impact on the entire economy and the whole of society, so will make certain demands of politicians too. Regulations "detrimental" to digitization must be avoided at all costs – any legislation must not hinder innovation or new ideas. It should be drafted with a view to being neutral toward both new and existing business models. The pace of the digital revolution must not be slowed by rashly conceived regulations. The state should look to become more of a partner in the digital revolution – like the Scandinavian and Baltic states, where digital exchange between citizens, businesses, and the authorities is really quite advanced.

Premises

- Progress requires as much regulation as necessary, but as little as possible. The role of the state is to provide an appropriate and predictable environment in which companies can go about their business.
- If the digital transformation is to be a success, the following three basic requirements and success factors peculiar to Switzerland will prove critical: the flexible labor market, the social partnership, and the dual education system. This will need legislators and the authorities to show an attitude of openness and flexibility toward new technologies and business models. The digital revolution cannot be stopped; protectionism will get us nowhere.
- Digitization and innovations are happening with increasing speed. There is a clear danger that legislators will lag behind developments.

Requirements/Measures

- The digital economy requires flexibility. **It is essential not to police new ideas and business models with rashly conceived regulations** so as not to choke off innovation and technological change.
- New or revised laws must not favor existing business models, but must be formulated in a spirit of neutrality. **Measures designed to preserve the status quo will undermine competitiveness and must therefore be avoided.**
- At the same time, **existing business models** should also be able to profit from the new regulations.
- The Swiss Federal Council should receive support from a **Digital Council** made up of digital specialists and experts from academia, education, and research, as well as from businesses, start-ups, and the worlds of finance and politics.
- The state is setting a good example and is positioning itself as a **leading digital democracy** through things like e-government, e-participation, e-voting, e-learning, e-bureaucracy, user-friendly digital ID cards (e-ID), and digital signatures (e-sig), which are also recognized abroad.
- It is essential to adopt a new approach to federalism in a digital world. A **proactive attitude is required to the issue of e-federalism.**
- The Federal Council and Parliament should be creating a political "fast track" so they can respond to fast-moving developments. The same applies to the administrative processes (such as approvals) which start-ups have to contend with.
- It is a case of creating an appropriate environment so innovation can continue to flourish in Switzerland. For example, **new ideas and business models should not be taxed until they are making a profit.** Taxation models must be revised so as not to penalize the funding of start-ups. It is necessary to come up with transparent and favorable principles – across the whole of Switzerland – for the taxation of start-ups so as not to deter investors and particularly those from abroad.
- The digital economy calls for a new breed of workers. It is up to business and politicians to **invest in training and development.**
- And there must be no unnecessary obstacles to prevent **experts, talent, and people wishing to start companies** from **migrating** to Switzerland. Measures must be taken to deal with a shortage of labor. Enough work permits should be available for professions
requiring high levels of qualifications. By way of comparison, most of the successful pioneers and companies in Silicon Valley are not from the area around San Francisco or even California, but have come from elsewhere in the USA or the rest of the world.

- With any expenditure at federal level, it is a case of checking **what percentage of the means available can be invested in digitization and the use of new technologies**. This particularly applies to education, administrative processes, defense, health, and the environment.
Infrastructure

Basic infrastructure such as safe and reliable ultra-fast broadband networks and readily available and secure data centers and data clouds provide the foundation for a digital economy and society. Data is becoming an increasingly important factor in production. The state is creating the right conditions for business to generate added value through intelligent use of data. And the state must also adopt a pioneering role with its own data.

Premises
- Data is often described as the raw material of the twenty-first century. But data lasts and tends to multiply and increase in value with use. Those who manage to process and refine the data available will be at the forefront of the digital revolution. Data is proving to be fertile ground for the new stimuli, business models, and companies that will revitalize the economy and help Switzerland reindustrialize.
- Cybersecurity is a key component of a sustainable approach to digitization. Each company in Switzerland is itself responsible for protecting and optimizing its IT infrastructure.
- Safe and reliable ultra-fast broadband networks, data centers, and data clouds provide the foundation for a properly functioning digital economy and society. The fiber-optic network and the next generation of mobile networks (5G) will need to be expanded continuously in order to secure a significant competitive advantage.
- In recent years, Switzerland has developed into one of Europe's leading countries for data. Key advantages include stability, neutrality, and security. And Switzerland also places a lot of emphasis on data protection, security of information, and data retention at a domestic level. If Switzerland remains true to these basic principles, it will be able to position itself as the world’s reliable data store and thereby make Switzerland more attractive as a country.

Requirements/Measures
- The state must have the courage to develop a vision of how publicly available data from various stakeholders (start-ups, research institutions, businesses, the authorities, etc.) can be anonymized, made available in a secure manner, and used in a way which adds value for both wider society and the Swiss economy. This data – as far as the interests of the data owners and producers allow – should be pooled together to create a data lake.
- Official data of public interest must be made available to the public free of charge for them to use as they please. This principle (known as the "open government data principle") must be set out in a uniform manner across the entire federal administration.
- Networks must be expanded more quickly across Switzerland and processes simplified (objections and approvals). Environmental legislation in particular must be adapted to ensure it creates no significant difficulties or even obstacles to any forward-looking expansion of important mobile communication infrastructure.
- High-speed broadband coverage should reach 100 per cent and be the best in the world. The aim is to facilitate Internet speeds of one gigabyte for the Swiss population. Steps must be taken to promote widespread introduction of the best possible mobile Internet access.
- The worlds of business, politics, and research are making cybersecurity a priority issue and driving this forward together with a view to ensuring sustainable data security in Switzerland. A national cybersecurity strategy would be a suitable response to the ever-increasing risks from cyberspace.
- Businesses and SMEs need to be told how valuable their data is, and how it can be protected and put to profitable use.
- In the area of data protection, it will be necessary to create a transparent legal basis and promote safe ways of working with data.
- Switzerland should aim to become the global hub for data storage, data protection, and data security. The excellent starting position the country enjoys today
(reliable legal system, outstanding infrastructure, specialist workforce) must not be jeopardized by changes in the law or the threat of new regulations.
Education

Education and creativity are Switzerland's raw materials. Children need to understand and learn the principles of the digital world, how to create and work with digital content, and how to behave responsibly in the digital world. Another factor in achieving success will be continuous professional development and ensuring everyone is involved in a process of lifelong learning to improve their digital expertise.

Premises
- The young generations who are going to shape business, politics, and academia over the next 40 years have incorporated technology into their lifestyle. Employment patterns are currently being reinvented, with many people changing sectors and professions several times during their life. In the past, it was a case of giving youngsters the training they needed to ensure they had good prospects and would find a job for life. In today's digital world, things are no longer quite so clear. Start-ups prefer to work in virtual teams, as opposed to hierarchies with lots of different levels. At the same time, the requirements and challenges associated with the world of work are also changing. People's life plans are more dynamic and agile, and it is essential to pursue a course of continuous development. Children, youngsters, and employees should be prepared in advance for these new challenges.
- These days, the ultimate goal of training and education no longer needs to be a long-term position; they can also prepare people for self-employment or something in between. This is why every higher education course should also pick up on the issue of self-employment.
- STEM professions (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) make a significant contribution to the digital transformation. And this is why STEM disciplines are becoming increasingly important. Our economy is reliant on a well-qualified workforce. But there is a lack of new blood coming through, with not all positions being filled as it is and the demand for workers continuing to grow.
- Digitization is not always risk-free, and the consequences for social cohesion cannot be predicted. When different generations discuss such matters, the difference in attitudes is always apparent.
- The success of the dual education system has shown it pays to pursue a policy of continuous development. For most SMEs, which provide the backbone of the Swiss economy, digital expertise is assuming critical importance in terms of new business models and interaction with new clients. And this is why continuous development opportunities must be improved in the digital arena.

Requirements/Measures
- There needs to be a debate about the risks and limits of digitization, with younger generations getting involved at every opportunity.
- Training and development in STEM subjects must be made more appealing so more children and youngsters will be enthusiastic about studying them in future.
- Digitization is something of an "intersectional" topic and can be introduced to the curriculum on an interdisciplinary basis, taking an application-oriented approach. IT and digital aspects should be integrated at all levels of education. It is not about making all youngsters study IT or Computer Science, but encouraging them to learn abstract and algorithmic ways of thinking ("computational thinking") and thereby improve their understanding of the digital world and their ability to help shape it.
- This means the basic education on offer needs to be modified accordingly. The resources required will have to be built up by the individual cantons. Technologies which support tuition (from a digital perspective) should be promoted and factored into school budgets.
- **Teachers should be given appropriate training and development.** It is imperative that digitally mediated knowledge transfer and the issues surrounding digitization are incorporated into the curricula at teacher training institutions.
- "**Entrepreneurship**" needs to be embedded across the board into professional and academic training programs. Where it makes sense, start-ups and founders of businesses should become involved in the education process on the back of projects.
- Businesses must create attractive, forward-looking training positions as part of the dual education system and support development both within the area of IT and through the application of digital expertise within the marketing, logistics, and sales areas of their operations.
- **University lectures should be made publicly available online.**
Research

Switzerland should look to become the world-leading research center for the digital transformation.

Premises
- The digital transformation is having a significant impact on all the various academic disciplines. Other countries (particularly the USA, China, Singapore, and Israel) and companies (notably the US tech giants) are building up huge resources for basic research. If Switzerland wants to join the leading pack, it will also need to set aside resources and continuously improve the environment within the country as a center for research.
- There is increasing crossover between the various disciplines. The silo mentality has had its day, and disciplines will be asked to work together even more closely in future (interdisciplinarity), including beyond national borders. Leading universities and centers of innovation will generate and benefit from even greater synergies.
- Research within the area of digitization takes equal account of both economic and social impacts and looks for strategies likely to serve the needs of both groups – business and wider society – most effectively.

Requirements/Measures
- Switzerland should provide ETH Zurich and EPFL Lausanne, the two Federal Institutes of Technology supported by the Swiss Confederation, with **CHF 2 billion for research** purposes. The research money should be invested in basic research into new technologies and areas where these might be applied.
- The **transfer of knowledge and technology between universities and industry** needs to be stepped up and improved. Important steps toward improving specific applications of new technologies by industry, spin-offs, or start-ups have been made with the founding of the Swiss innovation park known as Switzerland Innovation, with the conversion of the Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI) into the Swiss Innovation Promotion Agency Innosuisse, and various initiatives within universities.
- The role of the **Swiss National Science Foundation** also needs to be strengthened and promoted.
- The **commercialization of academic research** should be promoted.
- **Speed is critical to success** and must not be hindered by laborious administrative processes within research institutions.
Innovation

New business ideas must not be taxed until they are making a profit. Innovation is about more than just developing new technologies, products, processes, or business models. Innovation is achieved by pooling together various types of expertise and promoting openness and communication between all involved. A privately managed and financed fund for the future should ensure start-ups have sufficient capital and expert knowledge at their disposal. A targeted approach is required in terms of developing expertise in the area of risk or venture capital.

Premises

– Innovation, revolutionary new business models, start-ups, and pioneers tend to thrive where they find an environment that is right for them.
– Switzerland is currently a world leader when it comes to innovation. It needs to keep its pipeline of innovations and research results flowing well. The aim is to establish Switzerland as a test laboratory and business hub for forward-looking trends and a place from where new products and services can be exported around the world.
– When the subject turns to innovation in the digital arena, we instinctively think of areas known for innovation, such as Silicon Valley or the Boston region. But digitization means innovations can emerge just about anywhere. So now further melting pots of digital innovation are popping up worldwide, including in Switzerland. It is neither possible nor desirable to try and replicate recipes for success in their entirety. Each country's and university's tradition, culture, and specific strengths have a role to play and should be taken into account.
– Thanks to its unique quality of life, Switzerland is at or near the top of various rankings (such as the Global Competitiveness Report), while its outstanding universities and research institutions mean the country is ideally placed to join the leading pack as regards the global competition.

Requirements/Measures

– The aim is to create so-called digitization clusters with a view to building on existing entrepreneurial and scientific strengths in fields such as medical technology, robotics, banking, watches, and precision mechanics. These clusters will see the emergence of start-up campuses, where start-up founders, investors, and companies can collaborate in co-working spaces.
– Switzerland needs a privately financed start-up fund. Start-ups often find it hard, when they enter their second phase, to access the kinds of sums they need – often in the tens of millions – to continue their expansion, scale things up, or develop prototypes. This fund is intended to plug these funding gaps so start-ups in Switzerland can get off the ground and not feel obliged to leave the country. The idea is to invest at least CHF 100 million a year.
– A targeted approach is required when it comes to developing venture capital expertise. It is also necessary to attract foreign investors. Venture capitalists are very important because of their expertise and know-how and the links they provide as intermediaries between start-ups and institutional investors.
– Switzerland should set itself a target of attracting more venture capital. By way of comparison, 2015 saw CHF 676 million invested in start-ups in Switzerland, while investments in Israel came to USD 3.4 billion.
– More needs to be done to promote support for start-ups on the road towards commercialization – by way of coaching, in other words.
Business

Digital business models are international by nature. Business strategies that stop at national borders have little prospect of success. Established companies are being asked to check how their business models work in the digital environment and adapt to the new circumstances. Support for and collaboration with start-ups represent important elements in this process.

Premises

- Established companies are invited to see digitization as an opportunity for the future. Managers and boards must find the courage to question business models that have worked well for decades and turn them inside out before someone else does.
- Although cooperation between businesses and across sectors is already a reality in many cases, more needs to be done to promote this. Switzerland is a small country and must do much more by way of collaboration in these areas in order to scale up business models, come up with joint innovations, and ultimately survive and compete in digital terms.
- Special attention must be paid to SMEs. These are a key element of the Swiss economy, but do not always have enough capital for digital innovations.
- "Back shoring" as an opportunity: jobs previously outsourced from Switzerland can be brought back home thanks to automation and robotics. New positions requiring highly qualified people are emerging, with staff needed to operate automated processes.
- Swiss companies are increasingly competing internationally in the form of e-commerce. Customer-oriented offers and exports via digital sales channels require continuous investment in new expertise and open up considerable new potential for an export-oriented national economy.
- Switzerland offers immense potential in terms of digitization of successful sectors: such as the financial and medical technology industries, precision technologies, or the pharmaceutical industry. There is also significant potential in the Internet of things, artificial intelligence, blockchain, or robotics.

Requirements/Measures

- **Companies' management structures need to open up.** Hierarchies and inflexibility are standing in the way of the digital transformation. They also fail to appeal to the younger, digitally savvy generation, who want to enjoy more responsibility and control their own destiny, in addition to working on exciting tasks and projects.
- The corporate culture of trying to avoid mistakes needs to be ditched, with efforts made to promote a culture of experimentation. We must be brave enough to take risks and give people freedom to think for themselves. Failure and mistakes should become socially acceptable instead of being punished.
- New employees should be appointed not just on the basis of their experience but also with a view to their potential. Job profiles are changing so fast it is impossible to recruit the kind of experience needed.
- The **start-up ecosystem in Switzerland must be expanded as a matter of urgency.** This will mean implementing the CIT principle (Capital, Incentives, Talent):
  - **Capital:** The start-up system has far too little money at its disposal. It is necessary to create incentives so pension funds are able to invest more money, business angels show even greater commitment, and specialist sponsors (venture capital) start heading for Switzerland (see Innovation). Compared with other countries, Swiss institutional investors invest 2.5 and 4.5 times less than their Swedish and Israeli counterparts respectively. And conditions need to favor competitiveness in order for crowdfunding and crowd investing to take off.
The right kinds of **Incentives** within the regulatory and tax systems. Businesses need simple, clear, and comprehensive tax rules at both federal and canton level (see Innovation), which can also be transported and communicated at an international level. People who are prepared to take on a degree of entrepreneurial risk – whether they be employees, investors, or founders of start-ups – should be supported rather than punished (see Regulation). Start-ups should only be taxed when they make a profit or when they are on a solid and sustainable financial footing. For example, start-ups in the United Kingdom pay no tax for the first 7 years. Switzerland needs to be taking this line.

**Talent:** In order for a productive and successful start-up ecosystem to emerge in Switzerland, it is essential to make people – i.e. children and youngsters – enthusiastic about IT at an early age (see Education). Switzerland must promote talent in schools and recruit from outside, i.e. abroad, to cover the shortage of experts, coaches, sponsors, researchers, and entrepreneurs. In order to increase tolerance and acceptance of foreign experts, companies will have to do everything they can to develop homegrown specialists and give them a chance to share in the digital transformation.

Switzerland needs to **do more to market** its potential and its **scientific and entrepreneurial successes in the field of innovation and digitization**, both at home and abroad. The Swiss companies, organizations, and universities concerned, as well as the relevant products and services, should be just as well known around the world as the country's watches, chocolate, and banks.
Jobs and prosperity

The Digital Manifesto is a concept, a vision for a digital Switzerland. If the requirements under the various complementary areas of infrastructure, education, research, innovation, and business are satisfied, this will see the emergence of a solid and sustainable structure capable of securing and boosting jobs and prosperity for the future too.

In order for this to happen, wider society and politicians will need to buy into this process. And there must be no dilution of the two fundamentally Swiss values of freedom and initiative.

The conditions are ideal for Switzerland to emerge ahead of the field in terms of the digital transformation in Europe.

Zurich, January 24, 2017

The 50 digital shapers who took part in the workshop

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