

A national science advice network to anticipate crises and support the authorities

Together, the ERI sector institutions and the Swiss Confederation are launching the Swiss National Science Advice Network. The purpose of this measure is to anticipate potential crises for the nation and provide the authorities with independent, interdisciplinary scientific analyses.

Bern, 29 September 2025 – Public health, cybersecurity, disinformation and international challenges: the challenges facing our society call for decisions based on tried-and-tested scientific knowledge. The Covid-19 pandemic gave a striking illustration of the need for close collaboration between science and politics before crises actually occur, in order to build trust and prepare work processes.

In response to this need, the institutions of the education, research and innovation (ERI) sector – i.e. the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, the ETH Board, swissuniversities, the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Swiss Science Council and Innosuisse – have launched the Swiss National Science Advice Network (NSAN), at the instigation of the Confederation.

Scientific expertise to advise the authorities

NSAN, which is composed of high-level researchers, makes neutral, multidisciplinary expertise available to the federal and cantonal authorities. The Network operates on two levels: it intervenes preventively through scientific monitoring and constant dialogue with the authorities; in times of crisis, it quickly makes ad-hoc groups of experts available to the federal crisis management unit. “This network fosters dialogue between the scientific community and the authorities on a permanent basis – not just in an acute crisis. It's an investment in trust and in the quality of our collective decisions,” explains Yves Flückiger, President of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences.

NSAN is based on a flexible and scalable structure that brings scientists' expertise together in thematic clusters called circles or clusters. So far four clusters have been established on the themes considered the most strategic for the country's security and resilience: public health, cybersecurity, disinformation and international challenges. Each cluster is led by a steering committee tasked with defining priorities, liaising with the authorities and proposing experts as needed.

Impartial expertise

The scientists participating in NSAN are committed to acting as “honest brokers”: they present the current state of knowledge, the uncertainties and the possible scenarios without interfering in political decision-making processes. A Code of Practice, drawn up jointly by the ERI institutions and the Confederation, clarifies this role. It defines the principles of impartiality, independence and transparency, as well as the experts’ responsibilities. “Scientific impartiality is the key: we bring facts, not opinions. It is then up to the authorities to make informed decisions,” says Luciana Vaccaro, President of swissuniversities.

The experts are selected by the presidents of the ERI institutions with due regard not only to their scientific expertise, but also their ability to provide information as honest brokers, as well as other criteria that ensure the quality of the advice given.

Having been set up at the instigation of the Confederation, the Network is supported by the institutions of the ERI sector. The latter ensure coordination, the smooth running of the scientific secretariats, and adherence to the Code of Practice that guarantees independence, transparency and integrity. Full information on how the Network operates, and its members, may be found on the following website: www.reseau-conseil-scientifique.ch.

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