



# Diversified relations, constructively critical dialogue – Federal Council adopts China Strategy

**Bern, 19.03.2021 - The Federal Council adopted a public strategy for China for the first time at its meeting on 19 March 2021. The Strategy sets out the objectives and measures for Swiss policy on China for the 2021–24 period. The Federal Council recognises the importance of China, and intends the Strategy to create greater coherence in Switzerland's activities with this important partner.**

China has grown rapidly in recent years, becoming a major international force both economically and politically. Today, it is Switzerland's third most important trading partner. Relations are shaped by a free trade agreement, an innovative strategic partnership, and dozens of channels for dialogue. There are also clear differences in values between the two countries, however, and it is therefore vital to ensure that policy towards China is clear and consistent.

The new China Strategy represents the Federal Council's response to current geopolitical developments. Neither growing competition between major powers nor polarisation around China and the US is in Switzerland's interests. Promoting globally accepted rules and standards, functioning multilateral organisations and an intact global economy remain key elements of Swiss foreign policy.

## **Principles of cooperation**

The China Strategy 2021-24 was drafted in a participative process that involved all departments of the Federal Administration. It provides a reference framework for the many ways in which Switzerland and China are linked. The Strategy is rooted in the interests and values of Swiss foreign policy. The Federal Council firmly believes that these can most

effectively be safeguarded in a constructively critical dialogue and broadly diversified relations. Its China policy is based on three principles:

- The Federal Council pursues an independent policy on China. It regards China as a priority country for its foreign policy and is strengthening its China knowledge base. It actively seeks cooperation in all areas in which Switzerland has an interest, and self-assuredly defends Switzerland's fundamental values, as enshrined in the Federal Constitution.
- The Federal Council advocates the inclusion of China in the liberal international order and in efforts to overcome global challenges. Where added value is the result, Switzerland will coordinate more closely with like-minded partners.
- The Federal Council pursues a balanced, coherent and coordinated approach to China. In doing so, it encourages exchange with Parliament, the cantons, academia, the private sector and civil society.

### Thematic focus areas

As with other geographical strategies, the Federal Council draws the thematic focus areas of the China Strategy from those of the Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23.

Where **peace and security** are concerned, the emphasis is on global and regional security, Switzerland's domestic security, multilateralism and human rights. Switzerland makes it clear to China that respect for individuals' fundamental rights must be a core element of the two countries' relations. Human rights must be broached consistently in all bilateral and multilateral settings. Switzerland is willing to continue its human rights dialogue with China during the 2021–24 strategy period.

The topic of **prosperity** revolves around issues such as trade, investment, export promotion, education, research and innovation, and tourism. The Federal Council seeks to secure non-discriminatory, mutually beneficial market-based access for goods, services and investments. Also part of this is the protection and assertion of intellectual property rights in China. Furthermore, the Federal Council aims to modernise the bilateral free trade agreement, and there will be a detailed analysis of the implications for Switzerland of the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment.

On **sustainability**, the United Nations 2030 Agenda offers a touchstone for cooperation with China. In the case of Chinese infrastructure projects, Switzerland therefore concentrates on climate and the environment, health, a sustainable financial sector, and development and other forms of cooperation.

Indeed, cooperation with China on another focus area, **digitalisation**, remains important. This is also where problems originating from differing values and systems come to the fore, however. Switzerland advocates an intact digital space that is governed by the principles of international law. International Geneva is to play a central role here.

## Information exchange and coordination

A new cross-departmental coordinating body is to be created to ensure greater coherence. It will facilitate the sharing of information and experience among all federal bodies that deal with China. The Federal Council also welcomes exchange with and between stakeholders outside of the Federal Administration that also play an important part in relations. These include cantonal and city authorities, business representatives and non-governmental organisations, as well as institutes of training and research, and higher education institutions, in a 'whole-of-Switzerland' approach.

The Federal Council will now inform the foreign affairs committees of both chambers of Parliament.

---

## Address for enquiries

For further information:

F DFA Communication

Tel. +41 58 462 31 53

[kommunikation@eda.admin.ch](mailto:kommunikation@eda.admin.ch)

---

## Links

[A balanced, coherent and coordinated approach to China](#)

## Publisher

The Federal Council

<https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start.html>

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home.html>

<https://www.admin.ch/content/gov/en/start/documentation/media-releases.msg-id-82757.html>