CH@World 2.0

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Under the title "*Driving Competitiveness through Reforms and Investments*", the EPSA 2025-26 edition welcomed the submission of projects in three award categories: "Innovating Government, Governance and Policies", "Investing in Infrastructure, Mobility and Energy" and "Delivering User-Centric Services at Subnational Level". The edition sought to identify projects with data-driven innovation and endurable positive impacts on governance and service delivery.

This series of briefings provides key insights into the winning projects and offers lessons learned.

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CH@World 2.0

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INTRODUCTION

CH@World 2.0 is the digital platform on which Switzerland prepares, coordinates and records its foreign policy. Developed largely in-house by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) between May 2023 and July 2025, it replaced a system that had been in use for over twenty years and had come to serve mainly as a repository, while the real work of consultation took place by email.

The new platform brings together in one place the consultations through which the FDFA's headquarters, its embassies and missions abroad, as well as other federal departments agree Swiss positions on multilateral issues, the political memos in which diplomats report on developments, and continuously updated 'Country Pages' that combine data drawn automatically from international sources with analysis entered by FDFA staff. It has been used by the whole Swiss diplomatic service and by staff in other federal departments since January 2025, and its use for political reporting has been compulsory since February 2025. The case is of interest well beyond diplomacy, because the problem it addresses, namely large volumes of information scattered across inboxes, documents and separate databases, is shared by many public administrations.



Key facts

- **Project:** CH@World 2.0, the central digital working platform used to prepare and coordinate Switzerland's foreign policy, bringing consultations, political reporting and country information together in one system.
- **Applicant:** Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), State Secretariat.
- **Country and level of government:** Switzerland, federal (national) level.
- **Users:** more than 5,500 registered users, covering headquarters, around 160 representations abroad and other federal departments.
- **Duration:** May 2023 to July 2025, with a pilot launch in July 2024, full replacement of the legacy system in January 2025 and the final release (Country Pages) in June 2025.
- **Funding:** no EU funding; developed with the FDFA's own staff and IT infrastructure and delivered within budget. The source does not give a total budget figure.
- **Main components:** Country Pages for bilateral diplomacy and the Multilateral Consultation space for coordinating positions across government.
- **Development approach:** built largely in-house, using agile (Scrum) development following the HERMES project management framework.
- **Languages:** French, German, Italian, Romansh and English.
- **Legal basis:** Directive 600-0-E, in force since 1 February 2025, requires all foreign policy political reports and memos to be prepared and submitted through the platform, except in highly classified cases.
- **Headline results:** 58% less time spent producing country and thematic reports, and more than 11 million emails avoided.

EPSA Category

Innovating Government, Governance and Policies

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1. Relevance

Swiss foreign policy depends on continuous exchange between the FDFA's headquarters, its embassies and missions abroad, and the other federal departments with expertise on trade, security, development and related matters. The need for a shared digital tool arose when Switzerland became a full member of the United Nations in 2002 and the UN Human Rights Council was established in Geneva in 2006, since both developments considerably increased the number of multilateral files on which a Swiss position had to be agreed across several departments, often at short notice. The FDFA responded with CH@World 1.0, a platform designed to support these consultations.

Over the following two decades, however, the platform came to function mainly as a repository in which information was held in separate silos, data was static and updated only occasionally, and sources followed no common standard. Because the system could not generate reports or overviews, consultation and coordination took place outside it, by email and through Word documents and older databases, with the result that the same information was produced several times in different formats, versions of a position could conflict, and decision-makers had to wait for material assembled by hand.

Renewal became urgent for both technical and strategic reasons. The legacy system was approaching the end of its life and had to be replaced by 2025. At the same time, an increasingly complex geopolitical environment called for faster and better-evidenced decisions, and the FDFA had made stronger digital collaboration a priority in line with national digital government goals. As any change would affect every embassy, mission and headquarters division, as well as staff in all seven federal departments, the project was steered from the top of the FDFA's State Secretariat and accompanied by revisions to internal directives, which indicates that it was conceived as a reform of working methods rather than as a routine IT upgrade.

The project accordingly pursued five objectives: to provide a single platform for cross-government consultation, country knowledge, policy input and analytical data; to make data interoperable by connecting internal and external sources through common standards and automated interfaces; to raise productivity by redesigning reporting and coordination processes so as to remove duplication and manual work; to build tools for analysis, monitoring and evaluation into daily work, for example to support timely political reporting and scenario planning; and to establish shared digital practices, roles and responsibilities for collaboration and knowledge management across the FDFA.

In deciding how to meet these objectives, the FDFA concluded that deploying an off-the-shelf software or purely novel tool could prove too disruptive, and that developing the solution in-house would allow it to retain control over both the platform and its data.

2. Project design and implementation

The initiative for a new solution came from staff and was quickly taken up by the leadership, after which its design and implementation proceeded as a collective organisational effort rather than as a project of the IT department alone. It was endorsed by the State Secretary and governed through three layers: a steering committee and sponsor providing high-level direction, project management responsible for day-to-day oversight, and an execution team with separate leads for the multilateral and bilateral parts of the platform. The team brought together subject-matter experts, that is the diplomats and policy officers who use the system, and IT developers. It was recruited through an internal call for volunteers whose roles in the project matched their existing functions in IT, policy or management, an arrangement that kept project work integrated with regular duties without leaving gaps elsewhere. One evaluator noted that 17 staff worked on the project, which was developed largely in-house.

Formal oversight followed the HERMES project management framework, while development itself used Scrum, an agile method based on short cycles ('sprints') in which features are designed, tested and adjusted step by step; together, these gave the steering committee clear control points whilst leaving the team free to respond to user feedback. Work began in May 2023 with a baseline and benchmarking study, a staff survey and co-creation workshops in which users set priorities, and the findings were translated into an implementation roadmap with phased deliverables. Users then continued to test prototypes throughout development.

To replace scattered and outdated data, automated interfaces now collect information from external sources including the World Bank, UNDP, IMF, WIPO, Transparency International, the Swiss National Bank and the V-Dem Institute, convert it into standard templates and update it continuously. The many report formats of the past were replaced by a single, event-driven memo for political reporting, which is quicker to write and easier to search and analyse, and static country dossiers by a Country Page for each country, organised in six sections: an overview of key facts, links and contacts; bilateral relations, including meetings, agreements, trade and thematic cooperation; politics; the economy; key people in government; and documents. Tags, personalised notifications, topic subscriptions, watchlists, favourites and analytical search help users find what is relevant to them without being overwhelmed by information. Human input to Country Pages follows a defined protocol under which the country desk at headquarters triggers updates, the desk or the embassy edits the content, and the HQ desk reviews and publishes it, so that everyone works from the same information while responsibility for its accuracy rests with an identifiable desk.

Consultation by email was replaced by the Multilateral Consultation space, an interactive dashboard in which all stakeholders work on the same draft through the following steps:

1. An embassy or mission submits an 'instruction request' summarising the issue and recommending a decision.
2. Headquarters launches a consultation and invites all relevant federal stakeholders.
3. Stakeholders submit comments and can see each other's input on the evolving draft.
4. Headquarters consolidates a draft decision, on which each stakeholder signals agreement or disagreement, with space to explain their position.
5. Where all agree, headquarters issues the final instruction.

To limit risk, the platform was introduced in stages, each accompanied by training webinars, documentation and a dedicated support team:

- **July 2024:** first version live for pilot groups, including experts working on the UN Human Rights Council and the internal control system.
- **Q4 2024:** further groups added, including those working on the OSCE and the Council of Europe.
- **January 2025:** all remaining users and data migrated, and the legacy system switched off.
- **February 2025:** Directive 600-0-E makes the platform mandatory for political reporting.
- **June 2025:** final release introduces Country Pages for bilateral diplomacy.

Because users had helped to shape the design, little retraining was needed at the switchover, and updates to internal directives were timed to coincide with the roll-out so that the new way of working also became the official one. The validation visit showed an intuitive interface built on the principle that knowledge should remain with the organisation when individuals move on.
In the final phase, between January and June 2025, less internal IT development capacity was available than planned, and the effort required for Country Pages proved to have been underestimated. The team responded by giving priority to Country Pages, slightly reducing the scope of the final release and asking subject-matter experts from the policy side to take on more of the work. Plans to use advanced analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) were postponed to a later phase, although the necessary data structures were put in place,

and the project nevertheless remained on schedule and within budget.

3. Outcome

Since the legacy system was switched off in January 2025, CH@World 2.0 has become the main channel for Swiss foreign policy work, with more than 5,500 users across the entire diplomatic service and other federal departments. In 2025, users exported 2,930 country files and wrote 3,220 policy memos on the bilateral side, roughly 13 and 14 per day respectively, while on the multilateral side they conducted 6,670 consultations and generated 6,150 reports, roughly 29 and 27 per day. The move from long periodic reports to short, structured memos has made political reporting timelier and clearer, since decision-makers now receive focused updates as events occur rather than at the next scheduled report, and information that was previously spread across several channels is available to all relevant actors in real time.

The efficiency gains are supported by data that the FDFA presented during the validation visit, comparing the hours and days spent per task before and after the launch. Producing country and thematic reports, previously the most time-consuming work, now takes 58% less time; country briefs that were once assembled by hand can be generated with a single click, and more than 11 million emails have been avoided. The staff time released has been redirected towards analysis, policy design and foresight. Costs have remained modest because the platform was built, and is operated, with existing internal resources and without external vendors or additional spending, and because maintaining it requires far less technical effort than developing it did; the validation team concluded that this approach produced significant savings compared with outsourcing.

The jury and the validation team also observed improvements in the quality of daily work. A diplomat preparing for negotiations can now retrieve the official Swiss position on an issue directly rather than searching through multiple documents, as illustrated by the country report shown for a Switzerland-Brazil summit held three days before the visit, and staff taking over a new country or file can see all previous developments and the current situation in a few clicks, which preserves institutional memory. The platform also helps users to identify colleagues with relevant expertise elsewhere in the administration, and the jury noted a reduction in the pressure and stress associated with locating and consolidating information. User satisfaction is assessed systematically, and users can send suggestions directly to the project team, so that the platform continues to evolve with operational needs. These findings rest on direct observation, as the validation team saw a live update of a Country Page, examined the pages for the Netherlands and Luxembourg, took part in a simulated consultation on a UN file, and heard bilateral and multilateral end-users explain how the platform supports their work and why it should continue.

Beyond the FDFA, the platform's core country data, including macroeconomic figures, governance indices and bilateral trade and investment data, already feeds the 'Country Cockpit' of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), and other digital projects within the FDFA are adopting its approach to governance, user engagement and roll-out. The memo format has encouraged clearer and more consistent reporting beyond foreign policy, and since foreign policy context matters for trade, security and development, faster access to diplomatic information supports work in those fields as well. The validation team found that the platform's success does not depend on conditions unique to Switzerland: in administrations with more formal or hierarchical decision-making, the consultation workflow can be adapted by adding approval steps. Discussions on transferring the model are under way with Austria, Belgium, Chile and France.

CH@World 2.0 has moved from a time-bound project to a permanent part of the FDFA, with Directive 600-0-E making its use compulsory, a permanent structure responsible for governance, user support and further development, and the State Secretary having expressed strong support for its continuation. Planned next steps include extending automated data integration and adding AI functions: the platform forms part of the federal

government's programme to develop an in-house AI toolkit, KOBY, and KOBY pilot functions are currently being tested as add-ons.

Success factors

- **A clearly established, mission-critical need:** the legacy system was nearing the end of its life and limiting evidence-based diplomacy, which gave the project a strong claim to priority.
- **High-level steering combined with a dedicated mixed team:** a formal steering committee at senior level, supported by a project team of subject-matter experts and IT developers.
- **Co-creation and phased roll-out:** users helped to define and test the system, and staged deployment limited operational risk.
- **Organisational reform in step with the technology:** new directives and the single memo format changed how work is done, not only the tool used to do it.
- **Efficient use of resources:** reuse of internal capacity and delivery within budget.
- **Up-to-date, consolidated country data:** supports the preparation of negotiating positions and dossiers and preserves institutional memory.
- **Broad reach:** seven federal departments work on the same platform.
- **Security and readiness for future developments:** secure access layers and data structures prepared for AI.
- **Formal anchoring:** policy instruments moved the platform from a time-bound project to a permanent institutional solution.

Lessons learned and recommendations

For administrations facing similar problems of fragmented information and coordination, the case suggests the following:

1. **Use a system replacement to redesign the work itself.** The largest gains came from merging report formats and replacing static dossiers rather than from new software alone, so before building or buying a system it is worth listing the formats, channels and manual steps it should make obsolete.

2. **Make the new system the official channel.** Directive 600-0-E closed the parallel email route; without a binding rule, old channels tend to survive alongside a new platform and duplication continues.

3. **Diagnose needs with users before designing.** A benchmarking study, staff survey and workshops gave the team an evidence base and created early ownership among the people who would use the system.

4. **Combine formal oversight with agile delivery.** A recognised project management framework gave leadership clear control points, while short development cycles allowed the team to correct problems quickly.

5. **Roll out in stages.** Starting with pilot groups that have well-defined workflows allows testing in real conditions at low risk and creates internal advocates for later stages.

6. **Automate what can be automated and assign clear responsibility for the rest.** Statistics from international sources flow in automatically, while political content is entered by staff under a clear protocol for triggering, editing, reviewing and publishing.

7. **Consider in-house development where no market product fits and control of data matters.** Recruiting volunteers whose project roles match their regular functions can strengthen motivation and limit costs.

8. **When capacity falls short, reduce scope rather than quality.** Concentrating on the most valuable feature and drawing more on policy experts kept the final release on time.

9. **Prepare data structures for future analytics.** Although AI functions were postponed, consistent and structured data has made later integration with KOBY possible.

10. **Measure time spent before and after.** Task-level comparisons of hours and days produced the 58% figure and gave the efficiency case a concrete basis.

11. **Give users a permanent feedback channel.** Systematic satisfaction checks and a direct route for suggestions keep the platform aligned with operational needs once the project has ended.

12. **Adapt the workflow to the local decision-making culture.** The consultation process is not tied to Swiss practice, and administrations with more hierarchical procedures can add approval steps without changing the core design.

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