

# Regional Outlook 2019 SWITZERLAND

## Regional Development Policy in Switzerland



### General policy approach

In 2015, Switzerland updated its Federal Agglomeration Policy and issued at the same time its policy for mountain regions and other rural areas, which prioritises greater cross-sectoral and multi-level governance co-ordination as well as rural-urban linkages. Both policies serve as a strategic umbrella for spatial development policies, such as the New Regional Policy (NRP) and the Spatial Planning Policy. They also influence sectoral policies with a substantial impact on spatial development, for example transport, environmental or agricultural policy.

Switzerland's NRP was renewed in 2016 for a second eight-year period. The aim of the Federal Law on Regional Policy is still to "enhance the competitiveness and added-value creation of individual regions and thus contribute to the creation and safeguarding of jobs in the regions, to the safeguarding of a decentralised

settlement pattern, and to the reduction of regional disparities." Yet, for the implementation period 2016-23, the NRP has a stronger focus on innovation and tourism. Its three pillars consider: 1) an increase in the economic strengths and competitiveness of regions (85% of total funding); 2) co-operation and synergies between the NRP and sectoral policies (5-10% of total funding); and 3) capacity building in the knowledge system of regional policy (5-10% of total funding).

### Recent policy changes

- With the multiannual programme 2016-23, the New Regional Policy focuses on innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises. To facilitate this goal, it increasingly promotes regional innovation systems. The federal government supports these networks provided they have a functional area orientation, i.e. if they extend beyond cantonal or even national borders and are adapted to the needs of the defined target groups. Secondly, the multiannual programme 2016-23 sets a specific focus on promoting tourism in the regions, a sector that was exposed to strong challenges in recent years due to foreign exchange rates, and that is increasingly exposed to the effects of climate change. Digitalisation is considered as an overarching goal for economic development activities and needs to be transversally addressed.
- The updated Federal Agglomeration Policy (issued in 2015), has a "networks of cities" approach. Four objectives have been set as targets for 2030: 1) quality of life (and social cohesion); 2) attractiveness; 3) high living standards; and 4) efficiency of collaboration. It is based on a tripartite system including the confederation, cantons, and cities and local governments. Funds allocated to cities and local governments for transportation infrastructure have been increased and streamlined.
- The policy for mountain regions and other rural areas (2015) is based – for the most important part – on the existing sectoral policies for these areas. It not only forms a bracket around them and provides the so-far missing national framework of orientation, but also closes gaps between them, for example by initiating a cross-sectoral policy programme for supporting innovative projects and approaches to foster sustainable spatial development at the regional level.

## Institutional arrangements to prepare for global megatrends

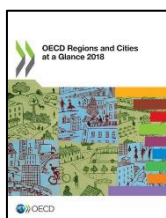
The Conseil de l'Organisation du Territoire (COTER) is an extra-parliamentary commission which advises the Federal Council and relevant offices responsible for regional policy and planning on issues related to regional, spatial, rural and agglomeration policy, and territorial development. The COTER assesses territorial development trends to help inform policies with a territorial impact. Among its various responsibilities are: carry out strategic foresight activities, co-ordinate between the administration and the scientific community, develop and implement new strategies for territorial development, and produce (in the third year of each sitting government) a report on "megatrends of the territorial development in Switzerland". Regional elements are at the centre of COTER's work.

At the national level, the Territorial Concept Switzerland provides a framework and guidance for decision making for future territorial development; it was designed and supported by all levels of government, and serves as the basis of COTER's work. Moreover, every four years, the Federal Chancellery produces a report on major changes, themes and trends that will shape federal policy in the next 15 years. The different levels of government and territorial components (cantons, municipalities, regions, rural and urban areas) are included in the discussions and elaboration of the reports. Other documents include the Digital Switzerland Strategy and Action Plan, which provides guidelines for government action and for the co-operation between authorities, academia, the private sector and civil society in order to shape the transformation process.

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## OECD Regional Outlook 2019: Leveraging Megatrends for Cities and Rural Areas

The 2019 edition of the *OECD Regional Outlook* examines the regional dimensions of global megatrends and their implications for the well-being of people living in different places. It discusses how place-based policies, public investment and multi-level governance reforms can respond to these megatrends to revive productivity growth, reduce inequalities, improve quality of life and increase sustainability.

Consult the full publication and the other country profiles on line: <https://oe.cd/pub/2vq>.

