The Swiss Federal Government's Concept for a National Sports Policy
Sport is an important aspect of life and, consequently, of society as well. It is a source of pleasure, intense experience and sense of solidarity, and makes an important contribution to health promotion and prevention.

However, the structural and economic factors associated with sport are becoming increasingly complex. The Swiss Federal Government (Federal Council) is therefore seeking to make a political contribution to the creation of a widespread culture of physical activity – the "spirit of sport" – which, it is hoped, will also forge cohesion and identity within our society. The following Concept was developed on behalf of the Swiss Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports (DDPS) by around 150 specialists involved in sport, science, healthcare, politics, business and public administration under the aegis of the Swiss Federal Office of Sports (FOSPO) at Magglingen. The Federal Government is using a broad definition of sport including, in particular, physical activity as a leisure pursuit.

The Government is aware that the development of sport, and in particular the commercialization of some aspects, has been accompanied by additional problems. Doping, violence and corruption are offshoots of sport that must be countered by all the partners in a joint, coordinated approach. The following Concept may be taken as a sign of the Federal Government's commitment to the positive further development of sport in Switzerland.

The principles of Swiss sports policy

The primary contribution made by the state is to provide a favourable framework within which sport can develop. The main elements to consider are welfare, stability, the education system, health, safety and general infrastructure.

- The (private) associations and organizations on the one hand and the (state-run) schools and universities on the other are the main players in sport in Switzerland. The autonomy of sport in the private sphere will be safeguarded and enhanced.

- Development measures initiated by the Federal Government will be based on the principle of subsidiarity – except where otherwise provided by the Federal Constitution or existing laws – and the overriding interests of public order, competition policy and financial policy.

- The need to act will not of itself generate automatic state intervention in sport. Measures undertaken by the Federal Government to promote sport as envisaged by the present Concept are defined in terms of their benefit to society.

- The Federal Government has the task of counteracting negative phenomena in sport and related areas. It may, for example, make the allocation of funding to sports institutions conditional on their active opposition to problematic developments such as doping, violence and corruption.
In view of the major importance of sport for the individual and society, Article 68 of the Federal Constitution gives the Federal Government the following mandate: “The Confederation shall promote sport, particularly sport education.” The legal situation in the 1970s led to the development in 1978 of a “Swiss Sports Concept”. Since then, however, there has been a fundamental change in the dimension, significance and pursuit of sport. Sport and physical activity have many beneficial effects, and Switzerland provides a comparatively good sports infrastructure, but a number of shortcomings require attention.

Women are under-represented in leading positions, teaching and research.

Existing resources (open spaces, developed areas, sports infrastructure) are not being exploited optimally.

Problems such as sport-related accidents, doping, corruption, violence and racism are on the increase.

If these areas are to be tackled, a new approach to sports policy is needed. This Concept is a major starting point from which the Federal Government can develop a coherent sports policy that will enable it to fulfil its joint responsibility for sport and contribute to the sport of tomorrow.

Starting with the shortcomings

- At least one third of the Swiss population engages in too little physical activity.
- In education, there is a trend towards reducing school and extra-curricular sport.
- Public-sector support for competitive sport and young athletes has too little impact and its organization is not systematic enough.
- Too little attention is paid to sport as a factor in adding economic value.
Main Objectives and Priority Activities

Sport and physical activity should make a contribution to the sustainable development of our society, economy and environment. The first four main objectives relate to the social and economic dimension, while the fifth is directed at sustainable development in general and environmental protection in particular.

1. Health
More physically active people.

The proportion of physically active people in the population needs to increase continuously. Priority activities include the following:

- The sports activities that schools, including vocational schools, are required to offer will be implemented.
- The Youth+Sport programme will focus on sustainable, regular sporting activity. Quality will be controlled.
- Structures and programmes intended to offer physical activity and sport for senior citizens will be specifically improved (Senior-Citizen Sports Concept).
- Innovative projects to promote sport and physical activity in the everyday context – e.g. at work, on the way to work, at school, in human-powered mobility – will be implemented.

The types of sport and physical activity promoted and the intensity and the level at which they are pursued should be adapted to individual interests, abilities, motives and other personal and environmental factors.

2. Education
Making use of education opportunities.

The opportunities for sports education will be reviewed and used more specifically. Priority activities include the following:

- The quality of sports education in schools, vocational colleges and in the Youth+Sport programme will be improved by suitable measures.
- Better use will be made of the opportunities offered by sports education and organized sport to strengthen social cohesion.

Topics such as fairness, social integration, preventive action, careful use of natural resources to promote sustainable development, etc. can be pursued to good effect in the context of sports education.

3. Performance
Promoting young athletes and competitive sport.

The framework and conditions for promoting young athletes and competitive sport will be improved. Priority activities include the following:

- Specialized sports schools/fast-track classes and suitable vocational training places of appropriate duration (e.g. in public administration) will be created.
- A “vocational training course for professional athletes” will be set up on a pilot basis.
- Prevention of doping and substance abuse will be improved.
The importance of sporting activity goes beyond the obvious aim of physical fitness. The physical and mental conditioning encouraged by sport and physical activity (irrespective of the level at which they are pursued) is fundamentally desirable in our society—and in general areas such as professional life.

4. Economy
Exploiting sport as an economic factor.

The impact of sport as an economic factor (some CHF 16 billion annually is currently spent on sport in Switzerland) and an opportunity for tourism needs to be better understood and exploited appropriately. Priority activities include the following:

- The importance of holding major sporting events and locating international sports associations in Switzerland must be recognized.
- A coordinated “location policy” for holding major sporting events and attracting international partners will be developed.

5. Sustainability
A learning environment for social development.

Sport can act as a testing ground for the sustainable development of society as a balance is sought between ecology, economy and the sociocultural dimension. Priority activities include the following:

- Instruments for evaluating the sustainability of sport and sporting events will be developed and subsequently deployed in practice.
- Sporting institutions will be made more aware of the concerns of sustainability, particularly the need for sustainable use of space and resources essential for life.

Measures designed to promote physical activity and sport should be in line with the principle of sustainable development. This is an objective espoused by both the International Olympic Committee and the Council of Europe.
Forging new partnerships

The scale, dynamics and complexity of modern sport mean that new partnerships have to be forged. Such challenging tasks as promoting health, education, performance, the economy and sustainability in and through sport can no longer be addressed in isolation. Active partnerships must be developed through local, cantonal, national and international networks. Instead of inflexible allocation of isolated tasks, a system of “shared responsibilities” under defined leadership must be adopted, with private and public players cooperating for their mutual benefit. A graphic example is the creation of “local sports networks” in every larger municipality in Switzerland.

Modern tools – such as telecommunications and data processing, including the Internet – can and should be used to facilitate cooperation between all players.

The Federal Government recognizes the important role, and the responsibility, of the media in communicating the values and concerns of sport and thereby fostering its development. It supports the activities of the media with an active information policy.

Using resources efficiently

All players must work together to make efficient, sensible and sustainable use of existing resources (people, finance, infrastructure, information/knowledge). Long-term planning, exploitation of synergies and coordination of needs are important means of achieving this objective. The financial requirements of new projects and activities must be in keeping with the existing financial plan and available resources.

A clear need for action has been identified in specific areas:

- Reinforcement of the position of volunteers (new forms of recognition, good, low-cost continuing education, exemplary holiday arrangements, examination of tax-deductible options);
- Increasing the number of women in leading positions;
- Provision and optimal, sustainable use of space and infrastructure for physical activity and sport (coordinated use of resources);
- Improved mobility with public transport (organizational measures, to be agreed between sport and transport authorities);
- Promotion of the Swiss Olympic Association (SOA) and the national sports associations through federal contributions, with assignment of a performance mandate and global budget;
- Promotion of applied research in the sports sciences.

Consequence 1

The Federal Government wishes to increase the number of people in all age groups who are physically active. It mandates the DDPS (under the aegis of the FOSPO at Magglingen and working in close cooperation with the cantons, municipalities, SOA, Swiss Sports Committee [SSC] and other responsible federal agencies such as the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health and the Swiss Federal Office of Social Security) to submit a national action plan. Special emphasis should be placed on health promotion, accident prevention, sustainable development and sport for young people, senior citizens and the disabled.

Consequence 2

The Federal Government wishes better use to be made of opportunities for education in sport. It mandates the DDPS (SSC), with support from the FOSPO, to work closely with the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education to explore aspects of education, social integration and sustainable development in and through sport and to implement the findings.

Consequence 3

The Federal Government wishes to contribute to improved promotion of young athletes and to acceptance of credible competitive sport. It will, within its powers, ensure that the recommended measures to promote young athletes are implemented. It mandates the DDPS to initiate the necessary measures.
Consequence 4
The Federal Government wishes to support sport associations and other bodies in their efforts to keep doping out of sport. It wishes to create a legal basis for imposing sanctions on athletes’ entourage and to improve prevention. It is prepared to examine additional measures proposed by sport. The allocation of development funding to sports organizations will be made contingent on their effective implementation of regulations to control doping and general harmful developments in and around sport – such as violence, racism and corruption – with suitable measures for prevention and elimination.

Consequence 5
The Federal Government acknowledges the importance of major sporting events and the presence of international sports bodies in Switzerland. In the interests of our country’s sport, economy and international reputation, it welcomes the organization of such events and the presence of such bodies here. It mandates the DDPS to invite those responsible to prepare for submission to the Federal Government a national concept for Switzerland as a location for major sporting events and a base for international sports associations.

Consequence 6
The Federal Government wishes to enhance understanding of sport’s significance for the social, economic and ecological sustainable development of our society and to communicate this significance. It mandates the DDPS to initiate this process.

Consequence 7
The Federal Government wishes to contribute to ensuring that necessary resources are used well and – where need can be demonstrated – made available. In particular, it fosters both material and non-material support for the provision of resources and the best possible sustainable use of space and infrastructure for physical activity and sport, and it backs measures to increase the proportion of women in leading functions, research into sports sciences, and the creation of higher education courses focusing on sports sciences. It mandates the DDPS to collaborate with the relevant government departments in making suitable proposals to the Federal Government.

Consequence 8
The Federal Government will periodically request reports on developments in sport. An “Observatory” will be set up to identify both positive and negative developments at an early stage. Any undesirable developments and irregularities must be eliminated in cooperation with the partners. The Federal Government mandates the DDPS to take the necessary measures.