Berne, le 2 février 2017

**Swiss answer to the Questionnaire on ways to bridge the gender digital divide from a human rights perspective**

1. **Please identify the obstacles and barriers to access the internet faced by women in your country. Please elaborate on the nature of these obstacles (e.g. social, cultural norms, literacy gap) and how they manifest themselves in practice**

*In December 2015 the Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research (IPMZ) at the University of Zurich published a* [*research report on internet applications and their use in Switzerland*](http://www.mediachange.ch/news/99/) *as part of the World Internet Project - Switzerland 2015. The most important results included the recognition that Swiss residents are using the internet for longer periods of time and that mobile use of the internet is increasing considerably. The report indicates that a gender gap has reemerged in the past two years, with internet access increasing amongst men but not amongst women. Women are also lagging behind when it comes to using mobile internet (58% compared to 67% of men) and they also use the internet less intensively than their male counterparts[[1]](#footnote-1). 22 out of 100 women in Switzerland spend less than 5 hours per week online – that figure is twice as high as for men. Women’s self-reported internet skills have decreased more dramatically than in the case of men, with 41% of women (2013: 27%) rating their skills as poor or adequate. The corresponding figure was only around one quarter for men.*

1. **Please indicate if your government collects disaggregated data on the basis of sex regarding Internet access. Please provide any other available data on Internet use by women, including with regard to type of access (e.g. broadband, household, mobile) and relevant studies done over the last five years. Please indicate if your government uses qualitative and quantitative *indicators to assist in monitoring progress regarding the ICT sector and/or on the gender digital divide.***

*The* [*Swiss Federal Statistical Office*](https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/culture-media-information-society-sport.html) *is collecting data on the basis of sex regarding Internet use. In 2016, there was still a difference between Internet use of Swiss women and men (81% vs 88%; see* [*https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/culture-medias-societe-information-sport/societe-information/indicateurs-generaux/menages-population/utilisation-internet.html*](https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/culture-medias-societe-information-sport/societe-information/indicateurs-generaux/menages-population/utilisation-internet.html)*).*

*Another quantitative indicator of the use of Internet on the basis of sex is ICT education. In Switzerland, only a very small part of the students performing an education in the ICT field are women (13% at university level; 7% at technical school level; see* [*FSO website*](https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/culture-medias-societe-information-sport/societe-information/indicateurs/formations-tic.html)*). No change has been registered in the last few years.*

1. **What measures has your government taken to facilitate and expand access to Internet for women? Please elaborate on the impact of these measures**

*Implementation of the Strategy Digital Switzerland:*

*In the new* [*Strategy ‘Digital Switzerland’*](https://www.bakom.admin.ch/bakom/en/homepage/digital-switzerland-and-internet/strategie-digitale-schweiz.html)*, adopted in April 2016, the Swiss government stresses the importance of education to facilitate and expand access to Internet for all inhabitants of Switzerland, women included. Equal opportunities and the participation of all belong to the key objectives of this strategy.*

*One challenge is to ensure that Swiss citizens, women and men of every age are able to use ICT in order to participate competently in political, social, economic and cultural processes and that they are able to deal with online risks in an informed and independent manner.*

*As part of their cooperation on education policy, the Swiss federal administration and cantons shall therefore closely coordinate their strategies to safeguard and improve the integration of ICT into the education system. As part of their joint responsibility, they shall assess the challenges associated with the digitization of the education system appropriately, report any corresponding need for action and contribute to assuring the quality and transparency of the Swiss education sector.*

*Better integration of ICT into the education system:*

*The Swiss Media Institute for Education and Culture (educa.ch) is the national coordination platform and the competence center for various projects in the field of ICT in education (*[*www.educa.ch/fr*](http://www.educa.ch/fr)*). It is mandated by the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) and the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI, is part of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER). With its activities, educa.ch promotes the integration of ICT in education and therefore also the access of women to Internet. See:* [*Switzerland Country Report on ICT in Education, 2015*](http://www.eun.org/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=46f7f5c0-d52e-438c-ac46-67fcf7f69060&groupId=43887)*, European Schoolnet (EUN).*

*Development programme «MINT Switzerland»*

*The* [*Swiss academies for arts and sciences*](http://www.akademien-schweiz.ch/en/index/International/Human_Rights_and_Ethics.html) *have been mandated by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) to promote equal opportunity at universities of applied sciences, including the access of women to science, as well as to strengthen human rights and ethics in science.*

*See:* [*Federal Administration’s “Equal Opportunity at Universities of Applied Sciences” Programme 2013-2016*](https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/topics/higher-education/universities-of-applied-sciences/basic-principles/federal-administrations-equal-opportunity-at-universities-of-app.html) *(not available in English).*

*Federal programme Youth and Media (2011-2015)*

*As an additional federal programme, the programme* [*«Jeunes et médias»,*](http://www.jeunesetmedias.ch/fr/accueil.html) *Youth and Media, was set up for the period 2011 to 2015. Its main objective was the support in the field of youth media protection and media skills, based on two pillars: fostering media competence and youth protection regulations. The programme that has focused on providing parents with relevant information until now, will focus in the future more on youth work, youth care facilities and vocational schools. As technology quickly develops, there is a lack of regulations to effectively protect children in that new online environment that needs to be addressed.*

*Local events* [*Girls in ICT in Switzerland*](http://girlsinict.org/girls-in-ict-day-events/lucerne-switzerland)

*On a local level, there are being organized in Switzerland specific events promoting the access of girls to ICT. See:* [*Girls in ICT events in Switzerland*](http://girlsinict.org/category/regions-event/europe-and-cis/switzerland)

*Transnational initiative GENDER-NET*

*Switzerland is participating at the* [*GENDER-NET*](http://www.gender-net.eu/?lang=en) *initiative. Gender-net is a pilot transnational research policy initiative funded by the European Commission under the* [*Science With and For Society*](http://ec.europa.eu/research/swafs/index.cfm?pg=home) *work programme of the seventh Framework Programme (FP7), designed to address the common challenges still facing European research institutions in achieving gender equality in research and innovation.*

*Private initiatives*

*Finally, there are some private initiatives like* [*ICT Switzerland*](http://ictswitzerland.ch/en/themen/ict-fachkraeftesituation/) *that want to promote the education of men and women in the ICT field in order to fight against the lack of ICT specialists in Switzerland. ICTS is calling for an additional 3,000 apprenticeship slots to educate the industry’s future workforce. This measure could have a positive impact on the gender digital divide.*

1. **What are the challenges faced by your government in implementing policies and programs to bridge the gender digital divide and to enhance the use of enabling technology in order to promote the empowerment of all women and girls? Are there regulatory and supply-side constraints (i.e. low affordability and a lack of digital skills), or barriers on the demand side? Please elaborate on the measures taken or identified to address them (i.e. access to internet in public libraries, universities, public Wi-Fi access points etc.)**

*In order to implement the* [*Strategy ‘Digital Switzerland’*](https://www.bakom.admin.ch/bakom/en/homepage/digital-switzerland-and-internet/strategie-digitale-schweiz.html) *(see point 3), the Swiss Federal Council launched a* ***national Dialogue on "Digital Switzerland"*** *with the objective to network all stakeholders and to guarantee cooperation between all federal levels of the administration and the private sector, civil society and academia.*

*At the end of 2017, a* ***national conference*** *is foreseen in order to analyze the implementation of the* [*Strategy ‘Digital Switzerland’*](https://www.bakom.admin.ch/bakom/en/homepage/digital-switzerland-and-internet/strategie-digitale-schweiz.html) *and its effective added value for the population and the private sector from the perspective of users. The issue of gender equality will be addressed if the participants of the conference will decide to do so, and new areas for action will be defined in order to enhance the empowerment of all women and girls in the ICT sector.*

1. **Please indicate if a national internet policy exists in your country and if this policy includes reference to human rights and gender considerations**

*Strategy Digital Switzerland*

*Part of the key objectives of the national* [*Strategy ‘Digital Switzerland’*](https://www.bakom.admin.ch/bakom/en/homepage/digital-switzerland-and-internet/strategie-digitale-schweiz.html) *(see point 3), are equal opportunities and the participation of all to the information society. The Strategy also provides that internet governance should be guided by the principles of the rule of law, human rights and democratic participation.*

*ICT Strategy of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)*

*The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) defined in 2007 a strategy to integrate ICT in teaching at all levels both as a tool and a resource for all subjects, as well as to enable all students (girls and boys) to acquire the necessary competences (digital literacy), both promoting equal opportunities for women and man with respect to ICT and media. This strategy will be renewed until the end of 2017. See:* [*Strategie EDK im Bereich ICT und Medien*](http://edudoc.ch/record/30020/files/ICT_d.pdf) *(in German only)*

*On the primary school level, the integration of ICT into the school curricula is part of the regional curricula* ***«Plan d’études romand»*** *(PER; in the French speaking cantons) and of the* ***‘Lehrplan 21’,*** *the corresponding curriculum for the 21 German speaking cantons. They both include the promotion of ICT skills and media competence for girls and boys.*

1. **Please indicate if your government has developed specific initiative to eliminate gender *disparities in digital literacy by 2030, taking into account goals 4 and 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other relevant SDGs***

*ICT for sustainable development*

*In order to promote ICT helping to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (MDGs), the* [*Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)*](https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/themes-sdc/state-economic-reforms/information-communication-technologies.html) *conducted programmes fostering participation of the poor and marginalized in decision-making processes that affect their lives.* *Furthermore, SDC is focusing on the integration of ICTs in its projects and programmes (as a strategic instrument).*

*Switzerland is active on the multilateral level to foster the implementation of the WSIS Outcomes and the Agenda 2030 and has targeted some of its foreign policy efforts in various platforms, such as CSW and WSIS. Switzerland has joined in UNWOMEN’s Action Plan on Women’s Empowerment in the Digital Age, which sets out the framework for actions to accelerate inclusive and sustainable development by closing the digital gender gap and harnessing the transformative potential of ICTs to realize the full and equal participation of women and men in the digital economy. The main objective of this Action Plan is to unify efforts and avoid the fragmentation of initiatives and build synergy between international development processes and efforts towards closing the digital gender gap through shared commitments.*

*Internet Governance*

*Since the beginning of the World summit on the Information Society (WSIS), Switzerland has been a driving force in promoting stability and availability of the internet, reducing the “digital divide” between industrialized, transition and developing countries, promoting the equality of women and enhancing the empowerment of persons with disabilities to participate in the information society. At the same time, innovative development of the internet should not be hindered.*

1. **Does your government have any specific laws or policies to address gender-based violence online? What are the challenges faced by your government to ensure accountability of perpetrators of human rights violations committed against persons for exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms on the internet?**

*In Switzerland, there are no specific laws or policies to address gender-based violence online.*

*The general laws apply for this question, as they are for example partly mentioned in the « message concernant l’approbation de la convention du Conseil de l’Europe sur la prévention et la lutte contre la violence à l’égard des femmes et la violence domestique » (convention d’Istanbul), for example explanations regarding Article 33 psychological violence, 2.5.2. in the message (*[*https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/federal-gazette/2017/163.pdf*](https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/federal-gazette/2017/163.pdf) *)*

*There are elements in criminal law, such as Article 26 of the Swiss criminal code or also elements in civil law referring to violations of psychological integrity that are considered as infringements of the legal personality according to Article 28 Swiss civil code (*[*https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19070042/index.html*](https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19070042/index.html)*).*

1. These figures don’t indicate when people spend *too much* time on the Internet. Therefore it is not necessarily a negative thing that women use the Internet less intensively than men. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)