



PolitExchange

**Competence Center of the Capital Region Switzerland
for Governance Study Visits**

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Competence Center of the Capital Region Switzerland for Study Visits on Governance

Governance issues are universal, even if expressed differently around the world. How do parliaments and governments interact? How do groups share power? What entitlements and resources do regions and municipalities have? How is cooperation between different levels of state ensured? How can transparency and accountability be ensured in governments and administrations with regard to public tasks? How can public services be organized, managed and funded efficiently and responsively? What possibilities does the populace have for influencing – or indeed making – decisions? How can the peaceful management of conflicts of interest be supported?

PolitExchange brings Governance into focus. Founded in 2016, PolitExchange is the competence center of Capital Region Switzerland for the organization of governance study visits. Its aim is to make the Swiss experience tangible for international visitors using real examples from Capital Region Switzerland. PolitExchange organizes study visits for delegations who want to know more about Swiss governance and to take inspiration from this for their own projects. PolitExchange is designed to serve as a platform for interaction between interested visitors and the members of the Capital Region Switzerland.

PolitExchange is a competence center and trade mark of Capital Region Switzerland. Capital Region Switzerland (www.hauptstadtregion.ch) is an association founded in 2010 with the aim of promoting the national and international importance of the Capital region as an innovative place to live and work. Members of Capital Region Switzerland include the Bern, Fribourg, Valais, Neuchatel, and Solothurn cantons, as well as cities, municipalities, and regional organizations around the Capital region. One of the specific aims of Capital Region Switzerland is to strengthen the national political center; this led to the creation of PolitExchange. The members of Capital Region Switzerland open their doors to visitors from abroad and offer their expertise and experience so that visitors can get information first-hand.



PolitExchange is managed by Ximpulse GmbH.

Ximpulse GmbH (www.ximpulse.ch) is a consultancy firm and team of experts based in Bern offering support and advice in the context of state building, constitutional reforms, governance and human rights, and in the management of complex change processes. Although primarily active in developing and transitioning countries as well as conflict situations, the members of Ximpulse also have a thorough knowledge of the Swiss political system through their own research and practical experience. Ximpulse has been organizing study visits to Switzerland on various Governance issues for delegations from different countries for several years and therefore can ensure the Swiss experience is conveyed relevant to visitors' interests.

Our Focus: Study Visits on Governance Topics

Our visitor programs are tailor-made. Our study tours provide insight into Swiss conceptual approaches and offer practical experience with governance themes in Switzerland. The visits aim to show the strengths and weaknesses of a functioning system, inspire reflection, promote the visitors' understanding of their own challenges, and provide ideas for innovative solutions. The hosting institutions and experts also profit from the exchange. They have the opportunity to reflect on their own experience from a new perspective, present their knowledge to an interested public, and discuss their findings.

We organize tailor-made visits lasting from a few days to around two weeks. We bring visitors in contact with the relevant institutions and experts from Capital Region Switzerland who are willing to share and reflect on their expertise and experiences. We are convinced that personal contact and discussions among peers are highly effective methods for promoting practical learning.

Swiss expertise and experience: clear – tangible – practical. The Swiss state system has features that make it interesting for visitors from around the world:

- **Federalism and decentralization:** With three state levels, the Confederation, cantons and municipalities fulfill public tasks and deliver high quality services, sometimes independently but in close cooperation and coordination with each other, with funding mechanisms that ensure financial equalization.

In practice: How do the different levels of government cooperate? For what are the cantons and municipalities in Switzerland responsible? How do the cantonal and municipal authorities manage the increasing challenges in control, organization, and financing of public duties and services? For example: water services, sewage, waste management, energy, public transport, construction of public infrastructure, education, planning, environmental protection, economic promotion, tourism, security, social services, migration, and integration?

- **Accommodation of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity:** Decision-making mechanisms, institutions and procedures provide room for the participation of multiple linguistic and political groups with consideration of their positions.

In practice: How are political decision-making procedures organized? For example, in bilingual cantons and communities? How do civil society groups engage with political processes? How is peace between religious communities ensured? What role does federalism play in helping different groups share power?

- **Instruments of democracy:** Constitutional initiatives and referenda on legislation and administrative acts offer the Swiss people opportunities to participate directly in decision-making on important issues. Moreover, Swiss voters select their representatives at all three state levels.

In practice: How do initiatives and referenda function? What are the opportunities and risks of the instruments of direct democracy? What are the legal and political implications if an initiative passes or fails? What are the experiences with direct democratic assemblies? What role do the political parties play? How are elections and votes organized? What contribution does the electoral system make to the integration of diversity?

- **Power-sharing, consensus, and concordance:** Governments at all levels follow a strategy of integrating the political majority and minorities, sharing the responsibility of governing (concordance); decision-making processes promote a consensus orientation in politics at all levels.

In practice: How is accountability generated and power controlled? How do the authorities manage conflicts of interests, for example in the case of big infrastructure projects? How is the population concerned consulted? How are constructive solutions created and conflicts managed?

We receive delegations, primarily from abroad, who are interested in learning about Swiss governance and want to use it as an inspiration – not a blueprint – for their own thought-processes. For example, representatives of national institutions and administrative authorities, parliamentarians, spokespersons of political parties and other organizations, interest groups, and civil society representatives who:

- want to familiarize themselves with a federal and decentralized political system and its various forms of consultation and cooperation mechanisms
- want to take a closer look at how the Swiss system manages specific public tasks
- are interested in the Swiss parliaments at national, cantonal, and municipal levels and the interaction of the different political levels in Switzerland
- want insights into the building of political opinions, decision-making procedures, the various consultation mechanisms, and possibilities for referenda in Switzerland
- are interested in developing creative solutions for political processes.

Our Services

Are you interested in a study visit or have been asked to organize one? PolitExchange can assist you according to your wishes and needs from organizing the entire visit to just helping with specific aspects such as defining the concept or finding experts. We would be happy to explore how we can help you. For example we can assist you with:

- Analysis of the delegation's needs and interests, identification of topics, examination of any possible political risks
- Identification of relevant institutions and experts from the Capital Region Switzerland (and beyond), program design, contacting experts, design support of presentations, and program logistics
- Background information on the Swiss context for the visitors (and vice versa for the Swiss experts)
- Accompaniment and professional support of the delegation during the visit (intercultural translation, recognizing expectations, answers to open questions, reflection on the impressions from the visit, feedback loops, workshop facilitation on specific topics or methodologies)
- Topical expert inputs (E.g., introduction to the Swiss political system)
- Summarizing the study visit and identifying the next steps for the visitors to possibly integrate the knowledge into their own environment

Are you a member of Capital Region Switzerland and assigned to organize a study visit? We are here to help with:

- Collecting background information for identifying the inquiring institutions and assessment of their interest regarding substantial discussions about the experience of Capital Region Switzerland
- Providing information on the political background of delegations from abroad and inter-cultural challenges
- Examination of possible risks that could be associated with reception of the delegation for Capital Region Switzerland or its members
- Supporting and advising the organization of the visit and presentation design



- Networking with other members of Capital Region Switzerland who have experience from past international delegations
- Of course, we can provide services for the entire study visit, including concept, organization and delegation accompaniment.

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