



# Youth Session 2021

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**Dossier**

## **Fossil Phase-Out**

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## Sustainability

Over the last few years, thousands of youths and young adults have been taking to the streets, demanding decarbonisation and sustainable development, thus demonstrating that sustainability and the sustainable development of societies are issues close to their hearts. This is likely because it is them who will have to live with the consequences of our current actions and who will need to make important decisions in that regard themselves. If one works on sustainability and all that it entails, one is quick to realise that the challenges associated with it are of a global nature. Apart from local measures, a certain degree of international cooperation is therefore indispensable.

The most-cited definition of sustainability is found in the 1987 Brundtland Report and is as follows:

1. A development is sustainable if it meets the needs of the present without risking that future generations cannot meet their own needs (WCED 1987: 46);
2. On the whole, sustainable development is a process of change in which the use of resources, the goal of investments, the direction of technological progress, and institutional change are harmonised, enhancing the current and future potential to meet the needs and wishes of all human beings (WCED 1987: 49).

Therefore, this definition of sustainability includes not only intergenerational justice but also the demand of a holistic change of behaviour. This process of change is not limited to ecological aspects but includes economic and social elements, too, all of which must be brought together.

Similarly, the Youth Session is an instrument to coordinate the different views and opinions of youths and to create common strategies as to how to shape the future. Furthermore, it sensitises youths from Switzerland and abroad to the need of international cooperation and enables the participants to formally formulate their common visions and demands for a sustainable development *vis-à-vis* politics and society.

## Sustainability and its Relationship to the Agenda 2030

The 2030 Agenda addresses the issue of the fossil phase-out in the following SDGs and their sub-goals (targets):

SDG	Target	Zielsetzung
	7.2	By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix
	12.c	Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist, to reflect their environmental impacts, taking fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimizing the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities
	13.2	Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning
	13.a	Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible

## Glossary

Energy sources	Substances from which energy can be gained, e.g. wind, water, gasoline, uranium, etc.
Greenhouse gases	Gases which contribute to global warming, e.g. CO <sub>2</sub> , methane, etc.
Carbon capture and storage	Processes which filter CO <sub>2</sub> from the air and storing it for centuries or millennia. <sup>1</sup>
Import	Import means the transportation of goods and services from abroad to one's own country. <sup>2</sup>
Paris Agreement / Paris Climate Accords	The Paris Agreement is the result of a global effort to unite all countries in the fight against climate change. Its main goal is to strengthen measures against global warming and to keep the rise in mean global temperature well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. <sup>3</sup>
Net Zero Goal	The Federal Council's goal of zero net emissions is to be reached by 2050, meaning that Switzerland ought not to balance its emission of greenhouse gasses with the amount which can be captured by both natural and artificial greenhouse gas sinks. It's goal is that Swiss greenhouse gas emissions are, on balance, zero. <sup>4</sup>
Fuel	An energy source which creates heat when burned. <sup>5</sup>
Propellant	A combustible fuel which can be used to power thermal engines. <sup>6</sup>
Renewable energy	Energy from renewable (regenerative) sources, i.e. sources which cannot be exhausted. <sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Geologie-Portal, CO<sub>2</sub>-Sequestrierung, 2021

<sup>2</sup> Timocom, Transportlexikon, Import, 2021

<sup>3</sup> Liferverde.de, Ziele des Pariser Klimaabkommens leicht erklärt, 2021

<sup>4</sup> Der Bundesrat, Bundesrat will bis 2050 eine klimaneutrale Schweiz, 2019

<sup>5</sup> RP-Energie-Lexikon, Brennstoff, 2021

<sup>6</sup> RP-Energie-Lexikon, Kraftstoff, 2021

<sup>7</sup> RP-Energie-Lexikon, Erneuerbare Energie, 2021

Primary energy	Energy value of natural energy sources in their natural state. <sup>8</sup>
Secondary energy	Energy value of artificially created or significantly modified energy sources. <sup>9</sup>
Effective energy	The energy form which is effectively used by a user, e.g. heat. (see comment by Florian Brunner, SES, 2021)
Oil equivalent	A measure of energy forms' energy content, equal to the thermal value of one kilogram of crude oil. <sup>10</sup>
Gross consumption	Energy consumption without consideration of losses of transformation or distribution.
Net consumption	Energy consumption including losses of transformation and distribution. <sup>11</sup>
Total energy consumption	The complete use of energy or complete consumption of energy sources. <sup>12</sup>

## What Is It About?

Fossil fuels are energy sources which are of a fossil nature. This means the remains of dead animals and floral biomass which have been transformed into oil, gas, or coal over the millennia. Fossil fuels are not equally spread all over the world. Certain regions (e.g. Russia and North Africa) have large deposits of fossil fuels, but other regions such as Europe need to import almost all of their fossil fuels. Switzerland, too, is dependent on fossil fuel import, since there are virtually no fossil fuels here. Almost 60% of imported crude oil is from African countries such as Nigeria, Libya, and Algeria, 30% originates from Kazakhstan, and the remaining 10% are from the US and Russia.<sup>13</sup> Crude oil is mostly unprocessed and has only been superficially cleaned, desalinated, and dehydrated.<sup>14</sup>

To make crude oil useable, it needs to be refined. This is the process of transforming primary energy by various means into secondary energy. In the case of oil, the less useful crude oil is refined by a (chemical) process into vital heating oil.

<sup>8</sup> RP-Energielexikon, Primärenergie, 2021

<sup>9</sup> RP-Energielexikon, Sekundärenergie, 2021

<sup>10</sup> RP-Energielexikon, Öläquivalent, 2021

<sup>11</sup> BFS, Umweltindikator – erneuerbare Energien, 2021

<sup>12</sup> RP-Energielexikon, Energieverbrauch, 2021

<sup>13</sup> AVENERGY SUISSE, 2019

<sup>14</sup> Oiltanking, 2021, <https://www.oiltanking.com/de/news-info/glossar/details/term/erdoel-rohoel.html>

## The Greenhouse Effect

Ever since there has been life on earth, all living beings have interacted with their environment and have caused long-term changes in the atmosphere. With this change in atmosphere, global temperatures have changed, since the composition of the air determines how much heat is reflected into space. Gases which are particularly able to trap heat on earth are called greenhouse gases.<sup>15</sup>

Because of the use of fossil fuels, the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is rising. A direct consequence of this is the rising global temperatures, which leads to changes in our ecosystems and climate as well as physical changes such as the melting of glaciers and pack ice, which causes ocean levels to rise. The rapid change of these ecosystems does not leave enough time for animals and plants to adapt to these changes. Mass extinction is a possible consequence of this process.<sup>16</sup> Ever since the 1950s, there are also observable changes in extreme weather and climate events.<sup>17</sup>

Examples of this are the decreased occurrence of cold snaps and the increased occurrence of heat waves. Furthermore, draughts and rising ocean levels have been observed.<sup>18</sup> In consequence, seashores have been flooded over the last few decades, forcing parts of their population to flee. Climate change is also in part responsible for turning agricultural land into wastelands, and climate catastrophes such as floods and storms are becoming more intense and frequent.<sup>19</sup>

Even in view of these many negative aspects, climate change can bring about some improvements for certain creatures and humans. An example of this is the possible expansion of certain animal habitats, and increased temperatures can change formerly unusable areas into arable land. The years 2016 and 2020 were, with minute differences in temperature, the hottest years since the beginning of temperature recordings in 1880. 2016 saw a 1.1°C increase in temperature compared to preindustrial times. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the total global temperature increased about 1°C from preindustrial times to 2017.<sup>20</sup>

The current changes in climate are virtually irreversible in our current system, as the economic systems could not bear such radical change. The conversion to renewable energy needs time and must happen stepwise, since companies' economic supply chains are complicated. Current climate policy is in part limited to damage limitation and harm reduction such as the reduction of further greenhouse gas emissions. There are also ideas which go beyond the idea of net zero emissions until 2050. One such idea is that in the future it could be possible to capture more CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere compared to what is emitted.<sup>21</sup> There are two main possibilities for carbon capture: the natural one, which consists of reforestation and the conservation of forests and moors, and the technical one, which consists of the chemical capture of CO<sub>2</sub> and subsequent carbon sequestration.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <https://wiki.bildungsserver.de/klimawandel/index.php/Treibhausgase>, 16.09.2020.

<sup>16</sup> Wikipedia, Folgen der globalen Erwärmung, 2021

<sup>17</sup> Welthungerhilfe, Klimawandel, Wetterextreme und Hunger, 2021

<sup>18</sup> Wikipedia, Meeresspiegelanstieg seit 1850, 2021

<sup>19</sup> [IPCC, 2014.](#)

<sup>20</sup> Wikipedia, Globale Erwärmung, 2021

<sup>21</sup> <https://gruene.ch/medienmitteilungen/fuer-eine-klimapositive-schweiz>; 16.09.2020).

<sup>22</sup> Dw.com, Klimaschutz: Wie lässt sich CO<sub>2</sub> aus der Atmosphäre entfernen?, 2020

There is also the question of if and how we can manage without the energy gained from fossil fuels. As we have seen, fossil fuels cause a large amount of greenhouse gas emissions when they are burned, and what is more, fossil fuel deposits are limited.

## Legal Basis

### Paris Climate Accords

Switzerland signed the Paris Climate Accords in 2017. With that, Switzerland committed itself to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% until 2030, compared with 1990. On the long run, global warming ought to be limited to 2 degrees centigrade. The Federal Council has formulated further goals: until 2050, Switzerland should reach net zero emissions. This means that no more emissions are caused in Switzerland than can be captured and stored in underground geological formations.<sup>23</sup> This, however, does not take into account greenhouse gases which Switzerland causes to be emitted abroad.<sup>24</sup>

### Federal Energy Act

The adoption of the Energy Strategy 2050 by the Swiss people necessitates a revision of the Federal energy act. Specifically, enough electricity must be generated to reach net zero by 2050. An expansion of renewable energy is intended to provide the energy needed to replace oil heating with heat pumps and to significantly increase the number of electric cars.<sup>25</sup> The overarching goal is to prevent electricity shortages in Switzerland. Therefore, the expansion of renewable energy is complemented with measures to increase energy efficiency. However, the energy act is focussed mainly on electricity and only tangentially touches the issue of decarbonisation.<sup>26</sup> The Federal Council intends to present a revision of the energy act to parliament in 2021 in order to determine how the reliability of energy supply can be guaranteed. The Federal Council further intends to present the energy act to parliament parallel to the revision of the Federal act on electricity supply.<sup>27</sup>

### Federal Act on the Reduction of Greenhouse Gases (CO<sub>2</sub> Act)

The CO<sub>2</sub> Act is specifically intended to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from fossil fuels. Its goal is to reduce the increase in global temperature to below 2 degrees centigrade. It went into force in 2010 and defined specific emission goals for 2020. A revised edition was passed by parliament in 2020, but after a successful referendum campaign, a majority of the Swiss population rejected the revised law on June 13<sup>th</sup> 2021.<sup>28</sup>

## What Is Currently Happening in Politics?

### Climate Strategy 2050

On January 27<sup>th</sup> 2021, the Federal Council has adopted a long-term climate strategy for Switzerland. It is based on the net zero goal for 2050 which aims at reducing Switzerland's greenhouse gas emissions to zero until 2050. With this, the Federal Council reacts to the realisation that already an average

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<sup>23</sup> Der Tagesspiegel, die CO<sub>2</sub>-Endlager-Debatte kehrt zurück, 2019

<sup>24</sup> Bundesamt für Umwelt BAFU, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Bundesamt für Energie BFE, 2020.

<sup>26</sup> Energiegesetz, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Energieradar, 2020

<sup>28</sup> Bundesamt für Umwelt BAFU, 2020.

increase of global temperature of 1.5 degree centigrade will have severe effects on humans and biodiversity. In his strategy, the Federal Council has formulated ten strategic principles which shall guide and shape Switzerland's climate policy for the next years. Furthermore, the strategy specifies possible climate goals and emission developments for the sectors of buildings, industry, traffic, international aviation, agriculture and food, waste, synthetic gases, and the climate sector.

### **Glacier Initiative**

The federal popular initiative 'Glacier Initiative' wants to amend the Swiss constitution in order to specifically name the net zero goal in it and to outlaw all fossil fuel use after 2050. The necessary 100'000 signatures have been collected successfully and the initiative will be voted on by the Swiss people probably between 2022 and 2024.

### **Paris Climate Accords**

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### **Federal Energy Act**

With the revision of the Federal Energy Act in 2017, the Federal Council wanted to specify how to phase out nuclear energy. However, it also contains solutions to prevent possible energy scarcities resulting from the nuclear phase out both during and after the process. Among these solutions there is the expansion of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. This revision was accepted by the Swiss people in a vote on the Energy Strategy 2050. However, the energy act is focussed mainly on electricity and only tangentially touches the issue of decarbonisation. The Federal Council intends to present a revision of the energy act to parliament in 2021 in order to determine how the reliability of energy supply can be guaranteed. A major question in this revision is how renewable energy can be promoted and which kinds of funding models are best suited to this task. The Federal Council further intends to present the energy act to parliament parallel to the revision of the Federal act on electricity supply.

### **CO<sub>2</sub> Act**

In June 2021, the Swiss people rejected the revised CO<sub>2</sub> Act. This revision was intended to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from fossil fuels and wanted to limit the rise of global temperature to less than 2 degrees centigrade. Its most important components were a reduction goal of greenhouse gases in Switzerland and an increase of fees and taxes on fossil fuels, which had already been part of the former version of the Act but were supposed to be toughened. The already existing fees and taxes on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were to be supplemented with a fee on plane tickets.

Since a majority of the Swiss people has rejected this revision, new measures must be put into place in order to reach Switzerland's climate goals. These measures must be supported by a majority of the people. The opponents of the recent revision propose voluntary approaches with new technologies, following a more liberal approach.

## Decision-Making Bases

The consequences of global warming are already apparent: an increase in global temperature of one degree centigrade has caused draughts to be more frequent, snow to become rarer in the lowlands, and climate related natural disasters to become more common. According to a UN study, there are more storms, floods, landslides, and other catastrophes now than there were in the 1960s, and these occurrences become more and more intense—and therefore graver and more serious. Thawing permafrost causes rockslides in the Alps, and many species face extinction.<sup>29</sup>

The use of fossil fuels causes a virtually irreversible change to the global climate. If emissions are not curbed quickly, temperature increases of up to 4°C are a realistic scenario.<sup>30</sup>

The necessity of decarbonisation and a fossil fuel phase-out is widely recognised.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, different actors have different ideas of how urgent this issue has become. Some people consider decarbonisation to be the first priority of all government action, while others are aware of the problem but demand that the needs of society and the economy must be met, too.

### **Political Arguments on Fossil Fuel Phase-Out:**

<b>Decarbonisation is of the utmost importance, without any regard for the economy and society</b>	<b>Fossil fuel phase-out should be compatible with the needs of the economy and society</b>
Many countries are facing droughts, the melting of glaciers and natural disasters, if global warming is not stopped. <sup>32</sup>	Decarbonisation must not happen too fast, as enterprises and private households would face financial hardship through rising energy costs.
Switzerland must curb its CO2 emissions out of solidarity with other countries since the per capita emissions of greenhouse gases are very high compared to other countries. What is more, Switzerland has the opportunity to become a pioneer and a role model. <sup>33</sup>	It is important to state that there are enterprises which are contributing to a solution. Businesses should be included in this process as part of the solution in order to achieve more sustainable production.

<sup>29</sup> Scientists4Future.org, 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Klimafakten.de, 2021

<sup>31</sup> RP-Energie-Lexikon, 2021

<sup>32</sup> Myclimate, 2021

<sup>33</sup> Myclimate, 2021

## Further Information

Links	QR Code
Overall Energy Statistics, Information on energy sources and use: <a href="https://www.bfe.admin.ch/bfe/en/home/supply/statistics-and-geodata/energy-statistics/overall-energy-statistics.html">https://www.bfe.admin.ch/bfe/en/home/supply/statistics-and-geodata/energy-statistics/overall-energy-statistics.html</a>	
Materials on the revision of the Federal energy act (in German): <a href="https://www.admin.ch/ch/d/gg/pc/pendent.html#UVEK">https://www.admin.ch/ch/d/gg/pc/pendent.html#UVEK</a>	
Information on the revision of the Federal Act on a Secure Electricity Supply from Renewable Energy Sources: <a href="https://www.bfe.admin.ch/bfe/en/home/supply/electricity-supply/federal-act-renewable-electricity-supply.html">https://www.bfe.admin.ch/bfe/en/home/supply/electricity-supply/federal-act-renewable-electricity-supply.html</a>	
Net Zero Goal of the Federal Council: <a href="https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentation/media-releases.msg-id-76206.html">https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentation/media-releases.msg-id-76206.html</a>	

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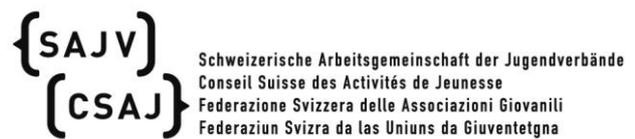
**Dw.com, Klimaschutz, Wie lässt sich CO2 aus der Atmosphäre entfernen? (2020):**

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