

# Evaluation of the project: “Unlocking the Power of Data Initiative”

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## 2. Executive Summary

The purpose of this evaluation of the “Unlocking the power of Data Initiative” is to analyze the current state of the project. Identifying its strengths and weaknesses makes it possible to propose changes and make a decision about its future. UPDI is well known and appreciated as a platform for communication and cooperation between different stakeholders as well as a good way to position the FSO and by extension Switzerland as an important actor of the international data and statistics community. On the other hand, there is a lack of emphasis on the added value the project brings to the FSO, a scarcity of resources and a deficiency in communication. The evaluation concludes that it would be advisable to continue the project, but it is needed to make several changes to its structure as well as to its internal and external communication. Another solution that is advised is the pausing of the project. This option takes into account the amount of work already done and the difficulty of continuing the same way. There is a need of a clear definition and communication over the goals and the “plus-value” UPDI brings to the FSO and Switzerland. In any case the evaluation suggests that the option of completely stopping the project would be the less advisable solution.

## 3. The Unlocking the Power of Data Initiative

### 3.1 Road to Bern

Originally, the project “Road to Bern” has been launched in 2019 till 2021 in prevision of the UN World Data Forum that took place in Bern between the 3 and 6 of October 2021. The two main goals of the project were:

1. On an international level: Preparing the UNWDF 2021 by already starting to treat the subjects that will be discussed.
2. On a national level: Support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Switzerland. In order to achieve these goals, 71 events were organized.

### 3.2 Unlocking the Power of Data Initiative

After the launch of the follow-up project, called “Project Rosling”, in January 2023, there were a few confusions about who was behind the project. Finally, in April 2023, it has been decided to rename the project. The name of “Unlocking the Power of Data Initiative” (UPDI) has been chosen.

The project is based on the postulate that “Data and statistics are the key ingredients for scientific advancement, entrepreneurial endeavors, democratic discourse and policymaking.” It has for objective to build a stronger link between the statistical community and a diversity of actors as well as the great public.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development play a role in the objectives of this project because data and statistics are necessary to measure and implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A variety of workstreams compose the UPDI. Each of these workstreams are completed with events, conferences, partnerships and various materials such as publications or videos.

The UPDI aims to pass the following five messages:

1. “Data and statistics provide a reliable, independent, coherent and transparent basis for sound political decision-making and support the democratic debate.”
2. “Data and statistics simplify the communication of complex issues and facilitate understanding.”

3. “Partnerships beyond the data and statistical communities are essential for robust data and statistical systems that support development processes and decision-making.”
4. “Statistical and administrative data sources are complemented by other data sources, which can address existing challenges and help seize new opportunities.”
5. “Switzerland is committed to sharing its expertise and know-how in data and official statistics and to actively participating in the development of these areas.”

The UPDI is divided in six different workstreams.

- (1) The first workstream consists of *data literacy*. The goal of data literacy is that individuals learn how to understand and use data in order to “better understand the world and to use data to make better decisions”.
- (2) The second workstream is about *financing data*. Facing new challenges, the financing of data and statistic becomes more and more important. The objective is to emphasize the role of data to achieve policy targets and to take decisions.
- (3) The third workstream concerns *data management*. Data becoming more and more important, it is important to have a coordinated policy about what to do with data. Therefore, this workstreams aims to underscore the importance of data management in order to maintain its quality and usefulness.
- (4) *Data science* is the fourth workstream that is treated by the UPDI. The promotion of data science has for objectives to help to solve increasingly complex problems. The goal of this workstream is to provide to different actors outside the world of statistic que keys to understand “evidence-based decision-making”.
- (5) For the fifth workstream named *population projections and climate change*. As it is suggested in the name of this workstream, the objective is to discuss about the impact of climate change on population projections, the explicative power of the different models that are provided and to bring into consideration this kind of analysis.
- (6) The sixth and last workstream is about *health data*. This workstream, even though it is indicated on the project website, has been little or not worked on.

## 4. Evaluation

To evaluate the project, it has been decided to conduct an analysis that follows a SWOT method. To do so the evaluation bases itself on the content of the project as well as its actors.

### 4.1 Method

To evaluate the “Unlocking the Power of Data Initiative” a SWOT analysis is conducted. As shown above the SWOT analysis could be divided in two parts. In reality, a SWOT analysis separates each of the external and internal environments in two other parts. First in the internal environment there is a “strength” and a “weaknesses” category. Second for the external environment there is a “opportunities” category and a “threats” category.

The analysis of the first two parts will help to correctly identify the capabilities that the project already possesses. This identification will help to develop even further the positive capabilities and change or suppress aspects that have a negative effect on the pursuit of the project’s goals.

To correctly identify these four categories of factors, it has been decided to primarily rely on interviews that are going to be conducted with the main actors of the “Unlocking the Power of Data Initiative” as well as through the analysis of the project’s content.

To do this, a series of questions has been established. The first group of questions is constituted of questions that are about the project in general. The second group of questions is divided between each workstream as well as a part on the project’s communication. The

questions were formulated to get a better idea of the aspects to be identified during the interviews, but the interviews took the form of a conversation with the interviewees. Below is the list of the people interviewed. They were selected on the basis of their involvement in the UPDI project.

Name	Organisation	Topic
Muriel Meister-Gampert	INA	General
Dominic Thomas	PUB	General
Ladina Darnuzer	SUP	Data literacy
Georges-Simon Ulrich	Direktor BFS	General
Petra Keller	Stabschefin BFS	General
Xavier Studer	SC MEDIA	Communication
Ambre Crettenand	INA	General
Pascal Blickle	INA	General
Claudio Wegmüller	SC SUP	Data literacy
Johannes Jütting	Director PARIS21	Financing data
Cornelia Neubacher	IOS	Data management
Bertrand Loison	Abteilungsleiter DSSC	Data science
Johanna Probst	DEM	Population projection and climate change

## 4.2 Analysis

### 4.2.1 Strengths

- Partnerships/networking

The UPDI collaborates with major organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, WHO or PARIS21. The organization of events such as the “Geneva Data Community” brings actors together, enables to build new links between them and promotes the exchanges of new ideas.

The fact that the UPDI originates from the FSO also gives it a good image internationally and helps build new links between actors who see this project as reliable and of high quality.

Furthermore, UPDI provides a good platform that favors the cooperation between the different actors that could have an interest in data and statistics.

There is also a certain amount of competition between the different parts of the world and the national statistical offices to increase their importance. This project also enables Switzerland to maintain its status of important actor and bridge builder.

- Cross-disciplinarity

The variety of subjects covered by the different workstreams enables to emphasize the cross-disciplinarity of the field of data.

This underlines the importance of data in today's world. Moreover, the fact that the workstreams are based on specific current issues such as climate change or health accentuates the importance of the promotion of data in our current environment.

A project such as UPDI makes it possible to link all these subjects together. This creates a kind of common thread, a logical sense between subjects that a priori have no connection with each other. The need for data as well as new methods on these subjects links them together. Overall, the subjects of data and statistics are cross disciplinary because of their usefulness in a diversity of fields. This crossdisciplinarity is strength that could be exploited for the future of the project (3.2.3 - Opportunities).

- “UPDI” as a brand

The UPDI is seen as a brand that is well recognized among the international statistical community. The name “Unlocking the Power of Data Initiative” is now well known. Overall, the project and its goals are appreciated by the public.

A project (or a “brand”) that is already recognized as being of high quality is a useful tool for the organization of future events or other activities.

The events have been well received by the public; it's like a kind of stage where people can come with their proposals. In this sense, the objectives of cooperation and communication between the various stakeholders that are promoted by this project are very well achieved.

- Flexibility

Another strength of the project is that its communication channels are less dependent from the FSO. That enables to have more freedom when it comes to posting and efficiency in making communication more spontaneously. This quality is also mentioned when it comes to the organization of events, or the design of the different interfaces used to promote UPDI.

Generally speaking, as the project is being run somewhat independently from the FSO’s framework, this allows for greater flexibility.

## 4.2.2 Weaknesses

- Purpose

The project does not always clarify its goals and purpose especially among its internal actors. There is a need of clarification of what is the added value that UPDI brings to the activities of the FSO and its members. This lack of clarity can lead to a lack of interest in the project and its very goals, even if these are important and useful for the activities of the stakeholders involved.

During the interviews, it was noted that the project and its aims had not always been properly understood by the members of the FSO, who were external to the project. Sometimes there is also a kind of fear that the project poses a risk of duplication with the work already being carried out at the FSO.

- Structure

There is an inequality between the workstreams. Workstreams are very broad and well developed while others are not. This can create a feeling of imbalance between the topics and lower the interest of the public.

There is a need to rethink the structure of the content the project provides as well as a clear structure that can help the public and the actors to understand where is the “beginning” and where is the “end” of each workstream for example. There is a sense that the workstreams lack a common thread. Even if there is the logframe structure, it is not clearly indicated enough to be correctly understood. This can be linked to the internal communication about the project.

- Visibility

As it has been explained in the “strengths” part of the evaluation the project is now well known and appreciated by the public. The problem is that when it comes to be known to the greater public, the project fails to reach this goal. The traffic on the project’s website is not very high. Even if the project has about 1300 followers on X/Twitter there are still not many interactions with the public.

It is possible that this resides in a communication problem which is the difficulty to make the topic of data attractive to the greater public. Another aspect could be that the communication about the project is very low outside of the events it organizes.

Overall, the UPDI needs to clearly define who it wants to reach.

- Resources

Resources can be monetary, infrastructural, the number of persons working on the project or how much time it takes. The point will be more developed in the “treats” sections as it can also be an external weakness.

To summarize, the question of resources is always an issue in the sense that we would often like to do more than we currently do.

### 4.2.3 Opportunities

- General topic

In current times the subject of the role of data and statistics to fight disinformation and misinformation is very important. Overall, the need of data and statistics of good quality is important. This is a good reason for the project to continue.

The analysis of facts based on data takes more and more space in our world. The purpose as well as the workstreams that are covered make a lot of sense and there are in accordance with the future challenges that the world could face in the long term.

Overall, the topic of the project and the themes it promotes are in line with actuality and will continue to be important in the future.

As it has been explained, the cross-disciplinarity of data and statistics as well as its growing importance guarantees the usefulness of the work on the different problematics linked to it.

- “Geneva Data Ecosystem”

The project helps to ensure that Geneva becomes a central location for international discussions on statistics. This work should continue.

As mentioned above, the concept promoted by UPDI is very popular with the public and works well in terms of bringing stakeholders together and encouraging cooperation and discussion on data-related topics.

### 4.2.4 Threats

- Resources

The evolution of the world politics could make the establishment of partnerships more difficult to achieve. The lack of resources could become a bigger problem with time.

The lack of resources could increase and put the project in real danger. Overall, it can impact all aspects of the project as well as all partners and stakeholders.

## 4.3 Summary of the analysis

Overall, there are a few main aspects that emerged frequently. First, the success of the meetings and conferences that were organized as well as the interest that the project UPDI generated. The project is welcomed and appreciated. UPDI offers a good platform for connecting different actors who might have common interests. A good example might be the “Geneva Data Community”. Moreover, it gives the FSO a good international image. That the FSO (and by extension Switzerland) keeps its good international image is important for the future.

As a negative point, sometimes the goals of the projects are not very clear. Finally, there is a need to clearly explain what is the added value that the project brings to the different actors of the FSO. There is a need of clarification. Internal communication about the project might be the most important point.

There is also the problem that some workstreams are unequally represented. Some of them are very large, others are limited.

There is clearly a lack of visibility of the project to the great public. This is maybe the most important point of this analysis.

There is also a need to implicate more other sections of the FSO as well as showing the added value of the project to their activities.

As always, the greatest risk or weak point, if this is already the case, is the lack of resources, which is also likely to increase over time. This is probably the biggest challenge facing the project. However, it is also important to mention that the handling of the various problems mentioned above probably has an impact on the resources allocated or not allocated to the project.

## **5. The future of UPDI**

### **5.1 Challenge 1 : Communication**

The communication on X/Twitter does not seem enough efficient for many reasons. During the Road to Bern, there were a lot of activities, but this pace could not be reached without having the link to the UN World Data Forum. Among them the decrease of seriousness of the general content that is published on this social media. A lot of medias and users are leaving the platform because of this. The low visibility of the project, as it has been described in the analysis there are not a lot of interactions with users, it is difficult to say if the X/Twitter account really increases the visibility of the project. More and more organizations seem to look for alternatives.

On the other hand, there is LinkedIn which is developing a lot. The platform is more “professional” oriented in the way that the individuals that are members and interact on it, do it more in a serious and professional way. Furthermore, most if not all of the actual partners as well as entities and individuals that could or already are interested in the UPDI are on LinkedIn.

Another interesting point is that a part of the website’s visitors accesses the website through LinkedIn. Even if the project does not have any account on that social media this could mean that its partners already use it and there is visibility potential on this platform.

An alternative could be to try new social medias such as BlueSky for example. However, there is a risk that these alternatives do never become as popular as their counterparts.

Internal to the project, it should be clarified what are the objectives of the project as well as its added value to the FSO’s activities. A solution could be to start an internal communication in order to promote the project to the members of the FSO and clearly explain what the added value of the project to their activities is.

What is the target audience of the project, what is “the great public”? For the future of the project there might be a need to clarify these aspects as well.

UPDI needs to communicate its aims and objectives effectively, both internally and externally (to current and potential partners). UPDI should also communicate more about its workstreams in particular, as this could generate interest from stakeholders who focus on a specific aspect of the data, for example.

### **5.2 Challenge 2 : Financing the project**

There is a growing need to “evolve in a resource limited world”. The financing of data is more and more complicated. A decrease in the financing of data also implies a decrease in all other kinds of resources. There is a real need of finding new solutions. These solutions can be new sources of financing but also new methods to continue projects but with less resources.

One solution to combat the decline in funding (and therefore resources) for UPDI but also for other projects would be to try to establish new partnerships with different stakeholders who have common interests. For example, the project could link up with actors who focus on a specific type of data or data use. That is why the creation of workstreams that could generate interest would be interesting. The project could try to work with other federal offices or semipublic institutions.

In all cases, the project must find a way to function even with few resources. For example, by identifying what is inexpensive in terms of resources but allows the project to remain known (link with the communication aspect).

### **5.3 Challenge 3 : Keeping the workstreams**

Changes could be made regarding the structure of the project and its workstreams. For each workstream we could have a clear procedure to follow, with a start and an end. The workstreams could be limited in time especially for very precise ones. Or they could be limited to the reach of an objective.

A section called “archives” can be created. In this section the website’s visitors find the workstreams that are not actual anymore as well as all their documentation.

An idea could be to keep the “big” workstreams (data literacy, data financing, data management and data science). Inside each of this workstreams there could be a subject-by-subject approach with pre-determined goals that limit them in time. Or another way is to always have one or two different specific subjects as workstreams. One need is to clarify to the different actors of these workstreams the usefulness of this project/workstream.

For such choices it can be useful to ask other sections of the FSO about their needs and the inputs they could bring to the project.

Even if the “logical framework approach” seems an adequate way to give a structure to the project and its workstream. The logical structure of the project and its workstreams need to be clearly defined and explained to the different sections of the FSO.

There is a need of clearly defining what is “data”.

It would be necessary to clearly define and emphasize the importance of the workstreams as well as their interest. As explained in the analysis, some workstreams seem very precise but their usefulness is not really understood (at least by some external actors), while others are so broad and not very well defined that the actors do not understand them very well.

This was only briefly mentioned during the evaluation, but ideally there should be performance indicators that make it easy to check whether the objectives, particularly in terms of project communications, have been achieved.

### **5.4 Options to choose**

#### **5.4.1 Option 1 - Continue the project**

Continuing the project can be done under many forms. This option is divided in three different three different sub-options.

##### **5.4.1.1 Option 1.1-Continue the project – enlarge the project**

Enlarging the project might be a complicated option with all the new resources limitations. On the other side a re-organization and a clarification of its goals and workstreams could be an option. This does not necessarily implies enlarging the project. By “enlarge the project” it is meant that the project continues with more resources and more events as well as an increased communication.

##### **5.4.1.2 Option 1.2-Continue the project as it was**

This option must be taken into account. However, without minimal changes regarding the points raised during the analysis, the project may not function in the most efficient way possible. This is why this option, although proposed in this evaluation, is not very desirable.

#### *5.4.1.3 Option 1.3-Continue the project but with limited resources*

The third sub-option takes into account the fact that the resources are limited. The weaknesses as well as the strengths are recognized. The value of keeping a platform such as UPDI is recognized but it is also recognized that it is not possible to continue with the same amount of resources

#### **5.4.2 Option 2 - Pause de project**

This second option takes into account the lack of available resources at least for a certain time. On the other hand, it also takes into account that UPDI is a valuable project. This solution can also become a solution if needed. The only risk to take into consideration is that by pausing the project for a certain time could lead to never resume the project. If this option is chosen, some “background” work has to be done anyway: Updating the platform, adjusting the communication material, etc. But: no workstreams, communication or events will be organized under the label of the UPDI. The stop should be evaluated after one or two years and to decide, to relaunch the project or to shut it down.

#### **5.4.3 Option 3 – Stop the project**

This option is the option that is the less recommended during the interviews. The project is now well known and appreciated. With a good clarification of its goals the stopping of the project would provoke a good tool for promoting the activities of the FSO as well as the building of links between actors.

#### **5.4.4 Options to choose – Summary**

First of all, stopping the project completely would be detrimental not only to the project itself but also to the FSO and Switzerland in general, particularly regarding Switzerland's role in the international data community. As explained in the analysis UPDI provides a good platform for a variety of actors. Therefore, stopping completely and definitively the project is the less recommended option.

A less radical solution when compared to the previous solution is pausing the project. The lack of resources available could be a reason to pause the project. Compared to a complete stop this enables to preserve the framework and to reactivate it when needed without many costs. This solution also counts on the possibility of more resources available in the future. The only risk with this solution would be that the project is never resumed. A measure to counter this could be to define a plan that establishes potential deadlines for when it would be possible to relaunch the UPDI project.

Regarding the sub-option “enlarge the project” this is the less likely option as explained above. Continuing the project without any change is also not very recommended. The third sub-option which suggest continuing the project with less resources could be interesting. This solution takes into account the scarcity of resources as well as the need of a project such as UPDI.

### **5.5 Focus communication**

Twitter/X is not the best way to communicate anymore. It is in a slow decline there is a growing need to find an alternative. LinkedIn seems to be a good option. Most if not all the partners of the UPDI already are on LinkedIn. The content of the platform seems to fit better to the content of the project.

On the other hand, there is the possibility to try an alternative which is BlueSky. With this alternative there is the problem that the number of users of this platform stays very low, and this would damage even more the visibility of the project.

When examining the traffic on the UPDI website it is possible to see that since the first event (under the name of “Project Rosling”) the visits of the UPDI website are stable, but the

numbers are very low. There are only more visits during events and almost only on the event page. A solution could be to make the website more attractive (by providing documentation, interaction, etc.). Another interesting aspect is that in the actual state a lot of users visit the website through LinkedIn. Even if UPDI does not have an account on this platform.

This could mean a few things:

The partners of the project or any other actor is already on LinkedIn and uses it to promote the project or its attendance to one of the events.

Maybe the content of the project suits better to a platform known to be used more in a professional way than X/Twitter.

Some communication should be made inside the FSO with the goal to promote the project and clearly explain the added value of the project to the FSO's activities.

Another solution might be to find a way to communicate about things other than just UPDI events. At that point, it would be necessary to determine whether UPDI is also used, for example, to promote scientific advances in the subjects it plans to cover, such as advances in data science or data management, etc.

It would also be necessary to redefine exactly which target groups the communication around the project would like to reach. This clarification would help to optimize the management of the communication.

Understanding of the project within the FSO is an aspect that often emerged during the interviews. Therefore, the project needs to increase its focus on the members of the FSO. The goal is to raise awareness and to inform about the project and its goals as well as its added value to the FSO. Finally, the members of the FSO should be encouraged to participate in the project.

## **6. Conclusion**

The evaluation of the "Unlocking the Power of Data Initiative" has helped to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of the project.

The objective of this evaluation is to suggest a decision concerning its future. Overall, the analysis showed that even if the project has a lot of qualities especially regarding its goals and the need of promotion of topics linked to data and statistics, there are some aspects such as visibility or clarification of its added value that cause a reduction of its full potential.

It was clear that the lack of clarity regarding the aims of the project sometimes led to a misunderstanding of the real added value that the project brings to the activities of the OFS. The lack of resources is also one of the main weaknesses of the project; it is important to try to develop the project despite the limited availability of resources.

If the option of continuing the project is selected an effort must be made regarding the internal communication. This communication should also encourage the members of the FSO to participate to the project.

On the positive side, it can be seen that the implementation of this project has enabled the establishment of a platform promoting contact and cooperation between the actors. Moreover, it strengthens Switzerland's position as an important actor in the field of data and statistics. Looking at the options available, two options are more prominent: 1. Pausing the project 2. Continuing the project with less resources. These two options seem to be the more likely because both of them take into account the scarcity of resources. The option of pausing the project could be advisable but it must be taken into account the risks that were stated. A final decision will be taken by the Board of FSO in May 2025.