

OBSERVING SWISS SOCIETY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Social Monitoring and Reporting Activities in Switzerland, 2000–2025

An update of Suter, C. & Iglesias, K. (2003), "Social Reporting Activities in Switzerland: The Hidden Roots and the Present State of the Art" In: Isabelle Renschler, and Dominique Joye (eds.): Observation of Social Change: Structures and Turbulences. Bern & Neuchâtel: University of Neuchâtel, Swiss Commission for UNESCO, Swiss Information and Data Archive for the Social Sciences, 50–76

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Looking Back and Moving Forward in Challenging Times

Trends in Well-being, Quality of Life, and Social Monitoring and Reporting

20th Anniversary Conference on Social Monitoring and Reporting in Europe

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1 Purpose & Analytic Framework

AIM: What has changed in Swiss social reporting over 25 years – since about 2000?

The classical functions of social indicators (Bauer 1966; Noll 1999)

Planning

Controlling

Communication

Evaluative criteria applied throughout

Multidimensionality
&
comprehensiveness

Continuity
&
institutionalization

Representativeness
&
regional coverage

Observation
of
policy measures

Interpretive
&
reflexive function

Empirical focus:

- *Official actors, scientific institutions, and private, NGO actors (for- and non-profit)*
- *National, subnational and regional/cross-boarder reporting.*

2 The 2003 Baseline *(Suter & Iglesias' stocktaking)*

1980: risks started building up

- Youth unrest
- Growing problem of addiction, HIV epidemic
- Industrial restructuring (watch industry)
- Growing unemployment & poverty
 - Real estate speculation & high interest rates
 - 1984 introduction of unemployment insur.
 - 1985 change in marriage laws

1990s: growing scientific & reflexive activities

- Begin Poverty Discussion (1988, 1997)
- Begin of working poor & “new poverty” research
- Demand for evidence → Rising fiscal cost of unemployment, poverty & social programmes
- Growing activity of scientific & private actors
(e.g., Regional Mapping of CH 1985, Labour Market Survey 1991)
- Reflexive, self-observational impulse started

By 2003: Claude:

- **Weaknesses flagged in 2003:** continuity of reports; representativeness of data; regional differentiation; interpretive depth.
- **Lack of coordination** of actors for data **and cooperation** for reports;
lack of large data sets with subjective & objective aspects; lack of longitudinal data
- **Only 2 products see institutionalization:** (1) the Swiss Almanac → Social Report → Panorama
(2) the FSO's 1981–82 indicators → Measurement of Social Welfare/Wohlfahrtsmessung.

3 Method

Idea:

- Update of existing article: **ideal job for AI** -> research work in internet
- Draft concept and later article: apertus (ETH), co-pilot, claude) -> **claude convincing**
- **Control** -> **structure** not coherent
-> many **existing reports not found**, timeline & developments not identified

Conclusion:

- **Personal research necessary on monitoring and reports**
-> table established on activities, institution, cooperation, domain, indicators ,periodicity, function & data
- **Claude very efficient** for seeking precise information **with previous information** on the website and document.
it identifies what is corroborated and where more indepth search is necessary. -> manually instructed helped build up table with references
- -> **personal work required**; language revision with claude
(thinking, structuring, reorganising, writing)

4 National Level of Comprehensive Reporting/Monitoring

Pre-1990s, fragmented	Successions (changes & continuities) fragmented		
Swiss Almanac 1978 scientific actor (SA) comprehensiv (c)	➤ Swiss Social Report with indicators 2000- 2016 SA, c	➤ Panorama of Switzerl. 2020/2024 SA & public actors (PA), domain- specific (ds)	➤ Panorama: every 4 years; open or discontinued (2028)
Social Indicators for Switzerl. 1981–82, (8 vol) in Beiträge zur Sozialstatistik, PA,c	➤ Series Social Reporting – Switzerland 2002 Données sociales – Suisse, PA, c	➤ Measurement of Social Welfare 2014–2024 Wohlfahrtsmessung PA,c	➤ Measurement of Social Welfare: discontinued 2024
		➤ Statistical Social Report 2011– PA, ds-social assistance reporting	➤ Statistical Social Report; bi-annually
	➤ MONET 2003 Concept PA, c	➤ MONET 2030 Indicators PA, c	➤ MONET 2030 ongoing

(– ?) Observation **Statistical Yearbook**: since 1891, 130th edition 2024 – general-purpose, not indicator-structured (PI, SFSO); ➤ 2025 edition paused, continuation planned in 2026

“institution” discontinued? *Reflects what is going on on cantonal level where they are discontinued*

4 Regional – Cantonal – Municipal Comprehensive Reporting

- (+) **Population survey city of Berne 1995 – 1999 annual; 2000–.** (PA-city of Bern) (c). Update every two, later four years; includes focus topic -> **Little change since 1995**
- (+) **Population survey city of Zürich: Satisfaction with various aspects of life and living together 1999** (PA-city of Zurich) (c). Bi-annual; includes focus topic & development, neighborhood reports. Not declared as monitoring
- (/) **First Social Report city of Berne 2008** – broad one-off report for social planning
- (+) **Social Indicators: monitoring quality of life Lucerne 2011/2012.** (PA, LUSTAT) (c). Continual update when data are available

4 Example LUSTAT: Cantonal Level of comprehensive Reporting

Leisure time and culture: monitoring

Freizeit und Kultur	Observed development	Desired development	Assessment
Indikator	Beobachtete Entwicklung	Angestrebte Entwicklung	Beurteilung
Kulturelle Partizipation	⬇	⬆	○○○
Beteiligung an Abstimmungen	⬇	⬆	●○○
Freiwilligenarbeit	⬆	⬆	○○○
Sprache	⬇	⬆	○○○
Einbürgerungen	⬆	⬆	○○●
Zufriedenheit mit dem Kulturangebot	➔	⬆	○○●○
Zufriedenheit mit den Sportmöglichkeiten	➔	⬆	○○●○

<https://www.lustat.ch/monitoring/sozialindikatoren>

4 Observations: Comprehensive Reporting/Monitoring

Initiatives by scientific actors

- institutionalized by public institutions; later in cooperation with others; or one-off scientific endeavor; or discontinued endeavors

Initiatives by public actors

- as **reaction** to public mandate or **external developments** (MONET)
- as **take over** of scientific initiatives -> Can change focus: comprehensive to **domain-specific** (Swiss Social Report in Switzerland 2000 -> Panorama; or **discontinued** like the Series Social Reporting 2002 -> Measurement of Welfare/Well-being then domain-specific -> Statistical Social Report)

Trends

- **Discontinuation of comprehensive reporting** on the national level (Measurement of Social Welfare)
 - **Change from comprehensive to domain-specific reporting** (Panorama; Statistical Social Reporting)
 - **Comprehensive reporting remains below the national level.** Large activity
- Diffusion to other cities:** Zürich's population survey (social reporting) -> LUSTAT

5 Domain-specific reporting/monitoring: poverty and/or social; similar developments in the health domain (not shown)

Cantonal and municipal level early on

- **2003–:** (cantonal) **Poverty Report ZH** (PA-ZH), annual. **Diffusion to most other cantons** (except 5 in 2023).
- **2004–:** **Social assistance in Swiss cities** (municipalities-city initiative social policies, PA, SA), annual
- **1999–:** **Social Almanac Caritas** national (NGO), annual with focus topic (domain-specific)

National level: scientific initiatives -> taken over by public actors -> change to domain-spec.

- **Social: Comprehensive Swiss Almanac 1978** (SA)(c) ➤ **Swiss Social Report 2000-2016** (SA)(c)
➤ **domain-specific – Panorama 2020** (PA-SFSO, SA)(ds), every four years
- **Poverty: Social Indicators for Switzerland 1981–82** (SA)(c) ➤ **Series Social Reporting 2002**
➤ **Measurement of Social Welfare 2014–2024** ➤ **Statistical Social Report 2011**

- **Many poverty activities** from 2003–2024

2003: National poverty conferences, Overall Swiss Strategy to Combat, National Programme against Poverty, Establishment of National Programme against Poverty — networking & knowledge exchange

- **National Poverty Monitoring Report 2025**

every 5-years, first-person testimony, cooperation PA, SA, NGOs, Statutory poverty monitoring 2020) exchange (following first poverty reports, 1988, 1997)

5 Expansion of Domains in Reporting/Monitoring since 2003

Education

- **2006: Swiss Education Report** (PA-EDK, SERI; SA-SKBF) (national)

Family and Generations

- **2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, 2024: AGE-Report** – ageing & living: accommodation/neighborhood (NGO)(reg) **2013: Families in Switzerland** (PA-SFSO) (national)

Equality topics

- **2005, 2008–: Income Distribution Equality Monitor** (NGO-Denknetz), annual update
- **2008–: Equality indicators for people with disabilities** (PA-SFSO) (national)
- **2011, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2020, 2023, 2026–: Swiss Trade Union Report on (Income) Distribution**(NGO)(national)

Novel topics

- **2007–: Migration Report**, annual (PA-SEM) (national)
- **2004, 2008-2013: Health of migrants** in Switzerland (national)

Spatial monitoring

- **2000: Monitoring socio-spatial development of the City of Bern**, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2017,2020,2022,2024 (PA-city of Bern)
- **2009: Regional monitoring**: 2011, 2013, 2016, thereafter online (PA-SECO, ARE)
- **2014– : City Statistics**: quality of life in Swiss cities (PA-SFSO & cities) (Precursor: 1931–2013: Stat. Yearbook of the Assoc. of Cities)
- **2009-2020: Municipal Ranking** (NGO-Weltwoche); 2021-2024 (NGO-Handelszeitung); **2025– (NGO-Bilanz)**

Cross-border (following on bi-lateral agreements)

- **2001/2005: Observatoire statistique tranfrontarlier (OST) – Grand Genève**, Cross-border governance steering and monitoring of Franco-Swiss agglomeration development
- **2005–: Observatoire statistique transfrontalière JURA (OSTA)**: vision for 2040 (ibid)
- **2005–: Grand Genève** demographic and housing monitoring: policy relevant indicators

5 Observations: Domain-specific Reporting/Monitoring

National level: scientific initiative taken over by public institutionalization

- 1993: Swiss Health Report (Walter Weiss ed.) (SA) ➤ 2008, 2015, 2020 , 2025: The National Health Report (PA-Obsan)

Bottom-bottom spreads (cantonal or cities/municipalities/socio-spatial

- 1997: start and end (dates) of **social assistance** benefits in the **city** of ZH -> city of Bern social assistance statistics 1999 onwards
- 2001/2003 Zürich **cantonal poverty** report -> all but 5 cantons have a poverty report in 2023
- 1994 first Zürich **cantonal health** report , 1999, 2002, 2004 .. ; almost all cantons have health reports now (by PA-Obsan)

Bottom-up trend → local to national

- First National Poverty Report relies on cantonal poverty reports
- Cantonal Health reports become provided by a public actors (Obsan); e.g. late cantonal health Report AR (2021 - not by Obsan)

Continuities among NGO-non profit and for-profit actors:

- 1999–: Social Almanac Caritas (NGO), poverty focus topics annually
- 2004–: AGE-Report (NGO), every 5 years, ageing, housing, neighborhood
- 2006–: Municipal ranking (NGO-Weltwoche, Handelszeitung, Bilanz)

Novel topics: equality, integration, migration, spatial and cross-border

- 2008– **Equality indicators** for people with disabilities;
- 2011/12–Integration indicators for the migrant population
- 2007_ **Migration report** (PI-SEM),
- 2006– **spatial indicators**,: socio-spatial monitoring or Indicators of regional disparities
- 2001/2005– **cross-border** (Geneva & surrounding France / Jura French & Swiss) after bi-lateral agreements

6 Research Infrastructure, Data, Digitalization & AI

Public institutions: national level SFSO strengthened

- In 2021, the **SFSO mandate** expanded to **data stewardship & data science**
- Nationwide project to link administrative registers (**I14Y interoperability platform**)
- Introduction of **algorithmic pattern detection** in areas like health research (AI)
- New section in SFSO for **experimental statistics** using machine learning
- **Web-based formats** for the presentation of data → more now-casting, temporality

BUT (national) comprehensive data and reporting weakened

- **Financial strains** emerging 2025
- **Data & comprehensive reports paused/discontinued**; development of new formats announced
- **Trend to substitute comprehensive reports** by indicator presentation with short comments

Public institutions: Data coordinated (Federal Office of Statistics)

- **OPENDATA.SWISS**: Swiss public administration's central portal for open government data (OGD); for the public, developers, researchers. A catalogue of metadata with link to the data sets. National & international cooperations
- **The I14Y interoperability platform**: the national data catalogue linking Confederation, cantonal and communal data

Scientific institutions & data: Establishment of FORS 2008 for large scientific data sets

- 1999–Swiss Household Panel, longitudinal, internationally integrated. Core database → social reporting & well-being
- **Large scientific comparative data sets** internationally integrated, comparative, focused (ISSP- 1987 → MosaiCH-2005, annual; EVS 1990, every 9 years; ESS 2002, biannually; SHARE 2004, bi-annually)

6 Observations: Research Infrastructure, Data, Digitalization & AI

Research infrastructure

- Institutional response to the 2003 **coordination gap** partially resolved (OPENDATA, I14Y-interopability platform, FORS)

Data

- **Institutionalization and linkage of public data** for social monitoring and reporting **partially fixed**
- **Scientific data institutionalized** with Swiss Household Panel, a core longitudinal data for social monitoring/reporting

2025 austerity:

- Several **statistics** cut, simplified, or reduced in frequency
- Discontinuation of **reports**, restructuring, new formats of presentation
- **Reduction in interpretative and reflexive reporting**

Digitalization & AI

- **Web-based formats** for the presentation of data, **more now-casting**
- **AI** explicitly **proposed** as compensation **for discontinued surveys**
- **Problem:** advanced **digital skills decline from age 55 onward**. Digital pivot risks of under-representation of the older, of vulnerable groups, & of poverty in well-being monitoring

7 Conclusion: Analytic Framework

Dimension	2003	2025
Compre- hensiveness	Social Report + early MONET	→ Loss/discontinuation of comprehensive products on national level; → increase in domains
		→ Comprehensive more on the cantonal level
		→ All levels more domain-specific → increase in domains
Continuity	Weak, only 2 reports institutionalized	→ Strong for politically mandated reports in domains: health;
		→ reversed for comprehensive reports: Social Report/Panorama & Measurement of Welfare
		→ Strong for cantonal and city reports
		→ Strong for NGO reports
Regional coverage	Flagged as a general deficit	→ Spillover cantonal to national (bottom-up): health; poverty → bottom-bottom: association initiatives for comparisons: city statistics, population surveys, spatial-social monitoring
Interpretive function	Emerging	More developed (Panorama, Sozialalmanach); uptake in policy unassessed; 2025 austerity & digitalization/AI suggest reduction
Production & data source	Not addressed as a dimension	→ New axis: data science, register linkage, interoperability platform, OPENDATA.swiss; FORS and SHP.
		→ Digitalization, AI → capacity gain, now-casting; less interpretation

Thank you for your attention

Questions & discussion welcome