The Swiss Security Network, its structure and activities

Explanatory brochure

Sicherheitsverbund Schweiz
Réseau national de sécurité
Rete integrata Svizzera per la sicurezza

1. Background

1.1 A need for greater coordination

In the early 2000s, it became apparent during several major events at which the police services and the Swiss Armed Forces collaborate, such as the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, the G8 summit, and the UEFA football championships, that greater coordination was needed between the Confederation and the cantons on security policy matters. More particularly, it became evident that cooperation between the armed forces and the civilian authorities required better coordination. It therefore proved necessary to develop new coordination structures.

A first step in this direction was taken in 2005 with the creation of an exchange platform, which brought together the Conference of Cantonal Justice and Police Directors CCJPD, the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport DDPS and, later, the Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP and the Intergovernmental Conference on Issues relating to Military, Civil Protection and Fire Services RK MZF. This first platform enabled representatives from these bodies to address strategic security matters common to both the Confederation and the cantons and to take political decisions.

1.2 Outlining a network

The idea of a national security network was outlined in the Federal Council's 2010 report on Swiss security policy[1]. The report emphasised the benefit of the exchange platform established in 2005 and expressed the need to transform it into an institutionalised structure.

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1 Federal Council (2010). Rapport du Conseil fédéral à l'Assemblée fédérale sur la politique de sécurité de la Suisse, at https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/federal-gazette/2010/4681.pdf (not in English).

1.3   A permanent structure

The Swiss Security Network SSN was established in 2012 as a pilot project and became a permanent structure on 1 January 2016 following an administrative agreement between the Confederation and the cantons.[2] The Network brings together all security policy instruments at federal, cantonal and communal level. Its joint bodies manage the consultation on, and the coordination of, decisions, resources and measures relating to security policy matters concerning both the Confederation and the cantons. The emphasis is on internal security, where there is a greater need for coordination than on external security, which lies in the jurisdiction of the federal authorities. SSN bodies come into play in a subsidiary role when coordination in a particular area is unsatisfactory or lacking.

The SSN office is jointly funded by the Confederation and the cantons on an equal basis. The administrative agreement regulates the tasks and structure of the SSN bodies and the funding of the SSN office.

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2   Confederation (DDPS and FDJP) and cantons (CCJPD and RK MZF) (2016). Administrative agreement on the Swiss Security Network SSN, available at https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/federal-gazette/2015/8499.pdf (not in English).

2. Structure

2.1 The SSN delegate

The SSN delegate is appointed by the Confederation and the cantons. The delegate acts as a mediator between the two sides within the network, and manages affairs dealt with by the political platform, the operative platform and the working groups. He or she also heads the operative platform, represents its interests in the political platform and implements mandates issued by the latter. The delegate is supported by an office which is administratively under the General Secretariat of the DDPS.

2.2 The SSN bodies

The Confederation and the cantons are equally represented in the SSN bodies. In addition, representatives from the municipalities, the communes or the private sector may participate in the working groups.

The political platform and the operative platform are permanent bodies. They deal with security policy-related issues concerning the Confederation and the cantons that require coordination, according to an agreed agenda.

The SSN bodies are not crisis management structures but perform their function, in particular at the strategic level, primarily during normal circumstances.

2.3   Political platform

The political platform comprises the following persons:

–   The heads of the FDJP and DDPS
–   The presidents of the CCJPD and the RK MZF

The political platform is kept informed about items of business conducted by the operative platform and working groups, and considers proposals from the operative platform. Although its decision-making powers are limited, it can make recommendations to the political decision-making bodies of the Confederation (i.e. the Federal Council) and the cantons (i.e. the intergovernmental conferences).
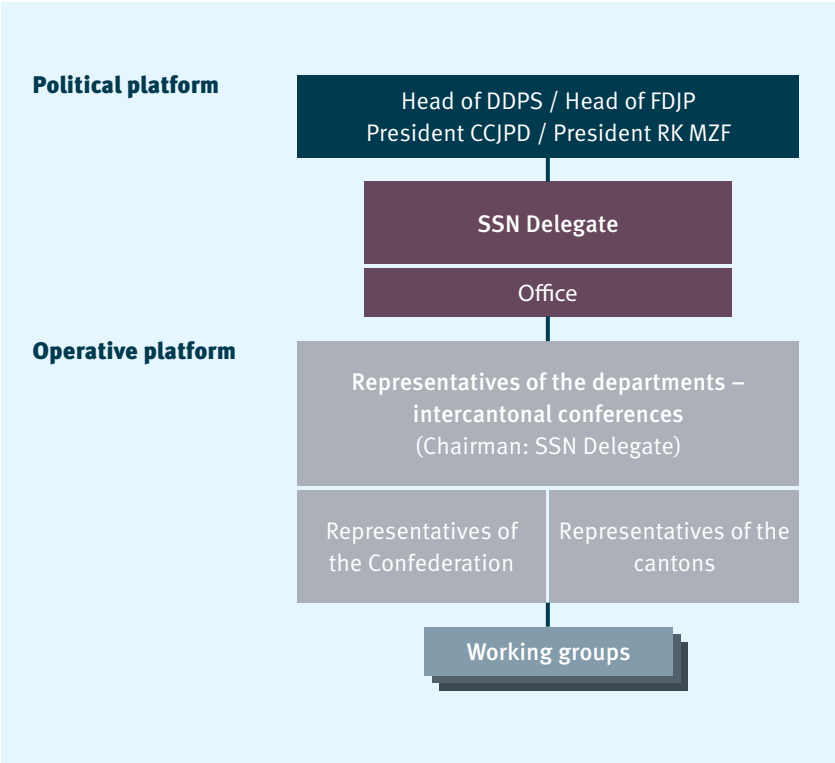
2.4   Operative platform

The operative platform is made up of six representatives from the Confederation and six from the cantons from the field of security policy. The representatives are:

–   the director of the Federal Office of Police (fedpol)
–   the director of the Federal Intelligence Service (FIS)
–   the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces
–   the director of the Federal Office for Civil Protection (FOCP)
–   the head of the Security Policy sector at the General Secretariat
     of the Federal Department for Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS)
–   the director general of the Federal Office for Customs and Border Security
     (FOCBS)
–   the secretary general of the Conference of Cantonal Justice
     and Police Directors CCJPD
–   the secretary general of the Intergovernmental Conference on Issues relating
     to Military, Civil Protection and Fire Services (RK MZF)
–   the president of the Conference of Cantonal Police Commanders of Switzerland (CCPCS)
–   the president of the Conference of Cantonal Representatives for the Military,
     Civil Protection and Civil Defence (CRMPD)
–   the president of the Conference of the Fire Service Coordination Authorities
     Switzerland (CFCAS)
–   the president of the Swiss Association of Municipal Police Chiefs (SAMPC).

Meetings of the operative platform are presided over by the delegate. The platform deals with the items on the SSN agenda according to the guidelines of the political platform. The operative platform carefully considers the items of business and seeks to reach a consensus between the Confederation and the cantons. The delegate forwards proposals from the operative platform to the political platform.

2.5 Working groups

If necessary, the political or operative platform may establish temporary working groups to deal with specific topics. In addition to representatives from the Confederation and the cantons, representatives from the municipalities, the communes and the private sector can also participate in the working groups.

Political platform

Head of DDPS / Head of FDJP
President CCJPD / President RK MZF

SSN Delegate

Office

Operative platform

Representatives of the departments –
intercantonal conferences
(Chairman: SSN Delegate)

Representatives of
the Confederation

Representatives of the
cantons

Working groups

3. Topics

The SSN bodies examine security policy-related topics that concern both the Confederation and the cantons, and establish an annual agenda. A topic may become an item of business if it meets at least one of the following criteria:

–   a majority of the SSN partners consider the topic important;
–   the topic has a strategic dimension and political implications for the area of security;
–   the topic requires coordination between the Confederation and the cantons.

The Network addressed or is currently addressing the following topics:

3.1   Cooperation between the Armed Forces and the civil authorities

It is primarily the responsibility of the cantons, i.e. the cantonal police forces, to safeguard internal security. The armed forces provide the civil authorities with auxiliary support if there is a serious threat to internal security or in exceptional situations. The common basic principles for the division of tasks between the police and Armed Forces in internal security matters, which were defined by the exchange platform, published in September 2006 and confirmed by the Political Platform in 2012[3], remain the benchmark for cooperation.

In recent years, the military police has also provided auxiliary support to the civilian authorities on various occasions, both in normal and exceptional situations. In 2016, an SSN working group prepared a report on the role of the military police[4]. The SSN also headed the working group on the protection of foreign representations (embassies, consulates) and on air traffic security measures.

3.2   Public security

In cooperation with actors from the fields of security, prevention and other areas, the SSN develops strategies and potential solutions to specific issues related to public security and responses to current and future challenges.

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3   Available in French, German and Italian at https://www.svs.admin.ch/en/topics/zusammenarbeit-zivi.html

4   Swiss Security Network (2016). Report of 14 November 2016 on the role of the military police, available at https://www.svs.admin.ch/en/topics/zusammenarbeit-zivi.html (not available in English).

The *National Action Plan to Prevent and Counter Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (NAP)[5]* was developed by the Confederation, the cantons and the communes under the lead of the SSN and adopted in November 2017. The SSN coordinates the implementation of the 26 measures contained in the Plan until the end of 2022 and was commissioned by the political platform to compile a second Action Plan.

The SSN was commissioned in late 2021 to compile and coordinate the third National Action Plan to *Fight Human Trafficking* in cooperation with fedpol.

An SSN working group comprising relevant players also developed a concept in 2018 on the *security of minorities requiring special protection[6]*, in which the SSN recommended strengthening cooperation between the Federal Intelligence Service, the police forces and particularly vulnerable minority groups. Since 2020, the Confederation has also contributed CHF 500 000 annually to the security costs of minority groups under particular threat.

Furthermore, the SSN published a report in 2019, in cooperation with other relevant players, on the *use of drones and their impact on security*. The Network also commissioned a study to gain an overview of the security forces in Switzerland. The report[7] was published in 2019 and analyses the situation and the evolution of the Swiss security forces between 2011 and 2018.

3.3 Cyber security

The Federal Council is committed to combating cyber risks and adopting the necessary measures for safeguarding the security of the country against cyber threats. To this end it adopted the first *National strategy for Switzerland's protection against cyber risks (NCS)* for 2013-2017 and the second NCS for *2018-2022*. The SSN, together with other relevant players, was involved in developing the strategy.

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5   Swiss Security Network (2017). National Action Plan to Prevent and Counter Radicalisation and Violent Extremism, available at https://www.svs.admin.ch/en/topics/praevention-radikalisierung/praevention-nap.html

6   Swiss Security Network (2018). Concept for the security of minorities requiring special protection, available at https://www.svs.admin.ch/en/topics/oeffentlichesicherheit.html

7   Dr. Fink Daniel, École des Sciences Criminelles, University of Lausanne, Dr. Koller Christophe, ESEHA – CHStat database (2020). Effectifs des forces de sécurité en Suisse 2011-2018 - Etat des lieux et premières tendances, available in French, German and Italian at https://www.svs.admin.ch/content/svs-internet/fr/home.detail.nsb.html/77492.html

An SSN working group developed a *cantonal implementation plan for the NCS 2018-2022*[8], which was adopted by the CCJPD in spring 2019. The SSN is working in close collaboration with the cantons to implement the projects foreseen under the plan. The Network has also established a permanent exchange between the cantons and the Confederation in this area so that they can be involved in the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).

3.4   Crisis management and training

The SSN is primarily a consultation and coordination body during normal circumstances; it is not a crisis management organ. The Network's role is to strengthen existing forms of cooperation while avoiding a duplication of tasks. In 2014, for example, it compiled guidelines for *cooperation between the Confederation and the cantons for managing extreme incidents.*[9]

Effective crisis management requires close cooperation between the Confederation and the cantons. Major operational and strategic exercises, such as the *Swiss Security Network Exercise* (chapter 4), take place and last one or more days. As part of these exercises interdepartmental collaboration or cooperation with the cantons and critical infrastructures is regularly tested and adapted where necessary.

The political platform commissioned the delegate, together with the main partners of the *Coordinated Medical Service (CMS)*, to analyse Professor Thomas Zeltner's recommendations of May 2018 and to make implementation proposals for the future orientation of the CMS. The report from November 2021 presents a status report on the CMS, its future mission and a new model of governance (inclusion of partners, funding, organisational location).

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8   Swiss Security Network (2019). Cantonal implementation plan for the 2018-2022 National Strategy to protect Switzerland against cyber risks (NCS), available in French and German at https://www.svs.admin.ch/en/topics/cybersicherheit/cybersicherheit-kantone.html

9   Swiss Security Network (2014). Principles for cooperation between the Confederation and the cantons in managing extreme incidents, available at https://www.svs.admin.ch/en/topics/krisenmanagement/krisenmanagement2.html

To strengthen its network, the SSN and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy have developed a training course for *senior SSN staff* lasting three weeks. The primary aim of the course, which will take place for the first time in 2020, is to strengthen the knowledge and skills of senior staff with respect to security matters at national level. From 2021 the Swiss Police Institute (SPI) will become the third institutional training partner, thus expanding the range of training courses for SSN players.

3.5   Participation in various working groups and committees

Having developed an important network of partners over recent years and in its function as an interface between the Confederation and the cantons, the SSN is involved in various projects and working groups on cooperation between the federal and cantonal authorities. For example, the Network has a seat on the Federal Commission for telematics in the field of rescue and security (KomTm BORS Commission) and on the Federal Civil Protection Crisis Management Board.

4. Swiss security network exercise

A major crisis would put the SSN to the test. Conducting joint exercises is therefore in the interest of everyone and is the focus of the SSN. Security exercises are important for ensuring that all parties – the Confederation, cantons and third parties such as operators of critical infrastructure – are able to respond appropriately in an emergency.

The *Swiss Security Network Exercise* is a national security exercise and an integral part of the Federal Council's overall planning of major exercises. The SSN political platform commissioned the most recent exercises (2014 and 2019). These exercises are planned jointly with the governmental conferences (CCJPD and RK MZF) and are intended to test collaboration between the cantons and the Confederation in emergency situations. The first two SSN exercises for example, were designed to test how the security organisations and SSN members were able to deal with an electricity shortage, a pandemic and a long-term terrorist threat. The exercises have been instrumental in improving several aspects of crisis management, some of which are useful in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following every exercise, recommendations are formulated based on a final report[10]. The object of these recommendations is to develop and improve collaboration between the SSN members and the players involved.

On 11 June 2021, the Federal Council approved the overall planning for major exercises from 2021 to 2029. The Federal Chancellery and the DDPS, in cooperation with the SSN delegate, were instructed to submit a concept for an integrated exercise in 2025 by the end of 2023.

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10   Available in French, German and Italian at https://www.svs.admin.ch/en/topics/krisenmanagement/krisenmanagement-uebung.html

5. Events

Various events take place to strengthen the exchange between the different SSN partners:

SVS Conference
The SSN Conference takes place every two years and addresses a specific security-related topic. Between 300 and 400 representatives from the communal, cantonal and federal authorities, as well participants from political society and the private sector, gather for the event.

SSN information meeting
The SSN organises an annual information meeting with around 20 participants from the private and public sector (i.e. federal and cantonal authorities). At the meeting the SSN Delegate reports on the Network's activities in the past year, with an in-depth look at specific topics.

Cyber-Landsgemeinde
("Cyber Assembly") The SSN Cyber-Landsgemeinde is held once a year and brings together a hundred participants from the Confederation, the cantons and the private sector to discuss various topics related to cyber security, with a special focus on implementing the NCS. The Cyber-Landsgemeinde also provides the cantons with a platform where they can express their needs and submit their contributions.

Radicalisation and violent extremism conference
Since adoption of the National Action Plan NAP in November 2017, the SSN has organised a biennial conference for specialists from the cantonal and communal services and civil society who are confronted in their daily work with people who have been radicalised or are involved in violent extremism. At the conference, the 200 or so participants obtain information on these topics, strengthen their network and share their experiences.

Workshops
The SSN also organises workshops or working group sessions as and when its partners require. An example of this is the working group that was established to draw up the NCS Cantonal implementation plan.