Concept of the Sustainability Week International

TOGETHER FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Because we believe in the power and potential of youth to co-create solutions to the most pressing sustainability challenges of our time.

Together, we MENTOR youth to ACT for sustainability.
Together, we INFORM citizens to INSPIRE for sustainability.
Together, we EMPOWER higher education institutions to ENABLE sustainability.
Together, we ENCOURAGE communities to CHANGE behaviors for sustainability.

Together, we CONTRIBUTE to, and CO-CREATE, a world that holds a FUTURE for ALL.
Introduction

The current society is living at the costs of future generations. Problems such as inequality, environmental pollution and the climate crisis are getting visible and their impact on our lives increase. It is definitely time for a change and young people have to drive it to save their own future.

A major raise in awareness of young people for a more sustainable lifestyle can be done during higher education. This is where the concept of a sustainability week comes into action: A group of voluntary students organises a week full of inspiring events and activities in order to raise awareness of students, employees and broad public for sustainability. Furthermore, demand and solution papers are drafted and handed over to the management of the higher education institution. All organisers have to obey a code of conduct including guidelines for a fair, responsible and sustainable organisation. All events are free of charge for visitors and should be open to interested public as well.

History

The concept of a sustainability week at higher education institutions (HEIs) is already well established. The origin of this concept lies in Zurich, Switzerland. Student of the university of Zurich and ETH Zurich organised the first sustainability week in 2013. The week grew during the following years and included other HEIs in Zurich. In 2017, a team of previous organisers from Zurich formed the Sustainability Week Switzerland (SWS), dedicated to spread the concept of a sustainability week among all HEIs in Switzerland. Their engagement was successful and in 2018 sustainability weeks took place in 12 cities including several HEIs all over Switzerland in all language areas. With over 250 events annually and 10’000s of visitors, reaching over 96 % of all students in Switzerland the SWS became the biggest student-led movement in the field of sustainability in Switzerland.

2013
First Sustainability Week in Zurich

2016
First Sustainability Week in Geneva

2017
Foundation Sustainability Week Switzerland (SWS)

2018
Sustainability Weeks in 13 Swiss Cities (SWS)

2019
Foundation Sustainability Week International (SWI)

2020 & Future
Spread the concept and connect students all around the world
Vision

We empower students to bring sustainability into all aspects of higher education institutions globally. Our aspiration is for students worldwide to turn their institutions into sustainability role models.

Exploiting limited natural resources, raising inequality, loss of biodiversity and the climate crisis are global problems. These problems ask for a global answer and a change towards sustainability. The concept of a sustainability week at HEIs is universal and should be globally applied. The SWI will spread the concept to students all over the world and support them to successfully establish a sustainability week at their own HEI.

Our vision is to reach every country, bring together students interested in sustainability from all over the world and globally raise awareness and action for sustainable development. The message to save our planet for us and future generations together with concrete solutions should reach every student on earth. As students are the future decision makers, they will transfer the knowledge and values into governments, academia and businesses.

Mission

We realize our vision by organizing Local Sustainability Weeks, which have the following objectives:

1. MENTOR to ACT: skills development and youth empowerment
2. INFORM to INSPIRE: event series
3. EMPOWER to ENABLE: demands and solutions
4. ENCOURAGE to CHANGE: network for support and cooperation

1. MENTOR to ACT
We mentor youth to teach them the soft and hard skills needed to set up and run Local Sustainability Weeks. We promote and share necessary tools and materials to empower youth communities to act more sustainably and become drivers of meaningful, impactful and positive change in higher education.

2. INFORM to INSPIRE
We inform and raise awareness through a series of co-organized events that inspire actions, solutions and impact for a sustainable future. Sustainably events in various formats (e.g. panels, workshops, excursion, talks) are organized free of charge for everyone.

3. EMPOWER to ENABLE
We empower students to bring sustainability into all aspects of higher education institutions by implementing demand and solution papers. This enables institutions to become sustainability role
models in education, research, governance, strategy, operations, and societal dialogue while embodying sustainability as public institutions on campus through institutional change.

4. **ENCOURAGE to CHANGE**
   To have greater impact, we encourage and facilitate collaboration through community-building and connecting like-minded students, staff and the broader public at local, national and international level. We also encourage ourselves to challenge the way we think in order to change the world we live in.

**Organisation**

**Overall structure**
SWI is the international organisation connecting all sustainability weeks. SWI will initiate and support the launch of LSW, with the aim of turning them into independent and sustainable long-term organizations. SWI will provide the supporting global network in order to advise the Local Sustainability Weeks and build up a global movement of these. In the beginning, SWI will be in direct contact with local sustainability week (LSW) organisers. If three of more LSWs formed within a country, SWI will connect and support them to form a national sustainability week (NSW).

**Internal structure**
The legal body of SWI is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation based in Switzerland. The applied constitution of the organisation is written in German (an official Swiss language is necessary) according to the civil law of Switzerland (ZGB, Zivilgesetzbuch) and translated to English.

The organisation consists of a board, led by a co-presidency. The board is supported by an advisory board (AB). Every person engaging in any LSW registered at SWI, is automatically a member of SWI. Every NSW can appoint two delegates which can vote on decisions within SWI, such as the board members. In countries where no NSW exists, the one or two LSWs can delegate one member with power to vote. AB members may not vote, neither any other partners.
Project

1. MENTOR to ACT: skills development and youth empowerment
2. INFORM to INSPIRE: event series
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4. ENCOURAGE to CHANGE: network for support and cooperation

The SWI transfers knowledge, structures and ideas of a sustainability week held at a HEI to students all over the world, which are willing to participate. It supports NSWs and LSWs worldwide among all fields as far as possible, e.g. establishing a team and internal structures, contacting HEI management, canteens or other partners, fundraising, creating ideas and organising events, public relations and so on. Financial support by SWI is generally provided only, if the HEI mirrors the amount. The NSWs and LSWs get registered and receive support as the local board signs the code of conduct of SWI and obey the provided guidelines.

A sustainability week defined by SWI is an annual event and should take place from Monday to Friday but can include the weekend as well. A minimum of one event per day is required but much more events may be organised.

SWI establishes partnerships with other international organisations, such as WWF (World Wildlife Fund) or UN SDSN (United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network) in order to get support for acting international, increase awareness and overall fundraising. SWI is responsible for the international public relations and organising representatives at international conferences or events.

Principles and Values

The basic principles of all activities within the SWI and the corresponding NSWs and LSWs are:

- No violation of human rights
- A peaceful and constructive way of working
- Respectful and sustainable behaviour
- Democratic decisions
- Gender equality
- No discrimination
- Independence of religion or political parties
- Minimise impact on environment
Our values are aligned with (1) priority model of sustainability (also known as concentric model of sustainability and strong sustainability). This model is consistent with the theory of planetary boundaries. Furthermore, we work towards the (2) Agenda 2030, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Our holistic understanding of sustainability integrates itself through (3) differentiation of the global, national, regional, and local levels (4) intergenerational understanding and timeframe, and (5) a multi-layered approach with measures at the individual, societal, and political levels.

At Sustainability Week International,

- we value the environment and live sustainably ourselves
- we are driven by passion, fun and intrinsic motivation
- we are transparent and live an attitude of honesty
- we respect, support & trust each other
- we embrace diversity and encourage everyone to co-create with us
- we take responsibility for constantly improving ourselves
- we believe in challenging the status quo and prioritize on increasing impact
- we cooperate with organizations that support our vision, mission and values
- we connect like-minded people and build a strong community
- we enable and support an atmosphere for personal development
- we value reflecting and learning
- we strive for excellence and celebrate our successes