



Interface of Science and Politics:

Learnings from the COVID-Pandemic in Switzerland

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Covid in Switzerland: What went well – and where did we have to learn?

What went well?

On the scientific side

- Science provided expertise – and got organized immediately to do so.

On the political side

- Politics learned to take decisions «just in time» and to work across sectoral silos like health, education, economics, culture, security policies.
- Compared to other countries Switzerland went for balanced solutions, supported by scientific evidence.
- External Evaluations were launched by the government to learn from experience made. This opened doors to innovation.

Where did we have to learn?

On the scientific side

- Most scientists involved didn't understand political processes. Science had also to get used to political trade-offs: Looking for solutions acceptable by a majority rather than strictly following scientific expertise.
- Researchers didn't unveil their uncertainties; some preferred their own show.

On the side of politics and media

- Politics and media could not really assess the relevance of scientific findings.
- Politics lacked established contacts within the scientific community.
- The digital handling of health data was insufficient.

On the public side

- Swiss citizens didn't trust digital tracking; the app developed to inform about risks of infections did not reach the critical mass.
- A small but loud group was against vaccination – and joined the right-wing political movements.

Bridging the gap between science and politics

- **Sustainable organisational set-up:** Switzerland needs a «Scientific Advice Mechanism» assuring a constant dialogue of science and politics and ready to provide expertise «just in time» whenever needed. Following the UK/India experience looks promising. Civil society must be integrated as well.
- **Multi-level approach:** Cooperation of science and politics must take place on three levels at the same time: With public administration to find reasonable solutions, with the authorities to build up political acceptance and with media regarding a clear and simple communication.

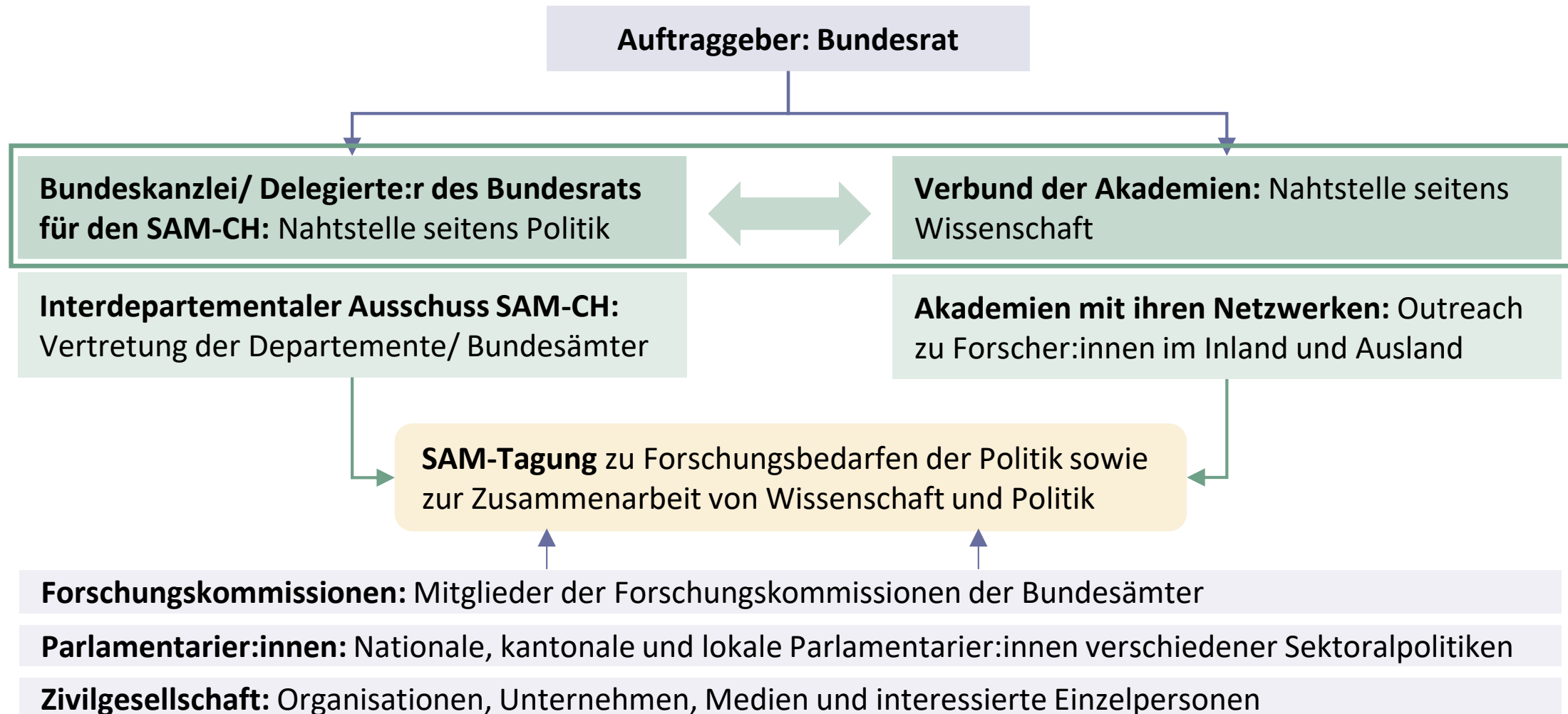
Politics

- **Digital Health:** Introducing comprehensive digital systems is important to improve public health; a digital patient record must be integrated in a general policy regarding private/public health data and data protection.
- **Compass:** Politics must assure sustainable solutions, societal cohesion and transparency to (re-) gain trust of citizens.

Science

- **Legitimation:** Scientists providing expertise to politics must be anchored in their academic community (no one-man shows).
- **Uncertainties:** Scientists providing expertise to politics must be humble and declare their uncertainties.
- **Engagements** of researchers supporting politics must be valorised by their peers. Academic incentives set today are wrong.

Scientific Advice Mechanism for Switzerland



Impressum

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