

Press release

In collaboration with prominent universities in the UAE and region

Swiss Pavilion and swissnex Network support Swiss and Middle Eastern students to pitch joint solutions for waste management

Dubai, 11 April, 2021: The Swiss Pavilion in partnership with the swissnex Network has recently launched the Swiss - Middle East Circular Economy for Youth Initiative (SMECEYI). This initiative aims at bringing together students from universities across the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Occupied Palestinian Territory to develop unique and innovative solutions for a cleaner environment, promoting the circular economy and encouraging youth empowerment.

The objective of the SMECEYI is to serve as a framework to enhance bilateral relations between Switzerland and the region in terms of education, research and innovation. This initiative supports the Swiss Pavilion towards developing a network of innovators ahead of Expo 2020. This community will then connect in a stronger way during the Expo, discussing technological and societal advancements to favour the transition towards a more sustainable economy.

Mr. Dante Larini, project manager of the swissnex Network at the Swiss Pavilion, said: “The SMECEYI is a key example of how the Swiss Pavilion is turning the challenging situation linked to the postponement of Expo into an opportunity. Thanks to this extended time, we are able to develop a stronger link with local innovative institutions. This community, which we are growing is going to be a strong pillar behind the success of swissnex at Expo 2020 Dubai, whose mission is to connect the dots in education, research and innovation between Switzerland and the Middle East.”

In this framework, multiple exchanges are taking place between 15 teams of students from universities across the region who are working together with Swiss counterparts, students and professors, to develop real-life project ready for implementation.

On the UAE side, 6 projects from the University of Zayed, New York University Abu Dhabi and the UAE University are being developed. These range from reusing plastic crates to designing elegant kindergarten chairs to a complex multidisciplinary waste water treatment research proposal. On the Swiss side, students and researchers from more than 10 universities are supporting the teams thanks to their expertise in plastic, food waste, used water, urban mining and environmental sciences. Overall, the SMECEYI is involving over 130 people who want to make a difference for the environment and society, all connected thanks to virtual communication software.

From her side, Ilze Loza, Assistant Professor in Zayed University, College of Arts and Creative Enterprises, said: “Swiss-Middle East Circular Youth Initiative is an excellent opportunity for students from Zayed University - College of Arts and Creative Enterprises to be exposed to international project and collaboration. During the project development, students had mentors from top universities of Switzerland, and gained a lot of skills and knowledge in project evaluation, international communication as well as the importance of sustainable design in UAE and the world.”

The finalists will be hosted at the Swiss Pavilion during Expo 2020 and their solutions celebrated as the fruits of Swiss-Middle East collaborations in science and technology.

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Swiss Pavilion Boilerplate

Switzerland was the first country to confirm its participation in the Expo 2020 Dubai.

The Swiss Pavilion offers a unique encounter with Switzerland. It showcases Switzerland as a country of scenic beauty and a leading hub of technology and innovation by presenting the excellence of Swiss universities, start-ups and companies as well as creating joint events with local partners.

The Swiss Pavilion relies on a public-private partnership model. It promotes Switzerland's economic capacity and attractiveness to the UAE – the most important trading partner in the Middle East. It turns the spotlight on its high quality products and services together with its partners Schindler, Rolex SA, Switzerland Tourism, Clariant, Roche, Novartis, Nestlé Middle East and North Africa and KGS Diamond Group Ltd and suppliers.

Presence Switzerland is in charge of the Swiss Pavilion. It is the unit of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, which is responsible for Switzerland's image abroad and Switzerland's official presence in international events, such as World Expos.

The selected project 'Reflections' was designed by the Swiss project team OOS AG (architecture), Bellprat Partner AG (scenography) and Lorenz Eugster Landscaping GmbH (landscaping) and built by General contractor Expomobilia.

swissnex Network Boilerplate

swissnex, the Swiss global network connecting the dots in education, research and innovation, will represent Switzerland as a world-leading technological hotspot at Expo 2020. To do this, a swissnex Network will form an integral part of the Swiss pavilion.

Swiss universities, start-ups and innovative companies will showcase their research and inventions through temporary exhibits. They will also take part in panels, workshops, pitch contests and networking events at the event space of the pavilion and the rooftop terrace.

Through these activities, swissnex Network at Expo 2020 Dubai aims at not only promoting the know-how of its Swiss partners, but also connecting them with equivalents from the UAE and the whole Middle East to facilitate the creation of valuable relationships.

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