



Press Release:

The Swiss Pavilion announces the winner of the Swiss-Middle East Circular Economy for Youth Initiative (SMECEYI)

In partnership with Swissnex and with the support of Nestlé

Dubai, November 9, 2021: The Swiss Pavilion announced the winner of the Swiss-Middle East Circular Economy for Youth Initiative (SMECEYI). Students from the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) in Lebanon ranked first for their ‘Plasticycle’ project. Following an interesting competition with five other teams from the region, the Lebanese students made it to the first place thanks to their out-of-the-box renewables ideas for a cleaner environment with a lot of potential to catalyse a circular economy.

The Plasticycle project by the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK), Lebanon addresses the mounting problem of plastic waste by providing a sustainable solution. The project’s focus is two-fold – to recycle the plastic waste to produce PP and PE pellets which can be used by Lebanese plastic industry that has been impacted by the economic crisis of the country and is unable to import raw materials.

Mr. Manuel Salchli, Commissioner General of the Swiss Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, said: “I congratulate all the teams for being able to reach so far and compete at an international level. The winning team will be given opportunities to further develop their project and we are very excited to witness it”.

The Swiss-Middle East Circular Economy for Youth Initiative (SMECEYI), which was organised in partnership with Swissnex and supported by Nestlé, aims at identifying and empowering innovative students from the region by giving them the opportunity to showcase their projects to a global audience at Expo 2020 Dubai. This initiative comes in line with the keenness of further strengthen Switzerland’s relations in the Middle East in the areas of education, research and innovation.

From her side, Mrs. Frédérique Naulette, Nestlé Human Resources Manager Dairy, Europe, Middle East, and North Africa, said: “Our commitments to society include both protecting the environment and empowering youth, which make us a natural partner for this initiative. We are happy to be providing participants with training sessions, proud to have been members of the judging panel and excited to be offering the winners mentoring sessions and the opportunity to join an innovation bootcamp run by the Lausanne-based Nestlé Research & Development Accelerator.”





Mr. Dante Larini, Project Manager of the Swissnex Network at the Swiss Pavilion, said: “At a time when the world is facing unprecedented risks due to climate change and environmental degradation, the need of the hour is to foster a culture of conservation, innovation, sustainability and prudence in the use of natural resources. Focusing on renewables and circular economy while simultaneously empowering today’s youth to conceive transformative ideas for their tomorrows is the reason why SMECEYI was conceived”.

The six finalists were from the Occupied Territory of Palestine, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, short listed from 10 teams in the region. The SMECEYI mandate to the participating teams were to come up with executable projects that can address the issues of electronic, water, food, plastic, and construction waste.

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About Swiss Pavilion:

Switzerland was the first country to confirm its participation in the Expo 2020 Dubai. The Swiss Pavilion offers a unique encounter with Switzerland. It highlights 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, Roche, Clariant, Novartis, Nestlé, and KGS Diamond Group Ltd and suppliers. Presence Switzerland oversees 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.

About Swissnex:

Swissnex is the global network connecting Switzerland and the world in education, research, and innovation. At the Swiss Pavilion, Swissnex presents content based on the Expo theme weeks, which are linked to the UN sustainable development goals. Swiss universities, start-ups and innovative companies will shed the light on their research and inventions through temporary exhibits and presentations for the public. In addition to this, panels, workshops, pitch contests and networking events will take place at the event space and the rooftop terrace.

Swissnex at the Swiss Pavilion also aims to connect our Swiss partners with equivalents from the UAE, the Middle East and other national pavilions. By inviting local and international researchers and students to events and workshops, the Swiss Pavilion is positioned as a hub for communication and creating new collaborative partnerships.





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