



# SUSTAINABILITY DAYS '23

Get things done

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## The time to act is now – the Sustainability Days 2023 make it very clear

**Yesterday saw the successful conclusion of the first edition of the Sustainability Days at the Congress Center Basel. The 2-day event, with more than 1,500 participants, featured 72 suppliers in the exhibition and 171 speakers who presented products, solutions, strategies and innovations focused on a sustainable future in the areas of cities, regions, environment, and economy.**

In keeping with the slogan “Get things done”, the Sustainability Days presented trends, concrete solutions in the form of innovative products and services, as well as strategies and perspectives. These were presented in the four congress and exhibition formats SmartSuisse, Re' Summit, Future-Proof Infrastructure, and MUT - Environmental Technology Trade Fair on 28 and 29 March 2023. “We are pleased that the Sustainability Days, featuring 15 key topics related to sustainability, have been so well received. Our goal in the future is to establish ourselves as a central platform for a sustainable future in the areas of smart city, corporate sustainability, environmental technology and infrastructure,” says Julien Rousseau, Brand Director of the Sustainability Days, with satisfaction.

### Food for thought from national and international voices

The series of conferences kicked off on 28 March with a total of more than 170 speakers, including Marco Lambertini, Special Representative and former Director General of WWF International. He advocates the initiation of a profound change in our economic model in order to become a nature-positive society and to separate development from environmental destruction. Keynote speaker and architect Thomas Rau also emphasizes the need for change to happen as quickly as possible. He sees one very important way to do this: the circular economy. In his opinion, we must rethink the value chain, transforming it into a value-preservation chain. In a finite world, materials must be seen as something that are only used temporarily and then returned to the usage cycle.

The political point of view on sustainability also plays a major role. For example, Swiss city presidents Stefanie Ingold (Solothurn), Beat Jans (Basel), Michael Künzle (Winterthur), Barbara Thalmann (Uster), and Beat Züsli (Lucerne) discussed the goal of climate-neutral cities. There was agreement that climate protection in this context was not merely a token exercise. This shows, among other things, which measures and ideas are already being initiated or considered. Cities certainly have a role-model function as they generally have more resources at their disposal. Regula Rytz, former member of the National Council and former President of the Green Party of Switzerland, provided a historian's perspective of the topic of “Sustainable Technology: between real transformation and progress myths”. According to her, new challenges in environmental policy require new forms of sustainable technology – and a pioneering spirit is needed to achieve real transformation. In his keynote speech, Pekka Timonen, Mayor of Lahti, presented success stories from the traditional industrial city. The city has become Finland's leading green city and a pioneer among sustainable cities in Europe.



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Other keynotes and sessions focused on climate change itself. The Secretary General of the UN organisation WMO, Petteri Taalas, impressively demonstrated climate change as well as the resulting climate catastrophes and future scenarios with a global impact. He stressed that action must be taken now if the worst effects of climate change are to be prevented in this century. Professor Reto Knutti, Professor of Climate Physics at ETH Zürich and speaker at the Re' Summit, organised together with sun21, also shared this view. According to him, the only way to limit climate change is through a complete shift away from fossil fuels and net zero emissions before 2050. The obstacles are not primarily technical and economic in nature, but rather a collision of identities and the question of how to react to the challenges.

A new feature of SmartSuisse was the expansion of the main topics to include health, which was met with considerable interest. At the Health Podium, for example, experts in the field discussed whether health data is the new gold in terms of data security vs. data use.

## **Cross-sector encounters**

A further highlight was the Networking Dinner Party on Tuesday evening. Over a three-course meal in a relaxed atmosphere, participants from all formats came together across sectors to talk and exchange ideas. The evening was led in an entertaining way by stand-up comedian and magician Michel Gammenthaler and by "The Blackouts", who used their LED show to demonstrate how art and technology can be used to convey a message and inspire people. Another guest at the event was Swiss adventurer and visionary Bertrand Piccard, who gave an account of his round-the-world flight in a solar-powered plane without fuel. A pioneer in viewing ecology through the lens of profitability, he is now an advocate for renewable energy and clean technologies.

## **Concrete solutions with a hands-on experience**

The accompanying exhibition offered ample opportunity for professional exchange as well as networking. 72 suppliers presented their solutions and innovations and were able to secure important contacts with the visitors as well as other participants. "SmartSuisse is an important meeting place for SBB to exchange ideas with other experts, to further develop our projects and to generate new ideas. This is entirely in keeping with the Smart City Lab Basel slogan "network, develop, test, experience", says Smart City Lab Basel, SBB AG.

There were also exciting things to experience at the exhibition: The exhibitor SAAM (Swiss Association for Autonomous Mobility) presented the teleoperated driving project initiated by SwissMoves as part of SmartSuisse. This included the opportunity for visitors to take a ride on a test track in a vehicle controlled from Fribourg.

Also part of the exhibition was the MUT - Environmental Technology Trade Fair, that catered to the trade audience of the Swiss environmental technology industry. "The meeting of the cleantech industry at the MUT shows the need to promote ecological and pragmatic solutions," says Andreas Knecht of Mokesa AG, an exhibitor at the Environmental Technology Trade Fair.

## **Virtual discussions: sustainable infrastructure projects**

On 28 March, a virtual discussion took place at the Future-Proof Infrastructure on the challenges that infrastructure projects face in order to achieve sustainability, such as financial and political



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resilience. This virtual congress brought together key international stakeholders, investors and infrastructure experts. The discussions clearly showed the immense financing shortfall in infrastructure investment funding across all sectors and the urgent need to tackle climate change by improving sustainable outcomes of infrastructure. Solutions for infrastructure funding were touched upon by the FAST-Infra panel, which aims to unlock private investment into valuable infrastructure. In addition, it discussed how project preparation facilities can bring to light important infrastructure projects in countries with limited access to financial and technical resources. The partner of the format is the Global Infrastructure Basel Foundation (GIB).

The second edition of the Sustainability Days is scheduled to take place in Basel from 9 to 11 April 2024.

## **MCH Group**

MCH Group has its headquarters in Basel and is an internationally operating experience marketing company with a comprehensive service network and an international range of experience marketing solutions. The Exhibitions & Events division organises around 170 guest events every year as well as 25 of its own events and trade fairs in Switzerland, among them leading live marketing platforms such as Swissbau, Igeho, and Giardina. With Messe Basel, the Congress Center Basel, and Messe Zürich, MCH also operates Switzerland's largest multifunctional event infrastructures in terms of surface area. The company employs more than 800 people, around half of them in Switzerland and the USA. For more information, please visit: [www.mch-group.com](http://www.mch-group.com)

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