

# Swiss Human Rights Institution (SHRI)

## Information to journalists

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# About the Swiss Human Rights Institution

The Swiss Human Rights Institution (SHRI) is Switzerland's national body established to protect and promote human rights in all areas of life and at all levels of government.

The SHRI is a public corporation structured similarly to an association. It receives funding from the federal government and the cantons. It is politically, institutionally and ideologically independent. It is autonomous in determining its areas of focus and how its resources are used.

Established in 2023, the SHRI defends the rights of any individual affected by acts or omissions of Switzerland related to human rights. It works with the authorities at all levels of government and with business, academic institutions and civil society, particularly human rights organisations.



It provides information about human rights to the public, as well as to administrative and political organisations and the private sector. The SHRI also undertakes analyses of the implementation of human rights in Switzerland, identifies any shortcomings and how they may be addressed, initiates dialogue and participates in political discourse.

[More information is available on our website](#)

## The SHRI and the media

The SHRI **regularly takes positions** on legislative and political developments in Switzerland. While not partisan, the SHRI is also not neutral. It participates in debates and puts forward opinions.

The SHRI also regularly publishes **media releases**.

[Find all our media releases online](#)

If you'd like to receive media releases from the SHRI, please send us an email:

[media@isdh.ch](mailto:media@isdh.ch)

Every four years, the SHRI publishes a **review of human rights in Switzerland**. The review is presented to the federal authorities and made available to the public.

## Answering your questions

The SHRI is happy to respond to questions in French, German or Italian. Using accessible language, it can, for example:

- Comment on current policy and legislative matters from a human rights perspective
- Provide information about human rights issues in Switzerland
- Set out the human rights provisions that exist in legislation, case law and administrative practice
- Explain international human rights standards and their implementation in Switzerland
- Put you in contact with relevant public bodies and civil society, private sector or research organisations

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## Biographies

### Raphaela Cueni, Prof. Dr. iur., President



Raphaela Cueni is Assistant Professor of Administrative Law at the University of St Gallen. Her research and teaching activities focus principally on Swiss and comparative constitutional law.

She has worked both in Switzerland and abroad on projects including protection of satire within the framework of freedom of expression, prohibition of begging, and the constitutional regulation of abortion. She is currently leading a research project on transparency in Swiss constitutional law.

[Download Raphaela Cueni's photo](#)  
[More information about the SHRI Committee](#)

### Stefan Schlegel, Dr. iur., Director



Stefan Schlegel has been a lecturer and researcher for 15 years, primarily in constitutional, administrative and international law, with a particular focus on migration law.

In 2009 he co-founded the Swiss foreign policy think tank “foraus” and set up its programme on migration. He was also involved in establishing the political movement “Operation Libero” in 2014 and was a member of its board until taking up the position of Director at the SHRI.

[Download Stefan Schlegel's photo](#)  
[More information about the SHRI team](#)

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## What is the SHRI's legal status?

The SHRI is a public corporation structured similarly to an association. It was established by the [Federal Act on Civilian Peacebuilding and Promotion of Human Rights](#), amended by the Parliament in autumn 2022.

The SHRI is an official body funded by the federal government and the cantons. However, it operates completely independently, and the public authorities do not determine its areas of focus or how it uses its resources.

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## What is the role of a human rights institution in a democratic country like Switzerland?

As in every country in the world, defending human rights in Switzerland is an ongoing task. Although human rights are enshrined in many legal texts in Switzerland, from the Constitution to international treaties, the commitments contained in these documents are only made meaningful through their specific implementation in everyday life.

How can the dignity of older people who are dependent or suffering from dementia be guaranteed? What responsibilities do Swiss businesses have abroad? Whether it's in relation to security, justice, the prison system or migration policy, Switzerland is regularly criticised by international monitoring bodies. The SHRI exists so that the commitments made on paper are reflected in everyday practice at all levels of government. everyday life.

The SHRI provides an early warning system. As lifestyles change, the challenges of human rights constantly evolve. The Institution develops solutions to ensure that human rights remain applicable and relevant in these changing landscapes.

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## What is the SHRI's budget?

The SHRI has an annual budget of CHF 1.3 million for 2024 to 2026 inclusive. The annual accounts are published in the Institution's [annual report](#).

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## How is the SHRI funded?

The SHRI is funded by the federal government and through contributions from the cantons. To a lesser extent, it also receives annual contributions from its members.

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## How does the SHRI set its priorities?

The SHRI has complete independence in determining the focus of its work. The selection of its initial priorities was based on recommendations made to Switzerland by international and European human rights institutions and on a series of consultations with civil society, academics and government. This led to the identification of cross-cutting priorities which will guide the Institution's work during the years to come:

- Human rights and democracy
- Federalism and human rights
- Multiple discrimination
- The externalisation of human rights responsibilities

The SHRI also has the necessary flexibility to address topics which may not be related to its priority areas but which are on the political agenda, are highly topical and/or are issues of public interest. For a topic to be addressed by the SHRI, there must be a clear human rights angle.

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[Logo in five languages © ISDH](#)

[Photo of Raphaela Cueni © Raphaela Cueni](#)

[Photo of Stefan Schlegel © ISDH](#)

[Photo of the outside buildings of the SHRI © Institut du fédéralisme](#)

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