

Z-Forum

2026  
Conference

# Z-Forum on Sustainability and Innovation Building Resilience in the Age of Uncertainty

15–16 January 2026 | Zurich–Baden, Switzerland

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## Steering Committee

Prof. Dr. Philipp Aerni

Director, Center for Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability (CCRS) in Zurich; Professor at the School of Management Fribourg (HSW-FR)

Dr. Liliane Auwerter

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Humboldt Fellow and CCRS Affiliate

Mr. Thomas Lütolf

Head Economic Promotion City of Baden, Manager Baden 4.0

Mr. Stefan Hubeli

Kanton Aargau, Department of Economic and Interior Affairs

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## Deadlines

Early Bird Registration:

15 November 2025

Regular Registration:

20 December 2025

## Welcome from the Chair

The conference “Building Resilience in the Age of Uncertainty,” to be held at Technopark Zürich from 15 to 16 January 2026, and supported by numerous public and private sector partners, addresses a growing demand in academia, business, and government to understand sustainability in a broader, future-oriented context. It posits that sustainability should encompass the ability to respond to global environmental changes, migration, and geopolitical shifts that may disrupt value chains and threaten food and energy security.

In this context, the current sustainability discourse, particularly in high-income countries, which focuses primarily on protection and conservation, may need to be supplemented with an opportunity-driven approach, which aims at enhancing societal resilience through investments in scalable innovations that promote inclusive and sustainable change in the long run.

### The challenge of reconciling the Paris Climate Agreement with the UN SDGs

Recent empirical research and practical insights underscore the necessity for an opportunity-driven approach to resilience management. They point at the urgent need to reconcile the greenhouse gas emission reduction commitments made by signatory states of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change with the social and economic objectives of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). These goals aim to improve food and energy security through investments in inclusive and



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## Panels

- P1. Infrastructure and bottom-up solutions for urban resilience
- P2. Rural-urban linkages and their contribution to an inclusive bioeconomy
- P3. An opportunity-driven approach to migration-induced urban growth
- P4. Investment in sustainable and inclusive technological change

sustainable growth by 2030 (WHO/FAO 2023). This urgency is reflected in the SDGs slogan “leave no one behind.”

Moreover, several UN SDG targets related to combating hunger, poverty, and gender inequality emphasize the importance of investing in local entrepreneurship, innovation, and job creation for inclusive and sustainable change (Juma 2015, Aerni 2018, UNCTAD 2024). This is particularly critical for low-income countries experiencing high rates of rural-urban migration and youth unemployment (Aerni 2016, Saunders 2010). These countries tend to adopt a pragmatic and solution-oriented approach to sustainability, recognizing that prosperity is vital for social resilience and protecting the environment (Aerni 2025).

### Learning from successful policy initiatives in the past and present to overcome crisis

Many European countries have historically pursued pragmatic and opportunity-driven approaches to cope with emerging social and environmental challenges stemming from early industrialization and population growth in the 19th century.

Switzerland, in particular, emerged at that time as a strong, resilient, and inclusive economy at the heart of Europe, thanks to collaborative public-private investments in infrastructure and innovative solutions that foster inclusiveness and competitiveness (Aerni 2021a, Jung 2020). Today, numerous economic ecosystems outside major Swiss urban centers continue to excel in highly specialized fields. This will be illustrated by the case of the economic region of Baden, a small town in the Canton of Aargau, which has evolved into a high-tech production cluster with global reach.

If you are interested in participating in this event, proposing a special session, or any sponsor collaborations, please contact our conference team here:

[sciforum.net/event/ZForum-1](https://sciforum.net/event/ZForum-1)

