

Press release (7.9.2021)

“Data Literacy Switzerland” launches a solidarity campaign with an idea contest

Increasingly, a worrying intensification of opposing attitudes and opinions on how to deal with the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus is becoming apparent. One reason for this can be found in our data culture, which has not yet been adapted to current developments. On the other hand, the long months of uncertainty and the ever-changing instructions and restrictions have worn many people down. **It is becoming increasingly clear that we - whether we like it or not - must learn to live with the virus by making reasonable use of the available options and to adapt our behaviour in each case to the (sometimes) rapidly changing developments and findings.** As a society, we are required, despite different convictions and views, to protect each other as well as possible from uncontrollable virus spreads and severe courses of disease that would massively impair our everyday lives and our health care systems. To this end, we must implement the current findings sensibly in our everyday behaviour within the scope of our possibilities.

In view of the current situation, in which the virus has not yet been eradicated, but government measures are already being relaxed in many places due to progress in vaccination and low number of cases, it is even more important that we focus more strongly on our individual responsibility. Showing solidarity and consideration, we should work together to prevent new outbreaks from emerging again and again. The experience of the last few months has shown us that the pandemic can only be controlled in the long term if we achieve the best possible global immunisation of the population. It would also be helpful to have treatment options that are as easily available as possible and can be applied at an early stage, which could prevent hospital admissions. However, these are still too little researched at present. There is currently no approach that, used alone, could lead to a sustained stabilisation of the pandemic. There is no “one fits all”. Multimodal approaches are essential. It would be even more important to apply the various tested pandemic containment measures in a coordinated and constructive a manner, instead of getting lost in disputes that do not achieve much.

In terms of data, we do not (yet) know a great deal and that certain trends can vary greatly from region to region and are influenced by many factors. Understandably, this can lead to different strategies and approaches, which sometimes cause confusion. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of various measures has been documented:

- Distance and hygiene rules reduce the risk of virus transmission.
- Properly worn masks can protect others and can reduce the spread of viruses in risk situations (crowds, stays in enclosed spaces, care of the sick).
- Regular ventilation of closed rooms reduces the potential virus load in the room and thus the risk of spreading the virus.
- Existing vaccines against COVID-19 significantly reduce the risk of severe disease and reduce the risk of spread.
- Timely “self-isolation” when symptoms occur and rapid testing allow for a well-timed diagnosis and containment of foci of infection.

However, none of these measures alone is sufficient to stop the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. In particular, the effectiveness of the various measures can vary depending on the virus mutation and the existing conditions. It is therefore even more important that each and every one of us applies the various proven measures in combination within the scope of our possibilities as long as the circulation of the virus is not sufficiently under control. In doing so, we should take care to avoid

discrimination. To act appropriately in different situations, we should bear in mind, for example, that there are people who can not be vaccinated for medical reasons. Likewise, there are situations in which wearing the mask can lead to relevant impairments (e.g. hearing impaired, persons with dementia). With this in mind, we should work together to develop and implement a new culture of data and discussion that is no longer about “right or wrong”. Rather, the COVID-19 pandemic teaches us that we need a new attitude that is “contextual”. This would defuse many of the current polarisations and conflicts.

Hence, «Data Literacy Switzerland» launches a COVID-19 solidarity campaign – for a new respectful and shared data culture. The campaign aims to set an example for solidarity, and to take a stand against stigmatisation and polarisation.

The campaign starts with two actions:

- **The distribution of a «solidarity button», which appeals for combining the different measures to protect each other.**
- **The launching of an idea contest, how the recent tendencies of polarisation could be defused.**

SOLIDARITY BUTTON

It has been shown that even people who are vaccinated against COVID-19 can transmit the coronavirus, albeit statistically relevant less frequently. At the same time, however, the fronts between the vaccinated and the unvaccinated are hardening and the mask is developing into an instrument of stigmatisation, although the correct wearing of the mask in potential risk situations should continue to be a sign of our individual effort to contain the spread of the virus. This has been demonstrated especially in the last autumn and winter season by the impressive decrease of various other viral diseases such as influenza. Therefore “Data Literacy Switzerland” has chosen the mask problem as a symbol to point out the importance and interconnectedness of various measures to be taken in solidarity against the COVID pandemic. The mask problem also lends itself to reflecting on our situational handling of resources, data, and differences of opinion.

Under the slogan: “I protect YOU with my mask”, “Data Literacy Switzerland” launches a campaign for a cultural change in the way we deal with data and differences of opinion.

Where there is an obligation to wear masks, we do not have to be merely obedient, but can express our will to take this protective measure in solidarity.

Where wearing the mask is no longer compulsory, but there still is a risk of contamination as there are fluctuating infection rates, or the mask is used in a discriminatory way, we can use the mask as a visible sign of our solidarity and individual responsibility.

Buttons expressing this attitude for a cultural change in favour of data literacy and more individual responsibility can be ordered via www.data-literacy.ch.

IDEA CONTEST

To provide a platform for diversity, creativity and constructive ideas to promote our personal responsibility and respectful coexistence in our “new life with the corona virus”, “Data Literacy Switzerland” is launching an idea contest for subjects on this issue. The competition is open to all interested individuals, companies, and institutions. There is also a special category for children and young adults.

Works and ideas on the following theme can be submitted:

“Defusing polarisation associated with the COVID-19 pandemic”.

In addition to the title, you can use the two questions below as a further inspiration.

- How can we promote mutually respectful interactions in the COVID-19 pandemic and protect each other in a reasonable way without discrimination?
- How can we counter the increasing polarisation around the coronavirus pandemic with humour?

Ideas and works (slogans, drawings, logos, musical works, videos, etc.) can be submitted to www.data-literacy.ch until 15.11.2021.

There are attractive prizes for the best submissions. The best submissions will be published on the homepage of “www.data-literacy.ch” after consultation with the authors. No correspondence will be entered into about the competition. The legal process is excluded. Swiss law is exclusively applicable.