

Abstract PhD research Sophia Werdin (September 10, 2025)

Background: Suicide remains a significant public health challenge even in politically stable, high-income countries like Switzerland. Effective prevention requires a holistic approach that integrates universal, selective, and indicated measures. This PhD research aimed to advance suicide prevention in Switzerland by generating evidence-based insights into contextual conditions and regional measures. Objectives included evaluating a multicomponent suicide prevention project, identifying challenges, gaps, and success factors across Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and promoting the sustainability of project-based initiatives.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey assessed the use and perceived usefulness of regional suicide prevention measures among at-risk individuals. An interrupted time series analysis examined the effects of this project on psychiatric readmissions. A qualitative study explored the perspectives of 36 suicide prevention experts from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. An editorial and a policy brief complemented this research to support translation into policy and practice.

Results: The regional suicide prevention project showed moderate uptake, with self-management measures considered helpful by about half of users. Routine health data revealed significant reductions in psychiatric readmissions associated with project implementation. Qualitative research highlighted persistent stigma, structural deficiencies in mental healthcare, insufficient multilevel collaboration, and a lack of programs for older adults and men. Success factors included national suicide prevention strategies, involvement of lived experience, intersectoral networks, and responsible media coverage.

Conclusion: Switzerland has made considerable progress in suicide prevention, yet key gaps remain. Sustainable advances require multisectoral engagement, strengthened mental healthcare, efficient resource allocation, and a shift in perspective that frames suicide prevention as a broader societal responsibility.