



Swiss Youth  
Hostels®



**2020**

# **SWISS YOUTH HOSTELS**

Business Report on  
Sustainable Development

youthhostel.ch

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## Readability

For the sake of readability, the masculine form will be used throughout the business report on the sustainable development of Swiss Youth Hostels. Wherever appropriate, use of the feminine form is of course implicit. Unless otherwise specified, the published data and figures relate to the 46 hostels (excluding franchises) operated independently by the Swiss Youth Hostels Association.

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Tel. +41 44 360 14 31, e-mail [geschaeftsleitung@youthhostel.ch](mailto:geschaeftsleitung@youthhostel.ch), [www.youthhostel.ch](http://www.youthhostel.ch)

# THE YEAR 2020 IN BRIEF

This year's business report comes with a new look. This short print version provides a brief overview of important key data from reporting year 2020 and refers interested parties to the detailed report in digital format. It offers interesting insights from the past business year.

In 2020, the spread of the global pandemic brought Swiss tourism to the limits of its endurance and economic viability. The massive travel restrictions and closed restaurants and wellness centres also hit Swiss Youth Hostels hard.

Thanks to the extraordinary commitment of all its employees and the honorary Executive Board, as well as the understanding approach of many partners, Swiss Youth Hostels has coped well with the COVID crisis under the circumstances. This highly motivated and committed team is also the guarantor for a successful future. Since 1 July 2020, the organisation has been led by a young management team which has been working very well together and tackling the required development and change processes with courage and expertise.

In 2020, the network of Swiss Youth Hostels consisted of 46 own and 6 franchise hostels. We accommodated 212,186 guests from 147 countries in our own hostels. The share of Swiss guests rose to 86.7% and overnight stays dropped to 484,878, a reduction of 34.2%. Youth hostels in urban areas recorded the largest decline, while demand in rural regions and mountain areas held up well. Since the first lockdown in spring 2020, school camps were only held occasionally and group trips were restricted.

Youth hostels were open throughout the year during the usual seasonal periods. During the lockdown, we were able to accommodate, in particular, stranded business professionals and tradespeople, people in special situations, as well as the military and other persons who supported the medical institutions during the pandemic. After openings gradually increased, more guests seeking respite from the stress of everyday life started to return.



Two youth hostels, however, were opened during the pandemic, under difficult conditions. Unfortunately, [Burgdorf Castle Youth Hostel](#) was unable to hold its large folk festival for its opening in spring. The “castle for everyone” features a public restaurant, an event area, museum and youth hostel, an offer that was very popular among the Swiss in the summer of 2020. In mid-December 2020, the [second wellness hostel](#) worldwide was opened in Laax. Unfortunately, the restaurant and wellness facilities and indoor pool have yet to be opened to external guests. Nevertheless, we have already been able to accommodate [many satisfied and happy guests](#). The start was a great success.

[Le Bémont Youth Hostel](#) closed its doors for good on 24 October 2020 after 56 years. Unfortunately, the required investment for safety and maintaining the substance of the facility was no longer financially viable.

Due to the impact of the COVID pandemic, the 53<sup>rd</sup> World Conference of [Hostelling International](#) was conducted digitally. Stephan Kurmann, former President of the SYH, was elected as new President with 61 of the 100 votes. He has served as Vice President of the worldwide network of youth hostel associations since September 2016.



**“Switzerland’s Best Employer 2021”:** The Swiss Youth Hostels Association is one of them! As we found out on 25 November 2020. Die Handelszeitung, Le Temps and the independent market research institute Statista ascertained this in a large-scale panel survey of thousands of workers. Swiss Youth Hostels reached 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Gastronomy, Tourism, Accommodation, Entertainment and Leisure sectors. We are proud and grateful to have received this award.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to all our employees, the honorary Executive Board members, the Swiss Foundation for Social Tourism, our members and benefactors and our partners for their wonderful support.

End of March 2021



**Frank Reutlinger**  
President SYH



**Janine Bunte**  
CEO SYH



# PORTRAIT

## SWISS YOUTH HOSTELS

We are a politically and religiously neutral organisation and as such are active in all areas of the country. We are aware that the local population and the natural environment in the areas in which we operate are crucially important both to us and to our guests. We wish to take the interests of the local population into account as far as possible, as well as respect their independence and culture, and to make every effort to minimise our environmental impact. We support environmentally-friendly youth hostels and leisure activities which have a negligible impact on the landscape.

### Who we are

Swiss Youth Hostels is a politically and denominationally neutral non-profit organisation with the legal form of a non-profit association.

Swiss Youth Hostels Association is responsible for operating the youth hostels in Switzerland and in the Principality of Liechtenstein, with the aim of establishing a comprehensive network of youth hostels in attractive tourist regions and destinations in all parts of Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein.

In addition to the Swiss Youth Hostels Association, Swiss Youth Hostels are represented by two further independent partner organisations in addition to the Swiss Youth Hostels Association:

- The [Swiss Foundation for Social Tourism](#) is the proprietor of the youth hostels (properties) or leases these for use by the Swiss Youth Hostels Association.
- The [Foundation for Youth Hostels in Switzerland](#) provides financial support in the form of long-term loans for the construction of youth hostels.

## What we want

Swiss Youth Hostels wants

- to promote quality-oriented, socially responsible and environmentally-friendly tourism for young people and families;
- to focus on human relations;
- to live up to the idea of partnership at all levels;
- to strengthen our image and standing as the most important tourist organisation for young people and families;
- to achieve appropriate business results in order to ensure the continued existence of our organisation.



# GUESTS

## THEY COME FROM NEAR AND FAR

### Guest segments

	2018	in %	2019	in %	2020	in %
Individual guests	332,532	46.0	335,970	45.6	218,923	45.2
Families	156,674	21.7	156,524	21.3	147,000	30.3
Schools	125,933	17.4	124,460	16.9	53,281	11.0
Groups	107,891	14.9	119,557	16.2	65,674	13.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>723,030</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>736,511</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>484,878</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Foreign guests, groups and schools were particularly affected by travel restrictions and other measures to contain the COVID pandemic. The lockdown and call to “stay at home” from March to May affected all segments and markets of origin.

### Top 7 countries (overnight stays)

2018	in %
Switzerland	68.8
Germany	8.8
South Korea	3.5
United Kingdom	2.2
USA	2.1
France	1.8
Italy	1.2
<b>Top 7</b>	<b>88.4</b>

2019	in %
Switzerland	70.2
Germany	8.0
South Korea	3.5
France	1.9
USA	1.9
United Kingdom	1.9
China	1.4
<b>Top 7</b>	<b>88.9</b>

2020	in %
Switzerland	86.1
Germany	6.1
France	1.3
United Kingdom	0.9
South Korea	0.8
Italy	0.6
Netherlands	0.4
<b>Top 7</b>	<b>96.2</b>

Due to the travel restrictions, the markets of origin of overnight stays shifted substantially. In January and February 2020, travel from China was restricted. From March 2020, all other countries worldwide were likewise affected.



## Average length of stay

	2018	2019	2020
Europe	2.00	2.05	2.46
Switzerland	2.02	2.06	2.27
Asia	1.83	1.88	2.20
Africa	2.53	1.82	2.19
South America	1.93	1.97	2.09
Australia	1.85	1.93	2.07
North America	1.85	1.90	1.94
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.99</b>	<b>2.04</b>	<b>2.29</b>

The average stay lengthened substantially to 2.29 nights (previous year 2.04). The length of stay increased across all markets of origin. People travelled less, but for longer.

## Members

	2018	in %	2019	in %	2020	in %
Junior	24,991	30.5	21,634	29.8	18,546	28.3
Adult	31,766	38.8	27,096	37.3	25,158	38.4
Senior	6,291	7.7	6,719	9.3	6,876	10.5
Families	14,186	17.3	12,491	17.2	11,808	18.0
Groups	4,698	5.7	4,652	6.4	3,132	4.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81,932</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>72,592</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>65,520</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Membership dropped by 9.7% to 65,520 members.



# EMPLOYEES

## THEY ARE THE KEY TO SUCCESS

### Number of employees/ full-time positions

Number of employees	2018	2019	2020
Hostels	529	558	475
Administration	48	49	47
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>522</b>

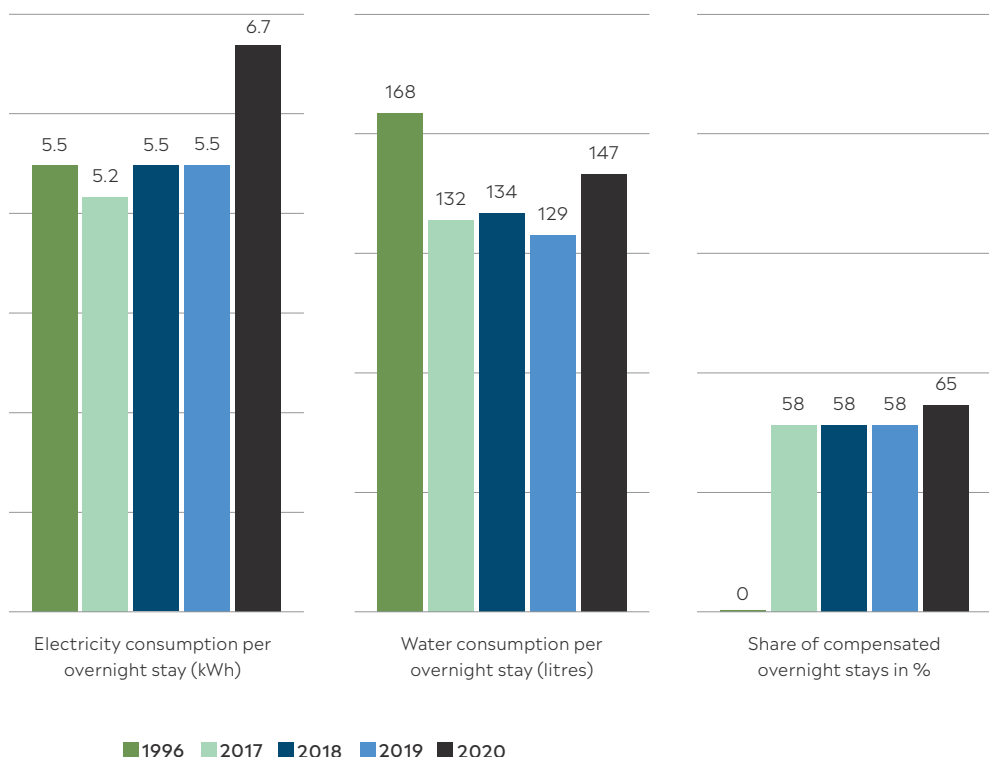
Number of full-time positions	2018	2019	2020
Hostels	274	275	244
Administration	37	36	38
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>282</b>

The outbreak of the COVID pandemic in March 2020 led to some seasonal positions not being filled for the summer season. The existing number of employees was maintained as far as possible. All hostels were registered for short-time working compensation. Benefits were only drawn in those hostels which depended on them due to under-employment.

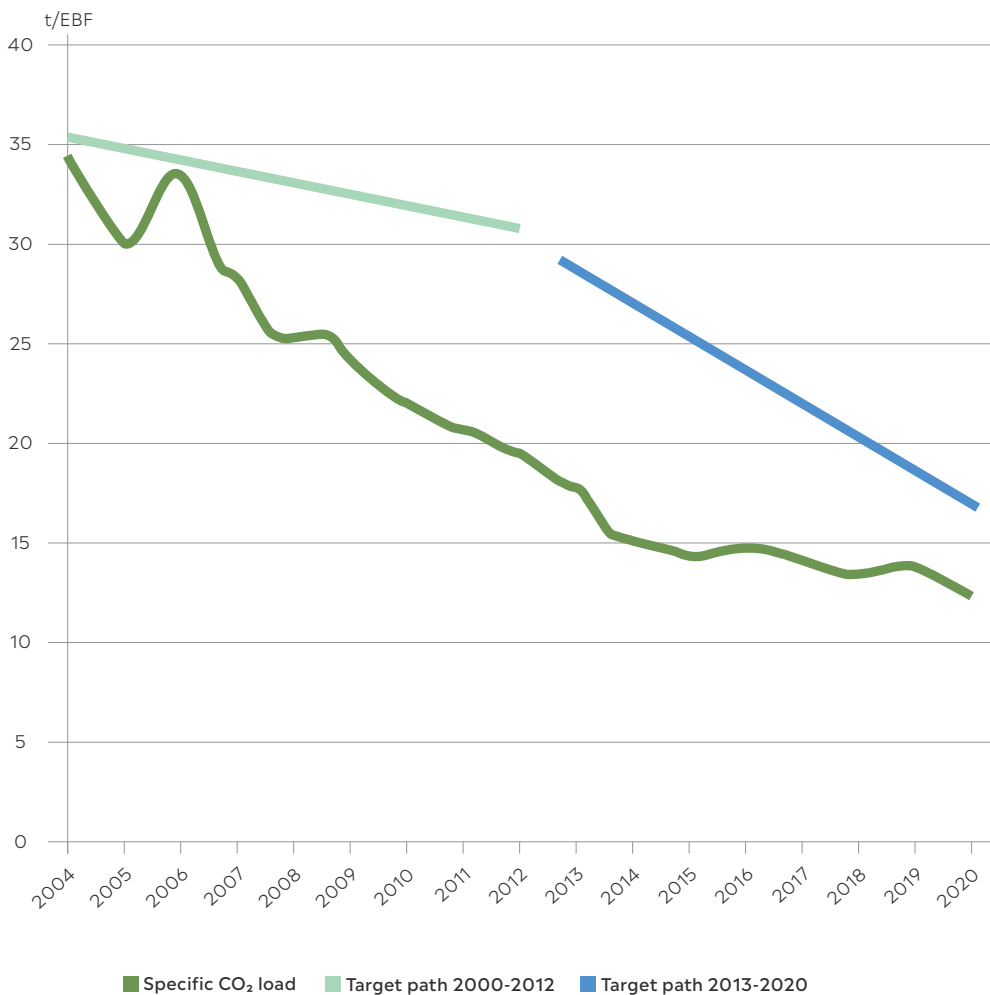
# RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

## SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH CONSIDERATION

Options for avoiding and reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and energy consumption for heat, electricity and water have been consistently implemented since the mid-1990s. In the year under review, exceptionally large discrepancies were recorded in the key figures as a result of the COVID pandemic and the resulting heavy drop in guest numbers. While the square metre key figures fell extraordinarily sharply (heating), the key figures increased dependent on the overnight stays (electricity, water).







The target agreement with the Energy Agency of the Swiss Private Sector EnAW was also successfully concluded for the second period (2013 to 2020). By 2020, we had reduced specific CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for space heating by 63.3% compared with 2000.



## Contact

### Website

[www.youthhostel.ch](http://www.youthhostel.ch)

### Booking centre

Tel. +41 44 360 14 14, [contact@youthhostel.ch](mailto:contact@youthhostel.ch)

### Address

Swiss Youth Hostels, Schaffhauserstrasse 14,  
P.O. Box, 8042 Zurich

### Newsletter

[www.youthhostel.ch/en/newsletter](http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/newsletter)

### International bookings

[www.hihostels.com](http://www.hihostels.com)

### Online booking

[booking.youthhostel.ch](http://booking.youthhostel.ch)

### Download app

Swiss Youth Hostels



### Membership

[www.youthhostel.ch/en/become-a-member](http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/become-a-member)

## Social media

[facebook.youthhostel.ch](https://facebook.youthhostel.ch)

[twitter.youthhostel.ch](https://twitter.youthhostel.ch)

[instagram.youthhostel.ch](https://instagram.youthhostel.ch)

[youtube.youthhostel.ch](https://youtube.youthhostel.ch)

## Information on benefactor account

As a non-profit organisation, we thank our benefactors for ensuring that sustainable and social tourism has a future. Many thanks!

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On behalf of: Swiss Youth Hostels, Schaffhauserstrasse 14, 8006 Zurich



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