Towards more adaptable and future-oriented education at comprehensive Universities

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Unlocking the potential

A rapidly changing world

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A new sense of urgency

- Climate and biodiversity crisis
- Demographic change (ageing population)
- New pandemic and health risks
- Return of geopolitics
- Digital transformation, accelerated by AI
- ...

Growth rate of knowledge increasing

Half-life of knowledge decreasing

The world of work is changing rapidly and profoundly

- Traditional job profiles are changing, being supplemented or replaced
- Many of today's students will be working in jobs that do not yet exist
- **Adaptability** and willingness to re-skill and up-skill throughout life as future key factors in a successful professional career

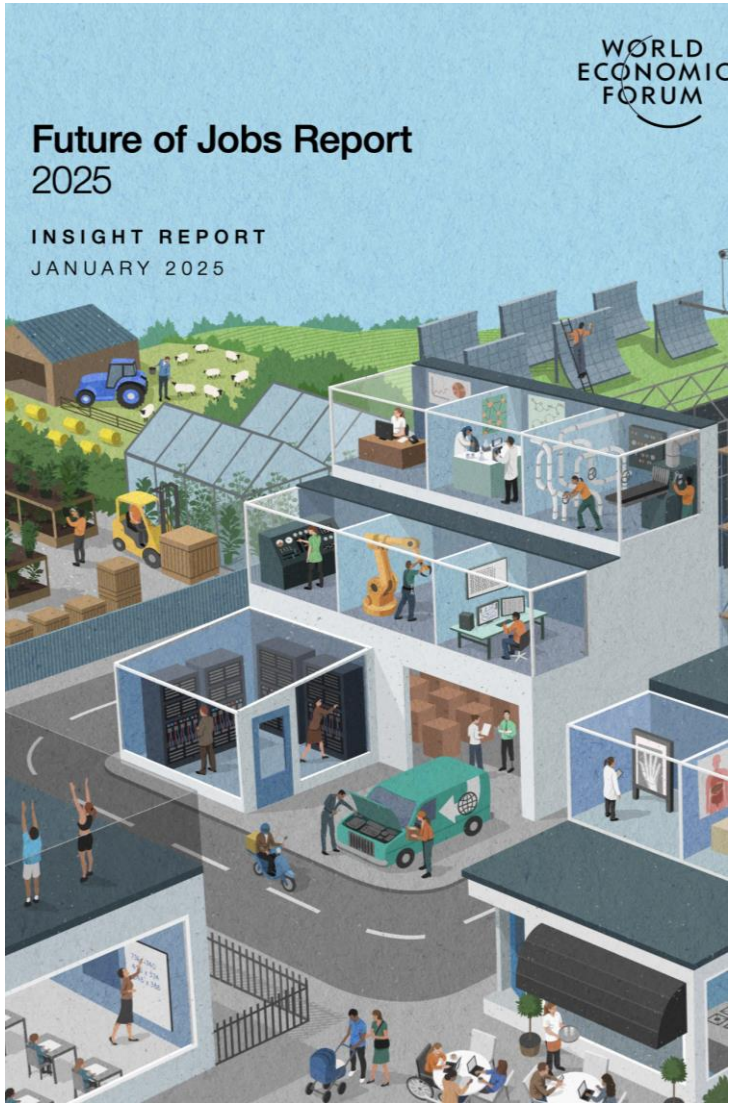
New demands on our graduates in the world of work

In addition to in-depth specialist knowledge, more and more robust personal skills are expected, such as:

- analytical skills, critical thinking, systems thinking
- the ability to orientate and adapt in a rapidly changing environment
- resilience, flexibility, agility and perseverance
- problem-solving skills
- communication and cooperation skills in diverse, international teams and and in changing contexts
- leadership skills and entrepreneurial mindset

but also

- technological literacy and the ability to use AI-based generative tools in an informed and confident manner and to critically evaluate their results as well as all types of data and information



New demands on university teaching and learning

Strengthening personal skills development, e.g. through

- inter- and transdisciplinary exposure
- international and intercultural exposure
- research-, project- and problem-based learning
- training to stand firm in controversial debates
- …

Fostering individual educational biographies

- Offering a range of options within degree programmes and between study cycles
- Making available and sharing introductory and methodological courses
- Providing self-learning opportunities with immediate feedback
- Opening-up individualised learning pathways for graduates (up- and reskilling, MCs)

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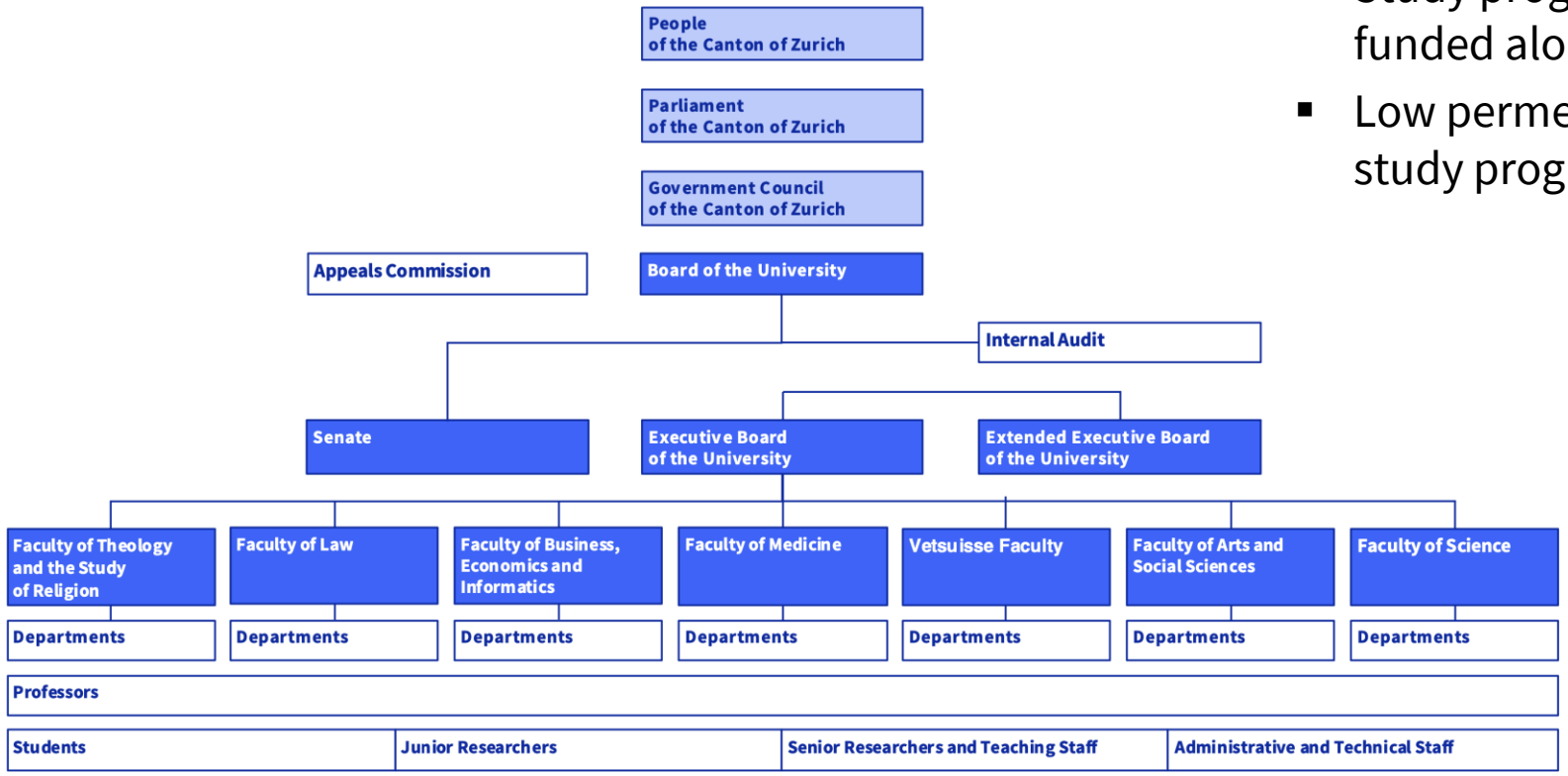
- Overcoming boundaries between institutions, departments and disciplines
- Making accessible the resources of the comprehensive university to all students

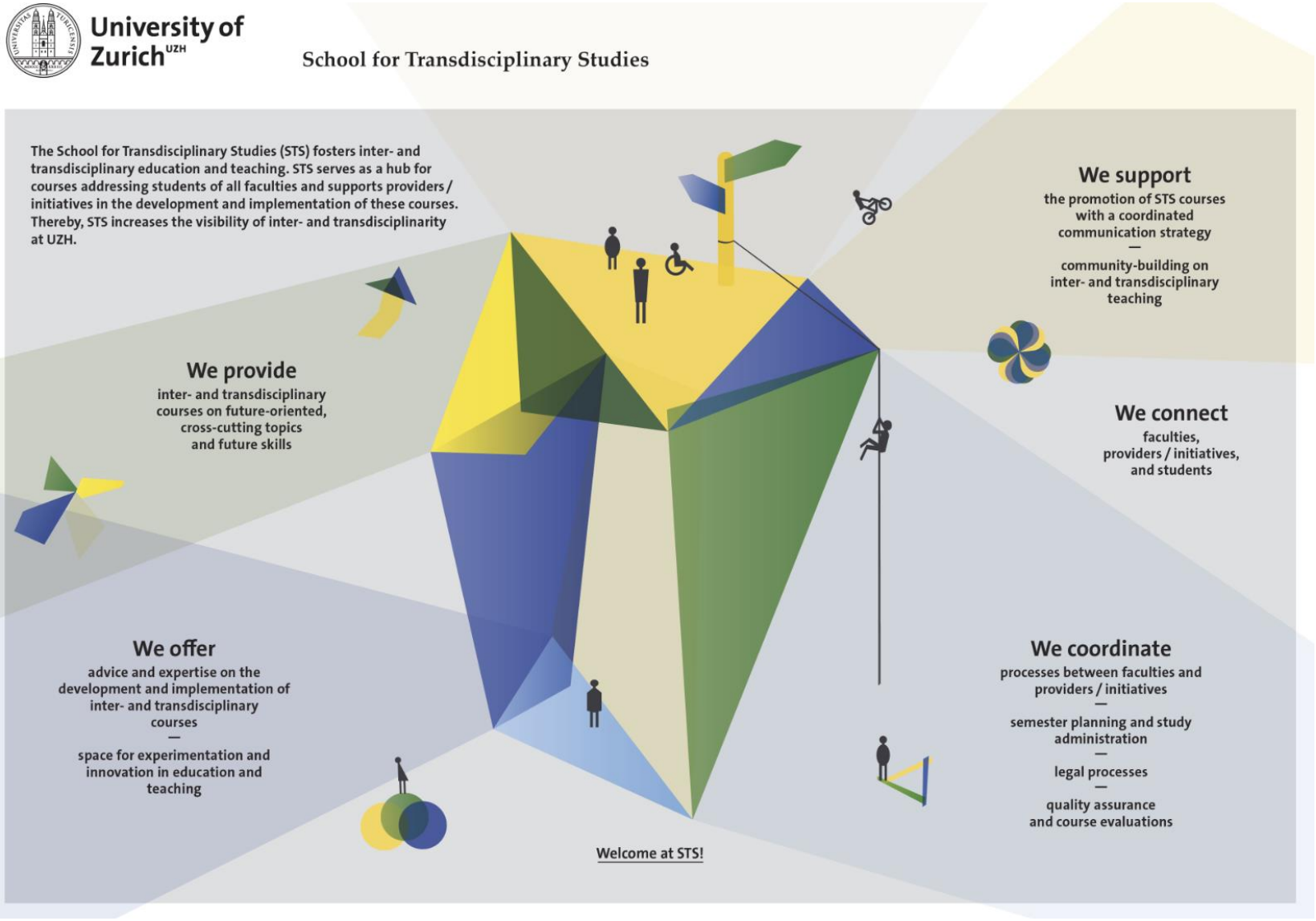
Opening agenda meets persistent organisational silos



- Organisation following traditional classification system of disciplines
- High autonomy of the faculties and departments
- Study programmes traditionally developed and funded along the disciplinary silos
- Low permeability as the competence to regulate study programmes lies with faculties and institutes

- 7 Faculties
- ca. 150 Departments
- ca. 100 Disciplines
- ca. 720 Professors
- ca. 4’500 other teaching staff

Measures taken so far: Establishing *The School for Transdisciplinary Studies*, STS (2020)



Two categories of course offerings

1. Inter- and transdisciplinary courses
2. Future Skills

Additional Minors

- Minor *Digital Skills* (est. 2024)
- Minor *Entrepreneurship* (planned)

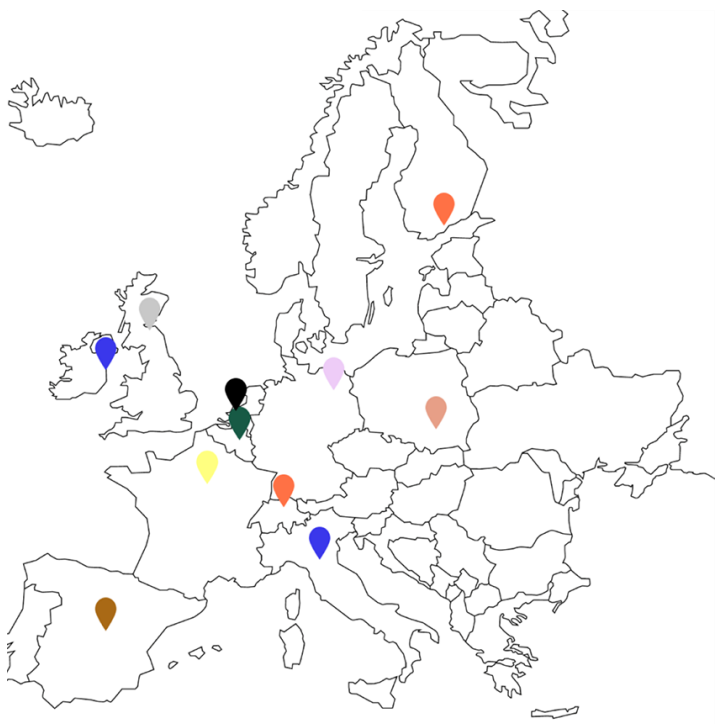
✓ inter- or transdisciplinary by design

✓ agile and cooperative programme development

however:

- limited recognition of student achievements in some faculties
- limited or no recognition of teaching load in some faculties

Measures taken so far: Joining *Una Europa* (2022)



Strong focus on the educational mission

Co-creation of *Joint Innovative Formats* (JIFs) in six *focus areas*:

- *Sustainability*
- *Europe and the World*
- *Data Science and AI*
- *Future Materials and Technologies*
- *One Health*
- *Cultural Heritage*

✓ interdisciplinary and international by design

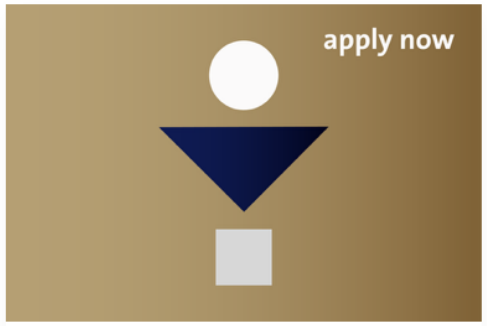
✓ wide range of formats to meet different needs at all levels of study (Joint Degree-Programmes, Joint Doctoral Spaces, Joint Challenges, Micro-credentials, BIPs, COILs, module exchange etc.)

however:

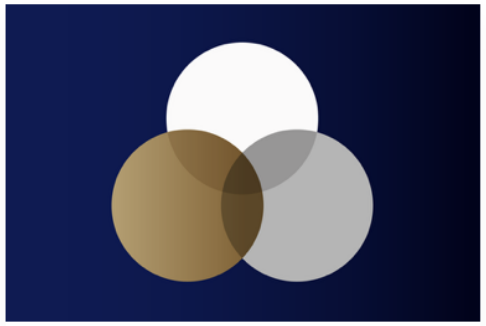
JIFs cannot be integrated equally well in all degree programmes

Measures taken so far: Setting up the *University Teaching Fund*, ULF (2022)

open_innovation →

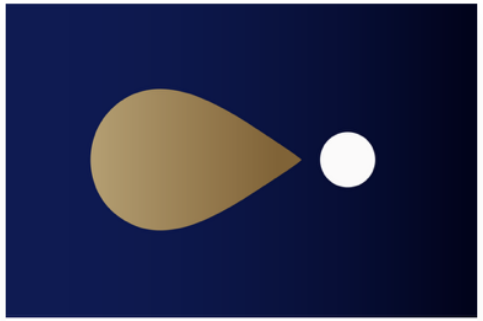


program_innovation →



transdisciplinary_innovation →

global_innovation →



focus_innovation →

micro_innovation →

engage_now →

Seven funding lines

transdisciplinary_innovation

funding for the creation of inter-/transdisciplinary courses at STS

global_innovation

funding for the creation of courses based on international cooperation (e.g. in *Una Europa*)

- ✓ interdisciplinary / international by design
- ✓ aligning bottom-up and strategic initiatives

however:

- – resources are not unlimited
- – courses not funded permanently through ULF

Measures taken so far: Community-building and awareness-raising

Teaching Tools

Open Channel Education

- "UZH Curriculum" as a shared point of reference
- Teaching Tools as a central hub for exchange of good practice, inspiration and support
- University-wide community events
- Open Channel Education (peer-to-peer learning, access to information)

✓ Promoting dialogue across faculties and disciplines

✓ Strengthening educational (leadership) roles

however:

– limited active participation

– target group somewhat evasive

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Measures taken so far: Establishing a new approval process for study programmes (2020)

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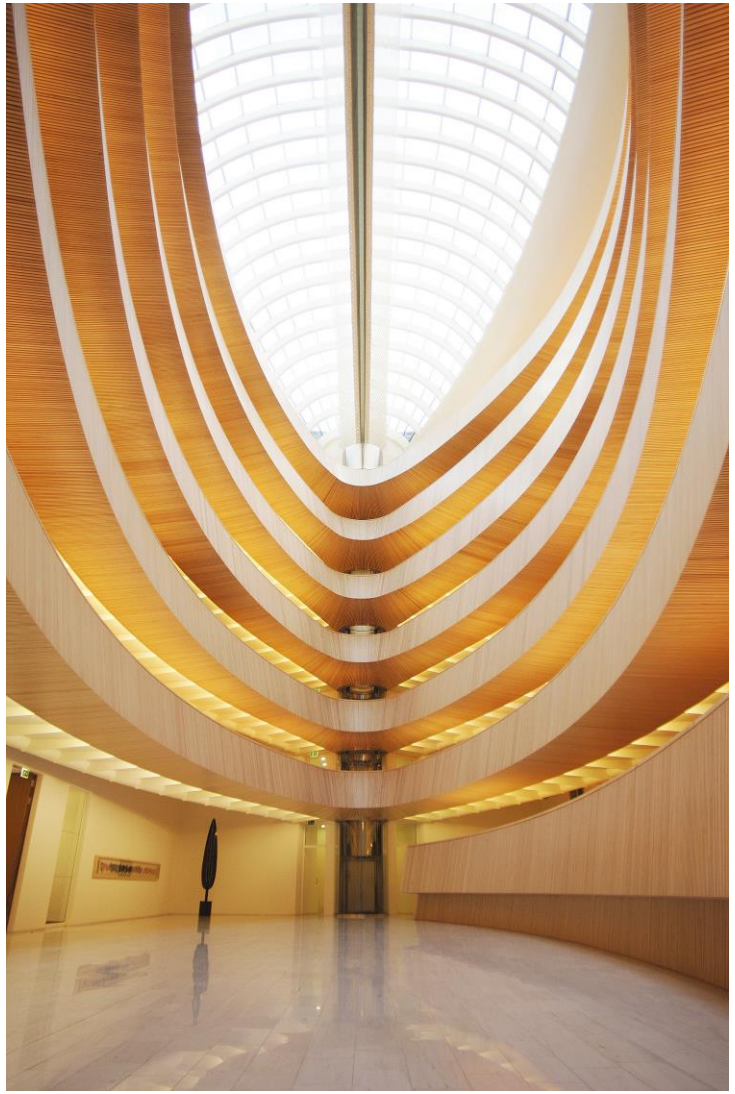
Both new programmes and revisions of existing programmes must be discussed and approved by the meeting of all Deans of Studies, chaired by the Vice-President Education and Student Affairs.

- ✓ ensuring coordination between the faculties and identifying potential synergies
- ✓ aligning bottom-up and strategic initiatives

To be complemented by an upstream integrated support process for programme development from autumn 2025.

Measures taken so far: Helpful, but not sufficient



Decision by the congregation of the Executive Board, Deans and Deans of Studies 2024:

Addressing and overcoming organisational silos in education and research as a strategic priority for the University as a whole

Action Plan: Attempting a holistic approach

Policies and mindsets

- More generous recognition and crediting of interdisciplinary and international courses
- More generous crediting of teaching achievements in interdisciplinary / international study programmes to the teaching load

Content

- Demand-driven opening of existing and development of additional (interdisciplinary) courses
- Demand-driven expansion of Major-/Minor-combinations and development of interdisciplinary Minors
- Utilising synergies and strengthening cooperation between institutes and faculties in course offerings
- Curricular integration of international courses and components provided by partner institutions

Study structures

- Promoting permeability through further harmonisation and simplification of study structures

Governance

- Review of current resource allocation models in teaching and elimination of disincentives and side effects

Let’s get interactive!

- **Short Q&A session**
- **Invitation to the World Café**

World Café: Methodology and Procedure

3 Thematic tables

1. From breadth to depth – Rethinking the first year of study — Anna
2. Encouraging individualisation of learning pathways– Opening up the silos — David
3. Governance and resource allocation models – Eliminating disincentives — Thomas

2 rounds of discussion à 2x23 minutes

- Select 2 out of the 3 tables at which you would like to participate in the discussion
- The table chair will briefly outline the goal of the discussion and will start the discussion by asking you to position your institution on the question at hand
- We will ask you to help us during the discussion to write down findings post-it notes so that we can document the key findings on the flipcharts prepared by us in advance

12:45 Final wrap-up à 3x3 minutes

The table chairs will briefly summarise the results of the discussion based on a flip chart documentation of the results