

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Three of Switzerland's strengths are especially prominent: high degree of innovation, supremely educated workforce and first-class scientific research organizations. Cutting-edge technologies and a business-friendly climate also contribute to our country's productivity.

Image
Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials
Science and Technology (EMPA),
Dübendorf



Research and Development Hub

Image
UCB Farchim, Bulle

WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH

Switzerland invests more than 3% of its GDP in research and development, one of the highest percentages in the world. More than 60 universities help to ensure the highest level of professional work. They work closely with the international research community and take part in scientific partnerships. They connect with industry through the exchange of knowledge and technology, support innovative start-ups, and establish strong spin-offs. Organizations and companies from Switzerland and abroad value the country's excellent research platform and its role as an international innovation hub. No wonder so many companies are based here, from biopharmaceutical giants Bristol-Myers Squibb and Roivant Sciences to the research centers of Disney and Google.

Almost half of Swiss workers are employed in knowledge-intensive industries. High-tech products form an important pillar of the country's economic success and excellent reputation. Around one quarter of all high-tech products are exported. This underlines the innovation potential of the Swiss economy, which holds a leading position in international rankings. Intellectual property is effectively protected through patent, trademark, design, and copyright law. In 2021, more than 8,000 patent applications were filed in Switzerland. This is the seventh highest figure in the world and it is the highest figure worldwide per capita. Switzerland's international leadership in research is also apparent in the number of Nobel Prize laureates per capita: Here, too, Switzerland is far ahead.

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

As an important center of research, Switzerland attracts highly qualified foreign researchers. Several internationally important institutions are based here. For example, the European Organization for Nuclear Research CERN, the Swiss Center for Electronics and Microtechnology CSEM and the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI). CERN is considered to be one of the most important centers in the world for basic research in physics. It was here, in the late 1980s, that the World Wide Web was developed.

The Swiss research community actively participates in the cross-border exchange of knowledge. It is well integrated in the cooperation networks of major European nations and covers a wide spectrum of research fields. Albert Einstein once studied and taught at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETHZ). And he's far from being the only one: ETHZ has always welcomed foreign researchers and lecturers; indeed more than half of its professors are non-Swiss.



Leading Industries and Technologies

Image
Smart Factory, digital manufacturing,
stock image

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Robotics
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Personalized Health
- Blockchain

A STRONG LOCATION FOR STRONG BUSINESSES

Significant international companies choose to locate their headquarters in Switzerland, a highly industrialized technology location with leading research institutions. The excellent collaboration between academia and industry in Switzerland ensures the rapid transfer of technology in the field of research and development. Three Swiss groups, Roche, Nestle, and Novartis, are among the 50 most valuable companies in the world. More than 850 multinational companies have their regional or global headquarters here, including giants like Johnson & Johnson, Google, Japan Tobacco, Medtronic, and Adidas.

A UNIQUE COMBINATION OF INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

Switzerland has world-renowned universities and research institutes in the field of artificial intelligence (AI). Thanks to legislation favorable to data protection and the proximity to top research, prestigious major tech corporations like Google, IBM, and Microsoft conduct their AI research from Switzerland. Thanks to outstandingly educated ICT specialists, Switzerland has an excellent base for further growth and innovation in the field of digitization technologies.

Based on a long tradition in the machine, electrical engineering, metalworking, and watchmaking industries, a highly industrialized precision cluster has developed in Switzerland and is taking up a leading position in the area of robotics and advanced manufacturing in the digital shift era. Various international companies such as ABB, Oerlikon, Schindler, and Hamilton are optimizing their existing production processes in Switzerland with digital solutions.

Switzerland has one of the most well-established life sciences clusters in the world. As a leading neutral location for global company headquarters, it is extremely attractive for global chemical and pharmaceutical companies such as BeiGene, Takeda, and Biogen, which have located their headquarters and production here. Thanks to this traditional strength in life sciences as well as considerable know-how in ICT, Switzerland is optimally equipped for the new era of personalized health, in which data is integrated into the healthcare system.

Switzerland's decentralized, grassroots political system provides the ideal environment for crypto technologies. Crypto Valley, originating in Zug, has now become a global hub for international development in blockchain technology. Blockchain technology is used in the fields of supply chain management, the insurance industry, energy provision, and logistics. The new DLT legislation came into force in 2021. Switzerland thus has one of the most progressive legislations in the world, which creates room for innovative projects and completely new business models.



Strong Education System

Image
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology
Lausanne (EPFL)

HIGHLY SKILLED WORKFORCE

Excellent, practice-oriented basic education, renowned private and boarding schools, and world-class universities and technical colleges – these are the ingredients for the success of Switzerland’s top-level educational landscape. These factors provide businesses in Switzerland with substantial, lasting benefits. In Switzerland, investors find well-educated, multilingual, motivated, and loyal employees. It is hardly surprising that Google and Oracle, two of the world’s most attractive employers, have chosen to be located in Switzerland. Major international companies work in close partnership with regional universities and recruit large numbers of highly educated employees from this high-quality pool.

The Swiss education system combines practice-oriented vocational training with outstanding university education. This dual system fuels the economy’s capacity for innovation and creativity. Low unemployment rates, even among young people, testify to the strength of the Swiss education system.

WORLD-CLASS STATE AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Public schools in Switzerland enjoy an excellent reputation – and with good reason. Students regularly achieve very good results in international PISA assessments. In mathematics, Switzerland’s mean is statistically significantly above the OECD average. Swiss universities regularly occupy top places in international university rankings. Four Swiss universities rank among the world’s top 100: the Zurich and Lausanne Federal Institutes of Technology and the Universities of Basel and Zurich. In fact, the first two are classed among the 40 best universities in the world.

The state school system is complemented by several hundred private and boarding schools. Internationally oriented families will find a tailor-made education system for them. Some staff members of foreign companies often stay in Switzerland only temporarily. Their children receive education in their native language or take part in international education at numerous international schools. They are well prepared for school-leaving exams in their home country, be it the Abitur, the Baccalaureate, or the admission requirements for a U.S.-American university.



SECURITY AND TRUST

The Swiss economy is one of the most liberal and competitive economies in the world. Low capital costs, a stable currency, strong purchasing power, moderate taxation, a federal state system, and economic and political stability guarantee a high level of security for investments in Switzerland.



Reliable Governance

Image
Bundesplatz, Bern

POLITICAL STABILITY: FERTILE GROUND FOR BUSINESS

Switzerland's federal structures create strong links between government, business, and civil society. The government is lean, consisting of the seven-member Federal Council. Each member is appointed Federal President for one year on a rotating basis. The constituent states of the Swiss Confederation, the 26 cantons, enjoy a large degree of autonomy, particularly in healthcare, education, and culture. Municipalities enjoy autonomy as well: each municipality – around 2,150 in all – decides its tax rate independently. Swiss citizens can participate directly in the political process through referendums, initiatives, and plebiscites. The stable political situation guarantees a high degree of dependability for business and practical decisions that are well supported by the population.

INDEPENDENCE IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

It takes one to two hours by plane to travel from Switzerland to Europe's major economic centers. A multilingual country, Switzerland is situated in the heart of Europe, combines different cultures, and borders three of the four biggest markets in Europe: Germany, France, and Italy. Their languages are also national languages of Switzerland, spoken by many Swiss alongside English.

There are close economic relations between Switzerland and Europe. The European Union is Switzerland's most important trade partner: around half of all Swiss exports go to EU countries and two thirds of all imports come from the EU. A comprehensive free trade agreement and bilateral agreements enable the free movement of goods and services even without EU membership. Through this agreement, Switzerland is fully integrated in the EU market, with its around 4500 million consumers, while remaining politically independent. More than 30 free trade agreements with more than 40 partners compliment the EFTA Convention and the Free Trade Agreement with the EU. Swiss free trade policy creates ideal conditions for trading goods and services with important partners. Agreements with all important industrial nations ensure that companies are only taxed in one country.



Liberal Labor Market

Image
Application situation, studio shot

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES: A SOLID PARTNERSHIP

Swiss labor law is very liberal and the labor market is subject to very few regulations. This is one of the factors that has made the Swiss economy one of the most productive in the world. Unemployment is low – especially in comparison with other countries. There is an active social partnership between employers and trade unions: conflicts are resolved around the negotiating table. Strikes are very rare in Switzerland; the last general strike occurred more than 100 years ago.

Swiss workers are generally well-educated and multilingual with above-average international experience. They are motivated, reliable, and dedicated employees. Switzerland is an attractive place to work for many foreign workers. A dual system applies to the employment market: persons pursuing gainful employment from EU/EFTA states get easy access to the Swiss labor market thanks to the agreement on the free movement of persons. Work permits for citizens of other countries (third-party states) are allocated by quota.

A MODEL SOCIAL INSURANCE SYSTEM

Switzerland has a large network of social insurance providers that offer extensive protection against risks with financial consequences to people who live and work in the country, as well as their families. Provision for retirement is based on three pillars: state, employer, and individual contributions. The individual shoulders a high degree of personal responsibility. This means that contributions for companies and insured parties are correspondingly moderate.



Sound Financial and Capital Market

Image
Paradeplatz, Zurich

EXCELLENT STABILITY AND PURCHASING POWER

Switzerland is among the countries with the highest purchasing power in the world. The stable Swiss franc is a central pillar of national competitiveness. Switzerland is a byword for economic and monetary stability. Even in times of global turmoil, prices change moderately and the Swiss franc is still one of the most sought-after currencies for reserve and diversification purposes.

SIX Swiss Exchange gives companies access to an international circle of investors. Those seeking capital will find committed long-term oriented backers offering advantageous conditions. The state also plays a role in promoting an investment-friendly climate, for example through tax relief for venture capital financing. Healthy competition in the banking sector testifies to the functioning Swiss money market, which also greatly benefits business.

THE SECURITY AND KNOW-HOW OF A LEADING FINANCIAL CENTER

Geneva and Zurich are among the most important financial locations in the world. This success is rooted in the stable and future-oriented basic conditions. Swiss companies like UBS, Swiss Re, and Zurich Financial Services enjoy an excellent reputation around the globe in their core competencies of private banking, asset management, and insurance. Private and business customers benefit in equal measure from the wide range of financial and insurance products and services. The Swiss stock exchange draws many domestic and foreign companies and is Europe's leading stock exchange for life science companies. Globally in-demand blue chips in corporations such as ABB, Alcon, Clariant, and Givaudan are traded here.



Attractive Taxes

Image
Tax return, stock image

AN INTERNATIONALLY COMPETITIVE TAX SITUATION

Switzerland's federal tax system is a successful model: taxes are determined and levied at the federal, cantonal, and municipal levels. Domestic tax competition plays a significant role in the very low rates of taxation. A debt brake introduced in 2003 obliges the government to maintain a balance between revenue and expenditure. The most attractive cantons in tax terms are international leaders with regard to both corporate taxes and the tax imposed on highly skilled workers.

MODERATE TAXES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES

On a national level, companies are taxed on profit after taxes with a corporate income tax rate of just 8.5%. Alongside the income taxes levied by the cantons and municipalities, a combined tax burden of between around 12% and around 22% applies, depending on the canton. If a company creates jobs in certain regions in Switzerland with an investment project, it may even be granted a full or partial tax exemption. Double taxation in Switzerland and abroad can in many cases be avoided based on double taxation treaties. Such agreements exist with all important trade partners, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, China, and many other countries.

The relationship between taxpayers and tax authorities is distinguished by its constructive, pragmatic thinking. Notable companies for tax consultancy and auditing also value this form of trusting cooperation.

With BEPS 2.0, the OECD wants to improve tax fairness between traditional and digital companies. Switzerland wants to adopt the OECD minimum taxation rules. In August 2022, the Swiss government opened the consultation on the ordinance regarding minimum taxation of large corporate groups (Minimum Taxation Ordinance, MindStV). This temporarily regulates minimum taxation in Switzerland by means of a supplementary tax. The new regulations are expected to enter into force on January 1, 2024.



Easy Start-Up Process

Image
Business plan, stock image

SET UP YOUR BUSINESS WITHOUT THE RED TAPE

Companies and individuals can set up a new business quickly and easily. In most cases it only takes two to four weeks to legally establish a company and the cost is usually between 3,000 and 9,500 Swiss francs.

International founders are very welcome and enjoy wide-ranging support. Under the principle of economic freedom (formerly freedom of trade), any person in Switzerland can essentially run a business, set up a company, or own a share in a company. The only requirement: an authorized signatory for the company must be domiciled in Switzerland; however, they do not necessarily need to be a Swiss citizen.

EASY TO MOVE IN

Switzerland Global Enterprise offers valuable support, providing potential foreign investors with information about the general framework, what Switzerland has to offer as a business location and the procedures for setting up a company in the country. If a company has clear criteria for its new location, the economic development agencies of the respective canton will help to coordinate the project locally. Banks, consultants, trust companies, and specialized lawyers can all provide assistance on specific issues. Extensive support is also available online, from tips on writing a business plan to registering a company in the commercial register.

Companies that relocate to Switzerland usually choose the legal form of an incorporated company, either an Aktiengesellschaft (stock corporation) or a Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung (limited liability company). It is possible to set up a Swiss subsidiary as a sole proprietorship, general partnership, or limited partnership online.



ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE

Switzerland inspires talented individuals to create and achieve. It's a country where work, innovation, creativity, leisure time, family, and recreation are optimally balanced. With a vibrant cultural life, beautiful scenery, and high-quality real estate, Switzerland offers a high standard of living.



Unique Quality of Life

Image
Neuenburg Old Town, Neuchâtel
Copyright by Vincent Bourrut

SPORT, LEISURE, RECREATION, AND CULTURE

From the High Alps to the fertile central plateau and the Mediterranean ambiance of Ticino, Switzerland has a richly diverse landscape that inspires both residents and visitors, all packed into a small area. In the summer you can swim in crystal-clear lakes and rivers and enjoy the fresh air. Yet the nearest town is never far away, because with the short distances you can reach any destination quickly and comfortably, whether by rail, bus, car, or boat. Switzerland's major cities, including Zurich, Geneva, Basel, and Bern, are ranked as some of the most attractive cities in the world in the Mercer quality of living survey. No wonder Switzerland has been found to be one of the world's happiest nations.

It's the perfect place for people who love sports and the outdoors. Summer or winter, the legendary Swiss mountains invite you to enjoy the stunning surroundings. The cultural life is characterized by diversity in a multilingual, cosmopolitan environment. Museums, foundations, galleries, festivals, and independent bodies promote both Swiss and international art. Switzerland hosts numerous cultural events with international appeal: the Montreux Jazz Festival, the Neuchatel International Fantastic Film Festival, Art Basel, Festival del film in Locarno, and the Zurich Film Festival, to name just a few.

FIRST-CLASS VENUES FOR SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES

First-class hotels with excellent facilities attract people seeking relaxation and well-being as well as seminar and conference participants. There are good reasons why the World Economic Forum (WEF) draws leading business and political figures to the paradise resort of Davos every year. By choosing to hold a business event in Switzerland, organizers are opting for variety and authenticity. And thanks to the short distances, there is never far to travel for things to see and do.



International Environment

Image
United Nations (UN), Geneva

COSMOPOLITANISM AND TOLERANCE

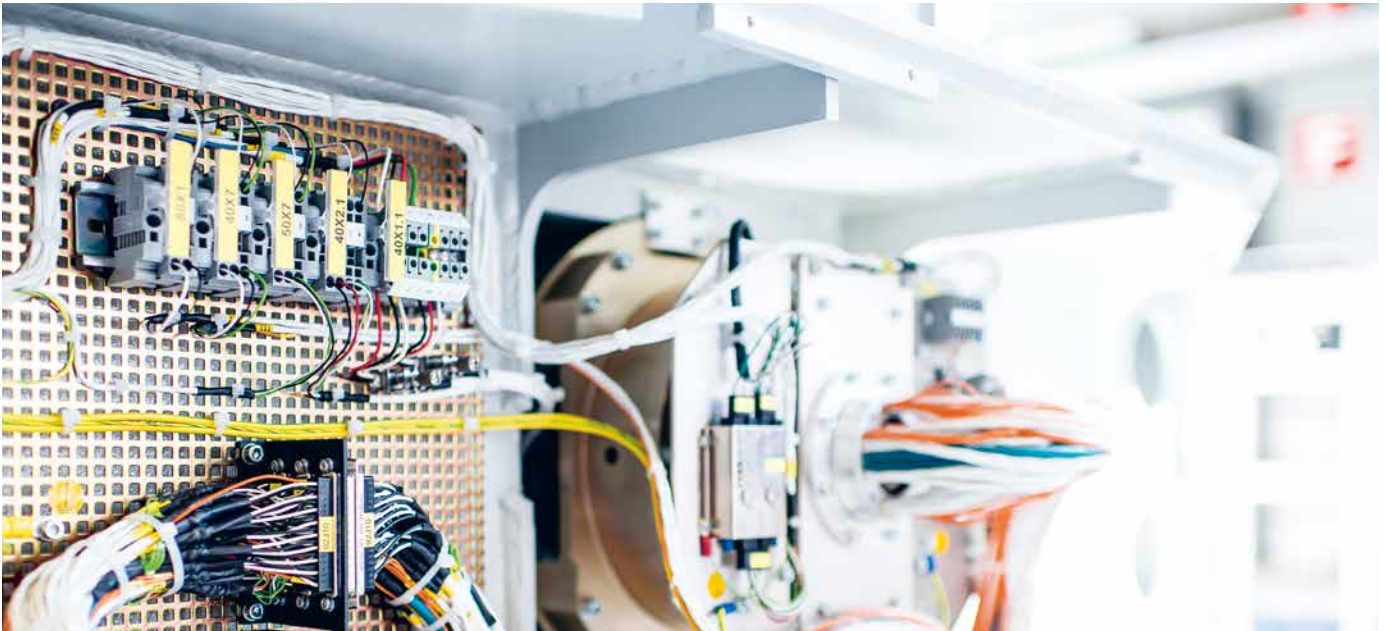
Foreign workers and companies value the international outlook of the Swiss, who are characterized by their tolerance and linguistic and cultural diversity. Switzerland is one of the most popular destinations for expats. Conversely, foreign workers and companies make an important contribution to Switzerland's prosperity.

Switzerland is an open country. For visits of up to three months a valid travel document is usually sufficient. Citizens of some countries require a visa, which can be obtained from the Swiss representation in their country. Residence and permanent residence permits are issued by the cantonal migration offices. A permit is required to work in Switzerland for more than three months. The Swiss employer will usually take care of the necessary formalities.

NEUTRALITY AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Diplomacy, humanitarian engagement, and international networking are at the heart of Switzerland's policy of neutrality. Switzerland has been a member of the United Nations since 2002 and has been actively involved in UN specialized agencies for much longer. Switzerland will also have a seat on the UN Security Council from 2023 to 2024. The country also participates in economic organizations such as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). In addition, it represents the interests of countries that do not maintain diplomatic relations with certain third countries.

As neutral territory, Switzerland is the ideal location for politically sensitive meetings and conferences. It is for this reason that so many international organizations, like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations, have their headquarters in Switzerland. Geneva is one of the most important centers of international cooperation in the world. It is also the headquarters of the World Trade Organization (WTO) – the legal and institutional foundation of the multilateral trading system and the only organization to regulate trade relations between states at global level. Switzerland is also home to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), UEFA, FIFA, and more than 60 other international sports organizations, in most cases the global or European headquarters.



Reliable Infrastructure

Image
Acutronic, Olten

MOBILITY AND SECURITY IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

Switzerland has excellent transport links. Three international airports in Zurich, Geneva, and Basel provide direct flights to all major destinations in Europe and overseas. Switzerland's excellent road network is one of the most dense in the world and is seamlessly linked to Europe's major routes. Urban and rural areas are connected by reliable rail and bus services. The Gotthard Base Tunnel, opened in 2016, is of huge importance not only for Switzerland but also for the whole of Europe. The longest railroad tunnel in the world connects people and goods more quickly, more frequently, and more reliably along the north-south axis. In terms of transport policy, this means a shift of heavy goods traffic from road to rail. Switzerland is thereby offering a high-quality solution to the constantly changing logistics requirements.

Whether you are looking for a private building for your business, a technology park or serviced offices, there is an enormous choice of high-quality, attractive commercial real estate. The regulations governing the purchase of real estate by foreigners have been much relaxed in recent years.

RELIABILITY AND COMPLETE COVERAGE

A well developed infrastructure meets the requirements of even the most demanding users in the information age. Leading IT companies such as Google, Huawei Technologies and the Walt Disney Company have chosen to locate in Switzerland and depend on the security and reliability of Swiss infrastructure and data technology. Switzerland also boasts a stable energy and water supply network that covers the entire country. As the "reservoir of Europe" the country makes significant use of renewable hydropower.

The Swiss healthcare system is among the best in the world. Complete medical care of the highest standard is provided by highly trained staff in medical practices, state-funded hospitals, and numerous private and specialist clinics. The Swiss have one of the longest life expectancies on the planet at an average of 83 years.