



Research & Development

# Chaos initiative *endangers* Switzerland as a driver of innovation

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## At a glance

- Innovation secures prosperity, competitiveness and jobs.
- Immigration is key for skilled workers, research and entrepreneurship.
- The Chaos initiative slows down innovation and weakens Switzerland as a business location.

Innovation is the foundation of Swiss prosperity. It keeps companies competitive, generates new products and creates high-quality jobs. The fact that Switzerland has been the most innovative country in the world for 15 years (see [Innovation Index 2025](#)) is no coincidence, but the result of an open, efficient and internationally networked location.

People are central to this innovative strength. Progress is created by highly qualified specialists, researchers, developers and entrepreneurs. Knowledge is the decisive raw material, especially in technology-intensive sectors. Because such talent is in short supply in this country, the innovation location is dependent on immigration. Restrictions on access to urgently needed skilled workers, as envisaged by the Chaos Initiative, would noticeably impair Switzerland's innovative capacity and weaken the business location in the long term.

The importance of immigration in research is particularly clear: around one in two researchers in Switzerland comes from abroad<sup>1</sup>, and in the pharmaceutical industry this figure is as high as two thirds. Without this international talent pool, cutting-edge research on this scale would not be possible.

## Immigration drives innovation

Switzerland has always benefited from immigration. As a country with few natural resources, its success is based on talent, entrepreneurial spirit and openness. Numerous internationally successful Swiss companies have also been founded on the initiative of immigrants. Examples such as Nestlé, Swatch and ABB are perfect examples of how immigrants have used their entrepreneurial spirit to build companies in this country that continue to create jobs, drive innovation and shape Switzerland's prosperity to this day.

Even today, foreign specialists make an above-average contribution to Switzerland's innovation performance: They found around 39 percent of all companies, shape the dynamics of the start-up ecosystem with around half of all start-ups and are behind 78 percent of Swiss unicorns (non-listed start-ups with a valuation of over one billion US dollars). They are also involved in 37 percent of patent applications, with Germans making up the largest group. International talent therefore not only strengthens the start-up scene, but also the technological development and global networking of the innovation system.

## Chaos initiative damages highly networked innovation location

In light of this, the SVP's chaos initiative is harmful. Rigid upper limits on immigration misjudge the reality of a highly networked innovation location. They make access to urgently needed skilled workers more difficult and jeopardize Switzerland's competitiveness. In a global competition for talent, isolation would be a clear disadvantage for the location.

Switzerland thrives on openness, excellence and international exchange. Anyone who wants to secure its innovative strength and enable the prosperity of tomorrow must see immigration as part of the solution.</p></div>



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**1. comes from abroad:** Patrick Leisibach, Patrick Schnell, Laurenz Grabher (2023): Grenzenlos innovativ. Die Bedeutung der Erwerbsmigration für den Innovationsstandort Schweiz, S. 24-26. <https://www.avenir-suisse.ch/publication/grenzenlos-innovativ/>

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