

Swiss innovation needs **reliable relationships**

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At a glance

- A new study by the SERI shows: Switzerland's participation in the EU Framework Programs for Research and Innovation has substantial impacts.
- Switzerland is well-positioned: International cooperation drives innovation and ensures competitiveness.
- Bilateral Agreements III are crucial for a stable association.

A [new impact study by SERI](#) commissioned by Parliament shows that Switzerland's participation in the EU's Framework Programs for Research and Innovation has substantial impacts on science, the economy, and society. The study focuses in particular on Horizon 2020, based on a broad survey of researchers and companies.

Switzerland is among the most successful participants

During the Horizon 2020 program period (2014–2020), Swiss participants received approximately 3 billion Swiss francs and took part in nearly 5,000 projects. With a success rate of 17 percent, Switzerland ranks among the most successful participants. About half of the participants were universities, and over a third were from the private sector, with a particularly high proportion of SMEs.

Horizon plays a central role in promoting research and innovation: For researchers, it is the second most important source of funding after the SNF. For companies, Horizon is actually the most important source of funding for research and innovation—and is therefore crucial to their competitiveness (see Figure 1). At the same time, EU funding has a strong leverage effect: Grants such as those from the European Research Council (ERC), the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), or the European Innovation Council (EIC) facilitate access to additional public funds and mobilize private investment. For startups in particular, this serves as an important quality indicator.

Figure 1: Importance of Funding Sources for Researchers and Companies

Source: SER, KOF Survey (2026)

Innovative Strength Through International Knowledge and Technology Transfer

However, the added value goes far beyond funding. The programs provide access to international expertise, research infrastructure, and networks. They foster collaboration between academia and industry, increase the visibility of Swiss stakeholders, and accelerate the transfer of research into marketable applications. Funded projects also enhance the international reputation of researchers and companies.

Risk-Taking as a Key Factor in Technological Breakthroughs

EU programs play a key role in translating research into marketable applications. They enable higher-risk projects that are often difficult to implement at the national level. It is precisely this openness to higher-risk projects that creates room for technological breakthroughs and allows Swiss stakeholders to participate in European technology and standardization processes at an early stage.

At the same time, an increasingly complex regulatory environment can slow down high-risk innovations and shift incentives toward incremental rather than radical improvements. This makes reliable and innovation-friendly framework conditions all the more important for securing Switzerland's innovative strength in the long term.

Horizon Europe as a Strategic Pillar of Switzerland's Innovative Strength

Ultimately, the study shows that the positive effects of EU research programs can only be fully realized through continuous participation. Interruptions weaken networking, visibility, and competitiveness. From a business perspective, the conclusion is therefore clear: Horizon Europe is a central pillar of Switzerland's innovative strength. A stable association requires reliable relations with the EU. The Bilateral Agreements III are crucial for this. Only in this way can Switzerland secure its leading position in the long term.

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