International Market Access, Regulation, Economy & Society

The Neutrality Initiative Poses *Uncertainty and Risks*

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At a glance

- Neutrality has always been an important tool for Switzerland to safeguard its interests as effectively and flexibly as possible in a changing global environment. This should remain possible in the future as well.
- In contrast, the so-called Neutrality Initiative calls for a risky break with this time-tested practice. It calls for a rigid definition of neutrality with strict restrictions.
- The initiative thus restricts Switzerland’s ability to act in foreign policy, undermines our security, and creates uncertainty and risks for our companies.

The so-called Neutrality Initiative seeks to enshrine a formalistic and rigid concept of neutrality in the Constitution. The initiative demands far more than merely the country's neutrality. It calls for a ban on military alliances and even a broad refusal to impose economic sanctions against belligerent states. For more than 175 years, the Swiss Constitution has allowed for a flexible interpretation of neutrality. This has enabled the Federal Council and Parliament to respond quickly to geopolitical developments in the country's best interests. This proven capacity to act must not now be jeopardized.

Corsets Pose a Threat to National Security

Replacing the current flexibility with a rigid regulatory framework would have far-reaching consequences. Rigid regulations would no longer allow Switzerland to optimally advance its interests in a complex international environment. For example, a strict limitation on cooperation with partner countries—such as in the exchange of expertise, education, research collaborations, or cyber defense—would have a direct impact on Switzerland's security. Our country would risk becoming isolated internationally. The initiative was launched with the aim of enhancing the country's security. In reality, however, it would have the opposite effect. It would make it impossible to respond to modern forms of threats that do not stop at the border. Extensive isolation from other countries and a ban on cooperation with defense alliances would severely weaken Switzerland.

Risks to Foreign Trade and Market Access

Switzerland as a business hub thrives on openness and connectivity. An isolationist policy would push Switzerland to the sidelines and thereby jeopardize these strengths. Innovation would suffer as a result. Free access to markets and stable economic relations are crucial for prosperity and employment. Especially in times of crisis, rigid self-restraint would have a detrimental effect on Switzerland and Swiss companies. Under the terms of the initiative, Switzerland would no longer be able to support even broadly supported international sanctions; only UN sanctions could be adopted. A neutrality that does not allow for peaceful countermeasures—even in the face of the most serious violations of international law—in cooperation with our close allies, breaks with our values and our tradition of upholding international law. The country's reputation would suffer, and Switzerland and our companies could thus come under pressure from the international community—and consequently from our most important trading partners—as violators of sanctions. In the worst-case scenario, Switzerland could even become a target of sanctions itself.

An Unnecessary Break from Established Practice

This initiative restricts our ability to act, undermines our security, and harms our industrial and financial sectors. Yet the core of the initiative is completely unnecessary. After all, neutrality is already enshrined in the Constitution. It is internationally recognized as perpetual and armed. Switzerland already refrains from participating in military conflicts involving third countries and does not belong to any military alliance. The so-called Neutrality Initiative thus calls for a break with Switzerland's proven practice of neutrality without any objective necessity—with potentially negative consequences for Switzerland as a business location. The Federal Council and Parliament are therefore right to recommend rejecting the Neutrality Initiative.

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