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# British-Swiss relations: on the right channel

At the second meeting of the Swiss-UK Trade and Investment Council on 15 March, discussions deepened on important future topics in the bilateral relationship. In addition to trade and investment issues, the Council also discussed cooperation potential in the field of innovation.

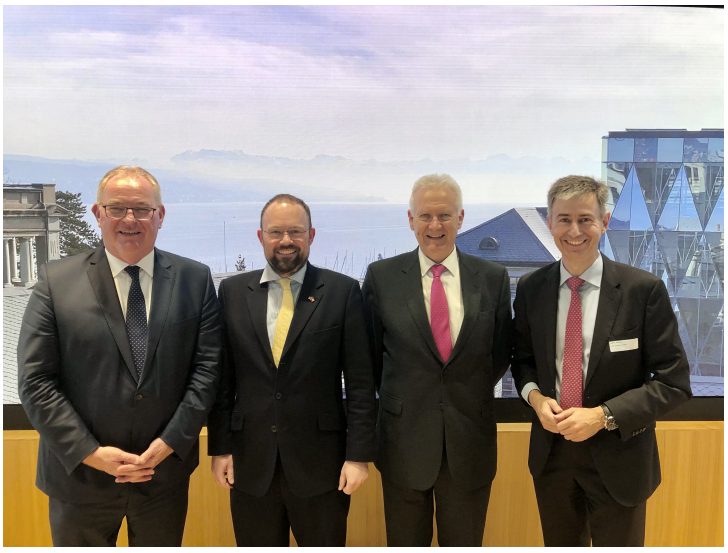
The recent bilateral relations between Switzerland and the United Kingdom had to develop under special circumstances. They "had to" because Brexit has shaken up the contractual basis of the relationship. Today, however, there is no trace of the initial uncertainties left; on the contrary: there is hardly any other partner country with which the two sides currently maintain similarly dynamic economic relations.

## Business and administration thinking ahead

The 2nd meeting of the bilateral Trade and InvestmentCouncil also gave strong testimony to this. Under the leadership of economiesuisse and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), around 40 high-ranking representatives from business and administration in both countries met in Zurich on 15 March. Current and future directions in bilateral trade in goods and services as well as mobility issues were discussed. These included negotiations on a comprehensive financial services agreement and a modernized free trade agreement, as well as an expansion of the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. In addition, existing hurdles for companies in bilateral trade in goods and services were addressed vis-à-vis the authorities. These relate, for example, to rules of origin or national regulations in the area of industrial goods.

**Happy faces**
Swiss and UK participants from business, academia and politics

However, economiesuisse President Christoph Mäder also recalled at the Council meeting: "We need not only new trade agreements, but also new ideas. As two of the most innovative countries in the world, we should therefore rightly explore the possibilities of strengthening our joint innovation capacities." Within the framework of three bilateral innovation workshops in the run-up to the Council, Swiss and British association and company representatives also identified important cooperation potentials in the fields of research and development, finance and intellectual property protection.



**Council Chairmen and Honorary Councellors**
Christoph Maeder, Chairman economiesuisse
H.E. James Squire, British Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein
Brian McBride, President Confederation of British Industry
H.E. Markus Leitner, Swiss Ambassador to the United Kingdom

## Impetus in a difficult competitive environment

Switzerland and the United Kingdom have continuously developed their bilateral relations. But at the moment, companies in both countries are challenged more than ever to position themselves in the best possible way in an increasingly challenging, geopolitically tense competitive environment. This makes the close exchange between business and politics in both countries all the more important – now and in the future. The Trade and Investment Council can provide important impetus in this regard.

**Innovation Workshop on Intellectual Property**
Matthias Schaeli, Head of International Trade Relations , Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property
Stephan Mumenthaler, Director General, scienceindustries
Ben Lucas, Managing Director, MSD
Luke Jessop, Deputy Director Intellectual Property and Procurement, UK Department for Business and Trade