

Executive Summary

- The European Union is Switzerland's most important economic partner. Today's inextricable economic linkages make sound relations between Switzerland and the EU indispensable for Swiss business. Businesses depend on a stable and economically friendly environment. The primary purpose of Swiss European policy is to secure and protect Switzerland as a business location.
- Given the political changes in Europe, Switzerland's European policy is in need of review. In this context, future trends developing within the EU that may have repercussions on Switzerland shall be taken into consideration. Switzerland must be in a position which is flexible enough to respond to such developments.
- The bilateral approach to the EU has proved to be successful. It is now of immediate importance that the existing agreements between the two sides are ratified and implemented. At the same time, a regular and provident revision of the agreements is necessary. Furthermore, any emerging problems have to be solved in a pragmatic and timely way.
- Independent of the course Switzerland will embark on with regard to its European policy, it is of vital significance that the EU remains economically strong and that its institutions are endowed with a business-oriented legal framework.
- An accession of Switzerland to the EU is not in the interest of Swiss business given that its most crucial concerns are fulfilled by the bilateral agreements. The increase in efficiency promised by an accession to the EU would by far be outweighed by numerous drawbacks in the area of economic policy (monetary policy, financial and fiscal policy, labour and social policy).
- Partial integration solutions such as an accession to the European Economic Area or to the European Customs Union do not represent any favourable targets in terms of European policy. A "light version" of an accession would require the respective willingness of the EU.
- From the viewpoint of Swiss business, the progression along the bilateral path is not easy and can be susceptible to shortcomings. Nevertheless, it is currently the only viable solution. The bilateral approach is secured by state treaties; it allows a solution-oriented and pragmatic cooperation and is acceptable to a majority.
- While the question of Switzerland's relations to the EU is of great significance, we must not lose sight of the global sphere of action of Swiss business. Top priority must be given to the conclusion of the current WTO Doha round. Alongside of a multilateral approach, bilateral economic relations with important non-European trade partners must be fostered and enhanced.
- Reforms must be expedited rigorously in Switzerland. An open domestic market strengthens Swiss competitiveness, stimulates economic growth and creates scope for action when it comes to international agreements.