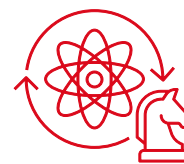


Research – a strategic investment in Switzerland



This text summarises the key points of a longer [position paper](#).

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Switzerland's prosperity depends largely on its ability to generate, disseminate, and apply knowledge. Research is a cornerstone of our country's wealth, and public research funding represents an essential strategic investment in safeguarding Switzerland's prosperity and competitiveness. It is therefore critical that the related funding measures are maintained consistently at the requisite levels.

① Research is a long-term investment

Scientific research refers to the processes undertaken to increase knowledge, deepen understanding, develop new scientific theories, and create new applications. A distinction is generally made between two main types of research:

- Basic research, which aims to acquire new knowledge and develop or test new scientific theories without anticipating an immediate application. It is driven by a desire to understand, it is long-term in nature, and it is largely dependent on public funding.
- Applied research, which aims to acquire new knowledge with a specific, practical objective in mind. It is generally conducted over the course of a few years and supported by both public and private financing.

There is a continuum between the two types of research: they are linked in a dynamic interrelationship and each draws benefits from findings generated by the other.

② How society benefits from research

Research delivers solutions to societal problems

Research enables the development of solutions for meeting the challenges of today and tomorrow. Such findings are generated through interdisciplinary and international collaborations as well as through a diversity of approaches and cultures. The development of filters made from innovative materials to remove PFAS from water, a 3D simulation model of landslides, and a new method for detecting breast cancer based on a blood test are examples of how researchers in Switzerland are addressing current societal challenges.

Research safeguards sovereignty and security

In today's uncertain geopolitical context, which is exacerbated by the growing danger of industrial espionage, a country's ability to generate its own scientific knowledge is a key priority. Research enables Switzerland to reduce its technological dependence, strengthen its security, and anticipate economic and societal transformations.

Research strengthens national and regional economies

In Switzerland, every franc invested in research generates at least three francs in economic returns. Through collaborations with the private sector, participation in international research programmes, and the creation of spin-offs in particular, universities are a pillar of the country's innovation and economic competitiveness. They also contribute directly to the prosperity of the regions they are based in.

Research enables evidence-based decision-making

Research provides policy-makers with a reliable, factual basis for developing evidence-based public policies, thereby ensuring the effectiveness, legitimacy, and acceptance of policy decisions. In addition, research findings help to inform public debate, also in the face of misinformation. Through mechanisms such as reproducibility, peer review, and the responsible use of AI, research equips itself with tools to detect and curb fraud, thereby contributing to the reliability of scientific knowledge.

Research informs education

Research shapes education by updating knowledge and enriching educational content and tools. In return, education practices disseminate these developments, encourage critical thinking, and foster innovation. Research also contributes to the quality of the entire education system and to the population's ability to understand, critically assess, and make use of research findings.

Research is a breeding ground for talent

Research-based education leads to the training of qualified professionals in fields of strategic importance to the country. These specialists are essential for developing new solutions in the interest of meeting contemporary challenges.

③ What research needs to flourish

Research requires government investment

Research, particularly basic research, is a long-term endeavour that involves uncertain outcomes. This means it cannot be adequately funded by private-sector actors, whose business models are based on a more immediate return on investment. Public funding is therefore a critical component in a knowledge base on which private-sector innovation can later be built. Moreover, public research funding also ensures that scientists and scholars remain unbiased by commercial interests. Given the long-term nature of research, public authorities must invest continuously in research and not wait until the first effects of underinvestment become evident.

Research depends on academic freedom

Academic freedom is a fundamental prerequisite for credible and independent research. It enables researchers to explore new and sensitive areas without political or economic pressure and to take risks in the pursuit of innovation. Academic freedom is also a key indicator of a country's democratic health, and the principle is enshrined in Switzerland's Federal Constitution.

Research calls for interdisciplinary exchange

Research thrives on exchange between different disciplines. While the natural sciences provide data and technical solutions, their application depends largely on human, social, economic, and political factors that are analysed in the humanities and social sciences.

Research needs qualified young talent

Research also needs a well-qualified new generation of researchers and is therefore dependent on a high-quality education system that provides favourable conditions for the promotion of young talent. This applies to the entire education system, from primary school through vocational training to the various types of higher education institutions.