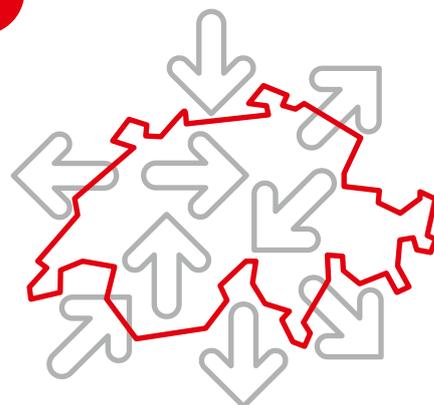


THE FEDERAL PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

Keeping Switzerland attractive for business



The Federal Promotion Activities ensure sound conditions and provide incentives for economic activity and private initiatives.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO
Promotion Activities Directorate

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This brochure contains information about the goals, tasks and activities of the individual sections of the Promotion Activities Directorate and the organisations it runs.



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FOREWORD

Dear reader,

Switzerland is an attractive business location. Despite the difficult global economic climate, Swiss businesses have done remarkably well in recent years. That is by no means self-evident, and is largely due to the outstanding conditions in place: the liberal labour market, good infrastructure, the dual-track system of vocational and professional education and training and a stable legal system, to name but a few.

Of course we have no intention of resting on our laurels. We are confronted with a series of major challenges: the ever increasing globalisation, the economy's adaptation to structural change, but also the strong value of the Swiss franc.

As Director of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, it is my main concern to ensure that the conditions for the economy in Switzerland are continually improved and adapted to the changing circumstances. At the national level, our efforts are aimed at strengthening Switzerland's ability to remain attractive for businesses, assuring competitive conditions and maintaining a liberal labour market policy. In terms of foreign economic policy, we work on developing and consolidating economic relations with the European Union and non-European states.

The Promotion Activities Directorate plays a key role in that regard. It promotes Switzerland as a business location in overseas markets, promotes exports and provides export risk insurance, implements regional policies, improves conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises and the tourism sector. This brochure provides information about the goals, tasks and activities of the individual sections of the Directorate and the organisations it runs.

Switzerland shall remain an attractive and powerful business location. The Federal Promotion Activities are an important instrument in this regard, one that we wish to continue to apply, in the future in an even more targeted manner. I look forward to our collaboration so that Switzerland may retain its leading position.



Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch
State Secretary and Director of SECO

Berne, March 2015



“Switzerland shall remain an attractive and efficient business location. Switzerland's Promotion Activities are an important instrument in this regard, one that we wish to continue to apply, in the future in an even more targeted manner.”



THE FEDERAL PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

SWITZERLAND

ranks among the world's most competitive countries, today.



For a competitive economy

Switzerland is an attractive and powerful business location. Through its Promotion Activities, the federal government aims at maintaining and building on these strengths. Businesses should be able to maximise their potential and hold their own in international competition. Promotion Activities help to assure that the right framework is in place, and its instruments create incentives for business activities and private initiatives.

Why the need for Promotion Activities?

Today, Switzerland ranks among the world's most competitive countries. Nevertheless, the Swiss economy faces a number of major challenges, such as the strong value of the Swiss franc, but also the ongoing long-term economic structural changes. The globalisation of capital, goods, services and people, as well as the rising demands of increasingly knowledge-based economies, are challenges for firms and their workforce, and intensify the competition among business locations. Examples of other economic and social challenges include population growth and the growing demand in Switzerland for space and resources – both of which are due, at least in part, to the positive development of the Swiss economy. The Federal Promotion Activities seek to promote economic growth that is based on innovation and higher productivity, makes better use of the available potential (infrastructure, workforce, networks), creates prospects for regional development, and is compatible with the principles of sustainable development.

What role do Promotion Activities play?

Swiss businesses mainly generate the competitiveness required for economic growth on their own. The state's role, first and foremost, is to ensure that a good framework is in place; for example in the labour market, infrastructure, education, research and innovation. There are a number of other factors that influence a company's competitiveness. Businesses benefit from a highly skilled workforce, developed markets, a high level of expertise, a high density of suppliers, and the being close to or having many important customers. These external factors are characterised as locational advantages, and they have a positive impact on the concentration of economic activity and the creation of local economic networks. These are particularly important when it comes to innovation, because they speed up the process of knowledge transfer and valorisation. Thanks to the advantages of scale and scope, they result in higher productivity, which in turn reinforces the locational advantages, benefitting existing and newly settled firms alike.

What aims do Promotion Activities pursue?

The Federal Promotion Activities are aimed at boosting Switzerland's appeal, performance and potential as a business location, and thus maintaining and enhancing the competitiveness of the country's SME-led economy in the long run. They build on the inherent strengths, support the process of structural change and create incentives for collaboration among relevant protagonists. All the activities are in addition to those of private protagonists and the cantons.

What Promotion Activities instruments are there?

The Promotion Activities' instruments create incentives and in turn trigger private initiatives. They require a personal contribution on the part of the beneficiary. The various instruments are grouped into the following four main areas: SME Policy, Tourism Policy, Regional Policy and Export and Location Promotion. The Promotion Activities Directorate fosters close cooperation through the various instruments and across policy areas.

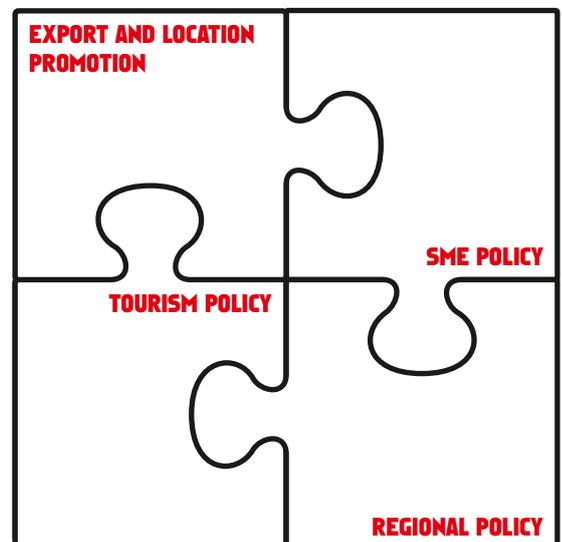
What priorities does Promotion Activities set?

Between 2016 and 2019, the Federal Promotion Activities will focus on the following:

- **SME Policy** will continue to expand e-government services to reduce the administrative burden on SMEs, improve their efficiency and thus increase their competitiveness.
- **Tourism Policy** will see the implementation of the Stimulus Programme for Swiss Tourism, which shall support the structural change, accelerated by the Second Home Initiative and the strong value of the Swiss franc, and cushion its consequences.
- The Stimulus Programme for Swiss Tourism is one key element of the **Regional Policy**, which shall also support innovation processes through Regional Innovation Systems (RIS). This involves continued and improved coordination between protagonists and between offers promoting innovation, and maximising regional potential for innovation. This should increase regional value added and competitiveness, create development prospects in rural areas and reinforce their links to the urban hubs of growth.
- In **Export and Location Promotion**, the services offered by the association Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE), which the Confederation entrusted to support export-oriented firms, will be tailored even better to the industry-specific needs of its customers. Furthermore, sectors which generate particularly high added value should benefit from greater support than to date, both in terms of accessing foreign markets and attracting businesses to Switzerland.



Dr Eric Jakob
Ambassador, Head of the Promotion Activities Directorate



SME POLICY

99.7%

of Swiss companies employ less than 250 staff.



Good conditions for SMEs

Two-thirds of the jobs in our country are provided by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). To be able to compete in a global market, SMEs rely heavily on good conditions. The federal SME Policy wants to shape these conditions in the best possible way.

The SME Policy is cross-sectorial and affects virtually every area of federal policy. The SME Policy section, in the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, coordinates these policies and implements individual elements, focusing on reducing the administrative burden and financing companies.

How the federal government promotes SMEs

Company funding

Funding is an important element for an enterprise's success. The federal government and the cantons provide SMEs with funding on a complementary basis. The SME Credit Market working group, with representatives from the economy and the federal government and chaired by the SECO, continually monitors the availability of loans to SMEs. Furthermore, the confederation works to continually improve the conditions, particularly in the area of venture capital. [For further information go to: www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Topics > Promotion Activities > SME policy > SME financing

Loan Guarantees for SMEs

The confederation assists efficient and viable SMEs in obtaining bank loans by funding loan guarantee cooperatives. They can offer the banks loan guarantees for lending to SMEs. In Switzerland there are three regional loan guarantee cooperatives, as well as a national loan guarantee organisation for women:

- BG Mitte, Loan Guarantee Cooperative for SMEs
- BG OST, Loan Guarantee Cooperative for SMEs
- Coopérative romande de cautionnement (loan guarantee cooperative in the French-speaking region of Switzerland)
- Guarantee Cooperative SAFFA for Women

The cooperatives vouch for loans up to CHF 500,000. The federal government covers up to 65 per cent of the cooperatives' loss risk and assumes some of the administrative costs. [For further information go to: www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Topics > Promotion Activities > SME policy > Loan Guarantees for SMEs



Loan Guarantees

Since it was reorganised in 2007, the instrument of commercially-oriented loan guarantees has developed extremely well. Between 2007 and 2013 the volume of loan guarantees increased from CHF 102 million to CHF 227 million. Loan guarantees help potentially successful SMEs to get started, grow and sort out business succession arrangements. Around 1,700 SMEs in Switzerland currently benefit from such loan guarantees.



Maren Gnädinger, Xocolatl Ltd., Basel, owner and CEO

“My customers continually rave about the wonderful smell of chocolate in my shop. I am delighted to hear that, but must also confess that my nose has become rather used to it and it’s no longer quite as noticeable. However, I still love chocolate more than anything else. My shop now stocks over 500 different chocolate products, all additive-free and from ethically and socially fair trade. I also sell a proprietary product range which is very popular with my customers.

The fact that Xocolatl Ltd. exists in its current form is also thanks to SAFFA, the loan guarantee cooperative for women in Switzerland. They supported my business plan and made sure I got a bank loan, so that in 2005 I was able to make my dream of a chocolate speciality shop come true. I had the idea while reading an article by the Swiss writer and journalist Max Küng, where he talked about shops selling chocolate with a cocoa content of up to 100 per cent. My business is now doing so well that I will soon be opening a new, bigger shop-cum-café. SAFFA will again provide support with a loan guarantee.”

“The fact that Xocolatl Ltd. exists in its current form is also thanks to SAFFA, the loan guarantee cooperative for women in Switzerland.”





Reducing the administrative burden

Excessive red tape is poison for the economy. Switzerland's comparatively streamlined administration is one of its main advantages as a business location. However, there is still room for improvement. Companies in Switzerland expect more relief, and other countries are also improving their conditions as business locations.

SMEs in particular suffer under high regulatory costs and red tape. SECO's SME Policy section draws up a set of specific relief measures that are submitted to the Federal Council and incorporated in the report on reducing the administrative burden for companies. In this report, which is published every four years, the Federal Council takes stock and adopts new measures, for example in the areas of VAT, the Swiss Code of Obligations or construction law. [For further information go to: www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Topics > Promotion Activities > SME policy > Reducing the administrative burden

SME Forum

The SME Forum is an extra-parliamentary commission of experts, which participates in consultations on federal laws or ordinances from the SMEs' point of view. If a bill were to introduce potentially burdening excessive regulations, the SME Forum submits proposals to the federal agencies on simplifying these regulations. Almost 70 per cent of the recommendations made in recent years were implemented. The members of the SME Forum are: at least seven entrepreneurs from various sectors, one member from the Conference of Cantonal Directors of Economic Affairs, and one representative from the Swiss Start-up centres. One of the co-chairs is from the SECO, which also provides the secretariat. [For further information go to: www.sme-forum.ch](http://www.sme-forum.ch)

E-Government

Simplified electronic licensing, application and registering processes are important for reducing red tape. Thanks to e-government, anything the public administration used to process on paper can be done electronically today. SECO provides online services, such as the SME portal, the start-up platform StartBiz or the licence database, all with the aim of reducing the administrative burden on companies. [For further information go to: www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Topics > Promotion Activities > SME policy > E-Economy / E-Government ■



SME portal www.sme.admin.ch

The website www.sme.admin.ch was one of Switzerland's first e-government products. It is designed as the SMEs' central point of access and provides practical information and tools for small and medium-sized enterprises – from starting up to finding a successor. It also provides links to online services of other authorities, for example the Debt Enforcement Office, obtaining excerpts from the commercial or criminal registers, trademark applications and the customs declaration.



Start-up platform www.StartBiz.ch

StartBiz is an online platform that supports and simplifies company start-ups in Switzerland. Entrepreneurs can register their companies conveniently from home. StartBiz helps them to register with the Old Age Insurance OAI, the commercial register, Value Added Tax VAT and accident insurance. According to a study by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences in Winterthur, users can halve the time usually required for these processes.



Caspar Eberhard, Appenzeller Gurt, Zürich, owner

“I had the idea of marketing Appenzell belts via the internet while I was on a world trip four years ago. Travelling through the USA, Australia and New Zealand, people kept asking me about my Appenzell belt, which had been part of my everyday outfit for ten years. They were amazed by the quality of the craftsmanship and the trendy look of the belt. I soon realised the hidden market potential.

In January 2013 I turned my business idea into reality: I founded the firm ‘Appenzeller Gurt – Swiss Hand-made Belts’ and started selling handmade Appenzell belts and dog collars online. For the manufacturing I turned to the Appenzell-based saddle maker Daniel Fuchs, whose family had been making belts for three generations.

I was really glad to be able to submit the numerous registration forms you need to start a company via the www.startbiz.ch website. Until shortly before, I had been employed by another company so I would never have found the time to hand in all the necessary forms to the various agencies in person. The SME portal also proved very useful in the start-up phase: I found some helpful tips in just a few clicks. That allowed me to do a lot myself and save money in the process.”

“I was really glad to be able to submit the numerous registration forms you need to start a company via the www.startbiz.ch website.”



TOURISM POLICY

TOURISM

is a key sector of the Swiss economy.



First class tourist destination with great potential

Breath-taking scenery and cultural specialities combined with an excellent infrastructure and quality-conscious protagonists: all of this makes Switzerland a first class tourist destination with great growth potential. Switzerland's Tourism Policy aims at making the most of this potential.

Tourism is a key sector of the Swiss economy. It plays a major role, especially in the alpine region, and offers potential for growth. The Federal Council want to make the most of this potential in the future: new jobs should be created in the Swiss tourism sector and regional value added increased.

How the federal government promotes tourism in Switzerland

Growth strategy

In its growth strategy for Switzerland as a tourist destination, the Federal Council has set the framework for Tourism Policy: it wants to improve the conditions for tourism industry businesses, while promoting tourist destinations in a targeted manner.

Improved conditions

In order to improve the conditions, Tourism Policy focuses firstly on strategic issue management. The aim is to identify the key issues for tourism early on and to constructively deal with them in cooperation with the relevant partners. Secondly, Tourism Policy recognises the interests of tourism in the form of cross-sectorial tasks since tourism is directly affected by many decisions taken in other areas, such as in agricultural policy, spatial development or environmental policy.



Tourism Policy's Stimulus Programme 2016–2019

The stimulus programme seeks in particular to support the tourism industry to cushion the consequences of the temporarily accelerated pace of structural change following the Second Home Initiative. In addition, it contributes to mastering the challenges presented by the strong value of the Swiss franc. The programme comprises four measures:

- To modernise the hotel industry
- To strengthen quality and product development
- To optimise structures and strengthen co-operations
- To increase knowledge building and diffusion



Swiss Society for Hotel Credit (SGH)

The SGH is a cooperative established under public law. It provides, alongside private lenders, loans to hotel establishments in tourism areas and spa towns on a complementary basis. Loans are therefore always granted in cooperation with and supplementary to those from private lenders. The aim of providing risk capital at favourable interest rates is to improve the capital structure of those businesses with healthy revenues but insufficient capital. In addition, the SGH offers consulting services in the whole country. For further information go to: www.sgh.ch



Benoit Greindl, Montagne Alternative, Commeire (VS), co-founder and CEO

“The Montagne Alternative project is dear to me and my business partner, Ludovic Orts. In 2006, Ludovic was hiking through the canton of Valais. Above the village Orsières he came across the hamlet Commeire and immediately fell in love with the spectacular location and the tranquillity of the place. Shortly thereafter, after he had purchased two old barns in Commeire, Ludovic phoned me. Together, we developed the idea of Montagne Alternative: modern, stylish holiday apartments and restaurants in traditional barns in the midst of beautiful and unspoilt surroundings; a place to take a step back and take time for personal reflection.

At first, our idea was ridiculed, but a positive assessment from the Swiss Society for Hotel Credit (SGH) opened the doors to the authorities. In addition to the SGH, financing was provided by private shareholders, the Canton of Valais, the CCF Centre of Financial Excellence and the Cantonal Bank of Valais. Today, Montagne Alternative has a total of 30 modern guest rooms in nine barns. Two more barns have meeting rooms and a restaurant. All buildings use CO₂-neutral energy, and 75 per cent of the food we use is produced by us or regionally. Although this project is now complete, we still have many more unconventional ideas we would like to realise.”

“A positive assessment from the Swiss Society for Hotel Credit (SGH) opened the doors to the authorities for us.”





Attractive tourist destination

The policy measures to promote Switzerland as a tourist destination want to make the offers more attractive and focus on two funding instruments: Innotour and the Swiss Society for Hotel Credit (SGH). The Federal Tourism Policy also strengthens Switzerland's market presence, mainly through financial contributions to Switzerland Tourism.

Switzerland Tourism

On behalf of the federal government, Switzerland Tourism promotes Switzerland as a travel and tourist destination. The aim is to attract both domestic and foreign visitors. For a number of years it has been successfully pursuing a dual strategy in foreign markets, with activities focussing on the one hand on key growth markets such as China, India, Southeast Asia, the Gulf States and Russia, while on the other hand concentrating on winning back European visitors. A significant amount of funding comes from the federal government, with membership fees and other third-party funds providing additional funding. [For further information go to: www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)

Strong brand

Switzerland Tourism is primarily responsible for marketing Switzerland as a tourist destination. This includes brand management, market cultivation and customer information. Switzerland Tourism develops, maintains and strengthens the tourist image of Switzerland as a brand to ensure that the country is perceived as one of the most prized travel and holiday destinations. In 2013, Switzerland Tourism triggered 16 per cent of the decisions on overnight stays in the Swiss hotel and holiday accommodation industry, which translated into eleven million overnight stays or sales of two billion Swiss francs.

A coordinated and modern approach

To present Switzerland as a tourist destination in a cohesive and effective manner all over the world, Switzerland Tourism wins the individual resorts, the numerous businesses and industries depending on tourism to use a common platform, which it also coordinates. Switzerland Tourism has been extremely successful in pursuing this cooperative approach and today has approximately 700 members. In addition, Switzerland Tourism advises individual resorts and tourism organisations in designing and marketing their offers, such as through the "Enjoy Switzerland" programme, focusing mainly on services that are not offered by private commercial providers. ■



Innotour

Innotour supports tourism innovation and collaboration aimed at strengthening the competitiveness of Swiss tourism. It also promotes knowledge building and therefore education and further training as well as information transfer. The majority of the funding is used for national projects and task coordination on a national basis. The aim of promoting innovation is to improve existing services and create opportunities for new offers. Promoting collaboration also creates synergies, lowers costs and boosts customer benefits. [For further information go to: www.seco.admin.ch/innotour](http://www.seco.admin.ch/innotour)



Tina Müller, Swiss Parks Network, Bern, Tourism Project Leader

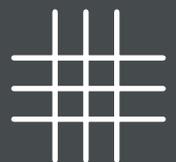
“For nearly one hundred years there was only one national park in Switzerland: the Swiss National Park in Graubünden. A few years ago, things started shifting in the park landscape. Today, 14 nature parks and a nature discovery park are officially recognised by the federal government.

Four more projects are in the preparatory stage. Since 2009 and with the help of the Innotour promotion tool, we have been actively developing nature and culture-based tourism in the parks: model solutions are developed in pilot projects, which are then presented to the parks at meetings where we share experiences.

Examples include e-bike trails in the parks, gift parcels with regional specialities, the Swiss Parks’ smart-phone app, or environment missions for employees of large companies. These offers bring new visitors to the region and strengthen the sustainable economy.

Thanks to Innotour, collaboration has also been established between national organisations and the private sector. A recent campaign run by a major bank for its members significantly improved the visibility of Swiss Parks. I can constantly see how Innotour helps the Swiss Parks to build a stronger network and make better use of the economic potential of nature and culture-based tourism. It feels great.”

“Thanks to Innotour, collaboration has been established between national organisations and the private sector.”



REGIONAL POLICY

COMPETITIVENESS

in the regions is enhanced.



For an innovative and competitive economy in mountain, rural and border regions

Switzerland's economic conditions have undergone a significant transformation in recent years. Coping with the resulting structural change is often more difficult for mountain, rural and border regions than for the strong urban areas. The Federal Regional Policy provides support for these areas. The aim is to strengthen the competitiveness of the regions, sustain infrastructure and offers, and connect rural areas with the urban hubs of growth.

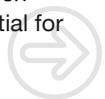
The rural economy is under pressure: international competition, the strength of the Swiss franc and structural problems present major challenges especially to the industry and tourism. Furthermore, other sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, forestry or energy, are also being stretched. The Federal Regional Policy supports businesses, through financial incentives, in their effort to cope with the structural change. The key factors are effectiveness and a market-driven approach, as well as the principles of sustainable development.

How the federal government promotes the target regions of the New Regional Policy

Direct funding of initiatives, projects and programmes as well as infrastructure projects

The Federal Regional Policy supports cantonal and regional initiatives, projects and programmes through non-repayable funds. Low-interest or interest-free loans are also granted for infrastructure projects. Considering public concerns about the increased use of land and resources, the Regional Policy is geared towards growth based on innovation and productivity. A couple of ski lifts, some industry and trade in each village: economic proliferation without an encompassing concept jeopardises the survival of entire regions' ability to survive and is not in line with the Regional Policy. In cooperation with the cantons, the regions define and realize tailor-made priorities. The objective is to reinforce the links between rural areas, their regional centres and the metropolitan areas to make the best use of the growth potential.

In the next few years, the Regional Policy's first focus will be on promoting innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises. Innovation, i.e. inventing new products, services or processes, is first a matter for the individual company. However, the regional exchange between companies, educational and research institutions, as well as public authorities can provide fertile ground for innovation. To drive these exchanges, Regional Policy will increasingly promote Regional Innovation Systems (RIS). The federal government supports these networks provided they have a functional orientation, i.e. they extend beyond cantonal or even national borders and are adapted to the needs of the defined target groups. From the federal perspective, there is potential for six or seven RIS in Switzerland.



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dentale dans les domaines
on sectorielle et des
e coaching. >>



**Audrey Saumon,
Programme Coordinator
for the Cross-Cantonal
Programme of the Confer-
ence of the Cantonal
Ministers for Economic
Affairs in French-speaking
Switzerland, Fribourg**

“In most cases, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) do not lack innovative ideas, but rather the know-how to implement them. This is where we come in. The cross-cantonal programme of the Conference of the Cantonal Ministers for Economic Affairs in French-speaking Switzerland hosts, for example, the Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KTT) platform Alliance, where we bring together entrepreneurs with universities. This enables the realisation of technically sophisticated product ideas. Take the example of an entrepreneur from Vevey who wanted to manufacture a high-precision tool for dentists to clean out root canals. Since he didn’t have the necessary technical knowledge he contacted a consultant from the Alliance platform. The consultant put the entrepreneur in touch with a professor from the Micro-Engineering Industrial Institute of the University of Applied Sciences in Saint-Imier. This led to a promising collaboration.

The cross-cantonal programme of our conference is financed through federal contributions from the New Regional Policy and contributions from the seven cantons of Bern, Fribourg, Vaud, Valais, Neuchâtel, Geneva and Jura. Committed experts back its numerous offers for SMEs and start-ups. The passion demonstrated by these individuals is essential for the programme’s success.”

“The Knowledge and Technology Transfer platform Alliance brings together entrepreneurs with universities, so that technically demanding product ideas can be realised.”





The second focus of the Regional Policy is on promoting tourism. In many rural and mountain regions tourism is a key economic sector and has an important role in driving the economy. At the same time, tourism is facing growing challenges. The federal government provides support to cope with the structural changes, so that the tourist destinations become more competitive and Switzerland as a tourist destination holds its own in the international competition.

Coordination and cooperation with other spatially relevant policies of the federal government

Various federal policies have an impact on the development of Regional Policy target areas. The Regional Policy section promotes the alignment of these policies with Regional Policy. Cantons and regions benefit from the resulting synergies. The key partners are tourism, SMEs, spatial planning, agglomeration and innovation policies. However, the policy areas of transport, telecommunications, agriculture, environment and energy also play an important role. An example of this type of cooperation can be seen in the projects under the scheme “Promoting economy in functional regions”, run by the Regional Policy section in conjunction with other federal offices – so-called “model projects”. [For further information go to: www.modellvorhaben.ch](http://www.modellvorhaben.ch)

Know-how for Regional Policy and its protagonists

Today, knowledge is essential for success in global competition. The New Regional Policy is therefore aimed at strengthening the regions’ ability to adapt and learn. To this end, the federal government operates regiosuisse, a network unit that collects, prepares and provides knowledge on regional development. Regional protagonists shall be enabled to apply this knowledge to develop, implement and market products and services. [For further information go to: www.regiosuisse.ch](http://www.regiosuisse.ch) ■



Tailored to the regions

The cantons are the federal government’s main Regional Policy partners. The federal government concludes four-year programme agreements with them. The cantons define with their regions four-year action plans and approve projects. That way they can support measures specifically tailored to their regions. From 2008 to 2013 the federal government and the cantons funded more than 1,600 projects.



Interreg

Under the EU’s Interreg programmes the federal government and the cantons support cross-border regional policy projects in cooperation with the neighbouring countries. Switzerland’s participation is part of the New Regional Policy and contributes to enhancing the competitiveness of border regions. [For further information go to: www.interreg.ch](http://www.interreg.ch)



Josef Odermatt, RigiPlus Inc., Rigi Kulm, chairman of the board

“Over the last five years, the Rigi has enjoyed a positive development both as a tourism and holiday region and a place to live and work. That’s something I’m very proud of.

The positive trend began in 2009 with the ground breaking ceremony for architect Mario Botta’s Rigi-Kaltbad Mineral Bath & Spa, and the launch of the RigiPlus Project, which was supported by federal funding provided through the New Regional Policy, the cantons of Schwyz and Lucerne, and the Rigi-Mythen Regional Association, each of which contributed one third. This project brought together the protagonists involved in the Rigi. The region formulated a mission statement and three years later the project led to the creation of RigiPlus – an independent marketing and development company, which currently has about 30 shareholders, including tourism associations, mountain railway companies, commercial alpine businesses, hotels and restaurants.

Integrated ticketing for all nine Rigi mountain railway lines, a shop with regional products, the Rigi Literature and Music Days and multi-provider overnight stay packages are just a few of the offers created in the new ‘Rigi spirit’. The mountain is once again the site of renewed investment and cooperation! Other projects are being planned as we speak, such as a ten-kilometre panoramic trail for people with disabilities. I am always happy to see new projects because they strengthen the Rigi region, and also because I can enjoy them myself, since I live in Weggis.”

“The RigiPlus Project brought together the protagonists involved in the Rigi.”



EXPORT/LOCATION PROMOTION

THE ECONOMY

depends on close ties with foreign countries.



Supporting Swiss exporters and promoting Switzerland as a business location

With export promotion and export risk insurance the federal government offers customised services to Swiss companies so they can export successfully. Location Promotion provides potential foreign investors with more detailed information on the numerous advantages of Switzerland as a business location.

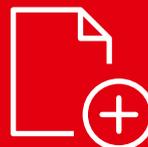
Switzerland has a small domestic market. The economy therefore depends on close ties with foreign countries. The federal government provides a wide range of support measures, in the form of advice and insurance services, which is supplementary to initiatives from the private sector, so that businesses can take advantage of opportunities in international export markets. The federal government also aims to establish Switzerland as a top business location for selected foreign companies.

The federal government's measures want to facilitate the activities of Swiss companies abroad, to safeguard jobs in Switzerland and to continually raise international awareness of the advantages Switzerland has to offer as a business location. Specialised institutions have been commissioned with the task of achieving this objective.

How the federal government promotes exports and informs about Switzerland as a business location

Promoting exports

The Federal Export Promotion Programme is aimed at identifying and exploiting sales opportunities abroad, positioning Swiss exporters as internationally competitive providers and facilitating Swiss companies' access to foreign markets. The federal government has commissioned the private association Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE, formerly Osec) with the task of export promotion. As an expert in internationalisation, S-GE provides Swiss companies, SMEs in particular, with information, advice and support on their international business projects. The services rendered by S-GE often begin with a consultation in Switzerland. The first points of contact in the export market are the Swiss Business Hubs (SBH). These are located in 21 different countries, and usually housed in a Swiss representation. The SBH staff have comprehensive knowledge of their respective markets, provide SMEs with useful information on the target market in question, and establish key contacts. Thanks to their official status the SBH have a broad network of contacts, are familiar with the local customs and the ways in which a company can gain access to ministerial departments and officials. [For further information go to: www.s-ge.com](http://www.s-ge.com)



Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE)

In 2013 S-GE assisted more than 5000 Swiss companies with over 9000 information, advisory and trade fair services. In a survey, 85 per cent of those companies stated that they had benefited from the service they had received.



Stefano Mondini, Mondini Engineering Inc., Tesserete (TI), CEO

“Originally we manufactured oil tanks, not waste containers. Up until the 1980s we sold hundreds of those tanks every year; then the market became saturated and our sales plummeted. We had to rethink our business and look for a different product. As a metal manufacturer, we were already specialised in sheet metal cutting, punching and welding, and since we produced oil tanks, we were already producing storage containers. At the beginning of the 1990s people in Switzerland became increasingly aware of the need for recycling. This gave us the idea of manufacturing waste containers.

Initially we only supplied local authorities in Switzerland, but the Swiss market soon became too small, so we started looking for customers abroad. The services of Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE) were very helpful in that regard. In 2013, we began searching for a distributor in Denmark and asked S-GE for help. Shortly afterwards we received a list of potential partners; we drew up a shortlist, conducted negotiations and finally chose a partner with whom we now have a successful working relationship. Working with S-GE was straightforward and we always received a swift reply from the responsible person. We will definitely be using the services of S-GE for future business transactions abroad.”

“Working together with S-GE was straightforward and we always received a swift reply from the responsible person.”



Export/Location Promotion



Export risk insurance

SERV, the Swiss Export Risk Insurance, is another important tool for supporting Switzerland's export trade. The objectives of SERV are to preserve and create jobs and to reinforce Switzerland as a business location by helping Switzerland's exporters to compete in the international markets. It is a public-law institution of the federal government and lends support to Swiss exporters in areas where the private sector insurance companies offer no or insufficient services. SERV is required to be self-financing in the long run, and is funded by risk-related premiums. SERV offers insurance cover for both the export of goods and of services. It offers insurance cover against the political and economic risks of export business transactions, thus avoiding payment defaults. The political risk includes events such as war, civil unrest or state intervention, for example export bans which render the performance of a contract impossible. The economic risks include the situation where a foreign buyer is unwilling or unable to foot the bill. In addition, thanks to SERV's range of products, it can help improve an exporter's cash flow. Especially SMEs who want to export can benefit: sometimes their loan guarantees and credit limits with banks have been exhausted, and they are forced to deposit additional financial guarantees to obtain the loans or guarantees needed. This is where the insurance services of SERV can help. [For further information go to: www.serv-ch.com](http://www.serv-ch.com)

Location Promotion

Foreign companies which settle in Switzerland create jobs here, generate added value and provide an important impetus to the local economy, for example in terms of know-how and technology. The federal government works closely with the cantons on Location Promotion, and has commissioned Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE), just as with export promotion, to handle the operational side of location promotion. While S-GE provides foreign investors with information on Switzerland as a business location and the advantages it offers, the cantons are responsible for the actual settlement of foreign companies. S-GE prepares key information on Switzerland as a business location and on the procedures for settling a business here and makes this information, in various languages, available to potential investors as well as the cantons. Furthermore, S-GE plays an important role in coordinating the activities of the official bodies involved in promoting Switzerland as a business location; it supports the cantons by providing market and trend analyses in selected priority countries; and identifies companies that are suitable for settling in Switzerland. The focus in this context is on innovative and high value-added companies. S-GE assesses the potential of investment projects and passes the information on to the cantons, which then assist the companies during the rest of the settlement process. [For further information go to: www.s-ge.com](http://www.s-ge.com) ■



Swiss Export Risk Insurance (SERV)

Thanks to SERV, Swiss exports are in the billions every year. These orders secure Swiss jobs both in the export sector and the associated supplier industries. SERV currently has insurance liabilities of approximately 9 billion Swiss francs.



Christophe Nicolet, Felco Inc., Les Geneveys-sur-Coffrane (NE), CEO

“Exports have been essential for Felco Inc. right from the start. We were already selling pruning shears abroad in 1946; just one year after the company had been founded. Today we supply end users and distributors in more than 100 different countries.

We primarily have to thank the Swiss Export Risk Insurance SERV for enabling us to gain access to some of the foreign markets. Take Brazil, for example. Because of their high import taxes it is very expensive for Brazilian traders to import foreign goods. A Brazilian businessman ordered a container full of pruning shears on the condition that he had 12 months to pay the invoice. The dealer initially wanted to pay the import taxes, to sell our pruning shears next, and only then pay the invoice. It was only thanks to a payment default insurance from SERV that we were able to reach an agreement. Without that insurance, the deal would have been too risky for us.

I am glad that SERV is here to help. Their service is very valuable for us.”

“The services of the Swiss Export Risk Insurance SERV are very valuable for us.”



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THE FEDERAL PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

