Media Release

Switzerland as a hub for the chemical and pharmaceutical industries: scienceindustries calls for better framework conditions for the life sciences sector

Zurich, 4 November 2026. **In BAK Economics' Global Industry Competitiveness Index (GICI) 2026, Switzerland once again ranks third behind the US and Ireland. In terms of innovation and technological leadership, Switzerland has slipped to seventh place. Switzerland thus remains one of the world's most competitive chemical and pharmaceutical hubs, but its lead is dwindling. scienceindustries is therefore calling for better conditions to enable research to be translated more quickly into industrial applications and value creation. Just how crucial this is, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence, was the focus of this year's annual event.**

Switzerland ranks among the top ten locations in all four main dimensions of the GICI. Its greatest strength remains the quality of the business environment: here, it ranks first worldwide. Excellent universities, highly qualified skilled workers and a strong research base provide outstanding conditions. In terms of performance, however, Switzerland slips to fifth place, and to seventh in innovation and technological leadership.

"I am concerned that Switzerland has dropped significantly in the rankings for its traditional strengths, such as innovation and technological leadership. Switzerland is losing ground in the very areas that will determine its future competitiveness," says Dr Annette Luther, President of scienceindustries.

AI: From research to application

Artificial intelligence is a prime example of what will matter in the future. Applications in the chemical, pharmaceutical and life sciences sectors have long been a reality: AI supports the search for new active ingredients, assists in the planning of clinical trials, accelerates the development of new materials and optimises reactions and production processes. At the same time, it is transforming logistics, administration and sales. "The crucial question is no longer: Is AI coming? It is: Where, and under what conditions, will it become a competitive advantage for innovative industries?" says Luther. Switzerland's starting position is good, but not comfortable.

At the annual event organised by scienceindustries, Prof. Dr Markus Lill, Dr Arndt Finkelmann, Dr Sarah Genner and Jamila Shoazizova discussed what is needed to ensure that this potential can be realised. Their personal perspectives ranged from research and industrial application to the world of work and the next generation.

Three prerequisites for accelerating progress

For scienceindustries, three areas of action are key when it comes to AI:

- Pragmatic regulation: Switzerland needs a risk-based, sector-specific and internationally compatible framework that addresses risks without preventively blocking applications.
- Better access to data: Businesses and research organisations need legally clear and practical access to high-quality data, particularly health data.
- Faster transfer: Research must be translated into industrial applications more quickly. This requires skilled personnel, further training and suitable conditions for funding, computing power and the testing of new applications.

"Technology won't wait for our processes to be finalised," notes Luther. "We can create the conditions today to ensure that Switzerland does not lag behind in this next wave of innovation but is instead at the forefront."

Third place is no guarantee of success

The GICI 2026 paints a clear picture: Switzerland continues to have very strong foundations. However, other locations are catching up, and investment decisions are made at an international level. "Third place is an excellent starting point, but it is not a guaranteed position," says Dr Stephan Mumenthaler, Director of scienceindustries. "The task now is to turn our strengths into consistent results once again: in terms of market access, as a life sciences hub, and in the deployment of new technologies such as AI." The key factor is whether we succeed in translating these favourable conditions into innovation, investment and industrial value creation more quickly than other locations.

Global Industry Competitiveness Index (GICI) 2026; Executive Summary (PDF)

Further information
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About scienceindustries
scienceindustries, the Swiss trade association for the chemical, pharmaceutical and life sciences sectors, works to secure internationally outstanding operating conditions for its approximately 250 member companies. The chemical, pharmaceutical and life sciences sector employs around 77,000 people in Switzerland. As Switzerland's largest export industry, it makes a significant contribution to the country's prosperity.