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Swiss biotech continues to focus on international collaborations

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2025 Swiss Biotech Report underscores the Ã¢â?¬Å?Power of International AlliancesÃ¢â?¬Â• with multiple examples



Over the last 50 years, Switzerland has emerged as one of the most innovative and collaborative biotech hubs in the world. For such a small country it has achieved significant global impact. Innovation and collaboration are intrinsically linked, driven by the multiple Swiss life science ecosystem players – powerhouse universities including ETH in Zurich and EPFL in Lausanne; disruptive biotechs such as CRISPR Therapeutics, AC Immune and Haya; receptive multinational corporations such as Novartis, Roche and Lonza; and supportive regulatory bodies.

As with the Swiss economy in general, the combined pharma and biotech sector has always been international in outlook. In 2024 it contributed 40% of Swiss exports and drew 98% of revenues from overseas. The domestic market is simply far too small to justify developing “Switzerland-only” new drugs. To drive successful R&D projects companies must present a compelling global business case to attract the interest of investors and international talent alike. Product development cycles typically extend over 10-15 years, the attrition rate is huge, and the required funding usually exceeds CHF 1 billion. Such high risk and long-term projects can only be justified if they have the potential to generate novel treatment options that benefit patients all over the world.

This has led to strong interest in developing international collaborations at all levels, particularly in research and regulation. During the COVID pandemic, such connectivity enabled the Swiss sector to play a major role in developing and coordinating the global response. Coming out of the pandemic, two major lessons were learned – the imperative to build more resilience into supply chains, and to further broaden international collaborations. Because of the financing model, the biotech sector in general has always been used to turbulence. Now as global political and trade uncertainties intensify, there is no doubt that Switzerland finds itself in a challenging position.

Against this background, the recently published 2025 Swiss Biotech Report produced by the Swiss Biotech Association in conjunction with E&Y and other key stakeholders makes fascinating reading. For a start, the report’s overriding message could not be clearer since it bears the title “The Power of International Collaborations.”

Michael Altorfer, CEO of the Swiss Biotech Association, comments, “In an era when isolationist policies and "me-first“ approaches have gained traction, Switzerland’s collaborative model offers a compelling counterproposal. None of the Swiss biotech innovators develops a new product or technology for the Swiss market alone. Switzerland has a long tradition of developing innovative products in close collaboration with strong international partners, thereby providing effective solutions to global challenges. This approach is so firmly anchored in the Swiss biotech hub that four out of five biotech patents filed in Switzerland are the result of international collaboration. At the same time, Switzerland has assembled a diverse and international talent pool that strongly facilitates global exchange of experience and best practices. I am delighted to see that the figures in this year’s Swiss Biotech Report powerfully support this approach.”

Frederik Schmachtenberg, EY Partner and Global Life Sciences Lead for Financial Accounting Advisory Services, adds, “Despite difficult headwinds, Swiss biotech companies were able to raise more than CHF 2.5 billion in funds in 2024, an increase of 22% over 2023. Most impressive was the success of private companies, raising a new record CHF 833 million in funds, investing in R&D expenses (CHF 1.4 billion), and at the same time also being able to show strong revenues of CHF 2 billion, an increase of 10% compared to 2023 levels.”

The report reveals that overall revenues generated by the Swiss biotech industry remained strong, dipping only slightly to CHF 7.2 billion in 2024 from the record 2023 level. Swiss biotech companies continued to successfully partner with large pharma companies, including AC Immune with Takeda, Idorsia with Viatris, Haya with Lilly, and Basilea with Innoviva. Product sales were similarly boosted by a record number of approvals from the Swiss regulatory authority Swissmedic, the European Medicines Agency, the Food and Drug Administration in the US, and other global regulators. These included breakthrough advanced therapies from Idorsia, Basilea and Santhera.

Public markets remained challenging, although CRISPR Therapeutics, a Swiss biotech that went public in 2016, secured a USD 280 million (CHF 247 million) follow-on financing round to support ongoing clinical trials in oncology, cardiovascular, and diabetes indications, and to further expand its autoimmune and gene writing programmes. However, the private funding environment was more encouraging, with Alentis Therapeutics (CHF 163 million raised) and SixPeaks Bio (CHF 102 million raised) as the top two private financing rounds. More than 95% of Swiss companies are privately funded.

In M&A, the standout events were Johnson & Johnson’s purchase of Yellow Jersey, a demerged subsidiary of Numab, for up to USD 1.25 billion, and Lonza’s acquisition of Roche’s Vacaville biologics site in the US for USD 1.2 billion.

The increased need for talent by CDMO companies and the success of private biotech R&D companies have led to further employment growth of around 8% – a testament to the depth of the talent pool. As another significant indicator of the sector’s robustness, R&D investment continued to grow to CHF 2.6 billion, with a record CHF 1.4 billion accounted for by private companies.

The 2025 Swiss Biotech Report also underscores the “Power of International Alliances” with multiple examples. In 2025, the Swiss innovation agency Innosuisse assumes the chair of the Eureka innovation initiative - a network of 47 countries plus the European Commission - to help strengthen and expand non-dilutive global research grants. In addition, Swissmedic continues to play a leading role in the Access Consortium, facilitating joint approvals of new therapeutics across Australia, Canada, Switzerland, Singapore, and the UK that will benefit over 150 million people.

Also worth noting is Switzerland’s commitment to the European Biosolutions Coalition which aims to ensure the opportunities presented by biosolutions are grasped. Finally, Biotechnet has been widely active in fostering collaborative international meetings and projects drawing on the connections of Switzerland’s vast pool of multinational life science talent. Of particular interest is the Indo-Swiss AMR Innovation Dialogue.

Successful collaborations thrive on personal connections. Because of its geographical location at the heart of Europe, Switzerland has always been a favoured international meeting place. Over the last few years, the Swiss Biotech Association has worked hard to make this true for the life sciences, focusing on growing the international appeal of the Swiss Biotech Day held annually in May in Basel. This year it attracted around 3,000 delegates, which is comparable with other events on the life sciences calendar.

One contributing factor is the Global Village, a platform hosted by the Swiss Biotech Association in partnership with other organisations to encourage worldwide networking and collaboration in biotech and life sciences. In just two years, the Global Village has already grown from 10 to 25 international delegations from every corner of the globe.

In summary, the Swiss biotech sector remains resilient and committed to international collaborations. Science knows no boundaries and working together is the only way to meet the health and wellbeing challenges the world faces.

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