



Background information: Swiss-Indian relations

April 2024

Switzerland and India share close and dynamic relations rooted in peace and friendship. The close relationship is reflected in a large number of agreements and treaties, and in frequent high-ranking diplomatic visits between the two countries. The broad-based and multi sectoral cooperation between Switzerland and India covers diverse areas including diplomacy; economy, trade and investment; education, research and innovation; skill development, vocational education and training; development, climate change and environment; and culture.

Diplomacy

India is a priority country for Switzerland in Asia. This is underscored in Switzerland's Foreign Policy Strategy 2024-2027 that seeks to deepen relations with India on a broad basis. The relationship between the two countries has been reinforced over the years with regular high-level visits. In addition to Presidential and ministerial visits, the two countries hold yearly political and thematic consultations and dialogues. Following the State visit to India by Swiss President Mrs. Micheline Calmy Rey in November 2007, Indian President Mrs. Pratibha Devisingh Patil visited Switzerland in September 2011. Indian Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi travelled to Switzerland on an official visit in June 2016 and on a working meeting in January 2018. Swiss President Mrs. Doris Leuthard paid a State visit to India in August/September 2017. In Autumn 2019, Switzerland hosted President Ram Nath Kovind for a State visit. Switzerland and India have been regularly conducting foreign office consultations since 2005.

Switzerland and India have signed numerous bilateral agreements encompassing several sectors including trade, development cooperation, vocational education and training, visas, migration, air traffic, investments, finance, taxation, disaster management, and cooperation in science and technology. The two countries signed the Treaty of Friendship on 14th August 1948. This was one of the first such treaties signed by independent India and an important milestone in Swiss-Indian relations. A Trade and Economic Partnership (TEPA) between the EFTA States and India was signed in March 2024.

In order to promote its interests, to facilitate easy accessibility and to render services to Indian and Swiss citizens, companies, scientific partners and cultural actors, Switzerland maintains a wide network of representations across India. Besides the Swiss Embassy in New Delhi, there are Consulates General of Switzerland in Mumbai and Bangalore, Honorary Consulates in Kolkata and Chennai, a Swiss Business Hub in Mumbai, a Swissnex office in Bangalore and a Switzerland Tourism office in Mumbai.

Economy

India is a priority country of the Swiss foreign economic policy. It is currently the fastest growing emerging economy worldwide and offers a plethora of business opportunities for Swiss companies.

Switzerland's investment flows in India amounted to USD 9.95 billion between 2000 and 2023 (rank #12) according to the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry; the International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicates that Swiss investments stocks in India amounted to USD 35 billion in 2021 (rank #7). Over 330 Swiss companies have invested in India, with a presence in various sectors such as MEM (machinery, electrical and metal), pharmaceutical, finance, construction, sustainable technologies and cleantech industry, as well as ICT services. According to the estimations of the Swiss National Bank, Swiss companies have created approximately 166'000 direct well-paid jobs in the country.

Nearly 140 Indian companies have invested in 180 entities in Switzerland, employing 5'000 persons. These companies are mostly present in the Zurich area and mainly active in the sectors of technology (32%) and life sciences (21%). According to the IMF, Switzerland is the 8th largest recipient of Indian FDIs stocks, amounting to USD 3.7 billion.

The bilateral trade in goods between India and Switzerland has been growing steadily over the last years, especially in favor of India (excluding gold and precious metals). In 2023, exports to India amounted to CHF 1.8 billion, while imports reached 2.6 billion, slight decrease by (-) 3.7% from 2022. The services sector grew of 9.5% since 2014, making India Switzerland's 16th partner globally. Bilateral exchanges amounted to a total of CHF 17.7 billion in 2023. The tourism sector is historically strong between Switzerland and India and figures show clear signs of post-Covid recovery.

Several well-established intergovernmental dialogues exist between the two countries. The Joint Economic Commission meets regularly to discuss economic issues of mutual interest in presence of business representatives. In addition, dialogues on financial matters, intellectual property rights, rail transport and infrastructure financing are also open and ongoing.

India and the EFTA States (Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) have signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement ([TEPA](#)) on March 10, 2024. This is the first comprehensive agreement concluded by India with European countries. While India is the biggest consumer market worldwide and a growing economy, EFTA States are leaders in innovation and major foreign investors. The TEPA will mutually benefit complementary economies.

In December 2017, Switzerland and India signed a mutual agreement related to the introduction of the Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) in tax matters, on a reciprocal basis. It is implemented since January 2018, with a first exchange of data taking in autumn 2019. The signing of the Mutual Agreement with India confirms Switzerland's international commitment to implementing the AEOI standard, and that it is moving forward to strengthen its network of AEOI partner states.

Trade and investment

The Swiss Business Hub India (SBHI) represents Switzerland Global Enterprise, the official export and investment promotion agency of the Swiss government, mandated by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs. Set up in 2001, the SBHI is located at the Consulate General of Switzerland in Mumbai, at the Embassy of Switzerland in New Delhi and the Consulate General of Switzerland in Bengaluru.

The Export Promotion team of the SBHI has supported over 150 Swiss companies, both new and those with an existing presence in India and continues to support more companies every year. With an experienced team of in-house consultants and its network of specialized experts, the SBHI provides services such as overview of industry sectors, business partner search, market entry information, and virtual interactions with relevant stakeholders. Most of these services are free, while a few are chargeable depending on the mandate from the company. The SBHI regularly identifies business opportunities in India and carries out physical as well as virtual activities to present these to Swiss companies. With the recent signing of the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), the SBHI is committed to further support Swiss businesses in understanding and leveraging opportunities from the free trade agreement to expand their presence in the Indian market.

Further, the Investment Promotion team of the SBHI promotes Switzerland as a competitive business location and facilitates investments of Indian companies by providing free advisory services to potential Indian investors. The SBHI collaborates closely with cantonal and regional economic development agencies in assessing projects and connecting prospective investors with relevant stakeholders and experts in Switzerland. To attract Indian investors, the SBHI organizes focused events and meetings.

Link: www.s-ge.com

Education, research and innovation

In 2003, Switzerland and India signed an agreement for scientific and technological cooperation. A MoU on cooperation in the social sciences was signed in 2012. So far Switzerland has invested circa CHF 19 million in this cooperation, which has been matched by the Indian Government. Projects on translational medical research, medical technology, blue sky research in biotechnology, renewable energy research, systems medicine, as well as in the social sciences have been supported. Calls for proposals in climate research and in the social sciences have also been announced in 2021. Since 2017, the Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften (ZHAW; Zurich University of Applied Sciences) is Leading House for South Asia in Switzerland. Mandated by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), the ZHAW promotes and fosters scientific cooperation with key institutions in India until the year 2024.

Swissnex in India was established in Bangalore in 2010. It facilitates collaborations between Swiss and Indian institutions of higher education and research and acts as an information hub on developments in the education, research and innovation landscape in India and Switzerland.

Swissnex in India is the 'go-to' partner for cooperation with Switzerland in the areas of Academic Relations and Education (building academic collaborations between Swiss and Indian universities); Innovation and Entrepreneurship (bringing Swiss entrepreneurship and innovation to India) and Corporate Innovation (finding open innovation solutions tailored to the needs of its corporate partners). The focus areas for Swissnex in India include University Partnerships (connecting Swiss and Indian universities at department, faculty, researcher and

Embassy of Switzerland
Nyaya Marg, Chanakyapuri,
New Delhi - 110 021
Phone: +91 11 4995 9500
Fax: +91 11 4995 9509
Email: newdelhi@eda.admin.ch
Webpage: <http://www.eda.admin.ch/newdelhi>

student levels; enabling the exchange of ideas and catalysing collaborations), Start-up Partnerships (serving as a launchpad for Swiss start-ups to expand into the Indian market and Corporate Innovation (enabling corporates to map the opportunities and find solutions from the right start up partners, and across industries).

The Indo-Swiss Innovation Platform, a joint initiative of Swissnex in India, the Embassy of Switzerland in India and the Swiss Business Hub India was launched on October 2023 to give the Indo-Swiss collaboration a more strategic and systemic dimension, moving beyond ad hoc-only collaborations. The Platform aims to contribute towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Health, sustainability and digital transformation are initial priority areas and activities under the platform have already been initiated.

Further, Swissnex in India conducts the 'Academia Industry Training Camp', which until 2021 was co-funded by both Switzerland and India, where 10 Indian and Swiss applied scientists respectively, are selected and coached in the market application of their research project. Ten such camps have taken place so far.

India is a priority country for the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships. Approximately 170 scholarships have been awarded to applicants from India to pursue post graduate research in Switzerland in the past 10 years.

Switzerland is becoming an important destination for Indian students seeking higher education abroad. The number of Indian students registered in the Swiss public university system has grown from 268 in 2005 to 1488 in 2023. In addition, it is estimated that there are currently about 400 Indian students studying management and courses related to the hospitality industry.

Development, climate change and environment

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is implementing projects in the field of climate change and environment in India. The aim is to support India's transition to a low-carbon and climate resilient development pathway.

SDC's work in India is aligned with Switzerland's Foreign Policy Strategy and International Cooperation Strategy. It contributes to the Global Programme Climate Change and Environment and to SDC's engagement in South Asia. The projects in India leverage on Switzerland's strong and recognized expertise to co-develop solutions that are aligned with India's climate goals and international commitments. SDC works with the Indian government authorities, Swiss and Indian experts, universities and research institutes, private sector, think-tanks, non-government organizations and international organizations.

Recent and on-going projects cover climate change mitigation (energy efficiency and renewable energy in buildings, low-carbon cement, reforestation, just transition), climate change adaptation (disaster risk management in the Himalayas, springshed management, solar irrigation, urban climate action plans), and environment (air pollution, integrated natural resources management). In addition, Switzerland occasionally provides humanitarian and technical assistance to affected populations (e.g Cyclone Amphan in 2020; Covid in 2021; floods in Assam in 2022; Glacial Outburst Flood in Sikkim in 2023).

Through its cooperation projects, SDC is contributing towards the implementation of the Government of India's flagship climate change programmes and schemes such as the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem, National Mission on Sustainable Habitat, Smart Cities Mission, National Programme on Energy Efficiency in Buildings, implementation

of the State Action Plans on Climate Change, Crop Insurance Scheme, and National Clean Air Programme among others.

The projects open-up important opportunities for scientific and economic collaboration between India and Switzerland that can be replicated in other parts of the world.

Links: <https://climalayas.in/>, / | <https://lc3.ch/> | <http://www.beepindia.org/> | <http://capacitiesindia.org/>

Culture

Switzerland and India have a long history of cultural ties. Numerous Swiss artists, architects, and researchers have been active in the Indian subcontinent. Le Corbusier (architect), designed the city of Chandigarh and Alice Boner (painter, sculptor, art historian) contributed to the discovery of Indian architectural, sculptural studies as well as to reviving Kathakali. Carl Gustav Jung and Hermann Hesse were deeply inspired by Indian philosophy and their journeys in India.

In recent years famous Swiss architects like Mario Botta and Herzog & De Meuron have designed buildings for well-known Indian institutions. Celebrated architect Peter Zumthor came to India in 2024 to find many young Indian architecture students to be very knowledgeable about his work. Famous performers like Masha Dmitri, Gilles Jobin have left their footprints in India by mentoring young Indian artists. On the Indian side, film producers such as late Mr. Yash Chopra brought Switzerland and India closer through popular Hindi movies filmed in the Swiss Alps. Similarly, the Locarno International Film Festival has served a breaking ground for Indian film makers like Satyajit Ray who spread out their wings in the world from here on.

The Embassy continues to engage itself broadly in the field of architecture, design, film promotion, languages and literature, contemporary arts and artistic exchanges, art in education, as well as innovation in traditional art initiatives. Our engagement in arts follows primarily a dual approach - looking for worthwhile engagements and platforming of Swiss artists, we are equally keen to find dynamic and knowledgeable local partners, who have all the necessary context-knowledge. As we look to promote gender equality, intercultural dialogues and mutual understanding, peace as well as artistic solidarity, we often work with local partners, who are guided by similar values. As we move towards a new world, our projects in the field of arts and culture too move more and more towards innovation and digitalization. Under the biannual initiative "SwitzerlandIndia 75: Success Stories to be continued" the cultural section has been able to come up with numerous additional projects that have brought Switzerland and India together.

Since the opening of Pro Helvetia – Swiss Arts Council, in New Delhi in 2007, cultural relations between the two countries have further intensified. Pro Helvetia focuses its efforts on contemporary literature, visual arts, dance and design. Moreover, an ever-increasing number Indian and Swiss artists had the opportunity to profit from the residency programs in Switzerland as well as in India offered by Pro Helvetia.
