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Swiss Science Diplomacy in 2024: A Strategic Pillar for Research, Innovation and International Cooperation



- News - General news -
Publication date: Monday 9 September 2024

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In 2024, Swiss science diplomacy will occupy a central place in the Confederation's international strategy, positioning science as a crucial lever for achieving its national and international objectives. The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SEFRI) plays a key role in developing and implementing this policy, which aims to promote Swiss scientific excellence, strengthen international cooperation and actively contribute to solving global challenges. This article explores how Switzerland, through an integrated approach to science diplomacy, continues to consolidate its position as a world leader in research and innovation.

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Promoting Swiss scientific excellence

Switzerland is recognised worldwide for its excellence in research and innovation. This reputation is based on a robust education system, cutting-edge research infrastructures and a deeply rooted culture of innovation. In 2024, Swiss science diplomacy aims to strengthen this position by actively participating in international initiatives and integrating global research networks. For example, Switzerland continues to be involved in programmes such as Horizon Europe, despite its status as a non-member of the European Union. This involvement enables Swiss researchers to collaborate with their European counterparts on large-scale projects, thereby enhancing the visibility and impact of Swiss science on a global scale.

SEFRI plays a crucial role in facilitating the creation of strategic partnerships with research institutions around the world, particularly in the United States, China and Japan. These bilateral agreements not only promote the mobility of researchers, but also stimulate innovation in key areas such as biotechnology, artificial intelligence and information technology. At a time when new scientific powers are emerging, particularly in Asia, Switzerland needs to diversify its partnerships while consolidating its traditional relations with Europe and North America.

Facilitating international scientific cooperation

International cooperation is an essential pillar of Swiss scientific diplomacy. In 2024, Switzerland will continue to strengthen its ties with global partners to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, the mobility of researchers and the implementation of joint research projects. This cooperation strategy is supported by the establishment of science diplomacy offices in several embassies, notably in Washington, Tokyo and Brussels. These offices play a crucial role in promoting Swiss interests, facilitating scientific exchanges and ensuring Switzerland's active presence in international discussions on science and technology.

Despite its status as a non-EU member, Switzerland maintains close cooperation with the European Union, actively participating in research programmes such as Horizon Europe. This strategic participation enables Switzerland to remain a key player in the European scientific landscape while preserving its independence. Navigating between the need to cooperate with the EU and maintaining its autonomy remains a challenge, but Swiss science diplomacy in 2024 demonstrates an ability to balance these two imperatives effectively.

Contributing to the resolution of global challenges

Swiss science diplomacy is not limited to promoting its national interests; it is also a vehicle for addressing global issues. In 2024, Switzerland is using science as a tool to help solve global challenges such as climate change, global health and food security. Through partnerships with other nations, Switzerland seeks to provide scientific solutions to the most pressing problems of our time.

One area in which Switzerland is particularly active is sustainable development. The Confederation is at the forefront of global efforts in sustainability research, participating in international initiatives to promote clean technologies and innovative solutions for more sustainable development. This positioning not only strengthens Switzerland's scientific diplomacy, but also contributes to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Switzerland is also extending its science diplomacy beyond traditional partnerships in Europe and North America, by strengthening cooperation with developing countries. Through South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, Switzerland shares its technologies, knowledge and best practices in research and development. By supporting science in developing countries, Switzerland not only contributes to the improvement of local scientific capacities, but also plays a role in the socio-economic development of these nations, which can have a significant and lasting impact.

Open Science and Data Diplomacy

Switzerland is a fervent advocate of open science, an approach that aims to make research results accessible to all. In 2024, this principle is a pillar of Swiss science diplomacy, which promotes open access to scientific publications and research data. In a world where scientific data is growing exponentially, Switzerland is actively involved in data diplomacy, a crucial area for facilitating the international sharing of data while addressing issues of security, data sovereignty and privacy.

This approach is part of a broader vision of science diplomacy, in which the promotion of human rights and ethics in science play a central role. Switzerland is involved in international discussions on ethics in science, particularly with regard to research on emerging technologies, genetic manipulation and the environmental impact of scientific research. By integrating values such as transparency, fairness and responsibility into its scientific initiatives, Switzerland strengthens its credibility and influence on the international stage.

Conclusion

In 2024, Swiss science diplomacy will continue to be a strategic instrument for promoting national interests, strengthening Switzerland's international position, and contributing to the resolution of global challenges. Through an

integrated approach combining scientific excellence, international cooperation and commitment to global issues, Switzerland continues to position itself as a key player on the world scientific stage. This dynamic is supported by concrete initiatives, such as the promotion of open science, data diplomacy, and the strengthening of cooperation with developing countries. By capitalising on its strengths, Switzerland is well placed to navigate the challenges of the future and continue to play a leading role in the development of science and innovation at a global level.