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Sustainability: Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industry in Top Spot

The Global Industry Competitiveness Index (GICI) 2024 from BAK Economics confirms that Switzerland's chemical and pharmaceutical industry is a leader in its field: it has improved its position in the international ranking of economic competitiveness and is now ranked second, behind the United States only. In terms of environmental sustainability, it is ranked first. This confirms the industry's strong environmental commitment and its high level of competitiveness in an increasingly demanding global environment. Stable trade relations are of central importance for export-oriented industries, which is why the progress in the Federal Council's negotiations with the EU, Switzerland's most important trading partner, is encouraging.

“The tense situation worldwide, both geopolitical and economic, places great demands on our export-oriented industries,” said scienceindustries President Matthias Leuenberger at the annual event of the Chemie Pharma Life Sciences trade association. “Nevertheless, the Swiss chemical and pharmaceutical industry was again able to convince in the Global Industry Competitiveness Index by BAK Economics. It is one of the most competitive worldwide and has been among the top three locations for five years in a row.”

The GICI indicates weaknesses in product regulation and trade barriers, as well as in digitalization, where Switzerland is substantially lagging behind its competitors – there is an urgent need for action here. Nevertheless, the Swiss chemical and pharmaceutical sector has improved its competitiveness and is now ranked second, behind the USA and ahead of Ireland (2023: third place). Switzerland's specialization in innovative, high-quality products gives it a stable position in international comparison – and thus contributes significantly to the stability of the Swiss economy.

Leading in terms of competitiveness and sustainability

The focus topic of the GICI 2024 is environmental sustainability. Based on greenhouse gas emissions per value added, en-

ergy consumption per value added and investments in environmental technologies, an environmental index is calculated that allows conclusions to be drawn about the environmental impact of economic growth. In terms of minimizing the negative environmental impact of economic growth, Switzerland's chemical and pharmaceutical industry is rated the best among the largest European locations.

“The analysis shows that the Swiss chemical and pharmaceutical industry is not only one of the most competitive internationally, but also one of the most environmentally friendly,” says Stephan Mumenthaler, Director of scienceindustries. “This commitment also reflects the sustainability strategy adopted by scienceindustries in spring, which is aligned with the net-zero target for 2050 and the UN sustainability goals.” This includes a wide range of topics, from health and nutrition to education and biodiversity, with a focus on climate and resources in 2024 – a recently produced film illustrates the various sustainability initiatives in this area.

Sustainable development: demands on politics

To achieve the ambitious sustainability goals without weakening international competitiveness, scienceindustries calls for framework conditions for sustainable innovation. These include risk-based and future-oriented chemicals regulation and the promotion of technological openness in research, energy supply and sustainable nutrition systems. New technologies such as the CRISPR/Cas9 breeding techniques play a crucial role in further expanding Switzerland's innovative strength while at the same time assuming ecological responsibility.

Stable trade relations are among the key framework conditions for the export-oriented chemical, pharmaceutical and life sciences industries – the latest communication from the Federal Council on advanced negotiations with the EU is therefore encouraging: barrier-free access to the EU single market and stable relations are essential to the success of the Swiss chemical and pharmaceutical industry. scienceindustries is strongly committed – in addition to a network of free trade agreements – to strengthening and further developing the proven bilateral agreements. Switzerland can continue to rely on the chemical-pharmaceutical industry as a strong economic mainstay – an industry that is committed to all dimensions of sustainability.

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