

SWEDISH SWISS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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A PRESTUDY ON SWEDISH STARTUP & SCALEUP
EXPORT POTENTIAL TO THE SWISS MARKET

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SUPPORTED BY A SCHOLARSHIP FROM STIFTELSEN
FONDEN FÖR EXPORTUTVECKLING



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A NOTE ON THE STUDY

This study was made possible through a scholarship awarded to Melody Batti Blesserman by Stiftelsen Fonden för Exportutveckling, enabling the Swedish Swiss Chamber of Commerce to commission original research into why the Swiss market remains underutilised by Swedish startups and scaleups despite offering strong structural alignment with Swedish innovation strengths. The study was conducted through in-depth interviews with Swedish companies across AI, life science, medtech, and consumer goods, complemented by strategic conversations with leading Swedish incubators.

"SWITZERLAND SUFFERS FROM A VISIBILITY PROBLEM, NOT A MARKET PROBLEM."

6 BARRIERS TO ENTRY

Lack of visibility

Switzerland does not actively promote its innovation ecosystem internationally. Many Swedish startups are unaware of the market's depth, the concentration of global HQs, or the strength of its investor landscape. The country simply does not compete for attention the way the US, UK or Germany does.

No network, no entry

The Swiss market is almost exclusively relationship-driven. Without a personal introduction, it is near impossible to reach the right clients, partners or investors, regardless of how strong the product or company is.

An invisible investor landscape

Swiss investors are highly discreet and rarely surface through conventional channels. Almost none of the companies interviewed had existing Swiss investor contacts, despite actively seeking capital.

Regulatory complexity

Switzerland is not an EU member state. This creates additional requirements around customs, import duties, product certification and sector-specific legislation that many companies are simply unprepared for when they first explore the market.

A misleading perception of market size

Many companies discount Switzerland early, perceiving it as too small to prioritise. In practice, Swiss purchasing power per capita is among the highest in the world, and the density of multinational HQs makes a single Swiss client relationship far more valuable than it might first appear.

Language and local presence

Four cantonal languages and an expectation of local representation add a layer of complexity for companies without the resources to establish a local entity or partner immediately.

STRUCTURAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR SSCC



A curated investor register

Swiss family offices, angels and deeptech VC are largely invisible to companies approaching from the outside. SSCC has the network to map this landscape and produce a structured, sector-specific guide to Swiss capital, a document that does not exist today.

An organised market entry trip

A selected group of Swedish startups travel to Swizerland for pre-booked meetings with Swiss clients, partners and investors, arranged by SSCC.

Sweden-based events with Swiss presence — Bringing Swiss investors, buyers, and partners to Swedish innovation hubs. Removing the travel barrier entirely makes Switzerland tangible for companies that are not yet ready to commit to a market visit.

A GTM partner network

Several companies are ready to enter the Swiss market but lack a local partner to get them there. SSCC can build a curated register of Swiss distributors and commercial representatives per sector, turning intent into action.

Talent and co-founder connections

Companies expressed interest in Swiss talent and co-founders connected to ETH Zurich and EPFL.



WHY SWITZERLAND, WHY NOW?

Sweden is a small market which is why Swedish startups internationalise quickly compared to other markets. The default destination is often the US, where the scale feels proportionate to the ambition, and notably, the US is also outside the EU, with its own regulatory complexity and market entry costs. But founders accept those barriers without much hesitation, because the perceived reward is obvious. Switzerland, by comparison, tends to get dismissed early: a small country, another Sweden. The rewards are less obvious, not because they aren't there, but because they aren't visible.

The problem is not that the market is wrong for Swedish companies. The problem is that the ecosystem is poorly understood from the outside, and when founders can't see it clearly, they don't choose it. That is a visibility gap, not a market gap.

And visibility gaps can be closed. Swiss market entry is entirely possible for Swedish startups. The companies we spoke to weren't lacking the product, the ambition, or the relevance. What they were lacking was a clear entry point and someone who knew the landscape. That is what this study set out to map, and it is what SSCC is working to build. Through a curated investor register, structured business missions, and a network of local partners, we are creating the infrastructure that makes Switzerland a real option, not just an interesting one. The opportunity has always been there. We are making it visible.