

An aerial photograph of Zurich, Switzerland, showing the city's dense urban landscape, the Rhine River, and distant mountains. A large, semi-transparent green glass building is overlaid on the left side of the image, serving as a background for the main title.

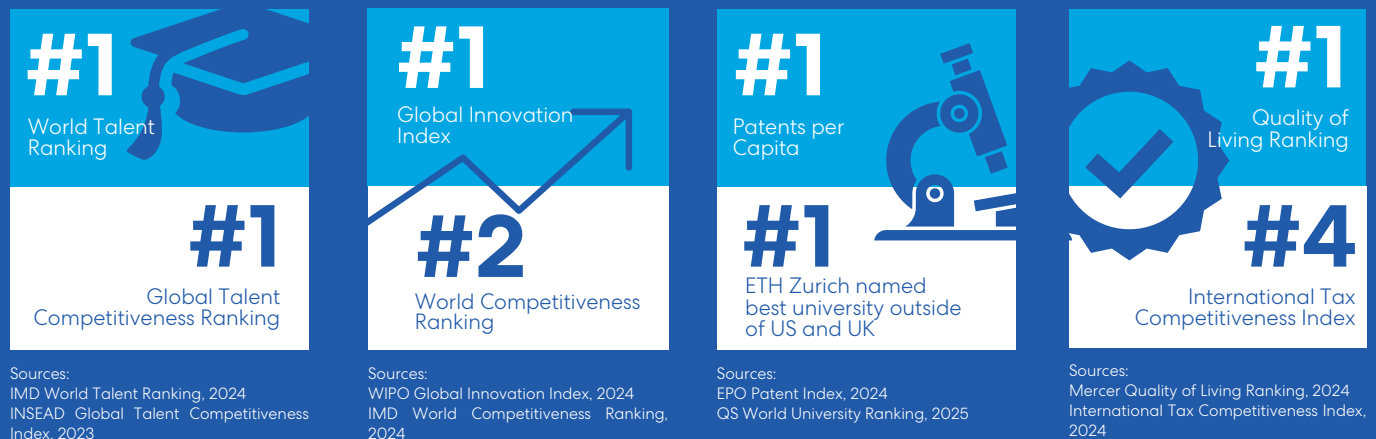
GREATER
ZURICH
AREA

Doing business in Greater Zurich

A complete guide about expanding
successfully into Switzerland

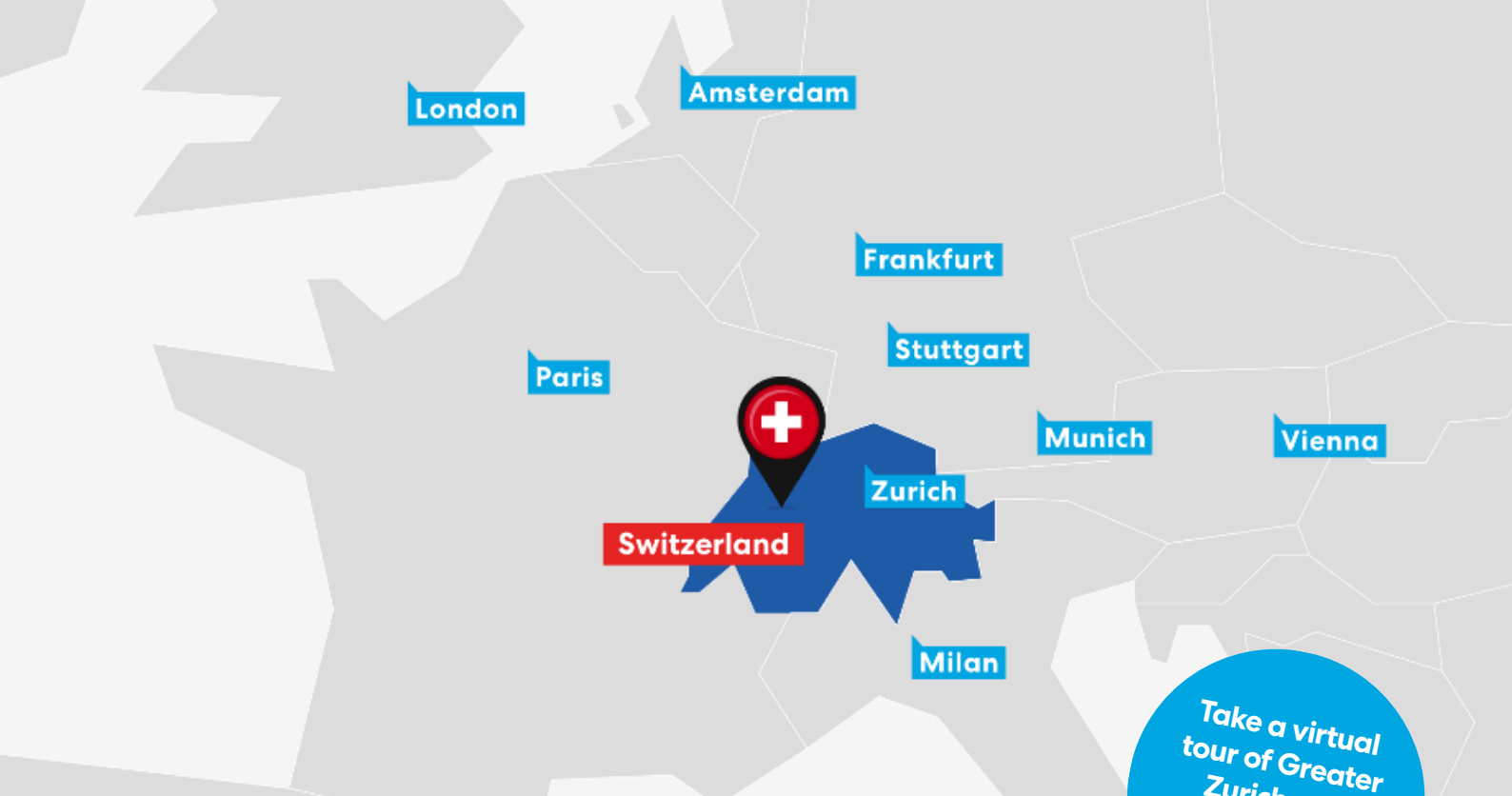
Why Greater Zurich?

The Greater Zurich Area is Switzerland's financial and technological powerhouse. Pairing the stability of Swiss governance with the agility of a thriving global tech ecosystem, the region provides unmatched access to major European markets, highly skilled talent, and a liberal regulatory environment. This makes it the ideal launchpad for global companies aiming to expand in Europe.



Top 5 reasons why companies choose Greater Zurich

- ✓ **1. Collaborate with world-class research institutions and pioneering startups**
Greater Zurich is home to top research institutions and a vibrant startup scene, fostering breakthrough innovations through close industry-academia partnerships.
- ✓ **2. Recruit top-tier multilingual talent**
Access a highly educated, international workforce in the world's leading talent hub.
- ✓ **3. Benefit from political and economic stability, ideal for long-term growth**
Switzerland's predictable legal system, low public debt, and strong institutions offer a secure environment for strategic investment.
- ✓ **4. Get anywhere in Europe in a matter of hours**
The Zurich region's central location, transportation system, and international airport ensure fast connections to all major European markets.
- ✓ **5. Benefit from attractive taxes and no red tape**
Low corporate tax rates, streamlined regulations, and fast company setup make doing business efficient and cost-effective.



The Greater Zurich Area - your international business hub in central Europe

The Greater Zurich Area is renowned for its innovation capacity, talent pool, and global business appeal. It encompasses a dynamic network of cities and industries, making it a prime location for international enterprises and research institutions.

The Greater Zurich Area stretches from Switzerland's northern border with Germany to its southern border with Italy, encompassing a population of over 4.5 million - nearly half of the entire Swiss population.

Key facts



Connectivity:

All major European countries can be reached within 2 hours by plane.



Inhabitants:

9 million inhabitants in Switzerland, 28% foreigners.



Employees:

5.4 million in Switzerland in 2024.



Multilingual workforce:

4 national languages: German, French, Italian, Romansh. English is the business language.

fDi European Regions of the Future 2024

#1 in Economic Potential

#1 in Connectivity

#1 in Business Friendliness

Greater Zurich, European Region of the Future.

FT fDi Intelligence, 2025

Home of global tech giants

Greater Zurich has built a reputation as Europe's compact tech powerhouse, attracting an impressive list of global giants. The region boasts one of the highest big tech densities in the world, enabling a close-knit innovation ecosystem with tech industry and academia.

The Zurich region boasts a high number of international tech giants. Google, Microsoft, Apple, Meta, Nvidia, IBM, Oracle, and Amazon Web Services (AWS) all maintain significant operations here.

Unlike Silicon Valley's sprawling expanse of more than 12,000 square miles, the Swiss region packs world-class innovation and tech pioneers into just 34 square miles.

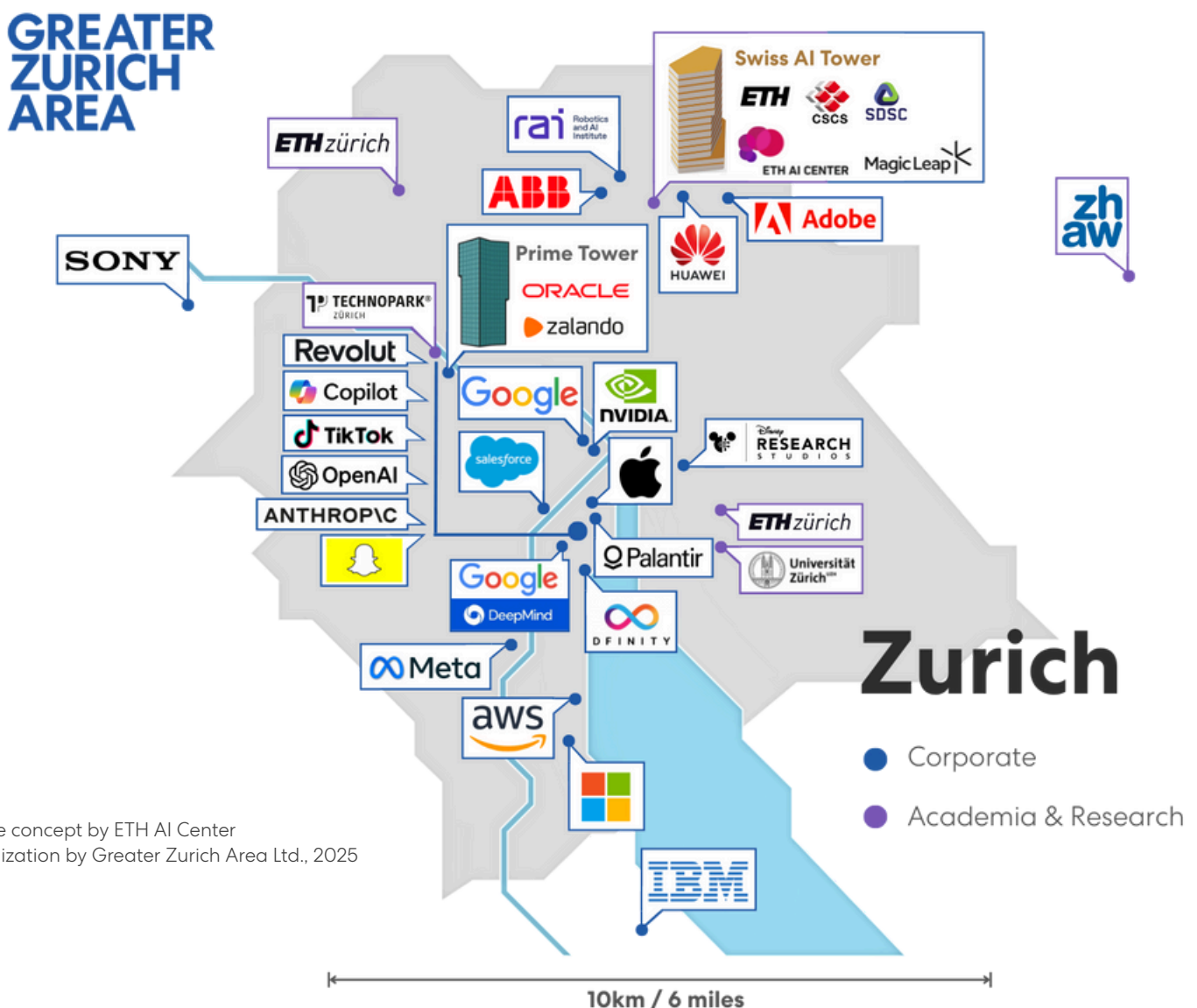


Image concept by ETH AI Center
Visualization by Greater Zurich Area Ltd., 2025

Economic landscape: Tech sectors and business hub

Switzerland's reputation as a global business leader extends to the Greater Zurich Area, which plays a pivotal role in driving the Swiss economy. With a diverse industrial base and strong support for innovation, the region offers a fertile business environment of all sectors and sizes.

Finance

The Zurich region is a major global financial hub and home to many FinTech and Blockchain companies, many of them located in the world-famous Crypto Valley.

Life Sciences

Cutting-edge advancements in pharmaceuticals, medtech, and biotechnology make the Greater Zurich region one of Europe's leading life science hubs.

Robotics & autonomous systems:

Also called the Silicon Valley of Robotics, Greater Zurich is leading in robots, drones, and autonomous systems with the best companies, pioneering startups, and research institutes leading the way globally.

Artificial intelligence

Switzerland has emerged as a prominent hub for AI in Europe, supportive regulatory environment. Industry giants such as OpenAI, NVIDIA, Anthropic, and MS Copilot have settled here.

Advanced manufacturing

Technologies made in Switzerland are transforming design and manufacturing. With digital technologies, photonics, sensor technologies and process automation, production more efficient and smarter.



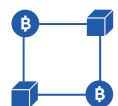
Artificial intelligence



Robotics & intelligent systems



Life sciences



Fintech & blockchain



FoodTech



Information technology



Advanced manufacturing

“Switzerland's political stability and business-friendly policies make it a secure and reliable place to invest.”

Rami Habib
General Manager,
Salesforce Switzerland

salesforce



Business framework: the ideal conditions to grow



Political and economic stability:

Switzerland is known for its stable political system and strong economy, providing a secure environment for business operations.



Connectivity:

The GZA offers attractive market access to Europe's largest economies within only a few hours' reach.



Innovation and research:

Switzerland invests heavily in research and development, fostering an innovative environment that is conducive to business growth and technological advancement.



Strong economy:

Switzerland enjoys strong GDP growth and consistently ranks among the most competitive economies worldwide.



Skilled workforce:

The country boasts a highly educated and multilingual workforce, supported by world-class educational institutions, which is beneficial for companies requiring specialized skills.



Ideal for headquarters:

More than 1,000 multinational companies have regional or international HQs in Switzerland.

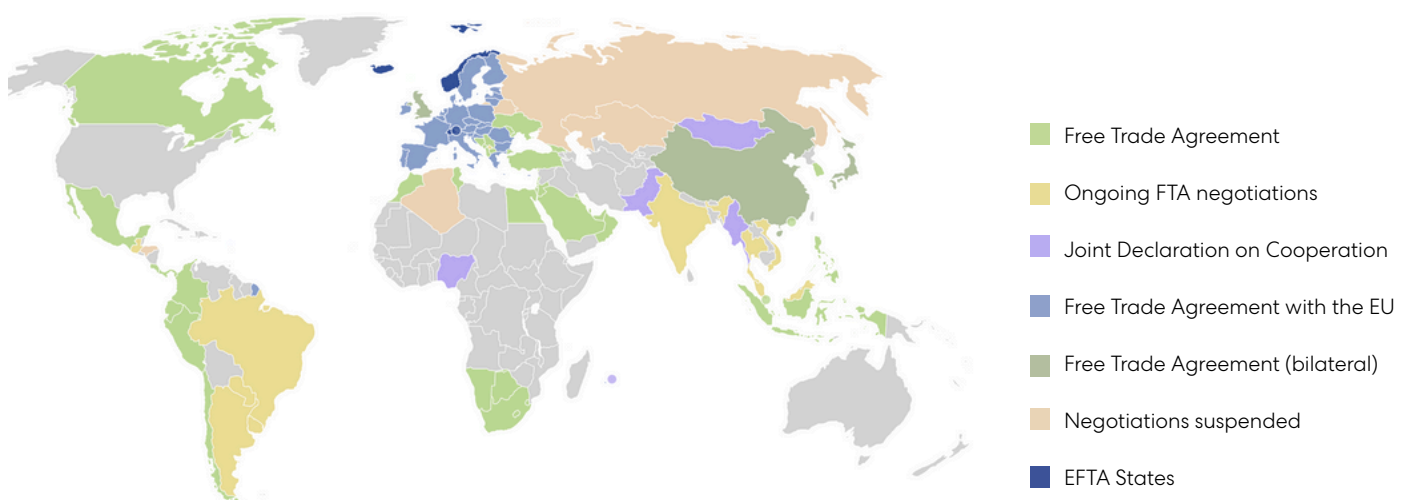
Global trade: access to international markets

Switzerland has [over 30 free trade agreements](#) with more than 40 countries, including significant economies like China and Japan, providing companies with preferential access to various markets.

Although not part of the EU and thus more flexible in many regards, Switzerland maintains a close relationship with the EU through a series of bilateral agreements, granting Swiss companies [access to significant portions of the EU single market](#).

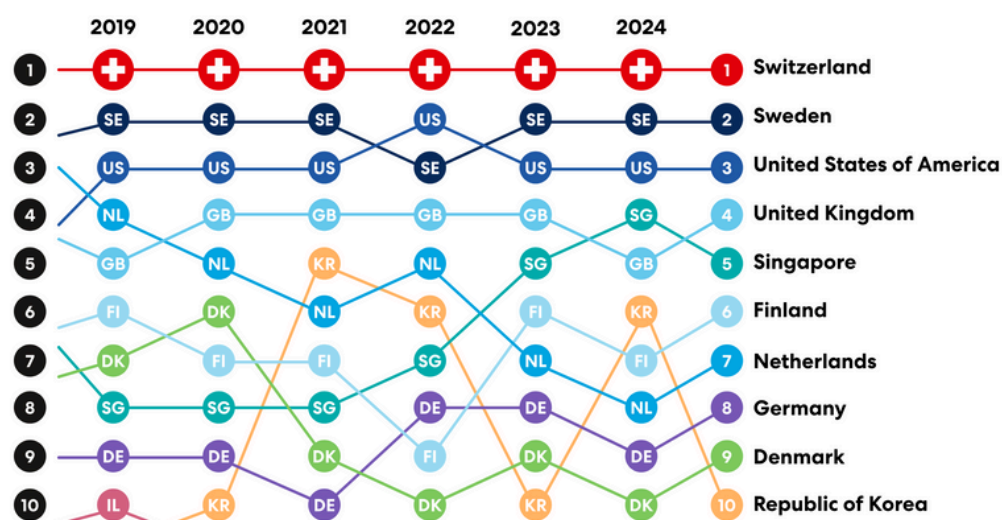
As a [member of the European Free Trade Association \(EFTA\)](#), Switzerland participates in free trade agreements that facilitate trade in various products.

Switzerland is a [WTO member](#), adhering to multilateral trade rules and commitments, which enhances its reliability as a trading partner.



Leading hub for innovation and R&D

Innovation is embedded into the DNA of Greater Zurich's economy. With globally recognized research institutions and government-backed support for innovation, Greater Zurich is a magnet for companies looking to push technological boundaries.



Switzerland has been ranked #1 in the Global Innovation Index for 14 consecutive years.

Why Greater Zurich leads in innovation

1

World-class research and education

Switzerland is home to renowned institutions like ETH Zurich and EPFL Lausanne, which are at the forefront of scientific and technological research. These institutions contribute significantly to the country's innovation output, particularly in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and biotechnology.

2

Strong industry-academia collaboration

The Swiss innovation model emphasizes close collaboration between academia and industry. This synergy facilitates the translation of research into market-ready products and services, enhancing the country's innovation efficiency.

3

Robust intellectual property framework

Switzerland maintains a strong intellectual property regime, encouraging innovation by protecting inventors' rights. The country consistently ranks high in patent applications per capita, reflecting its commitment to safeguarding and promoting innovation.

4

Significant investment in research and development

The Swiss government and private sector invest heavily in research and development (R&D), allocating over 3% of the country's GDP to R&D activities. This substantial investment supports a wide range of innovative projects and initiatives.

5

Supportive policy environment

Switzerland's policy framework is conducive to innovation, offering incentives and support for startups and established companies alike. Agencies like Innosuisse play a pivotal role in promoting science-based innovation across various sectors.

6

Highly skilled and multilingual workforce

The country boasts a highly educated and multilingual workforce, with a strong emphasis on vocational training and continuous learning. This talent pool is essential for driving innovation across diverse industries.

“Switzerland is home to a thriving tech scene from which not only great and successful companies emerge, but also creates an interesting environment for innovation.”

Christine Antlanger-Winter
Country Director,
Google Switzerland

Google



Taxes & incentives



Switzerland's competitive tax system is a key driver behind its attractiveness to international companies. Greater Zurich offers one of Europe's most favorable tax environments, supported by transparent fiscal policies and financial stability.

**Corporate tax rates
can be as low as**
12%

Greater Zurich has a very competitive standing in the international corporate tax competition. Within Western Europe, only Ireland is similar low.
Tax Foundation 2024

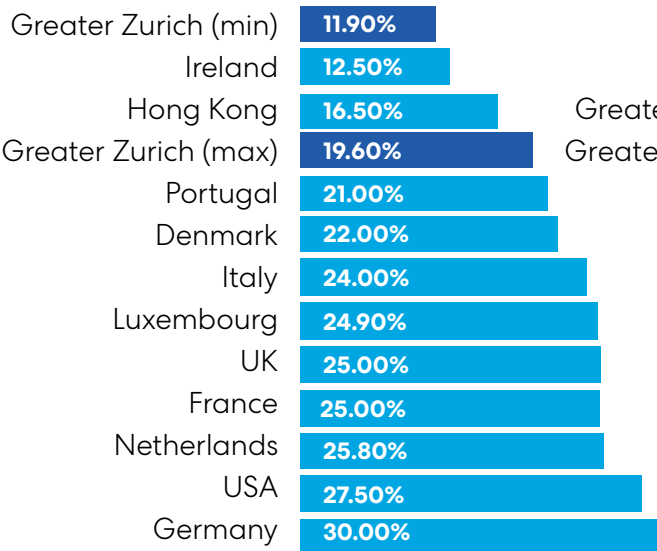
Key tax benefits

- ➔ Straightforward tax system, unique relationship with tax authorities
- ➔ Very competitive corporate tax rates, with some states providing rates significantly lower than neighboring countries
- ➔ Extensive network of double taxation treaties with over 100 countries, reducing the tax burden on international businesses and preventing the same income from being taxed in multiple jurisdictions
- ➔ Super deductions up to 150% for qualifying R&D staff and contract research
- ➔ Patent box regimes for up to 90% tax reduction on qualifying IP income

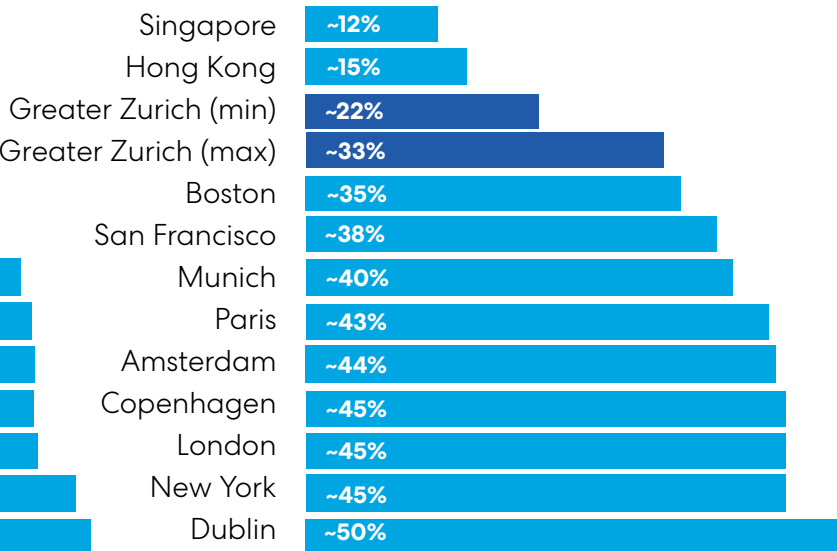
i VAT is 8.1% - one of the lowest rates in Europe.

Low corporate and individual taxes: International comparison

Corporate tax rates:



Individual tax rates:



Incentives for companies

Switzerland's financial ecosystem offers international businesses a range of funding options, grants, and tax incentives. Whether you're a startup or an established company, there are numerous programs designed to foster growth and innovation.

Financial incentives for businesses:

- R&D Tax Credits: Reductions on taxable income for companies investing in research and innovation
- Innovation Grants: Government-backed grants are available through Innosuisse for tech-focused businesses
- Export Promotion: Support provided by Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE) to help businesses expand internationally

Access to capital:

- Venture Capital: Zurich is home to a growing network of venture capital funds investing in fintech, AI, life sciences, and sustainability
- Private Equity: A strong private equity market supports business growth and acquisitions
- Angel Investors: Active angel networks offer early-stage funding for startups with high growth potential

Public incentives:

- Innosuisse: Covers 40–70% of project costs, including pre-market startup funding
- Cantonal Incentives: Tax holidays, relocation step-ups, and targeted support

Private investment:

- Greater Zurich receives over 50% of Swiss venture capital
- Switzerland ranks #2 globally in VC investment per capita

Intellectual property edge:

- No withholding tax on most royalties
- Efficient registration via www.ige.ch
- IP depreciation possible over 5 years



"Switzerland offers ideal conditions for our growth - with its international outlook, well-educated workforce, legal certainty, and open-minded authorities."


Chris Keller
Managing Director, AWS Europe Central



Setting up a business

Establishing a business in the Greater Zurich Area is straightforward, with clear procedures designed to support both domestic and international companies. Whether you're setting up a branch, a subsidiary, or starting from scratch, the Swiss legal framework offers flexibility and clarity.

The average time to fully register
a company in Switzerland is



2-3 weeks
making it one of the fastest
setups in Europe.

Costs range from CHF 1,200 to CHF 5,000, depending on the business structure and legal services used.

How to set up your business – Step by step



1. Select a legal structure:

- AG (Corporation) – Best for large enterprises. Minimum capital: Chf 100,000.
- GmbH (Limited Liability Company) – Ideal for small to medium-sized businesses. Minimum capital: Chf 20,000.
- Branch Office – Suitable for foreign entities expanding operations



2. Register your business:

- File with the Commercial Register
- Obtain a Business Identification Number (UID)



3. Set up a Swiss bank account:

- Deposit the required capital
- Open an operational account for daily transactions



4. Handle employment requirements:

- Apply for necessary work permits (especially for non-EU nationals)
- Register for social insurance contributions

Are you looking to expand your business into Switzerland?
Reach out to our team for free expansion support: hello@greaterzuricharea.com

Regulatory & legal framework

Switzerland offers a transparent and business-friendly regulatory environment. Its legal framework protects investors' interests while ensuring compliance with international standards.



Business-friendly policies

Streamlined regulations encourage foreign investment and ease of doing business.



Strong legal protections

Intellectual property rights, contract enforcement, and data protection are prioritized.



Labor flexibility

Laws allow for flexible hiring while maintaining fair worker protections.

Regulation in Switzerland: Pragmatic and tech-neutral

Data privacy laws

- ✓ Stringent Swiss data privacy laws offer high security and quality.
- ✓ Swiss laws align with EU standards while maintaining a more pragmatic approach to foster innovation without the overly restrictive measures seen in other regions.

Innovation-friendly regulatory framework

- ✓ Progressive regulation allows for innovation.
- ✓ Authorities are pragmatic and accessible, ensuring smooth interactions with businesses.

Tech-neutral regulation

- ✓ Swiss laws are designed in a technology-neutral manner, offering clear regulation for high legal certainty and international flexibility.
- ✓ Focus on updating existing laws to accommodate new advancements, ensuring that AI companies are not burdened by outdated regulations.

Internal market act:

This legislation ensures that businesses established in Switzerland have free and equal access to the market across all cantons (=states), minimizing regional restrictions and promoting a cohesive domestic market.

Technical regulations:

Switzerland aligns many of its technical standards with international norms, reducing technical barriers to trade and simplifying compliance for foreign companies.

Talent & workforce

Switzerland
ranks #1 in
global talent
attraction and
retention.

Switzerland is globally recognized for its highly skilled, multilingual workforce and continues to rank as the world's leading hub for attracting and retaining talent. It is home to a talent pool that meets the needs of global businesses and is famous for attracting companies with its talent pool, as happened with OpenAI, Anthropic, or the Robotics and AI Institute by Boston Dynamics.

1 Unmatched in talent rankings

- Switzerland has ranked #1 in the IMD World Talent Ranking for over a decade
- Zurich ranks #3 globally for tech and science talent availability
- Switzerland is in the Top 5 countries worldwide for AI talent concentration

2 Highly skilled and educated workforce

- A significant share of the population holds university degrees
- 28% of all graduates complete STEM degrees, which is well above the OECD average
- The renowned dual education system combines academic learning with hands-on experience, producing job-ready graduates from day one.

3 Global and multilingual mindset

- Multilingualism is the norm: With German, French, Italian, and English widely spoken, Switzerland excels at operating in a global business environment.
- Greater Zurich's international character and strong expat community make it easy for companies to attract and retain foreign talent.

“In Greater Zurich, all the elements are available to establish a hub for global expansion. The Greater Zurich Area is a fabulous place to recruit talent.”

Cedric Francois
CEO and Co-Founder,
Apellis Pharmaceuticals

Apellis



Swiss labor laws

Employment contracts

Both fixed-term and indefinite contracts are permitted.

Compared to the EU, Swiss rules are more flexible

- shorter notice periods, less prescriptive working time rules, and fewer mandatory employee protections.

Working hours

Standard is 40–42 hours per week.

Regulatory framework:

Less regulated in Switzerland than the EU but requires strict adherence to health and safety laws.

Termination

Short notice periods - usually 1 to 3 months depending on tenure.

Collective bargaining:

Less widespread in Switzerland than in the EU - labor relations are more individualistic.

Employee benefits & legal requirements



Social security & retirement

Three pillars system:

Pillar 1: State pension

Mandatory contributions from employers and employees.

Pillar 2: Occupational pension

Employers pay at least 50% of contributions, employees the other part.

Pillar 3: Private pension

Voluntary private pension plans with tax advantages.

Employers must at least provide the Pillar 2 minimum package covering retirement, disability, and death benefits - many companies offer enhanced plans for higher earners.



Supplemental benefits

Employers often supplement statutory requirements. Common benefits include:

- Business Travel Insurance
- Maternity and Paternity Leave: While statutory maternity leave is provided, many companies offer additional paid leave.



Health insurance

No employer contribution is legally required - employees arrange and pay for coverage themselves.



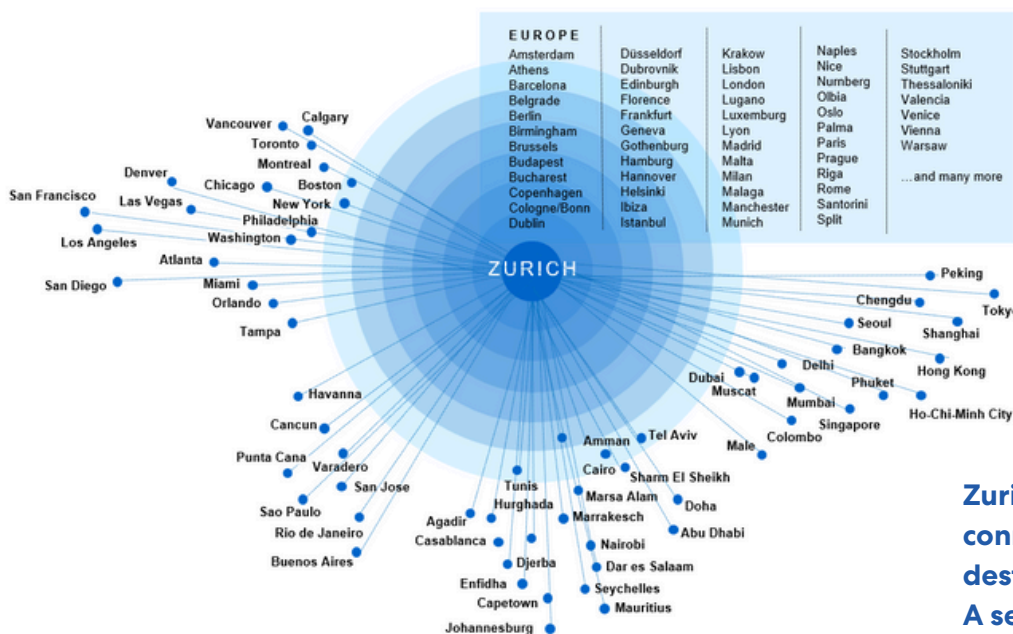
Occupational health & safety

Employers are legally required to ensure a safe working environment under the Labor Act.

Connectivity & infrastructure

Much of Swiss public transport is powered by renewable energy sources.

The Greater Zurich Area stands out for its exceptional infrastructure and strategic location, making it a gateway to Europe and beyond. Whether it's air, rail, road, or digital infrastructure, it provides seamless connections for businesses operating globally.



Zurich Airport offers connections to over 200 destinations worldwide. A selection.

Greater Zurich's infrastructure works for international business



Air connectivity

- Zurich Airport offers direct flights to over 200 destinations worldwide with daily connections to key business hubs such as London, New York, and San Francisco.
- It only takes 12 minutes to reach Zurich Airport by train from the city center.
- Close access to Basel, Geneva, Stuttgart, and Milan airports.



Rail and road network

- High-speed trains connect directly to major European cities like Paris, Milan, Munich, Stuttgart, Berlin, and Vienna in a matter of hours.
- An extensive highway system ensures easy access to neighboring countries with open borders.



Digital infrastructure

- Nationwide 5G coverage supports businesses reliant on advanced technology.
- Secure data centers ensure business continuity with compliance with Swiss data protection laws.



Co-working spaces and labs

- Modern office spaces, research labs, co-working hubs, and industrial zones are available across the region.

Quality of life & business culture

The Greater Zurich Area offers not only a thriving business environment but also an exceptional quality of life. For international businesses, this makes it easier to attract and retain top talent.

Safety, stability & governance

- One of the world's safest countries, low crime rates and high public trust in government institutions.
- A stable democracy with decentralized governance, fostering responsive public services and strong local engagement.
- Among the most transparent and least corrupt countries, creating overall confidence in doing business.

Education, talent & innovation

- Combination of a renowned university system with one of the world's most effective dual vocational education and training systems (VET).
- The country consistently tops the IMD World Talent Ranking, thanks to a skilled, multilingual, and productive workforce.
- Good international schools

World-class healthcare & environment

- A high-performing healthcare system, with cutting-edge facilities, quick access, and multilingual professionals.
- Life expectancy is among the highest globally, reflecting the country's preventive care and healthy lifestyle.
- Strict environmental policies result in low pollution levels and high ecological health standards.

Work-life balance and personal well-being

- Swiss cities and rural areas offer a calm lifestyle, with short commutes, flexible work policies, and abundant nature.
- Community life is vibrant, yet respectful of privacy – ideal for both families and individuals.
- Cultural events in both cities and rural areas



“The Greater Zurich Area is simply an outstanding location. It offers a high quality of living, is home to one of the top institutions of higher education in the world, and provides an employer-friendly climate.”

Markus Gross
Chief Scientist,
The Walt Disney Studios



Disney
RESEARCH
STUDIOS

Success stories

Global leaders from various industries have already recognized the strategic advantages of operating in the Greater Zurich Area. These success stories highlight the region's ability to attract innovation, investment, and growth.



... and many more.

Read success stories at greaterzuricharea.com/success-stories

Contact information & services

Who are we?

Greater Zurich Area Ltd is your trusted partner for expanding and thriving in Switzerland. We are the official investment promotion agency for the Greater Zurich region and offer personalized support at every stage of your expansion journey – from the initial fact-finding phase to setting up your operations.

Whether you're exploring the Swiss market or already planning your move, our expert consulting services are tailored to your specific business needs – and always free of charge.

How we help



Introductions to key contacts in industry, academia, and government agencies



Facilitating contact to potential research partners at universities and research institutes.



Support in location evaluation, introduction to service providers, and advice on regulations.

Contact us today!

greaterzuricharea.com

info@greaterzuricharea.com

