

**Press release**

25 April 2012

40th anniversary of the Free Trade Agreement between Switzerland and the EU

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and Switzerland, BUSINESSEUROPE and economiesuisse jointly organised a special event today in Brussels. The Presidents and Directors General of both these business federations emphasised the importance of the bilateral business relations and called for more pragmatism with regard to the further development of the established bilateral path.

The economic success of the Free Trade Agreement is an excellent reason for celebration: Switzerland has become the EU's third most important trade partner after the United States and China, ahead of countries such as Russia, Japan and India. As BUSINESSEUROPE's President Jürgen Thumann points out: "With an annual bilateral trade surplus of 40 billion euros in goods and services, the EU economy regards Switzerland as a top export destination. Pragmatic agreements have fostered this strategic business relationship in trade and investments. In addition, both partners share a common interest in fostering a strong and competitive Europe." In view of the integration of its economy in the European value chain, Switzerland has a major interest in the international competitiveness of the EU Member States.

The quest for solutions to improve the institutional framework of the bilateral relations between the EU and Switzerland has become an important item on the political agenda, and the wishes of the EU Commission have to be taken into account. However, any future framework needs to be solution oriented, taking the interests of EU and Swiss business into consideration, and focusing on solving existing problems. In the words of Gerold Bühner, President of economiesuisse: "On this basis, pragmatic and mutually satisfying solutions can undoubtedly be found at a political level in order to further develop bilateral economic relations."

In an anniversary brochure published jointly by economiesuisse and BUSINESSEUROPE, politicians, diplomats and business leaders provide insights into 40 years of fascinating history of an agreement which still forms the basis for the intense economic relations between Switzerland and the European Union.

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