

Fostering Talent through Swiss Companies in Mexico



CÁMARA SUIZO-MEXICANA
DE COMERCIO E INDUSTRIA A.C.



Executive Summary

Mexico's vibrant youth population and robust technical education system position it as a vital source of creativity, young talent, and innovation. With a growing pool of skilled young professionals, the country plays a key role in addressing global economic challenges while fostering the development of emerging talent.

Switzerland, renowned for its leadership in innovation and education, excels in nurturing talent development through world-class universities, advanced research institutions, and a culture of precision and quality. Its commitment to fostering young talent has established Switzerland as a global hub for education, research, and technological advancement.

The collaboration between Mexico and Switzerland highlights a successful partnership focused on cultivating young talent and advancing talent development. By leveraging their unique strengths, both countries have created an alliance that supports the growth of future professionals and drives technological and industrial innovation.

This report explores the role of Swiss companies in Mexico in enhancing the employability of young talent. It examines the historical context, current initiatives, and remaining challenges, emphasizing the mutual benefits of sustained investment in young talent and talent development for both nations.

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Swiss Companies in Mexico

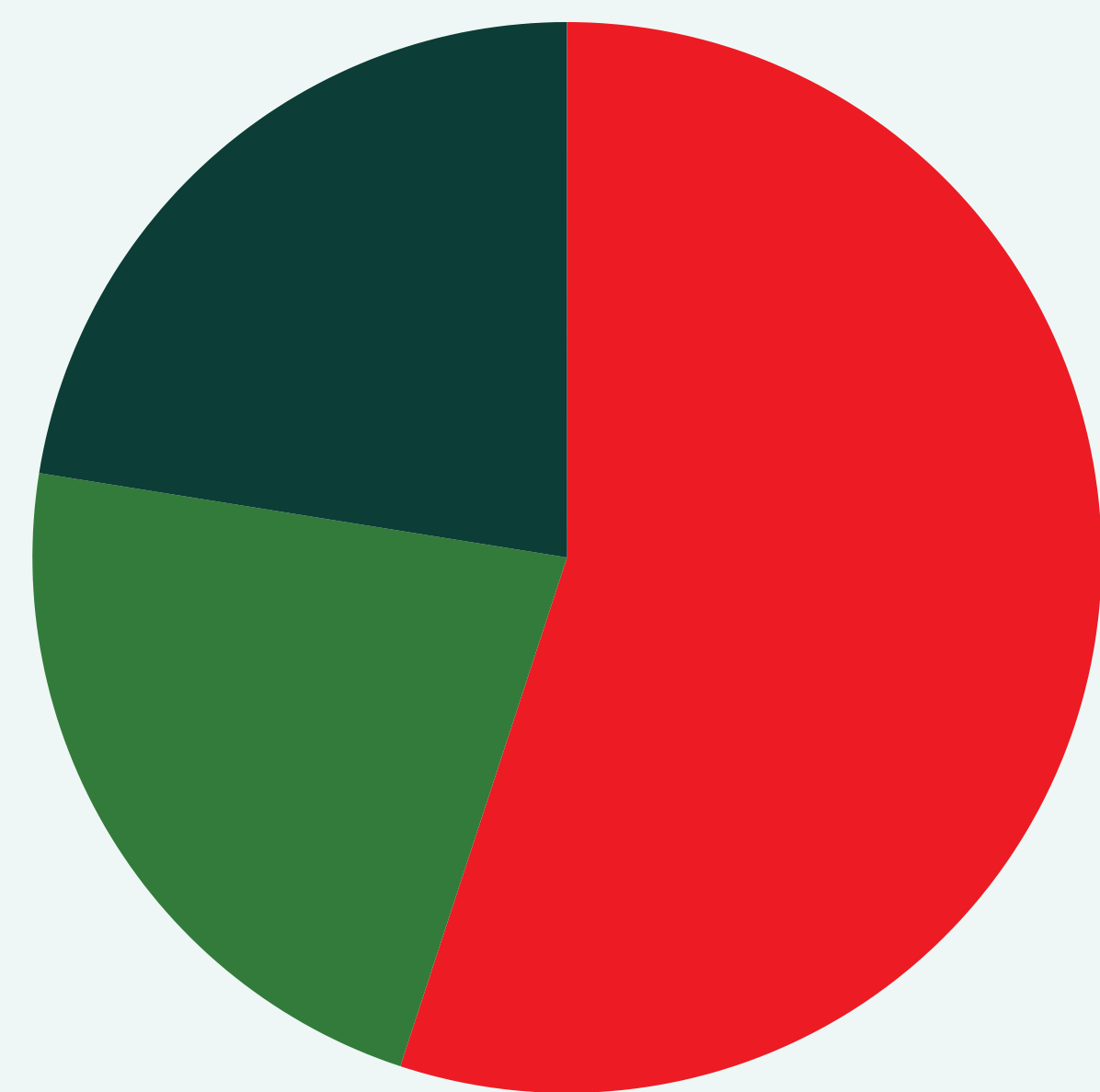
Switzerland has established itself as the ninth largest foreign investor in Mexico by 2024, with a direct investment of US\$8.8 billion.



Since the beginning of the 20th century, leading Swiss companies such as Nestlé, Roche, and Sandoz have established a strong presence in Mexico. Today, over 200 Swiss companies operate in Mexico, providing around 55,000 direct jobs, making Mexico Switzerland’s largest economic partner in Latin America.

Switzerland has a strong international engagement; one out of every two francs is generated abroad. To further strengthen these increasingly dynamic economic relations, various institutional frameworks have been established between both countries, including the creation of the Swiss-Mexican Chamber of Commerce in 2016.

What does Mexico import from Switzerland ?



- Chemicals and pharmaceuticals (55.05...)
- Machines and electronics (22.48%)
- Precision instruments, watches and cloc...

In 2022, Mexico accounted for 83% of machinery imports from Switzerland to Latin America, highlighting its economic development. Mexico is a key hub for technology and equipment, driving regional economic integration and attracting foreign investment.

Switzerland and Mexico: Milestones in Bilateral Cooperation

The partnership between Mexico and Switzerland has been marked by key milestones that underscore their strong bilateral cooperation. Areas such as investment, education, technical training, and innovation have played a pivotal role, reflecting both nations' shared commitment to fostering development and preparing skilled professionals to meet global challenges.

1827

- The first contact between Mexico and Switzerland began with the establishment of Switzerland's first consulate in Mexico, later upgraded to a Consulate General in 1847.

1945

- Switzerland and Mexico officially established diplomatic relations, marking the beginning of a strong and enduring partnership. In 1946, both countries set up legations, and in 1958, they elevated their diplomatic missions to embassies.

2001

- The Free Trade Agreement between Mexico and the countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)—of which Switzerland is a member—came into force, strengthening economic ties and fostering trade between the nations.

2010

- An Agreement to Avoid Double Taxation between Mexico and Switzerland was established, promoting greater economic cooperation and facilitating cross-border investments.

2016

- A letter of intent was signed between the economy ministers of Switzerland and Mexico to promote dual vocational training. That same year, the **Swiss Alliance for Dual Vocational Education** was established in collaboration with the Swiss Embassy and the Swiss-Mexican Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SwissCham Mexico), which was also created in 2016.

2021

- Renewal of the Letter of Intent on Cooperation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training was signed between Mexico's Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) and Switzerland's State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SERI).

This longstanding cooperation underscores both countries' dedication to fostering investment, innovation and developing skilled professionals.



Developing Talent and Innovation Together

Switzerland holds one of the most advanced positions in scientific-technological research, driven by high global standards in academic institutions, research centers, and human resources; sophisticated research infrastructure; and universities focused on intensive scientific study. This scientific quality has propelled Switzerland to one of the **highest rates of patent and invention production** globally. Technological probing in Switzerland has been closely linked with productive activity, providing practical applications in many daily life areas.

Mexico's advanced scientific and technical community benefits from its strong infrastructure, top-tier researchers, and collaborations with institutions such as Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN). The participation of Mexican researchers in Swiss research centers and innovation projects underscores Mexico's progress in scientific training. Key initiatives include the installation of the V0+ subatomic particle detector from UNAM at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), Cemex's materials technology lab in Biel/Bienne, and the robotic telescope project at the San Pedro Mártir Observatory in Baja California, a collaboration between UNAM and the University of Bern.

The Swiss-Mexican Chamber of Commerce and Industry on its side, has successfully promoted the technical and vocational education and training among the Swiss companies in Mexico; and also has some efforts in developing talent, for example with the development of personalized programs for its members on topical issues such as Public Health, which features six virtual sessions led by experts from the Swiss School of Public Health, fostering dialogue and knowledge sharing on public health. These sessions have also been enriched by the participation of Mexican public officials, promoting bilateral collaboration and leveraging Switzerland's expertise to address critical health challenges in Mexico.

An insight to Swiss education model in Mexico

"Mexico has the most Swiss School campuses worldwide. This proves the incredible talent and potential that we see in youth talent. Our students consistently demonstrate a high level of academic excellence and innovation. That's how our institution contributes to the country's education and development".



Jörg Wiedenbach
Managing Director,
Swiss School Mexico

COLEGIO SUIZO DE MÉXICO



This institution, founded in 1965, currently has three branches in the country: Queretaro, Cuernavaca and Mexico City, and has established itself as a prestigious educational institution following the signing of the Agreement for the recognition of the Swiss School as a bi-cultural School, signed during the visit of the Vice President of the Federal Council Alain Berset to Mexico in 2017.

Did you know that Mexico has more engineering students than U.S.?

Mexico has quietly been building up its infrastructure over the past decade to educate more engineers and attract companies with advanced engineering design work. Some 451,000 students are currently enrolled in full-time undergraduate engineering programs in Mexico, up to 20% since 2000.



Swiss Companies' Contributions to Talent Development in Mexico

Swiss companies have played a significant role in shaping Mexico's labor market and contributing to the development of its workforce. With over 50,000 direct jobs created across the country, Swiss businesses are present in nearly every sector of Mexico's economy, fostering economic growth and offering a wide range of employment opportunities. Beyond job creation, Swiss companies are also committed to developing talent through collaboration with educational models, government programs such as "Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro," various internship initiatives, and the establishment of their Research and Development centers in Mexico. These efforts are essential in promoting employability, bridging the skills gap, and empowering young people with the training and experience needed to succeed in a competitive, technology-driven economy.

"Investing in education focused on innovation and technology is vital for empowering the next generation. By promoting these fields, we ensure that young minds are equipped to lead in a rapidly evolving world, driving both economic growth and technological advancement for a brighter future."



Francisco Martinez
CEO Adecco Mexico



Technical and Vocational Education

The Mexican Dual Training Model (MMFD) is a nationally recognized educational option since 2015 by the Ministry of Public Education (SEP). It Proposes training within the company and at school for students pursuing technological, technical professional, or technical professional baccalaureate programs at Public Institutions of Higher Secondary Education. **SwissCham Mexico actively participated in this process, and today, one of its objectives is to promote and encourage dual training in its member companies.**

In 2016, the Swiss government announced the launch of the Swiss Alliance for Dual Education: an initiative between the Swiss Embassy and the Swiss-Mexican Chamber of Commerce and Industry to promote dual training in Swiss companies in Mexico. Today, more than 513 apprentices (57% men - 43% women) have been trained in the Mexican Dual Training Model in companies such as Bühler, Clariant, Firmenich, Nestlé, Schindler and Zurich in 20 technical careers in nine Mexican states. In addition, more than 337 instructors and tutors have been trained and certified in the companies.

In Switzerland, vocational training combines theoretical and practical learning through a specialized Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. The dual system consists of practical training that allows young people to work as “apprentices” in a company for three or four days a week. This part is complemented by one or two days of theoretical preparation in the classroom, focused on the area of specialization of the student's choice. **Switzerland has decades of experience in applying this model within its education system.**



Emilia Pfeiffer
Managing Director,
SwissCham Mexico

"SwissCham Mexico actively promotes vocational education and training across our 60 member companies, in collaboration with the Swiss Alliance for Dual Education and the Swiss Embassy with more than 540 students in seven states of Mexico.

Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro



The *Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro* program pursues similar objectives to the Mexican Dual Training Model, as it is a training program to transfer labor skills and competencies to apprentices but unlike the MMFD, it is coordinated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS). This Program was launched at the beginning of 2019 and aims to link 2.3 million young people between the ages of 18 and 29 who are neither studying nor working with work centers to receive training and mentoring, whereby they will receive a monthly scholarship of 3,600 pesos for a maximum period of one year and social security from the IMSS.

Since the start of the program in January 2019, SwissCham member companies have opened their doors to talented young people for training at their workplaces in different parts of the country.

Almost 3,000,000 young professionals integrated the *Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro* program since its creation.



Caio Zuccarelli
CEO Clariant Mexico

"Mexico is a key market for the chemical industry in LATAM. One of the main challenges to capture its future potential is the development of required talent. Enhancing collaborative programs between the public and private sectors is crucial to addressing it".

Swiss R&D Centers in Mexico.

Swiss R&D centers play a pivotal role in shaping Mexico's skilled workforce by forming specialized technicians, ensuring a continuous flow of expertise and innovation across key sectors. In 2023, ABB established a center in Mérida, Yucatán, to train engineers for the U.S. market, highlighting their commitment to technical excellence. Novartis invested in a High-Quality Laboratory in Naucalpan, advancing pharmaceutical research and strengthening Mexico's role in scientific innovation. Similarly, Givaudan inaugurated a Creative Center offering fragrance evaluation, technical labs, and creative development in the chemical sector.

These initiatives showcase Swiss companies' diverse contributions to talent development and innovation. By providing specialized training, enhancing research capabilities, and cultivating creative solutions, Swiss R&D centers are transforming Mexico into a global hub of technology and industry. Their strategic investments not only elevate workforce capabilities but also ensure sustainable growth, positioning Mexico as a leader in innovation and industrial development.

SwissCham actively fosters talent development within member companies by organizing **high-impact events and certification programs.**



Working Group on Human Resources

The Human Resources Directors discuss issues such as working rights and labor conditions, hiring and talent retention, outsourcing, equal pay and inclusion, youth programs, and dual education.



Working Group on Manufacturing and Industry 4.0

Production directors and plant managers discuss and share challenges and solutions for the manufacturing sector. In addition, it addresses Industry 4.0 and innovation issues to make plant management more efficient.



Swiss Job Fair

Our first employment event designed to connect job seekers with top Swiss companies. It serves as a platform for individuals looking to advance their careers, explore job opportunities, and network with industry leaders.

Women Leaders Mentorship Program

In 2024, the Program addressed the importance of women for innovation and the transition to sustainability, closing with a Forum, which marks the conclusion of the SwissCham Mexico Women Leaders mentoring program, to host an awards ceremony to recognize the participating mentors and mentees.



Talent for Nearshoring Panel: as part of the Regional Policy Dialogue on strengthening sustainable industries in the digital age, a panel was organized along with BID and the Swiss Embassy with featured insights of CEOs from swiss companies, as well as testimonies from apprentices from leading Swiss companies like Holcim, Schindler and Nestlé.

▼ Looking Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities

Looking Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities

Even though there are many successful initiatives and programs to provide opportunities to young talent between Mexico and Switzerland, there is still room to enhance and expand these efforts.

The collaboration between Switzerland and Mexico presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly in innovation, talent development, and economic progress. While notable achievements have been made, key obstacles must be addressed to fully realize the partnership's potential. A primary challenge is bridging the talent gap. Despite advancements in technical and vocational education, aligning Mexican workforce skills with the demands of Swiss industries remains a pressing issue. The need for specialized training and investment in education is critical to meet the requirements of innovation-driven sectors.

Additionally, funding limitations hinder further collaboration. While scholarships and agreements support undergraduate exchanges and research, financial resources fall short of meeting demand. Expanding funding opportunities, particularly for postgraduate studies and advanced research, is essential to strengthen ties and drive innovation.

Despite these challenges, the partnership also presents numerous opportunities. One of the most promising avenues is the expansion of the dual education model, which has proven effective in equipping Mexican talent with practical skills and hands-on experience. By fostering stronger collaborations between Swiss companies and Mexican academic institutions, the employability and competitiveness of the local workforce can be significantly enhanced.

Switzerland's global leadership in research and innovation also provides a unique opportunity for joint projects that address pressing global challenges. Collaborative efforts in fields such as sustainable development, public health, and advanced manufacturing can generate substantial benefits for both nations.

Building on this foundation, the exploration of new technologies and emerging sectors presents a natural progression for the partnership. Developing collaboration in these areas offers significant opportunities for both countries to leverage their respective strengths and resources. Switzerland, renowned for its cutting-edge innovation and advanced research capabilities, can provide valuable expertise and technological advancements. Meanwhile, Mexico, with its growing pool of talented professionals and burgeoning tech industry, offers a dynamic environment for implementation and development.

New technologies and emerging sectors

To foster this collaboration, initiatives such as joint research projects, exchange programs for students and professionals, and bilateral investment in tech startups can be established. These initiatives could focus on areas such as artificial intelligence, renewable energy, biotechnology, and advanced manufacturing. Creating innovation hubs and incubators in both countries can also stimulate entrepreneurial ventures and facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practices.

Moreover, establishing a framework for regular dialogue between academic institutions, industry leaders, and government agencies from both countries can ensure that collaborations are aligned with the latest trends and needs. By prioritizing the development of new technologies and emerging sectors, Switzerland and Mexico can drive mutual economic growth, enhance their competitive edge in the global market, and contribute to solving some of the most pressing global challenges.



Relocating the formation of qualified professionals

Establishing specialized training centers and academic programs in strategic locations within Switzerland and Mexico is essential for developing the skilled professionals needed to drive collaboration in new technologies. These initiatives ensure a steady supply of talent tailored to regional needs, support local economies, and reduce brain drain. Moreover, by aligning these programs with industry demands, both countries can enhance their competitiveness on the global stage. Collaborative efforts in education and training not only foster innovation but also create a resilient workforce capable of addressing future technological challenges.



Karina Lerma,
President of
SwissCham México

"By embracing innovative technologies, we unlock global collaboration, overcome barriers, and drive growth and progress between Mexico and Switzerland in order to boost the talent development in the upcoming years."

More information

- ▼ Report: “A un año de Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro en empresas suizas”, Cámara Suizo-Mexicana de Industria y Comercio.
- ▼ Report: “Mexico and Switzerland: 75th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations”, Instituto Matías Romero
- ▼ Report: “Swiss dual education and Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro: strategies to combat unemployment in Mexico”, Cámara Suizo-Mexicana de Industria y Comercio.
- ▼ Switzerland - Latin America: Economic Relations Report 2022



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