















Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2023/2042(INI)	Procedure completed
EU-Switzerland relations		
Subject 6.40.01 Relations with EEA/EFTA countries 6.40.11 Relations with industrialised countries		
Geographical area Switzerland		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Foreign Affairs	 MANDL Lukas	01/12/2022
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 SCHIEDER Andreas	
		 GRUDLER Christophe	
		 BÜTIKOFER Reinhard	
		 MARIANI Thierry	
		 KANKO Assita	
		 MAUREL Emmanuel	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 International Trade (Associated committee)	 WARBORN Jörgen	21/03/2023
	 Culture and Education (Associated committee)		30/03/2023
		 HEIDE Hannes	

Key events			
20/04/2023	Committee referral announced in Parliament		

20/04/2023	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
18/07/2023	Vote in committee		
25/07/2023	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0248/2023	Summary
03/10/2023	Debate in Parliament		
04/10/2023	Results of vote in Parliament		
04/10/2023	Decision by Parliament	T9-0345/2023	Summary
04/10/2023	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2023/2042(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 57; Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/9/11734

Documentation gateway					
Committee draft report		PE746.735	14/04/2023	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE749.089	17/05/2023	EP	
Committee opinion	INTA	PE745.546	29/06/2023	EP	
Committee opinion	CULT	PE745.540	29/06/2023	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0248/2023	25/07/2023	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0345/2023	04/10/2023	EP	Summary

EU-Switzerland relations

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the initiative report by Lukas MANDL (EPP, AT) on EU-Switzerland relations.

Foreign and security policy

The report highlighted the EUs strong interest in cooperating with Switzerland as a like-minded partner on international peace, security, human rights and defence matters, in particular in response to Russias war of aggression against Ukraine. It acknowledged Switzerlands long-standing foreign policy of promoting peace, mediation and peaceful conflict resolution.

Members welcomed Switzerlands close stance with the EUs CFSP, including on humanitarian aid, civil protection, counter-terrorism and climate change issues. They welcomed, further, Switzerlands announcement in November 2021 to participate in certain projects of the Permanent Structured Cooperation.

The report encouraged closer collaboration between Switzerland and the EU on social and humanitarian issues. It also encouraged Switzerland to continue its efforts to promote a rules-based international order, to amend its legislation to allow for the confiscation of Russian assets, and to undertake a review of its sanctions practices in order to align itself more systematically with EU sanctions.

Members also welcomed Switzerland's participation in summits of the European political community. They took note of the cooperation between the EU and Switzerland on international migration, particularly with regard to the management of refugee flows and the relocation of refugees. They regretted, however, that Switzerland does not currently meet the conditions for participation in the European Union's civil protection mechanism.

Economy, labour market and access to the EU internal market

The report underlined that safeguarding, strengthening and deepening strong, stable and sustainable trade relations with Switzerland, the EUs fourth largest trading partner, remains a high priority.

Members considered that a modernised and mutually beneficial relationship, underpinned by an ambitious agreement, should not only reduce barriers to trade but should also create a level playing field for EU citizens and economic operators, generate trust, stability, jobs, growth and welfare, ensure the non-discriminatory protection of workers rights.

Regretting the fact that Switzerland remains the only EFTA member that has not joined the EEA, Members noted that Switzerland would always be welcome to join the EEA or the EU should it express such a wish in the future. They underlined the importance of stable and strong relations and frameworks between the EU and Switzerland for future cross-border cooperation.

Members are concerned about any lack of implementation of certain agreements with the Union by Switzerland and its subsequent adoption of legislative measures and practices that might be incompatible with those agreements, in particular measures affecting the free movement of persons. They urged Switzerland to apply the relevant EU acquis and to comply with its obligations under the 1999 agreement on the free movement of persons, in particular on posted workers.

Members are concerned that basic bilateral agreements are slowly phasing out and no longer secure frictionless market access as a result of the non-incorporation of new developments in the EU acquis. They noted that the model based on individual bilateral agreements instead of a package agreement is outdated. They recalled that the adoption of a package agreement for existing and future agreements that enable Switzerlands participation in the EU single market to ensure homogeneity and legal certainty remains a precondition for the further development of a sectoral approach.

The Commission is called on to propose a mandate for negotiating a modern EU-Switzerland investment protection agreement which was concluded 50 years ago.

Energy, climate and the environment

While welcoming the high degree of political alignment between Switzerland and the EU in the area of energy and climate policies, the report called on the Commission and the Swiss Federal Council to find avenues of cooperation on the EUs Fit for 55 package, and Swiss participation in various aspects of the European Green Deal, notably the REPowerEU plan, and also industrial alliances, including the European Solar Photovoltaic Industry Alliance, the European Clean Hydrogen Alliance and the European Battery Alliance.

Switzerland is invited to apply legislation on environmental protection under a future cooperation agreement, in particular the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and the overhaul of the Emissions Trading System.

Members stressed that an electricity market agreement would create a conducive basis for continued and close cooperation between the EU and Switzerland, in particular on fossil-free electricity and clean gases, including through innovative solutions for cross-border electricity trade, such as a joint electricity market.

Research and innovation, development, education and culture

The report underlined the importance of EU-Switzerland cooperation in research, innovation and development, fostering Europes role as a strong player in this field of research and innovation, and strengthening the European education system. It called for the EU and Switzerland to find a common approach to the benefit of citizens in order to achieve mutually beneficial cooperation, especially as regards Switzerlands participation in all EU programmes in the 2021-2027 period. It insisted on the fact that the free movement of persons is a precondition for participation in Erasmus+.

Institutional framework and cooperation

The report regretted the Swiss Federal Councils decision to terminate the negotiations on the EU-Swiss institutional framework agreement in May 2021 after seven years of negotiations. Regretting any narratives in the Swiss public and political spheres that the EU would work against Swiss interests, Members stressed that a second failure in negotiating an agreement on EU-Swiss relations would be damaging for both the EU and Switzerland and risks weakening their political role.

Members deplored with regret that the Swiss Federal Council will only decide whether to prepare for the adoption of a negotiating mandate by the end of 2023. They expect the progress in exploratory talks between the Commission and the Swiss Federal Council to be stepped up with a view to obtaining the required clarifications and assurances to adopt a mandate for negotiations. They called on both sides to use this window of opportunity for talks on a possible new negotiation package and a cooperation agreement between the EU and Switzerland, and to reach an agreement before the end of the term of the current Commission and Parliament.

EU-Switzerland relations

The European Parliament adopted by 538 votes to 42, with 43 abstentions, a resolution on EU-Switzerland relations.

Members recalled that the European Union and Switzerland are close cultural and political allies who share the same values, such as democracy, the rule of law, human rights, the protection of minorities, social equality and social and environmental sustainability. The EU and Switzerland are major economic partners with an interest in shared economic prosperity. They enjoy a long-standing relationship based on shared values and the objectives of peace, commitment to multilateralism and a rules-based international order.

Foreign and security policy

The resolution highlighted the EUs strong interest in cooperating with Switzerland as a like-minded partner on international peace, security, human rights and defence matters, in particular in response to Russias war of aggression against Ukraine. Members welcomed Switzerlands alignment with EU sanctions adopted in this context and its adoption of all EU sanction packages to date. They encouraged Switzerland to maintain its commitment to the international rules-based order and to closely and consistently apply and implement all adopted EU restrictive measures as it has already done so far and to prevent their circumvention. Switzerland is also encouraged to amend its legislation to allow for the confiscation of Russian assets.

Parliament welcomed the fact that Switzerland had moved closer to the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, particularly on issues of humanitarian assistance, civil protection, the fight against terrorism and climate change, and that it was taking part in several CSDP missions. It also welcomed Switzerland's announcement in November 2021 to participate in certain projects of the Permanent Structured Cooperation and that potential participation and its intent to participate in the European air defence sky shield initiative.

Switzerland is encouraged to undertake a revision of its practices in regard to sanctions, in order to align itself more systematically with sanctions taken by the EU, including when these are based on human rights violations under the EU global human rights sanctions regime.

Members welcomed Switzerland's participation in the summits of the European political community. They noted the cooperation between the EU and Switzerland on international migration. They regretted that, to date, Switzerland has not fulfilled the conditions for participation in the European Union's civil protection mechanism.

Economy, labour market and access to the EU internal market

The resolution underlined that safeguarding, strengthening and deepening strong, stable and sustainable trade relations with Switzerland, the EU's fourth largest trading partner, remains a high priority. Members considered that a modernised and mutually beneficial relationship, underpinned by an ambitious agreement, should not only reduce barriers to trade but should also create a level playing field for EU citizens and economic operators, generate trust, stability, jobs, growth and welfare, ensure the non-discriminatory protection of workers rights.

Parliament reiterated that 71 % of the Swiss population is in favour of joining the EEA, while the majority also wants full access to the EU single market and participation in EU cooperation.

Members are concerned about any lack of implementation of certain agreements with the Union by Switzerland and its subsequent adoption of legislative measures and practices that might be incompatible with those agreements, in particular measures affecting the free movement of persons. They urged Switzerland to apply the relevant EU acquis and to comply with its obligations under the 1999 agreement on the free movement of persons, in particular on posted workers.

Members are concerned that basic bilateral agreements are slowly phasing out and no longer secure frictionless market access as a result of the non-incorporation of new developments in the EU acquis. They noted that the model based on individual bilateral agreements instead of a package agreement is outdated. They recalled that the adoption of a package agreement for existing and future agreements that enable Switzerland's participation in the EU single market to ensure homogeneity and legal certainty remains a precondition for the further development of a sectoral approach.

The Commission is called on to propose a mandate for negotiating a modern EU-Switzerland investment protection agreement which was concluded 50 years ago.

Energy, climate and the environment

While welcoming the high degree of political alignment between Switzerland and the EU in the area of energy and climate policies, Parliament called on the Commission and the Swiss Federal Council to find avenues of cooperation on the EU's Fit for 55 package, and Swiss participation in various aspects of the European Green Deal, notably the REPowerEU plan, and also industrial alliances, including the European Solar Photovoltaic Industry Alliance, the European Clean Hydrogen Alliance and the European Battery Alliance.

Members noted with concern that Switzerland did not sufficiently support the EU's push to remove fossil fuel protections from the Energy Charter Treaty. In this regard, they invited Switzerland to consider withdrawing from this Treaty, following the example of several EU Member States. They also stressed that an electricity market agreement would create a conducive basis for continued and close cooperation between the EU and Switzerland, in particular on fossil-free electricity and clean gases.

Research and innovation, development, education and culture

The resolution underlined the importance of EU-Switzerland cooperation in research, innovation and development. It called for the EU and Switzerland to find a common approach to the benefit of citizens in order to achieve mutually beneficial cooperation, especially as regards Switzerland's participation in all EU programmes in the 2021-2027 period. Members are convinced that a more stable, future-oriented partnership will benefit both sides and help Switzerland's association to Erasmus+ and other European programmes. They insisted on the fact that the free movement of persons is a precondition for participation in Erasmus+.

Institutional framework and cooperation

Parliament regretted the Swiss Federal Council's decision to terminate the negotiations on the EU-Swiss institutional framework agreement in May 2021 after seven years of negotiations. It stressed that a second failure in negotiating an agreement on EU-Swiss relations would be damaging for both the EU and Switzerland and risks weakening their political role.

Members welcomed the political statement following the conference of cantons of 24 March 2023 advocating Treaty-based relations with the EU based on shared values, reaffirming their position to continue and deepen the bilateral agreements, and their willingness to support the Federal Council in negotiations. They expect the progress in exploratory talks between the Commission and the Swiss Federal Council to be stepped up with a view to obtaining the required clarifications and assurances to adopt a mandate for negotiations.

Members called on both sides to use this window of opportunity for talks on a possible new negotiation package and a cooperation agreement between the EU and Switzerland, and to reach an agreement before the end of the term of the current Commission and Parliament.

Transparency				
SCHIEDER Andreas	Shadow rapporteur	AFET	14/06/2023	Botschaft Schweiz
MANDL Lukas	Rapporteur	AFET	22/05/2023	Konferenz der Schweizer Kantonsregierungen
MANDL Lukas	Rapporteur	AFET	18/04/2023	Swiss Ambassador to EU

SCHIEDER Andreas	Shadow rapporteur	AFET	18/04/2023	Schweizer Mission bei der EU
MANDL Lukas	Rapporteur	AFET	14/04/2023	Unia Schweiz
MANDL Lukas	Rapporteur	AFET	21/03/2023	Schweizerische Vereinigung für Qualitäts- und Management- Systeme (SQS)
MANDL Lukas	Rapporteur	AFET	02/02/2023	Delegation of the European Union to Switzerland
MANDL Lukas	Rapporteur	AFET	01/02/2023	Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour
MANDL Lukas	Rapporteur	AFET	01/02/2023	EEAS Division Switzerland
MANDL Lukas	Rapporteur	AFET	06/12/2022	Chefin Sicherheitspolitik des Eidgenössischen Departements für Verteidigung, Bevölkerungsschutz und Sport (VBS)