

UK secures key services agreement with Switzerland

The UK and Switzerland have secured a far-reaching agreement on services that maintains high quality access for UK service suppliers to the Swiss market.

The deal is part of the government's strategy to place the UK at the centre of a network of modern free trade agreements with dynamic economies, and to enhance our status as a global services hub.

The UK-Switzerland Services Mobility Agreement will allow UK professionals and other service workers to continue travelling freely to Switzerland and work visa-free for up to 90 days a year.

This deal will support trade in vital industries of the UK economy, including finance, consultancy, legal services, the tech sector and the creative industries.

When travelling to Switzerland, UK professionals will be able to do business as they do now and will not face economic interest tests, work permits or lengthy processing times for the first 90 days.

The agreement builds on the existing UK-Switzerland trade deal and will enter into force from 1 January 2021. Together, these deals will support over £37 billion worth of trade, ensuring low or zero tariffs access for thousands of products including cars, medicines and watches.

The initial agreement will last for two years to ensure continuity immediately after the transition period. It will help lay the groundwork for an enhanced UK Switzerland trading relationship in the future.

The UK and Switzerland have also committed to work together on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications in each other's country. This will make it easier for British professionals – from accountants to architects – to practise in Switzerland.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

We have a golden opportunity to lead the world in modern areas like tech and services, and to push new frontiers in trade. Ultimately, we want to create a cat's cradle of deals with dynamic economies that share our values and commitment to rules-based free trade.

This deal – with a fellow services powerhouse – is an important part of that vision. It provides vital continuity for businesses and paves the way for a more advanced deal with Switzerland in the future.

Antony Walker, Deputy CEO techUK said:

This is an excellent outcome for the UK tech sector which serves and collaborates with many of Switzerland's most innovative businesses in key growth sectors like Financial Services and Pharmaceuticals.

The agreement delivers on the key asks that techUK members called for ahead of the negotiations. It ensures continuity in existing business arrangements and provides a strong basis for what we hope will be an equally ambitious future FTA.

Miles Celic, Chief Executive Officer, TheCityUK said:

Businesses in both the UK and Switzerland will welcome this agreement. Mobility is a vital foundation for successful trade relations and this exceeds the expectations of what many people thought could be achieved in the time available.

The commitment to working together on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications is also a positive outcome. Given Switzerland's place as one of the UK's largest trading partners in services, we hope that this will be a further important step towards an ambitious and comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between the two countries in the future.

Sally Jones, EY's Trade Strategy and Brexit Lead, said:

Today's announcement is enormously important and significant, in terms of both the breadth and depth of services access it represents. The freedom for UK service providers to work in Switzerland for 90 days visa- and permit-free, with just a straightforward notification process, is vital – not just for the service providers ourselves but also for the companies we support.

Whether pharmaceutical giants, specialist robot manufacturers or boutique chocolatiers, our clients will hopefully feel reassured in the knowledge that their UK advisers are still able to support them in exactly the same way as before.

Policy Chair at the City of London Corporation Catherine McGuinness said:

Switzerland and the UK are natural partners and world leaders when it comes to financial services exports, so it is vital that we deepen our relationship in the years to come. I therefore warmly welcome the Services Mobility Agreement reached between our two countries, which will set out a pathway towards deep mutual cooperation for financial services trade between our two countries.

This sends out a signal that we are an open trading nation, willing to work with like-minded partners in order to eradicate cross-border trading barriers and connect the world to capital. Continuity of services trade will ultimately benefit businesses and consumers in both of our countries and across the world.