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ETH Zurich and HSG launch Manufacturing Alliance to strengthen Switzerland as an industrial location

The University of St.Gallen (HSG) and ETH Zurich are jointly launching the “ETH-HSG Manufacturing Alliance”. In doing so, they want to strengthen the competitiveness of Swiss industry and promote young talent. The alliance combines the strengths of the two universities and provides new impetus in research and practice.

The alliance currently has 13 industrial partners: Roche, Novartis, Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine, Takeda, SHL Medical, Nestlé, Lindt & Sprüngli, Givaudan, Schneider Electric, Schindler, Endress+Hauser Flowtec, VAT Group and SFS Group. They will finance the project starting in January 2025 for a period of three years with a total of CHF 2.1 million.

Junior talent for Swiss industry

The new alliance offers companies access to a unique talent pool called the “Circle of Scholars”. In its initial phase, this group will consist of six highly qualified doctoral students who, together with the alliance partners, will conduct research on topics such as operational excellence, global production networks, artificial intelligence in production and sustainable business practices.

One key advantage of this model is that the doctoral students are employed either at HSG or ETH Zurich and work closely together through regular cross-location exchanges. In contrast to traditional industry doctoral programmes, in which usually only one company is involved, alliance partners benefit here from the expertise and research results of the entire Circle of Scholars. In addition, members benefit from events such as the Operations Executive Forum, the St.Gallen Production Management Conference and other exchanges.

A network for future industry topics

“With the Manufacturing Alliance, we are creating a platform that not only transfers scientific findings into practice, but also actively involves industry partners in research,” emphasises Prof. Dr. Thomas Friedli from the Institute of Technology Management (ITEM-HSG) at the University of St.Gallen. The aim is to establish a network that will strengthen Switzerland as an industrial centre in the long term and develop innovative solutions for products with the made in Switzerland seal of quality. Instead of isolated, occasional interactions, the focus is on a continuous exchange between research and practice.

Prof. Dr. Torbjörn Netland from ETH Zurich adds: “What is special about the alliance is that doctoral students work on real-life problems from day one – this helps industry and promotes young talent.” For example, individual doctoral students will use artificial intelligence to analyse and improve a company’s production processes.

Expanding the potential of the Swiss manufacturing sector

Despite difficult conditions, companies still have unwavering confidence in the country's competitiveness, as the latest edition of the “[Swiss Manufacturing Survey 2024](#)” by the University of St.Gallen shows. At the same time, the 2023 survey reveals that Swiss companies are increasingly moving their production facilities back home to benefit from the advantages of local innovation and stability. This underlines the urgency of further expanding the potential of the Swiss manufacturing sector.



Invitation to collaborate

The ETH-HSG Manufacturing Alliance invites companies of various sizes and from different industries to become part of this innovative network. In addition to scientific insight, the benefits include practical solutions and the opportunity to actively participate in research projects. “We are excited to join the Manufacturing Alliance with ETH Zurich and HSG, two leading institutions in Switzerland and renowned worldwide, to strengthen our Factory of the Future program by accessing cutting edge capabilities and world class talent,” says Peter Hagmann, head of Manufacturing, Engineering, Logistics & Safety at Nestlé. The company is one of the current 13 industrial partners of the ETH-HSG Manufacturing Alliance.

Johnson & Johnson (J&J) Innovative Medicine is also one of the industry partners. Leila Schwery, vice president, Manufacturing Operations and Engineering, says: “We see Switzerland, with its extraordinary competitiveness in academia and industry, as a key player in shaping the future of pharmaceutical manufacturing. Our collaboration with world-class institutions like ETH Zurich and HSG, as members of the ETH-HSG Manufacturing Alliance, will not only advance the manufacturing field but also deliver meaningful benefits to patients and society as a whole.”

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