



International  
Trade  
Centre



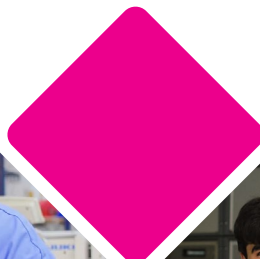
Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,  
Education and Research EAER  
**State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO**

# ITC and Switzerland

*A long-standing partnership supporting  
trade-led sustainable development*





## The International Trade Centre

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ITC is fully dedicated to supporting the competitiveness and integration of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) into regional and global trade.

By enabling MSMEs in developing and transition economies to become more competitive and connect to international markets for trade and investment, we can have a positive impact on job creation, incomes and supporting inclusive opportunities, especially for women, young people, and poor communities.

ITC's mission is to foster inclusive and sustainable economic development, and contribute to achieving the United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development. ITC works towards good trade - trade that creates positive and inclusive economic, social and environmental impact.

Established in 1964, ITC is a joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. Its operational budget for 2020 was \$135 million, 73% of which was funded by voluntary contributions. ITC is headquartered in Geneva, and has a number of project offices around the world. The ITC family is more than 409 strong, representing 88 different nationalities. Its current Executive Director, Pamela Coke-Hamilton has led the organization since October 2020.

# SECO Support to ITC

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The State Secretary of Economic Affairs (SECO), as a representative of the Swiss government, is a key contributor to ITC's ambition to embed MSMEs from developing countries into the global economy.

Switzerland not only hosts ITC's headquarters but has contributed to numerous initiatives to strengthen the competitiveness of developing country exporters and help build vibrant, sustainable export sectors that provide entrepreneurial opportunities.

This support forms part of Switzerland's engagement in international economic cooperation with the aim of alleviating poverty and promoting sustainable development in partner countries. Under the current strategic period from 2021-2024, SECO's thematic priorities are concentrated on supporting economic growth and sustainable prosperity in order to contribute towards overcoming poverty, inequality and global challenges. In doing so, it aims to a) promote reliable economic framework conditions for equal access to markets and opportunities for people and companies; and b) support innovative private sector initiatives to create decent jobs and income opportunities.

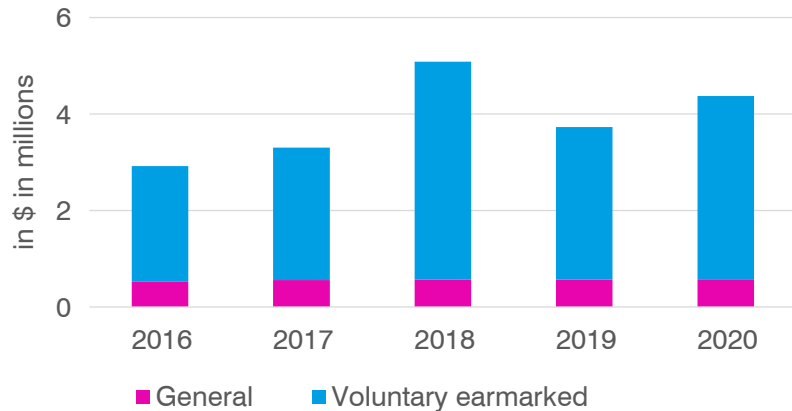


# Switzerland's Financial Contribution to ITC

Switzerland supports ITC financially through both general contributions (core budget) and voluntary contributions (earmarked to specific programmes):

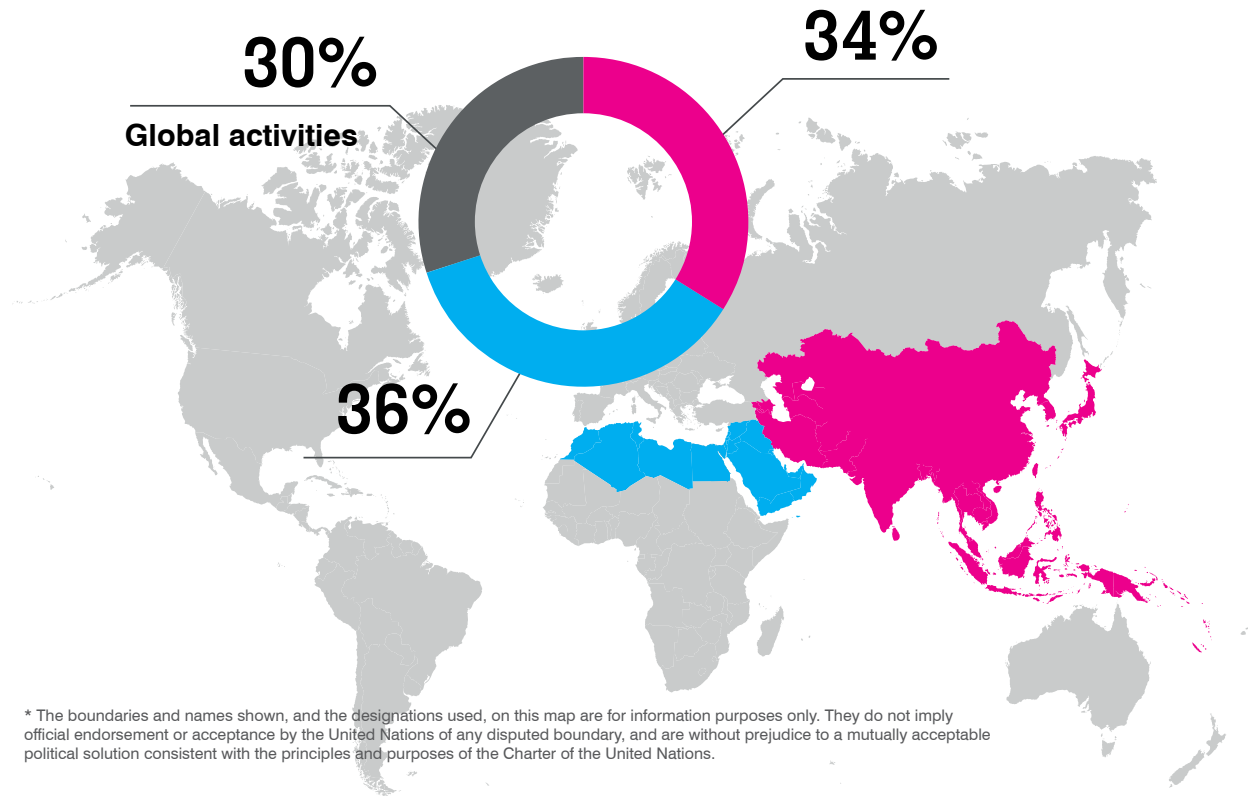
- General contributions are paid by all UN and WTO Member states by virtue of their membership. Between 2016 and 2020, Switzerland contributed \$2.8 million.
- With \$16.6 million voluntary contributions earmarked to priority programmes between 2016 and 2020, Switzerland was ITC's 5<sup>th</sup> largest contributor of extra-budgetary resources.

*Switzerland's Overall Contributions to ITC*



# Switzerland-ITC Portfolio of Activities by Region

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## Strategic Alignment

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ITC and SECO have several areas of strategic alignment reflected in a joint work programme. They collaborate on:

1. Contributing jointly to establish reliable economic framework conditions, which promote equal access to markets and opportunities through a rules-based trading system. ITC and SECO both support the multilateral trading system by engaging in the WTO, in particular via the informal working group on MSMEs and on issues around Aid for Trade.
2. Creating more equitable and sustainable supply chains through the provision of global public goods for transparent market information and the promotion of social and ecological standards.
3. Promoting the integration of producers and enterprises into global and regional value chains through interventions focused on market-oriented skills. Joint sectoral programmes on textiles, tourism, and horticulture promote skills that help to meet market-demand in the digital age.
4. Stimulating the productivity and growth of enterprises by the creation of an innovation-friendly business environment. Recognizing the importance of the private sector in driving job creation, poverty reduction and sustainable development, ITC works with policy-makers, business support organizations, and relevant stakeholders to advance reforms through public-private dialogues.
5. Prioritizing gender equality and women's economic empowerment, as well as climate action, the circular economy and the efficient use of resources as prerequisites for sustainable economic growth. ITC and SECO employ mainstreaming strategies to embed these topics in all initiatives.

# ITC-Switzerland Joint Programmes

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Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD)

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Global Trade Helpdesk (GTHD)

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Global Textiles and Clothing Programme (GTEX)

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SwissTrade Programme: Vietnam

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UN Trade Cluster Programme: Myanmar

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Strengthening Business Support Organizations (BSOs)

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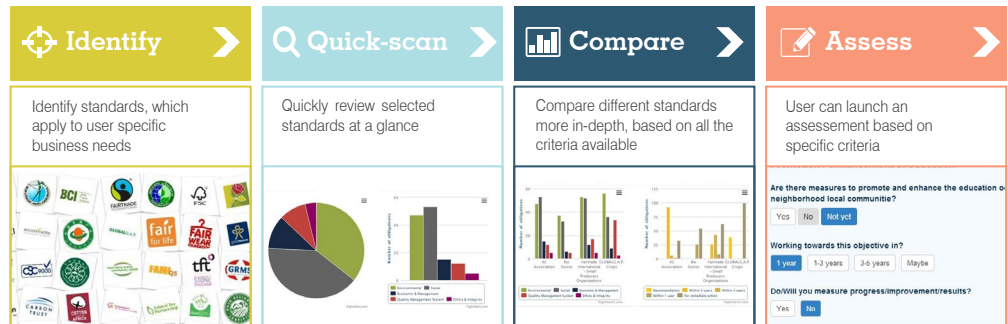


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# Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD)

The T4SD database is a one-of-a-kind global, freely accessible repository of comprehensive and neutral information on voluntary sustainability standards and codes of conduct.

Over the years, SECO has supported the development and expansion of the T4SD platform. Today, there are over 260 voluntary sustainability standards, private standards or codes of conduct referenced in the T4SD database and comparable on [Sustainability Map](#). Together with Switzerland, T4SD is also increasing the coverage of Swiss labels.







## Global Trade Helpdesk (GTHD)

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The provision of up-to-date trade and market information to enhance business decision-making has been at the heart of ITC's mandate since its foundation.

Together with SECO, ITC has developed the free online [Global Trade Helpdesk](#) platform that facilitates access to all of ITC's suite of Global Public Goods. The platform and its tools are widely used by national ministries, business support organizations, industry associations, trade policymakers and academia, as well as companies of all sizes from multinationals to MSMEs.






## Global Textiles and Clothing Programme (GTEX)

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The Global Textiles and Clothing Programme (GTEX) promotes textile and clothing exports from selected countries in Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa with the aim of stimulating employment and income generation along the value chain.

GTEX works via two outcomes. First, it enhances the institutional infrastructure around the sector, including policy aspects and the nexus between the private sector, academia, and the state. Second, it targets the enterprise level and improves the competitiveness of MSMEs in the sector directly in each link of the value chain.



## SwissTrade Programme: Vietnam

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The SwissTrade Programme in Vietnam seeks to improve the trade performance and international competitiveness of Vietnamese MSMEs through enhanced framework conditions for trade.

In collaboration with the Vietnamese Ministry of Industry and Trade, ITC will establish more favourable framework conditions for export by updating the national export strategy in joint collaboration with policy-makers and the private sector.

The project will also create public-private dialogue for export development and strengthen business support organizations to enable them to deliver services to SMEs for exports and participation in regional and global value chains.



## UN Trade Cluster Programme: Myanmar

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This programme is part of the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity and aims to improve the economic situation in the Inle Lake area through the upgrade of horticulture supply capacity and the development of sustainable tourism.

ITC is improving the area's position as a touristic destination through the design and application of a new branding strategy, as well as the enhancement and promotion of products and services, in particular by aligning goods and services with industry standards for quality and safety.

MSMEs in the tourism sector will reach a new market positioning in sustainable and inclusive tourism, resulting in an increase and stabilization of business opportunities.

In parallel, ITC will also support the development of the local horticulture supply capacity to establish business linkages leading to income generation and employment creation.



## Strengthening Business Support Organizations (BSOs)

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ITC's work to strengthen BSOs was created to recognize and enhance their critical multiplier role as connectors and service providers for internationalizing MSMEs.

Since 2017, ITC has collaborated with the Swiss Import Promotion Programme to jointly support business support organizations around the world. The collaboration has enabled them to develop clearer strategies, improve their service portfolio, establish results measurement systems, strengthen networks, and optimize the use of resources at their disposal to help enterprises reach their internationalization goals.





## ITC's COVID-19 Response

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In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing socio-economic crisis, ITC has adjusted its delivery to continue supporting those most in need. This was made possible through flexible delivery mechanisms, strengthening online delivery, and making strong use of ITC's established networks and local expertise on-the-ground.

ITC's Global Public Goods were of vital importance in communication and outreach during this critical period. With the help of SECO, ITC modified the tools to establish a COVID-19 dashboard, which included a real-time tracker of COVID-19 related trade measures.

ITC has worked with business support organizations to ensure that they can support their members as needed, and created a new approach during lockdown to help support organizations be more resilient and responsive in the face of external shocks. GTEX, for instance, facilitated switching production to personal protective equipment, especially medical masks and gowns.

T4SD has offered advisory services to local beneficiary MSMEs of T4SD Hubs to access local financial support programmes provided by public and private institutions, given that an ITC survey confirmed access to financial support as one of the biggest challenges to MSMEs during the pandemic.

ITC has equally adjusted its work on women's economic empowerment through the SheTrades initiative to provide tools to allow women entrepreneurs to manage the crisis and raise additional financial resources.



## The Future Switzerland-ITC Relationship

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To further capitalize on the existing strong strategic alignment in key areas, SECO and ITC will deepen their institutional relationship. SECO is exploring ways to support ITC's innovative tools and expertise in trade through a financial contribution under a global trade partnership.

Going forward, ITC and SECO intend to collaborate even closer on key areas of shared importance, including gender equality, digital transformation, climate action and the efficient use of resources, global public goods, supporting the multilateral trading system and private sector partnerships. In particular, closer collaboration is envisioned to link with other Swiss initiatives, such as the Swiss Import Promotion Program, the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa and the Sustainable Textiles Switzerland 2030 initiative.

The enhanced partnership will also allow ITC to respond in a swift and agile manner to changing conditions and future crises. Indeed, the COVID-19 crisis has forcefully shown that flexible financing and adaptive management is crucial for ITC to adjust its delivery modalities and continue to support partners in the process towards *good trade*.





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The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

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