

Switzerland and the eu essay examples

[Parts of the World](#), [European Union](#)



Switzerland and the EU

Since the early 16th century, Switzerland has remained untouched by regional and international conflict as it stood alone as a neutral territory and became a sanctuary for people wishing to stay away from wars and conflict throughout the region. With the major World Wars and regional conflicts settled, Switzerland was expected to have joined the European States in forming its very own regional organization, the European Union, to maintain the peace in the region and rebuilt what was lost in the conflicts. However, it was unexpected that Switzerland had not acceded to the EU given that other neutral territories such as Austria, and Sweden acceded. Many have believed that the Swiss economy and political system would be able to adapt to the European Union policy schemes and thrive once it becomes a member, however, some have pointed out that Switzerland must have had their reasons from straying away from the EU and adopted partnership treaties and agreements with the organization. It can be attributed that Switzerland had remained firm in their reluctance to join the European Union due to the issue of neutrality and the political and economic setbacks the accession would entail to the country.

Switzerland remains to be ambivalent regarding the European Union and its membership. The country consists of 20 cantons and 6 half cantons, each having their own government and autonomy. The country was established in 1291, situating its capital in Berne. The Swiss Confederation follows the federal system of government; enabling representatives from various communities comprise the Federal Council or the parliament. The country

also plays host to language communities: German (73%), French (20%), Italian (4%) and Romansh (0.6%) of the populations. Today, German, French and Italian are considered the country's official languages. The Swiss region remains separated in the European Union as it has not acceded to the otherwise conglomerate of European states. The topic of its accession continues to remain to be sensitive despite the objected by the Swiss government to find a compromise to accede to the organization. The country had applied for accession to the EU in 1992, in full hopes that the European Economic Area would have been agreed upon by the public. However, it was not able to support for the EEA, eliminating the nation's chance to become a member of the EU in the period.

Nonetheless, the country remains to be in close partnership with the EU, developing sets of bilateral agreements and economic partnerships to ensure that Switzerland remains a part of European projects and still retain its freedom and neutrality. However, Switzerland remains up-to-date with EU affairs; however, not in the areas of EU development that has changed the EU member states. International law is often considered of high importance in Switzerland, immediately enabling the country to apply treaties and provisions to the nation. Switzerland is also a founding member of the European Free Trade Association (1960), which establishes free trading zones for industrial groups between European countries for non-members of the EC. The EFTA are capable of applying tariff stated in their constitution rather than having a fixed tariff rate. The EFTA and the EU had entered into a free trade agreement in 1972 for industrial products. In lieu of the release of the EU-supported Single European Market, the European Economic Area

was created by the EFTA members in 1990. Eventually this caused the debate in Switzerland regarding the accession to the EFTA/EU treaty, which would have influenced the free trade zone with the EU. Sadly the EEA proposal was lost in the elections, removing all chances for Switzerland to even consider acceding .

In 2000, the Swiss voters accepted a bilateral agreement with the EU, enabling channels with the EU to open. There has not been enough change in EU-Swiss affairs since the FTA in 197 and the failure of the European Economic Area in 1992. Nonetheless, it was visible that the Swiss were open to the bilateral agreements for the following policies: free movement of persons, civil aviation, overland transport, agriculture, public procurement, trade barriers, and research. The agreements itself are for the benefit of the European market, which also covers Switzerland's access to open and secure access to the rest of Europe. Switzerland has often noted that their efforts to integrate with the EU are a means to present its willingness to become a member of the European Union. The Swiss government, especially the Federal Council, had maintained a positive stance over further partnership with the EU as an official member. At the economic standpoint, Switzerland would be benefitted once it enters the Single European Market without the bias that it is not a permanent member or a country that would have to adhere to EU foreign policies despite Switzerland's European status. With the end of the 20th century, the question remains if Switzerland is willing to keeping itself out of the loop of European Union affairs while it could protect its independence with international cooperation with both international and supranational organization.

One can note that Switzerland's neutrality is one of the crucial factors that influenced Switzerland's decision to decline membership to the EU, given the history on what the state did while remaining neutral. The Swiss neutrality dates back in the 16th century by the time the Napoleonic wars have sprung throughout 1798 to 1815. Two factors had led to the country's neutrality: external and internal reasons. The first factor dealt with Switzerland's geographic location as it is located in the heart of five nations – namely Austria, Liechtenstein, France, Italy and Germany- and acts as a buffer whenever tensions brew between the surrounding nations. The territory is also crucial with the European transit. At first, it may seem that the neighboring states would not have allowed Switzerland to maintain its peace and the dominance it held for so long. However, the European nations did accept the Swiss neutrality provided that the nation would aid fellow states against foreign domination. It could also be said that neutrality is a form of condition on the country's independence, removing it would have been fatal to the otherwise thriving nation. The European territories also saw Switzerland as an important factor, a stabilizing state, to match the growing European balance of power. The European acceptance to the Swiss Neutrality was proven in the 1815 Vienna Congress, stating that neutrality “is in the true interest of the whole Europe”. The neutrality enabled Switzerland to receive special functions from the international community. Switzerland today houses several headquarters for the international community, one being the Red Cross Headquarters (1863) and the Geneva Convention (1864).

The second factor that fostered Swiss Neutrality is the internal structure of the country as the country has been formed from a loose conglomerate of small communities with their own autonomies. Alliance treaties were famous and upheld by communities as an important safeguard to their independence and self-government. Autonomy is also given more importance than establishing a powerful state. Neutrality became a shield, enabling Switzerland to remain unhindered by international and regional disputes and policies. In the case of regional disputes, neutrality became a means for survival with the Reformation split the nation into Protestants and Catholics. It would have been possible for Switzerland to have perished if the Catholic-Protestants had supported the European Religious Wars in the 16th century. It is also visible that neutrality had enabled Switzerland to play host for Germans, French, and Italian cantons that wanted to remove themselves from the fights between Germany and France. For years, neutrality had also transformed Swiss political affairs to concentrate on democratic self-government, peaceful coexistence with various religions and linguistic groups, which are also included in their foreign policy strategies. The nation is also capable of protecting itself from foreign encroachments, enabling the Swiss government to sustain neutrality and armed defense. The capability of neutrality to protect the nation had proven itself capable as they were spared from the German influence. As a small nation, many European nations had underestimated Switzerland; however, its neutrality guaranteed its freedom and democracy even up to the present .

At present, Swiss neutrality is self-determined, permanent, and armed; the cornerstone of the nation's foreign and security policy. The Constitution is

also firm in noting that the Federal Assembly is capable of ensuring measures to protect the country's security, independence and neutrality. Four elements embody the Swiss neutrality clause: the Law of Neutrality, national interest, the international situation and the tradition and history. Currently, the government is putting forward "active neutrality." While Switzerland remains neutral, it is not an obstacle to aid or participate in economic sanctions or non-military international organizations like the UN. Neutrality is also considered the pillar of sovereignty and a medium for active foreign policy. Swiss citizens are in favor of neutrality as it is a part of their national identity .

With the idea of EU membership and the fact it promises it would not influence Swiss neutrality, the public was not convinced. As noted by the long neutrality of the country, as well as well as the benefits it had thrived in for the past centuries, the possibility of breaking this trend is not open to the Swiss public. Their adherence to neutrality had been shaped by time and thus, making neutrality a vital part of their belief. All polls have showcased results showing just how much the Swiss public valued neutrality, not willing to give it up for anything. It is also visible that the Swiss would not suggest the removal of neutrality, showing the emotional attachment to the idea. This belief in neutrality had also influenced Swiss membership to the UN as the public had only accepted the membership after the Swiss government noted that nothing will happen with the country's neutrality while being a member of the UN . It is also noted that accession would restrict Switzerland from its neutrality policy as it would require to side with a country or even identify policies to aid wars. .

Aside from the importance of the country's neutrality, there are also questions as to how much changes politically and economically would take place once Swiss Accession to the EU takes place. Similar to Norway, Switzerland had considered EU membership to be questionable, preferring to remain a partner than a member. It can be ascribed that the Swiss saw the costs of accession to be pricy as compared to the benefits it could provide the country. While the EU remains positive with the possible Swiss accession by enabling them to partake in bilateral or pluri-lateral agreements, there is still the limitation for the Swiss in influencing EU decision-making. Of course, there is still the idea as to their membership to the EU in the future questionable as they may believe they would be turned down by the Union. This belief fosters the idea that the Swiss could continue having the channels open for accession but still be alright if they are rejected by the EU. The Federal Council, as of late, had also noted a more “ longer-term option” with regards to the EU membership, aligning most of its policies towards administration and the expansion of bilateral agreements. Opponents to the Switzerland accession to the EU have also noted that several Swiss political policies would be undermined once the country becomes a part of the EU, which includes the neutrality clause of the constitution and the system of direct democracy. The accession would also create a massive influx of foreigners to enter the country, creating lesser opportunities for the Swiss public to enter in jobs and create businesses .

Economically, the Swiss public, especially its farmers, would most likely reject accession to the EU due to the amount of support they are receiving from the government. If they had acceded to the EU, the Swiss farmers

would have to accept the low level of support under the CAP, which may influence their economic status and capacity to earn from their produce. There is also the agreement that the Swiss are more in favor of finding a solution to ensure access for the Swiss economy to be a part of the EU Single market with bilateral agreements already finished in 2004 . With regards to the Swiss franc and the adoption of the Euro upon the accession, many noted that Switzerland would have to give up its monetary autonomy. The country is also not capable of handling mass-produced goods in its domestic market, an important requirement for the Eurozone .

If the EU would have these nations in the organization, it is important that the EU would ensure that new members would have to ensure that benefits would be larger than that of the cost. The EU's government system must also be able to handle Switzerland's strict adherence to neutrality, complicating decision making. Enforcement alone would also foster additional costs for both the EU and Switzerland should they accept the accession as they would have to work on placing additional languages and translation costs to products and government publications; as well as revising the entire constitution to fit the EU policies . A membership ala carte would also be beneficial to ensure the Swiss public of accepting or acquiescing to the EU membership. Nonetheless, the Swiss public is still torn on the issue itself, which may cause problems over the accession issue .

Nowadays, it still remains a mystery yet to be solved if Switzerland would indeed embrace the European Union policies and remove itself from neutrality after three centuries. While some experts believe that Switzerland would indeed move towards the EU membership in the near future with the

fighting capacity of the Euro in the international market and the EU-member policies others thrive from its enactment, the issue on the stability of the Eurozone may pose some problems. On the one hand, the EU and Switzerland could benefit from each other once the nation has acceded, especially for the European Monetary Union and the accessibility of both Swiss and European market. Switzerland could also get additional policies and partnerships between member countries, easing up trade and taxes. There is also the fact that Switzerland would no longer need to keep revising their bilateral agreements with the EU should they accede. On the other hand, there is still the reluctance to enter the EU within the Swiss community given the very reasons they decided to remain neutral even after three centuries. If Switzerland were to let go of neutrality and accede to the EU, the nation would also have to undergo drastic changes that may retract back all of its earnings and laws to match the EU. Immediate membership with the current problem of the EU may cause Switzerland's stable economy to take a huge hit as it would also need to sustain the currently regressing EU member economies under debt. Unless there is a compromise agreement regarding the position of Switzerland over the current crisis or a complete recovery within the EU, as well as the support of the Swiss public regarding the accession, Switzerland may still remain in its firm position to be apart from the EU.

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