

Joining forces against ‘Swissness’ misuse abroad

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Business and industry associations, companies and state actors have joined forces in the pursuit of ‘Swissness’ free riders. In future, they want to take coordinated action against the wrongful use of Swiss indications of source abroad. Forces need to be combined in order to successfully enforce ‘Swissness’. This is evidenced by a study published by the Federal Council.

Placing a Swiss cross on a watch dial, adorning the packaging of a face cream with the Swiss flag, or integrating ‘Swiss’ into a company name – this approach abroad is usually as easy as it is rewarding. For many consumers, Switzerland has an outstanding reputation with regard to quality and safety, which is why they are prepared to pay a premium for the professed Swiss origin. But often, where it says ‘Swiss’ on the outside, there is nothing ‘Swiss’ on the inside.

Free riders play the ‘Swissness’ card without adhering to the corresponding criteria. They deceive and betray customers and by doing so, damage the ‘Swiss’ brand. This, in turn, damages companies that produce in Switzerland by jeopardising their origin-related competitive advantage.

Swiss laws only apply in Switzerland. Exporters of goods, foodstuffs and of services therefore cannot benefit from their added value abroad if Swiss indications of source can also be used there without constraint. Because ‘Swissness’ is a relevant economic factor, individual trade associations, companies, and the IPI have been fighting back against the wrongful use of the Swiss cross and Swiss coat of arms for many years. The most important players in the legal enforcement of ‘Swissness’ founded the association Swissness Enforcement early this year in order to monitor the markets worldwide and together build up know-how on country-specific instruments to combat such misuse.

Collaborating within the association not only increases efficiency, but also enables interventions to be expanded geographically (e.g. to South Korea, Indonesia and Mexico). It also allows smaller sectors and companies to take part in defending the ‘Swiss’ brand. Members also benefit from the Swiss Confederation’s network abroad. Years of dialogue with other governments is bearing fruit for the entire economy, as the example with China shows – the Chinese trade mark office consistently refuses any trade mark applications containing Swiss indications of source.

The association Swissness Enforcement commenced its activities under President Erich Herzog (economiesuisse). According to the authors of the study published by the Federal Council (Swiss Brand Experts’ [study](#)), the organisation fills an important strategic gap for enforcing ‘Swissness’.



Swiss Association Against the Misuse
of Swiss Indications of Source

Swissness Enforcement, the Swiss association against the misuse of Swiss indications of source abroad, currently comprises 13 members: Biscosuisse, Chocosuisse, economiesuisse (presidency), The Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry (FH), The Institute of Intellectual Property (IPI, vice-presidency), Hoffman-La Roche, The Swiss Cosmetic and Detergent Association (SKW), Switzerland Cheese Marketing AG, Swisscos (Association for the Protection of the Origin of Swiss Cosmetics), The Swiss Dental Industry Association, Swissmem, Swiss Textiles and Victorinox. In addition are other supporting institutions such as the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE).

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