

CLINICAL TRIALS IN SWITZERLAND

Location Factors, Access, and Sustainability

Key Message

While the number of clinical trials worldwide has increased by 38 percent over the past decade¹, clinical trial activity in Switzerland has stagnated². Switzerland continues to possess key prerequisites for clinical research. In international competition, however, speed, reliable procedures, usable data, improved recruitment, and collaboration among all stakeholders are becoming increasingly decisive factors. The challenge lies not in the tools themselves, but in their integration: knowledge, data, approvals, and policy initiatives are still not sufficiently interconnected.

Orientation: Where does Switzerland stand, what is happening, and what is needed?

Level	Documented Status	Ongoing developments	Open Questions and Options for Action
REGULATORY	Fast-track pilot; coordinated with ethics committees since May 2026; fee reduction; Innovation Office.	Revision of the Human Research Act; joint portal; openness to new and decentralized technologies.	Permanent implementation of the Fast Track; degree of national harmonization; regulatory approach to real-world evidence and AI; avoidance of additional Swiss requirements.
POLITICAL	Parliamentary motions address location strategy, incentives, patient access, data, and the submission portal.	Review and implementation of the five motions; revision of the Human Research Act as the central framework.	Consolidate the motions into a joint implementation agenda; define responsibilities, priorities, and success criteria.
SYSTEMIC	Strong foundations, life sciences clusters, and strengths in early phases; Phase II offers potential.	Study portals and research platforms exist or are being further developed.	Improve awareness, allocation, and recruitment; make data interoperable; secure academic research and Phase III.

Foundation and Context

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How do affected individuals find out in a timely manner that a suitable study exists?	How can data be made secure, interoperable, and truly usable for research?	How can the national approval process be made faster and more reliable?	How can individual policy measures be integrated into a coherent location strategy?

Five Key Findings

- Information and Access:** Information about ongoing clinical trials does not reliably reach patients and treating professionals. Existing services are technically accessible, but some of their content is not sufficiently tailored to their target audiences. Public information and referral pathways also remain fragmented rather than forming a coherent access pathway.
- Process quality:** The fast-track approach and enhanced coordination are important developments. However, differing procedures and processing times continue to make it difficult to plan study start dates.
- Data usability:** A lack of interoperability and unclear access conditions hinder the use of health data for recruitment, research, real-world evidence, and AI. Key priorities include the implementation of the national oncology dataset and ensuring legal certainty for the secondary use of health data.
- Research support:** Academic groups, startups, and smaller companies are more reliant on supportive structures for funding, consulting, and networking.
- Alignment of Measures:** Policy proposals, regulatory reforms, and systemic initiatives address key sub-problems but are not yet linked by a common implementation strategy.

Synthesis

The analysis shows that Switzerland is not starting from scratch. Key instruments already exist or have been initiated at the policy level. The greatest need for action lies not so much in additional individual measures as in the coordination and consistent further development of existing approaches. Patients need information and clear pathways to care; treating professionals need simple referral processes; study sponsors need predictable and harmonized procedures; and researchers and companies need usable data and reliable framework conditions. The five parliamentary motions—³—and the revision of the Human Research Act provide starting points for joint implementation.

¹ IQVIA for EFPIA & Vaccines Europe, Assessing the Clinical Trial Ecosystem in Europe, October 2024

² Swissmedic / admin.ch — new clinical trials approved, 2024 | IQVIA for EFPIA, global trial growth, Oct 2024 | Interpharma Switzerland — July 2026

³ [25.3504](#), [25.3685](#), [26.3007](#), [26.3510](#), [26.3511](#)

Stakeholder Perspectives: Expected Benefits and Identified Gaps

Benefits arise when information, procedures, and data reach the stakeholders.

Stakeholders	Expected benefits	Identified Gaps
Patients	Awareness that studies exist; finding suitable studies; fair and early access to therapies; having a say as experts.	Information rarely reaches those affected; lack of guidance from healthcare providers; complex search process and unequal access.
Doctors and healthcare providers	Overview of ongoing trials; coordinated, supraregional, and straightforward referral; clear points of contact; minimal additional effort.	Trial information is not seamlessly integrated into everyday clinical practice; recruitment is possible but time-consuming and requires specialized knowledge.
Study Sponsors and Trial Sites	Predictable approvals; faster recruitment; national reach; usable data and clear rules.	Cantonal differences, fragmented processes, limited visibility, and a lack of interoperability.
Companies	Faster and more predictable trial launches; attractive Phase I through Phase III conditions.	Speed compared to other countries; regulatory gaps regarding AI/real-world evidence; declining Phase III activity and limited differentiation.
Start-ups and smaller companies	Low-barrier consulting; clear requirements; predictable costs and procedures.	Fewer resources and less experience with complex clinical trial processes; support services do not yet sufficiently meet the need.
Academic research	Funding, research networks, consulting, and multicenter structures.	Decline in academic studies; insufficient funding; platforms are not being used consistently.
Swissmedic and ethics committees	Coordinated dossiers, clear risk assessment, improved digital infrastructure, and more efficient procedures.	Coordination and harmonization are not yet consistent; national uniformity and regulatory interoperability remain unresolved.
Policy and Administration	A coherent location strategy; visible patient benefits; verifiable implementation of legislative initiatives.	Fragmentation between legislative initiatives, legislation, and enforcement; lack of joint oversight.
Switzerland as a Research Hub	More studies, talent, and research career paths, partnerships, innovation, and value creation within the country.	Weak international differentiation; competitors are picking up the pace; existing strengths are not systematically linked.

Options for Action

Area of Action	Level	Possible Approach	Stakeholders to be involved	Expected benefits	Point of reference
Making studies visible	Systemic	Awareness program; user-friendly central portal; standardized referral pathways.	FOPH / Healthcare / Study centers / Patient organizations	Better access and improved recruitment	Prioritize immediately; implement initiatives regarding patient access, recruitment, and data
Make the fast track permanent	Regulatory	Evaluate the pilot project and transition it to routine operations; continue coordinating Swissmedic and ethics review processes.	Swissmedic / Ethics Committees / Trial Sponsors / Trial Sites	Faster and more predictable procedures; earlier study starts	Short-term further development of the existing pilot project
Harmonize ethics review procedures	Regulatory / Political	Reduce cantonal differences in requirements and processing times; examine national simplifications; create a unified submission portal as a one-stop shop; promote binding and predictable procedural standards.	Federal Government / Parliament / Ethics Committees / Swissmedic / Study Sites	More uniform requirements, fewer duplicative processes, and more predictable study start dates	Revision of the Human Research Act; legislative initiative for a unified submission portal
Making data usable	Systemic / Regulatory	Improve the interoperability and quality of relevant health data; clarify the prerequisites for secure research access and data sharing; address real-world evidence, AI, and decentralized technologies from a legal and regulatory perspective; make more consistent use of existing platforms. Advance the transition to the EGD, with an opt-out model for patients.	Federal Government / FOPH / Data holders and platforms / Swissmedic / Research / Healthcare / Patient advocacy groups	Improved study planning and identification of study participants (more targeted recruitment for new research approaches)	Revision of the Human Research Act; digitization of the healthcare system; further development of existing data infrastructures
Strengthen academic research	Systemic / Political	Ensure funding for independent clinical research; expand national research networks and multicenter structures; strengthen advisory services for academic groups, startups, and small businesses; make existing support services more accessible	Federal Government / Funding Agencies / Universities / University Hospitals and Other Hospitals / Research Networks	More independent and multicenter studies; access to a broader range of studies	Funding and financing decisions; further development of national research networks
Sharpen the research profile	Political / systemic	Visibly position Switzerland's strengths in early phases of clinical trials; strategically develop the potential of Phase II; secure Phase III as a key access channel for patients; strengthen international trial acquisition and collaboration between research centers.	Federal Government / Regional Organizations / Industry / Universities / Research and Clinical Trial Centers	Access to clinical trials in various development phases; a clearer location profile; the research location gains international visibility	National location strategy; implementation of legislative initiatives regarding the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and life sciences strategy

Area of Action	Level	Possible Approach	Stakeholders to be involved	Expected benefits	Point of reference
Jointly steering implementation	Political	Consolidate the five parliamentary motions and the revision of the Human Research Act into a joint roadmap; clarify responsibilities and interfaces, define priority goals and verifiable success criteria; involve relevant stakeholders early on and in a binding manner.	Federal Government / Parliament / Swissmedic / Ethics Committees / Research / Industry / Healthcare Providers / Patient Organizations	Coherent implementation rather than individual measures that are independent of one another.	Comprehensive implementation agenda for the five motions and the revision of the Human Research Act