

Investment promotion

The GGBa announces very good results for Western Switzerland and the opening of a second office in China

- **Western Switzerland welcomed 88 new foreign companies in 2017**
- **As far as extensions are concerned, several companies reinforced their presence in the region, including Incyte, COFCO, Celgene and CSL Behring**
- **International competition requires a differentiated approach in each key market**
- **A new office will soon be opened in Shenzhen, China**

Lausanne, 9 March 2018 – Western Switzerland confirms its attractiveness with the establishment of 88 foreign companies in 2017. This positive result stems from the collaboration between the Greater Geneva Bern area (GGBa) and the economic development offices of its six member cantons. The investments coming from China and the United States experienced a record year.

This outcome is the fruit of a long-term work of selective identification and prospection of potential targets that meet well-defined criteria, such as value added, jobs creation and innovation. Among the almost 240 companies that conducted assessment visits to the GGBa member cantons last year, some should get established in 2018 already.

“Despite increased international competition, reinforced by the competition of the cities themselves, Western Switzerland did very well,” says Pierre Maudet, State Councilor of Geneva and President of the GGBa for two years. *“But our lead is shrinking and requires highly attractive framework conditions. Taxation is a major issue that Switzerland must now be able to address without any further delay.”*

Western Switzerland and its advantages

Western Switzerland has advanced skills in areas as diverse as Industry 4.0, the Internet of Things, blockchain technologies and digital health. To make the region shine internationally, the GGBa actively collaborates with the cluster platforms, as well as with local innovation players such as technology parks and incubators. Being part of this tightly-knit network fosters the development of new synergies and the creation of value.

“Western Switzerland is a region with a strong identity and a clear, compelling positioning,” says Thomas Bohn, GGBa Executive Director. *“The adoption of a thematic approach to promote the region in selected areas of excellence helps to strengthen the image of Western Switzerland abroad and to better target the companies that will come enrich and complete the local ecosystem.”*

In 2017, the following representative companies established a presence in the region:

- LASEA, a Belgian company specialized in high-precision laser machining
- iGenius, an Italian Artificial Intelligence company
- NeoGenomics, a U.S.-based provider of oncology testing services

The following companies strengthened their presence in Western Switzerland:

- American biopharmaceutical company Incyte
- Chinese agrifood giant COFCO International
- Australian pharmaceutical company CSL Behring
- American biopharmaceutical firm Celgene

Activities and perspectives

In a fast-changing global environment, the GGBa continues to invest in its monitoring and business intelligence tools to detect early-warning signals that can be used to identify high-potential targets.

The GGBa implements its strategy thanks to a network of representatives based around the world, including in the United States. *"We remain attentive to the effects of the U.S. tax reform,"* explains Thomas Bohn, *"but what Western Switzerland has to offer goes well beyond purely financial considerations. Our region has a highly qualified workforce, world-renowned universities and research centers, as well as excellent infrastructures. This unique combination of assets explains the persistent interest of foreign companies for Western Switzerland."*

With the increasing internationalization of Chinese companies, China is also becoming a key market for the GGBa. A second office will be opened in Shenzhen, known as the country's Silicon Valley. "Shenzhen is home to numerous high added-value companies in the sectors of health, finance, and in the precision industry. Having a permanent presence in the city will allow us to build closer relations with the local innovation players, our priority targets," says Thomas Bohn.

Annex

Highlights 2017

About the GGBa

Founded on 1st January 2010, the Greater Geneva Bern area (GGBa) regroups the cantons of Bern, Fribourg, Vaud, Neuchâtel, Geneva and Valais. The GGBa's mission is to attract foreign companies that will sustainably strengthen the priority expertise poles of Western Switzerland and create high added-value jobs. More specifically, the GGBa generates investment projects through its business development activities in foreign countries and transmits these projects to its member cantons, which are in charge of implementing them.

Additional information and contacts

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Greater Geneva Bern area is an initiative of the cantons of Bern, Fribourg, Vaud, Neuchâtel, Geneva and Valais.