



Fribourg, 23 August 2013

## Press release

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# Swiss SMEs' internationalization efforts

## Swiss International Entrepreneurship Survey – SIES 2013

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*The School of Management Fribourg has presented the results of its 2013 study, the third of its kind, on Swiss SMEs' internationalization efforts and in doing so has uncovered some new trends. For the purposes of data collection for the PostFinance-sponsored study, a multilingual questionnaire (German, French, Italian and English) was sent out to the management of SMEs that focus on exports. The results of this study, which was based on the Bisnode D&B company databank, have revealed the principal factors affecting the success or failure of a company's internationalization strategy.*

### Reasons for a study of SMEs

In the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013, Switzerland topped the list of the most competitive countries. The decisive factor behind this excellent result is the strong performance of Swiss companies in key areas, such as efficiency, the job market, technology, innovation and corporate culture. At this point, it is important to highlight the fact that 99.6% of Swiss companies are designated as SMEs. Hence, these companies have a major influence on Switzerland's international success.

### The key to success: international experience

The study focuses on the head of the company and his global vision. The findings show that at each stage of a company's life cycle, different characteristics are required from the management team. The key to successful internationalization unquestionably lies with the head of the company and top management. The study confirms that in order to be able to operate internationally, it is vitally important to have a management team with the necessary expertise. Hence, international experience should not be underestimated; it not only affects the speed of internationalization, but also its success.

### Recommendations and advice

Given these results, companies and the management of SMEs are advised to invest less in tangible assets and more in areas that directly generate competitive advantages. These areas include research and development and employee creativity. The cases presented in the study also highlight the various forms of internationalization of SMEs and show management that internationalization is not necessarily the result of exporting products and services, but can also be attained by means of a specific position in the international value chain.

### **Partners for the study**

The study was supported by partners PostFinance and Bisnode D&B. As one of the largest financial institutions in Switzerland, PostFinance maintains customer relationships with around 150,000 SMEs, accounting for half of all Swiss SMEs. PostFinance is a professional partner for companies operating in international markets, primarily in international payment transactions, foreign exchange trading and e-commerce. Interesting and useful expert knowledge on foreign trade can be found on the new microsite [aussehenhandel.postfinance.ch](http://aussehenhandel.postfinance.ch).

Bisnode D&B is the market leader in business information. With its global database of more than 225 million firms, potential new customers can be identified worldwide. This also makes it possible to check the creditworthiness of business partners in order to avoid losses. In this way, Bisnode D&B supports Swiss SMEs that focus on exports in tapping new markets abroad and doing business safely.

<http://aussehenhandel.postfinance.ch>