



# ENGINEERING & MANUFACTURING RECRUITMENT TRENDS IN SWITZERLAND

KEY INSIGHTS FOR 2026

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## Executive Summary

The provided brief on Recruitment Trends in Engineering & Manufacturing in Switzerland for 2026 outlines a cautious market driven by economic pressures and skill shortages, which aligns with the latest data as of January 2026. Updates incorporate refined GDP forecasts, confirmed US tariff impacts under the recent trade agreement, persistent talent gaps including in adjacent life sciences, and rising emphasis on AI, flexibility, and soft skills. Swiss GDP growth for 2026 is now projected at 0.6-0.9%, down due to US tariffs despite a partial reduction to a 15% cap on most exports via the November 2025 memorandum, with pharma potentially facing new risks from Q1 2026

## Swiss Market & Economic Overview

- US tariffs imposed by President Trump, initially at 39% on select Swiss exports from August 2025, have eased slightly but still burden export-heavy manufacturing, leading to subdued CFO confidence and hiring restraint.
- Overall unemployment hovers at 2.9%, with modest GDP growth of 0.6-1.2% fueling selective hiring tied to efficiency and innovation rather than expansion.
- Export-focused manufacturers, especially in mechanical and electrical engineering, face significant cost pressures and industry contractions, forcing many companies to revisit hiring priorities and opt for flexible contracts or internal mobility over expansion.
- Confidence levels among CFOs remain subdued, with investment focused on R&D, innovation, and digital capabilities, but sectoral optimism persists due to Switzerland's strengths in advanced engineering, precision manufacturing, and industrial transformation.

## Key Talent & Skills Trends

- Switzerland's engineering sector continues to report a deficit of at least 17,000 skilled professionals per year, with persistent shortages expected for tech and manufacturing roles well into 2026.
- Hiring is becoming "quality over quantity," with employers seeking candidates who can deliver immediate value, integrate seamlessly, and adapt quickly to transformation initiatives.
- AI-exposed job profiles now require skill updates at a rate 66% faster than non-exposed roles, while companies are showing a clear preference for tech-fluent talent able to drive efficiency and innovation.

## Impact of AI on Recruitment

- Artificial intelligence is central to recruitment, reshaping job profiles and workplace demands.
- Over 40,000 tech roles are projected to remain unfilled in Switzerland, further highlighting the premium placed on digital and AI competencies.
- 57% of Swiss employers report improved efficiency due to AI, with the technology enabling both the creation of new jobs and the evolution of existing roles, especially in process automation, predictive maintenance, and digital supply chain management.
- AI adoption necessitates ongoing reskilling and strategic workforce planning, with HR teams pivoting from administrative functions to competency mapping and upskilling initiatives.

## Recruitment Process Evolution

The recruitment process in Switzerland's Engineering & Manufacturing sectors is evolving rapidly to adapt to candidate expectations, technological adoption, and economic realities:

- **Increased Use of Technology and ATS:** Applicant tracking systems (ATS) have become standard to handle growing application volumes efficiently. Recruitment teams expect CVs to be well-formatted and keyword-optimized to pass automated screening systems.
- **Structured and Selective Hiring:** Hiring is becoming more strategic and selective, with fewer but higher-quality hires prioritized. Companies focus on candidates' ability to integrate quickly and add value from day one, reflecting a shift towards stability and long-term fit.
- **Candidate Experience:** Candidates demand clarity, transparency, and timely communication. There is a rise in mobile-friendly application processes, with candidates expecting regular updates and clear information on compensation and career progression opportunities.

- **Hybrid Work Models:** While remote and flexible working arrangements have become more common, especially for roles that do not require constant onsite presence, employers still value in-person collaboration and local integration for manufacturing and engineering roles .
- **Focus on Soft Skills:** Adaptability, communication, learning agility, and intercultural skills are increasingly important. These are critical to success in cross-functional, evolving teams driving innovation and technological change .
- **Emphasis on Demonstrated Skills:** It is no longer sufficient to claim skills; candidates must provide evidence through portfolios, practical examples, and well-structured interviews focusing on real-world problem solving and project impact .
- **Speed and Efficiency:** Recruitment processes are becoming faster with streamlined interview stages, combining virtual initial assessments with onsite technical evaluations. This balances candidate convenience while ensuring hands-on capabilities are thoroughly assessed .
- **Alignment with Industry 4.0 and Sustainability:** Hiring processes incorporate upfront discussions on continuous learning, upskilling, and the role of new technologies like automation and digitalization in the company's future—thus attracting candidates willing to grow with ongoing industrial transformation.

In summary, recruitment in Swiss Engineering & Manufacturing is becoming more digital, candidate-centric, and aligned with industry trends emphasizing innovation, workforce agility, and sustainability.

## Strategic Recommendations for Leaders

- Prioritize strategic hires tied to innovation, transformation, and digitalization rather than volume-based recruitment.
- Invest in continuous workforce reskilling programs to keep pace with AI-driven changes in job requirements and maintain competitive advantage.
- Advance internal mobility and temporary staffing to manage cost uncertainty associated with global trade disruptions and tariffs.
- Support C-level and HR leaders in adapting talent acquisition strategies to focus on technical and sustainability skills, aligning with Switzerland's ongoing green transition and Industry 4.0 priorities.
- Leverage AI to improve recruiting efficiency and candidate experience; foster partnerships with educational institutions to secure future talent pipelines.

These trends reflect a Swiss recruitment landscape in transition: strategically selective, technology-driven, and shaped by global economic turbulence. C-level executives and HR Directors must act now to secure the workforce capabilities necessary for ongoing innovation and resilience.

## Sources

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