

Press Release

March 2026

Conference on the Supply of Critical Raw Materials: Swiss Research and Industry Develop Guidelines for Policy and Business

Swiss experts from industry, research, and politics will meet on 13 May 2026 in Biel/Bienne to develop strategies for a sustainable supply of critical raw materials. The national conference will culminate in a guideline with concrete recommendations for Switzerland as a technology hub.

The supply of critical raw materials and key components is becoming an increasingly strategic issue for Switzerland as a technology location. Against this backdrop, The Rare Metals Foundation (ESM), the Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences SATW, the Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne (SIPBB), and the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology (Empa) are organizing a national conference with workshops on 13 May 2026 in Biel/Bienne. The event is supported by the Economic Development Agency of the Canton of Bern.

Under the title *“Sustainable Supply of Critical Raw Materials and Components for the Future of Switzerland as a Technology Location”*, experts from industry, associations, research, administration, and politics will come together across sectors. The aim is to analyze risks in the supply of critical raw materials and semi-finished products, discuss current and future strategies, and formulate concrete recommendations for policymakers.

The morning session will be an invitation-only in-depth workshop. In nine working groups – covering Chemistry & Pharma, Energy Storage, Electronics and Construction, Watches & Jewelry, Defense, and Markets & Trade – participants will address supply risks, diversification and circular economy strategies, as well as regulatory frameworks. The results will feed into a guideline intended to provide policymakers and the public with a compact overview of the status quo, fields of action, and priority measures.

In the afternoon, the conference will open to the public. After a welcome by National Councillor Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter and representatives of the Canton of Bern, preliminary findings from the workshops will be presented. Keynote speeches will follow, including National Councillor Simon Michel, CEO of Ypsomed, on diversification strategies in medical technology, National Councillor Gerhard Andrey on digital resilience and sovereign systems, as well as presentations on raw material monitoring and strategies from the EU and Austria. A panel discussion on how diversification and the circular economy for critical raw materials can be strengthened in Switzerland will conclude the program, followed by an Apéro Riche and an optional tour of the SIPBB.

“Critical raw materials are the foundation of numerous Swiss key industries – from medical technology to watchmaking, and from energy to digital infrastructure,” emphasize the organizers. “With this conference and the guideline, we aim to consolidate knowledge, promote cross-sector networking, and develop concrete, actionable recommendations for policymakers and businesses.”

Event Overview

Title: Conference and Guideline *“Sustainable Supply of Critical Raw Materials and Components for the Future of Switzerland as a Technology Location”*

Date: 13 May 2026, 09:00-19:00

Location: Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne, Aarbergerstrasse 46, 2503 Biel/Bienne

Organizers: Entwicklungsfonds Seltene Metalle – The Rare Metals Foundation (ESM), Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences SATW, Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne (SIPBB), Empa – Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology

Support: Bern Economic Development Agency

National Councillor Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter on the Conference

“Securing the supply of critical raw materials is essential for the competitiveness of our economic location. In times of global uncertainty, we need to develop clear strategies to sustainably support our industry and secure Switzerland’s innovative strength in the long term. This conference provides a valuable platform to jointly develop solutions and lay the groundwork for a more resilient future.”

Registration

- Public Session (from 14:00):
<https://eventfrog.ch/de/p/kurse-seminare/sonstige-kurse-seminare/nachhaltige-versorgung-mit-kritischen-rohstoffen-7432347496012113353.html>
- Expert Workshops (morning): Interested parties please contact the organizing team

Media Contact (Organization & Coordination)

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Organising Institutions

- Entwicklungsfonds Seltene Metalle (ESM) – The Rare Metals Foundation
<https://esmfoundation.org/en/>
- Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences SATW
<https://www.satw.ch/en/>
- Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne (SIPBB)
<https://sipbb.ch/fr/>
- Empa – Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology
<https://www.empa.ch/>