



Manifesto - Swiss AI Summit Theme 2026

16 Nov. - Kunsthaus Zürich

Autonomy & Sovereignty

The new rules of business, work and competition



AI is no longer just changing how businesses work. It is changing who and what gets to decide.

For years, the AI conversation was dominated by models, applications, and productivity. That conversation is now entering a new phase as AI moves from assisting work to performing work, from generating outputs to initiating actions, and from supporting decisions to increasingly participating in them.

As AI takes on a more active role within organisations, the question facing leaders is no longer simply **“What can AI do for us?”**, but rather **“What should we allow AI to do and what must remain under our control?”** This is becoming a defining leadership question of the next phase of artificial intelligence.

The challenge for leaders, therefore, is not simply deciding what AI can do, but defining where it can act, where humans must remain involved, and where human judgement must remain decisive. **This is the strategic tension at the heart of the next phase of AI: giving organisations greater autonomy while retaining the ability to determine their own direction.**

Key questions for decision-makers:

- What is the impact on our industry?
- What is the impact on our workforce; which roles, skills and responsibilities will change?
- What are our competitors doing & where do we risk falling behind if we don't act?

It is this tension that defines the **Swiss AI Summit 2026 Edition**, centred on two forces that will increasingly shape organisations, industries and nations: **AUTONOMY & SOVEREIGNTY**.



At the **Swiss AI Summit 2026 Edition**, this conversation will come together across Business & Strategy, Financial Services & Insurance, Healthcare & Life Sciences, and Manufacturing. Leaders from business, technology, government and academia will explore how AI is moving from experimentation to execution, and what it takes to scale it with confidence.

The programme brings together perspectives from across the AI ecosystem, with speakers including high-level governmental representatives, the Swiss Armed Forces, RUAG, Swisscom, leading banks and insurance companies from Switzerland, Hospitals and Manufacturing leaders. Together, they represent the range of perspectives needed to navigate a future in which AI increasingly shapes how organisations operate, decide and compete.

They are joined by leading organisations across technology, finance, research and innovation. Partners including IBM, NTT Data, NVIDIA, QuantumBasel, Oracle and many others that bring expertise spanning AI infrastructure, innovation, financial services, enterprise technology and digital sovereignty reflecting the breadth of the ecosystem required to turn AI ambition into real-world capability.

I. AUTONOMY

The enterprise of the future will not simply use more AI. It will be **designed around AI**.

With agent-based AI, systems are increasingly able to analyze information, make recommendations, execute processes, and coordinate ever-more-complex workflows, all while operating with a certain degree of autonomy within defined goals and parameters. This is not simply another step toward automation. It is a shift from AI that reacts to instructions to AI that can plan, act, and adapt.

As a result, AI is beginning to transform the very architecture of the organization. Functions that once relied on sequential human intervention can now be continuously managed by intelligent systems, while decisions are made closer to real time and processes can be designed to be adaptive rather than rigid. This enables organizations to become faster and more responsive, and increasingly capable of operating at machine speed.

However, autonomy is not the same as automation. While automation follows rules, autonomy acts within a mandate. That distinction changes everything because it shifts the question from what can be automated to where AI should be trusted to act independently. Leaders will therefore need to determine where AI can and should operate autonomously, where humans must remain in the loop, and where human judgement must remain decisive.

At the same time, this will require organisations to rethink more than individual processes. Operating models, governance structures, workforce strategies, and decision rights will need to evolve around a new relationship between humans and intelligent systems. Ultimately, the competitive question will not be who has the most AI, but who can build the organisation that knows how to use it best.

It will be: **Who can build the most capable organisation while retaining the ability to direct it? How do you balance the risk? How will you redesign your governance?**



II. SOVEREIGNTY

The more autonomous organisations become, the more dependent they can become on the infrastructure that enables that autonomy. AI does not exist in isolation; it relies on models, data, computing capacity, cloud infrastructure, semiconductor supply chains, platforms, standards and technology providers. These dependencies create enormous opportunities, but they also introduce new forms of strategic exposure.

For business leaders, sovereignty therefore means understanding where critical dependencies lie and retaining meaningful choices over them. It means knowing where data is stored, which infrastructure and models an organisation relies on, who controls the underlying platforms, and whether the organisation could adapt if those dependencies changed.

IMPORTANT NOTE! Sovereignty does not mean isolation. It means the freedom to choose. It means maintaining the control, resilience and capabilities needed to determine your own technological direction. For businesses, this is increasingly a question of strategic competitiveness; for governments, of economic resilience and strategic autonomy; and for society, of who ultimately controls the systems on which critical infrastructure and economic activity depend.

Autonomous Business and Sovereignty are therefore deeply connected. As organisations give AI greater responsibility, they must also ensure that the underlying data, infrastructure, capabilities and governance remain within their strategic control. The challenge is not simply to build more autonomous organisations, but to build organisations that can act with greater autonomy without surrendering the ability to determine their own direction. This is the conversation we are bringing to the **Swiss AI Summit 2026**.

On 16 November 2026, at Kunsthaus Zurich, the Swiss AI Summit will bring these perspectives together around one defining question: how do we build organisations that can act with greater autonomy while remaining sovereign in their ability to decide?

The future will belong not simply to organisations that deploy AI, but to those that can harness its autonomy without giving up their own.

Contact

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