Blockchain for Financial Service Providers

Pulse Survey 2025

Foreword: Towards a connected financial world

The financial industry is entering a period in which the boundaries of what is possible are beginning to shift. Around the world, countries are setting new rules for digital assets, designing frameworks for stablecoins, and testing new forms of digital money. This global momentum shows that the move toward digitally enabled financial markets is no longer a distant idea - it is happening now, and it is accelerating.

For Switzerland, these global developments matter in a very direct way. It is a reminder that the country stands at an important decision point. With its strong regulatory foundations, trusted institutions, and history of financial innovation, Switzerland has everything it needs to help shape the next generation of financial infrastructure - if it chooses to engage with the same clarity and ambition seen in other jurisdictions.

Blockchain is part of this transition, not as a trend but as an emerging layer of financial infrastructure. Crypto assets have found their place in banking, tokenization is slowly taking root, and the idea of a blockchain-based Swiss franc - whether through regulated stablecoins or tokenized bank deposits - is becoming increasingly relevant. These developments point to a broader shift in how value will be issued, transferred, and stored in the years ahead.

Looking forward, the financial industry could evolve into an environment in which digital and traditional systems operate seamlessly side by side. Assets may move instantly across institutions, without the delays and frictions of today's reconciliation processes. Payments could become programmable, settling automatically the moment predefined conditions are met. Market infrastructures might grow increasingly interoperable, connecting participants across borders in real time.

Such a system would not replace the principles that define the Swiss financial market - it would extend them. Reliability, precision, and trust would remain at the core, but supported by infrastructure that is faster, more transparent, and more connected than anything we have today.

This study sets a baseline for where we stand today, helping us see how far we have come - and how the picture changes as the financial system continues to evolve. As a co-initiator of the original study, I am particularly pleased to see this work being continued, as it provides important insights for the financial industry. The shift toward a digitally augmented financial world has already begun. Switzerland now has the opportunity to engage actively, thoughtfully, and with confidence in shaping what comes next.

Dr. Lidia Kurt, CEO BX Digital and Chairwoman of vision&

Summary

Blockchain is no longer a future bet for the Swiss financial industry; it is a present-day imperative. The 2025 Blockchain Pulse Survey reveals an industry in a decisive phase of execution. The strategic debate has shifted from 'why' to 'how', and conviction is firm: 64% of institutions now see high long-term potential in blockchain - a dramatic leap from 37% in 2024.

This maturation is evident across the board. Formal strategies are now standard practice (86%, up from 58%) and cryptocurrencies have become a mainstream offering, with more than 60% of banks now live. Consequently, the primary hurdles are no longer strategic but operational, as "compliance" and "IT integration" replace "lack of business priority" as the top challenges. Tokenization follows this same trajectory, with its main barrier also shifting from "business case" to "compliance."

Finally, this report highlights the strategic urgency of a blockchain-based Swiss franc, as 75% of leaders believe that Switzerland is losing its innovative edge to international frameworks such as the EU's MiCA.

Key takeaways for decision-makers

- **The strategic debate is over**: An official blockchain strategy is now the standard (86% adoption). The challenge has moved from planning to execution, with responsibility shifting from innovation teams to core product units.
- **Focus shifts from 'why?' to 'how'**: For both cryptocurrencies and tokenized assets, "compliance" has replaced "lack of business priority" as the primary hurdle. Leaders must now deploy resources to solve operational, regulatory, and IT integration challenges.
- **Stablecoins are the new strategic priority**: The industry's next phase – settlement – is at risk. 75% of respondents believe that Switzerland is "acting too cautiously", risking a competitive disadvantage against the EU's passportable MiCA framework.
- **A pragmatic pullback**: The market is consolidating resources, pulling back from speculative "advanced applications" (whereby 61% have no plans) to focus first on mastering the foundational layers of tokenization and settlement.

1 Introduction

Since our inaugural survey in 2024, the influence of blockchain technology on the Swiss financial services industry has not only continued, but also accelerated and matured. What was once a topic of future potential is now an operational reality, driving tangible changes in business models, client offerings and the very infrastructure of the financial market.

The 2025 Blockchain Pulse Survey aims to provide a clear, data-driven picture of how the Swiss financial industry is navigating this new phase of adoption. It analyzes how strategic priorities have shifted, how implementation challenges have evolved, and where the sector will be deploying its resources in the coming years.

This year's survey builds on our previous work by tracking the evolution of two key pillars of the digital asset ecosystem:

1. Cryptocurrencies: The trading and custody of decentralized digital assets on behalf of clients.
2. Tokenized assets: The digital representation of securities and real assets on blockchain-based platforms.

Furthermore, this 2025 edition introduces a stronger focus on a third, critical area: stablecoins. As the industry moves from asset creation to transaction and settlement, the need for a dependable, blockchain-based Swiss franc has become a central strategic topic.

Between August and October 2025, 28 banks and financial service providers participated in the survey, a significant increase from the 19 institutions in the previous year. This growth in participation also reflects the topic's rising importance, with the 2025 cohort including a larger share of institutions already active in the blockchain space. The participants represent a diverse cross-section of the Swiss market. Notably, 12 of the original respondents to the 2024 survey participated again, providing valuable continuity for our year-over-year analysis. All data was anonymized and evaluated for the sole purpose of this paper.

This study is a joint initiative of the Center for Financial Services Innovation at the University of St. Gallen, ACK, mintminds, PwC and vision&. The authors of the study are Markus Perdrizat (ACK), Thierry Hess (vision&), Dr. Tobias Trütsch (University of St. Gallen), Dr. Samy Amara and Philipp Netzer (mintminds AG), Bastian Stolzenberg (PwC) and Nicolas Memmishofer (PwC).

2 Blockchain strategy

The strategic landscape for blockchain in Swiss banking has changed fundamentally over the past year. What started as isolated innovation projects are now embedded in corporate strategy, governance, and budgeting processes.

The findings reveal a clear pattern: strategic conviction is solidifying, formal strategies are becoming standard practice, and responsibilities are shifting from innovation hubs to core business functions. This chapter analyzes how banks are strategically assessing and acting on the potential of blockchain technology, revealing a clear, decisive shift from asking 'why?' to defining 'how.'

2.1 Strategic conviction deepens

The industry's belief in the long-term impact of blockchain is no longer a tentative hypothesis. It is a firm conviction. This growing confidence is reshaping strategic priorities, leading institutions to sharpen their focus on the most immediate and tangible opportunities.

2.1.1 Blockchain's long-term potential is undeniable

The survey results show a clear strengthening of belief in blockchain's transformative power. In 2025, **almost two-thirds (64%) of participating institutions see high long-term potential (over a five-year horizon) for technology** (see Figure 1). This marks a significant leap from 2024, when only 37% of banks shared this level of optimism. The consensus is clear: blockchain is increasingly seen as a foundational layer of the future financial system. This rise in confidence underscores that blockchain has matured from exploration to strategic cornerstone.

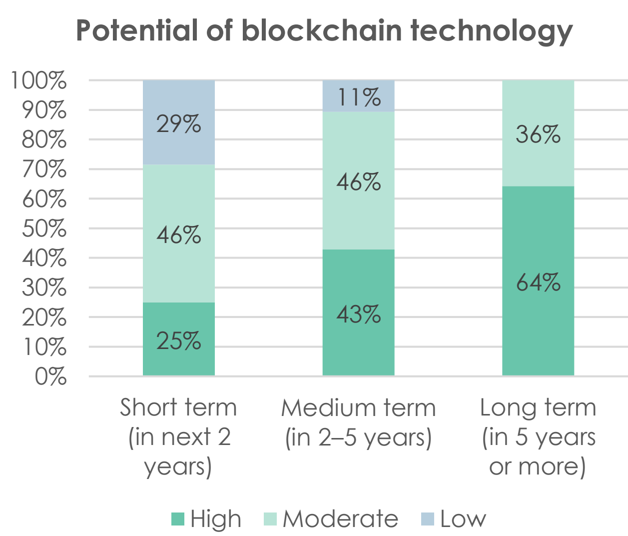

Figure 1: Belief in long-term potential solidifies

2.1.2 Focus sharpens on digital assets, de-prioritizes broader applications

As conviction grows, strategic focus shifts from experimentation to commercial execution. Banks are directing their resources toward the most developed and promising areas: cryptocurrencies and tokenized assets.

While nearly three-quarters of institutions have launched or are planning cryptocurrency offerings, there has been a notable pullback from more nascent, long-term applications. The proportion of banks with launched or planned advanced blockchain applications (such as in trade finance or identity management) has declined from 58% in 2024 to just 40% in 2025 (see Figure 2). This indicates a strategic consolidation, with banks prioritizing the development of a robust digital asset ecosystem before tackling more complex, cross-industry use cases. The widening gap between front runners and more conservative institutions highlights a two-speed market dynamic that could shape competitive positioning in the years ahead.

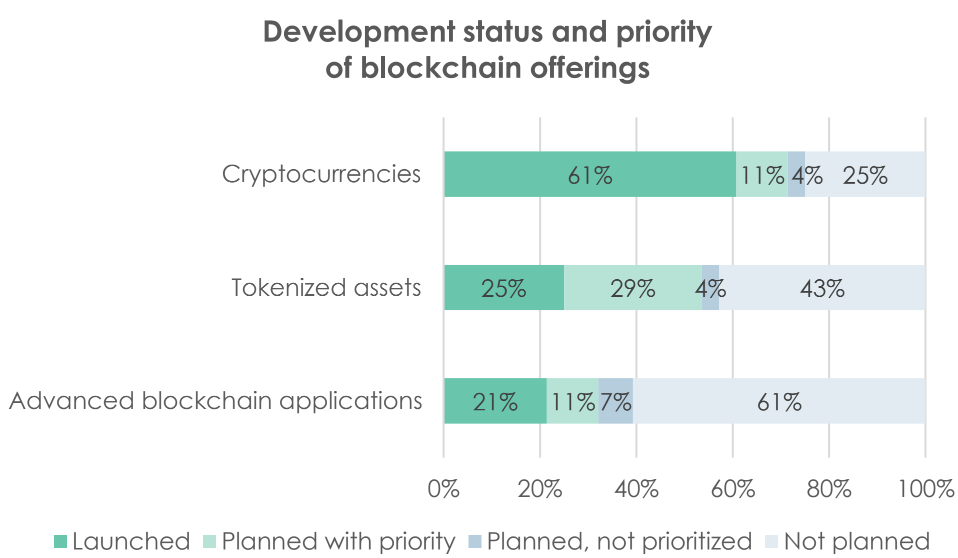

Figure 2: Development focus sharpens on digital assets

2.2 From strategy to standard practice

Recent development

In September 2024, Zürcher Kantonalbank (ZKB) announced its crypto asset offering, including a business-to-business solution with Thurgauer Kantonalbank (TKB) as its launch partner. This emphasizes the survey finding that specific business drivers have become the dominant motivators, and that it's no longer merely about being innovative.

Blockchain initiatives have become increasingly formalized across the industry. Having a defined strategy is no longer a differentiator for early adopters, but has become the standard for any institution pursuing digital-asset integration.

2.2.1 A formal blockchain strategy is becoming the norm

In 2024, just over half (58%) of the banks surveyed had a blockchain strategy in place or in progress. A year later, that figure surged to 86% (see Figure 3).

Owing to the expert composition of our survey panel – 78.5% of participants are already active in digital-asset services. This result should be understood as a signal of consolidation among early adopters rather than evidence of market-wide adoption.

The topic has been decisively elevated from isolated projects to an integral part of corporate planning for these active players. This formalization is further evidenced by the increased priority at the highest levels of management: 64% of banks now classify the topic as being 'high' or 'medium' priority (see Figure 3) – a significant rise from 42% in the previous year. As formal strategies become the norm, the motivation behind them is also evolving.

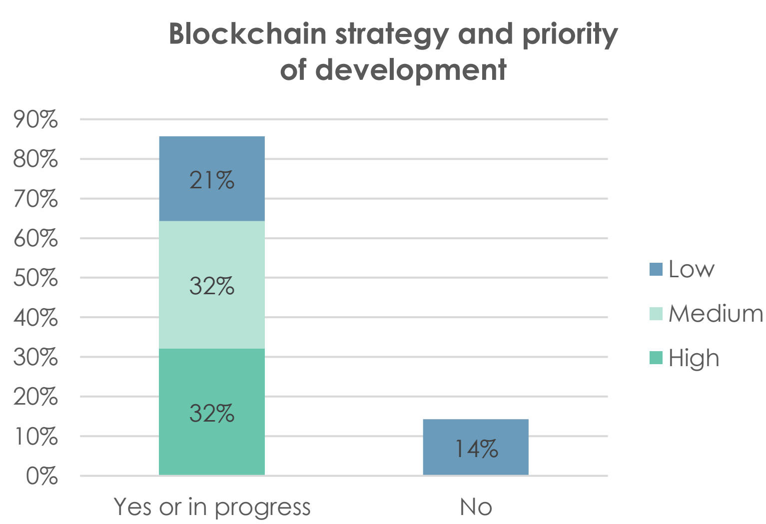

Figure 3: A formal blockchain strategy is becoming the norm

2.2.2 Motivation shifts from innovation to client and business needs

The driving force behind these strategies has also matured. While innovation remains an important factor, it is no longer the primary motivator. Instead, concrete business drivers have become the dominant motivators.

In 2025, nearly half of all institutions (48%) cite offensive (growth, new clients) or defensive (client retention) motivations as their main drivers (see Figure 4). This is a substantial increase from 32% in 2024 and signals a clear recognition that clients are actively demanding digital-asset services. Banks are no longer just exploring new technology; they are responding to explicit client demand. This underscores the fact that blockchain adoption has entered the commercial phase.

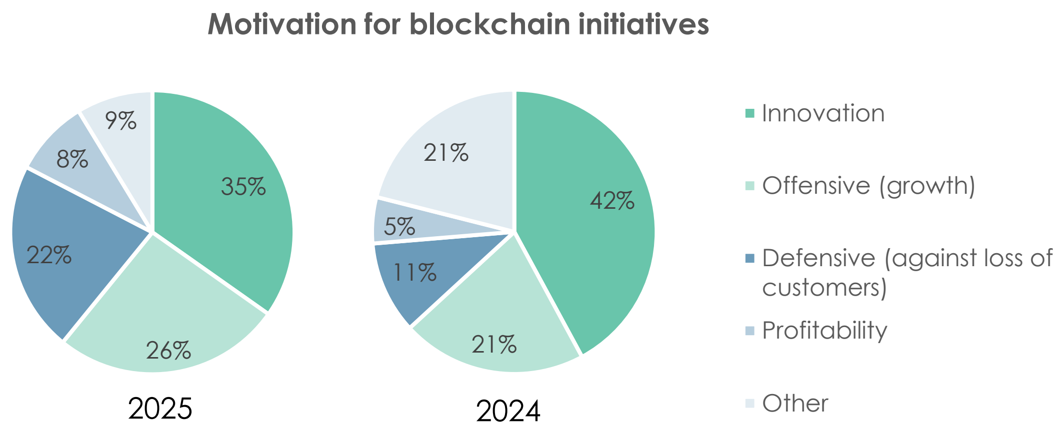

Figure 4: Primary motivation shifts to client and business needs

2.3 Resources and responsibilities scale up

With clear strategies in place, banks are now allocating the necessary resources – both human and organizational – to execute them effectively. This operationalization is a key theme for 2025, reflecting a deeper integration of blockchain initiatives into banks' core fabric.

2.3.1 Product and business development units take ownership

Responsibility for blockchain initiatives is migrating from peripheral innovation hubs to core business units. In 2025, **product and business development is the most frequently cited area (64%) responsible for the focus on blockchain topics** (see Figure 5). This shift is critical, as it ensures that new offerings are developed with a clear focus on commercial viability, client experience, and integration with banks' existing product suites.

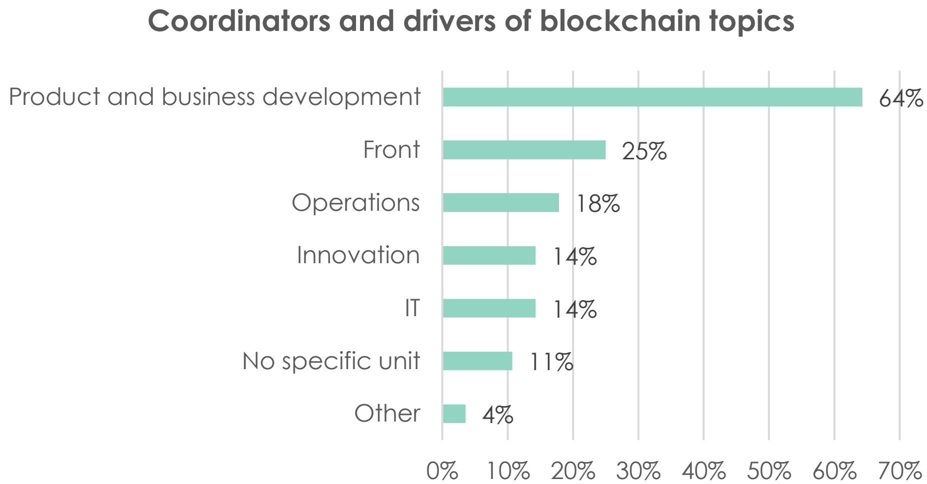

Figure 5: Product and business development units take ownership

2.3.2 Investment in talent grows as teams expand

The most tangible evidence of increased commitment is the growth in dedicated personnel. **One-third of all surveyed institutions now employ more than ten full-time equivalents (FTEs) in blockchain-focused roles** (see Figure 6). This is a significant increase in investment in specialized talent compared to the previous year. However, this concentration of expertise within a few institutions highlights a growing structural imbalance. Most smaller banks still lack in-house blockchain talent, which could slow ecosystem-wide scalability and collaboration.

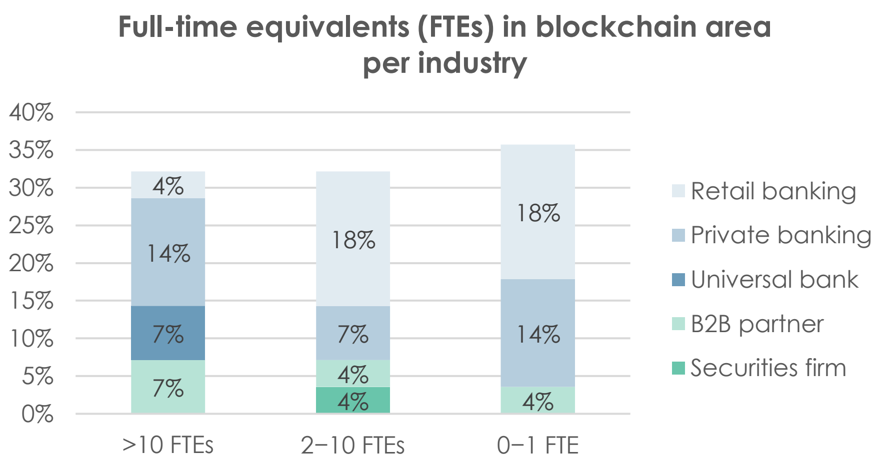

Figure 6: Investment in talent is growing as teams expand

2.4 Conclusion

The strategic evolution from 2024 to 2025 is unmistakable. The Swiss banking sector has moved past the initial phase of discovery and is now firmly in an era of execution. The industry's conviction in blockchain is stronger than ever, but this optimism is now tempered by a pragmatism that prioritizes tangible digital asset offerings over more speculative ventures. With formal strategies becoming standard practice, motivations shifting to clear business needs, and a significant increase in resource allocation, the foundation for the next phase of growth is securely in place. The strategic challenge is no longer about setting a direction, but about navigating the complexities of the journey.

3 Cryptocurrencies

The integration of cryptocurrencies into the Swiss banking system has moved decisively from a strategic option to an operational reality. In 2025, the narrative is no longer about tentative plans, but about live products, growing client assets and the practical challenges of managing a dynamic new asset class. This chapter analyzes how banks are developing their crypto offerings, expanding their service capabilities and approaching the increasingly complex hurdles of implementation.

3.1 From plan to product: crypto offerings become mainstream

The last year has seen a significant number of banks moving from drawing board to marketplace. What was a priority for a few has become a product for the many, signaling a broad acceptance of cryptocurrencies as a legitimate component of modern wealth management.

3.1.1 Most banks now have a live crypto offering

The transition from planning to production is the standout trend of 2025. More than 60% of participating institutions have now launched a cryptocurrency offering for their clients (see Figure 7). Consequently, the proportion of banks with no plans to enter the crypto space has shrunk from 37% in 2024 to just 25% this year. This indicates that a clear majority of the market now views a crypto offering as a competitive necessity.

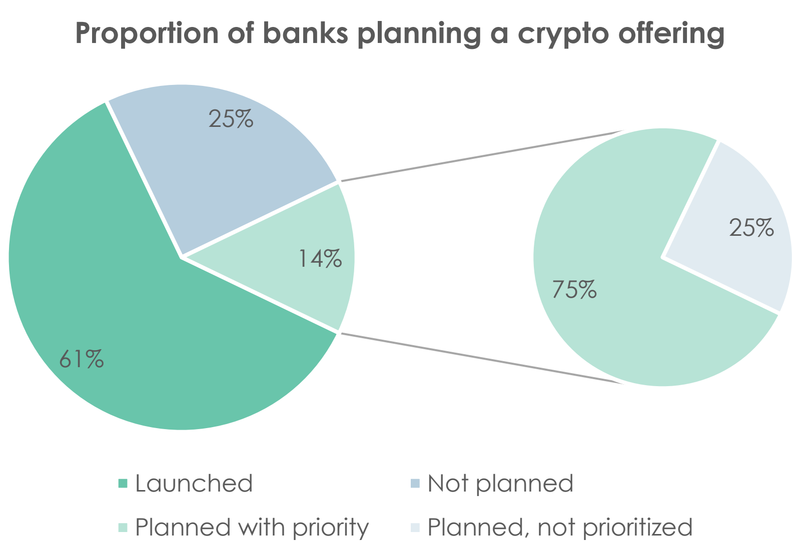

Figure 7: Most banks have launched crypto offerings

3.1.2 Crypto assets under management show steady growth

Live offerings engender a growing pool of client assets. The share of institutions holding crypto assets under management (AuM) on behalf of their clients has doubled since last year. This growth is particularly notable in retail banking, where participating banks with a crypto offering now report that, on average, 3% of their clients' assets are invested in cryptocurrencies (see Figure 8). This suggests that mainstream adoption is not only growing but indeed accelerating.

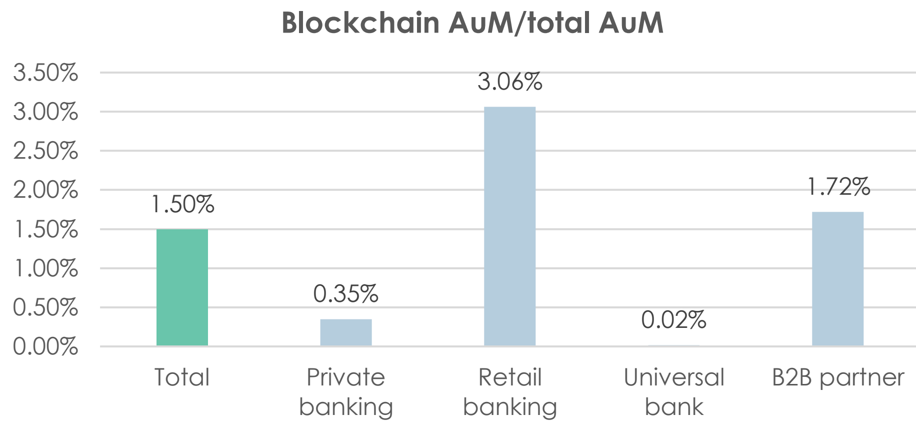

Figure 8: Crypto assets under management show steady growth

3.2 Expanding the service portfolio

> **Recent development**
>
> In January 2025, about a year after first introducing its crypto offering, PostFinance launched a staking service for its customers that enables them to earn passive income by staking Ethereum (ETH). PostFinance customers can participate in staking from just 0.1 ETH. The staking service is completely integrated into PostFinance's existing services.

As banks establish a foothold in the market, they are broadening their range of crypto-related services. The focus is on building a comprehensive offering that goes beyond simple access, with institutions making critical decisions about which capabilities to develop in-house and which to source from specialized partners.

3.2.1 Custody and trading are the core of crypto services

Secure custody and reliable trading remain the foundational pillars of any institutional crypto offering. Among banks active in the space, **more than 95% plan to offer or are already offering custody services and 90% provide trading** (see Figure 9). While outsourcing remains a popular model for speed to market, there is a clear trend towards developing in-house custody solutions to ensure maximum security and control over client assets. More advanced services like staking are also gaining traction, with 68% of active banks now planning or offering them.

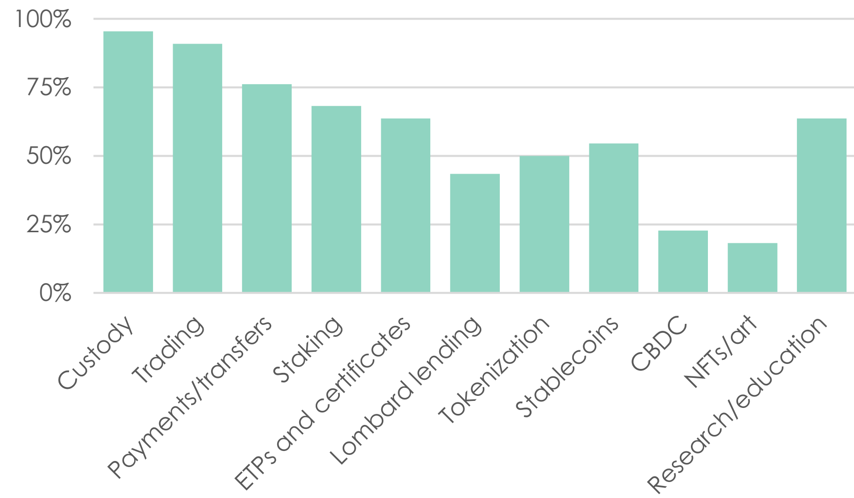

Figure 9: Custody and trading are the core of crypto services

3.2.2 Banks report growing expertise and maturity

With a year of operational experience, banks' self-assessed maturity has increased significantly. In 2025, **more than 52% of institutions with a crypto offering classify themselves as "experts"** (see Figure 10) – a substantial leap from 20% in 2024. This growing confidence reflects the firsthand knowledge gained while navigating the technical, operational, and regulatory demands of this asset class. The industry is learning fast.

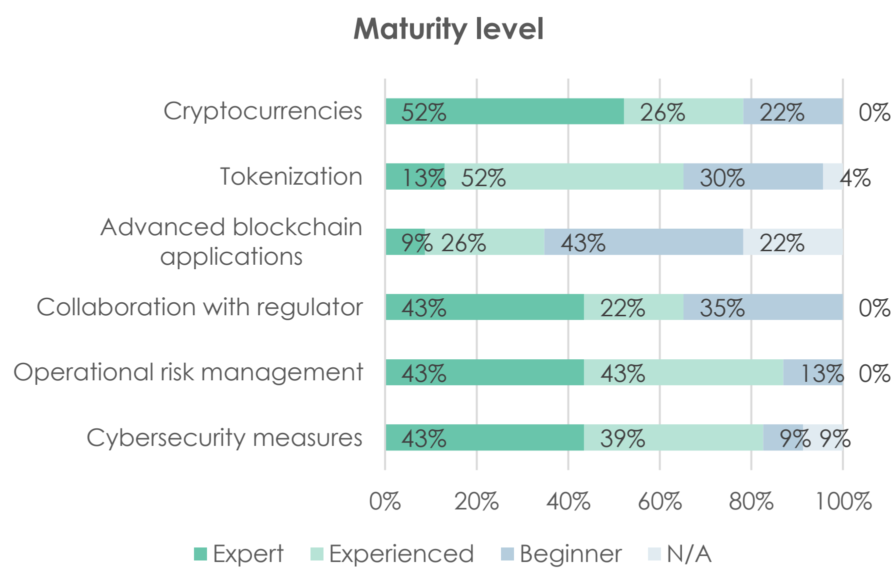

Figure 10: Banks report growing expertise and maturity in crypto operations

3.3 Approaching the hurdles of implementation

As the industry matures, the challenges it faces evolve. The primary obstacles are no longer strategic or conceptual but are now the practical, operational complexities that come with integrating a novel technology into a highly regulated environment.

This is the most significant change from the previous year. In 2024, a "lack of business priority" was the single biggest obstacle to implementation. In 2025, it has been relegated to a secondary concern. The top challenge now is compliance, cited by 33% of active institutions (see Figure 11). This is followed closely by issues related to the integration with current IT systems (22%).

This shift is a clear indicator of maturation. The strategic debate appears to be over. The industry's focus has now turned to the hard work of ensuring that crypto offerings are delivered securely and efficiently, and comply fully with a complex, evolving regulatory framework.

Figure 11: Implementation challenges shift from business priority to compliance

3.4 Conclusion

The role of cryptocurrencies in Swiss banking has undergone a profound transformation. No longer a niche topic for innovators, it has become an established, fast-growing business line for most institutions. With live products, increasing client assets and expanding service menus, the market is demonstrating both breadth and depth. The challenges ahead are no less significant, but they are now those of a maturing industry – focused on regulation, operational excellence and seamless integration rather than on justifying its own existence. The critical adoption barrier has been crossed; the task now is to extend the landscape on the other side.

4 Tokenized assets

Tokenized assets, the digital representation of securities and other financial instruments on distributed ledger technology (DLT), are gaining traction throughout the Swiss banking sector. The 2025 survey results show that tokenization is no longer a conceptual discussion, but a practical component of many institutions' digital asset strategies. With clear regulation and increasing institutional experience, Switzerland continues to position itself at the forefront of this development.

4.1 Services for tokenized assets

4.1.1 Adoption is steady, with a strong pipeline of new offerings

Our findings for tokenized assets reveal critical insights into the market's maturation. While progress is being made, only 25% of participants have launched a tokenized asset offering, with another 32% planning one (see Figure *12*).

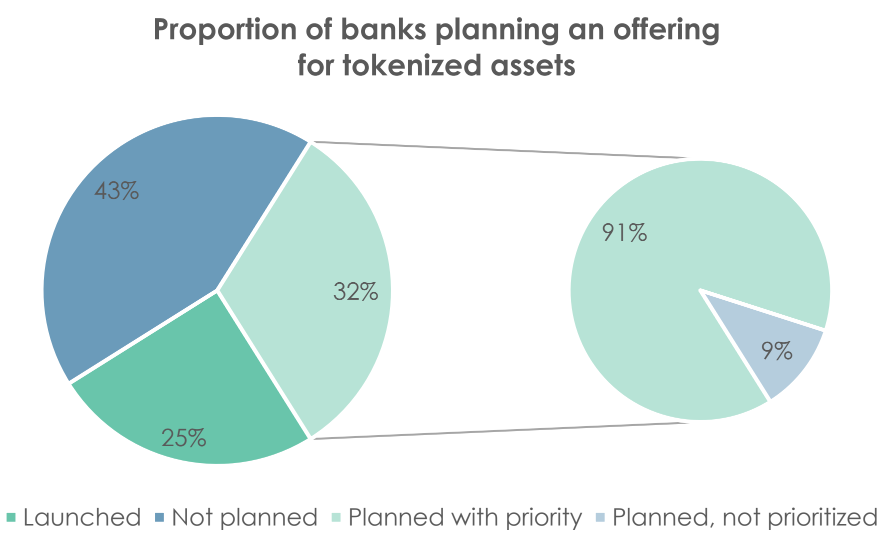

Figure 12: Proportion of banks planning an offering for tokenized assets

At first glance, this adoption rate seems low. However, when viewed through the lens of our expert sample, where 78.5% of participants are *already* 'crypto banks', the current proportion of banks with launched or planned offering for tokenized assets shows clearly that tokenization is not simply a 'next step' after cryptocurrencies.

Even for institutions that have mastered the complexities of crypto custody and trading, tokenized assets present a fundamentally different – and higher – set of hurdles. Our data points directly to the lack of business case and compliance and reputational risks as the key barriers. The path from crypto assets to tokenization is non-trivial, and these challenges are proving formidable even for the industry's most experienced players.

While overall adoption remains measured, tokenization is clearly moving to the heart of Swiss financial-market infrastructure.

4.1.2 Banks are building practical expertise

The self-assessed maturity of banks in tokenization has improved noticeably. **Sixty-five percent of institutions now classify themselves as "experienced" or "expert,"** compared with 28% in 2024 (see Figure 13).

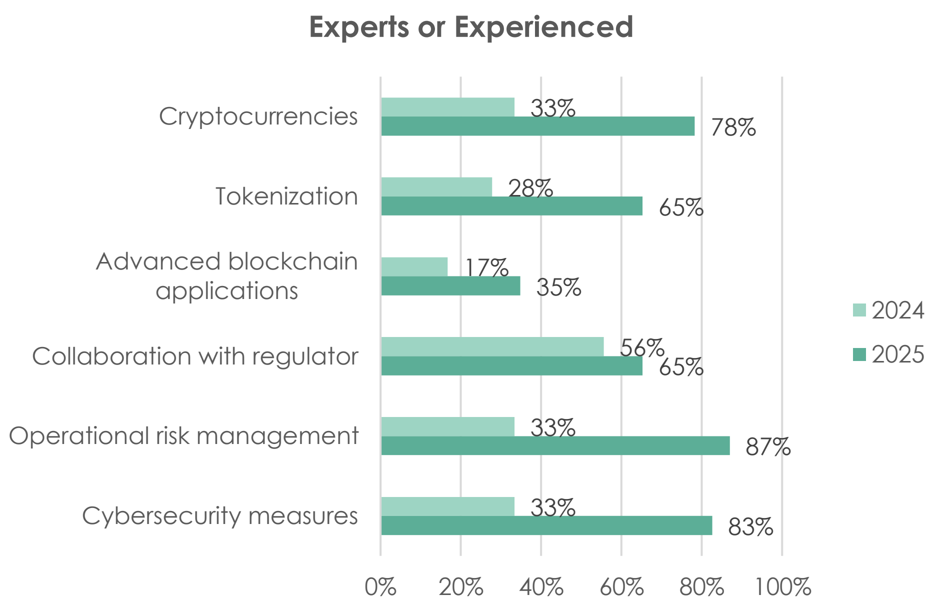

Figure 13: Maturity level

This rise illustrates growing operational readiness. Banks with more than ten FTEs dedicated to blockchain topics report significantly higher maturity, underlining that investment in internal capabilities accelerates progress. Yet the market's overall readiness remains uneven. Institutions with small blockchain teams report limited experience, underlining that the learning curve for tokenization is steeper than for crypto-related activities.

4.2 Obstacles to introducing tokenized assets

4.2.1 Compliance emerges as the central challenge

Compliance and regulatory alignment have become the leading implementation challenge. In 2025, 35% of respondents cite compliance aspects as their primary obstacle, overtaking the lack of business case (53%) that dominated in 2024 (see Figure 14).

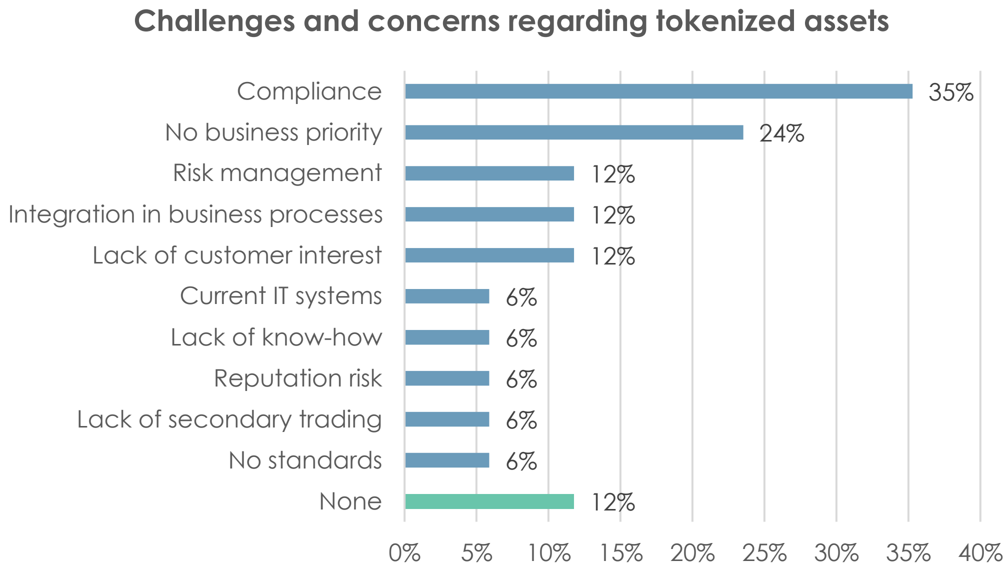

Figure 14: Challenges and concerns regarding tokenized assets

This shift suggests that tokenization has entered a new phase of operational maturity. The focus is no longer on conceptual viability, but on integrating regulated products within existing risk, compliance, and settlement frameworks.

Recent development

Late 2024: The Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA) issued important guidance, including clarifications on the risks of stablecoins and a need for strict anti-money laundering (AML) screening of all addresses. As a result, tokenization activities have generally slowed due to the regulatory uncertainty surrounding AML activities in tokenized assets.

Compliance and regulatory alignment (35%)

Compliance requirements are now the most frequently cited obstacle to implementing tokenized-asset offerings. This reflects the market's progress. Institutions are no longer questioning the relevance of tokenization but are working to ensure that it fits within existing governance, reporting, and risk frameworks. The complexity of translating established compliance and KYC processes into DLT-based environments requires new operational models and technical controls.

Lack of business priority (24%)

For almost a quarter of banks, tokenization is still not a top business priority. Competing transformation projects and cost pressures mean that resources are often allocated to more immediate business areas. However, the share of institutions citing this as a barrier has declined significantly compared to 2024 (53%), indicating that tokenization is gradually moving up the strategic agenda.

Lack of customer interest (12%)

While institutional awareness of tokenization is increasing, demand from end clients remains moderate. The proportion of banks identifying this as a challenge has declined slightly from 16% in 2024 to 12% in 2025, suggesting that awareness and education are improving. However, limited secondary-market availability and the early stage of market infrastructure continue to constrain client engagement.

The recent approval of additional regulated DLT trading venues in Switzerland is expected to improve accessibility and secondary-market opportunities, which should help to strengthen both client interest and participation in the coming years. This pattern mirrors the development observed in cryptocurrencies: once the business case is accepted, the main barriers shift toward regulatory alignment, internal compliance, and system integration. The convergence of challenges across domains points to the need for coordinated regulatory guidance rather than isolated interpretations.

Integration into business processes (12%)

Integrating DLT-based products into existing business and IT processes requires significant effort. Many banks are still harmonizing their internal systems and data flows to support tokenized issuance, settlement, and reconciliation. Aligning these new digital processes with established operating models is essential for scaling tokenization within a regulated banking environment.

No obstacles (12%)

Encouragingly, 12% of banks report that they are not facing any major barriers. This result should be interpreted with caution, as regulatory and integration requirements vary widely depending on the tokenization model.

4.3 Conclusion

Tokenization has entered the practical phase of development in Swiss banking. With 25% of banks already live and another 32% preparing to launch, tokenization is evolving from innovation topic to operational reality. The shift in primary challenges from “business case” to “compliance” reflects this growing maturity.

At the same time, banks are increasingly recognizing the efficiency and infrastructure potential of tokenization, particularly in settlement and post-trade processing. Switzerland’s legal clarity, institutional commitment and market infrastructure create favorable conditions for continued adoption.

5 Advanced applications

Recent development

In March 2025, FINMA approved BX Digital AG as Switzerland's first fully licensed DLT-based trading and settlement system. The platform enables regulated delivery-versus-payment settlement of digital securities within a single DLT infrastructure. The approval marks a key step from pilot projects to operational market infrastructure in the Swiss financial sector.

This section explores whether banks and asset managers are moving beyond tokenized assets toward more advanced blockchain applications – use cases that build on the core functionalities of distributed ledger technology to enhance automation, transparency, and interoperability.

These use cases leverage core blockchain functionalities – decentralization, transparency, cryptographic security, consensus mechanisms, and smart contracts – to improve efficiency, automation, and trust across complex financial processes.

The following chapter outlines selected examples of such advanced use cases and discusses the main factors that are currently limiting their practical adoption in the financial sector.

5.1 Examples of advanced applications

Building on these technological foundations, advanced blockchain applications demonstrate the potential to extend DLT's impact beyond asset creation into process automation, cross-institutional coordination, and real-time data integrity. The following examples highlight both the promise of these innovations and the practical challenges that continue to limit their adoption.

Settlement and post-trade processing

Blockchain enables instant or near-instant settlement of financial instruments, reducing counterparty risk and reconciliation costs. Platforms such as BX Digital demonstrate that regulated, DLT-based delivery-versus-payment systems are now technically and legally viable in Switzerland, marking a transition from pilot projects to productive use.

Trade finance and tokenized receivables

Blockchain can enhance transparency and automation in trade finance by tokenizing receivables and enabling documents to be verified in real time. Yet interoperability between parties and legacy IT systems remains a major obstacle.

Digital identity and KYC

Shared digital-identity frameworks promise more efficient client onboarding and data verification across institutions. However, data-privacy regulation and the lack of standardized frameworks limit cross-bank adoption.

AI-blockchain hybrids for corporate actions

Combining smart contracts with AI-driven data extraction could automate tasks such as dividend processing or shareholder voting. This approach remains experimental but illustrates how intelligent agents might interact with DLT systems in the future.

Tokenization of art and intellectual property

Asset tokenization in art markets and IP licensing showcases blockchain's potential beyond traditional finance, yet adoption remains limited due to valuation, legal enforcement, and market-depth constraints.

5.2 Activities relating to advanced blockchain applications

5.2.1 Priority of advanced blockchain applications is decreasing

Compared with 2024, activity relating to advanced blockchain applications has declined significantly. More than 60% of institutions now report no active projects in this area – up from around 40% last year (see Figure 15). However, this decline does not signal a loss of interest. It reflects a strategic shift of resources toward initiatives that promise clearer regulatory pathways and near-term commercial value – particularly tokenization and DLT-based settlement, as already noted in Chapter 2.1.2.

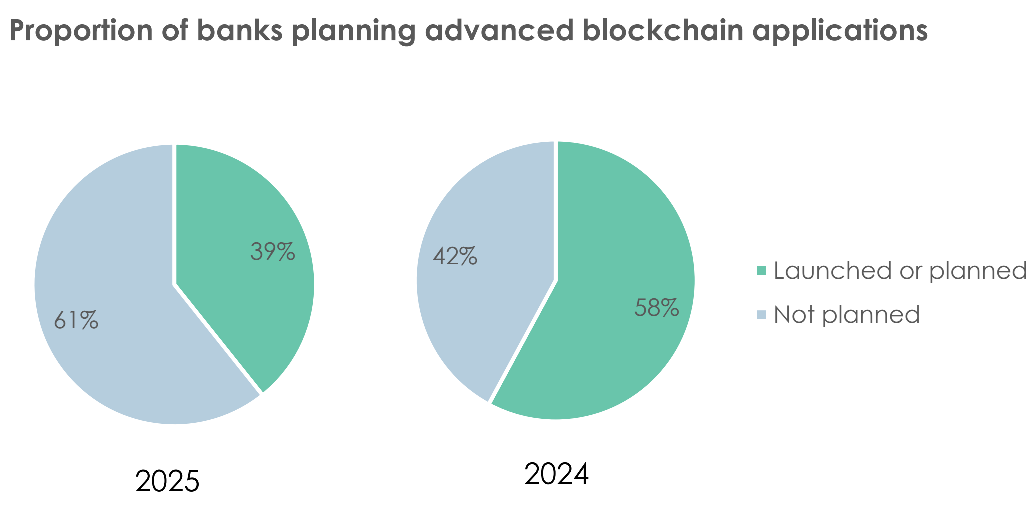

Figure 15: Development of advanced blockchain applications

Institutions with dedicated blockchain teams continue to explore advanced applications, yet most banks have shifted their focus from exploratory R&D activities to implementing proven use cases.

The result is a consolidation phase in which innovation capacity is concentrated in a smaller number of well-resourced institutions, while others wait for clearer business models and standards to emerge (see Figure 16).

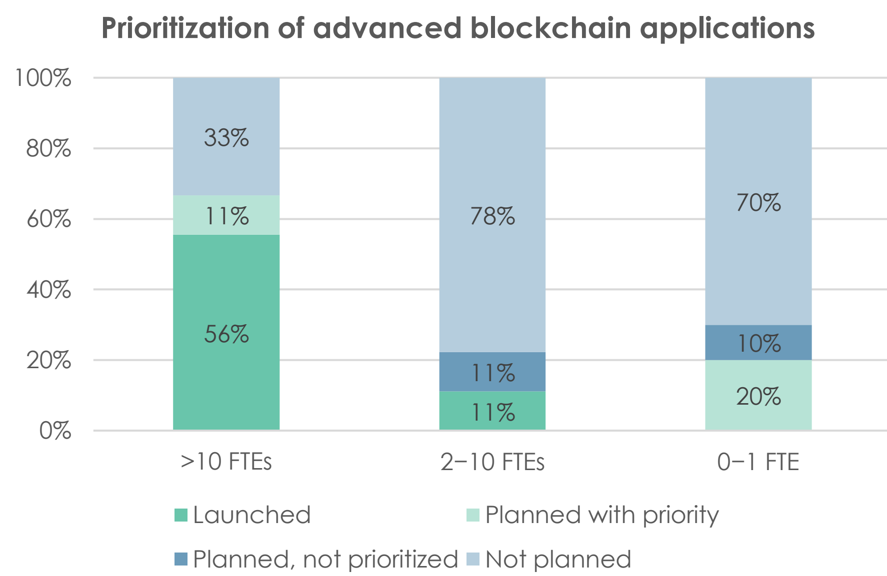

Figure 16: Prioritization of advanced blockchain applications

5.2.2 Use cases for advanced blockchain applications are not yet established

Despite growing technological maturity, no widely adopted business cases for advanced blockchain applications have yet emerged in Swiss banking. The most frequently cited barriers remain a lack of business priority (38%), regulatory and compliance uncertainty (31%), and limited client demand (19%) (see Figure 17).

The results indicate that, while the enabling technology is largely proven, institutional readiness and market incentives are still limited. Advanced blockchain applications will require clearer regulatory frameworks, standardized interfaces, and stronger cross-industry collaboration before scaling becomes viable. Figure 17 provides a summary of these barriers to implementing advanced blockchain applications.

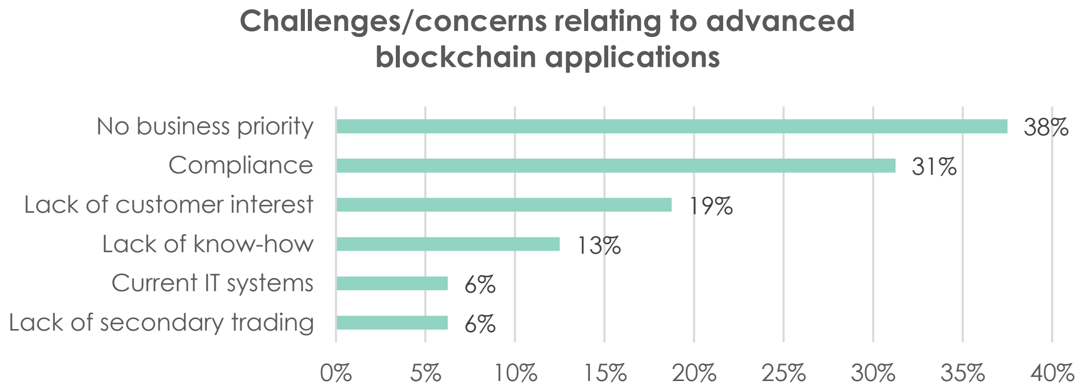

Figure 17: Hurdles regarding advanced blockchain applications

5.3 Conclusion

The decline in advanced-application projects marks a phase of consolidation rather than retreat. Banks are redirecting resources toward tokenization and DLT-based settlement, which offer greater regulatory clarity and business potential.

Advanced blockchain use cases remain on the industry's innovation agenda, but their broader adoption will depend on clearer standards, stronger collaboration, and demonstrable value creation.

6 Stablecoin regulations and market

Stablecoins – and, increasingly, bank-issued deposit tokens – are emerging as the DLT-based settlement layer for digital assets. While both instruments represent Swiss-franc value on distributed-ledger infrastructures, they differ in issuance model and regulatory treatment: stablecoins are typically issued by non-bank entities, whereas deposit tokens are created within the banking system as tokenized customer deposits.

The 2025 survey results reveal strong interest in but also growing concern about Switzerland's pace of progress. Three-quarters (75%) of respondents believe that Switzerland is acting too cautiously and may lose its innovative edge, while 61% cite insufficient regulatory or political support (see Figure 18).

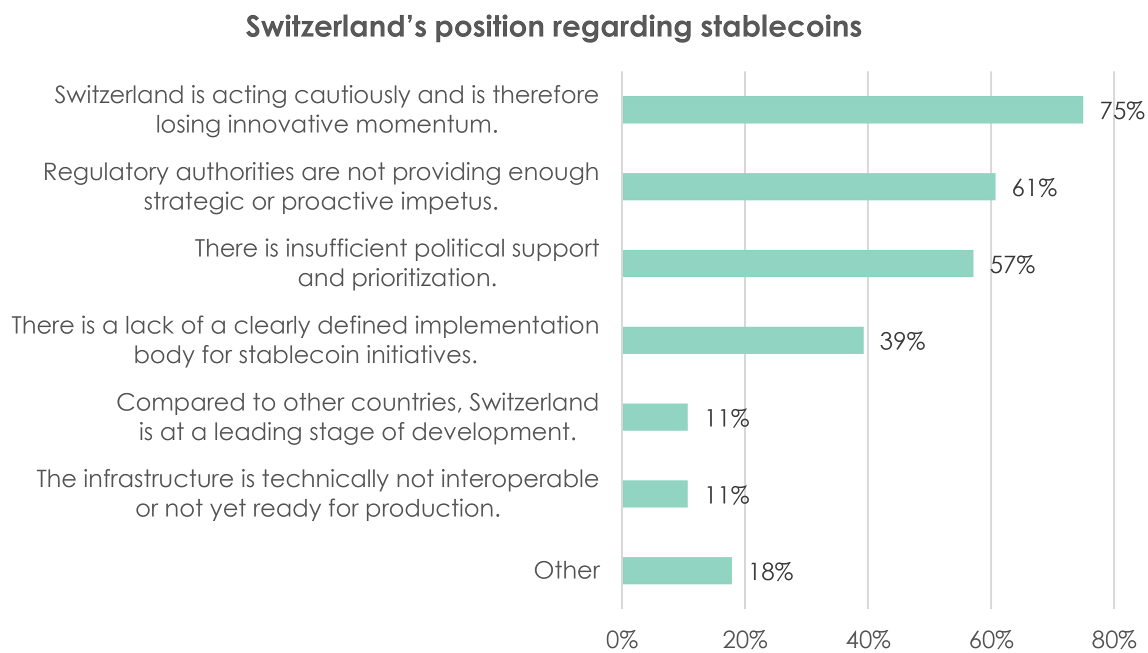

Figure 18: Switzerland is losing innovative momentum

These perceptions mirror a market at a crossroads: banks view DLT-based settlement assets as critical to the next phase of digital-asset infrastructure, yet regulatory uncertainty, limited profitability and the lack of a clear strategic impulse continue to slow development.

6.1 Switzerland’s stablecoin market: regulatory framework, ecosystem, and factors influencing innovation

In July 2024, FINMA published guidance establishing that stablecoin issuers qualify as financial intermediaries under anti-money laundering legislation.[1] Consequently, issuers must fulfill various obligations, including identifying customers, verifying stablecoin holders, and identifying beneficial owners. Stablecoin issuers are required to prevent transfers to any non-identified holders, which means that subsequent acquirers must be identified before they can acquire the stablecoin. These compliance requirements present substantial regulatory and operational barriers for stablecoin issuers in Switzerland, particularly given the associated costs and administrative complexity.

This study reveals that approximately 55% of surveyed parties with a productive or planned crypto offering intend to offer stablecoin services (see also Figure 9 in Chapter 3.2). They prioritize their primary targets as follows:

- settlement mechanisms (65%),
- programmable payments (36%),
- collateral in digital financial markets (35%), and
- and retail applications (14%).

This supply-side interest, however, contrasts sharply with demand-side realities: 68% of respondents perceive a lack of market demand for stablecoins, casting doubt on whether genuine appetite exists among Swiss consumers and businesses (see Figure 19). Despite Switzerland’s implementation of regulatory measures, 64% of study participants identified regulatory clarity as a significant concern.

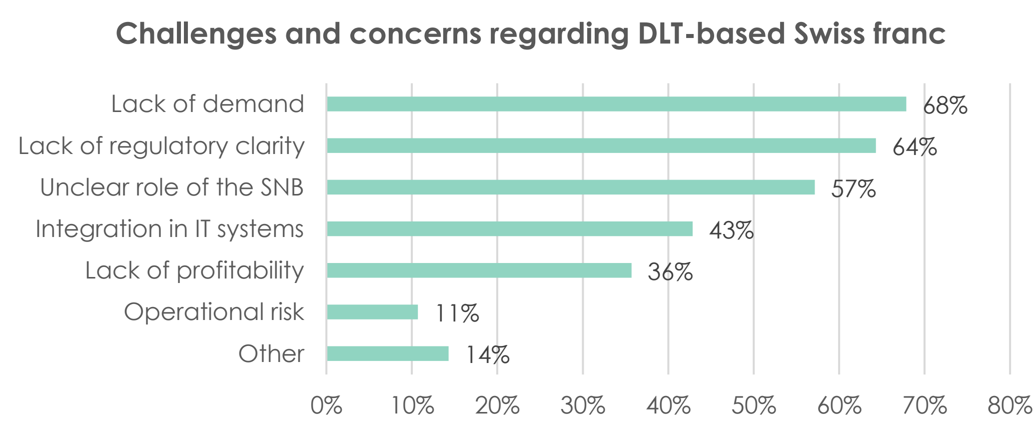

Figure 19: Lack of demand and lack of regulatory clarity: challenges for adoption of the DLT-based Swiss franc

[1]FINMA (2024): Stablecoins: risks and challenges for issuers of stablecoins and banks providing guarantees, https://www.finma.ch/en/~/media/finma/dokumente/dokumentencenter/myfinma/4dokumentation/finma-aufsichtsmitteilungen/20240726-finma-aufsichtsmitteilung-06-2024.pdf?sc_lang=en&hash=03D675C1247EAFAE0C391363A2F18B9A, accessed 14.10.2025.

Recent development

In October 2025, the Federal Council initiated a consultation on new legislation to create clear rules for stablecoins and cryptocurrencies. The proposal introduces two new license categories – 'Payment Instrument Institutions' and 'Crypto Institutions'. This move is designed to establish a dedicated, tiered framework for stablecoin issuers and crypto service providers.

Beyond regulatory hurdles, the financial sustainability of stablecoin operations in Switzerland faces significant constraints. Stablecoin issuers typically rely exclusively on interest income from reserve assets to fund operational expenses. For Swiss franc-backed stablecoins, the persistently low-yield environment characteristic of CHF-denominated assets creates particularly acute profitability constraints. The limited returns on such reserves may prove insufficient to cover substantial operational costs. This revenue challenge, compounded by the regulatory compliance costs outlined above, raises questions about the long-term economic viability of CHF-pegged stablecoin operations.

Recognizing the regulatory challenges, the Swiss State Secretariat for International Finance (SIF) has very recently initiated a legislative revision.[2] Switzerland's revised regulatory framework aims to enhance the competitiveness of its financial center for innovative, technology-driven business models while implementing international standards for stablecoin and cryptocurrency oversight.

Building on its early adoption of fintech regulations, the Federal Council proposes two new authorization categories:

- **Payment token institutions** (replacing the existing FinTech license), which may issue specific stablecoins backed by asset reserves and operate without the previous CHF 100 million deposit cap, with enhanced customer protection through bankruptcy-remote segregation of client funds; and
- **Crypto institutions**, which provide cryptocurrency services under requirements modeled on securities houses but are adapted to the distinct risk profile of digital assets.

These regulatory adaptations respond to evolving international standards and aim to strengthen both market attractiveness and customer protection, particularly through clarified anti-money laundering obligations for stablecoin issuance and conflict-of-interest provisions for crypto service providers.

Overall, the findings suggest that Switzerland's regulatory environment is viewed as credible but conservative, with strong legal foundations but limited momentum towards scalable adoption.

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[2] Eidgenössisches Finanzdepartement EFD (2025): Bundesrat geht voran mit Stablecoins und Kryptos: Vernehmlassung eröffnet, https://www.efd.admin.ch/de/newnsb/x4TMWQ1SWofNoFx7XyHhY, accessed 27.10.2025.

6.2 International stablecoin regulation and comparative assessment of the Swiss framework

The Financial Stability Board (FSB) has issued high-level recommendations establishing baseline principles for stablecoin regulation applicable across jurisdictions.[3] The FSB framework applies a fundamental principle: "same activity, same risk, same regulation." This means that stablecoins must be comprehensively regulated and supervised by the appropriate authorities, particularly those with potential for substantial scale and cross-border reach.

The key recommendations address several critical areas.

1. Firstly, stablecoins must maintain high-quality liquid reserve assets with clear redemption rights at par value.
2. Secondly, issuers need robust governance frameworks with clear accountability lines.
3. Thirdly, authorities must have access to adequate data for regulatory oversight.

The FSB also emphasizes comprehensive risk management covering legal, operational, and cyber security concerns. Full compliance with anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing standards is mandatory. Importantly, the framework calls for effective cross-border cooperation between home and host authorities. It also requires recovery and resolution planning for orderly wind-down procedures.

Systemically significant stablecoin arrangements face heightened supervisory scrutiny due to potential financial stability risks. The FSB has designed these recommendations as a flexible framework that individual jurisdictions can implement according to their specific legal and regulatory contexts while maintaining consistent international standards.

Furthermore, the European Union has adopted the Markets in Crypto Assets Regulation (MiCA), which entered into force for stablecoins on 30 June 2024.[4] It is the world's first comprehensive regulatory framework specifically designed for crypto assets. MiCA distinguishes between two stablecoin categories. Asset-referenced tokens (ARTs) are backed by multiple assets or currencies. These require specific authorization from competent national authorities. E-money tokens (EMTs) are pegged to a single fiat currency and require an e-money institution license. Both categories face strict reserve requirements with mandatory one-to-one backing and segregated assets.

MiCA establishes minimum capital requirements of EUR 350,000, unconditional redemption rights at par value, and prohibition of interest payments on EMTs, whereas this prohibition is not extended to ARTs. Under the MiCA framework, issuers of ARTs and

[3] Financial Stability Board (2023): FSB finalizes global regulatory framework for crypto-asset activities.

[4] Regulation (EU) 2023/1114 on Markets in Crypto-assets (MiCA), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/1114/oj/eng, accessed 14.10.2025.

EMTs are obliged to commission public audits of their reserve holdings on at least an annual basis, while simultaneously maintaining monthly published attestations of their reserve assets via their official websites. MiCA has also created an EU-wide passporting regime that enables authorized issuers to operate in all 27 member states under a single authorization.

Significant stablecoins exceeding EUR 5 million in daily transactions or EUR 1 billion market capitalization fall under direct European Banking Authority (EBA) oversight rather than national supervision. The EBA classifies a token as significant if it meets at least three of seven quantitative and qualitative criteria. These criteria are more complex and include metrics such as the number of holders, transaction volume and value, market capitalization, and the issuer's cross-border activities.

Switzerland's stablecoin regulatory framework aligns with FSB core principles through FINMA's functional approach requiring reserve backing, AML compliance, and redemption rights. However, it diverges significantly from MiCA's prescriptive model. Switzerland maintains flexibility through case-by-case assessment and offers multiple regulatory pathways, including the newly proposed Payment Token Institution category, which removes the previous CHF 100 million deposit cap. This contrasts with MiCA's fixed EUR 350,000 capital requirement and standardized reserve composition rules.

The critical competitive disadvantage lies in market access. MiCA-authorized issuers benefit from EU-wide passporting rights in 27 jurisdictions under single authorization. Swiss-licensed entities must seek separate authorization in each target market and potentially maintain dual compliance to access European customers. While Switzerland's principles-based approach offers innovation advantages and regulatory flexibility, MiCA's harmonized framework provides greater legal certainty and superior market access. This tension suggests that Switzerland's future competitiveness as a crypto-financial hub may depend less on regulatory innovation and more on achieving practical interoperability with dominant international regimes like MiCA.

6.3 Central bank digital currency (CBDC) in Switzerland: Project Helvetia

Alongside private stablecoin development, the Swiss National Bank (SNB) has actively explored wholesale central bank digital currency (CBDC) applications through Project Helvetia, which is a joint experimental initiative between the SNB and the SIX Digital Exchange launched in 2020 to explore the integration of tokenized assets with central bank money settlement.[5] The project aims to investigate both wholesale CBDC options and tokenized commercial bank deposits for Switzerland's evolving digital financial infrastructure. This parallel track demonstrates that Switzerland's digital currency landscape encompasses both private innovation and public sector experimentation.

[5] Schweizerische Nationalbank (2025): Project Helvetia, https://www.snb.ch/en/the-snb/mandates-goals/payment-transactions/projekt_helvetia, accessed 14.10.2025.

Phase 1 of the project was launched in 2020 and explored the integration of tokenized assets with existing Swiss payment systems. The SNB and SIX Digital Exchange successfully tested how tokenized asset transactions could be settled using today's Swiss Interbank Clearing (SIC) system, proving interoperability between traditional and DLT-based infrastructures without requiring a CBDC.

Phase 2, initiated in 2021, tested the issuance of a tokenized wholesale CBDC (digital Swiss franc) directly on a distributed ledger. The SNB demonstrated it could settle tokenized asset transactions using central bank money native to the DLT platform, demonstrating the technical feasibility of integrating CBDCs into financial market infrastructures for real-time delivery-versus-payment settlement. This phase was conducted in collaboration with the BIS Innovation Hub.

In 2024, the third phase of the project began shifting the focus from SNB-issued CBDC to third-party deposit tokens issued by commercial banks. Banks issue tokenized deposits backed by reserves at the SNB, enabling the settlement of tokenized securities while preserving the two-tier banking system. This approach avoids SNB competing with commercial banks and maintains existing monetary policy transmission mechanisms. This phase is still in development and is currently being tested. Looking ahead, the focus will be on establishing the legal and regulatory framework for deposit tokens in Swiss law, developing operational standards for interbank settlement, and potentially expanding to cross-border settlement experiments with other central banks.

Switzerland's divergent paths for private stablecoins and public CBDCs reveal a pragmatic dual strategy: robust regulatory frameworks enabling private innovation alongside reserved experimentation in sovereign digital currency.

7 Conclusion and outlook

The findings of the 2025 Blockchain Pulse Survey are clear: the era of exploration is over. The Swiss financial industry has moved decisively from strategic curiosity to operational execution. Conviction is firm, formal strategies are the norm, and the debate has shifted from ‘if’ to ‘how.’

This new phase of maturation presents distinct, parallel challenges for industry leaders and policymakers.

For banking leaders: master the operational challenge

The primary hurdle for banks is no longer a “lack of business priority” but the complex, practical work of integration. The focus must now be on execution: deploying resources to solve the critical compliance, operational risk, and IT integration challenges required to deliver secure, scalable, and regulated digital asset offerings.

For regulators and policymakers: act on the strategic challenge

The strategic challenge for Switzerland is now external. This report’s starkest warning is that 75% of industry leaders believe Switzerland is “acting too cautiously” and risks losing its innovative momentum. The EU’s MiCA framework offers a clear, passportable, and competitive alternative that is set to attract capital and stimulate innovation. An urgent, clearly structured, and proactive regulatory framework for a DLT-based Swiss franc is no longer merely a ‘nice to have’ – it is a critical issue of national competitive advantage.

The industry has passed its first point of no return. The work of the coming years will be less about discovery and more about building: laying the permanent, operational, and regulatory foundations for the next generation of finance.

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Since 2017, vision& has been developing products, managing projects and building companies in the field of blockchain, digital assets and DLT financial market infrastructures. vision& accompanies clients from the business idea to the implementation of a strategy, from regulatory and technical to economic challenges. We work as partners with our clients, offer consulting services, or manage projects in an entrepreneurial manner.

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