

swissuniversities

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Plea for a re-association of Switzerland to the Erasmus+ programme

swissuniversities takes the launch of the EU's Erasmus+ programme for the period 2021-2027 as an opportunity to once again call for Switzerland to be re-associated as soon as possible. The [plea](#), published in March 2017, outlined the importance of the Erasmus+-programme for Swiss higher education institutions and presented scenarios how the persistent cooperation with the European higher education landscape could become more difficult as a consequence of Non-association.

Almost four years later, developments show that the cooperation of Swiss institutions of higher education with countries of the European Union is being made considerably more difficult by the lack of access to Erasmus+. The Swiss alternative solution, SEMP, disadvantages Swiss institutions in several respects: They lose visibility and influence at the European level, since they are not included in the lists of possible mobility destinations and cannot actively shape the development of the Erasmus+ programme. In addition, they do not have access to instruments that promote mobility and to the new databases and tools created for this purpose. With the ongoing digitalisation of European mobility, Switzerland needs this access, otherwise the administrative hurdles for both Swiss and European institutions will continue to grow, and Swiss institutions will lose access sooner than later. In recent years, Switzerland has recorded a stagnation in the development of mobility at university level and even a decline for universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education. This is particularly evident in relation to comparable Erasmus+ countries, such as Austria.¹

The Erasmus+ programme is also taking a further step away from a pure mobility programme with the upcoming 2021-2027 period and offers a wide range of instruments to strengthen the strategic networking of European higher education institutions, in particular in priority areas such as green mobility, digitalisation or inclusion. Switzerland must have the opportunity to participate in these large-scale projects.² As a non-associated partner, cooperation projects with Swiss institutions currently represent a risk, as projects can be rejected if the added value of Switzerland's participation is not convincingly demonstrated. Furthermore, Swiss institutions are still excluded from project management. Accordingly, the development of strategic cooperation projects in the period 2014- 2020 clearly shows a significant difference to other comparable countries.³

¹ The mobility agency Movetia has conducted a detailed [analysis of the development of mobility and cooperation from 2014 to 2020](#).

² [Programme Guidelines Erasmus+ 2021-2027](#)

³ Erasmus+-Programme: [Opportunities for Higher Education](#)

In view of the importance of mobility for Swiss higher education, the inadequacies of the transitional solution and the strategic cooperation projects included in the Erasmus+ programme, swissuniversities once again calls for the immediate resumption of negotiations with the European Commission. The full association with the Erasmus+ programme is essential for the cooperation in the European higher education landscape and cannot be adequately replaced by a Swiss alternative solution. swissuniversities is aware that full association in 2021-27 will entail additional costs compared to the current solution. swissuniversities is convinced, however, that the additional benefits of full association for the Swiss higher education sector are far greater and therefore justified. However, it would not be in the interests of swissuniversities if the costs of a re-association of Switzerland were to be borne by the institutions or would lead to cuts in the ERI budget.