



European Students' Union (ESU)

Fighting for students' rights since 1982

www.esu-online.org

Mundo-Madou

Avenue des Arts 7/8, 1210 Bruxelles



Swiss Student Union (VSS-UNES-USU)

<http://www.vss-unes.ch/>

Monbijoustrasse 30,

3011 Bern, Switzerland

SOLIDARITY STATEMENT ON THE RE-ASSOCIATION OF SWITZERLAND TO THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

European Students' Union (ESU) is an umbrella organization of 45 National Students' Unions representing more than 20 million students across Europe. Together with the Swiss Student Union (VSS-UNES-USU), an independent national students' union of Switzerland, which represents student associations of universities, universities of applied sciences, pedagogical universities and Swiss federal institutes of technology on a national level, we actively aim and work towards proactive support and promotion of educational, professional and personal development, equal opportunities and access, inclusion, diversity and fairness across the Higher Education community.

Recent 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+.

Switzerland and the European Union have been in negotiations to sign a new Institutional Framework Agreement (InstA) to govern economic relations between the two actors. However, since the talks to establish the agreement were abandoned on 26 May 2021, negotiations relative to the Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe programs have been made more precarious. It should be emphasised that neither collaboration in terms of education nor that concerning

research are legally bound to the Framework Agreement, which deals with the accession of Switzerland to the Single Market¹.

It remains unclear whether and when the Swiss government can begin negotiations for the full association to the Erasmus+ programme, despite the explicit request by the Swiss Parliament to finance Switzerland's contribution to the programme². Current replacement programmes such as the Swiss-European Mobility Programme (SEMP) have been implemented to ensure mobility opportunities to Swiss students. Nevertheless, they do not offer a sustainable compensation to the Erasmus+ programme. SEMP failed in matching the growth rate of the previous Erasmus period: the growth level of outgoing student mobility has been of a mere 5%, compared to the previous 9% of the period 2011-2013 (when Switzerland was part of the Erasmus) and to a general average European growth of 8% (period 2014-2017). It has been estimated that, if Switzerland would have been in Erasmus, the outgoing student mobility figures would most likely have been 13% higher today³.

Taking this into account, **the European Students' Union and the Swiss Union of Students urge the Swiss government and the European Commission to start negotiating the re-association of Switzerland to Erasmus+ programme.** The launch and the current process of the EU's Erasmus+ programme for the period 2021-2027, presents an opportunity to once again call for Switzerland to be re-associated as soon as possible.

¹ https://www.fdfa.admin.ch/dam/europa/fr/documents/abkommen/Acccord-inst-Projet-de-texte_fr.pdf and https://www.fdfa.admin.ch/dam/europa/en/documents/abkommen/InstA-Wichtigste-in-Kuerze_en.pdf

² <https://www.parlament.ch/fr/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20213975>

³ https://www.movetia.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Bereich_4/Praxis_Wissen/Wissen/Movetia_Cahier_Erasmus_Higher_Education_200622.pdf