

European students want Switzerland to be re-associated with Erasmus+

The European Students' Union and VSS-UNES-USU urge the Swiss government and the European Commission to constructively work on a common solution for the reassociation of the country to Erasmus+.

Erasmus+ enables young people, students, researchers, professionals, apprentices, and volunteers alike to benefit from fruitful exchange activities that develop their competencies and enable better cultural understanding. Erasmus+ offers crucial formal and non-formal educational experiences benefiting the whole of Europe.

As a student organisation, we could not overestimate the importance of the Erasmus+ programme. It increases our employability post-graduation, and it boosts our foreign language proficiency and our self-confidence¹. It allows us to **engage** in meaningful exchange activities, learn from each other, **connect** and create a bond beyond national borders.

Erasmus+ strengthens our identity as Europeans and gathers our generation around our shared European values. It enables stakeholders connected to education institutions to become responsible, **empowered** citizens of the entire European continent. It promotes active citizenship and helps to enhance participation in democratic life within European societies.

The association of Switzerland to the Erasmus+ programme further represents an extension of opportunities for young Europeans. Swiss institutions offer a diversified range of learning and cultural experiences for the European youth. In the current situation, the lack of a unified structure of access to these institutions impairs Europeans as well. Switzerland has a large number of institutions committed and motivated to create new

¹ Allinson K., Gabriels W.,(2021). Maybe it will be different abroad; student and staff perspectives on diversity and inclusion in student exchanges. SIEM Research Report, siem-project.eu

partnerships. This is why we advocate for the re-association of Switzerland to the Erasmus+ program as the only way through which meaningful large-scale partnerships can be built. . The “Siww-European Mobility Programme (SEMP)” is not enough². The current lack of access to the Erasmus+ programme puts both European and Swiss young people at a disadvantage, especially in regards to the financial aid available for mobility.

The Swiss National Youth Council (SNYC), Erasmus Students Network (ESN) Switzerland, Intermundo and VSS-UNES-USU are four organisations representing youth interests on the national level and advocating for the opportunities of young people in Switzerland. Since 2014, all have been actively amplifying youth voices and promoting re-association to the Erasmus+ programme which fosters mobility as well as learning and working opportunities across Europe.

The lack of participation of Switzerland has had a negative impact on the equal opportunities of young people in Switzerland compared to their European peers. Numbers have shown that between 2014 and 2020, Switzerland was unable to participate in many projects: as a comparison point Austria, which is comparable in size, has participated in 11 times more projects³.

It is crucial to promote mobility between Europe and the rest of the world without forgetting the immediate neighbourhood: that is why establishing a framework of mobility cooperation Switzerland is paramount, and that needs to be decoupled from non-related political negotiations: **students cannot be used as bargaining chips.**

Taking this into consideration, the European Students' Union expresses its support towards the re-association of Switzerland in the Erasmus+ programme and asks Swiss and European authorities the following:

- Urges the Swiss government and the European Commission to re-launch the negotiations and find practical solutions to include Switzerland as a full-member of

² European Students' Union. (2021, 21st October). Solidarity Statement on the re-association of Switzerland to the Erasmus+ Programme – European Students' Union. European Students' Union.

<https://esu-online.org/policies/solidarity-statement-on-the-re-association-of-switzerland-to-the-erasmus-programme/>

³<https://www.movetia.ch/en/news-events/erasmus-cooperation-switzerland-is-lagging-behind>

the Erasmus+ programme, while decoupling from non-related discussions such as the InstA agreement;

- Urges the Swiss government and the European Commission to treat the institutional issues and the Erasmus+ mobility programme separately, in order to safeguard the students' interests and a strong european education sector.