



EU programmes

Background

The EU provides funding for a series of programmes in research, innovation, education, vocational education and training, youth, sport, culture and several other areas. Non-EU member states such as Switzerland can also take part in these programmes under certain conditions.

After negotiations on an institutional agreement (InstA) reached a deadlock in 2021, Switzerland was denied associated country status in major cooperation programmes in the areas of education, research and innovation (2021–2027 Horizon package and Erasmus+). Now Switzerland may once again become a fully associated country for these EU programmes.

About the EUPA

The EU Programmes Agreement (EUPA) forms the legal basis for Switzerland's participation in EU programmes. It currently covers participation in Horizon Europe, the Euratom programme, the ITER research infrastructure and the Digital Europe Programme (referred to collectively as the Horizon 2021–2027 package), as well as Erasmus+ and EU4Health. The EUPA also paves the way for potential future participation in other EU programmes. With each new programme generation, Switzerland is free to decide which of the programmes open to third countries it wishes to join.

The EUPA is comprised of two parts: the main body of the agreement contains provisions applicable to all EU programmes for which Switzerland is eligible; then there are the protocols to the agreement, which contain specific provisions applicable to individual programmes. While the main body of the agreement is not subject to an expiry date, the same does not hold true of the protocols. As in the past, each new programme generation requires renegotiation of the protocols. This may result in the addition of new protocols or in the non-renewal of protocols that are expired.

Implementation in Switzerland

The EUPA will only come into effect following ratification of the Switzerland-EU package. However, it may already be provisionally applied once it has been signed. This will enable Swiss association in the Horizon 2021-2027 package to be applied retroactively from 1 January 2025 (exception ITER: from 2026) and Erasmus+ from 2027. Swiss participation in the EU4Health programme will be possible as soon as the bilateral health agreement comes into effect as part of the Switzerland-EU package

Researchers and innovators in Switzerland have had access to nearly all calls for proposals relating to Horizon Europe, the Euratom programme and the Digital Europe Programme since 1 January 2025 under the transitional arrangement. In case of successful evaluation, in order for their share of the project costs to be covered by the European Commission, a retroactive association as of 1 January 2025 is however necessary. To ensure this, EUPA is expected to be signed in November 2025. Once this has been done, Switzerland will transfer its mandatory contribution to the EU to enable participation in the 2025 programme year.

Importance for Switzerland

EU funding programmes are among the world's most prestigious programmes for education, research and innovation. Switzerland's participation in EU research and innovation programmes has a long tradition and for many decades the country has played an instrumental role in strengthening Europe's position in research and innovation. Researchers and innovators in Switzerland have a strong track record in securing funding from EU programmes. Moreover, cooperation and coordination through EU education programmes has long formed the basis for Switzerland's funding policy in the area of mobility and cooperation in education. The successful outcome of negotiations with the EU means that Switzerland can now pursue and maintain this cooperation. This will benefit Switzerland directly as a location for education and research, and indirectly as a business location.