



EU programmes

What are EU programmes?

The EU has funding programmes for research, innovation, education, vocational education and training, youth, sport, culture and other fields. Non-EU member states like Switzerland can take part in these programmes under certain conditions.

Since the institutional agreement (InstA) negotiations were ended in 2021, Switzerland has been denied association to key cooperation programmes in education, research and innovation (ERI) such as the Horizon package and Erasmus+ 2021–27. Switzerland is now to regain full association status with these EU programmes.

Outcome of the negotiations

The outcome of the negotiations provides for a legal framework for Switzerland's association to the EU programmes for education, research and innovation. The aim is to strengthen cooperation with the EU in these areas in the long term. Specifically, the agreement between Switzerland and the EU covers participation in Digital Europe, Horizon Europe, Euratom, the ITER research infrastructure (these four programmes are collectively referred to as the 2021–27 Horizon package), Erasmus+ and EU4Health. The agreement also lays the foundation for possible future participation in other EU programmes, for example in the areas of culture and space.

The agreement on Switzerland's participation in EU programmes will take effect when it is ratified as part of the overall package. With the substantive conclusion of the negotiations, the European Commission has fully activated the transitional arrangement as of 1 January 2025. This allows research and innovation actors in Switzerland to participate in almost all calls for proposals in the 2025 programme year of Horizon Europe and the Euratom programme. Switzerland's participation in calls for proposals in areas considered strategic by the EU (e.g. quantum technology and space) will be the subject of further talks with the EU. With a few exceptions, researchers in Switzerland also have the opportunity to participate in the calls for proposals of the Digital Europe programme. As the agreement has been signed, it can be applied provisionally in this area, meaning Switzerland can regain association to the Horizon package from 2025 and to ITER from 2026.

Thanks to the agreement, association to Erasmus+ is also possible. The Federal Council is aiming for Swiss participation from 1 January 2027, for which it must apply to Parliament for the necessary funding. Until then, the preparatory work required for association will be carried out at national level and the current Swiss solution for promoting international mobility and cooperation in education will remain in place.

The negotiation objectives have thereby been achieved.

Importance for Switzerland

The EU funding programmes are among the world's top education, research and innovation programmes. Swiss participation in EU programmes for research and innovation has a long tradition, involving decades of key contributions towards strengthening Europe as a location for research and innovation. Researchers and innovators in Switzerland have regularly met with success when applying for grants from these programmes. Regarding mobility and cooperation in education, Switzerland's funding policies are shaped by long-standing cooperation and coordination with the EU education programmes. This cooperation is now secured and can be continued thanks to the outcome of the negotiations. Switzerland benefits from this directly as a centre of education and research and indirectly as a business location.