

The time is ripe to bring Switzerland back to the Erasmus programme

ESN and ESN Switzerland call for a swift re-association of Switzerland to Erasmus

The Erasmus Student Network expresses its staunch support for a swift association of Switzerland with the Erasmus programme, joining the calls made by the [Academic Cooperation Association](#), the [European Association of Universities](#) and the [European Students' Union](#).

ESN stresses the importance of disconnecting the negotiations on Switzerland's participation in the programme with the broader EU-CH political negotiations. The broad consensus among Higher Education Institutions and student organisations clearly show that students who want to study abroad for their personal and career development should not be used as political chess figures in the negotiations. ESN urges both parties to maximise their efforts and look for a successful compromise that will lead to Switzerland rejoining the programme as soon as possible.

As the main organisation supporting mobile students in Switzerland and Europe at large, ESN and its Member Organisation ESN Switzerland have long advocated for the reassociation of Switzerland to the programme. In September 2020, a [petition](#) that gathered more than 10 000 signatures asking for rejoining Erasmus+ was submitted by ESN Switzerland, together with the Swiss Student Union and the National Youth Council, to the Swiss Government. The campaigns surrounding this petition garnered strong support from various national and international stakeholders and resulted in the topic being brought forward on a political level. Through the work of our local associations in Switzerland, we have continued providing support to all mobile students participating in the Swiss mobility programme, and we are committed to continue doing so. However, the reduction in the growth of participation in mobility since Switzerland left the programme in 2014, reported by [Movetia](#), shows that there is no substitute for transnational collaboration in the field of learning mobility. A good illustration of the unrealised

potential for mobility and exchanges comes from the comparison with Austria, which with a similar student population, achieved 26% more mobility activities as part of Erasmus+ than Switzerland from [2016](#).

Besides the famous Higher Education exchanges, Erasmus would bring a number of opportunities for all the actors involved in Education and Training, from school education to adult learning. Among others, cooperation projects can help to make education more international across sectors and create lasting change in organisations and local communities, and youth projects such as youth exchanges can foster civic engagement and intercultural dialogue among young people.

Erasmus should aim at being the world's most relevant, inclusive and impactful learning mobility programme. In order to achieve this goal, bringing on board long-standing partners with excellent Higher Education systems and close people to people links to young EU citizens is key. The societal goals of Erasmus should be put first rather than political considerations. Both Switzerland and the EU will benefit enormously from a re-association to the programme, with the number of students, staff and cooperation projects increasing substantially and the quality of those initiatives also being reinforced.

The Erasmus Student Network and its member ESN Switzerland have long been advocating for this re-association, and we regret the fact that the negotiations have been stalled from both sides. The strong support by all civil society actors shows this should become a priority for both parties. It is now up to the Swiss Government and the European Commission to break this political deadlock and agree on an association process and interim measures that bring Switzerland back to the programme as soon as possible.