



# Switzerland and Erasmus+

Position paper

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October 14, 2019

Erasmus+ is the EU programme to promote academic and vocational education, youth engagement and sport in Europe. It has been adopted for the period from 2014 to 2020, its successor being discussed. The IDEALiStiC 2019 in Aachen held a workshop on the topic, discussing the current situation and its future.

All 28 EU States took part in the predecessors of Erasmus+, as well as some additional European states, bringing great effects on the individual participants and the countries. Not only is the mobility of individuals within Europe improved, it also helped building joint degrees and transnational partnerships. Participating countries support each other in the education sector and improve international recognition of skills. Erasmus+ took an important step forward from its predecessors in also allowing non-European states to join this international programme.

Although we approve of Erasmus+ working beyond European borders we do hope that we can include even more European countries as well. Switzerland for example does not take part in the programme, having only been allowed to participate indirectly until 2011. Right now, Universities in Switzerland have to make bilateral contracts with all individual universities to offer something similar to the Erasmus+ experience. With ETH Zurich as a member of the IDEA League it should be a goal for the IDEA League and for Europe to include Switzerland in Erasmus+ again.

Thanks to the Swiss European Mobility Programme (SEMP), the experience of doing an exchange from ETH Zurich to universities in Europe has not changed much. Due to efforts at the universities all over Europe, neither has the experience of doing an exchange at ETH Zurich. Students doing an exchange within the SEMP are treated very similar to Erasmus exchange students. This is not the case for all universities in Switzerland. Still, because Switzerland is not a part of Erasmus+, Swiss students cannot benefit from some of the other aspects of Erasmus+. Since ETH Zurich is one of the leading universities in Europe, it is particularly attractive for European students to go on exchange there. This should be a reason for Switzerland to try to renegotiate a participation.

On top of that, ever since the exclusion of Switzerland from Erasmus+, the workload on both Switzerland and the receiving universities' side has increased substantially. In order to continue the cooperation between Swiss and EU universities, bilateral contracts have been negotiated. These contracts usually are based on the old Erasmus+ project, demanding to renew agreements when the Erasmus+ successor program will start in 2021 depending on Switzerland's decision to join it. It's still not clear if every contract can be renewed, as the University of Zurich alone has formed 400 contracts. If there is a lack of interest on either side to go through the legal process of renegotiating these contracts, Switzerland might lose the opportunities their students have right now. The only option to ensure good conditions for their students for Switzerland is to participate in the new Erasmus+.

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Ultimately Erasmus exemplifies a milestone of European collaboration enabling young, ambitious citizens to engage in international exchange. Although Switzerland was never part of the European Union, it shares the European values and culture. Building on this common understanding and the strengths of multilateralism, reintegrating Switzerland into Erasmus is a necessary step towards a sustainable solution.