



EUA Statement of support for the Swiss ‘Appeal for an Open European Higher Education Area’

As the most comprehensive and representative body of European universities it is the core mission of EUA to support the development of a coherent European Higher Education and Research Area. All Swiss universities are longstanding, committed members of our association. It is for these reasons that EUA underlines the importance of an open European Higher Education Area and Research Area based upon cooperation and mutual learning and allowing the mobility of students, staff and researchers. EUA expresses its concern about the developments that have recently led to the exclusion of Swiss universities, their researchers, teachers and students from full participation in Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020, affecting particularly applicants for the upcoming ERC deadline.

This decision follows on from the yes-vote on the federal popular initiative “mass immigration” from 9 February 2014. The text was adopted by 50.30% of votes cast and has therefore called into question the free movement of persons between the Swiss Confederation and the European Union, which will be replaced by a quota system. In response, on 26 February, the European Commission announced that Switzerland will no longer be able to participate on an equal footing with Member States in Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+, as in the past, but will be considered as a ‘third country’¹.

Swiss organisations active in higher education and research, including university and student associations, have launched an appeal and online petition for an “open European Higher Education Area”. The appeal “Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020: not without Switzerland” states that: “Switzerland’s affiliation with the European higher education area is threatened in consequence of the yes-vote” and that “the signers of this appeal call upon decision-makers in Europe and Switzerland to enable Switzerland’s participation in these important programmes, and voice their commitment to an open European and international higher education area”.

EUA strongly supports this position, underlining that the current situation is not only harmful to Swiss academics, researchers and students but also to their colleagues and partners in the European Union. While the European Commission’s action is a direct result of Switzerland’s own decision to isolate itself, and thus its brightest young minds, from exchange with their peers and partners in other parts of Europe, it is the responsibility of the European academic community as a whole to emphasise the importance of maintaining such exchanges and scientific collaboration given their importance for Europe and for all parties concerned.

In conclusion EUA emphasises its support for the Swiss scientific community, its teachers, researchers and students and for open European Higher Education and Research Areas. EUA

¹ Horizon 2020: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/h2020-hi-swiss-part_en.pdf

Erasmus+ : http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm

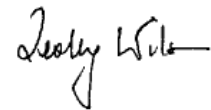
sincerely hopes that its members will continue to cooperate with their Swiss partners and further promote mutual learning through the mobility of students, staff and researchers.

EUA calls on those responsible both within the Swiss Confederation and the European Union to make every effort to enable further Swiss participation in all the European higher education and research programmes, including giving due consideration to alternative funding modalities, in the interests of the development of a truly European knowledge society. The European Higher Education and Research Areas will only become a reality if all the actors, universities, governments and European institutions are fully committed to the fundamental principles which enable the building of Europe.

More information on the appeal is available at: <http://www.not-without-switzerland.org/en/>

Professor Maria Helena Nazaré

Lesley Wilson

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maria Helena Nazaré'.A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lesley Wilson'.

EUA President

EUA Secretary General

Brussels, 17 March 2014