

## **The bilateral agreements III support Swiss research**

The Swiss National Science Foundation supports the bilateral agreements III. For the future of Swiss science, they strengthen Switzerland's leading position in research and innovation. The bilateral agreements III offer stable conditions for Swiss research and innovation as well as enhanced access to EU research, innovation and education programmes. The package represents an opportunity to stabilise and develop the bilateral relations with the European Union, which is especially relevant in a world with increasing global challenges and political instability.

### **Switzerland's position as a centre for research relies on the bilateral agreements with the EU**

For nearly 25 years, the bilateral approach between Switzerland and the European Union has substantially contributed to Switzerland's success in research. In 2021, negotiations on the institutional agreement stopped abruptly, resulting in the partial exclusion of Switzerland from Horizon Europe, the world's largest research and innovation programme, Euratom, Digital Europe and ITER. As a result of limited access to Horizon Europe and other R&I programmes, Switzerland not only lost individual projects but also access to highly competitive, pan-European funding for research (e.g. ERC and MSCA grants or collaborative projects in strategic areas). In addition, exclusion from the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures reduced Switzerland's strategic presence in the research landscape and took away its means of shaping the European research landscape in the field of major infrastructures [[scienceindustries - The knowledge nation of Switzerland needs the EU research programmes](#)].

The Federal Council consequently decided to set up transitional and complementary measures to maintain Switzerland's competitiveness in research and innovation. However, these measures were unable to offset the negative consequences of Switzerland's exclusion from Horizon Europe and other R&I programmes as they could not provide the Europe-wide competitiveness and reputation of the Horizon Europe funding instruments. In the long term, the exclusion of Switzerland from Horizon Europe would lead to an isolation of the Swiss research community and an erosion of its partnerships, networks and international attractiveness for talent across Europe and beyond.

### **The bilateral agreements III provide access to strategic EU programmes for scientific success**

The bilateral agreements III address this urgent issue. Through a package approach, they address key sectors, including the participation of Switzerland in EU research, innovation and education programmes, and represent a key opportunity to reaffirm Switzerland's position in international science and innovation. The stable relations and legal certainty provided by the bilateral agreements III bring tangible scientific benefits for Switzerland [[Bilateral III: An important milestone is reached | economiesuisse](#)]. They also help rebuild trust, stabilise and strengthen Swiss-EU relations, demonstrating Switzerland's commitment to constructive engagement with the EU.

Before the signature of the bilateral agreements III, Switzerland had no legal right to participate in European R&I programmes. Access depended on the good will of the EU and could be withdrawn at any time (e.g. 2014-2017 and 2021-2024). The EU Programmes Agreement (EUPA), which are part of the bilateral agreements III package, brings stability to the Swiss research community by establishing the principle of “seamless continuity of the cooperation” (EUPA Art.3.2). The EUPA makes the participation of Switzerland in R&I programmes conditional on the free movement of persons and the non-discrimination of EU citizens (Art. 5). The breach of these principles could lead to a suspension of the EUPA (Art. 19) and the exclusion of Switzerland from the European R&I programmes.

With full access to international research programmes, such as Horizon Europe and its successor, the upcoming FP10, researchers based in Switzerland will benefit from crucial access to strategic projects, cross-cutting facilities as well as other initiatives and networks. It will provide the long-term stability, predictability and resilience needed for long-lasting scientific success. Furthermore, it enables the possibility of leading and coordinating projects and networks, thereby increasing Switzerland's visibility and leadership in research globally.

The bilateral agreements III will also help to attract talent to Swiss universities and prevent brain drain, thereby sustaining a dynamic scientific community. Reassociation to the Erasmus programme supports the internationalisation of the Swiss academic sector along the education-to-research pipeline. In addition, the agreements will facilitate access to strategic areas and critical technologies (e.g. AI, Quantum, Space) where long-term investments are required, and issues can no longer be solved in a national context. They also offer Switzerland the opportunity to influence and shape European programmes and policies in accordance with Swiss interests, ensuring alignment with the national priorities as well as timely information for the preparation of calls and other opportunities. Finally, the bilateral agreements III will contribute to strengthening Switzerland's competitiveness, an essential factor not only for the advancement of research but also for the resilience of the economy and the well-being of society at large, particularly in the context of growing geopolitical challenges.

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