

Switzerland's association to Horizon Europe is crucial to tackle global challenges

Joint Statement of Research-Intensive University Groups in Europe

We, 61 leading research-intensive universities in Germany (German U15), France (Udice), the United Kingdom (Russell Group) and Switzerland (swissuniversities, Chamber of Universities) are united in our support for the association of Switzerland to Horizon Europe, the world's largest ongoing programme for research and innovation. We therefore most welcome that the Swiss Federal Council approved at its meeting on 15 December 2023 the draft negotiating mandate with the European Union, whereas the President of the European Commission informed in its letter of 13 December 2023 addressed to the President and the Chancellor of the Swiss Confederation that the Commission will seek a mandate from the Council of the European Union to start negotiations with Switzerland.

Switzerland is a research powerhouse. Given the multifaceted geopolitical and environmental challenges we face, Switzerland's association is crucial to allow Europe to remain globally competitive and shape its own future successfully and on its own terms. Stronger research partnerships strengthen the whole of Europe.

We are emphasising three key reasons for associating Switzerland:

- (1) **Switzerland is a global research powerhouse and a like-minded country.** Switzerland is a key partner for the EU research community – and vice versa. All our universities have a long-standing, trusted and immensely productive record of mutual collaboration. We all share a strong commitment to open science, academic freedom, and the transnational exchange of knowledge. Today's geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainties underscore the importance of a resilient wider European research and innovation ecosystem. The inclusion of a partner like Switzerland significantly bolsters our capacity to navigate through these uncertainties, following the UK's recent full association.
- (2) **Europe's scientific future lies in collaboration.** The 21st century will be shaped by societies' strength in research, innovation and technology. To respond to future challenges and seize future opportunities, Europe needs to be able to attract and work together with the best talent around the world, especially in like-minded countries. Horizon Europe is the prime mechanism for this, and Switzerland is a prime partner.
- (3) **We can only tackle cross-border challenges by working together.** Today's economic, environmental and societal challenges require interdisciplinary, cross-border cooperation. Swiss research-intensive institutions will bring quality and impact to European research and innovation, and enrich Horizon Europe by growing its range of perspectives, expertise, and resources. Switzerland's expertise in environmental research and sustainable innovation will be particularly valuable for Europe's green transition.

We, the undersigned, envisage a strengthened European research environment capable of responding adeptly to the pressing global challenges. We call on both the European Commission and the Swiss Federal Council to work together, in a spirit of flexibility and compromise, in order to set up a stable legal framework allowing for a long-term association of Switzerland, so that we can unlock the full potential of our shared collaboration.