

Erosion Monitor #2

Report on the Status of the Bilateral Relationship between Switzerland and the EU, with a Focus on Education and Research

In the Erosion Monitor, Avenir Suisse assesses the developments of bilateral relations between Switzerland and the EU after the negotiations on the institutional framework agreement were broken off. Since the last edition of the report there have not been any relative improvements in any area, but things have deteriorated on the research and meteorology fronts. According to an Avenir Suisse survey, 88 percent of Swiss universities do not see the transitional solutions from the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) as equivalent to participation in Horizon Europe.

Bilateral cooperation has been seriously impaired since Switzerland broke off negotiations on an institutional framework agreement with the EU. Avenir Suisse's Erosion Monitor provides regular information on the current state of affairs, the risk of further impairments, and unharnessed potential for cooperation, as well as defining cornerstones for a future European policy. The second edition of the monitor focuses on research and development.

Negative effects at 80 percent of universities

Since Switzerland was downgraded to the status of a third country in the Horizon Europe framework program for research, cooperation with 27 EU member states and 16 other associated countries has been severely impaired. For example, Switzerland no longer has a say on the various committees. A survey of Swiss universities conducted by Avenir Suisse shows that there are great concerns about the sudden disappearance of this important source of third-party funding. Not only does Horizon Europe have an enormous budget (EUR 95.5 billion from 2021-27), but it also covers all areas of research. Of the universities surveyed, 80 percent reported that they are already feeling the first negative effects, and 88 percent do not believe that the transitional solution from the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) is equivalent. Of the respondents, 81 percent expect the lack of association with Horizon to lead to a deterioration in academic research in this country. The first universities in the EU area are already trying to poach researchers from Switzerland. Another area where the situation is deteriorating is meteorology, where Switzerland has been excluded from a major European project called Destination Earth. In response to this, the

Swiss parliament has now approved funding to enable MeteoSwiss to improve modeling even without international cooperation.

No further development in the bilateral relationship

Following the EU's decision on 26 May 2021 that new Swiss medtech products would henceforth have to be certified twice, product certificates that have already been issued are also no longer recognized. While it's been possible to find an agreement with Germany, this agreement is not recognized by the EU. On the land transport front, there is one year to find a solution for cross-border rail traffic, although the basic ongoing development of the agreement has been halted. The positive news that Swissgrid and its Italian counterpart has been able to come to a private-law agreement for electricity is put into perspective by the fact that it is limited to one year, and that Switzerland has been thrown out of the European energy regulation authority Acer. All in all, the bilateral relationship continues to erode.

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