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**NOTE FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE MEMBERS OF
THE ERASMUS+ COMMITTEE, NATIONAL AUTHORITIES AND NATIONAL AGENCIES**

Subject: Participation of Switzerland in Erasmus+ following the Swiss popular initiative aimed at stopping mass immigration

The popular vote by the people and the cantons in favour of changing Switzerland's system of immigration of 9 February 2014 calls into question the EU-Swiss Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (FMOP). The outcome of the referendum raises two issues:

- Introduction of annual quantitative limits to immigration. In itself, this does not trigger immediate consequences, as the Swiss government has three years to enact the implementing legislation for this initiative;
- No international treaty contrary to this initiative shall be concluded. This amendment of the constitution might have as a consequence that Switzerland would most likely not be able to sign the Protocol extending the FMOP agreement to Croatia, which joined the Union on 1 July 2013 as new Member State¹.

The EU has always made clear that there is a close link between Swiss participation in Erasmus+ and the Protocol, as the programme is closely linked to the free movement of persons (exchange of researchers and students). Given the current circumstances, the EU and the Swiss authorities have agreed to suspend on-going negotiations on Swiss participation in Erasmus+.

¹ Free movement of workers and right to supply services freely between the EU and Switzerland has existed since 2002, to clear mutual benefit. It was extended to the new Member States by protocols signed in 2004 and 2008 respectively. For the EU-15 plus Cyprus and Malta, the transition period came to an end in 2007. For Member States that acceded to the EU in 2004, the transition period will end in 2011 but Switzerland has in both cases the possibility to take safeguard measures until 2014. For Bulgaria and Romania the end dates are in 2016 and 2019, respectively.

Considering the tight time schedule, this suspension results into the impossibility to conclude an agreement with Switzerland on its participation to Erasmus+ as Programme Country in time for the signing of contracts with beneficiaries selected under the 2014 calls for proposals. The Commission has duly informed the Swiss authorities of this state of play in a series of bilateral contacts.

As a result, in 2014 Switzerland will enjoy the status of Partner Country as foreseen in the Erasmus+ Regulation and in line with the specifications of the Erasmus+ Programme Guide and the various calls for proposals.

General information is being made available on the Erasmus+ website in order to provide the general public notably with a list of all Erasmus+ activities open to Swiss participation. For ease of reference, please find enclosed the above-mentioned information as Annex I to this note.

With a view to adequately inform the potential programme beneficiaries on the decentralised programme actions, please find enclosed as Annex II a more detailed technical guideline on decentralised actions for the attention of the National Agencies.

Negotiations for the subsequent period (2015-2020) can restart any time depending on developments in the overall EU-Switzerland relations. You will be kept informed of any progress on this file in due course.

signed

António SILVA MENDES

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Information Note on the Participation of Switzerland in Erasmus+

On 9 February 2014, the popular vote by the people and the cantons in favour of changing Switzerland's system of immigration called into question the principle of free movement of persons between the EU and Switzerland.

While implementing legislation for this popular vote will now have to be enacted by the Swiss Federal Council within three years, the referendum explicitly prevents the government from concluding any new international agreement contrary to this initiative. Hence, as an immediate consequence, the Federal Council is not in a position to sign the Protocol extending the EU-Swiss agreement on the free movement of persons to Croatia, which joined the Union on 1 July 2013 as new Member State, and is analysing the different implications.

The EU has always made clear that there is a close link between Swiss participation in Erasmus+ and the Protocol, as the programme is closely linked to the free movement of persons (exchange of researchers and students). Pending the outcome of the Swiss analysis, the EU and the Swiss authorities have agreed to suspend on-going negotiations on Swiss participation in Erasmus+ and took note of the impossibility of signing an agreement in time for the signing of contracts with beneficiaries selected under the 2014 calls for proposals.

Therefore, as foreseen in the Erasmus+ Regulation, until such an agreement is signed, Switzerland will not participate in Erasmus+ on an equal footing with Member States (i.e. as a "Programme Country") as initially envisaged, but will rather enjoy the same status as other third countries (i.e. as a "Partner Country").

Please find in attachment to this note the list of Erasmus+ activities to which Swiss individuals and/or organisations may participate, as well as contact points for further information.

Annex II – List of activities open to Swiss participation

Activity	Deadline	Where to submit?
Joint Master Degrees ^{2**}	27 March 2014	EACEA ³
Knowledge alliances, sector skills alliances**	3 April 2014	EACEA
Strategic partnerships in education, training and youth**	30 April 2014 (all) 30 April 2014 (only youth) 1 October 2014 (only youth)	National Agency
Jean Monnet *	26 March 2014	EACEA
Sport collaborative Partnerships**	15 May 2014	EACEA

* as applicant or partner organisation

** as partner organisation

Concerning the various activities mentioned, you may wish to **contact**:

Your [National Agency](#) - for further information on decentralised actions;

The [Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency](#) - for centralised actions;

The [State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation](#) (SERI) - for general information;

The [CH Foundation](#) (Swiss National Agency) – for further details.

² Students can apply directly to consortia as any other student in the world.

³ Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.

Technical guidelines regarding the status of Switzerland for actions managed by National Agencies

1. ERASMUS+

1.1 Participation status

The suspension of the negotiations with Switzerland has direct consequences for the eligibility of grant applications both for organisations from Switzerland as well as from other countries.

In 2014 Switzerland will enjoy the status of Partner Country as foreseen in the Erasmus+ Regulation and in line with the specifications of the Erasmus+ Programme Guide and the various calls for proposals.

As regards the programme actions managed by the National Agencies, the consequences are as follows:

- Key Action 1 – Learning mobility of individuals: Switzerland is ineligible both as sending and hosting country. Applications involving Switzerland as one of the minimum number of Programme Countries will be ineligible.
- Key Action 2 – Strategic Partnerships: Swiss organisations cannot apply for grant support, but can participate in Strategic Partnerships as other organisations from Partner Countries. However, this also means that the specific rules applicable to Partner Country participation and funding apply (see 1.3 below).
- Key Action 3 – Structured dialogue: meetings between young people and decision-makers in the field of youth: Swiss organisations cannot apply for national meetings and the participation of Swiss organisations and young people cannot be funded in transnational meetings.
- Under all decentralised actions: the Swiss National Agency will not be able to select and manage Erasmus+ applications submitted by Swiss organisations.

1.2 Information of applicants

At this moment in time, the eForms for grant applications for actions managed by the National Agencies are in production (Key Actions 1 and 3) or about to be released (Key Action 2). Since reflecting the recent changes would result into delays, it is too late to modify the status of Switzerland in the eForms used for the first rounds of the 2014 Call for Proposals.

As a consequence, National Agencies are called upon to disseminate widely the information on the changed status of Switzerland, as the forms will not prohibit Swiss organisations to apply or to be included as partners from a Programme Country.

The Commission has published an information note on this issue on its Erasmus+ website, but it is important that NAs support the spreading of this message to avoid

massive disappointment of potential applicants so shortly before the first deadlines for grant applications.

1.3 Treatment of grant applications

Given that the eForms will not automatically reject non-eligible proposals, it is important that NAs implement the following rules:

- at eligibility check stage: under Key Action 1 and 3, declare ineligible any Swiss organisation involved in the project. Under Key Action 2, consider Swiss organisations as organisations from a Partner Country. Under all Key Actions, reject grant applications in which an organisation from Switzerland represents one of the minimum number of Programme Countries in the project in accordance with the Programme Guide;
- at quality assessment stage: for Key Action 2, strictly apply the award criterion on the necessary added value of participation of Partner Countries, as specified in more detail in the Guide for Experts. If a project with Swiss participation can be funded, the rules and restrictions related to activities with and organisations from Partner Countries will apply (see Erasmus+ Programme Guide).

2. LIFELONG LEARNING AND YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAMMES

For the Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programmes, the existing provisions continue to apply until the end of the actions supported under the 2013 calls for proposals.

This means that Swiss organisations continue to participate as beneficiaries and partners in all decentralised programme actions under the conditions applicable to the calls under which they applied.

Activities still to be financed under the Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programmes, will take place as foreseen.

The Swiss National Agency will continue to fulfil its contractual obligations under all open Commission-NA Agreements, to cooperate with the National Agencies of the other participating countries and to provide the necessary support to programme beneficiaries and participants involved in the Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programmes.

Considering this difference of approach between the Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programmes, on the one hand, and the Erasmus+ Programme, on the other hand, National Agencies are requested to carefully inform current beneficiaries and participants in order to avoid confusion resulting in activities not being implemented as planned.

National Agencies can send any further information requests to EAC-NA-Coordination@ec.europa.eu or directly to their NA desk officer in EAC-B-4.