

**Ensuring the participation of Swiss scientific institutions in the European Research Area
Appeal from the German Rectors' Conference (HRK)**

The German Rectors' Conference (HRK) is appealing to politicians within the European Union to recommence the suspended negotiations on the participation of Swiss universities and research institutions in the EU's Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes. Given the close networks that exist between Swiss researchers and those in EU member states, a level-headed and pragmatic approach is to be preferred to the boycott measures currently imposed on an ad hoc basis. Any delays to – let alone the complete suspension of – negotiations on the participation of Swiss institutions in the education and research programmes of the European Union would inflict unnecessary damage on the close scientific collaboration in Europe. It is not primarily a matter of the funding of Swiss research projects by European funding programmes, but rather a matter of the evaluation of Swiss research projects in line with international ERC standards.

The HRK is fully aware that the result of the Swiss referendum on 9 February 2014 is inconsistent with one of the key goals of the European Union, namely ensuring the free movement of people within Europe. This is certainly a justifiable reason for suspending financial support for Swiss projects. However, exclusion from scientific evaluation is in stark contradiction to the idea of creating a European Research Area.

The unrestricted access of all previous partners to the European evaluation process is particularly important for European universities, enabling Europe to remain competitive in global research, education and innovation. Europe's universities need one another and the scientific contribution made by Swiss partners is not only welcome, but indeed essential.

Setting an example of this kind, in the world of science of all places, where the dialogue with Swiss partners has functioned so well in the past, would not be the right approach.