

Agreements on Switzerland's participation in Union programmes and on the terms and conditions for the participation in the European Union Agency for the Space Programme

1. Cooperation in the past

Switzerland is an important partner of the European Union in research and innovation. Researchers from Swiss universities and the private sector have participated in the research and innovation framework programmes since 1987, and in Euratom research since 1979. Switzerland also participated in the activities carried out by the European Joint Undertaking for ITER and the Development of Fusion for Energy between 2007-2020. In 1987, the EU-Switzerland Science and Technology Agreement entered into force.

To build on this past cooperation, the EU and Switzerland decided to include a new Agreement on Switzerland's participation in Union programmes, as well as an Agreement on Switzerland's participation in the European Union Agency for the Space Programme, in the broad package negotiations held between March and December 2024.

2. The new Agreement on Switzerland's participation in Union programmes

The new Agreement on Switzerland's participation in Union programmes will allow EU and Swiss entities to collaborate across a broad range of Union programmes in areas such as research, innovation, and education. It will enable Switzerland's association to Horizon Europe, Euratom Research and Training, ITER/F4E (Fusion for Energy), Digital Europe, Erasmus+, and EU4Health. This association will create new opportunities for Swiss researchers and entities to access EU funding and work alongside European partners. It will also enable European research and innovation communities to benefit from a wider pool of talent and scientific excellence. Swiss participants will enjoy the same rights as EU entities, including the ability to receive direct EU funding and lead research consortia.

The Agreement on Switzerland's participation in Union programmes forms an integral part of the broader package of agreements. The successful ratification of the package is essential for ensuring long-term cooperation in research and all other areas covered by the agreements in the package.

3. The transitional arrangements regarding the new Agreement on Switzerland's participation in Union programmes

The transitional arrangements, in place since 1 January 2025, provide Swiss entities with a possibility to apply for calls under Horizon Europe, Euratom Research and Training, and Digital Europe, pending the signature of the Agreement. Switzerland's membership in Fusion for Energy (F4E) is foreseen to start from 2026, and participation in Erasmus+ is planned from 2027. Switzerland's Association to EU4Health will become applicable once the Agreement on health enters into force.

In addition, the provisional application from the moment of signature of the Agreement will allow both sides to collaborate while still completing the necessary steps to ratify the broad package of agreements negotiated between March and December 2024.

4. Agreement on Switzerland's participation in the EU Agency for the Space Programme

A separate Agreement, which forms integral part of the same broad package, will cover Switzerland's participation in the EU Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA), for activities related to the Galileo and EGNOS components of the Union Space programme. That Agreement will contribute to furthering the Union's policy objectives in such areas as education and training, research and innovation, digital economy and society, and space.

The EUSPA Agreement spells out the conditions under which Switzerland has a right to participate in the EUSPA, as established by Regulation (EU) 2021/696. It is based on the EU-Switzerland agreement of 2014 on the European Satellite Navigation Programmes.

The EUSPA Agreement will also allow Switzerland's participation in activities related to other components of the space programme, beyond Galileo and the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) as established in the 2014 Agreement, if a protocol to the Agreement on Switzerland's participation in Union programmes so provides.

The Commission proposes that this Agreement be provisionally applied pending its ratification.