

"Stick to Science": for collaboration in research free from political barriers

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At a glance

Due to political differences that are not related to research, the EU is refusing to allow the United Kingdom and Switzerland to participate in the European research framework programme Horizon Europe. This is hurting the European research hub as a whole. The Stick to Science initiative, launched on 8 February 2022, calls for open and barrier-free cooperation between European research and innovation actors who all share the same values.

For over a year now, the European research and innovation community has been calling for the full association of Switzerland and the United Kingdom to Horizon Europe. Yet the conclusion of agreements is delayed by political discussions that are not related to science. This is hurting the entire European research hub, which is losing ground in competition with Asia and America. In response, Swiss and British research institutions have launched the "Stick to Science" initiative. It has already been signed by over 300 prominent organisations and individuals from across the European research and innovation community. Among them are Nobel Prize and Fields Medal winners, entrepreneurs and innovators, umbrella organisations and institutions for research work and promotion, as well as leaders from universities and research institutions from 34 countries - including 18 EU member states. *economiesuisse* and its members also fully support this initiative.

Rapid full association is in the interest of the entire European research hub

Due to non-association, British and Swiss universities which are among the world's leading universities cannot participate in Horizon Europe. ETH Zurich, for example, has just been named the fourth best university in the world in Computer Science by Times Higher Education Rankings. Only two American institutes and Oxford University - which is also excluded from Horizon Europe - were ranked better in this area. The EPFL in Lausanne is also ranked 19th in both Engineering & Technology and Computer Science. With the exclusion of these leading European research institutes, the EU is increasingly falling behind its American and Asian competitors, especially in key areas for the future digital economy. Moreover, the relegation of European research to the second division puts innovation-driven European companies at a disadvantage vis-à-vis their competitors from Asia and the USA. This is because the latter benefit from the research results of universities close to them and bring them to market in new products.

If associated, the United Kingdom and Switzerland would contribute almost 19 billion Swiss francs to Horizon Europe. This would result in an 18 per cent increase in the budget available for funding European top-level research. A soon full association of the United Kingdom and Switzerland is therefore in the interest of the entire European research hub and should not be delayed by further political gambits.

The initiative can be supported at the following link: <https://stick-to-science.eu/>

Image: Logo of Stick to Science



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