



## Switzerland's Non-Association to Horizon Europe 2021 – 2024

### Initial assessments by researchers and companies

#### ► In brief

Between 2021 and 2024, Switzerland participated in the 9th EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe, as a non-associated country. Non-association does not mean non-participation in Horizon Europe. From 2021 to 2024, the federal government provided transitional measures, including, in particular, direct funding for Swiss partners involved in eligible collaborative projects under Horizon Europe. This made it possible to participate in around two-thirds of the Horizon Europe calls for proposals.

#### Survey of researchers and companies

As part of the 2026 impact study<sup>1</sup>, a survey was conducted in September 2025 among researchers and companies in Switzerland who had previously taken part in calls for proposals under the 8th EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020<sup>2</sup>. In addition, participants were asked about their experiences during Switzerland's non-association to Horizon Europe, their assessment of the impact on the Swiss research and innovation community (R&I community), and on their own work. During the non-association period from 2021 to 2024, 55% of respondents applied for at least one Horizon Europe call for proposals. 35% of respondents participated in at least one Horizon Europe project during the non-association period.

The survey provides an initial insight into how researchers and companies perceived Switzerland's non-association. However, it does not allow for a causal assessment of impact and cannot be readily extrapolated to the entire Swiss R&I community. It is not yet possible at this stage to make a definitive assessment of the longer-term impacts, particularly on the outcomes of the projects launched between 2021 and 2024.

#### Predominantly negative assessment of the impact on the Swiss R&I community

The survey paints a consistent overall picture: Non-association is mainly perceived as a hindrance to the Swiss R&I community with researchers' assessments being more negative than those of companies. This could be related to the fact that companies predominantly participate in collaborative projects in which involvement remained possible even during the period of non-association, thanks to Switzerland's transitional measures. Respondents assess the impact of non-association on the R&I community as more negative than on their own work. However, negative impacts are also reported in several areas regarding their own work. One possible explanation is that the effects on specific aspects of their own work – such as career prospects or international networking – only become apparent after a delay.

#### Transitional measures were able to partially mitigate the effects of non-association

According to the respondents, the national transitional measures were able to mitigate certain consequences. However, they could not fully replace the international participation and networking opportunities that the association offers. The period of non-association from 2021 to 2024 cannot be equated with long-term non-association. During the period of non-association, association remained the Federal Council's stated goal. The transitional measures served to mitigate the consequences of the temporary non-association as much as possible.

1 SERI, Impact Study 2026 'The Impact of Switzerland's Participation in the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation'

2 KOF ETH Zurich, Technical Report 2026 'Switzerland and the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation: Impact of participation'

## Impact on the R&I community in Switzerland

The respondents largely view the impact of non-association on Switzerland's research and innovation community (R&I community) as negative (Fig. 1). This applies in particular to exclusion from individual funding and from strategically relevant areas, as well as the loss of coordination opportunities. The assessments of researchers are more negative than those of companies: Depending on the aspect surveyed, 64–71% of researchers, compared with 33–42% of companies, perceive a deterioration. The reasons for this difference cannot be clearly determined on the basis based on the available survey data. One possible explanation is that researchers were more severely affected than companies by exclusion from individual funding and strategically relevant areas, as well as by the loss of coordination opportunities. Companies, on the other hand, primarily participate in collaborative projects. Under the transitional measures, such participation remained possible even during the period of non-association. In contrast, about 8% of respondents perceive an improvement.

Fig. 1. Impacts on the R&I community in Switzerland

Perceived consequences for the Swiss R&I community of different dimensions of the non-association to Horizon Europe 2021–2024.

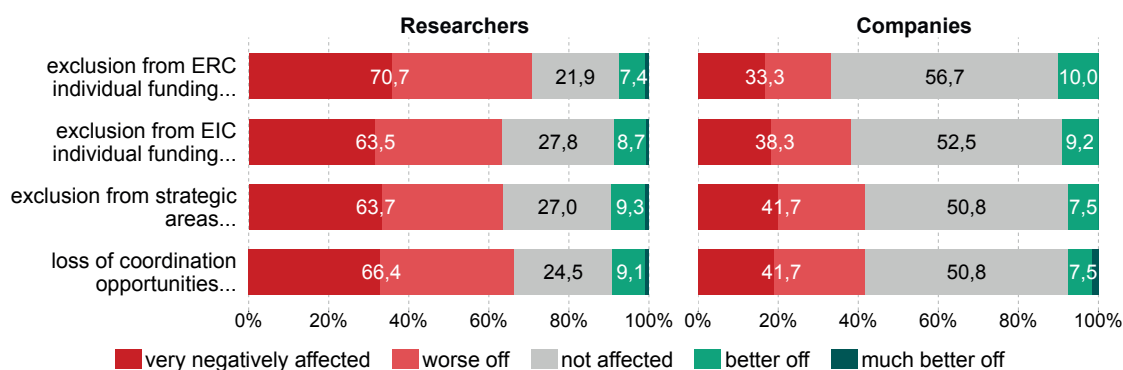


Fig. 1. Broken down by researchers (left; n = 515) and companies (right; n = 120). The ERC (European Research Council) is Horizon Europe's instrument for funding excellent basic research. The EIC (European Innovation Council) supports the development and scaling of groundbreaking innovations. Due to space constraints, the percentages for the categories 'much better off' and 'better off,' as well as 'very negatively affected' and 'worse off,' are shown as combined totals but distinguished by colour. The exact percentages for the individual categories, as well as the original wording of the questions and answers, can be found in the KOF technical report.

Source: KOF / SERI.

## Impact on their own work

Respondents also view the impact of non-association on their own work as negative in several areas. This is most evident in funding opportunities: 55% of the researchers surveyed and 37% of the companies report a deterioration in this area (Fig. 2). In addition, a higher administrative burden (39% for researchers and 33% for companies) and more difficult access to specific R&I areas (39% for researchers and 29% for companies) are cited relatively frequently.

The impacts on career prospects, personnel recruitment and international networking are generally assessed as less pronounced than those on funding opportunities or administrative burden. As with the impact on the Swiss R&I community, researchers' assessments of their own work are more negative than those of companies in several areas. At the same time, many respondents indicate that their situation has remained unchanged.

Fig. 2. Impact on one's own work

Switzerland was not associated to Horizon Europe from 2021 to 2024. On a personal level, ...



Fig. 2. Broken down by researchers (left; n = 546) and companies (right; n = 132). Due to space constraints, the percentages for the categories 'much better' and 'better', as well as 'much worse' and 'worse', are each presented as a combined total but differentiated by colour. The exact percentages for the individual categories, as well as the original wording of the questions and answers, can be found in the KOF technical report.

Source: KOF / SERI.

## Substitutability through national transitional measures

Respondents were also asked to assess the extent to which national transitional measures can replace key elements of participation in the EU framework programmes for research and innovation. Overall, the survey results show that, from the respondents' point of view, national transitional measures can only partially offset the disadvantages of non-association (Fig. 3). In particular, most of the respondents consider the benefits associated with participating in international programmes to be difficult or impossible to replace. This is especially evident in the expansion of international networks, the reputational benefits, and competitiveness: 71–77% of researchers and 50–65% of companies consider these aspects to be difficult or impossible to replace through national measures. The leverage effect associated with programme participation is also considered by researchers in particular to be difficult to replace. By contrast, access to specialised research infrastructures and mobility opportunities are judged to be comparatively easier to replace. Nevertheless, even here – depending on the group and dimension – 41–46% of respondents consider replacement through national measures to be difficult or impossible.

Fig. 3. Substitutability through national transitional measures

Are there any elements of the EU Framework Programmes for R&I that cannot be replaced by national measures?

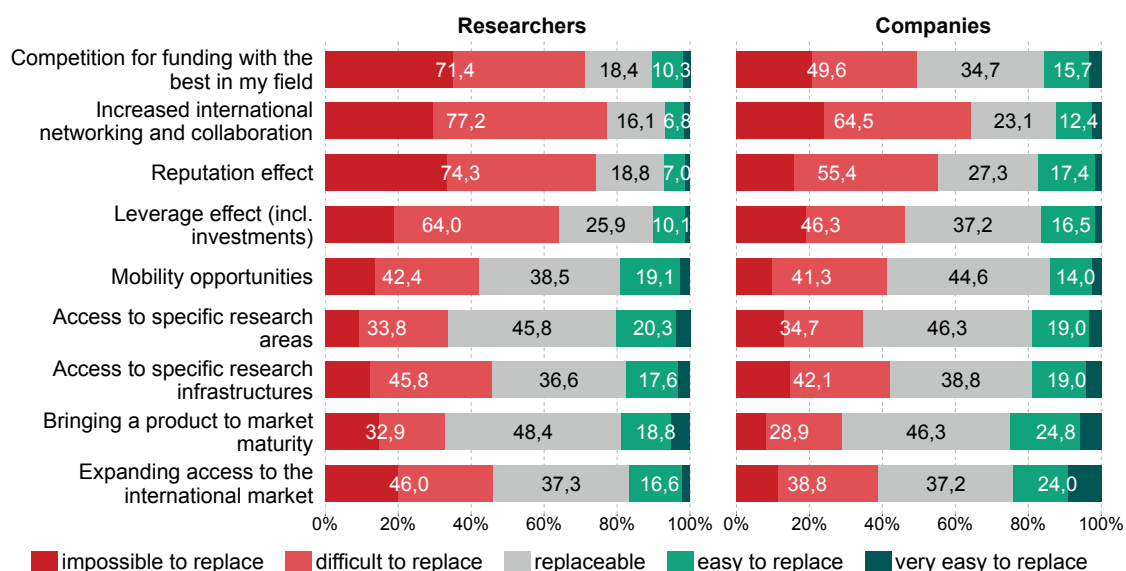


Fig. 3. Broken down by researchers (left; n = 517) and companies (right; n = 121). Due to space constraints, the percentages for the categories 'very easy to replace' and 'easy to replace', as well as 'impossible to replace' and 'difficult to replace', are presented as combined totals, but distinguished by colour. The exact percentages for the individual categories, as well as the original wording of the questions and answers, can be found in the KOF technical report.

Source: KOF / SERI.



Scan the QR code for the 2026 impact study



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,  
Education and Research EAER  
State Secretariat for Education,  
Research and Innovation SERI