

Do not fight at the expense of young people !

Open letter addressed to Swiss and European authorities regarding the announcement of the consequences of the adoption of the initiative against mass immigration in Switzerland- February 2014

The initiative against mass immigration demands the reintroduction of quotas for foreign citizens which is against the free movement of people and the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the European Union. This initiative has been accepted by a small majority of Swiss people on the 9th of February 2014.

Since then, bad news has continued to arise. After the governmental decision of not extending the free movement of people to Croatia, the European Union announced Sunday 16th of February the suspension of current negotiations regarding Horizon 2020, the principal instrument for the promotion of research and innovation in Europe, and Erasmus +. These programmes are of extreme importance for Switzerland, and according to the European Union, they are directly related to the free movement of people.

Erasmus + is the flagship european youth program that allows mobility to young people, students, escolars, apprentices, teachers and people that work on the education and activities related with the promotion of youth. Erasmus + is the programme replacing Erasmus, Youth in Action, Piaget, Comenius, etc., that have expired in late 2013.

Importance of mobility programs

The young people of Switzerland have benefited from international exchanges. For example: using Erasmus, around 6,000 Swiss were given a scholarship for mobility in 2011. Considering our globalized context, mobility experiences in Switzerland and

abroad allow young people to acquire important skills for their careers. Exchange programs offer the opportunity to develop knowledge regardless of national frontiers while discovering other cultures. International mobility is a key factor in reinforcing self-confidence, autonomy, the spirit of responsibility and openness together with creativity and interdisciplinary analysis.

What is happening now? Young people are the victims of the consequences of the results of the referendum of the 9th of February. With the decision of suspending the negotiations around Erasmus + a whole generation of young people wanting to have a mobility experience will be excluded from having this opportunity. This is not acceptable for youth organisations and for other organisations that support these claims.

Our claims

Organisations engaged with youth are convinced that young people, scholars, students and apprentices should not pay the consequences of the initiative against mass immigration! As signers of this open letter, we expect the Swiss government to mobilize all its forces to continue making possible all of the exchanges and activities planned under the framework of Erasmus + programme and therefore allow young people to enjoy their right of mobility. The Swiss confederation needs to mobilize all its resources- including financial resources- in order to guarantee these exchanges.

The signers of the letter also expect the European Union to think about the interests of young people in Switzerland and Europe, and seek to build a solution to this unacceptable situation.

Mobility and intercultural exchanges are key elements of our present and future world. Exchanges help promote the core values of a peaceful Europe and respect for others citizens. The organisations signing this letters will continue the fight for an open Europe

where mobility and promotion of young people beyond frontiers will prevail over political strategies.

Organisations signing the document:

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