EU/Switzerland Agreement: participation of Switzerland in the ‘Youth in Action' programme and in the action programme in the field of lifelong learning (2007-2013)

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PURPOSE: to **conclude** an Agreement between the EU and the Swiss Confederation regarding the participation of the Swiss Confederation in the ‘Youth in Action’ programme and in the action programme in the field of lifelong learning (2007-2013).

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

BACKGROUND: following the results of the 1992 referendum, rejecting Switzerland's participation in the EEA Agreement, Switzerland showed continued interest in closer cooperation with the EU in the education, training and youth sector. In a joint declaration on future negotiations attached to the seven agreements signed on 21 June 1999 by the EC and Switzerland, the two parties stated that preparatory work for negotiations on Swiss participation in training and youth programmes should proceed rapidly after conclusion of the seven agreements. This area of cooperation was indeed broached during the next cycle of bilateral negotiations.

Since the legal basis for the education, training and youth programmes which were in force in the 2000-2006 period (Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth) did not provide for the participation of Switzerland, it was agreed to postpone the negotiation of a participation agreement until after the adoption of the programmes succeeding them. This took place for the generation of programmes 2007-2013: the ‘Youth in Action’ programme and the action programme in the field of lifelong learning.

In February 2008 the Council authorised the opening of negotiations with Switzerland with a view to concluding an agreement laying down the terms and conditions for its participation in the two programmes. Negotiations were completed in August 2009, and on 25 January 2010 the Council adopted a Decision approving the signing of the Agreement and its provisional application from 2011.

IMPACT ANALYSIS: no impact assessment was carried out.

LEGAL BASE: Article 165(4) and Article 166 (4), in conjunction with Article 218(6)(a) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

CONTENU : the main points of the Agreement are as follows :

- projects and initiatives submitted by participants from Switzerland will be subject to the same conditions, rules and procedures pertaining to these programmes as are applied to Member States, regarding in particular the submission, assessment and selection of applications and projects, the responsibilities of the national structures in the implementation of the programmes, and the activities related to the monitoring of their participation in the programmes;
- Switzerland will make an annual financial contribution to each programme;
- as regards financial control and audit matters, Switzerland will conform to European Union provisions, including controls by European Union bodies and controls carried out by the Swiss authorities;
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the Agreement will apply until the programmes come to an end, or until one of the parties notifies the other party of its wish to terminate the Agreement. The Agreement may be extended automatically if the programmes are extended without change;

- the Agreement reflects a political link with the Agreement on the free movement of persons signed on 21 June 1999 by ruling out an extension in the event of the termination of the Agreement on the free movement of persons.

In accordance with the arrangements made for agreements previously concluded on Switzerland's participation in other European Union programmes, a Council Declaration covers questions concerning the attendance of Swiss representatives at programme committee meetings, as observers, for the points which concern Switzerland.