

Erasmus in the memory of Basel

*Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)*

Basel has kept the memory of Erasmus in many forms. His tomb in the Minster is visited by admirers from all over the world. The house in which he died, *zum Luft*, on the Bäumleingasse, bears a plaque. The Kunstmuseum holds Holbein's portraits of him, while the University Library holds his books and papers. The University of Basel has named several institutions after him, and the European Union's programme for the exchange of students, named Erasmus after the Rotterdam humanist who studied and taught in many European cities, recalls the cosmopolitan ideal that he embodied.¹

Switzerland's participation in the Erasmus programme has itself become an object of political negotiation. After the adoption of the popular initiative against mass immigration in 2014, the European Union suspended Switzerland's full participation in the programme, and Switzerland has since financed alternative arrangements for student mobility while negotiating its return to the programme as part of the new package of agreements with the Union.² The name of the humanist who chose Basel for its openness has thus become a symbol of the relationship between Switzerland and Europe, which Part K examines.

The legacy of Erasmus for a financial centre can be summarised in a few principles that he defended throughout his life: the value of learning and of accurate information, the importance of reputation, the preference for peace over war, the demand that rulers manage public finances frugally and justly, the respect for the independence of the individual and the moderation of judgement in times of polarisation. These principles are not specific to finance, but a financial centre that honoured them would be well placed to deserve the trust of its clients.

1 Notes

1. On the memorials of Erasmus in Basel (tomb in the Minster, the house zum Luft, Holbein portraits in the Kunstmuseum, papers in the University Library), see the local literature and the publications of the institutions concerned. To be verified. ↩
2. On the suspension of Switzerland's full association with Erasmus+ after the popular vote of 9 February 2014, the Swiss mobility programme and the negotiations on re-association in the context of the package of bilateral agreements concluded in 2024/2025, see the publications of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). To be verified. ↩

For general information only. This article does not constitute legal or tax advice, does not replace advice on an individual case and creates no lawyer-client relationship. It reflects the legal position as of September 2026.

Online version: helveticaregister.com/basel-erasmus-in-the-memory-of-basel