

Talent, research and Horizon Europe

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

The third driver after markets and prices is the availability of talent and of public research. The research-based industry of Basel depends on access to scientists, physicians, engineers and regulatory specialists from across the world, many of whom come from the European Union under the agreement on the free movement of persons. Others come from third countries under the quota system for non-EU nationals.¹ The industry and the university have long argued that the third-country quotas are too tight, particularly for specialists from the United States, the United Kingdom, India and China. The future of the free movement of persons is part of the debate on the package of agreements with the European Union and on popular initiatives concerning immigration, which Chapter IV of this Part examines without anticipating the outcome of any vote.

Public research forms the second element. Switzerland was treated as a non-associated third country in Horizon Europe from 2021 after the end of the negotiations on an institutional framework agreement, which excluded Swiss researchers from many grants of the European Research Council and from leadership of collaborative projects.² After the political conclusion of the package of agreements in December 2024, Switzerland was able to participate again in most parts of Horizon Europe for calls from 2025. An association agreement was signed in late 2025 with retroactive effect from 1 January 2025.³ For the University of Basel, the Biozentrum, the Department of Biosystems Science and Engineering of ETH Zurich in Basel and the Friedrich Miescher Institute, re-association restored access to the most prestigious grants and networks.

Research funding interacts with industrial location. The decision of a pharmaceutical group to keep early research in Basel depends on the quality of the surrounding academic ecosystem, which in turn depends on international funding and mobility. The location package of Basel-Stadt, with its support for research and development personnel costs, attempts to

strengthen this link with cantonal money.⁴ By 2035, the combined effect of European research association, immigration rules and cantonal support will have determined whether Basel remains one of the few places in Europe where large pharmaceutical groups conduct discovery research on a significant scale.

1 Notes

1. Agreement between the Swiss Confederation and the European Community and its Member States on the free movement of persons of 21 June 1999, SR 0.142.112.681; Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration (AIG), SR 142.20, and the annual quotas for third-country nationals set by the Federal Council. To be verified. ↩
2. On the status of Switzerland as a non-associated third country in Horizon Europe from 2021 and the transitional measures financed by the Swiss Confederation through the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), see SERI publications. To be verified. ↩
3. Agreement between the European Union and the Swiss Confederation on the participation of Switzerland in Union programmes, and the association of Switzerland to Horizon Europe, Euratom and Digital Europe from 1 January 2025 under transitional arrangements; signature in November 2025 and provisional application. Status to be verified. ↩
4. See Part G, Chapter III, section "The Basel location package", on the fund for innovation financed from minimum tax revenue. Figures 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-talent-research-and-horizon-europe