Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Federal Department of Economic
Affairs, Education and Research EAER

State Secretariat for Education
Research and Innovation SERI
Communication

ADOPTION OF THE INITIATIVE AGAINST MASS IMMIGRATION AND ITS IMPACT ON SWISS PARTICIPATION IN HORIZON 2020

Information as of 25 June 2014

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) will post regular updates on the status of Horizon 2020:

- ➔ **In response to the result of the vote on mass immigration held on 9 February 2014, the European Commission suspended negotiations on Switzerland's association to the Horizon 2020 package and Switzerland now has the status of a third country.**
- ➔ **This means that Swiss institutions can continue to take part in Horizon 2020 as project partners with third country status (incl. as coordinators).**
- ➔ **However, Switzerland will no longer be able to take part in individual projects (e.g. ERC grants) due to its third country status.**
- ➔ **The European Commission has stated that researchers in Switzerland may immediately and once again fully take part with associate status in Horizon 2020 (including funding for individual projects) if certain EU policy requirements are met. The nature and scope of the associate status is currently being discussed by the European Commission.**
- ➔ **Because the situation is still unclear, on 25 June 2014 the Federal Council approved a programme of interim measures: funding earmarked for compulsory contributions to Horizon 2020 can be paid on a project-by-project basis directly to researchers in Switzerland whose participation in joint and individual projects under Horizon 2020 is not funded by the European Commission.**
- ➔ **The stated aim nevertheless remains association to Horizon 2020 by the end of the year, if possible. That way researchers in Switzerland whose projects are approved once association has been re-established would again be able to receive direct funding from Brussels.**
- ➔ **The Federal Council wishes emphasise the fact that Switzerland holds a leading position in Europe in the field of education and research. Switzerland contributes substantially to the positioning of European research as a whole. It would be counterproductive to limit Swiss cooperation in this area. The Federal Council is continuing to coordinate efforts, also in its contacts with the EU, to implement the decision of the Swiss electorate in a manner that serves the interests of Swiss and other European nationals affected by the agreement.**

A. FACTS:

FP7

- The bilateral agreement between Switzerland and the EU regarding Switzerland's participation as an associated country in the EU's 7th Framework Programme (FP) remains unconditionally valid until all projects under FP7 have run their course.
- The funding by the European Commission of project holders from Switzerland in FP7 is assured until the end of the research project.
- This applies in particular for the FET flagship Human Brain Project, which is being funded from the FP7 budget in the ramp-up phase up until spring 2016.

Horizon 2020

- Negotiations with the EU with regard to association, which were at an advanced stage, are currently suspended following adoption of the initiative against mass immigration; the EU cites the principle of the free movement of persons as a key element of the bilateral agreements and has made any further steps to be taken dependent on the Federal Council's decisions regarding implementation of the initiative against mass immigration.
- Following the adoption of the initiative against mass immigration, the Federal Council was unable to sign the protocol extending the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons to Croatia in its original form. On 30 April 2014 the Federal Council adopted a declaration envisaging a number of measures including the presentation of a solution to the application of quotas for the admission of Croatian citizens to the Swiss labour market. These measures take effect on 1 July 2014. In addition, the Federal Council confirmed the enlargement contribution for Croatia and on 28 May 2014 approved the related dispatch for submission to Parliament.
- Education, research and innovation (ERI) are essential factors for Switzerland's competiveness and stability, which is why great emphasis is placed on international cooperation in these areas. The top priority therefore remains achieving full association to Horizon 2020 this year, if possible.
- On 25 June 2014 the Federal Council approved a series of specific interim measures. These are based on Art. 2 of the federal decree relating to Switzerland's participation in the Horizon 2020 package (see below), which allows for funds set aside for compulsory contributions to be channelled directly to researchers in Switzerland in the event of delayed association to Horizon 2020. Switzerland operated a similar project-by-project system of participation for research programmes between 1992 and 2004. In concrete terms this means that researchers and institutions in Switzerland who participate in Horizon 2020 joint projects approved by the European Commission can receive federal funding directly (participants from third countries do not receive funding via the European Commission and must be able to provide their own funds). A further interim measure is the provision of funding in the form of the Swiss National Science Foundation's 'temporary backup schemes' to support participants in ERC grant projects under third country conditions.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICANTS:

B.1. Individual projects (namely under grants from the European Research Council or Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions):

- Only institutions in an EU member state or an associated country may take part in calls for project proposals for ERC grants. Therefore, as things currently stand, researchers from Swiss institutions may not apply for ERC grants.
- Die Temporary Backup Schemes können bei weiter ausbleibender Assoziation allenfalls auch auf die Advanced Grants erweitert werden
- With regard to ERC grants (currently Starting Grants and Consolidator Grants), the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)'s temporary backup schemes provide a solution for application submissions this year so that applications from Switzerland that are ready for submission or in planning are not lost or wasted. If Switzerland fails to gain associate status, these schemes may be extended to Advanced Grants.
- Researchers who are Swiss nationals and who will conduct at least half of their research in connection with an ERC grant at an institution in an EU or associated country will still be entitled to participate.
- European Fellowships granted under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions scheme are open to researchers of all nationalities, including applicants from third countries.
- Nevertheless, Swiss institutions now have limited rights to take part in Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.

B.2. Joint projects:

- SERI recommends that project partners from Switzerland (including businesses, especially SMEs) take part in calls for project proposals as part of an international consortium.
- Switzerland's third country status should be taken into account in the planning phase as follows:
  - → Project proposals must have the required minimum number of consortium partners from three institutions from three different EU member states or associated countries (not including Switzerland).
  - → According to Horizon 2020 participation criteria, third countries may also coordinate projects as long as they provide their own funding and cover their own coordination costs. Swiss research institutes can therefore continue to act as project coordinators. Nevertheless it is important that the consortium verify whether another institution from an EU member state or an associated country is willing to take over coordination.
- Project partners should also be actively informed that excellence is the only evaluation criterion under Horizon 2020 and that applications submitted with Swiss project partners will in no way be discriminated against (this would even be explicitly against evaluation rules).
- Project participants are advised against exploiting funding opportunities of project partners outside Switzerland and using project-by-project funding by Swiss partners as additional funds. This would not be approved by the European Commission, which under the third-country conditions no longer receives Swiss contributions to the Horizon 2020 budget.

B.3 Information from the European Commission

- Information on 18 March 2014:
  http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/h2020-hi-swiss-part_en.pdf

C. INFORMATION ON FUNDING FOR SWISS PROJECT PARTNERS

The financing of transitional measures in relation to the provision of funding for the participation of Swiss partners in individual projects, as practised in Switzerland between 1992 and 2004 is based on the parliamentary decree of 10 September 2013:

Art. 2
Should the financial conditions of the future agreement between Switzerland and the European Union on Swiss participation in EU framework programmes in the area of research and innovation come into effect only after 1 January 2014, then the guarantee credit may be used to cover Swiss participation on a project-per-project basis for the period pending commencement of the agreement.

With its decree of 25 June 2014 and its instructions to amend the associated ordinance, the Federal Council is preparing the legal basis to be able to fund directly, in the event that association to Horizon 2020 is not achieved, projects which were not able to be submitted in 2014. This solution also covers individual projects such as ERC Starting Grants.

D. CONTACT

- Questions concerning the submission of research proposals:
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