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Swiss Confederation

Federal Departement of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER

**State Secretariat for Education,
Research and Innovation SERI**

International Cooperation in Research and Innovation

Project-by-project funding in Horizon 2020

Guideline for Swiss participants

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Disclaimer: This text represents work in progress and intends to serve as an informal practical guideline. Therefore, it must not be regarded as a legally binding document.

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1 Introduction

This text intends to serve as a guide for Swiss researchers who participate in collaborative projects of Horizon 2020 (H2020) as so-called "3rd country partners" considering the prospect of Switzerland being fully associated to H2020 again by 2017. For the background of this special Swiss situation, please confer the fact sheet available [here](#). We attempt to give a brief overview on how to submit requests for project-by-project funding of Swiss participations in H2020 collaborative projects to the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI).

Due to the latest information published in June 2016 by the European Commission on the Swiss project partners in Horizon 2020, SERI advises researchers in Switzerland to prepare their project submissions assuming that Switzerland will be fully associated from the beginning of 2017. This overview is complemented by a list of important rules that need to be taken into account.

Should Switzerland not be fully associated to H2020 from 2017, researchers based in Switzerland can continue to participate in collaborative projects, although they will not receive direct EC funding. In this case, the federal government will take the necessary measures to cover the expenses of the Swiss project partners.

Financial support can be requested for Swiss participations in H2020 collaborative projects that have been positively evaluated, proposed for funding and for which a grant agreement¹ (GA) has been signed and in which the Swiss participants are so-called third country partners.

Please note that you cannot submit requests for financial support for participation in projects of H2020 actions to which Switzerland is currently associated (Excellence in Science, Euratom/ITER, widening participation). Swiss participants in such projects are directly funded by the EC.²

This is a "living" document that will be extended and corrected according to the experiences both Swiss participants and administrative staff will make with the 3rd country participation in H2020 in the times to come. However, the SERI staff would like to express their hope that the procedure outlined in the following is slim and straightforward enough to allow you participating in H2020 projects and being part of the European research community as unhampered as possible.

2 How to participate in H2020 as a 3rd country partner with perspective of full association in 2017

As outlined in www.h2020.ch, the administrative and research policy settings for Switzerland have significantly changed with respect to the predecessor framework programme FP7 to which Switzerland was fully associated. In H2020, Switzerland currently is only partially associated. For illustration, we cite two paragraphs from the www.h2020.ch website:

"The current partial association allows researchers in Switzerland, as of 15 September 2014, to again participate as associated and thus equally entitled partners in all activities under the first pillar of H2020, comprising ERC grants, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, Future and Emerging Technologies (FET) and research infrastructures. Researchers in Switzerland are also able to participate as associated partners in the programme section on Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation and in Euratom. As associated partners, researchers in Switzerland are again able to receive direct funding from the EU.

For all other H2020 calls (mainly those from the second and third pillar), Switzerland remains a third country entity. In these programme areas, Swiss partners can still join European collaborative projects, however they will not be entitled to any direct funding from the EU for their part."

For 2017 this status ought to change again significantly, as we are currently expecting to be fully associated again by January 1st, 2017. Therefore, some small but decisive adjustments are to be made when applying for a collaborative project in those parts of H2020 to which Switzerland is not associated

¹ The signed GA is a legally indispensable requirement for concluding a funding contract between a research institution and SERI.

² According to the European Commission (EC), Swiss project partners will be certain to receive EC funding if the grant agreement is signed before 31 December 2016. The federal government will strive to find a solution for all other eventualities.

(until January 1st, 2017).

Though the according administrative and political settings are admittedly complex, participating in H2020 collaborative projects is surprisingly straightforward. In what follows, we will address the Swiss participant³ as "you".

As things are changing quickly, in the following we will distinguish two application processes

1. **You plan to submit a proposal** for a project expected to start in 2017 in which case you will receive funding through the EC with Switzerland currently being expected to become a fully associated country to H2020 by 1 January, 2017.
2. **You already submitted a proposal** to the EC in those parts of H2020 to which Switzerland is not associated and therefore assumes the status of an industrialised third country *and* you have received a positive evaluation (in which case you will receive national funding through the SBFI)

The main difference between these two options is *who you will receive funding from* and therefore how you'll have to submit your budget in your application. **This is decisive to actually benefit from funding after a successful application.** We know about some complications (i.e. 2 stage proposals that fall in between terms or calls that are too closely timed to change the budget again). For these, please see: Part A, 2.2 Eligibility criteria or contact [us](#) directly.

2.1 If you plan to submit a H2020 proposal to the EC

Here we assume that you are involved in the preparation of a proposal and that you are about submitting your part of the proposal via the [H2020 participant portal](#).

Even with the currently expected re-association of Switzerland to H2020 in 2017, you need to take into account a few points already during the preparation of a project proposal:

- It is highly recommended to notify [Euresearch](#) and/or your institution's research office of your intention to participate in a H2020 proposal submission. For University or ETH domain participants, please refer to your Euresearch regional office and/or the institution's research office⁴. For participants from other institutions or enterprises, please refer directly to the Euresearch head office.
- Despite the currently expected full association of Switzerland to H2020 in 2017, it is most advisable to still mind these boundary conditions of the "3rd country" regime:
 - the eligibility criterion for 3rd country participants in H2020 project consortia: the consortium must, additionally to you, consist of at least three partners from three different EU member states (MS) or associated states (AS).
 - If you intend to involve subcontractors, these should, if possible⁵, be based in Switzerland. Should there be reasons to involve foreign subcontractors, please discuss the matter with Euresearch or us.
- Given the expected full association of Switzerland to H2020 by 2017, participants from Switzerland should submit project proposals for all calls *as participants from associated countries*. In doing so, it is important that on the EC project submission form, participants from Switzerland provide their full attributable research budget ('Budget for the proposal' and 'EC requested funding' column) in order to receive funding from the EC budget.⁶
- *In proposal submissions to calls with deadlines after 30 September 2016, you need to design the financial setup of the project as if Switzerland was fully associated to H2020.* That is, count the Swiss participants' costs to the total project costs and keep in mind that one of the evaluation criteria is whether the total project costs (regardless from which sources they are funded) are reasonable for

³ Loosely speaking, this is the primary investigator in the participation of a Swiss institution. However, in terms of Art. 12 [FRPBV](#), it is the institution (i.e. a person who acts on behalf of this institution) who can submit funding requests to SERI.

⁴ In many cases, these are located at the same location and run by the same staff.

⁵ Note that you might have to take into consideration the public procurement law relevant for your institution.

⁶ Companies should respect maximum hourly rates as defined by CTI (see 3.3. „on personnel costs“).

the project as a whole. For detailed explanations on the CH2020 funding and financial reporting rules please refer to the [financial guidelines](#) (currently available in [French](#) and [German](#)).

- SERI understands that specific problems may arise in two-stage project submissions. If at the first stage, Swiss project partners submitted their budgets as Third-Country participants (EC contribution = 0), SERI accepts these Swiss partners stating their budgets as a Third-Country participant also in the second stage proposals.

Once the proposal is submitted, you do not need to do anything but wait until the project is positively evaluated and the coordinator is invited by the EC to prepare a grant agreement (GA).

2.2 If you already have submitted a proposal to the EC

How to apply for project-by-project funding

As the success rates in European Framework Programmes are not overly high (within the not homogeneously distributed range of [3%, 20%]), making it on the EC's funding list and being invited for GA preparation is an indicator that the proposal and the project consortium behind it play in the European champions' league of the research field addressed by the call: the proposal has matched very high standards of scientific excellence, implementation and project management quality and has outperformed many others in a highly competitive evaluation procedure.

This having been said, the subsequent section and Figure 1 intend to give you a short overview of what to do once the GA has been signed: "just" complete the [web form](#)⁷.

Required information and documents

(1) To get the web form completed swiftly, please be prepared to provide contact data⁸ of

- participant (= you)
- your affiliating institution (including legal name and PIC),
- Legal statement authorised signatory - "Vertragsperson"- (if person signing the contract with SERI is not you),
- contact person (if this is not you),
- bank account (IBAN if available) to which payments should be made.

(2) Furthermore, the following documents need to be uploaded as pdf-files:

- the submitted project proposal ,
- evaluation summary report ESR,
- signed GA⁹,
- signed accession form (if you are not the coordinator).

⁷ If you are requesting SERI funding for your participation in **H2020 ERA-NET Cofund**, please follow the specific instructions for completion given in the web form

⁸ note that these contact data serve as a characterisation of the institution who, according to Art. 12 [FRPBV](#), is entitled to submit funding requests to SERI.

⁹ To conclude a funding contract between you and SERI, the signed GA is a legally indispensable requirement. To speed up the procedure, you may submit your funding request for pre-check by Euresearch before GA signature. Note, however, that the final submission to SERI can only be made and the funding contract can only be concluded upon delivery of a copy of the GA that has been signed by both parties (i.e. coordinator and EC).

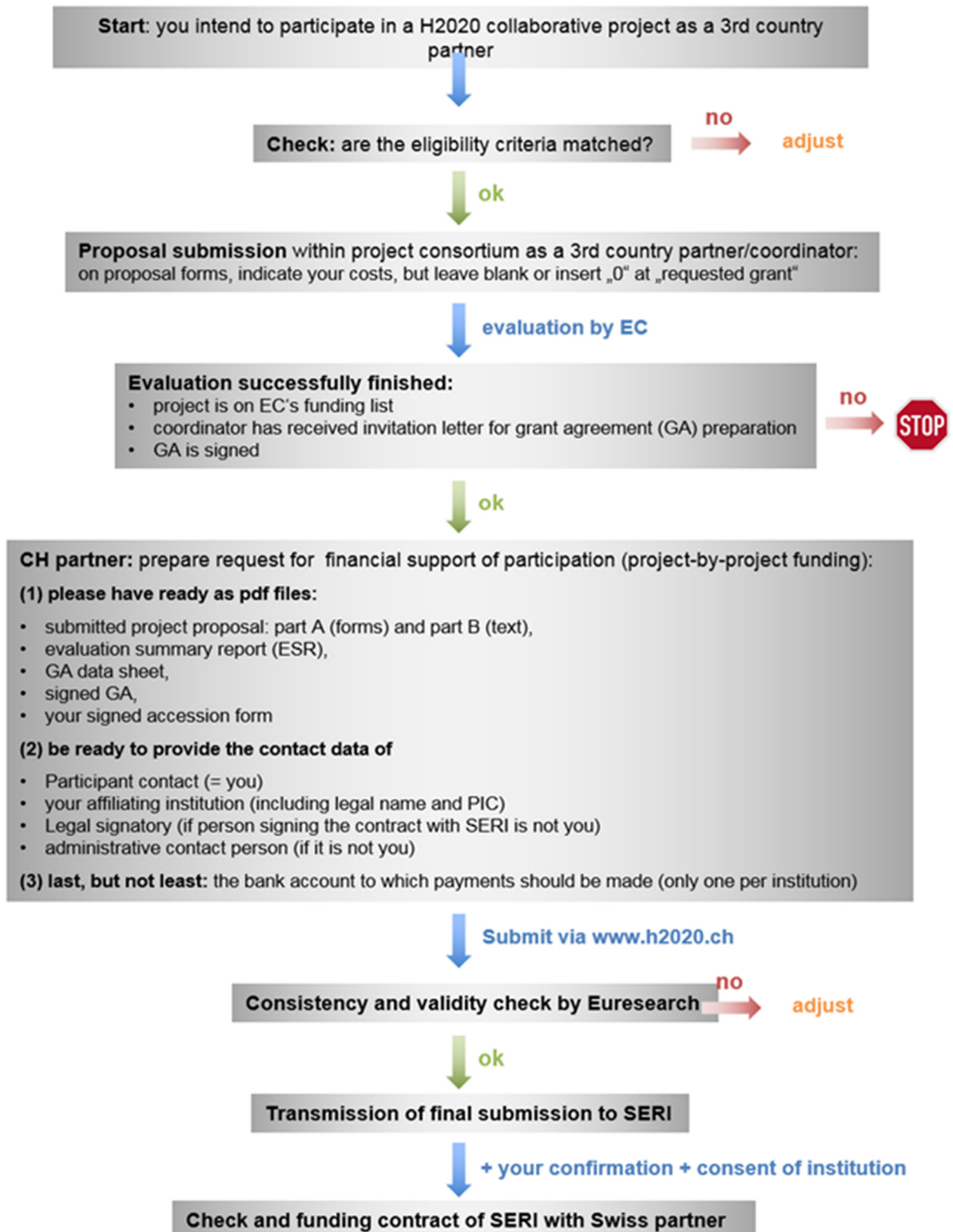


Figure 1: Procedure to follow for Swiss participants *only when submitting as 3rd country participants*.

Should there be any missing information or ambiguities in your request, your Euresearch contact will, in close collaboration with you, finalise and prepare your request for final submission to SERI. At this phase, both Euresearch and you will have access to your account. Close collaboration and communication are essential at this phase. The "Help" button at the top right corner of the web form assists you in getting in touch with Euresearch.

Please note that solely you can submit the finalised request: once you have finalised your request with your Euresearch contact, your account will be set to read-only access and you will be invited to submit the finalised request to SERI. If you should not agree with changes proposed by Euresearch, this will be indicated by Euresearch and SERI will take the final decision.

This procedure ensures that you have checked and approved the final version of the request, being aware of your role as person who is legally responsible for the submission of the request to SERI. Note that this also implies that you have secured the consent of your institution!

3 General rules

The legal basis for project-by-project funding of Swiss participations in H2020 projects (henceforth termed "CH2020 funding") can be found [here](#). In what follows, citations via "Art." or "Abs." refer to the [FRPBV](#) ("Verordnung über die Massnahmen für die Beteiligung der Schweiz an den Rahmenprogrammen der Europäischen Union im Bereich Forschung und Innovation")¹⁰.

Here, we compile and explain some rules and conditions of participation that the submission procedure is based on and that we consider particularly relevant for you to be aware of when submitting a funding request to SERI.

What can be funded

SERI is entitled to provide funding for H2020 activities which Switzerland is not associated to and to which Switzerland is admitted to participate in as a 3rd country partner (Art. 8 FRPBV). The introduction of Section 2 provides an outline of which H2020 actions fall when under this category.

Who can be funded

On request, SERI can provide CH2020 funding to Universities, University research institutions, non-commercial non-university research institutions and companies that are based in Switzerland (Art. 10 Abs 1 FRPBV). Note, however, that units of the central federal administration (CFA) cannot be funded directly by SERI. Special procedures apply. If you belong to the CFA and intend to participate in a H2020 project, please contact the person responsible for research at your CFA unit. However, please do also submit a request for funding to SERI once your project GA is concluded. In the web form, please additionally indicate the planned project costs per calendar year.

Submission of requests

(i) Each participating institution handles all CH2020 funding requests within its domain by one internal centre¹¹, (ii) that informs SERI about all submitted H2020 proposals within its domain, (iii) SERI may define submission deadlines¹² for CH2020 funding requests (Art. 12 Abs. 1-3. FRPBV).

¹⁰ Ordinance of 12 September 2014 on Measures for Switzerland's Participation in the Framework Programmes of the European Union in Research and Innovation.

¹¹ i.e. research office, Euresearch regional office. If you are a small institution/company with only one H2020 participation, this is you and your Euresearch contact.

¹² Currently, there are none. If there were they would be announced on www.h2020.ch.

Formal conditions for CH2020 funding

- (i) Projects need to be based on a contract (i.e. the GA) between the European Commission (EC) or an agency mandated by the EC and the project consortium (Art. 10 Abs. 3 lit. a FRPBV). That is, the participant needs to appear explicitly in the GA and must have signed the GA or the accession form¹³.
- (ii) SERI does not fund Swiss researchers who wish to join a project after its starting date and who have not participated in the project's preparation. The only exception is when the Swiss researcher intends to replace another Swiss participant or other beneficiary involved in the project from its beginning.
- (iii) The CH participation is not exceptionally funded by the EC¹⁴ (Art. 10 Abs. 3 lit. b FRPBV).

General financial rules

Rules on funding and financial reporting that apply to project partners from EU member states (MS) or associated countries (AC) in principle also apply to Swiss participants¹⁵. That means, in particular, that CH2020 funding shall not exceed the funding costs for the Swiss participants as indicated in the GA with respect to funding rates and funding cuts that apply to all project partners. (Art. 11 Abs 3 FRPBV). For detailed explanations on the CH2020 funding and financial reporting rules please refer to the [financial guidelines](#) (currently available in [French](#) and [German](#)).

Only costs in Switzerland

CH2020 funding can only be provided for costs that are incurred in Switzerland. Exceptions: (i) subcontracting costs for work that cannot be performed in Switzerland, (ii) costs that are incurred for use of research infrastructures that are not based in Switzerland. (Art 10 Abs. 4 FRPBV).

On In-kind contributions (IKCs)

For IKCs, the rules laid down in the model grant agreement (see footnote 20) apply. Indirect costs ("overhead") only can be charged for IKCs that are used on your, that is the beneficiary's, site ("on premises"). Consequently, no overhead may be charged for costs of IKCs used off-site¹⁶.

On personnel costs

Please indicate your costs¹⁷ according to the ones indicated in the GA. When indicating direct personnel costs, please use the usual salary rates of your institution¹⁸, except if you are a company: in this case please use the usual hourly rates of your company up to the ones indicated as "Tarif B" in the CTI salary guideline (currently available in [French](#) and [German](#)) then¹⁹. The hourly rates indicated there comprise salary including employer's contribution to social insurances but without overhead (which you can indicate separately).

¹³ Note that MSCA Innovative Training Networks (ITN) are exceptions: there is no contract of the partner organisations with the EC but they are mentioned in the GA annexes. However, they are eligible for CH2020 funding if the call deadline was before 15 Sept 2014. Furthermore, personnel costs are specified differently. Please find instructions [here](#).

¹⁴ The EC can also fund 3rd country participants if their contribution is judged to be essential for the project (due to a very rigid definition of "essential", this happens extremely rarely).

¹⁵ Note that SERI reserves the right to impose own eligibility rules for cost categories that will be published as a negative list (none so far).

¹⁶ In this case, account for these costs under "D-other direct costs", without charging overhead for them (cf. column "m" in the EC's "estimated budget" form).

¹⁷ The web form has been designed in order to match both the GA layout and Art. 11 Abs.2 FRPBV.

¹⁸ Note that, though personnel costs are not explicitly capped for non-commercial institutions, SERI reserves the right to cut personnel costs that are "excessive" in relation to the market price level.

¹⁹ Note that, contrary to the CTI-guidelines" project leader rates can be charged for the *complete* time the respective person works for the project. Project leader rates apply for project coordinators (if applicable), for the PI of the Swiss participation and for work package leaders.

Be aware of reporting obligations

Although not required in the CH2020 funding request, you or your financial department will be requested by SERI to provide some more detailed financial information when it comes to financial reporting after the first project phase and after the project is concluded. The reporting rules outlined in the [CH2020 financial guidelines](#) (currently also available in [French](#) and [German](#)) grossly follow the ones of the EC²⁰.

Within reason!

SERI reserves the right to impose funding cuts should the costs of the Swiss participant be unproportionally and unreasonably high. This includes the right to mandate an external expert panel to review the Swiss project part. As a rule of thumb, “Swiss costs” more than twice as high as the ones of the next-expensive project partner will be given a closer look on whether they are justified.

Exchange rate

Please provide all your costs in EUR. SERI will convert the requested amount into CHF, applying the month average exchange rate at the call deadline as published by the Swiss National Bank. If your project was evaluated in a two-stage evaluation, the submission deadline for the 2nd stage proposal will be relevant for the exchange rate definition.

Payments

CH2020 funding will be based on a contract between the Swiss participant and SERI (Art. 12 Abs. 4 FRPBV). A first payment instalment of 50% of the funding will be paid on contract signature but not before project start. The next tranche can of 30% can be invoiced after receipt of the interim financial report and the last one (20%) after approval of the final financial report. The Swiss participant has to issue an invoice to SERI for each payment.

Reporting

Copies of all project reports submitted to the EC have to be (electronically) sent to SERI according to the reporting periods specified in the GA²¹. Furthermore, specific financial reports to SERI will be required to release payments of funding instalments (see above):

- 1st financial reporting after 2 years (for projects lasting at least 36 months), or after 1 year for shorter projects. Invoice for max 30% of the grant.
- Final financial report at the end of the project. Invoice: remaining 20% of the grant, but not more than the eligible costs incurred.

Notifications on GA amendments

All notifications made to the EC concerning amendments to the Grant Agreement and to the Consortium Agreement shall also be notified to SERI. If the GA amendment affects your participation, your funding contract with SERI will be adapted accordingly.

Change of affiliation

If a Swiss participant changes his or her affiliation, SERI needs to be informed immediately.

²⁰ See the EC's (quite voluminous!) annotated model grant agreement [AMGA](#).

²¹ i.e. to be submitted in parallel with the reports submitted to the EC.

Confidentiality

Towards Swiss participants, SERI assumes EC's role as a funding agency and therefore needs to be provided with appropriate project related information to meet its financial controlling obligations. Of course, all information submitted to SERI will be treated confidentially.

If you want to make sure that your partners will not consider transmitting the reports and other official project documents a breach of confidentiality you can add a clause to the CA that "the Swiss State Secretariat for Research and Innovation (SERI) shall not be considered a third party in the sense of the articles dealing with confidentiality" (Art. 10 DESCA).

4 Further information and assistance

Should you encounter any problems or ambiguities, please feel free to [contact us](#). Please let us know about hooks and pitfalls in the text and within the application procedure. Any recommendations for improvement are most welcome!