Status Update: Swiss participation in Horizon Europe and related programmes and initiatives

Information as of 4 May 2022

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) provides regular updates on Switzerland's participation in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon Europe:

Main changes have been made in the sections marked with □.

- Switzerland is considered a non-associated third country1 in Horizon Europe and related programmes and initiatives. This applies to Horizon Europe, the Euratom programme and the Digital Europe Programme (DEP). As far as the construction of ITER is concerned, the EU no longer considers Switzerland a participating state for the time being.

- Switzerland's association to Horizon Europe and related programmes and initiatives as soon as possible remains the Federal Council's declared goal. However the European Commission (EC) informed SERI that it was not in a position to discuss the next steps towards exploratory talks and negotiations on an association at this point.

- As a non-associated third country, project participants based in Switzerland can still participate in most collaborative projects. As the funding for project participants in Switzerland is not provided by the EC, they must indicate how their costs will be covered when submitting the project to the EC. The funding is provided by SERI as part of the transitional measures (see section A.2) and is secured for positively evaluated projects. SERI has made corresponding funding guarantees for the 2021 and 2022 calls available on its website. These can be distributed to the consortium partners.

- Participation in individual projects is not possible as a non-associated third country. These include the individual fellowships from the European Research Council (ERC), the Postdoctoral Fellowships from the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA PF) and the Accelerator from the European Innovation Council (EIC).

- Following the decision on the transitional measures for the EIC Accelerator 2022 calls of 4 March 2022, the Federal Council decided to provide funds for further 2022 transitional measures on 4 May 2022. This concerns transitional solutions for the 2022 calls for proposals ERC Advanced Grants (AdG) and MSCA PF, which will be implemented by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). Further transitional measures will be initiated at the European Space Agency ESA and other actors. In addition, the Federal Council has decided to provide national funding by SERI for all collaborative projects of the 2022 calls that have been positively evaluated. Additional funding was granted in the areas of high-performance computing and quantum research. The implementation of the transitional measures in 2022 is subject to the approval of Parliament within the Confederations' credit and budget process.

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1 Please note that according to the EU nomenclature, all non-EU states are referred to as third countries. Within Horizon Europe, a distinction is made between (i) associated countries and (ii) non-associated third countries. This nomenclature is also used in this document. Among the non-associated third countries, participants from high-income third countries do normally not receive funding from the European Commission (EC), while a number of low- and middle-income third countries are automatically eligible for EC funding. Detailed information can be found here.
Furthermore, on 4 May 2022 the Federal Council decided on complementary measures. These involve the promotion of bilateral and multilateral research collaborations and the launch of a national quantum initiative.

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A. SWISS PARTICIPATION IN HORIZON EUROPE

A.1 State of play

- The legal basis for Horizon Europe was adopted by the Council of the EU on 16 March 2021 and by the European Parliament on 27 April 2021. On 12 May 2021 the Horizon Europe Regulation officially entered into force. It is retroactively applied as of 1 January 2021.

- The European Commission (EC) informed SERI on 22 June 2021 that Switzerland will be treated as a non-associated third country for the submission of project proposals in Horizon Europe and related programmes and initiatives (see Horizon Europe Programme Guide).

- According to information provided by the EC in November 2021, this status will also apply to the calls in 2022 until further notice. In a response letter, the EC stated that at this point in time they are not in a position to discuss the next steps towards association exploratory talks and negotiations.

- Hence, participants in Switzerland receive their funding directly from SERI, namely in all projects that were fully evaluated, for which a participation is possible and a positive result of the evaluation is available.

A.2 Transitional as well as further measures

Please note: A graphic overview of all measures initiated can be found on the SERI website Transitional measures - Direct funding.

SERI-internal transitional measures, direct funding: Direct funding is the most important transitional measure in financial terms. The Federal Council decided on 20 October 2021 to directly finance positively evaluated collaborative and accessible mono-beneficiary projects in the 2021 calls.

On 4 May 2022, the Federal Council approved direct national funding by SERI for all positively evaluated collaborative projects for the 2022 calls for proposals.

SERI-external transitional measures, individual grants: On 17 September 2021, the Federal Council instructed SERI to initiate transitional measures 2021. These were submitted to the parliament in the 2021 winter session and approved in December 2021. As a substitute for participation in the 2021 calls for proposals for the ERC Advanced Grants (AdG) and MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships (PF), as well as the ERC Starting (StG) and Consolidator Grants (CoG) 2022, SERI has commissioned the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) to implement transitional solutions. These are based as far as possible on the ERC StG, CoG, AdG and MSCA...
PF calls, but have their own deadlines for project submission. Further information on the individual calls is available on the SNSF website.

On 4 May 2022, the Federal Council approved funds to implement the 2022 calls for proposals for the ERC AdG and the MSCA PF at the SNSF. Additionally, the Federal Council has earmarked funds for potential transitional measures in 2023 for the ERC StG, CoG and AdG, which will be initiated in case Switzerland’s current participation status in Horizon Europe does not change. SERI will provide information in due course.

- **SERI-external transitional measures, innovation:** SERI has also initiated transitional measures in the area of innovation. Innosuisse has been participating in the Eureka clusters ITEA-4 and Xecs since 2021. In addition, the promotion of innovation projects and systemic innovation within the framework of the Flagship Initiative at Innosuisse will be strengthened based on the Federal Council decisions of 17 September 2021 and 4 May 2022. Additional funding will also be made available for BRIDGE, as a joint programme of the SNSF and Innosuisse.

For the EIC Accelerator 2022 calls for proposals, the Federal Council adopted transitional measures on 4 March 2022. SERI has commissioned Innosuisse to implement the Swiss Accelerator. Additionally, the Federal Council has earmarked funds for potential transitional measures in 2023 for the EIC Accelerator, which will be initiated in case Switzerland’s current participation status in Horizon Europe does not change. SERI will provide information in due course.

- **Further transitional measures** have been initiated at the European Space Agency ESA and other players. At ESA, the funds can be used for the 2021 calls under the already running Prodex, Artes programmes and newly for the 2022 calls in the NAVISP, FLPP and GSTP programmes. Additional funding was granted in the areas of high-performance computing and quantum research.

- **Complementary measures:** The Federal Council decided on complementary measures on 4 May 2022. These involve the promotion of bilateral and multilateral research cooperation and the launch of a national quantum initiative.
  - **Replacement measures** should only take effect if no association to the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation is possible in the long term.
  - **Switzerland’s association with Horizon Europe as soon as possible remains the Federal Council’s declared goal.**

**B. GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS**

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Please note: To provide further information on specific issues, SERI has also published a document with the most “frequently asked questions and answer on the Swiss participation in Horizon Europe and related programmes and initiatives” on its website.

### B.1 Collaborative projects

- SERI recommends institutions based in Switzerland (including companies and notably SME) to participate in consortia responding to calls for proposals in Horizon Europe and in the Euratom programme. European project partners should be actively made aware that the inclusion of Swiss partners in a consortium has no negative influence on the evaluation of a project. The evaluation by independent experts follows clear guidelines and criteria and any discrimination would explicitly violate the evaluation rules.

- Applicants based in Switzerland must submit their project proposals on the Funding & tenders portal as participants from a non-associated third country (‘associated partner’) until further notice. This applies not only to the calls with call identifier 2021, but also to the 2022 calls (meaning 2021 or 2022 is included in the call ID) until further notice. Additionally, any proposal needs to fulfil the general eligibility criteria (minimum of 3 independent partners from 3 different Member States or associated countries, of which at least one is based in a Member State). Participants from non-associated third countries cannot coordinate projects. They can however lead work packages as any other participant.

- Should Switzerland be reclassified by the EC as a “country to be associated” before the deadline of the corresponding calls, Swiss participants must change their status from ‘associated partner’ to
‘beneficiary’ in the project proposal and apply for funding from the EC. In this case, the budget must be included in the total amount of funding requested by the consortium from the EC.

- If researchers and innovators have obtained Horizon Europe project funding in collaborative projects from an institution in an EU Member State or associated country and have accepted an appointment to an institution in Switzerland, as long as Switzerland is a non-associated third country, SERI will directly fund these researchers and innovators (through so-called transfer grants). This applies to ongoing projects with an existing grant agreement which are transferred from an EU Member State or an associated country.

- The Euresearch network, which is funded and mandated by SERI for this purpose, will continue to advise researchers and innovators in Switzerland planning to participate in Horizon Europe projects. It is recommended to seek advice from Euresearch when submitting project proposals.

B.2 Mono-beneficiary projects

- Participation as researchers from non-associated third countries in mono-beneficiary instruments (namely ERC, MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships and EIC Accelerator) is no longer possible. This also applies to proposals already submitted that will not necessarily be evaluated.

- However, exceptional rules apply to the 2021 calls of the ERC Starting (StG) and Consolidator Grants (CoG), which have already been closed. As the host institution for these projects can be changed during the preparation phase of the Grant Agreement, proposals submitted by Principal Investigators based at a Swiss host institution have been evaluated. Researchers and innovators with a positively evaluated project proposal for an ERC StG 2021 or an ERC CoG 2021 (an application on the so-called ‘main list’ that would in principle be eligible for EU funding) are awarded a ‘SERI-funded ERC Starting Grant’ or ‘SERI-funded ERC Consolidator Grant’ from SERI if they carry out their project at an institution in Switzerland.

- Researchers and innovators with a positively evaluated project proposals of the EIC Accelerator call 2021 (after two evaluation stages) will receive a ‘SERI funded-EIC Accelerator Grant’.

As a substitute for the participation in the 2021 ERC Advanced Grants, 2021 MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships calls and the 2022 ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants, SERI has assigned the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) to implement transitional solutions. In addition, the Federal Council has approved funds to carry out the 2022 ERC AdG and MSCA PF calls for proposals at the SNSF (see section A.2).

- The Federal Council also decided to initiate transitional measures for the 2022 EIC Accelerator calls. These measures will be implemented by Innosuisse (see section A.2).

- If researchers and innovators have obtained Horizon Europe project funding for a mono-beneficiary grant (namely ERC StG, CoG, AdG) from an institution in an EU Member State or an associated country and have accepted an appointment to an institution in Switzerland, as long as Switzerland is a non-associated third country, SERI will directly fund these researchers and innovators (through so-called transfer grants). This applies to ongoing projects with an existing grant agreement which are transferred from an EU Member State or an associated country.

C. CONTACT

- For questions on the status of Switzerland and on federal funding of Swiss participation in EU projects:
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