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Baccalaureate education

Measures to boost professional education and training

New 'Personalised Medicine' support initiative



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

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Cover photo:

The diversity of the Swiss education system is an asset for Switzerland. Preserving this diversity in terms of levels and educational paths, while ensuring a certain level of permeability, is essential. The Confederation and cantons work together effectively with a view to maintaining high-quality baccalaureate education in order to guarantee students access to higher education without the need to sit entrance exams. Photo: Iris Krebs

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Dear reader



The question of cooperation between universities and the private sector has been in the spotlight recently.

Professorial chairs financed by businesses, private sponsorship of higher education institutions, university research groups commissioned by industry – what is and isn't permissible in public-private-partnerships? And is the federal government encouraging a brutalisation of academic mores by taking account of third-party funding, for example, in the competitive allocation of resources to cantonal institutes of higher education under the Higher Education Act, thereby rewarding more successful institutions?

Anyone considering how universities operate in this day and age has no cause to be overly concerned. The institutions take great care to uphold their academic freedom in teaching and research, even when carrying out commissions. Any researcher worth his salt knows that the saying, 'Once one's reputation has been ruined, one can live quite freely', does not apply in this field. Instead the thinking of the philosopher Karl Popper holds sway, that empirical science is characterised by the demarcation criterion of falsifiability: research findings, whether publicly or privately funded, are peer reviewed. Anyone attempting to cheat or deceive is likely to be found out and then has a real credibility problem in academic circles; and private backers of academic cheats would be mauled in the press.

Even if we cannot recall such a case in Switzerland, the question remains of when the limits of privately funded university research are reached. That would certainly be the case if it were the only form of research, and if that research focused exclusively on 'hard' and application-oriented sciences. But we are nowhere near there yet. The Swiss National Science Foundation exercises its constitutional mandate to promote free basic research in all disciplines – including the humanities and social sciences – irreproachably, and with significant federal funding. At a national level, third-party funding accounts for less than 10% of total income at higher education institutions, and that share has remained stable in recent years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Mauro Dell'Ambrogio'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mauro Dell'Ambrogio
State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI

Enhancing the quality of the Swiss baccalaureate

Programme to promote basic subject skills to be rapidly implemented

The Confederation and cantons pursue the joint education policy goal of guaranteeing that students who hold a Swiss baccalaureate can be admitted to university without having to sit an entrance exam. In order to achieve this goal, the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) launched four sub-projects that are co-funded by the Confederation. These include a programme to develop basic subject skills that students who wish to enter university must acquire in their first language and mathematics. The Confederation is calling for swift implementation of the programme.



Implementing programmes to ensure basic subject skills in mathematics and a first language, which students require in order to study at university, is an important aspect of current policy regarding baccalaureates in Switzerland.

According to Article 61a of the Federal Constitution, the Confederation and the cantons are responsible for ensuring the high quality and permeability of the Swiss Education Area. The Confederation is therefore jointly responsible for guaranteeing the quality of baccalaureate courses and works closely with the cantons within the limits of its powers in this area.

In 2011, the Confederation and cantons amended the declaration of joint policy objectives regarding the Swiss education area. These objectives were re-examined and adapted in 2015 in line with the 2014 national report on education. These joint objectives include guaranteeing admission to university without the need to sit an entrance exam for holders of a baccalaureate and reducing the university dropout rate. The baccalaureate qualification

proves that students have acquired the necessary skills to be admitted to university without having to sit an exam.

Guaranteeing suitability for higher education

In the summer of 2001, the Confederation and cantons decided to conduct a national evaluation of the baccalaureate reform, which took place in 1995 (EVAMAR I: see box). A further evaluation, EVAMAR II (2008), and the subsequent education reports of 2010 and 2014, reported that some baccalaureate holders lacked the skills required to enter higher education.

The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) and the Confederation launched a project in 2012 entitled 'The Swiss baccalaureate – a long-term guarantee of access to higher education

without an entrance exam', which comprised several sub-projects. The results and conclusions of these sub-projects were examined by the EDK and the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER).

In his position statement of 21 December 2015, the head of the EAER, Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, emphasised the need to maintain the quality of the baccalaureate in order to guarantee access to universities for baccalaureate holders in the long term. This ensures that students are able to complete their degrees successfully in the shortest possible time without switching subjects. In order to achieve this, guidance and orientation activities aimed at future university students are to be stepped up.

Positive impact of the EVAMAR national baccalaureate evaluation

Contact is encouraged between baccalaureate schools and universities to ease the transition for students, either in the form of individual initiatives, such as assessments of baccalaureate exams or joint supervision of baccalaureate essays; or in the form of collaboration networks at institutional level. Such cantonal ar-

The basic subject skills required to enter higher education

The EVAMAR II study revealed that the skills necessary to maximise chances of success at university are the skills taught in the first language (language of schooling), such as reasoning and language production, as well as in basic mathematics, such as logical thinking and abstract reasoning.

rangements should be implemented to ensure comparability of examination procedures at regional level. Implementing programmes to ensure basic subject skills in mathematics and a first language, which students require in order to study at university, is an important aspect of current policy regarding baccalaureates in Switzerland.

Professor Franz Eberle from the University of Zurich highlighted a number of basic subject skills required for a wide range of university disciplines. Such skills should therefore be acquired as part of baccalaureate courses to enable students to successfully pursue various higher education programmes (see box).

Close cooperation between the cantons and Confederation

Following the EDK's plenary assembly of 17 March, the head of the EAER repeated his call for the rapid implementation of a programme to ensure basic subject skills and for this to be integrated in the core curriculum for the baccalaureate from the 2016-2017 academic year. He also welcomed the imminent establishment of a working group involving represent-

atives from the Confederation and cantons which would be tasked with evaluating and modifying the conditions for success where necessary, in particular by examining the weighting rules between mathematics, students' first language and other disciplines. An evaluation is also set to be conducted into whether the notion of basic subject skills should be incorporated in the Federal Council's ordinance/EDK's regulations on the recognition of baccalaureates.

In addition, the implementation of a programme to ensure basic skills in mathematics and a first language is due to be evaluated, but no date has been set at this time.

The diversity of the Swiss education system is an asset for Switzerland. Preserving this diversity in terms of levels and educational paths, while ensuring a certain level of permeability, are essential. The Confederation and cantons work together effectively with a view to maintaining high-quality baccalaureate education in order to guarantee students access to higher education without the need to sit entrance exams.

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(German, French and Italian only)
🌐 www.sbfi.admin.ch/ch-maturitaet_d

EDK information
(German and French only):
🌐 www.edk.ch/dyn/11661.php

National evaluation of the baccalaureate EVAMAR

In 1995, the structure of the baccalaureate was overhauled. It had previously been based on categories ranging from A to E and was changed to a system where students are free to choose their main and secondary specialisms, thereby offering broader choice and a greater focus on cross-disciplinary approaches. The national evaluation of this reform was conducted in two stages: EVAMAR I (2002–2005) and EVAMAR II (2005-2008).

The EVAMAR II study was conducted under the direction of Professor Franz Eberle at the University of Zurich (Institute for Educational Science). According to the study, the level of baccalaureate holders' skills was considered satisfactory in the three subjects examined (first language, mathematics and biology). The best results were obtained in the first language, ahead of mathematics and biology. There were, however, notable differences between individuals and between entire classes. The study also highlighted a correlation between the results obtained in the tests and various other factors, such as the baccalaureate pass rate, the duration of baccalaureate courses and the specific options chosen. The baccalaureate essay, which was introduced at the same time as the regulations on the recognition of the baccalaureate in 1995, is well thought of on the whole and was considered an effective form of learning and examination by the researchers.

OECD workshops in Bern

Experts in vocational education and training from Switzerland and abroad exchange ideas on work-based learning

The Confederation is committed to improving the visibility of Swiss vocational and professional education and training (VPET) and raising awareness of its specific features at an international level. It does so, for example, through its membership of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and by hosting international conferences. At the end of April, some 70 vocational education and training representatives from Switzerland and abroad convened in Bern to discuss work-based learning in the scope of three OECD workshops. The findings from the workshops are to be incorporated in an OECD study.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) contributes to the evaluation and development of political strategies in its member states in the fields of economics, finance, education and science, social affairs, the environment and development.

The OECD also plays an important role in the field of vocational education and training. It has published two comparative country studies on vocational education and training in recent years ('Learning for Jobs' and 'Skills beyond School') and therefore put the topic of VPET on the international political agenda. The country studies on Switzerland highlighted the key role of VPET in this country and presented the strengths of Swiss VPET to an international audience.

Six different modules

In conjunction with these country studies, the OECD launched a project in 2015 to address thematic aspects of work-based learning (WBL) and vocational education and training. The project aims to understand how work-based learning can have a positive impact on the economic and social developments in a given country. This involves analysing in detail six issues (modules) related to work-based learning, highlighting good practice and formulating the most important insights in the form of policy recommendations (see table).

As a member of the OECD and as a participant in the OECD Group of National Experts on Vocational Education and Training, Switzerland contributes to research into topics related to work-based learning and vocational education and training. It is contributing a total of EUR 160,000 to co-fund the modules 'Recognising skills acquired through work-based learning' and 'Work-based learning and career guidance'. These funds are to be used for the development of the analysis reports drawn up by the OECD on the individual modules. The reports will then be discussed in workshops by OECD member states and the results incorporated in a synthesis report containing policy recommendations for each of the six topic areas. The synthesis report is due to be published in 2017.

Aspects of work-based learning

For the workshops that were held from 27–29 April 2016, 70 participants from over 15 countries convened in Bern. The conference was opened by State Secretary Mauro Dell'Ambrogio, Director of SERI.

The first and third days focused on cost-benefit considerations for training apprentices and incentives for creating apprenticeships. Discussions revolved around questions such as why companies offer apprenticeships, what incentives there are to encourage companies

to do so and how the costs and benefits of training apprentices can be measured.

A key takeaway from the two days was that the benefits for host businesses vary depending on the sector and business in question and are not only limited to apprentices' productivity. For instance, training apprentices can have a positive influence on the public perception of a business or on the learning culture within the organisation. Recruitment costs for skilled workers can also be a crucial factor in companies' cost-benefit analyses. In addition, participants concluded that monetary incentives from the public sector, as opposed to non-monetary incentives, have a minimal impact on the creation of new apprenticeship places.

Testing the skills acquired through work-based learning

The second day of the conference, which was funded by Switzerland, focused on formal recognition of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in a work context. Following an inaugural address by Josef Widmer, Deputy Director of SERI, there were a number of presentations by different players. Representatives from the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET) and its German counterpart, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, as well as representatives from professional organisations (including the Swiss Conference of Commercial Training and Examination Branches) addressed questions such as: How are the skills acquired in a work context formally recognised? Who is responsible for the qualification process and what quality assurance mechanisms are in place? How can we ensure that skills acquired through work-based learning are also

Module 1	Costs and benefits of apprenticeships
Module 2	Strengthening incentives and implementation of apprenticeships
Module 3	Work-based learning and school-to-work transition among at-risk youth
Module 4	Work-based learning and productivity
Module 5	Recognising skills acquired through work-based learning
Module 6	Work-based learning and career guidance

An overview of the modules of the work-based learning studies

recognised in the labour market? How can skills acquired through work-based learning be tested?

In order to illustrate the central role played by professional organisations in the qualification process in Switzerland, SERI joined forces with the Swiss Professional Examination Commission for the Real Estate Industry to organise an exam simulation for the Federal Diploma of Higher Education in real estate management. This provided the VET experts from abroad with an insight into how a PET oral examination is organised and conducted and allowed them to see the process from an examiner's perspective. This exercise demonstrated which skills are assessed through oral examinations and how. The exam simulation featuring real examiners was one of the highlights of the intensive three-day conference.

As a host of the OECD workshop modules, SERI, together with its Swiss network partners, facilitated a highly informative exchange between VET representatives from government ministries, social partners and international organisations (OECD, the European Commission). This is in line with SERI's strategic objective of promoting better understanding of Swiss vocational education and training, raising its profile on the international stage and boosting vocational education and training in general at an international level.

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The OECD

- The mission of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is to promote policies that will improve the economic and social wellbeing of people around the world.
- Members: 34 member states, including Switzerland
- Established: 1961 (its predecessor organisation was established in 1947)
- OECD and (vocational) education: The OECD considers education an important factor in achieving its goals in terms of sustainable economic growth, job creation, improving standards of living and maintaining financial stability in its member states.
- OECD country studies in the field of vocational education and training: Learning for Jobs (country study on vocational education and training – Switzerland, 2009) and Skills beyond School (country study on professional education and training – Switzerland, 2013)

Further information:
www.sbfi.admin.ch/oecd_e

Source: OECD and SERI

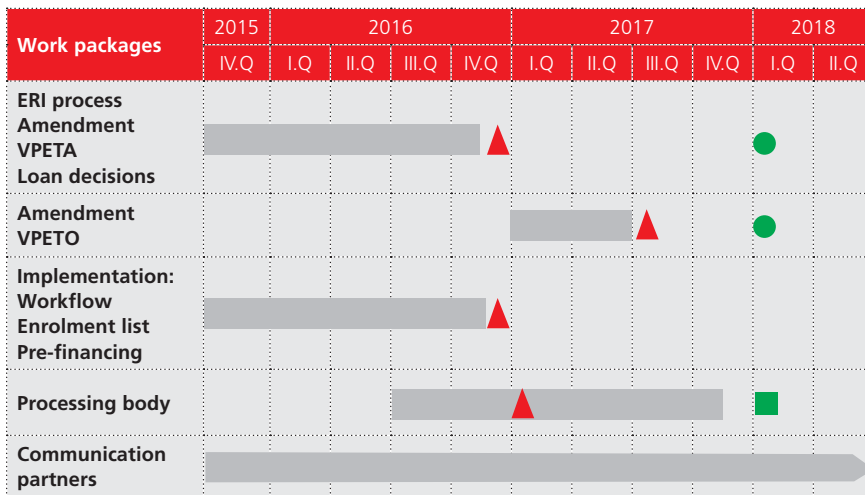
Date	27 April 2016	28 April 2016	29 April 2016
Module	1) Costs and benefits of apprenticeships	5) Recognising skills acquired through work-based learning	2) Strengthening incentives and implementation of apprenticeships
Funded by	European Commission and Germany	Switzerland and Germany	Norway

Workshops on the topics of modules 1,2 and 5 were held in Bern at the end of April.

An overview of the measures put in place to boost professional education and training

Important steps taken

Professional education and training (PET) is a priority for SERI. In order to ensure an integrated approach to developing and strengthening PET, SERI launched a strategic project in 2013. The project sees SERI working with the cantons and professional organisations to discuss solution approaches. These efforts in the fields of funding, positioning and recognition of PET will gradually yield results between now and 2017. The following article offers an overview of the project's various measures and of measures in other fields.



Entry into force ● Go live ■ Decision ▲

An overview of the rollout process for the new subject-based funding for preparatory courses for federal examinations. VPETA: Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act; VPETO: Vocational and Professional Education and Training Ordinance. Image: SERI

Funding

Preparatory courses for federal examinations

Students who complete preparatory courses for federal examinations are to benefit from direct federal grants. The Federal Council submitted the proposal for a partial revision of the Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (VPETA) for consultation in January 2015. The proposal received a largely positive response. Based on the results of the consultation process, the Federal Council defined the next steps and the key execution details in September of the same year. It submitted the necessary legal amendments to Parliament within the scope of the 2017–2020 ERI Dispatch. In this connection it is applying for funding worth a total of CHF 365 million. The Vocational and Professional Education and Training Ordinance (VPETO) is to be amended by mid-2017. Meanwhile, the new grant process is set to be implemented in early 2018.

SERI is currently working with its partners to plan the grant application process in detail. This will largely be processed electronically. They are also looking at placing the courses in question on an enrolment list. The form of this enrolment list and the way courses are registered will be defined by the end of 2016. An external body will be commissioned by the federal government to handle the grant process. The decision regarding the awarding of this contract will be made in the first half of 2017. Finally, SERI and the Conference of Swiss VET/PET Agencies have already agreed on the transitional arrangements from the current system of cantonal funding to the future federal funding process.

Conducting federal examinations

In 2013, the Confederation contributed 25 per cent of the costs of conducting federal examinations; that figure has now risen to 60–80 per cent. In 2015 the Confederation spent some CHF 30 million in this area.

Developing federal examinations and courses of study at professional colleges

The Confederation assists institutions in creating and developing federal examinations and in drawing up core curricula for courses of study at professional colleges. In 2015, the Confederation paid grants worth a total of CHF 3 million.

Funding for courses of study at professional colleges

In 2014, the Intercantonal Agreement on Funding Contributions for Study Programmes at Colleges of Higher Education (HFSV) came into effect. For the first time from the 2015/2016 academic year, the same grants apply for the same study programmes throughout Switzerland.

Positioning

National Qualifications Framework (NQF VPET)

The NQF VPET and the associated diploma supplements and certificate supplements improve the international comparability of PET qualifications.

The Federal Council approved the corresponding ordinance in August 2014. It came into force on 1 October 2014. SERI published the NQF levels for the first 28 qualifications in January 2016, including 19 PET qualifications. The next batch of qualifications will be referenced in July 2016 and is set to include around 35 PET qualifications.

English VPET qualification titles

Based on a wide-ranging process, SERI approved the new English qualification titles for VPET qualifications in November 2015. The English qualification titles will be adopted as part of the implementation of the NQF VPET and the associated certificate and diploma supplements. At

PET level, they will also be enshrined in federal examination regulations and in the core curriculums for courses of study at professional colleges.

Permeability between PET and universities of applied sciences

SERI aims to strengthen dialogue between representatives of professional education and training and universities of applied sciences in a bid to strengthen the interfaces between the two areas of tertiary education. The primary aim is to promote permeability, in particular in areas where there are parallel programmes at professional colleges and universities of applied sciences (e.g. social work, healthcare, business).

Decisions about whether to admit PET graduates onto courses at a university of applied sciences (UAS) are the responsibility of the relevant UAS. The Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (swis-suniversities) approved recommendations regarding the admission of PET graduates onto bachelor's degree programmes and the transfer of practical experience and prior learning.

OECD country studies

Switzerland takes part in the comparative country studies conducted by the OECD, thereby underscoring the importance and potential of professional education and

training. Two country studies have been published to date: 'Learning for Jobs' (2009) and 'Skills beyond School' (2013). The OECD's next study will be published in 2017 (see article on p.6).

Switzerland is also actively involved in OECD committees to promote understanding of Swiss VPET, to raise its profile and to ensure it is accurately presented on the international stage.

Communication and marketing

Marketing

The visibility and value of professional education and training needs to be improved. PET is therefore a focal point of the latest VETPLUS.CH campaign – the umbrella campaign of the Swiss vocational and professional education and training system.

SERI is currently examining the need for additional marketing measures to promote PET based on an overview of the existing activities organised by various players (cantons, trade associations, companies).

Newsletter

SERI provides an insight into current developments related to professional education and training and the status of the strategy project in its new newsletter 'VPET News'

(currently available in German, French and Italian only). Regular updates can also be found on the SERI website.

Other measures

Development of statistics on PET

In collaboration with the Federal Statistical Office, SERI is planning to extend the statistical bases in the field of professional education and training between now and 2020. The project aims to:

- fill gaps in data on professional education and training;
- facilitate a detailed description of PET and promote the statistical comparability of PET and university courses;
- develop indicators that are as comprehensive, differentiated and clear as possible for the future management of PET.

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Further information

For more detailed information on professional education and training (in German, French and Italian only), please see:
 🌐 www.hbb.admin.ch

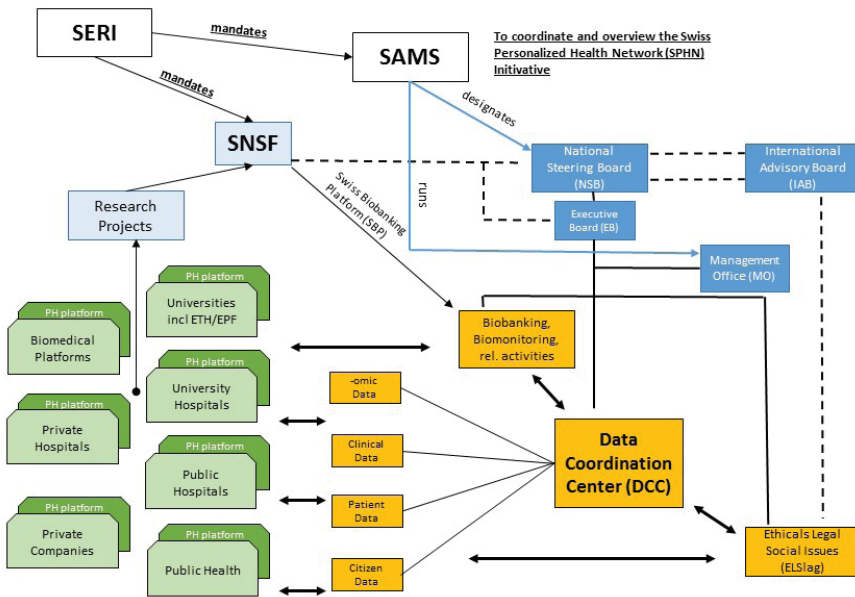


Thanks to its system of professional education, Switzerland has a well-established model for awarding non-academic tertiary-level qualifications. Following a reorganisation and an expansion of funding for preparatory courses for federal examinations, it is hoped to strengthen this system further. Photo: Iris Krebs

New 'Personalised Medicine' support initiative launched

Harmonisation of data opens up new opportunities

Major advances are being made in life sciences, medicine and information technology. This involves a huge and fast-growing quantity of data. Coordinated action and a minimum degree of harmonisation of various types of data and information systems are needed in order to efficiently and effectively use health data for research and innovation. The Confederation's national support initiative on 'Personalised Medicine' is a step in this direction.



The Swiss Personalised Health Network should be operational by the end of 2016. Image: SAMS / SERI

Research in personalised medicine is aimed at laying the foundations for more precise diagnoses and developing individual therapies to treat diseases. New diagnostic methods can be used to determine optimal dosage and duration of treatment.

A good starting position in Switzerland

Research in these areas is being conducted both at the national and international levels. With its two federal institutes of technology (ETH in Zurich and EPFL in Lausanne), university research centres and hospital clinical research departments, Switzerland is very well positioned compared to other countries. For example, networks exist in the areas around Lake Geneva and in the Basel-Zurich region. The ETH Board has also defined personalised medicine as one of its focal areas in its strategic planning for 2017-2020. The idea is for the institutions of the ETH domain to work with Swiss clinics to

research clinical samples, develop new technologies in the field of medtech and to expand clinical know-how using their state-of-the-art research infrastructures.

Adopting a coordinated approach

Personalised medicine builds on new findings in both medical science and information technology. This requires close cooperation between biology, chemistry, medicine and engineering sciences – and an interdisciplinary and cross-border approach involving various institutions.

In Switzerland, considerable action needs to be taken in data organisation, in other words in gathering and processing patient data, basic biological data (including biological databases) and omics data (research into the building blocks of life and life processes). The biggest challenges are likely to be in recording clinical data in a standardised manner. A well-coordinated approach is essential to ensure that this crucial field in the Swiss healthcare system

can be optimally and efficiently developed (no duplication, interoperability between local and regional data systems).

This is where the 'Personalised Medicine' national support initiative can make a difference. The aim is to leverage basic biological research and technological developments to improve clinical expertise. It should also enable Swiss universities and industries to efficiently use the latest advances in their research and innovation activities. Genetic analysis is one example of this. In the future, this technology should lead to more targeted therapies for individual patients.

During the initial development phase, the national support initiative will remain focused on universities and on patient data at university hospitals. Here, the challenge will be to use a language and concept that is as uniform as possible throughout Switzerland. This will make it much easier to exchange data between institutions. A national network of relevant stakeholders is key to optimal and cost-efficient organisation of data. Equally important are interfaces with related projects (e.g. the creation of a national biological database by the Swiss National Science Foundation SNSF and biomonitoring by the Federal Office of Public Health FOPH).

A broadly-backed support initiative

The support initiative is being jointly implemented by universities, (university) hospitals and research funding institutions (Swiss National Science Foundation, SNSF). The various stakeholders - swiss-universities, the ETH Board, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS) - have all agreed to this approach. In addition, they have decided that the SAMS will be responsible for overall coordination during the initial development

phase 2017–2020. The Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics (SIB) will act as a national data coordination centre and take responsibility for ensuring the interoperability of regional databases.

As part of the planning for the national support initiative, various related topics such as data security, data integrity, data access rights, data archiving and data protection as well as confidentiality and ethical aspects will be defined (e.g. with regard to rights of privacy, data protection and dealing with patients at risk of disease).

Organisation

SERI and the Federal Office of Public Health FOPH will issue a corresponding joint mandate to the SAMS for the 2017–2020 period. This will include setting up the organisational structure and relevant

committees, developing guidelines for grants and defining topic areas. The aim is to set up a secretariat within the SAMS, which can be up and running by the end of 2016. The first call for project proposals is due to take place in summer 2017.

Funding

Half of the implementation costs for the national support initiative will be covered by the participating institutions and the other half by the Confederation. In the Federal Council Dispatch on Education, Research and Innovation for 2017–2020, the Federal Council has requested a total of CHF 70 million. This federal funding will be used to develop research infrastructures and establish the national data coordination centre. Research funding for projects relating to personalised medicine will be awarded by the SNSF through its usual competitive process.

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ERI NEWS

COST – a launch pad for research careers and successes

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a Europe-wide inter-governmental framework for the coordination and networking of research activities. Researchers from Switzerland have been participating successfully in COST activities for many years and have therefore played their part in achieving Switzerland's outstanding position in international research.

A new SERI publication provides an insight into COST on the basis of various success stories. Researchers from Switzerland recount their experiences, thereby highlighting the diverse opportunities COST offers.

The publication will be available (from the end of May 2016) at:
www.sbfi.admin.ch/cost-e

Funding for CET organisations: submission of applications

The Continuing Education and Training Act (CETA) comes into force at the beginning of 2017. It provides for the possibility of funding CET activities in the areas of awareness-raising, coordination, quality assurance and development that are carried out by continuing education organisations for the benefit of the CET system. In the ERI Dispatch 2017-2020 the Federal Council applied for a total of CHF 10.7 million for measures to benefit CET organisations.

Applications for the 2017–2020 funding period can be submitted until 31 January 2017. However, in the interests of planning certainty for the CET organisations and due to the lengthy process of drawing up service agreements, SERI recommends submitting applications by 31 July 2016.

Further information:
www.sbfi.admin.ch/org-wb

Swiss spin-off company wins international award

At this year's EUREKA Innovation event held in Stockholm at the end of April, the Opto-Brain project, carried out with significant Swiss involvement, was singled out from among 1,000 submitted Eurostars projects. The consortium, headed by Swiss spin-off company Ne-MoDevices AG, developed a marketable new system to measure oxygen supply and blood flow in the brain.

The EUREKA Innovation Award was introduced following an initiative by Norway and Switzerland. EUREKA, the pan-European initiative for cross-border projects in market-oriented research and development, is currently chaired by Sweden. Switzerland held the one-year chairmanship in 2014/2015 and is still represented in the troika until summer 2016.

THE FIGURE



Number of vocational qualifications awarded to adults in 2014

	1 st qualification	2 nd qualification	Total
Regular VET programme	3 531	90	3 621
Shortened VET programme	1 222	43	1 265
Direct access to final examination	2 170	28	2 198
Validation of non-formal and informal learning	565	4	569
Total	7 488	165	7 653

In 2014 a total of 7653 VET qualifications were awarded to adults.

There are several ways for adults to obtain a Federal VET Certificate (normally awarded upon completion of a two-year VET programme) or a Federal VET Diploma (normally awarded upon completion of a three- or four-year VET programme). Two pathways do not require the person to undergo the full spectrum of training: one is direct admission to the final examination and the other is validation of non-formal and informal learning. The other two pathways are either to undergo the full VET programme, including apprenticeship, or to undergo a shortened version of the same.

Adults who already have prior knowledge and experience can undergo an assessment to determine whether they qualify for validation, direct access to the final examination or enrolment in a shortened VET programme. In the first two cases, the person must have at least five years of work experience. While the path to validation is only possible for specific occupations, direct access to the final examination is normally possible for all occupations.

Source: Federal Statistical Office. From 'Facts and Figures 2016 – VPET in Switzerland'. SERI, 2016, p. 22

ERI | PHOTO OF THE MONTH



A unique research and innovation platform has opened its doors: In May 2016, the modular experimental building NEST was inaugurated on the Dübendorf campus of the two research institutes Empa and Eawag. Its official goal: to accelerate the innovation process in the building and energy sector by enabling research, industry and the public sector to co-develop sustainable technologies, materials and systems and test them under real-world conditions. Photo: Roman Keller