



Swiss participation in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and other related programmes and initiatives

Q&A on Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe, partnerships, Digital Europe Programme, Euratom Programme and ITER

SERI updates the answers of the Q&A according to developments on the Swiss and EU side.

The financial dispatch for the Horizon package 2021–2027 has been approved by the Swiss Parliament, covering notably the Swiss association to Horizon Europe, to the Euratom programme and to the Digital Europe programme, as well as our continued participation in ITER. The dispatch forms the basis for Swiss organisations to apply for funding in European projects.

Information update 21 December 2020

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Horizon 2020

1	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, what would happen to the Swiss partner(s) in the ongoing Horizon 2020 projects?
	A	<i>Not being associated to Horizon Europe has no influence on ongoing Horizon 2020 projects, even after 2020. Switzerland remains associated to Horizon 2020, independently of its participation mode in Horizon Europe.</i>
2	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, could a Swiss partner enter in an ongoing Horizon 2020 project (e.g. to replace a missing partner) and get EU funding? Would the Swiss partner in this case be considered as an entity from an «associated country»?

	A	<i>Yes and yes. Switzerland pays its contribution to the EU budget upfront, i.e. to the very budget, from which the European Commission publishes calls in Horizon 2020. It has thus paid its entire contribution to a call when any Horizon 2020 project is funded; Swiss participants are thus eligible in all Horizon 2020 projects. Not being associated to Horizon Europe would have no influence on ongoing Horizon 2020 projects, even after 2020. Switzerland remains associated to Horizon 2020, independently of its participation mode in Horizon Europe.</i>
3	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, could Swiss entities participate and get funding in Financial Support to third parties (FSTP) calls from Horizon 2020 projects?
	A	<i>Yes. A non-association to Horizon Europe has no influence on ongoing Horizon 2020 projects, even after 2020. Switzerland remains associated to Horizon 2020, independently of its participation mode in Horizon Europe.</i>
4	Q	Does Brexit affect the current Horizon 2020 projects with UK partners / coordinators?
	A	<i>UK scientists, researchers and businesses can continue to participate in, bid for and lead projects in Horizon 2020, as if the UK remained a Member State. (Link to UKRO Factsheet)</i>
5	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar I: is there any risk that running projects with Principal Investigators (PIs) from Switzerland will have to be terminated or modified (PI converted to team member, projects that do not fulfil the eligibility criteria)?
	A:	<i>No, there is no risk. Switzerland is associated to Horizon 2020 and the conditions for projects running under the Horizon 2020 rules will remain the same until the end of the project, even after 2020.</i>
6	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar I: Is there a risk that running projects (grant agreements signed before 1.1.2021) will be terminated?
	A	<i>No, like the FP7 projects after 2014, the Horizon 2020 projects will continue to run under the Horizon 2020 rules until the projects end (even after 2020). This is also independent of the GA signature date.</i>
7	Q ERC	If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar I, would a researcher holding an Horizon 2020 ERC grant be allowed to move this ERC project to an institution based in Switzerland? If not, will there be national compensation measures in place to fill in the gap?
	A	<i>Yes, a grant can be moved to Switzerland if Switzerland has been associated at the time of the respective call deadline. Not being associated to Horizon Europe would have no influence on ongoing Horizon 2020 projects, even after 2020.</i>

Horizon Europe

8	Q	Can researchers in Switzerland participate in Horizon Europe?
	A	<i>Researchers in Switzerland can apply for the first calls for proposals in Horizon Europe. Already in the past, the agreement for the association was applicable with retroactive effect.</i>
9	Q	Will researchers in Switzerland be funded under Horizon Europe? And if so, who will fund them?
	A	<i>As soon as Switzerland will be associated to Horizon Europe the financial contribution to Swiss participants will be coming from the European Commission. If</i>

		<i>Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, researchers taking part in collaborative projects will receive funding via SERI (in the same way as from 2014-2016). If Switzerland were not associated to instruments implemented through mono-beneficiary projects, contingency measures will be explored. This also applies to companies. Companies will be financed when participating in collaborative projects.</i>
10	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, will Swiss partners be funded nationally, as it was the case between 2014 and 2016?
	A	<i>If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, researchers taking part in collaborative projects will receive funding via SERI (in the same way as from 2014-2016). If Switzerland were not associated to instruments implemented through mono-beneficiary projects, contingency measures will be explored. This also applies to companies. Companies will be financed when participating in collaborative projects.</i>
11	Q	What is the earliest possible date to inquire the status of participation of the Swiss partners in the projects?
	A	<i>This question cannot be answered at this point in time as negotiations between Switzerland and the European Union have not yet started. Nevertheless, researchers in Switzerland are encouraged to participate already in the first calls of Horizon Europe.</i>
12	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, when and how will researchers be informed about the possible preparation of a back-up scheme?
	A	<i>As soon as the negotiations between the European Union and Switzerland on Switzerland's association to Horizon Europe have been concluded and the prospective timeline and the terms are clear, SERI will inform about the outcome and possible back-up scheme in case of a non-association.</i>
13	Q	If Switzerland were not fully associated, will there be back-up schemes in place? (ERC, MSCA, EIC etc.)? If so, will they be in force for the beginning of 2021?
	A	<i>The Dispatch allows SERI to set up backup schemes/contingency plans in case of a non-association to the entire programme or certain parts thereof. The measures will not be in place from the beginning of 2021 since negotiations are only about to start by then. However, they may apply be applied reactively.</i>
14	Q	Will there be funding for companies in collaborative projects in Horizon Europe, even if Switzerland were not associated to the EIC?
	A	<i>Yes, Swiss companies in collaborative projects will receive funding independent of whether Switzerland is associated to Pillar III.</i>
15	Q	Is the commercial exploitation of project results by Swiss companies affected when Swiss partners participate in projects even though Switzerland is not associated to Horizon Europe?
	A	<i>In general, the rules for exploitation of results do not differ greatly from those in Horizon 2020. If the commercial exploitation is primarily focused on non-associated third countries, this decision needs to be justified; specific questions need to be solved within a consortium.</i>
16	Q	If Switzerland were not associated and the Swiss partners prepare the budget request of the proposals, should the Swiss partner still request a contribution from the EU or should they leave it blank respectively put a 0 € for the amount?
	A	<i>In the transition phase, associated countries of Horizon 2020 shall be treated as if they were associated to Horizon Europe. Therefore, Swiss partners shall be able to request a contribution from the EU and should apply as participants from an associated country</i>
17	Q	If Switzerland were not associated and the Swiss partners prepare their proposal, is there a default statement provided by SERI, which the Swiss participants should insert concerning the costs?

	A	<i>There is no direct statement by SERI designed to accompany the project proposal. As outlined above, in the transition phase associated countries of Horizon 2020 shall be treated as if they were associated to the new programme generation. Additionally, in October 2020, Euresearch informed the international partners via the network of national contact points (NCPs) about the funding of Swiss researchers in collaborative projects. This is intended to eliminate any uncertainties among our international partners at an early stage. Further information can be found on the SERI website</i>
18	Q	Will the State Secretariat of Education, Research and Innovation provide national funding for Swiss participants for Pillar 2 projects?
	A	<i>Yes, if Switzerland is not or not fully associated to Horizon Europe, SERI will provide direct funding for Swiss partner organisations in positively evaluated collaborative projects.</i>
19	Q	In order to avoid that EU coordinators prefer to leave out researchers from Switzerland in a consortium, can Euresearch inform monthly from 2021 via website/newsletter and NCP networks to clarify the current situation regarding the Swiss participation and funding?
	A	<i>In October 2020, Euresearch informed the international partners via the network of national contact points (NCPs) about the funding of Swiss researchers in collaborative projects. This is intended to eliminate any uncertainties among our international partners at an early stage. Further information can be found on the SERI website.</i>
20	Q	If Switzerland was not associated to Horizon Europe in the first calls and funding was provided at national level, would lump sum funding be implemented in exactly the same way as at EU level?
	A	<i>National funding must be in line with the national legal basis therefore, we cannot guarantee that the implementation will work exactly in the same way as on EU level.</i>
21	Q	What measures are planned to increase the visibility of the Seal of Excellence holders? How about events with investors?
	A	<i>Since Switzerland is not an EU member state, SERI is not directly involved in discussions regarding such measures on the European level. On the national level, no concrete measures are currently planned.</i>
22	Q	Will the NCP structure be re-organised to be aligned with the new Horizon Europe structure?
		<i>Yes. The structure has been adapted to reflect the new structure of the programme.</i>
23	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, how would the role of the NCP's change? Would the title "NCP" still apply?
	A	<i>Not being associated to Horizon Europe does not affect the role of NCPs in Horizon Europe. A similar NCP system will remain in place for Horizon Europe. In Switzerland, Euresearch will continue to support applicants in the preparation of proposals, either individually or by offering courses and webinars. However, details will only be clarified at a later stage.</i>
24	Q	Is a full participation of Switzerland in the first Horizon Europe calls and thereafter possible, including the right to coordinate a consortium? Will SERI or the EC fund the Swiss participants in the first calls and thereafter?

	A	<i>We cannot fully answer this question at the moment, as we do not have sufficient knowledge on the call deadlines in 2021 nor on the association status of Switzerland. In the transition phase, associated countries of Horizon 2020 shall be treated as if they were associated to the new programme generation. The goal is that researchers in Switzerland can participate in the first calls, funded either by the EC (if association agreement is ready in time) or by the SERI. SERI is examining possible alternative measures to support research and innovation if Switzerland were not associated to (parts of) Horizon Europe.</i>
25	Q	When will Switzerland's association status be known definitely?
	A	<i>As soon as the negotiations on Switzerland's association with the EU are concluded. The negotiations are expected to start in early 2021.</i>
26	Q	Will the UK be associated to Horizon Europe?
	A	<i>The association of the UK to Horizon Europe is part of the negotiations between the EU and the UK.</i>
27	Q ERC	Will ERC proposals of researchers based in countries with ongoing negotiations on their association status be considered provisionally eligible (i.e. entering the normal evaluation pipeline) until the negotiations (on the association status of CH) are concluded?
	A	<i>Already for the 7th Framework Programme and Horizon 2020, the rule was that the association agreements entered into force retroactively and that researchers in Switzerland could apply to the European Research Council before the association agreement was fully concluded. We are optimistic that this will also be the case in Horizon Europe and thus we encourage researchers in Switzerland to apply even if the association agreement to Horizon Europe is not yet concluded. In the transition phase, associated countries of Horizon 2020 shall be treated as if they were associated to the new programme generation.</i>
28	Q ERC	If a researcher chooses a host institution abroad, could the person move the ERC grant to a Swiss institution during grant preparation in case Switzerland becomes associated to pillar I and the association enters into force retroactively?
	A	<i>Yes, if Switzerland will be associated retroactively, a transfer of the project from a host institution to an institution in Switzerland may happen before signature of the grant agreement or during the implementation of the project.</i>
29	Q ERC	What should a researcher do if the 2021 StG/CoG is the last chance to apply for Starting Grants/ Consolidator Grants? Should they negotiate with an institution abroad as host institution on the application, in case Switzerland will not be associated, or rely on Switzerland to find solutions in case the application with a Swiss institution turns out to be ineligible?
	A	<i>Already for the 7th Framework Programme and Horizon 2020 Swiss institutions were able to find solutions for researchers applying to the ERC; thus we encourage researchers from Switzerland to apply to the early deadlines for the Starting Grants and Consolidator Grants with the deadlines approaching in spring in 2021. In the transition phase, associated countries of Horizon 2020 shall be treated as if they were associated to the new programme generation.</i>
30	Q ERC	At which point in time and how will researchers know if they are tentatively eligible to apply for ERC grants, e.g. the Starting Grant-2021 and the Consolidator Grant-2021, against the context of an association which becomes valid retroactively as indicated by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation?

	A	<i>Unfortunately, no exact timeline has been defined yet. The negotiation on Switzerland's association to Horizon Europe will not start before the European Commission has been granted a negotiation mandate. However, In the transition phase, associated countries of Horizon 2020 shall be treated as if they were associated to the new programme generation, thus researchers in Switzerland should apply for the first calls in Horizon Europe as participants from an associated country.</i>
31	Q ERC	If it became clear that Switzerland would not be associated to Horizon Europe, will the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) establish national contingency measures which provide equal eligibility conditions as the ERC, e.g. with regards to research age and the years of experience since completion of PhD?
	A	<i>If Switzerland were not associated to instruments implemented through mono-beneficiary projects, contingency measures will be explored.. SERI is committed to ensure that suitable measures are taken that serve researchers in Switzerland.</i>
32	Q MSCA-ITN/ MSCA Doctorates	If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar I, would there be national compensation measures to fund activities within MSCA training networks, in particular the employment and training of Early Stage Researchers (ESR) by institutions based in Switzerland, which would not be able to participate in MSCA ITN (MSCA Doctorates) projects as beneficiary and would take part as partner organisations instead.
	A	<i>Yes, SERI will inform you at an early stage. SERI is committed to ensure that suitable measures (e.g. direct financing) are taken if Switzerland could not associate to Pillar I.</i>
33	Q MSCA-ITN	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, will Swiss organisations only be able to participate as partner organisations and as such not sign the grant agreement. And if that is the case, will there still be national funding for them?
	A	<i>Yes, Swiss organisations can participate as partner organisations and they will receive funding via SERI as it was already the case 2014-2016.</i>
34	Q MSCA	Is it possible for an institution from a Third Country to participate as Beneficiary in a MSCA Doctoral Network and therefore also being eligible for direct payments from the European Union?
	A	<i>Yes, it is possible if the evaluators deem the contribution of the institution from a Third Country as essential for the project.</i>
35	Q MSCA	What happens if the contribution of a participant from a Third Country is not deemed essential by the reviewers and therefore the participant cannot act as Beneficiary?
	A	<i>In case the experts do not endorse the exceptional funding, they assess the proposal as if the concerned entity were participating with its own funds. If the proposal is selected for being able to participate with external funding, the Research Executive Agency (REA) would ask the entity to become a Partner Organisation during the Grant Agreement Preparation and would remove the EC contribution initially requested by the entity at the proposal stage (this change cannot be done during the evaluations). In this case, SERI can provide funding as it was already the case 2014–2016.</i>
36	Q MSCA	Can MSCA Doctoral Networks be coordinated by Partner organisations?

	A	<i>No, this is not possible. Only Beneficiaries (who are receiving money from the EU) can coordinate MSCA Doctoral Networks.</i>
37	Q EIC	Will Swiss companies be allowed to participate and to receive funding under Horizon Europe? And what would happen if Switzerland were not associated to the EIC and/or Pillar III. Would there be a back-up plan for national funding
	A	<i>If Switzerland is fully associated to Horizon Europe, companies will be eligible to receive funding for projects positively evaluated for funding according to the evaluation procedure of Horizon Europe. If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, companies in collaborative projects would receive funding from SERI. If Switzerland were not associated to the third Pillar (EIC), appropriate contingency measures will be explored.</i>
38	Q	Can SERI proactively inform on regular intervals on the developments regarding participation and funding of each specific partnership that will be linked to Pillar II? E.g. AAL, IMI, Clean Sky, EDCTP.
	A	<i>The set-up of the partnerships is currently discussed by the European Commission and the Member States in course of the strategic planning process. SERI is actively following this process and will regularly update its website. Specific information on the Swiss participation and funding opportunities will be provided by the national bodies in charge of the particular partnerships once the modalities for a Swiss participation have been clarified.</i>
39	Q EIC	If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar III – is there an option that Swiss entities can participate as applicants from a third country in EIC pathfinder (collaborative) projects?
	A	<i>In general, the financial dispatch for Horizon Europe covers a participation as third country for all pillars and instruments. If Switzerland is not or not fully associated to Horizon Europe, SERI will provide national funding for Swiss partner organisations in positively evaluated collaborative projects.</i>
40	Q EIC	If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar III, Swiss companies could no longer benefit from the EIC Accelerator as a mono-beneficiary grant. Are there ongoing discussions to set up a national funding instrument as a replacement?
	A	<i>The legal basis for such a scheme is currently not in place. Contingency measures will be explored.</i>
41	Q EIT KIC	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, will the Swiss partner participating in activities of the EIT and its KICs receive funding from the Swiss authorities
	A	<i>In general, the financial dispatch for Horizon Europe covers a participation as third country for all pillars and instruments. As such, Swiss partners in projects of the EIT and its KICs are eligible for funding. As the financial dispatch as such foresees funding for research and innovation projects, we cannot guarantee that all activities of the KICs will be eligible—notably if they lack the required research/innovation dimension.</i>

Partnerships

42	Q	Will Switzerland's participation in Eurostars be negotiated independently of a participation in the third Pillar?
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	A	<i>The process of establishing the partnerships is currently discussed by the European Commission and the Member States as part of the strategic planning process. How Eurostars will be integrated in the third pillar of Horizon Europe has not been finally decided yet.</i>
43	Q PPP	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, could Switzerland participate as a third country in the successors of the “Innovative Medicines Initiative” (IMI) and “Bio-Based Industries” (BBI) partnerships and further Public-Private Partnership (PPP) successors?
	A	<i>The process of establishing the partnerships is currently discussed by the European Commission and the Member States as part of the strategic planning process. The concrete modalities of association and participation have not yet been defined.</i>
44	Q ERA-NETs (H2020)	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, how would this affect the eligibility of Swiss-based researchers to participate in Horizon 2020 ERA-NET calls (including calls for proposals)?
	A	<i>Participants of Horizon 2020 ERA-NETs are not affected. Switzerland remains associated to Horizon 2020, independently of the participation mode in Horizon Europe. As for Horizon Europe, ERA-NETs will be integrated into the partnership landscape, whose set-up is currently discussed by the European Commission and the Member States in course of the strategic planning process.</i>
45	Q	What type of partnerships is Switzerland eligible for? Who will finance the Swiss participation?
	A	Researchers will be able to participate in all calls that are published in the Horizon Europe work programme financed either by the European Commission or SERI as laid out in question 9 (, this includes all calls for co-programmed partnerships. For the co-funded partnerships, researchers in Switzerland can only participate if national co-funding is provided by a Swiss funding agency or federal office, this also applies to institutionalised partnerships that require national co-funding. For institutionalised partnerships that do not require national funding, researchers in Switzerland are again eligible and the (non-)association determines the mode of financing)
46	Q	Can SERI proactively inform on regular intervals on the developments regarding participation and funding of each specific partnership that will be linked to the second Pillar? E.g. the successors of AAL, IMI, Clean Sky, EDCTP.
	A	<i>The process of establishing the partnerships is currently discussed by the European Commission and the Member States as part of the strategic planning process. SERI is proactively following up the developments and informing the relevant stakeholders. Information on the EU Partnerships is regularly updated on the corresponding website. Relevant information on the Swiss participation will be made available by the national bodies in charge of the respective partnerships as soon as the modalities of Swiss participation have been clarified.</i>

Digital Europe

	Q	Will the whole Digital Europe Programme (DEP) be open for Swiss participation?
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47	A	<p><i>The Digital Europe Programme is a new EU funding programme that will run in parallel and complementary to Horizon Europe. The conditions for the participation of third countries are not yet finalised.</i></p> <p><i>We expect that Swiss researchers and companies will be able to participate in most of the activities of the Digital Europe Programme. Certain restrictions may apply, notably in cybersecurity activities.</i></p> <p><i>SERI, in cooperation with other federal offices, published a report in 2019 on the interests of Swiss research and innovation actors in a possible Swiss participation in the Digital Europe Programme.</i></p>
	Q	Is there already an indication of funding rates when participating in a project in the Digital Europe Programme?
48	A	<i>Project funding under the Digital Europe programme will typically require national co-financing, which means that the costs for a project may not be fully covered by the Digital Europe Programme.</i>
	Q	Is there already an indication of funding rates when participating in a project in the Digital Europe Programme?

Euratom & ITER

49	Q	Will researchers in Switzerland be able to participate in next programme generation of the Euratom Programme for nuclear research and training?
	A	<i>The Federal Council is seeking full association to Horizon Europe, the Digital Europe Programme, the Euratom programme and a full participation in the ITER infrastructure. . In case of association of Switzerland to the Euratom programme, participation conditions are anticipated to be similar to the current ones. In case of a non-association, SERI intends to finance researchers taking part in collaborative projects directly during a limited phase until conclusion of an agreement, in an analogue way as planned for Horizon Europe participations (see question 9).</i>
50	Q	Does the Federal Council intend to seek full association to the Euratom Programme for nuclear research and training?
	A	<i>Yes, in connection with a full association to Horizon Europe and the Digital Europe Programme, the Federal Council currently is seeking full association the Euratom Programme for nuclear research and training.</i>
51	Q	Does the Federal Council intend to continue Switzerland's participation in ITER?
	A	<i>Yes, in connection with a full association to Horizon Europe and the Digital Europe Programme, the Federal Council currently aims to continue Switzerland's participation in ITER.</i>