



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

The Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) updates the answers of the Q&A according to developments in Switzerland and the European Union (EU) with regard to the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and other related programmes and initiatives.

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Content

1	Horizon Europe	4
1.1	Generally applicable	4
	Can researchers in Switzerland participate in Horizon Europe?.....	4
	Will researchers in Switzerland be funded under Horizon Europe? And if so, who will fund them?.....	4
	When will Switzerland's association status be known definitely?.....	4
	Will the UK be associated to Horizon Europe?.....	4
	What measures are planned to increase the visibility of the Seal of Excellence holders? How about events with investors?.....	4
1.2	Implications for third country participation to Horizon Europe	5
	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, will there be measures in place and when will researchers be informed about those?.....	5
	Will participants from third countries sign the grant agreement?.....	5
	Are participants from third countries allowed to coordinate projects?.....	5
	Are participants from third countries allowed to apply for Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs)?..	5
	Is there any possibility for an institution from a third country to participate as beneficiary in a project and therefore also being eligible for direct funding from the EU?.....	6
	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe and funding was provided at national level, would lump sum funding be implemented in exactly the same way as at EU level?.....	6
	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, how would the role of the National Contact Points (NCPs) change? Would the title 'NCP' still apply?.....	6
1.3	Collaborative Projects	7
	How many partners are needed in a collaborative project of Horizon Europe and how should the Swiss partner be counted?.....	7
	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe at the time of the application to the call and the Swiss partners prepared the budget request of the proposals, should the Swiss partners.....	7

1.4 Partnerships	8
What type of partnerships is Switzerland eligible for? Who will finance the Swiss participation?	8
Will Switzerland's participation in Eurostars be negotiated independently of a participation in the third Pillar?	8
Can the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation proactively inform on the developments regarding participation and funding of each specific partnership that will be linked to the second Pillar II?	8
1.5 European Research Council (ERC)	9
If a researcher first 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?.....	9
If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, will the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation establish measures which provide equal eligibility conditions as the ERC, e.g. with regard to research age and years of experience since completion of the PhD?.....	9
1.6 Marie-Sklodowska-Curie-Actions (MSCA)	9
If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, would organisations based in Switzerland be able to participate as 'associated partners' (former 'partner organisations') in the MSCA Doctoral Networks (former ITN) and as such not sign the grant agreement? If that is the case, will there still be national funding for them?.....	9
Can MSCA Doctoral Networks (former ITN) be coordinated by 'associated partners' (former 'partner organisations')?.....	9
1.7 European Innovation Council (EIC)	10
Can SMEs based in Switzerland apply for blended finance in the first calls of the EIC Accelerator?..	10
If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar III, would there be an option for Swiss entities to participate as applicants from a third country in EIC pathfinder (collaborative) projects?.....	10
1.8 European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)	10
If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, would the Swiss partners participating in activities of the EIT and its KICs receive funding from the Swiss authorities?	10
2 Digital Europe Programme (DEP)	11
Is Switzerland going to be associated to the Digital Europe Programme?	11
Can entities based in Switzerland apply to the first calls of the Digital Europe Programme?.....	11
Are there restriction for entities based in Switzerland, to participate in certain areas of the Digital Europe Programme (DEP)?	11
Is there already an indication of funding rates regarding the participation in a project in the Digital Europe Programme?.....	11
3 Euratom & ITER	12
Will researchers in Switzerland be able to participate in next programme generation of the Euratom Programme for nuclear research and training?.....	12
Does the Federal Council intend to seek full association to the Euratom Programme for nuclear research and training and to continue Switzerland's participation in ITER?	12
4 European Defence Fund (EDF)	12
Can Switzerland participate in the European Defence Fund programme?.....	12
5 Horizon 2020	13
If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, what would happen to the Swiss partner(s) in the ongoing Horizon 2020 projects?.....	13

If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, could a Swiss partner join 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»?	13
If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, could Swiss entities participate and get funding from Financial Support to third parties calls from Horizon 2020 projects?.....	13
Does Brexit affect the current Horizon 2020 projects with UK partners / coordinators?.....	13
If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar I of Horizon Europe: is there any risk that running projects under Horizon 2020 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)?	13
If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar I of Horizon Europe: Is there a risk that running projects under Horizon 2020 (grant agreements signed before 1.1.2021) will be terminated?.....	13
If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar I of Horizon Europe, would a researcher holding a Horizon 2020 ERC grant be allowed to move this ERC project to an institution based in Switzerland?.....	14
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)?...	14

1 Horizon Europe

1.1 Generally applicable

1	Q	Can researchers in Switzerland participate in Horizon Europe?
	A	<p>Yes, in the current transition phase, countries associated to Horizon 2020 are treated as if they were associated to Horizon Europe.</p> <p>For this reason, researchers and innovators in Switzerland, applying for the calls of Horizon Europe and related programmes and initiatives <u>must submit their proposals as participants from an associated country and request EU funding</u>. Otherwise they may not be able to receive funding, either from the European Commission or from the federal government. This rule applies to both collaborative projects and mono-beneficiary grants (e.g. ERC, EIC, MSCA).</p> <p>Based on current information from the European Commission, the association agreement will be applicable with retroactive effect (from 1 January 2021), as it was already the case in the past (Framework Programme 7 & Horizon 2020).</p>
2	Q	Will researchers in Switzerland be funded under Horizon Europe? And if so, who will fund them?
	A	<p>If an association agreement is in place at the time of the signature of the grant agreement (GA) the financial contribution for participants in Switzerland would come from the European Commission.</p> <p>If no association agreement with Switzerland is in place at the time of the signature of the grant agreement, researchers who take part in collaborative projects open to third country participation, would receive funding via the State Secretariat of Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) (in the same way as it was organised during 2014 -2016).</p> <p>With regard to mono-beneficiary instruments (e.g. ERC, EIC, MSCA), the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation plans national measures for project proposals that have been positively evaluated but are not funded by the European Commission due to the absence of an association agreement at the time of the grant agreement signature. In addition, SERI examines further measures in this context.</p>
3	Q	When will Switzerland's association status be known definitely?
	A	As soon as the negotiations on Switzerland's association to Horizon Europe are concluded with the European Union.
4	Q	Will the UK be associated to Horizon Europe?
	A	As part of the agreement reached between the UK and the EU, the UK has announced its association to Horizon Europe (except to the EIC Fund, meaning that UK SMEs and start-ups can only apply for grant support in the EIC Accelerator), as well as the Euratom Research and Training Programme 2021-2025 and ITER.
5	Q	What measures are planned to increase the visibility of the Seal of Excellence holders? How about events with investors?
	A	Since Switzerland is not an EU member state, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation is not directly involved in discussions regarding such measures at European level. On the national level, no concrete measures are currently planned.

1.2 Implications for third country participation to Horizon Europe

6	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, will there be measures in place and when will researchers be informed about those?
	A	<p><i>The Federal Decree on the Financing of the Horizon package 2021-2027 allows for funding of researchers and innovators based in Switzerland, even if Switzerland can only participate in Horizon Europe as a partially associated country or in third country mode. This applies in the event that there is a delayed, incomplete or no association agreement with the EU.</i></p> <p><i>If no association agreement with Switzerland is in place at the time of the signature of the grant agreement, researchers who take part in collaborative projects open to third country participation, would receive funding via the State Secretariat of Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) (in the same way as it was organised during 2014 -2016).</i></p> <p><i>With regard to mono-beneficiary instruments (e.g. ERC, EIC, MSCA), the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation plans national measures for project proposals that have been positively evaluated but are not funded by the European Commission due to the absence of an association agreement at the time of the grant agreement signature. In addition, SERI examines further measures in this context</i></p>
7	Q	Will participants from third countries sign the grant agreement?
	A	<p><i>No, the new generation of EU programmes for research and innovation does not foresee the legal status 'beneficiaries not receiving EU funding' anymore. Participants from third countries (not eligible for funding from the European Commission) are thus no longer classified as 'beneficiaries not receiving EU funding' and do therefore not sign the grant agreement.</i></p> <p><i>Nevertheless, researchers from third countries will be able to participate in projects as an 'associated partner' (which is not to be confused with the term 'associated country').</i></p> <p><i>This rule applies to all EU programmes (e.g. Euratom, DEP) and related initiatives (e.g. partnership instruments). For exceptions see question 11.</i></p>
8	Q	Are participants from third countries allowed to coordinate projects?
	A	<p><i>No, participants from third countries cannot coordinate a project, since the coordinator of a project has to sign the grant agreement (which is not the case for 'associated partners', see question 7).</i></p> <p><i>What would this mean for participants based in Switzerland who are submitting the proposal as project coordinators?</i></p> <p><i>If no association agreement is in force at the time of the signature of the grant agreement, the project partners can transfer the role of the coordinator before the grant agreement signature. The Swiss participant (originally foreseen coordinator) can still join the project as 'associated partner' and receive national funding from the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation. It is therefore important that the general eligibility criteria are fulfilled in each scenario (see question 14).</i></p> <p><i>As Switzerland is a Horizon 2020 associated country and is therefore treated as if it was associated to Horizon Europe in this transition phase, researchers and innovators in Switzerland, applying for the calls of Horizon Europe and related programmes and initiatives, <u>must submit their proposals as participants from an associated country and request EU funding</u>. Otherwise they may not be able to receive funding, either from the European Commission or from the federal government.</i></p>
9	Q	Are participants from third countries allowed to apply for Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs)?

	A	<p><i>No, entities from third countries will not be able to participate in CSAs (with the notable exception of topics where this is explicitly foreseen in the eligibility criteria stated in the work programme).</i></p> <p><i>Thus, if no association agreement is in place at the time of signature of the grant agreement participants from third countries will not be eligible for participation in these CSAs, regardless of their previous involvement in the proposal preparation.</i></p>
11	Q	<p>Is there are any possibility for an institution from a third country to participate as beneficiary in a project and therefore also being eligible for direct funding from the EU?</p>
	A	<p><i>Legal entities established in a non-associated third country are not foreseen to participate as beneficiary in a project and therefore being eligible for direct funding from the EU. However, there are some exceptions. A legal entity established in low to middle income non-associated third country and, exceptionally, other non-associated third countries, are eligible for funding in an action if:</i></p> <p><i>a) the third country is identified in the work programme adopted by the European Commission; or</i></p> <p><i>b) the European Commission or the relevant funding body considers that the participation of the legal entity concerned is essential for implementing the action.</i></p>
12	Q	<p>If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe and funding was provided at national level, would lump sum funding be implemented in exactly the same way as at EU level?</p>
	A	<p><i>National funding must be in line with the national legal basis. Therefore, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation cannot guarantee that the implementation would be implemented in the same way as on EU level.</i></p>
13	Q	<p>If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, how would the role of the National Contact Points (NCPs) change? Would the title 'NCP' still apply?</p>
	A	<p><i>Not being associated to Horizon Europe does not affect the role of NCPs in Horizon Europe. In any case, 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.</i></p> <p><i>The NCP structure has been adapted to reflect the new structure of the programme.</i></p>

1.3 Collaborative Projects

Please also take note of sections '1.1 Generally applicable' and '1.2 Implications for third country participation to Horizon Europe'.

14	Q	How many partners are needed in a collaborative project of Horizon Europe and how should the Swiss partner be counted?
	A	<p><i>In general, a consortium of a collaborative project requires at least three different independent legal entities of which</i></p> <p>a) <i>at least one independent legal entity must be established in a member state; and</i></p> <p>b) <i>at least two other independent legal entities should each be established in different member states or associated countries.</i></p> <p><i>As the status of the Swiss partner may become that of an associated country or that of a third country, we recommend ensuring the rule of three is fulfilled independent of the Swiss partner.</i></p>
15	Q	What is the earliest possible date to inquire the status of participation of the Swiss partners in the projects?
	A	<p><i>As soon as the negotiations on Switzerland's association with the EU are concluded.</i></p> <p><i>Nevertheless, researchers and innovators in Switzerland are strongly encouraged to participate in the calls of Horizon Europe and must do so <u>as participants from an associated country and request EU funding</u>. Otherwise they may not be able to receive funding, either from the European Commission or from the federal government.</i></p> <p><i>Based on current information from the European Commission, the association agreement is applicable with retroactive effect (from 1 January 2021), as it was already the case in the past (Framework Programme 7 & Horizon 2020).</i></p>
16	Q	<p>If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe at the time of the application to the call and the Swiss partners prepared the budget request of the proposals, should the Swiss partners</p> <p>a) request a contribution from the EU</p> <p>b) leave it blank respectively put a 0 € for the amount</p> <p>c) or will they be provided with a default statement by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation to put in the section concerning costs?</p>
	A	<p><i>In the current transition phase, countries associated to Horizon 2020 are treated as if they were associated to Horizon Europe.</i></p> <p><i>For this reason, partners based in Switzerland <u>must request funding from the EU and must apply as participants from an associated country</u>.</i></p> <p><i>Based on current information from the European Commission, the association agreement will be applicable with retroactive effect (from 1 January 2021), as it was already the case in the past (Framework Programme 7 & Horizon 2020).</i></p> <p><i>If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, researchers taking part in collaborative projects would receive funding via the State Secretariat of Education, Research and Innovation (in the same way as it was organised during 2014 -2016).</i></p>
17	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, would the commercial exploitation of project results by Swiss companies be affected when Swiss partners participate in Horizon Europe projects?

	A	<i>In general, the rules for exploitation of results do not differ greatly from those in Horizon 2020. However, legal entities that mainly target the exploitation of results primarily in non-associated third countries, shall explain how this is still in the interest of the European Union.</i>
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1.4 Partnerships

Please also take note of sections '1.1 Generally applicable' and '1.2 Implications for third country participation to Horizon Europe'.

18	Q	What type of partnerships is Switzerland eligible for? Who will finance the Swiss participation?
	A	<p><i>The process of establishing the partnerships is currently being discussed by the European Commission and the member states as part of the strategic planning process.</i></p> <p><i>In any case, 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 the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, as laid out in <u>question 2</u> (this includes all calls for co-programmed partnerships).</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>This also applies to institutionalised partnerships that require national co-funding.</i></p> <p><i>For calls launched by institutionalised partnerships that do not require national funding, researchers in Switzerland are eligible and the (non-)association determines the mode of financing.</i></p>
19	Q	Will Switzerland's participation in Eurostars be negotiated independently of a participation in the third Pillar?
	A	<i>The process of establishing partnerships is currently being discussed by the European Commission and the member states as part of the strategic planning process. Eurostars will most probably be integrated in the third pillar of Horizon Europe as a so-called co-funded partnership.</i>
20	Q	Can the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation proactively inform on the developments regarding participation and funding of each specific partnership that will be linked to the second Pillar II?
	A	<i>The set-up of the partnerships is currently being discussed by the European Commission and the member states in course of the strategic planning process. The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation 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 respective partnerships, once the modalities for a Swiss participation have been clarified.</i>

1.5 European Research Council (ERC)

Please also take note of sections '[1.1 Generally applicable](#)' and '[1.2 Implications for third country participation to Horizon Europe](#)'.

21	Q	If a researcher first 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, a transfer of the project from a host institution abroad to an institution in Switzerland may be done before the signature of the grant agreement or during the implementation of the project (as long as the Swiss association was effective at the time of the grant signature, which includes the case of the association agreement being signed later but applied retroactively).</i>
22	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, will the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation establish measures which provide equal eligibility conditions as the ERC, e.g. with regard to research age and years of experience since completion of the PhD?
	A	<i>If Switzerland were not associated to instruments implemented through mono-beneficiary projects, national measures would be explored.</i>

1.6 Marie-Sklodowska-Curie-Actions (MSCA)

Please also take note of sections '[1.1 Generally applicable](#)' and '[1.2 Implications for third country participation to Horizon Europe](#)'.

23	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, would organisations based in Switzerland be able to participate as ' associated partners ' (former 'partner organisations') in the MSCA Doctoral Networks (former ITN) and as such not sign the grant agreement? If that is the case, will there still be national funding for them?
	A	<i>Yes, in this case, organisations based in Switzerland could participate as 'associated partners' and they would receive funding via the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, as it was already the case 2014-2016.</i>
24	Q	Can MSCA Doctoral Networks (former ITN) be coordinated by 'associated partners' (former 'partner organisations')?
	A	<i>No, this is not possible. Only beneficiaries (who receive funding from the EU) can coordinate MSCA Doctoral Networks (former ITN).</i>

1.7 European Innovation Council (EIC)

Please also take note of sections '[1.1 Generally applicable](#)' and '[1.2 Implications for third country participation to Horizon Europe](#)'.

25	Q	Can SMEs based in Switzerland apply for blended finance in the first calls of the EIC Accelerator?
	A	<i>Yes, as under Horizon 2020, SMEs based in Switzerland can apply for blended finance. The reference in the work programme that the association agreement provides for an exclusion from the EIC Fund, is not referring to Switzerland.</i>
26	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar III, would there be an option for Swiss entities to 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, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation will provide national funding for Swiss 'associated partners' in positively evaluated collaborative projects. However, the general eligibility criteria have to be fulfilled (see question 14).</i>

1.8 European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

Please also take note of sections '[1.1 Generally applicable](#)' and '[1.2 Implications for third country participation to Horizon Europe](#)'.

27	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, would the Swiss partners 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, the Stat Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation cannot guarantee that all activities of the KICs will be eligible, notably if they lack the required research/innovation dimension.</i>

2 Digital Europe Programme (DEP)

Please also take note of sections '1.1 Generally applicable' and '1.2 Implications for third country participation to Horizon Europe'.

28	Q	Is Switzerland going to be associated to the Digital Europe Programme?
	A	<i>The Digital Europe Programme is a new EU funding programme that will run in parallel and in complement to Horizon Europe. The conditions for the participation of associated and third countries are not yet finalised. However, Switzerland has the Intention to be fully associated to the programme and has initiated all steps on the Swiss side, to start association negotiations.</i>
29	Q	Can entities based in Switzerland apply to the first calls of the Digital Europe Programme?
	A	<i>If Switzerland were associated to the Digital Europe Programme at the time of the call opening, entities based in Switzerland will be able to participate in most of the first calls (see subsequent question 30).</i>
30	Q	Are there restriction for entities based in Switzerland, to participate in certain areas of the Digital Europe Programme (DEP)?
	A	<i>If Switzerland were associated to the DEP, researchers and companies based in Switzerland should be able to participate in most of the activities of the programme. However, certain restrictions may apply, notably with regard to activities in sensitive domains (e.g. construction and procurement of quantum computers or quantum communication infrastructure, such as cybersecurity).</i> Note: <i>The discussions on "open strategic autonomy" within the EU increasingly leads to the outcome that non EU member states associated to Horizon Europe and DEP could be excluded from sensitive technology domains.</i>
31	Q	Is there already an indication of funding rates regarding the participation in a project in the Digital Europe Programme?
	A	<i>Project funding under the Digital Europe programme will typically require national co-funding, which means that the costs for a project may not be fully covered by the Digital Europe Programme. Typically, a funding rate of 50% will apply for grants.</i>

3 Euratom & ITER

Please also take note of sections '[1.1 Generally applicable](#)' and '[1.2 Implications for third country participation to Horizon Europe](#)'.

32	Q	Will researchers in Switzerland be able to participate in next programme generation of the Euratom Programme for nuclear research and training?
	A	<p><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.</i></p> <p><i>In case of a non-association, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation intends to fund researchers taking part in collaborative projects directly until conclusion of an agreement, in an analogue way as planned for Horizon Europe participations (see question 2).</i></p>
33	Q	Does the Federal Council intend to seek full association to the Euratom Programme for nuclear research and training and to continue Switzerland's participation in ITER?
	A	<p><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 and aims to continue Switzerland's participation in ITER.</i></p>

4 European Defence Fund (EDF)

34	Q	Can Switzerland participate in the European Defence Fund programme?
	A	<p><i>No, the European Defence Fund is open for association only to members of the European Economic Area.</i></p>

5 Horizon 2020

35	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>
36	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, could a Swiss partner join 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 (EC) funds projects in Horizon 2020. Switzerland has thus paid its entire contribution to a call at the time any Horizon 2020 project is funded and Swiss participants are therefore eligible for funding 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>
37	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Horizon Europe, could Swiss entities participate and get funding from Financial Support to third parties calls from Horizon 2020 projects?
	A	<i>Yes. 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>
38	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. The UK is considered a member state under Horizon 2020.</i>
39	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar I of Horizon Europe: is there any risk that running projects under Horizon 2020 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 projects, even after 2020.</i>
40	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar I of Horizon Europe: Is there a risk that running projects under Horizon 2020 (grant agreements signed before 1.1.2021) will be terminated?
	A	<i>No, as for 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 signature date of the grant agreement.</i>

41	Q	If Switzerland were not associated to Pillar I of Horizon Europe, would a researcher holding a Horizon 2020 ERC grant be allowed to move this ERC project to an institution based in Switzerland?
	A	<i>Yes, all ERC grants that were submitted when Switzerland was associated to Horizon 2020 at the time of the respective call deadline, can be moved. Not being associated to Horizon Europe would have no influence on ongoing Horizon 2020 projects, even after 2020.</i>
42	Q	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 being discussed by the European Commission and the member states in course of the strategic planning process.</i>