



## Status Update: Swiss participation in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and other related programmes and initiatives

### Information as of 4 August 2021

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) provides regular updates on Switzerland's participation in the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020:

- The European Commission (EC) has informed the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) that Switzerland will be treated as a non-associated third country<sup>1</sup> for the submission of project proposals in Horizon Europe and other related programmes and initiatives. This status can be changed at any time, but will now apply for all calls in 2021.
- Switzerland will be treated as a non-associated third country in Horizon Europe, the Euratom programme and the Digital Europe Programme. Furthermore, the EU does not consider Switzerland a state contributing to the construction of ITER for the time being. The Federal Council remains committed to its goal of a full association to Horizon Europe and other related programmes and initiatives as soon as possible.
- Applicants based in Switzerland must submit their project proposals for the corresponding calls in the year 2021 as participants from a non-associated third country as of now.
- With this status, project participants in Switzerland can still participate in approximately 2/3 of Horizon Europe and notably in most collaborative projects. The Swiss project partner will not be funded by the EC but by SERI during the whole lifetime of the project. (However, units of the central federal administration cannot be funded directly by SERI.)
- The participation in mono-beneficiary instruments (individual ERC grants, MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships, MSCA COFUND and EIC Accelerator) is by principle excluded as a non-associated third country. However, exceptional rules apply to the 2021 calls of the ERC Starting Grants (StG) and the ERC Consolidator Grants (CoG), which have already been closed. As the host institution for these projects can be changed during the preparation phase of the Grant Agreement, proposals submitted by Principal Investigators based at a Swiss host institution will be evaluated. SERI will provide national funding for researchers whose proposals for an ERC StG or CoG were positively evaluated. In addition, positively evaluated project proposals of the EIC Accelerator call 2021 (after two evaluation stages) will receive direct funding from SERI.
- SERI is currently drafting a mandate for the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) to implement a suitable transition solution for the 2021 calls for ERC Advanced Grants (AdG) and MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships. These instruments will be aligned as closely as possible with the ERC AdG and MSCA calls, but with independent deadlines for submission. The measure developed will be submitted to the Federal Council and Parliament as part of the credit and budget process. SERI will provide further information in due course.
- If researchers and innovators have obtained Horizon Europe project funding from an institution in an EU member state or an associated third country and transfer to an institution in Switzerland, as long as Switzerland is a non-associated third country, SERI will directly fund these researchers and innovators (so-called transfer grants). This applies to researchers and innovators in individual projects (namely ERC StG, CoG, AdG) as well as to collaborative projects.

- ➔ In addition, SERI prepares proposals for suitable measures for those programme parts that are no longer accessible in view of the Confederation's credit and budget process (notably for the field of quantum and space technologies).
- ➔ Switzerland's association to Horizon Europe and related programs and initiatives as soon as possible remains the declared goal of the Federal Council. SERI will provide information on the 2022 calls for proposals in due course.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that according to EU nomenclature, all non-EU Member States are referred to as third countries. In the context of Horizon Europe and other EU programmes, a distinction is made between (i) associated third countries and (ii) non-associated third countries. Among the latter category (non-associated third countries), participants from certain low- to middle-income countries are eligible for EC funding. Participants from high-income countries such as Switzerland are normally not eligible for EC funding. Detailed information by the EC is available in [this document](#).

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### A. GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS

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

#### A.1 Collaborative projects

- SERI recommends institutions based in Switzerland (including companies and notably SME) to participate in consortia responding to calls for proposals in Horizon Europe and in the Euratom programme.
- As long as Switzerland participates in Horizon Europe as a non-associated third country, SERI will fund participants in collaborative projects. This also applies to collaborative projects within the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA Doctoral Networks und MSCA Staff Exchanges) and the European Innovation Council (EIC).
- As a non-associated third country, a number of limitations apply that need to be taken into account:
  - For researchers and innovators based in Switzerland, including companies and SME, the funding in collaborative projects is secured if the project is funded under Horizon Europe or related programmes and initiatives. In this case, funding to the Swiss entities will be provided directly by SERI. (However, units of the central federal administration cannot be funded directly by SERI.)
  - Any proposal needs to fulfil the general eligibility criteria. Any consortium needs a minimum of 3 independent partners from 3 different Member States or associated countries, of which at least one is based in a Member State. Any participants from non-associated third countries would only be possible as addition to these 3.
  - Participants from non-associated third countries cannot coordinate projects. They can however lead work packages as any other participant.

- Participants from non-associated third countries cannot participate in Coordination and Support Actions (CSA) except where there is an explicit reference to non-associated third countries in the eligibility criteria of the specific topic.
  - For collaborative projects of the European Research Council (ERC), namely ERC Synergy Grants, participants from non-associated third countries (e.g. Switzerland) can apply as part of a consortium. However, only one Principal Investigator linked to an institution based in a non-associated third country is permitted per project.
  - European project partners should be assured that taking a Swiss partner aboard would not have a negative impact on the evaluation of the project. The evaluation by independent experts follows clear guidelines and criteria and any discrimination would explicitly violate the evaluation rules.
  - As participants from a non-associated third country, Swiss researchers and innovators would need to explain at project submission how funding for their contribution will be secured. A corresponding financial guarantee, which can be shared with the consortium partners, is provided by SERI on its [website](#).
  - The [Euresearch](#) network, which is funded and mandated by SERI for this purpose, will continue to advise researchers and innovators in Switzerland planning to participate in Horizon Europe projects. We advise to seek their advice when submitting projects.
- SERI prepares proposals for suitable measures for collaborative projects that are not accessible as a non-associated third country (notably in the field of quantum and space technologies) and will inform accordingly.
  - If researchers and innovators have obtained Horizon Europe project funding from an institution in an EU Member State or associated third country and transfer to an institution in Switzerland, as long as Switzerland is a non-associated third country, SERI will directly fund these researchers and innovators (through so-called transfer grants). This applies to researchers and innovators in individual projects (namely ERC StG, CoG, AdG) as well as to collaborative projects.

## **A.2 Mono-beneficiary projects**

- As a non-associated country, a participation in mono-beneficiary instruments (namely ERC, MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships, MSCA COFUND and EIC Accelerator) is no longer possible. This also applies to proposals already submitted that will not necessarily be evaluated.
- However, exceptional rules apply to the 2021 calls of the ERC Starting Grants (StG) and the ERC Consolidator Grants (CoG), which have already been closed. As the host institution for these projects can be changed during the preparation phase of the Grant Agreement, proposals submitted by Principal Investigators based at a Swiss host institution will be evaluated. SERI will provide national funding for those researchers based at a Swiss host institution whose proposals for an ERC StG or CoG were positively evaluated.
- In addition, positively evaluated project proposals of the EIC Accelerator call 2021 (after two evaluation stages) will receive direct funding from SERI.
- SERI is currently drafting a mandate for the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) to implement a suitable transition solution for the 2021 calls for ERC Advanced Grants (AdG) and MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships. These instruments will be aligned as closely as possible with the ERC AdG and MSCA calls, but with independent deadlines for submission. The measure developed will be submitted to the Federal Council and Parliament as part of the credit and budget procedure. SERI will provide further information in due course.
- As a non-associated third country, a number of limitations apply that need to be taken into account:
  - Researchers with Swiss citizenship will remain eligible for the ERC StG, CoG and AdG in any case as long as at least half of their research related to the ERC grant is performed in an institution from an EU Member State or an associated country. For researchers who have submitted their ERC proposal with a Swiss institution, a "Financial Guarantee for Swiss Participants in ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants 2021" (in English) is published on the [SERI website](#).

- Since MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships are mono-beneficiary instruments, the participation of non-associated third countries is restricted. Swiss institutions are not eligible to host European Postdoctoral Fellowships, but they can host researchers during the outgoing phase of Global Postdoctoral Fellowships.
- European Postdoctoral Fellowships are open to researchers of all nationalities. Swiss citizens are thus eligible to apply for European Postdoctoral Fellowships as long as their host institution is located in an EU Member State or associated country. In contrary, Global Postdoctoral Fellowships are restricted to citizens and long-term residents of an EU Member State or associated country.
- The [Euresearch](#) network, which is funded and mandated by SERI for this purpose, will continue to advise researchers and innovators in Switzerland planning to participate in Horizon Europe projects. We advise to seek their advice when submitting projects.
- SERI will provide information on the 2022 calls (including the ERC calls 2022, which will open as early as autumn 2021, with a deadline for submission at the beginning of 2022) in due course. Switzerland's association to Horizon Europe as soon as possible remains the declared goal of the Federal Council.
- If researchers and innovators have obtained Horizon Europe project funding from an institution in an EU Member State or an associated country and transfer to an institution in Switzerland, as long as Switzerland is a non-associated third country, SERI will directly fund these researchers and innovators (through so-called transfer grants). This applies to researchers and innovators in individual projects (namely ERC StG, CoG, AdG) as well as to collaborative projects.

## B. SWISS PARTICIPATION IN HORIZON EUROPE: STATE OF PLAY

- The legal basis for Horizon Europe was adopted by the Council of the EU on 16 March 2021 and by the European Parliament on 27 April 2021. On 12 May 2021 the Horizon Europe Regulation officially entered into force. It is retroactively applied as of 1 January 2021.
- After the Federal Council took the decision not to sign the institutional agreement, and communicated this decision to the EU, the European Commission informed on 22 June in the Horizon Europe [Programme Guide](#) that Switzerland will be treated as a non-associated third country for the submission of project proposals in Horizon Europe and other related programmes and initiatives.
- According to the information published by the European Commission on its [website](#) on 12 July 2021, this status applies until further notice and applies to all calls for proposals in 2021.
- Hence, participants in Switzerland receive their funding directly from SERI, namely in all projects that were fully evaluated, for which a participation is possible and a positive result of the evaluation is available.
- The timely association to Horizon Europe and other related programmes remains the Federal Council's declared goal.

## C. PARTICIPATION IN HORIZON 2020

- The bilateral agreement between Switzerland and the EU on Swiss association to Horizon 2020 remains fully valid until all projects under the programme are effectively concluded.
- The European Commission will continue to fund Swiss participants in projects, in which they were eligible for EU funding, until these projects are effectively concluded
- SERI will continue to fund all projects linked to partial association (2014–2016).
- The Swiss status in Horizon Europe has no implications for projects funded under Horizon 2020.

## D. CONTACT

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