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Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,  
Education and Research EAER

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

International Research and Innovation Programmes

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# Horizon Europe – Guide

## for Swiss participants on how to apply for direct funding in collaborative projects

v.11 / May 2024 (update: inclusion of calls 2024)

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<sup>1</sup> This guide is subject to ongoing revision. In case of open questions and/or ambiguities, please let us know by email: [europrogram@sbfi.admin.ch](mailto:europrogram@sbfi.admin.ch)



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# 1 Introduction

As long as Switzerland is not associated to **Horizon Europe (HEU)**, SERI can fund the participation of Swiss entities in projects responding to calls that are open for participation of Swiss partners. We attempt to give an overview on how Swiss participants can submit requests for funding of their participations in HEU collaborative projects to the **State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)**. This overview is complemented by a “shortlist” of the most important financial rules from the [financial guidelines](#) that need to be considered.

Financial support can be requested from SERI for Swiss participations in HEU collaborative projects that have been positively evaluated, proposed for funding and for which a **grant agreement (GA)** has been signed<sup>2</sup> in which the Swiss participants are mentioned as so-called **associated partners (APs)**.

Currently, SERI can fund such Swiss participations in HEU projects with 2021, 2022, 2023 or 2024 call identifiers<sup>3</sup>.

However, please note that, if Switzerland is reclassified by the EC as a “country to be associated” before the deadline of the corresponding calls, Swiss participants will have to change their status from “Associated Partner” to “Beneficiary” in the project proposal and apply for funding from the EC. In this case, the Swiss budget will have to be included in the total grant amount requested by the consortium from the EC.

This “living” document will be extended and adapted according to how things evolve regarding a possible association to HEU and will also include the experiences both Swiss participants and administrative staff will make during the transition period.

We really do hope that the procedure outlined below (see also [fig. 1](#)) is slim and straightforward enough to allow you to participate in HEU projects and being part of the European research community as unhampered as possible.

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<sup>2</sup> at least by the **European Commission (EC)** and the project coordinator.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. “2021”, “2022”, “2023” or “2024” is included in the call ID on the EC’s funding & tenders portal.



## 2 Project submission to the EC: how to participate in HEU as an associated partner

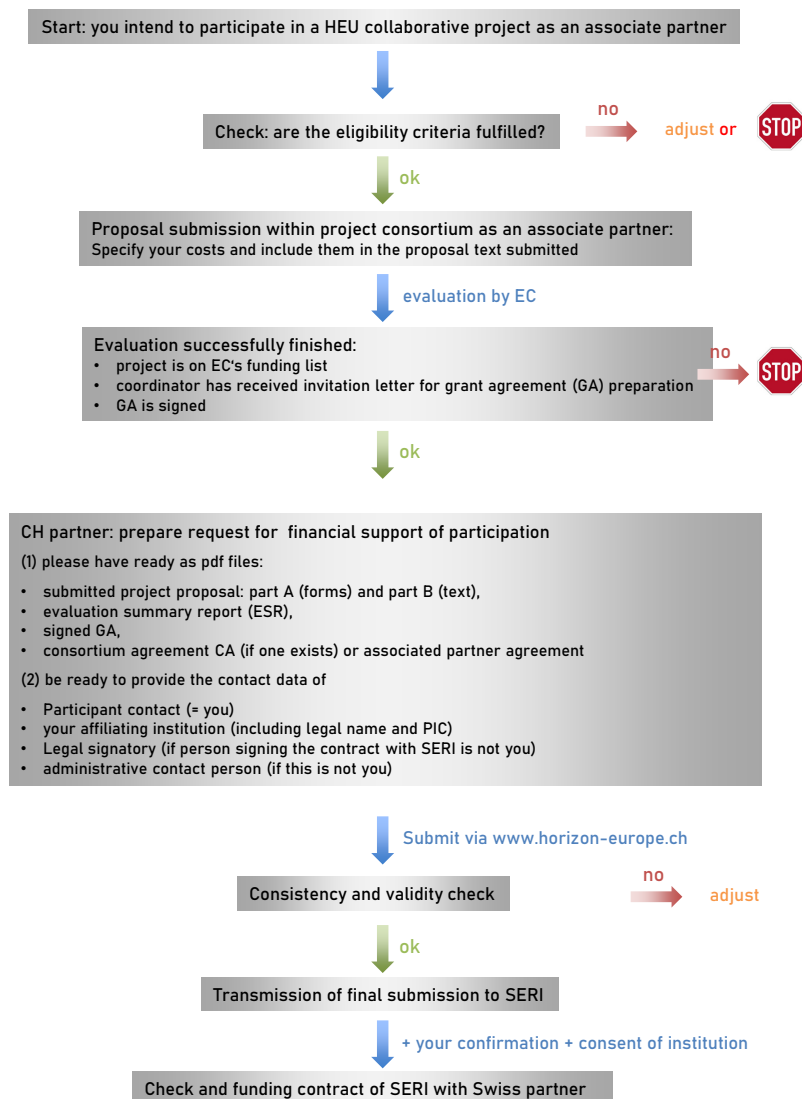


Figure 1: Process overview: flow chart of application for direct funding of a HEU participation as an AP from Switzerland.



## 2.1 Basic settings

As outlined on [www.horizon-europe.ch](http://www.horizon-europe.ch), the administrative and research policy settings for Switzerland have significantly changed with respect to the predecessor framework programme Horizon 2020 to which Switzerland was partially and, from 2016 on, fully associated. In Horizon Europe (HEU), Switzerland currently has the status of a non-EU country not associated to HEU. Informal wording uses the term “**third country**” (TC) for such a country that is also said to participate “in TC mode” or “as a non-associated TC”.

In HEU, eligibility for participation of partners from non-associated TCs is generally restricted to collaborative projects. Furthermore, some topics are exclusively restricted to EU Member States (MS) or associated countries (ACs).

As project partners from a non-EU country not associated to HEU, Swiss entities are eligible to participate in collaborative projects of HEU with the legal status of a so-called **associated partner (AP)**: APs do *not* sign the grant agreement (GA) and their budget is neither funded by the EC nor counted towards the total project budget. Furthermore, APs cannot act as project coordinators.

Though the underlying administrative and political settings are admittedly complex, participating in HEU collaborative projects as an AP from a non-associated TC is straightforward and grossly follows the procedure sketched above in Figure 1. In what follows, we will address the Swiss participant as “you”.

## 2.2 Start

We assume that you are member of a consortium that intends to submit a proposal in response to a collaborative HEU call that is open for participants from TCs. The submission deadline still being sufficiently ahead, you and your consortium partners are about drafting the proposal and the coordinator starts to collect the information he/she needs to complete the application forms in the participants’ portal.

As a participant, you will have the legal status of an “associated partner” (AP) who will not sign the GA but is legally attached to the project consortium<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> This may be technically implemented by the **consortium agreement (CA)** or by an association agreement between the AP and one or more of the other project partners who have the legal status of a “beneficiary”.



## 2.3 To-do-list

As an AP from Switzerland, you need to consider a few points already during the preparation of a project proposal to the EC:

**contact:** It is highly recommended to notify [Euresearch](#) and/or your institution's research office of your intention to participate in a HEU proposal submission. For University or ETH domain participants, please refer to your Euresearch regional office and/or your institution's research office. For participants from other institutions or enterprises, please refer directly to Euresearch's [network office](#).

**check conditions:** The [general annexes](#) to the HEU work programmes give an overview of the general conditions that a project consortium and its proposal need to fulfil to be eligible for EC funding. Any deviating and/or additional conditions are explained in the call topic text. First, please make sure that you and your partners fulfil the two most prominent and important conditions:

(1) As an AP, you need to be eligible for participation which is, as outlined above, true for most but not for all calls for collaborative HEU-projects.

(2) the project consortium as a whole needs to fulfil the "rule of three": if not stated otherwise in the call text, the consortium must, in addition to you as an AP, consist of at least three partners from three different **EU Member States (MS)** and/or **associated countries (AC)**. At least one of these three must be from a MS.

**specify your budget:** As explained in the [financial guidelines](#)<sup>5</sup>, SERI adheres to the EC's budgeting rules applicable for HEU project applicants  $\implies$  specify your costs (in EUR) along the categories **(A)** personnel costs, **(B)** subcontracting costs, **(C)** purchase costs, **(D)** other direct costs, **(E)** indirect costs<sup>6</sup>. For further explanations, see Section 2.1. of the [financial guidelines](#).

**place your budget:** advise the coordinator to indicate your total costs but leave blank the "requested funding" field in the project proposal form of the EC. Note that Swiss partners need to be included as APs<sup>7</sup> and that in the budget table (Part A

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<sup>5</sup> which we highly recommend you read as well! The financial guidelines describe also the few financing rules that are specific to Switzerland due to the Swiss national legal framework. You can also download the financial guideline [here](#).

<sup>6</sup> Indirect costs and the sum of total eligible costs will be automatically calculated based on your inputs.

<sup>7</sup> The Euresearch [factsheet](#) shows how this is done.



of the proposal template), only the total cost of the Swiss partner can be included as a “financial contribution” of an “associated partner”.

Your budget should also appear in the proposal’s Part B, Section 3 or in an annex (not counting to the page limit) to the proposal template. However, this is not required by the EC and therefore depends on the project coordinator’s goodwill (see Section 2.2 of the [financial guidelines](#)).

**wait for the evaluation:** Once the proposal is submitted, wait until the project is evaluated and the coordinator is invited by the EC to prepare a grant agreement (GA).

### **3 How to apply for direct federal funding: submission to SERI**

If you belong to a successful consortium, the following sections provide you with a short overview of what to do once the project has been evaluated positively and the GA has been signed. Firstly, we recommend to submit these funding requests promptly (usually within 3 months after conclusion of the Grant Agreement) so that they can be reviewed as quickly as possible. Secondly, to request funding, all you need to do is to complete the [web form for collaborative projects](#).

Please note that, for technical reasons, **the web form will shut down without saving if there is no input for  $\geq 20$  minutes!**

#### **3.1 Required information and documents**

To get the web form completed swiftly, please be prepared to provide contact data:

- participant (PI);
- your affiliating institution (including legal name and PIC),
- authorised signatory (“Vertragsperson”): you sign the contract with SERI *if* you are the authorised signatory of the affiliating organisation.
- contact person.





In some cases (for example if the participant is an SME), one person may need to act in two or all three roles.

Furthermore, copies of the following documents need to be uploaded as pdf-files:

- the submitted proposal,
- evaluation summary report (ESR),
- signed consortium agreement and/or agreement between AP (=you) and beneficiary/ies (if not available at submission of the funding request, please submit as soon as possible),
- Signed GA<sup>8</sup>, including Annexes,
- your costs of participation, detailed in the same way as the beneficiaries' costs (if not included in the proposal and/or its Annex).

### 3.2 Enter data and submit

When completing the web form, you have the option to pause the procedure at any time and to resume it later.

Only once you hit the “submit”- button in the web form, your request will be submitted to SERI where it will be checked for consistency and completeness.

**Before this final submission, please make sure there is neither information missing nor ambiguities left in your request:** your data, notably the financials, need to be complete and 100% consistent with the documents submitted to the EC. In particular, the grant amount you request from SERI must not be higher than your total costs that had been indicated in the proposal to the EC.

By submitting the request, you state that you have checked and approved the final version of the request and that you accept being legally responsible for the submission to SERI. Please note that this also implies that you have secured the consent of your institution's hierarchy.

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<sup>8</sup> We need to see at least valid e-signatures from EC and the project's coordinator to be able to process your application.



### 3.3 Timeline and further steps

As soon as your application has been submitted to SERI and does not require consultations for fixing anymore, you should normally receive an email from the responsible scientific advisor within a maximum of 30 working days, informing you of the next steps leading to the conclusion of the funding contract with SERI<sup>9</sup>.

### 3.4 Important rules

We compile and explain some rules and conditions of participation that the submission procedure is based on and that we consider particularly relevant for you to be aware of when submitting a funding request to SERI.

In what follows, citations via “Art” or “par” refer to the [FIPBV](#) (“Verordnung über die Massnahmen für die Beteiligung der Schweiz an den Programmen der Europäischen Union im Bereich Forschung und Innovation”).

The [financial guidelines](#) will be important once it comes to financial reporting: they indicate which specific financial aspects need to be taken into account to ensure that the project funding (and therefore the reporting) complies with Swiss national legislation. This guide refers to these aspects only as far as they need to be considered already for the project preparation and the request for SERI funding.

#### 3.4.1 What can be funded

Currently, SERI can fund Swiss partners<sup>10</sup> in HEU projects with 2021, 2022 and 2023 call identifiers<sup>11</sup>, unless EC funding is exceptionally provided for participants from non-EU-member states who are not associated to HEU<sup>12 13</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> i.e. you will receive a subvention contract signed by SERI which you need to counter-sign to receive the first funding instalment.

<sup>10</sup>In HEU, eligibility for participation of countries that neither are EU members nor associated to HEU, is generally limited to collaborative projects; in addition, some topics are exclusively restricted to EU Member States and associated countries.

<sup>11</sup>i.e. “2021”, “2022” or “2023” is included in the call ID on the EC’s funding & tenders portal

<sup>12</sup>Such countries (to which, for the time being, Switzerland belongs) have the status of a so-called “non-associated third country” (TC) or are “in TC-mode”.

<sup>13</sup>In case Switzerland becomes associated to Horizon Europe after the signature of the grant agreement, project partners based in Switzerland will continue to receive funding from SERI for the entire duration



### 3.4.2 Who can be funded

On request, SERI funding can be provided to higher education research institutions, non-commercial research institutions outside the higher education domain and companies that are based in Switzerland (Art. 11 [FIPBV](#)).

Note, however, that for **units of the central federal administration**<sup>14</sup>, specific conditions apply as these cannot receive direct SERI funding. A specific [factsheet](#) was distributed to the affected institutions.

Special rules hold with respect to the funding and participation of **international organisations** (IOs) within Horizon Europe. The conditions for a potential funding of IOs from SERI are laid out in our [Q&A](#). They must be taken into account before the proposal submission to the EC.

Guidelines and a web form for submitting funding requests for **mono-beneficiary projects** (e.g. within ERC, EIC that have been positively evaluated by the EC have been published [here](#)).

### 3.4.3 Submission of requests

(i) A participating institution should handle all its SERI funding requests by one internal centre that informs SERI about all HEU proposals submitted within its domain.

(ii) SERI may define submission deadlines for funding requests (Art. 13 par 3 [FIPBV](#)).

### 3.4.4 Formal conditions for SERI funding

(i) You need to be member of a HEU project consortium in which where you normally have the status of an AP<sup>15</sup>.

(ii) Your participation is not funded by the EC (Art. 11 para. 7 [FIPBV](#)).

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of the project, unless specific solutions were found during the association negotiations between Switzerland and the EC. In either case, the Swiss project partner will receive funding for the entire duration of the project (either by SERI or by the EC).

<sup>14</sup>The ordinance on governmental and administrative organisation [RVOV](#) provides a list of the offices that make up the central federal administration.

<sup>15</sup>According to Art. 11 para. 4 lit. a your project participation is eligible for SERI funding if you are listed as an associated partner or as a project partner in the contract (i.e the GA) between the project coordinator and the European Commission (EC) or an agency mandated by the EC.



(iii) SERI does not fund Swiss researchers who wish to join a project after its starting date and who have not participated in the project's preparation. An exception can only be made if a Swiss researcher/institution intends to replace another Swiss participant or another beneficiary who has been involved in the project from its beginning.

### **3.4.5 General financial rules**

Rules on funding and financial controlling that apply to project partners from EU Member States (MS) or associated countries (AC) do, in principle, also apply to Swiss participants.

This means, in particular, that SERI funding must not exceed the costs that the Swiss participants have indicated in the evaluated proposal with respect to funding rates and funding cuts that apply to all project partners. (Art. 12a para. 2 FIPBV).

SERI reserves the right to impose funding cuts should the costs of the Swiss participant be disproportionately high. This includes the right to mandate an external expert panel to review the Swiss project part.

Some other subtleties may come into play in special situations that are not covered in this guide. Should you encounter such a situation, please refer to the [financial guidelines](#), the [Q&A](#) or [contact](#) us directly.

### **3.4.6 Only costs in Switzerland**

SERI funding can only be provided for costs that are incurred in Switzerland. Exceptions can be made based on Art. 11 para. 6 [FIPBV](#).

### **3.4.7 Subcontracts**

If you intend to involve subcontractors, these need to be based in Switzerland except if there are no Swiss subcontractors available who are capable of performing the task and the subcontracting cannot be handled by another project partner.

### **3.4.8 Personnel costs**

Cost must be identical to those you have indicated in the evaluated proposal and/or in the GA. For direct personnel costs, use the usual salary rates of your institution. Private



companies should comply with the maximum salary rates indicated in Section 3.1 of the financial guidelines. These maximum salary rates are based on Art. 12 FIPBV and, as referenced from there, on Art. 7 par 2-5 FIPBV. They are listed in Table 1 for convenience.

<b>staff category</b>	<b>CHF/a</b>	<b>CHF/h</b>
(deputy) project leader; experienced scientist	220'500	119
research assistant	126'000	68
specialist staff member	113'400	61
doctoral student / assistant	85'100	46

Table 1: Staff categories and their maximum gross annual and hourly salary rates for companies and non-higher education institutions. Note that employer's social contributions are not included and that these can be claimed on top.

### 3.4.9 Unit contributions (MSCA)

In the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), eligible costs are indicated as unit contributions. These unit contributions are different compared to the cost categories of the "standard" collaborative projects. Therefore, these specific guidelines are necessary for submitting funding request for MSCA projects to SERI.

**Cost calculation:** The following table illustrates the unit contributions for the collaborative projects MSCA Doctoral Networks (DN), MSCA Staff Exchanges (SE) and MSCA COFUND for the calls 2021-2023. Based on the MSCA work programme 2024-2025, the unit costs and the Swiss country correction coefficient have been adapted for the 2024-2025 calls and will soon be added to this document. In general, a flat rate is paid for every month of employment of the recruited candidate (person-month):



EUR per person-month					
<b>MSCA DN</b>	Living allowance	Mobility allowance	Family allowance <i>(paid only if applicable)</i>	Research, training and networking contribution	Management and indirect contribution
	3400 x 128.6%* = <b>4372.4</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>1600</b>	<b>1200</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>8432.40</b>
<b>MSCA SE</b>	Top-up allowance		Research, training and networking contribution	Management and indirect contribution	
	<b>2300</b>		<b>1300</b>	<b>1000</b>	
	<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>4600</b>
<b>MSCA COFUND</b>	COFUND allowance				
	<b>Doctoral programmes: 2800</b>			<b>Postdoctoral programmes: 3980</b>	

Figure 2: Unit contributions / \* Country correction coefficient (CCC) for Switzerland

**Family allowance:** Unlike Horizon 2020, the rules on MSCA in Horizon Europe now foresee the possibility to also grant family allowance (EUR 660 per person-month) for recruited candidates whose family status changes during the fellowship. For this reason, the family allowance should always be included in the total requested budget for each recruited candidate when requesting funding at SERI. **It is however only to be paid out by the host institution to the recruited candidate in case this person has or acquires family obligations during the action duration<sup>16</sup>.** Should that not be the case, SERI will deduct the family allowance accordingly in the final payment at the end of the action. SERI reserves the right to request proof of family obligations.

**Contribution to coordinator:** Within the scope of MSCA projects, Swiss partners may pay a contribution from the project funding awarded to them by SERI, to cover the management costs of the project coordinator, even if the coordinator is based outside of Switzerland (in an EU member state or associated country). This cost contribution

<sup>16</sup>i.e. persons linked to him/her by (i) marriage, or (ii) a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the legislation of the country or region where this relationship was formalised; or (iii) dependent children who are actually being maintained by the recruited candidate.



funds joint events, initiatives, projects, websites, etc. that particularly benefit the researchers employed on the project. In this respect, MSCA projects are a special case as flat rate funding is based on person-months and project coordinators cannot claim any additional costs for coordination. Swiss project partners must indicate the costs paid to the coordinator (according to the consortium agreement) in the financial reports to SERI.

**Submission of funding requests:** As outlined above, the MSCA unit contributions are different to the cost categories of the “standard” collaborative projects. SERI’s webform for [submitting the initial funding request](#) is however set up in the “standard” cost categories. Therefore, it is important that you exceptionally fill in the **total amount of costs (in EUR)** only in **cost category “B. Subcontracting costs”**, as illustrated in the following [Figure 3](#) for the 2021-2023 calls, although they are not subcontracting costs.

Also, keep in mind that you do not need to calculate the costs of all associated partners in the section “Total costs (in EUR)” in the webform. Please simply enter the sum of the “Max. EU contribution (in EUR)” and the total grant amount your institution is requesting for the MSCA-project (in EUR).



Cost categories indicated in the web form	Entry for MSCA DN and MSCA SE
<b>A. Personnel costs</b> A.1 Employees (or equivalent) A.2 Natural persons under direct contract A.3 Seconded persons A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries	<b>Leave blank</b>
<b>B. Subcontracting costs</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fill in the total costs of the Swiss project partner, calculated based on the total amount of the Swiss partner's person-months indicated in the evaluated project proposal.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">E.g. MSCA DN: 36 person-months for 2 recruited candidates: <math>72 \times \text{EUR } 8432.40 =</math>  <b><u>Total EUR 607'132.80</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">E.g. MSCA SE: 4 person-months for 1 and 6 person-months for 2 recruited candidates:  <math>16 \times \text{EUR } 4'600 =</math> <b><u>Total EUR 73'600</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">E.g. MSCA COFUND: 10 person-months for 1 and 6 person-months for 2 recruited postdoctoral candidates:  <math>22 \times \text{EUR } 3980 =</math> <b><u>Total EUR 87'560</u></b></p>
<b>C. Purchase costs</b> C.1 Travel and subsistence C.2 Equipment C.3 Other goods, works and services	<b>Leave blank</b>
<b>D. Other direct costs</b> D.1 Financial support to third parties D.2 Internally invoiced goods and services D.3 Transnational access to research infrastructure unit costs D.4 Virtual access to research infrastructure unit costs D.5 PCP/PPI/PAC procurement costs D.6 Euratom Cofund staff mobility costs D.7 ERC additional funding D.8 ERC additional funding (subcontracting, FSTP and internally invoiced goods and services)	<b>Leave blank</b>
<b>E. Indirect costs</b>	<b>Is generated automatically</b>
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>Is generated automatically</b>
Funding rate %	<b>Is generated automatically (100%)</b>
Maximum possible contribution	<b>Is generated automatically</b>
Maximum request grant amount	<b>Fill in same amount as in 'Maximum possible contribution'</b>

Figure 3: How to fill in the cost categories in the SERI web form





#### **3.4.10 Within reason!**

SERI reserves the right to impose funding cuts should the costs of the Swiss participant be disproportionately<sup>17</sup> high. This includes the right to mandate an external expert panel to review the Swiss project part.

#### **3.4.11 Exchange rate**

Please provide all your costs in EUR. SERI will convert the requested amount into CHF, applying the month average exchange rate at the call deadline as published by the [Swiss National Bank](#)<sup>18</sup>. If your project was evaluated in a two-stage evaluation, the submission deadline for the 2nd stage proposal will be relevant for the exchange rate calculation.

#### **3.4.12 Payments**

SERI funding will be based on a contract between the Swiss participant and SERI (Art. 13 par 4 FIPBV). A first payment instalment of the funding will be paid on contract signature, the next tranche after receipt of the interim financial report and the last one (remaining costs of typically 20%<sup>19</sup>) after approval of the final financial report.

The Swiss participant has to issue an invoice to SERI for each payment. SERI reserves the right to adjust (the amount of) the respective tranches.

#### **3.4.13 Open science and acknowledgement**

Research results or other scientific findings should in principle be published with Open Access. As defined in the subsidy contract between SERI and the Swiss project partner, project partners and start-ups funded by SERI undertake to mention the funding in all written publications, reports and scientific publications as well as in all public documents (print/digital) associated with the results of the funded project.

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<sup>17</sup>For example, you may expect that “Swiss costs” significantly exceeding the costs of the next-expensive project partner will be particularly scrutinised on whether they are justified.

<sup>18</sup>for more details, please refer to Section 2.4 of the [financial guideline](#)

<sup>19</sup>A maximum of 80% pre-financing is enshrined in the Federal Law on subsidies.



The following reference should be made: "This work has received funding from the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)".

In addition to the reference in the text, the SERI logo can be displayed in publications, on websites or in social media. The logos are available for print (.eps, .jpg) and digital applications (.jpg, .svg, .png) and are accessible on the following website: [sbfi.admin.ch/logos\\_en](http://sbfi.admin.ch/logos_en). Please also read the manual for recipients of SERI funding published there.

#### **3.4.14 How to report**

You will be requested by email to submit financial and scientific reports when they are due during and at the end of the project. The general rules for this will generally follow the ones of the EC.

Copies of all project reports submitted to the EC and the EC project review report have to be sent to SERI according to the reporting periods specified in the GA. Furthermore, specific financial reports to SERI will be required to release payments of funding instalments:

**Interim financial reporting** after 2 years (for projects lasting at least 36 months), or after 1 year for shorter projects. Invoice for second tranche of the grant.

**Final financial report** at the end of the project, where an audit needs to be conducted for project grants  $\geq 500'000$  CHF. Invoice: remaining eligible costs, typically up to 20% of the grant.

#### **3.4.15 Notifications**

All notifications made to the EC concerning amendments to the GA and to the **Consortium Agreement (CA)** must be communicated to SERI in a timely manner via email to the responsible scientific and financial advisors<sup>20</sup>.

#### **3.4.16 Change of affiliation**

If the participant (you) changes his or her affiliation, SERI must be informed immediately by email to the scientific advisor assigned to the project participation.

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<sup>20</sup>These contact persons will be assigned to your project participation along the application procedure.



### **3.4.17 Confidentiality:**

Towards Swiss participants, SERI assumes the EC's role as a funding agency and therefore needs to be provided with appropriate project related information to meet its financial controlling obligations. All information submitted to SERI will be treated confidentially.

If you want to make sure that your partners will not consider transmitting the reports and other official project documents a breach of confidentiality, you may ask your project partners to add a clause to the consortium agreement (if there is one) or to the association agreement that "the Swiss State Secretariat for Research and Innovation (SERI) shall not be considered a third party in the sense of the articles dealing with confidentiality" (Art. 10 DESCAs).

## **3.5 Further information and assistance**

Should you encounter any problems or ambiguities, please feel free to contact us or have a look at the [Q&A](#). Please let us know about hooks and pitfalls in the text and within the application procedure. Any recommendation for improvement is most welcome!