

MSCA Doctoral Networks for Swiss participants

Swiss-based doctoral candidates on top of EU contribution

Doctoral candidates employed by Swiss host institutions can be added on top of the EU contribution if Switzerland is not reclassified by the EC as a 'country to be associated' before the deadline of the corresponding call. The Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) guarantees that Swiss participants will receive direct national funding.

Overview

Currently Switzerland is treated as a non-associated third country for the submission of project proposals in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon Europe. Therefore Swiss institutions participate as 'associated partners' in Doctoral Networks unless their contribution is deemed to be essential. As associated partner, a Swiss institution cannot claim any costs from the EU and may thus not employ researchers under the action. However, as long as Switzerland participates in Horizon Europe as a non-associated third country, the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) will fund Swiss partners in collaborative projects. This also applies to MSCA Doctoral Networks. Thus, a doctoral candidate employed by a Swiss institution will be directly financed by SERI. The doctoral candidate employed by the Swiss partner will not have the status of an official MSCA fellow, but can supplement the network if the consortium agrees. In order to receive funding from SERI, the candidate needs to be employed at a Swiss institution. Once the proposal receives a positive funding decision, the Swiss institution can follow the SERI procedure to obtain the respective funding.

Change of Swiss status

Currently Switzerland has the status of a non-associated third country. However, this status can change at any time. Please be aware that should Switzerland be reclassified by the EC as a 'country to be associated' before the deadline of the corresponding calls, Swiss participants must 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 must be included in the total grant amount requested by the consortium from the EC.

Same rules

Be aware that the same rules apply to the doctoral candidate financed by SERI (eligibility rule, especially mobility rule). The same legal and financial obligations and rights apply to the candidates of the Swiss partner. The recruitment of the candidate should also follow the same process. It is strongly encouraged that all candidates have the same conditions for their fellowship.

Funding provided by SERI

The SERI will provide exactly the same financial contribution as the European Commission would have provided if Switzerland was associated. The Swiss partners receive the same unit contributions per person months and the living allowance is adjusted with the Swiss country correction coefficient.

Project of the doctoral candidate employed by a Swiss partner

Demonstrate that the participation of the Swiss partner is important for the network and contributes to the overall scientific and training objectives of the proposal. The project of the doctoral candidate employed by a Swiss partner should be described in the proposal. Please make sure to list the number of fellows with the indication of the specific person-months in the description. Specify that the candidate is financed by Switzerland's own funding. Be careful to distinguish between the *official* MSCA fellows and the candidate employed by the Swiss partner.

Secondments

While a MSCA fellow cannot be employed by the Swiss partner and the candidate of the Swiss partner can't be employed outside Switzerland, secondments are a way to ensure transfer of knowledge, which is crucial in any Doctoral Network. Highlight in the proposal how the Swiss partner contributes to the training elements of the Network by hosting secondments, and by seconding their candidates to other institutions within the consortium.

Letter of commitment

A Letter of Commitment is mandatory. Euresearch provides a template for the Swiss partners explaining the financial contribution and commitment. In Part A of the application, the budget of the proposal is calculated based on the number of researchers recruited by the beneficiaries and their number of person months. Since the Swiss partner is not a beneficiary and cannot claim cost, the Swiss organizations and the researchers employed there are not part of the budget table in Part A. The financial contribution from the Swiss partner is however specified in the letter of commitment.

Funding and tenders portal

Please be aware that associated partners cannot be added to the consortium list in the Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal (FTOP). This means, that the Swiss partner has no access to the proposal in the FTOP and that the coordinator will have to forward every project-related communication by the EU/REA to the Swiss partner. A possible solution as work-around would be that the coordinator adds the associated partner's contacts under the coordinator's contacts.

Partnership and Consortium Agreement

We strongly encourage signing a partnership agreement between the associated partners and the beneficiaries to regulate the internal relationship between all participating organisations. The partnership agreement(s) must comply with the grant agreement and is often part of a consortium agreement. We recommend to discuss expectations already during the proposal writing phase and to imagine the project in all its details. A helpful base is the [LERU ITN CA template](#).

FAQ

Can the Swiss partner be involved in an Industrial or Joint Doctorate?

The two rules to consider are:

- 1) Official MSCA candidates can't be employed by a Swiss host since Switzerland is an associated partner
- 2) In order to receive funding from SERI, the candidate from the Swiss partner can only be employed at a Swiss institution.

In the Doctoral Networks 2022 call there are 2 important changes, which facilitate the implementation of Industrial and Joint Doctorates for Swiss partners: the need for consecutive recruitments and the limitation of the duration of secondments have been lifted. Therefore researchers financed by SERI can be employed by the Swiss institution and sent to any European MS/AC for secondment of longer than half of their fellowship time.

Can a DN be coordinated by a Swiss partner?

No, this is not possible. Only beneficiaries can coordinate collaborative projects.

Can the Swiss partner be a work package leader in a DN?

Yes, 'associated partners' are able to lead work packages.

Can companies or SME in Switzerland participating in a DN also receive funding from SERI?

Legal entities (including companies and SME) based in Switzerland participate in DN and will receive funding via the SERI.

How does the 40% rule apply for the Swiss participant?

The SERI follows the same rule and the Swiss Budget should not exceed 40% of the total EU financial contribution (budget of all beneficiaries).

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