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Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER
**State Secretariat for Education,
Research and Innovation SERI**
International Research and Innovation Programmes

Swiss Position Paper on FP10

17 June 2024



The Swiss Position Paper on the 10th EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10) presented here was prepared on the initiative of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation in collaboration with Swiss research and innovation (R&I) stakeholders: swissuniversities, ETH Board, Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, Swiss National Science Foundation, Innosuisse, Swiss Science Council, Euresearch, SwissCore, Swissemem, scienceindustries, economiesuisse and Swiss Startup Association.

The EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation are of high significance for Switzerland due to its extensive engagement history, shared principles and geographical centrality within Europe inevitably fostering strong scientific exchange and collaboration. The present paper outlines the main principles that should be addressed in FP10 from a Swiss perspective.

In order to build on shared knowledge and values, to realise the full potential of research and innovation in Europe and to attract new talent, Switzerland strongly advocates for the continuation of excellence and the proven bottom-up mono-beneficiary instruments in FP10. This is without denying the importance of collaborative R&I to tackle current and future global challenges. Strategic areas must be considered with a vision to promoting Europe's competitiveness and global role in research and innovation by bringing on board like-minded excellent and trustful R&I partners. A strong 10th EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation will benefit Europe's economy and society beyond the capacity of individual countries and should therefore remain at the heart of the EU's political agenda.

Research and innovation policy

- ▶ Maintain excellence as a key criterion.
- ▶ Continue to cover the entire value chain from basic research to innovation activities.
- ▶ Facilitate excellence-based cooperation with industry.
- ▶ Catalyse breakthrough innovation in all areas and instruments.
- ▶ Better integrate Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (SSAH).

Strategic orientations

- ▶ Promote international cooperation with like-minded countries within the framework of FP10 to foster high quality research and innovation, build partnerships and address global societal challenges.
- ▶ Apply open strategic autonomy sensibly by focusing on strengthening Europe's competitiveness and global role with trusted partners.
- ▶ Design synergies with other EU Programmes in such a way that associated countries can fully participate.

Governance policy and sustainability

- ▶ Secure a predictable and well targeted FP10 budget focusing on research and innovation activities to ensure financial sustainability.
- ▶ Realise the implementation of the current, short- and long-term objectives of the European Research Area before multiplying its policies.
- ▶ Promote positive change in European academic culture to bring forth and attract excellent scientists and innovators.
- ▶ Strengthen the integration of diversity aspects and continue to integrate gender and sex aspects into research and innovation content.
- ▶ Raise public understanding of the importance and impact of research and innovation to ensure long-term political support for the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation.

Implementation aspects

- ▶ Further simplify administrative procedures in the participation process.

► **Maintain excellence as a key criterion.**

Europe's competitiveness can only be maintained and strengthened by funding and promoting excellence in research and innovation. In this context, the continued promotion of international competition is key to achieving excellence and addressing global challenges.

► **Continue to cover the entire value chain from basic research to innovation activities.**

While recognising the importance of basic research as a foundation and prerequisite for disruptive innovation, it is crucial to maintain the diversity of instruments to support bottom-up research (e.g., ERC & MSCA), targeted top-down initiatives and market uptake.

Instruments without a positive track record should be improved or discontinued under FP10, based on the ex-post Horizon 2020 and the Horizon Europe interim evaluations. There is no need to add new instruments (in particular to fund actions that are not related to research and innovation), but rather to consolidate the existing ones and to improve coordination between them.

Inter- and transdisciplinarity should be further promoted in FP10, both at research and innovation level. Non-R&I components of governance-oriented instruments (e.g., Missions) should be placed outside FP10.

FP10 should promote greater sustainability and permeability of instruments. For example, Research Infrastructures should be enabled to provide long-term resources and services to research communities in a non-discriminatory way across the programme covering all needs. In a similar manner, Technology Infrastructures could promote the scaling-up of technologies along the TRL-scale in all pillars of the programme.

► **Facilitate excellence-based cooperation with industry.**

Strong collaboration with industry is essential for Europe's competitiveness in order to develop the scalability of technology in strategic areas and to drive the green and digital transition. The facilita-

tion of such collaboration throughout FP10 should be based exclusively on excellence and competitiveness and secure a level playing field. Corresponding instruments need to respect the diversity of the industrial policy landscape in Europe. Cooperation with industry should primarily serve the valorisation of knowledge originating from the entire range of FP instruments and initiatives.

► **Catalyse breakthrough innovation in all areas and instruments.**

The need to promote innovation outcomes across all instruments should be taken into account in the design of the new FP. It is important to focus on strategic partnerships between science and industry that drive innovation. Switzerland therefore welcomes the integration of instruments into Horizon Europe aimed at facilitating the translation of basic research into innovative applications to foster entrepreneurship (e.g., EIC-Transition). Such instruments should be further developed and strengthened in FP10.

Furthermore, the specific innovation instruments should continue the proven bottom-up approach by using mainly open calls to boost innovation with a disruptive potential. The EIC Accelerator plays a crucial role in helping companies to develop and grow quickly. This should be continued in FP10, while seeking stronger synergies and complementarities with start-up support programmes at national level.

► **Better integrate Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (SSAH).**

The complex challenges of our time require transformative solutions, which must include cross-sectoral collaboration involving SSAH disciplines. Previous attempts to better integrate SSAH have so far not had the desired effect. New ways need to be found to encourage such inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches. This could be facilitated by improved integration and collaboration between projects in STEM disciplines and SSAH. It is particularly important to improve the dialogue between different perspectives, as most, if not all, global challenges show strong SSAH aspects.

Strategic orientations

► **Promote international cooperation with like-minded countries within the framework of FP10 to foster high quality research and innovation, build partnerships and address global societal challenges.**

International collaboration in research and innovation is key to addressing the global nature of today's societal challenges and the rapid pace of technological development. Therefore, international cooperation with countries and partners that share values and principles with the EU should be strengthened in FP10.

Switzerland fully supports and promotes the principle of open science, open and FAIR research data and standardised data quality throughout the programme, in the European Open Science Cloud, as well as in the context of European and global cooperation, according to the principle of „as open as possible, as closed as necessary“.

The number and importance of infrastructure instruments and initiatives, such as the European Research Infrastructure Consortia (ERIC), the European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (EDIC) and other European Research Infrastructures is growing, and they are becoming increasingly interconnected particularly with regards to FAIR data. FP10 should ensure that these instruments remain equally open and accessible to like-minded research and innovation organisations beyond EU Member States in order to build global ecosystems.

► **Apply open strategic autonomy sensibly by focusing on strengthening Europe's competitiveness and global role with trusted partners.**

In the light of the changing geopolitical context, FP10 must ensure the framework conditions for a strong and independent European research and innovation capacity. International cooperation with like-minded partners outside the EU should be actively fostered.

Strategic areas should be considered with a vision to promoting Europe's competitiveness, technological sovereignty and global role in research and innovation by bringing on board long-standing and trusted R&I partners. Restrictions based on the principle of open strategic autonomy should be the exception and applied sensibly. FP10 must remain a relevant funding instrument for European research and innovation, fostering collaboration in "critical technology areas" with trusted partners, aligned in security aspects and shared values. In particular, no compromises should be made in terms of excellence, performance and cost-effectiveness in the pursuit of strategic autonomy.

Furthermore, Switzerland supports a separation between funding for defence and civilian research in FP10. Potential dual-use concerns in "critical technology areas" require careful assessment and a cautious approach to international cooperation, focusing on long-standing and trusted partners.

► **Design synergies with other EU Programmes in such a way that associated countries can fully participate.**

The transformative nature of the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation inevitably calls for greater synergies with other EU programmes, such as the Digital Europe Programme, Erasmus+, the Connecting Europe Facility, the European Space Programme and other EU funds and programmes, in order to maximise benefits and opportunities in research and innovation, avoid duplication and save resources. However, to take full advantage of these synergies, they should be designed in such a way that they do not lead to exclusion of or disadvantages in terms of participation and funding for countries associated to one or several, but not all of the affected programmes.

► **Secure a predictable and well targeted FP10 budget focusing on research and innovation activities to ensure financial sustainability.**

High levels of investment across the R&I spectrum and a stable and predictable framework for R&I funding are crucial for the functioning of the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation. It is therefore essential to safeguard the FP10 budget in face of growing pressure to reallocate funds to other priorities, and to ensure that it does not fall below the Horizon Europe budget.

In particular, Switzerland calls for the continuation or increase of the budget of the highly successful and important bottom-up instruments (e.g., ERC & MSCA), in order to promote the continuation of curiosity-driven research and its results, and to counteract the oversubscription of these basic research instruments.

► **Realise the implementation of the current, short- and long-term objectives of the European Research Area before multiplying its policies.**

Throughout FP10, the European Research Area (ERA) should first and foremost be strengthened. Switzerland suggests to deepen both, the long-term objectives and the current goals of the ERA action policies throughout Europe, before introducing new actions, in order to give countries enough time to sustainably implement the policies and objectives of the R&I Pact.

Associated Countries and long-standing partners of the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation should be strongly involved in the policy-setting process of the ERA in order to create benefits for Europe as a whole. This should include participation at eye level in ERAC, the ERA Forum, ESFRI and other policy expert groups. Furthermore, Switzerland values the involvement of stakeholder groups in the ERA governance and suggests the continuation of these groups under FP10.

► **Promote positive change in European academic culture to bring forth and attract excellent scientists and innovators.**

Switzerland welcomes and participates in the efforts to promote positive change in academic culture by advancing research assessment (e.g., CoARA) and improving research careers in co-operation with international partners. These developments are crucial for more impactful, efficient, inclusive and high-quality research systems and should be further pursued, implemented and monitored. This will contribute to maintaining and further feeding the European talent pool by attracting excellent scientists and innovators from around the world. In particular, it is crucial to promote First Stage and Recognised Researchers (R1 & R2), who are the cornerstones of a strong research and innovation landscape.

► **Strengthen the integration of diversity aspects and continue to integrate gender and sex aspects into research and innovation content.**

Switzerland welcomes a strengthened focus on diversity in research careers and research teams to produce high-quality R&I. To this aim, the effective implementation of Gender Equality Plans should be further encouraged under FP10. Research and innovation content should continue to include gender and sex aspects and, where applicable, take an intersectional approach.

► **Raise public understanding of the importance and impact of research and innovation to ensure long-term political support for the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation.**

Each FP10 project should mandatorily integrate activities that bridge the gap between R&I results and their practical application in society. This can increase trust in science and research and political support for R&I funding. Switzerland therefore proposes to continue and strengthen the promotional and public relations activities for FP10, in particular to make the concrete results of scientific projects and their impact more accessible to policy-makers and the general public.

Implementation aspects

► **Further simplify administrative procedures in the participation process.**

Switzerland welcomes all efforts to further simplify the participation process and to streamline administrative procedures along the entire project life cycle, in order to avoid excluding potential new research and innovation participants. Nevertheless, new mechanisms and tools (e.g., lump sum funding schemes and AI-assisted tools) should be tested and thoroughly evaluated before being integrated on a broader scale. The main objective should remain to facilitate research and innovation activities and to ensure that such new mechanisms and tools provide a level playing field and do not create unexpected inequalities or additional bureaucratic burdens.

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Acknowledgements:

Economiesuisse

ETH Board

Euresearch

Innosuisse

Scienceindustries

Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences

Swiss National Science Foundation

Swiss Science Council

Swiss Startup Association

SwissCore

Swissmem

Swissuniversities