

SCOPES 2009-2012

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

In recent years, the SNSF has been confronted with many questions concerning the implementation of the SCOPES programme. These questions and their answers are listed below as supplementary information. Due to the diversity of participating countries, research teams, institutions, and supported activities, the general conditions under which scientific co-operations take place show a broad variety. Therefore, it is not possible to offer a specific solution for each problem. We hope that these recommendations will be helpful and would be pleased if you could share your experience with us. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or suggestions.

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1. General information

1.1 Who is eligible to participate in the SCOPES programme?

Research teams and institutions from specified partner countries in Eastern Europe and New Independent States of the former Soviet Union are eligible to participate in the SCOPES programme (the eligible partner countries are listed in the information concerning the call for proposals). They must have a partner in Switzerland who is employed at one of the Swiss universities or the Federal Institute of Technology, a federal research institute or a university of applied sciences.

1.2 Where can information concerning the programme be found?

The website of the SNSF (www.snf.ch > International > Europe > Eastern Europe: SCOPES > Call for proposals) publishes up-to-date information on any open calls, including forms and guidelines. Information is also available from the SNSF, International Co-operation (e-mail: international@snf.ch).

1.3 When is it possible to submit a proposal?

Proposals can be submitted only in the framework of an open call (see corresponding deadlines) and not during the entire duration of the programme. Calls are advertised primarily by the SNSF, which also informs the Swiss Embassies and the co-ordination offices of the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) in the participating countries, the Embassies of the participating countries in Switzerland as well as partner organisations of the SNSF (funding agencies and Ministries of Science).

1.4 Are there regular calls for proposals?

Calls are issued at irregular intervals, usually at the start of a programme phase. Therefore, applications for Preparatory Grants (PG), Joint Research Projects (JRP) and Institutional Partnerships (IP) are possible at the beginning of the programme, whereas applications for Conference Grants (CG) and Valorisation Grants (VG, for activities related to accepted JRP and IP) are possible for the whole duration of the programme.

1.5 What kind of scientific fields are included in the SCOPES programme?

All scientific disciplines of basic research are included. Research activities to be selected for funding should not be of academic interest only, but rather be thematically oriented to important issues of the transition process and its consequences.

2. Applications

2.1 Who is responsible for the submission of a SCOPES proposal?

Proposals for SCOPES funding instruments must be submitted by the Swiss partner representing both his/her own team and the partner(s) from Eastern Europe.

2.2 How can partners be found in Switzerland?

Swiss partners can be found through their publications in scientific journals or personal contact, or by checking who took part in previous projects. The websites of the Swiss universities and research institutes contain information about scientists on their faculty sites. Swiss scientists should be contacted directly. A link to the university and research institute pages can be found on the SNSF website (www.snf.ch > Services for researchers > Links). The SNSF can give advice, but does not provide recommendations concerning potential partners.

2.3 What kind of funding instruments are supported by SCOPES?

SCOPES calls include the following instruments: Joint Research Projects (JRP), Institutional Partnerships (IP), Conference Grants (CG), Preparatory Grants (PG) and Valorisation Grants (VG).

Joint Research Projects (JRP) shall enable scientists from the partner countries to undertake jointly with scientists from Switzerland original research on a specific topic from any scientific area. The objective is to strengthen excellent research teams in partner countries by contributing to the improvement of their working conditions. Applications for JRP can only be submitted during an open call for proposals.

Institutional Partnerships (IP) shall contribute to the further development and modernisation of institutional aspects of research and higher education. By improving the framework conditions for research and teaching, the participating institutions from SCOPES partner countries should be enabled to enhance their attractiveness and competitiveness in the international scientific community. IP do not focus on research directly (no funding of research projects). Applications for IP can only be submitted during an open call for proposals.

Conference Grants (CG) shall enable scientists from the SCOPES partner countries to participate in international scientific conferences held in Switzerland. For this purpose, Swiss conference organisers will receive a financial contribution towards the travel and subsistence costs of the Eastern European scientists participating at the conference who should principally be no older than 45 years of age. For each participant, a short *Curriculum vitae* must be provided. Applications for CG can be submitted during the whole duration of the programme.

Preparatory Grants (PG) shall enable potential co-operation partners from Switzerland and SCOPES partner countries to meet each other in order to discuss and prepare a proposal for a

Joint Research Project/Institutional Partnership. PG should cover travel and subsistence costs of the meeting. A flat rate of CHF will be financed. The meeting must take place before the submission of a proposal. Applications for PG can only be submitted during an open call for proposals.

Valorisation Grants (VG) shall strengthen the distribution and valorisation of results resulting from Joint Research Projects/Institutional Partnerships. Applications for VG can be submitted during the whole duration of the programme.

2.4 Are there special opportunities for young scientists?

There is no fellowship instrument in the framework of the SCOPES programme. However, in Conference Grants, Joint Research Projects and Institutional Partnerships, preference will be given to those proposals which include young scientists.

2.5 Is it possible for a partner from a third country to be involved in SCOPES?

Yes, but at its own cost.

2.6 Must a proposal be submitted in English, or are other languages allowed?

Generally proposals are only accepted in English, but if both the Swiss and Eastern European partners have a working language of either French or German, proposals in these languages will also be accepted exceptionally. This applies especially to projects which have a theme relating to either of the two languages.

3. Financial issues

3.1 Are the budget categories binding?

All expenditure must be allotted to a category of the accepted budget. Eastern European and Swiss expenditure is to be listed separately (see Guidelines for the Administration of Joint Research Projects/Institutional Partnerships).

3.2 Is it possible to transfer funds from one budget category to another?

Generally, the accounting is to be done according to the approved budget categories. Changes are possible, but they must be announced in advance in written form by the co-ordinator. This is necessary to ensure traceability in the final audit. No request is necessary when the amount to be transferred is less than CHF 20,000 and if no terms and conditions are breached.

3.3 Is it possible to receive further funding for activities?

It is not possible to receive further funds with the exception of the Valorisation Grants aimed at promoting the distribution and valorisation of results.

3.4 Are grants automatically transferred to project accounts?

Before a grant can be transferred to the research institution of the co-ordinator, a lay summary and any necessary authorisation or notification concerning research on humans, animals etc. must be provided. The co-ordinator then requests the release of funds with the form annexed to the approval letter. On receipt of this, the grant will be transferred as one payment for Conference, Preparatory and Valorisation Grants or as several payments for Joint Research Projects

and Institutional Partnerships. The second and third instalments will only be released on request. The request form can be found on the SNSF website (www.snf.ch > International > Europe > Eastern Europe: SCOPES > Forms, Regulations and Directives).

3.5 How can money be transferred to the country of an Eastern partner?

In many countries, the banking system is not yet as well established as in Western Europe. Partners from Eastern Europe should be asked which is the safest way to transfer money. To begin with, the transfer of small amounts to a separate account specific to the project is recommended in order to test the chosen system. If there are problems, the SNSF should be contacted.

Cash transfers during visits have also been effected successfully, but this method can be risky and the responsibility for funding lost in transit lies within the project.

Certain expenses of the Eastern European partner(s) can be paid directly by the co-ordinator in Switzerland (e.g. travel and subsistence costs, equipment and consumables).

3.6 How much could be paid as an individual grant?

An individual grant is a financial contribution, paid directly to a team member of the partner countries, supporting him/her personally in his/her scientific work in the framework of the Joint Research Project. Individual grants should preferably be used for the support of younger scientists and should be adapted to local salaries. They are currently fixed between 200 – 500 CHF per month. The range depends also on the position of the scientist: team leader = up to 500 CHF, senior scientist = up to 400 CHF; junior scientist, engineer = up to 300 CHF; technical or other specialised staff = up to 200 CHF (if working 100 %).

3.7 How can individual grants be transferred to the recipients?

An individual grant should be paid directly to the person for whom it is intended. This can be done through the personal account of the recipient or through a trusted person. The payments are to be confirmed by the person receiving an individual grant by signing a confirmation form (www.snf.ch > International > Europe > Eastern Europe: SCOPES > Forms, Regulations and Directives).

3.8 How much is the daily allowance for visiting scientists?

The maximum daily allowance is CHF 160 in larger cities and CHF 120 in smaller cities. It covers accommodation and subsistence (hotel, meals, local transport). There is a special confirmation form for accounting; thus it is not necessary to provide receipts for every expense.

3.9 Must taxes and social security contributions be paid for visiting scientists?

The money paid to visiting Eastern European scientists is for daily expenses, and is not to be regarded as salary. Therefore no deductions should be made.

3.10 Are there guidelines for the administration of grants available?

Guidelines in English for Joint Research Projects and Institutional Partnerships can be found on the SNSF website: www.snf.ch > International > Europe > Eastern Europe: SCOPES > Forms, Regulations and Directives

4. Project Management

4.1 Who can co-ordinate a proposal?

The Swiss main applicant is the formal project co-ordinator.

4.2 What is the role of the co-ordinator?

Participating research teams/institutions of Joint Research Projects/Institutional Partnerships must nominate a co-ordinator who shall come from a participating Swiss institution. The co-ordinator shall represent the participating research teams/institutions to the SNSF and be responsible for:

- the submission of the proposal for a JRP/IP/CG/PG/VG,
- the co-ordination and management of the JRP/IP/CG/PG/VG (all SNSF correspondence relevant to the implementation of the supported activities will be addressed to the co-ordinator),
- the distribution of financial support from the SNSF to the partners,
- the submission of the scientific and financial reports (including all original receipts for all expenditure financed by SNSF with exception of flat rates).

4.3 What kind of management instruments are recommended?

An internal kick-off meeting at the beginning of a Joint Research Project/Institutional Partnership is highly recommended in order to learn more about each others situation, needs and expectations and to confirm common understanding of the project. Besides the annual scientific and financial reports requested by the SNSF, a more frequent exchange of information (informal reports at shorter intervals, e.g. quarterly) is recommended for internal monitoring.

4.4 Is it possible for partners to participate at international conferences?

If a participation is relevant to a Joint Research Project or an Institutional Partnership, this may be agreed for the partner(s). For conferences taking place outside of Europe and the NIS countries, a request to the SNSF should be made beforehand.

4.5 What is the maximum duration of stays in Switzerland?

Stays of up to three months in one year per person are the general rule. For short visits, a tourist visa may be adequate (check with the Swiss Embassy in the concerned partner country). Otherwise, a business visa must be applied for.

4.6 What formalities are necessary for a visa application (if needed)?

The partner from Eastern Europe must be provided with an invitation letter mentioning the SCOPES programme as well as the project number, the duration and the reason for the visit. The same letter should be sent to the Swiss Embassy (the embassies already have a list of SCOPES projects). In principal, a business visa is needed; in some cases, a tourist visa may be sufficient. This should be checked with the authorities (www.snf.ch > International > Swiss contacts).

4.7 What arrangements are recommended concerning health insurance?

The visitor should have a valid health insurance in Switzerland. Most Swiss embassies do not provide a visa without a health insurance. Some universities in Switzerland have a collective

health insurance in which visitors could easily be included. Other universities do not offer this service. In this case it is necessary to establish a separate insurance to cover the visit.

4.8 What rules apply for booking flights?

The cheapest offer in Economy Class should be used. The SNSF does not offer a booking service for flights.

4.9 Do Swiss contacts exist in partner countries?

Co-operation offices of the Swiss Embassies can be found in most of the participating countries. Embassies and consulates have experience and can offer advice. A list of contact addresses is available from the SNSF website (www.snf.ch > Services for researchers > Links).

4.10 Are there any agreements between Switzerland and the partner countries?

For most of the partner countries in Eastern Europe, agreements concerning technical and financial co-operation are in place between Switzerland and the concerned country. They aim at establishing framework rules and procedures for the implementation of bilateral projects. They could be useful to avoid taxes and customs duties, for example if transfer of goods from Switzerland to the partner countries is envisaged. Copies of the agreements are available from the SNSF on request.

Any intention to transport goods from Switzerland to a partner country or vice versa should be communicated well beforehand to the relevant co-operation office of the SDC. If necessary, the SNSF (and/or the Embassy of the concerned partner country in Switzerland) could provide an accompanying letter.

If needed, the SNSF could also provide a letter concerning tax exemption to individuals in Eastern Europe who are supported in the framework of SCOPES.

4.11 Is it possible to buy equipment/sundries in Switzerland?

Generally, yes. It depends on the availability, price quotes and special individual commercial agreements that may already be in effect. When buying equipment, the service possibilities should be considered, especially for equipment prone to malfunctioning.

4.12 Can postal services be recommended?

Postal services in some countries are quite slow, so information from partners on the reliability of such services can be helpful. If necessary, independent express services could be used.

5. Reporting

5.1 How often must scientific reports be sent to the SNSF?

For Joint Research Projects/Institutional Partnerships: an interim scientific report is to be drawn up every twelve months after the starting date and must be submitted to the SNSF through the co-ordinator in one copy. By the concluding date of the Joint Research Project/Institutional Partnership, a final scientific report must be submitted to the SNSF through the co-ordinator in two copies.

For Conference Grants and Valorisation Grants: By the concluding date, a final scientific report must be submitted to the SNSF through the co-ordinator.

For all reports concerning JRP/IP, the SNSF will provide the co-ordinator with the relevant form or link to the electronic version before reports are due. The reports will be subject to evaluation and acceptance by the SNSF.

5.2 How often must financial reports be sent to the SNSF?

For Joint Research Projects/Institutional Partnerships: an interim financial report is to be drawn up every twelve months after the starting date and must be submitted to the SNSF through the co-ordinator in one copy. By the concluding date, a final financial report must be submitted to the SNSF through the co-ordinator including receipts for all expenditure (with exception of flat rates) and details both for the Swiss side as well as for the Eastern European partner(s). It must be clear what spending relates to which partner and which budget category.

For Conference Grants and Valorisation Grants: by the concluding date, a final financial report must be submitted to the SNSF through the co-ordinator.

For all reports, the SNSF will provide the co-ordinator with the relevant form or link to the electronic version before reports are due. The reports will be subject to evaluation and acceptance by the SNSF.

5.3 What is the purpose of site visits by the SNSF?

The SNSF or any duly authorised representative may execute site visits/audits with the Joint Research Partnership/Institutional Partnership participants in Eastern Europe. Site visits are a monitoring instrument for the programme management and also enable them to form an idea of the working conditions of the research teams and institutions in the partner countries as well as to receive direct feedback from the beneficiaries. The visit will mainly consist of an interview with the team leader and/or with the team. The visited teams are requested to provide any necessary information related to the SCOPES project and its financial accounting.

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