

Executive Summary Multi-Year Programme 2021–2024



We invest in researchers
and their ideas

Executive Summary

Based on its federal mandate, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) invests in scientific research as a driver of economic and societal innovation. Grants are awarded in a selection procedure that is competitive, quality-driven and independent.

- **Competitive:** The SNSF awards the financial resources in a competitive process to the best researchers and research projects in Switzerland. Competition between ideas is an important factor in high-quality research and scientific discoveries.
- **Quality-driven:** The SNSF evaluation bodies decide whether applications submitted by researchers deserve funding based solely on quality. Leading scientists evaluate the applications according to international standards.
- **Independent:** The SNSF is convinced that scientists are best able to identify promising research topics. Open funding formats with few requirements have been devised to boost freedom of research. Thanks to its independence and expertise, the SNSF is also able to make substantial contributions to the development of the science system.

Strategic priorities

Although Swiss research is in an excellent position internationally, it is also confronted with a number of challenges in a highly competitive environment. In order to optimally meet these challenges and underpin and expand Switzerland's leading position, the SNSF has set the following strategic priorities for the 2021–2024 funding period:

- **Foster excellence through diversity:** The SNSF has a mandate to promote high-quality research in Switzerland in all its diversity. In the next funding period, its activities will remain focused on funding basic research. In order to unlock further potential for excellent research, the SNSF will support use-inspired research at universities of applied sciences as well as research carried out by women, in particular.
- **Strengthen international leadership through collaboration:** Research is global, but at the same time it is becoming increasingly specialised. Many research questions can only be addressed if different groups with complementary skills work together. The SNSF wants to make it easier for researchers to jointly contribute to the development of new areas of knowledge and enhance the leading position of Swiss research.
- **Support data infrastructures and services for open science:** Research produces, stores, administers and analyses increasingly large volumes of data. The SNSF aims to ensure that researchers in Switzerland are able to use high-quality data infrastructures and services that are well coordinated and easily accessible. This is crucial to the quality and usability of research results and expedites the transition to open science.
- **Enhance the value of research for society:** The full potential of research findings is not yet being realised. The SNSF will continue to support their translation into innovations in collaboration with Innosuisse. In addition, the SNSF will bring together SNSF-funded researchers with stakeholders who want to apply research findings. This will facilitate, in particular, the implementation of the sustainable development goals defined by the United Nations.

Further information: www.snsf.ch

New measures and funding portfolio

A series of new measures supports the implementation of these strategic priorities. The measures complement the existing funding portfolio through which the SNSF has successfully promoted scientific research in Switzerland.

The orientation and structure of the funding portfolio remain unchanged. Open formats with few thematic or other requirements (projects and careers) still account for the lion's share of the funding budget, approximately 80 %.

Funding category in the portfolio	New financially relevant measures to implement the strategic priorities	Additional funds for 2021–2024 period compared to the level at the end of the previous period (2020)
Projects		
Enable researchers in all disciplines to apply for support for self-chosen projects to pursue new ideas and achieve their research targets.	New funding scheme for research collaboration in medium-sized consortia	Reallocation within funds for projects
	Temporary measure for health and engineering research at universities of applied sciences	CHF 24 million
Careers		
Funding schemes have been enhanced in the current funding period in order to offer young researchers clear career prospects.	Excellence grants for female doctoral candidates in the STEM disciplines and life sciences	CHF 17 million
Programmes		
Pursue special predefined goals.	Development of BRIDGE, the joint programme of the SNSF and Innosuisse	CHF 18 million (additional mandate)
Infrastructures		
Support the development of entire disciplines.	Funding and evaluation for data infrastructures and services of national importance	CHF 28 million (additional mandate)
	Start-up and development grants for emerging data infrastructure requirements	CHF 10 million
Scientific communication		
Foster dialogue and knowledge transfer.	Funding of implementation networks to support communication between researchers and potential users of research	CHF 7 million
Total		CHF 104 million*

* incl. additional mandates from the government in the amount of CHF 46 million in total

European research funding

The SNSF's planning presupposes the full association of Switzerland to the next European research framework programme Horizon Europe. The SNSF is striving to achieve this objective in close collaboration with the SERI. Both SNSF funding and European funding

are necessary: without competition-based national funding, Swiss research would be less competitive. In the absence of European funding, Swiss research would lack international integration and the very important opportunity to measure up against European quality standards.

Financial requirements

The financing required for the 2021–2024 period has increased for three reasons:

■ Prior financial commitments and continuation of new grants at a level similar to 2020: The SNSF generally funds projects over several years to allow researchers to plan and think ahead. This has an impact on the financial requirement, as funding decisions made in one period entail payments in the next period. If the newly approved project funds go up, the SNSF's financial requirement for the following years will increase, into the next ERI period. This applies even if new approvals do not continue to increase. In the 2021–2024 period, the SNSF plans to continue approving new applications in existing schemes at the same level as in the period up to 2020. To achieve this, it requires an additional CHF 231 million for the above-mentioned reasons. Most of these resources will be allocated to career funding, which was expanded by the SNSF in the 2017–2020 period.

■ Necessary adjustments to existing funding schemes: CHF 61 million are needed to adjust the salaries of project employees to the development of nominal wages and to increase the mobility fellowships, which will be taxable from now on.

■ New strategic priorities: The SNSF requires CHF 104 million for the above-mentioned measures.

In relation to the funding budget, the indirect research costs at higher education institutions (overhead) and for service provision (Administrative Offices and evaluation processes) are in the region of the costs for 2017–2020.

The additional financial requirement for the 2021–2024 period thus comes to CHF 396 million. This corresponds to an annual increase of approximately CHF 100 million, or 3.5%. The SNSF is not requesting compensation for the generally increasing research costs and it will transfer money within project funding to finance some of the new measures. It will require less funding for the NCCRs and NRPs than in the current period.

- Continuation of grants at level of 2020
- Necessary adjustments to existing funding schemes
- New strategic priorities

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2021 – 2024	Additional funds for 2021– 2024 period compared to the level at the end of the previous period (2020) in CHF million
Projects	540	548	549	580	604	2,280	120
Careers	185	200	228	232	240	900	160
Programmes	14	15	17	19	19	70	12
Infrastructures	36	40	40	40	41	159	15
Science communication	11	12	13	15	16	56	11
Total I	787	814	846	885	919	3,465	318
NCCRs and NRPs	86	89	77	75	75	316	-26
Additional mandates from the Federal Government	43	54	54	54	55	218	46
Total II	915	957	978	1,015	1,049	3,999	338
Service provision	69	72	74	76	79	301	25
Overhead for indirect research costs at higher education institutions	107	100	117	119	124	460	33
Total III	1,091	1,129	1,168	1,210	1,252	4,759	396

The amounts may include rounding differences

The SNSF will definitively prioritise the planned measures on the basis of the ERI Dispatch 2021–2024.