

Terms of Reference

Funding period 2021-2024

9 December 2021

Introduction

Innosuisse – the Swiss Innovation Agency – and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) have jointly established the BRIDGE programme. The basic principles of BRIDGE are defined in the present *Terms of Reference for the programme BRIDGE*, approved by the Board of Directors of Innosuisse on 18 November 2020 and by the Presiding Board of the SNSF Research Council on 9 December 2020. The amended version of 9 December 2021 was approved by the Board of Directors of Innosuisse on 16 November 2021 and by the Pre-siding Board of the SNSF Research Council on 8 December 2021.

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1. Goals and scope of the programme

The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Swiss Innovation Agency (Innosuisse) launched their joint funding programme BRIDGE in 2017 based on the task given by the Swiss Confederation. BRIDGE offers funding opportunities at the interface of basic research and science-based innovation. It relies on an integrative and iterative vision of innovation, which assumes that science and innovation interact in many different ways. The overall aim of BRIDGE is to make better use of the economic and societal potential of research findings and to facilitate research-based innovation by accelerating the uptake of research findings that may be transformed into products, services and further commercial or non-commercial solutions for the benefit of the Swiss society and economy. The BRIDGE programme should also trigger promising research ideas by speeding up the feedback loop between academia and the scope of implementation.

BRIDGE shall as well strengthen the structural cooperation between SNSF and Innosuisse in view of creating a truly consistent set of funding instruments for research and research-based innovation projects. It should encourage researchers to explore potential applications of their research in an early phase and allow them to develop the early stages of applications from their research results.

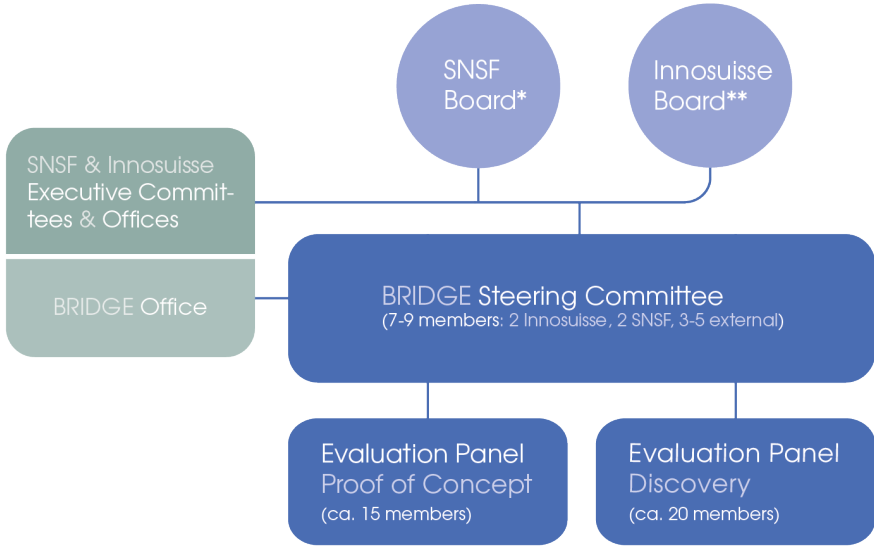
BRIDGE consists of two funding schemes with different target groups:

- **Proof of Concept** is aimed at young researchers who wish to develop an application or service based on their research results.
- **Discovery** is aimed at experienced researchers who aim to explore and implement the innovation potential of research results.

Both funding schemes are open to innovations of all kinds and from all research areas. Only projects that have a high potential of societal and / or economic impact will be funded.

The two funding schemes were rolled out in the 2017-2020 test phase, for which a budget of CHF 70 million was made available. Based on its obvious success, BRIDGE is consolidated as a joint programme embedded in the regular funding portfolios of SNSF and Innosuisse in the funding period 2021-2024. A funding budget of CHF 105 million will be available.

2. Governance structure



*SNSF Presiding Board of the National Research Council | **Innosuisse Board of Directors

2.1. Roles of the SNSF Presiding Board and Board of Directors of Innosuisse

The SNSF Presiding Board of the National Research Council (hereafter SNSF Presiding Board) and the Board of Directors of Innosuisse assume jointly the supervision of the BRIDGE programme and have the following decision power:

- Decide on the overall scope of the programme
- Decide on the governance structures and competences
- Decide on the different funding schemes of BRIDGE and their relative weight within the programme
- Decide on the Terms of Reference for the programme
- Appoint the members of the BRIDGE Steering Committee and its Chairperson.

- Decide on the rotation of SNSF and Innosuisse representatives as Chair of the Steering Committee.

2.2. BRIDGE Steering Committee

The BRIDGE Steering Committee (SteCo) is responsible for the implementation and steering of the BRIDGE programme. It is composed of 7-9 members: 2 representatives of the SNSF, 2 representatives of Innosuisse, and 3-5 external members. The SteCo has the following tasks and competences:

- Issues the regulations of the BRIDGE funding schemes proposed by the Executive Committees of SNSF and Innosuisse
- Decides on the conditions of the publication of calls (based on the regulations of the BRIDGE funding schemes)
- May propose additional funding schemes
- Allocates yearly budgets to each funding scheme
- Sets up and composes the Evaluation Panels and appoints its chairperson and its members
- On the basis of the recommendations of the Evaluation Panels, decides on the funding of projects according to available budgets
- On the basis of the recommendations of the Evaluation Panels, decides on the interruption or the extension of projects
- Monitors the programme during the funding period and reports to the SNSF Presiding Board and the Board of Directors of Innosuisse
- May propose events or activities related to BRIDGE and / or communication activities on BRIDGE
- Elaborates and submits propositions for the further development and optimisation of the programme

The members of the SteCo are elected for a fixed period of time and for a maximum of four years. Re-election is possible up to a total of eight service years.

The SteCo may elect a Vice-Chairman among its members.

The members of the SteCo shall comply with the rules of the SNSF and Innosuisse regarding conflicts of interests and confidentiality.

The SteCo has a quorum when the majority of its members are present. It takes decisions with the majority of votes cast. If the votes are equal, the Chairperson has the casting vote. In urgent cases, resolutions may also be made by way of circulation unless a member requests discussion thereof in a meeting within three working days after the relevant proposal was sent.

Chairpersons of the Evaluation Panels that are not members of the SteCo regularly participate in meetings of the SteCo as guests in an advisory capacity.

The members of the SteCo representing Innosuisse are remunerated according to the remuneration provisions of Innosuisse.¹ All other members of the SteCo are remunerated according to the remuneration provisions of the SNSF.² Furthermore, the SteCo governs its way of working.

2.3. Evaluation Panels

The evaluation and monitoring of the Proof of Concept and Discovery projects are undertaken by separate Evaluation Panels (EPs), since the two types of projects require different evaluation competences. Each EP will include experts in a broad range of research and innovation areas and types.

¹ Entschädigungsverordnung Innosuisse vom 20. September 2017 (SR 420.233)

² Entschädigungsreglement des SNF (also published at www.snf.ch)

The EPs have the following competences and tasks:

- Evaluation of the submitted proposals and submission of recommendations to the SteCo
- Monitoring of the project progress
- Submission of recommendations to the SteCo concerning the interruption and extension of projects
- May propose changes to the regulations of the funding schemes

The members of the EPs are elected for a fixed period of time and for a maximum of four years. Re-election is possible up to a total of eight service years.

The members of the EPs shall comply with the rules of the SNSF and Innosuisse regarding conflicts of interests and confidentiality.

Each EP has a quorum when the majority of its members are present. It takes decisions with the majority of votes cast. If the votes are equal, the Chairperson has the casting vote. In urgent cases, resolutions may also be made by way of circulation unless a member requests discussion thereof in a meeting within three working days after the relevant proposal was sent.

The members of the EPs are remunerated according to the remuneration provisions of the SNSF.³ Furthermore, the EPs govern their way of working.

2.4. BRIDGE Office

The BRIDGE Office – appointed and financed by Innosuisse and the SNSF – manages all funding activities of the programme. The BRIDGE Office has the following tasks and competences:

- Manages the programme
- Supports the SteCo and the EPs in their tasks and prepares and executes their decisions
- Assesses the formal funding criteria as set out in the regulations of the BRIDGE funding schemes
- Implements and communicates the funding decisions made by the SteCo
- Is responsible for the lifetime management of the supported projects
- May request advisory services of the Offices of SNSF and Innosuisse if needed, specifically in case of legal or financial matters
- Communicates on BRIDGE in close coordination with the communication offices of SNSF and Innosuisse and within the guidelines of the Executive Committees of SNSF and Innosuisse
- Regularly reports its activities to the Executive Committees of SNSF and Innosuisse

2.5 Executive Committees of SNSF and Innosuisse

The Executive Committees of SNSF and Innosuisse have the following tasks and competences:

- Conclusion of a cooperation agreement between SNSF and Innosuisse setting out the details concerning required infrastructure, management and staff, collaboration between the BRIDGE Office and the different services of the Offices of SNSF and Innosuisse, financing and supervision
- Provision of all necessary management capacities and services in order to guarantee an efficient, effective and lawful execution of the programme
- Supervision of the activities of the BRIDGE Office

³ Entschädigungsreglement des SNF (also published at www.snf.ch)

- Allocation of resources and infrastructure needed for the management of the programme, in particular the working place of the BRIDGE Office and the necessary IT infrastructure for the submission of proposals and grant management
- Monitoring and evaluation of the programme, assurance of an appropriate impact analysis
- Adoption of a communication strategy to promote BRIDGE and supervision of its execution
- Any other business not assigned to another body

3. BRIDGE funding schemes

3.1. Proof of Concept

BRIDGE Proof of Concept (PoC) projects support young researchers who aim to develop an application or service based on their own research findings. These projects may feature any type of innovation or research field.

The PoC scheme is designed to support researchers on their way to entrepreneurship or their efforts to implement and apply their research results with an economic and/or societal partner.

3.2. Discovery

BRIDGE Discovery supports projects that aim to explore and implement the innovation potential of research results. Submitted projects demonstrate the societal and/or economic impact of the innovation to be developed. The projects may feature any type of innovation or research field.

The Discovery scheme targets researchers such as faculty members or teaching and research staff employed at a higher education research centre or a non-commercial research centre outside the higher education sector according to the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA).⁴

3.3. Conditions and details of the funding schemes

The requirements, terms and conditions and further details for the submission of applications are defined in the regulations of the two funding schemes, issued by the SteCo.

3.4. Project support

The following measures are implemented:

- In coordination with Innosuisse's Start-up and Next Generation Innovators division, training courses are offered to BRIDGE fellows.
- Innosuisse's Start-up and Next Generation Innovators division serves as an entry point for obtaining coaching services.
- Access to patent search support by the Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IPI).
- BRIDGE events are organized every year to bring together implementation partners, project investigators, investors, and BRIDGE committees and panels.

⁴ 420.1 Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA) of 14 December 2012

4. Budget

The 2021-2024 funding budget for BRIDGE amounts to CHF 105 Mio:

- CHF 52.5 Mio are assigned to BRIDGE by the SNSF and CHF 52.5 Mio by Innosuisse.
- BRIDGE funding is integrated within the general budgets of Innosuisse and SNSF. The two organisations may allocate additional funding if needed.