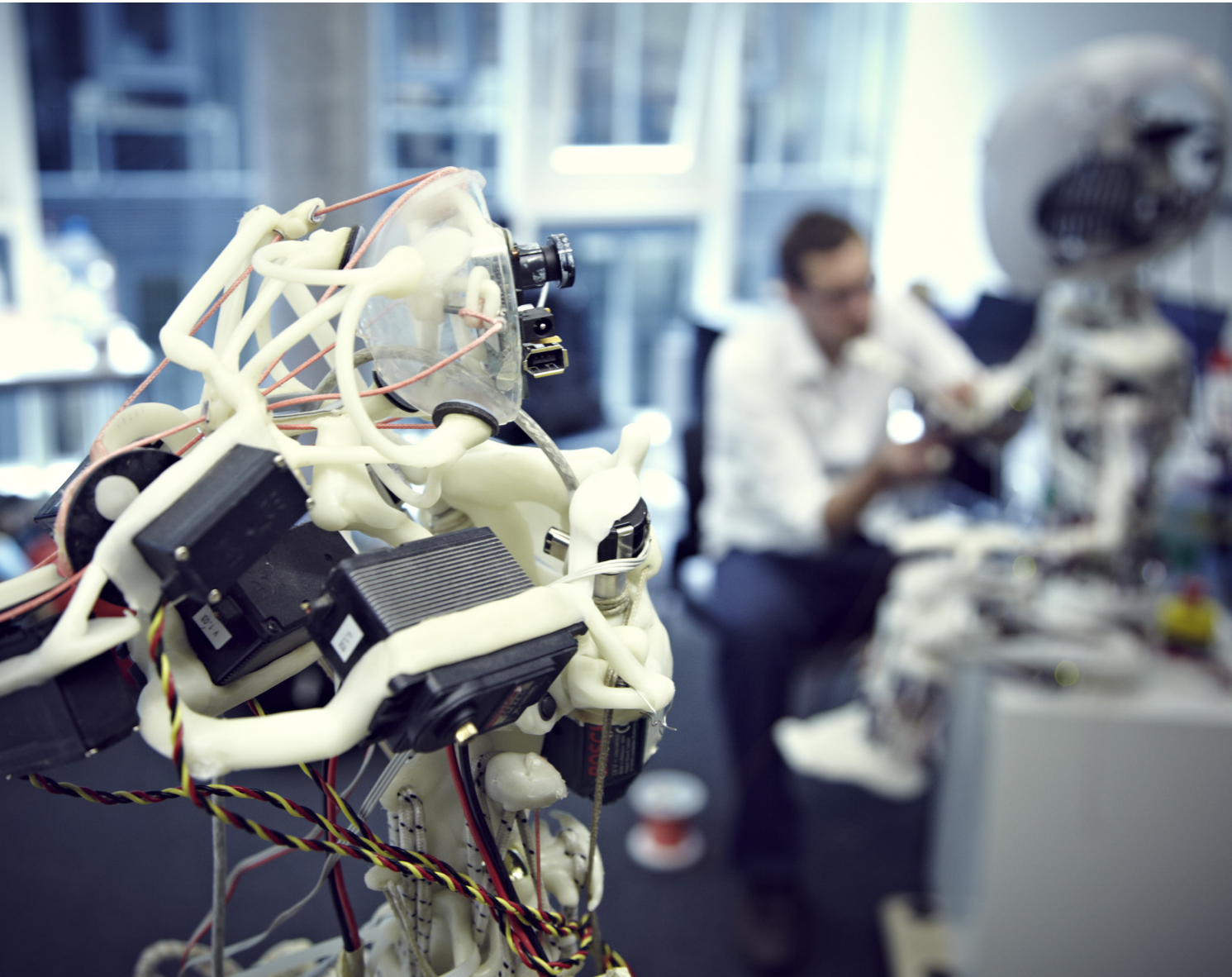




Multi-Year Programme 2029–2032

We invest in research
for the Switzerland
of tomorrow

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Executive summary

At a glance

Switzerland's prosperity, independence and capacity to tackle global challenges rest on an indispensable pillar – world-class scientific research. In 2029–2032, the SNSF will preserve what works and underpins Swiss research excellence: competitive, researcher-driven funding across all disciplines and strong support for early-career researchers. While maintaining a lean portfolio, the SNSF will tackle the research landscape's emerging needs. We will launch an evaluation framework and a new funding scheme dedicated to state-of-the-art research infrastructures, closing a strategic gap in the research landscape. We will build new partnerships with national public actors and private foundations to pool resources around urgent environmental, digital and societal challenges. In addition, we will accelerate the testing of exploratory ideas through smaller-scale research projects, focus on further reducing precarity among early-career researchers, and strengthen dialogue with society. With this plan, the SNSF is positioning itself to contribute to Switzerland's ability to protect its competitive edge and its talent pipeline. In the face of ever-increasing societal, technological and geopolitical challenges, Switzerland should be able to count on its strong foundation of well-supported scientific research to shape its future.

Safeguarding Switzerland's leadership

Switzerland is a global leader in knowledge creation and innovation. It has achieved this status through sustained investment in research.

As technological change accelerates and instabilities grow, countries worldwide are expanding their investments in research. To ensure Switzerland's international competitiveness, long-term prosperity and independence, it is a strategic imperative to invest boldly in knowledge creation, creativity and excellence.

By promoting outstanding research, the SNSF plays a pivotal role in this endeavour. We support research projects driven by researchers' own ideas that are selected in highly competitive evaluation processes. Numerous innovations in medicine, energy, digital technologies, engineering, environmental protection and democratic governance are rooted in the research we funded in the past decades.

The SNSF invests primarily in people. We fund thousands of researchers, one of Switzerland's most valuable long-term assets. Their capacity to lead, to innovate and to problem-solve makes them sought after by employers across Switzerland.

Our funding strategy for 2029–2032 is based on a strong conviction: Switzerland's future depends on sustaining and growing a research ecosystem that is closely connected to society, the economy and the wider world. Consequently, in the next funding period, we will focus on strengthening synergies, competitiveness and resilience.

Principles to ensure effective, responsible and trustworthy funding

The SNSF approaches its role as research funder based on five principles.

- We support scientific research that creates new knowledge of lasting value and serves the public good. Today's achievements are only possible because of the research foundations that have been laid over the past decades.
- The pursuit of excellence is our guiding principle. We identify excellent proposals through rigorous and competitive peer-review evaluation. Researchers are best placed to recognise potential for knowledge gain. For this reason, we invest the majority of our funding in research projects driven by researchers' own ideas and questions.
- We facilitate the framework conditions that enable and sustain excellent research by fostering good working conditions, funding early-career researchers and investing in research capacity including state-of-the-art research infrastructures.
- We manage a strong research funding portfolio that supports all forms of scientific research and promotes cooperation and networking. This helps generate unexpected insights, novel synergies and pioneering ideas that no single research tradition or community could produce alone.

- We hold ourselves and the researchers we fund to the highest standards of integrity and transparency. Both are essential to the quality and credibility of the research the SNSF supports.

Challenges and opportunities in a rapidly changing world

Change is continual, but its current pace, scale and intensity appear to be growing at unprecedented rates. Digital transformation, the sustainability crisis, health and wellbeing, societal fragmentation and pressures on academic freedom are expected to mark the 2029–2032 period. In this demanding context, research is increasing in importance since it provides the competence base to address these challenges. Both the conditions under which research is conducted and the questions it must address are changing, calling for new ways of doing research.

Thanks to its high-quality research system, solid economic foundations, international connectivity and institutional stability, Switzerland is well placed to respond to these challenges. Setting forward-looking quality standards across Switzerland, the SNSF plays a pivotal role in addressing these as well as in sustaining the country's position as a trusted and competitive research hub.

Our priorities for 2029–2032: Strengthening synergies, competitiveness and resilience

In the coming period, we will focus on three strategically inter-linked pillars.

– *Strengthening synergies in the research landscape*

We will partner with national public and private funders to address environmental, digital and other societal challenges more effectively with pooled expertise, resources and funding. In the next funding period, we will strive to ensure Switzerland maintains cutting-edge infrastructure for top-tier research. We will develop a coherent evaluation framework for co-funding mid-sized research infrastructures. To ensure Swiss research remains internationally connected, we will also maintain strong ties with our core partners and strategically consolidate our strategic network.

– *Strengthening Switzerland's competitiveness*

We will increase our support for exploratory research by accelerating the testing of new ideas in smaller-scale projects. These may result in large-scale projects or branch off ongoing ones. We will ensure that our funding accommodates the full potential of research, for instance through our evaluation processes. In addition, we will continue improving our support for early-career researchers, many of whom will go on to drive progress and innovations as professionals across all sectors. We will identify and implement actions to improve their visibility and prepare them for successful careers.

– *Strengthening the resilience of research and society*

We will enhance our foresight capacity to improve our readiness to anticipate, to prepare for and to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities for research and society. We will intensify the dialogue with society to generate mutual benefits and to ensure that research is communicated clearly, understood, trusted and used. We will advance responsible research culture as the basis for a thriving, excellence-driven research community. To this end, we will support the promotion of the responsible use of AI, Open Science, research integrity, work culture, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and sustainability.

A coherent and efficient funding portfolio

In the next period, we will maintain a lean funding portfolio to ensure overall coherence across our funding schemes. We will also further enhance the efficiency of our funding activities and evaluation processes. Following the ongoing career funding reform, we will simplify and reduce the number of funding schemes for early-career researchers. Beyond career investment, we will focus on reinforcing and developing existing schemes in order to deliver on our priorities. We plan a new funding scheme specifically for research infrastructures to support national co-ordination in this area of strategic significance for future competitiveness. To maximise the potential of national and international cooperation, we will also explore joint initiatives with other funders and seek to strengthen global networks.

Contribution to federal ERI themes

The SNSF will continue and reinforce its efforts to advancing the four federal transversal ERI themes through integrated approaches.

With our priority “Strengthening synergies in the research landscape”, we will reinforce national and international cooperation. ERI themes such as sustainable development and digital transformation (in particular AI) lend themselves particularly well as areas for cooperation. Both are also catalysts for increasing our commitment to research infrastructures, a key element of national cooperation.

The priority “Strengthening the resilience of research and society” addresses the interconnected dimensions of responsible research culture. This will allow us to make especially strong progress towards advancing equity.

Finances

Investing in publicly funded research lays the foundation for long-term innovation, societal benefit and economic success in Switzerland. The country’s strong innovation system, built on the interplay among research, knowledge transfer and the economy, is increasingly under pressure. Investment in research is no longer keeping pace, and Switzerland is beginning to fall behind its peers. To safeguard prosperity, competitiveness and the ability to address global challenges, decisive efforts and increased investments in research and innovation are key for Switzerland’s long-term success.

After years of stagnating federal funding due to budget cuts related to the federal budget relief package (EP27), the SNSF will

require an annual growth rate of 3% to maintain competitive research funding as a key driver of innovation, sustained scientific excellence, technological progress and knowledge-based wealth. This growth rate is necessary for the SNSF to uphold its core funding schemes in a robust and sustainable manner and to invest in the urgent needs of the Swiss research ecosystem, namely research infrastructures.

The 2028 baseline is calculated on the basis of the amount originally approved in the ERI Dispatch, reduced by 5% in line with Parliament’s decision under EP27. With an annual growth rate of 3%, the federal contribution would only surpass the initially planned 2028 level, i.e. 1,328 million Swiss francs, in 2031.

The table below presents the federal funding requirements for this scenario (in CHF million):

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2029–2032
Research funding						
– Basic contribution	998	1,047	1,081	1,103	1,139	4,370
– National Research Programmes	16	17	17	17	17	66
– National Centres of Competence in Research	57	58	59	59	59	234
Overhead	126	130	133	137	142	542
Additional tasks	48	32	32	46	46	156
Total	1,246	1,283	1,321	1,361	1,402	5,367

The SNSF has also elaborated alternative scenarios. An annual growth rate of 2.5% would significantly limit new funding opportunities for research infrastructures. Under a scenario of 1.5% growth, it would no longer be possible to introduce such opportunities. In addition, increased support for international cooperation would also not be feasible. In this case, the SNSF would only be able to continue its funding activities; however, it would forgo the implementation of strategic measures deemed essential to address developments in the ERI landscape effectively.



1 Introduction

1 Introduction

Switzerland is one of the global leaders in research and innovation, a position forged over many decades through sustained investment, exceptional talent and scientific ambition. Maintaining this strong position is both a responsibility and a strategic imperative.

As technological change accelerates and geopolitical instability grows, countries worldwide are increasing their investments in research and innovation. In this ever more competitive environment, Switzerland's future strength depends on sustaining a system that invests boldly in knowledge, creativity and excellence – the key prerequisites for resilience, competitiveness and long-term prosperity.

The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) has played a central role in keeping Switzerland at the cutting edge of research and innovation since its foundation in 1952. By promoting outstanding, innovative and rigorous research, the SNSF makes a vital contribution to the country's social and economic wellbeing and helps safeguard Switzerland's leadership internationally.

The SNSF supports excellent research across all academic disciplines represented at Swiss higher education institutions, with a primary focus on basic research driven by researchers' own ideas. We conduct highly competitive evaluation processes to select the most promising research projects in which to invest. Founded on a strong and responsible research culture, our insistence on excellence fosters cooperation across disciplines

and borders and generates positive effects that go far beyond the research projects that the SNSF funds directly.

The freedom of basic research from immediate practical objectives is crucial to ensuring its success in challenging established assumptions, opening new perspectives that stimulate society to shape a better future. This freedom also makes SNSF-funded research and researchers particularly well-placed to contribute to addressing complex challenges. This is essential to build the resilience we need to thrive in the future and to guarantee Switzerland's long-term prosperity.

Use-inspired research constitutes a complementary objective within our funding activities. It bridges the gap between fundamental discovery and practical application, accelerating the translation of knowledge into solutions. Rather than representing opposing ends of a spectrum, the basic and use-inspired research supported by the SNSF form a continuum from which knowledge that delivers meaningful benefits to society emerges.

All SNSF-funded research provides the scientific and intellectual foundation upon which future applications, technologies and societal advances can be built. Today's innovations in medicine and health, energy, digital technologies, environmental protection, democratic governance, and public policy and regulation are rooted in the research we supported in past years and decades.

SNSF funding is central to the competitiveness and reputation of Switzerland. It enables the attraction and retention of outstanding researchers and thereby fortifies Switzerland's knowledge economy. Most SNSF investment is in people. We sustain a pipeline of many thousands of highly skilled and networked researchers

and experts, one of Switzerland's most valuable long-term assets, in addition to the knowledge and innovation that comes from SNSF-funded research projects.

Our investment in people is supported by the national and international partnerships necessary to address national and global challenges. The SNSF works in close liaison with Swiss partners such as Innosuisse and with the international research ecosystem through European programmes, such as Horizon Europe, as well as global initiatives. Through the way we fund research, we play a key role in the development and orientation of Switzerland's research landscape and ensure that Switzerland remains a globally recognised hub of world-class research excellence – a true *Spitzenforschungsplatz*.

The SNSF is more than a funding body. It embodies Switzerland's commitment to excellence, curiosity-driven research and academic freedom and shapes wider policy across the research landscape.

Our strategy for 2029–2032 is based on a strong conviction: Switzerland's future depends on sustaining a research ecosystem that is closely connected to society, to the economy and to the wider world. Guided by its mission to support highest quality research, the SNSF will contribute to a more competitive and resilient Switzerland by strengthening the already vibrant Swiss education, research and innovation system in which it plays a pivotal role.

To achieve its objectives for the next funding period, the SNSF will focus its strategy on three interrelated pillars.

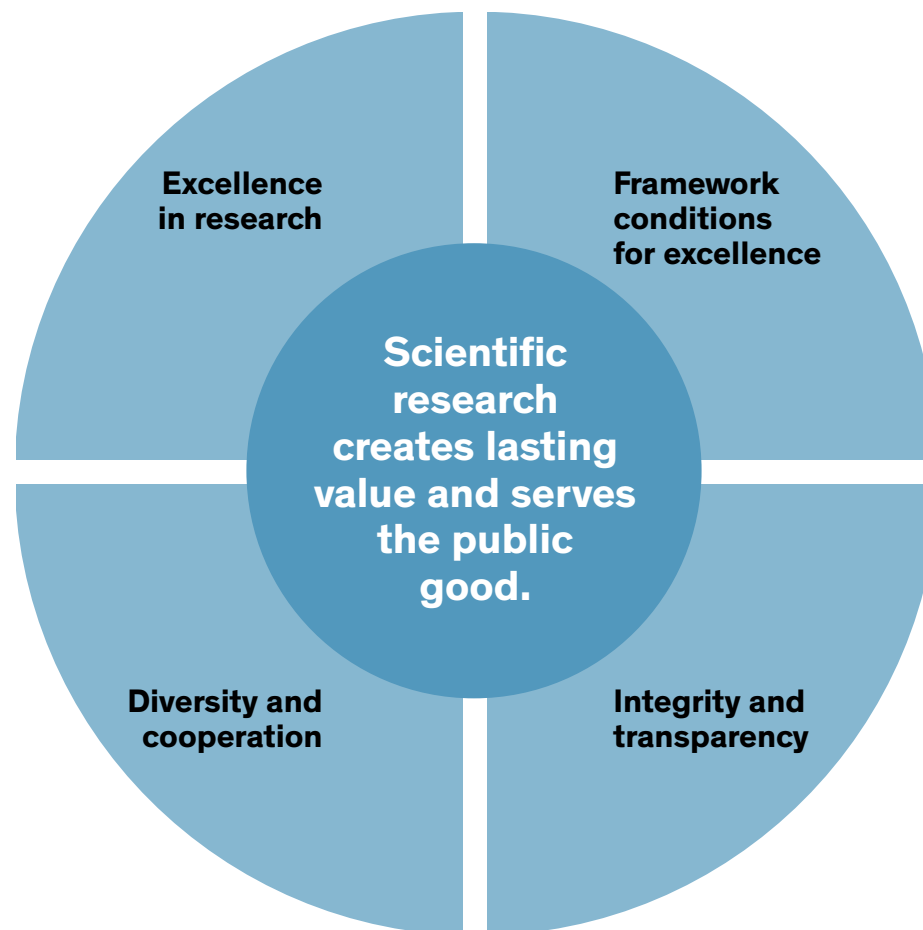
- **Strengthening Synergies.** The SNSF will reinforce collaboration across the Swiss and international research landscapes. It will help align collective efforts to maximise their impact and capabilities.
- **Strengthening Competitiveness.** The SNSF will invest in outstanding research and in the people who drive it, supporting research careers, excellence and a plurality of approaches and perspectives.
- **Strengthening Resilience.** The SNSF will sustain knowledge creation in times of scientific, societal and systemic disruption. It will strengthen its own operational resilience, reinforce the resilience of the broader research system, and support research that helps society anticipate, absorb and adapt to shocks.



2 Principles underlying our funding

2 Principles underlying our funding

The following principles set out how the SNSF approaches its role as a research funder. While the challenges and opportunities specified in chapter 3 will shape the SNSF's priorities for 2029–2032, these principles reflect enduring convictions about what makes research funding effective, responsible and worthy of public trust. They hold true across funding periods, research disciplines and research forms. These principles express not just a set of values. They guide how our values should translate into practice. Together, they articulate the logic behind our decisions: why we fund what we fund, how we select it, what conditions we try to create and what we expect of ourselves and of the researchers we support.



Our central conviction and long-standing principles guide all our activities as a research funder and enable us to deliver research funding that is effective, responsible and worthy of public trust.

Our commitment to the value of research

The SNSF's work is grounded in the conviction that scientific research creates knowledge of lasting value. Promoting research as a public good and investing in it over the long term are at the heart of everything the SNSF does.

The SNSF is committed to the value of research in all its breadth. Research expands knowledge, develops the intellectual and human capital that society needs, and generates lasting economic and societal value. Its benefits emerge over time through the combined contributions of diverse actors across the research and innovation ecosystem. They accumulate in ways that are often unexpected, widely shared and difficult to attribute to any single project or institution.

The SNSF supports research in various forms shaped by distinct incentives and timescales to reap the full benefits of its investment. Research supported by the SNSF can aim to solve immediate problems or be directed towards long-term knowledge creation. It can focus on fundamental questions posed by researchers or address specific societal challenges. Its nature can be exploratory, knowing that serendipity can lead to discoveries of exceptional value, or consolidating, deliberately valorising previous work and building carefully on established foundations.

Excellence in research

The pursuit of excellence is the SNSF's guiding principle.

Excellence in research is founded on three pillars as illustrated in the SNSF's model of excellence:

- original and relevant research questions
- rigorous, sustainable, open and ethical methods

- collaborative behaviour, engagement and acknowledgment of others' contributions

This tripartite understanding of excellence shapes the research that the SNSF funds and the way that we evaluate project proposals. Through this model and how we implement it in our processes, the SNSF sets the standards for research in Switzerland more broadly.

*The SNSF directs the majority of its funding toward research driven by **researchers' own ideas and questions**.* We apply this principle broadly, dedicating four-fifths of our funding to research projects initiated by researchers themselves, with no imposed thematic or programmatic constraints. This reflects a long-standing and proven strength of the Swiss research system that acknowledges that researchers themselves are best placed to identify the most promising research questions. We believe that research functions best when society trusts researchers to pursue ideas freely, question prevailing assumptions, including their own. Researchers should be enabled to follow evidence wherever it leads, exercise independent judgement and pursue lines of inquiry whose value may not be immediately apparent.

*The SNSF seeks to balance support for **exploratory and consolidating research**.* Exploratory research challenges prevailing assumptions and pioneers novel approaches with the potential for conceptual or methodological breakthroughs. Consolidating research strengthens existing knowledge and methods, building carefully on prior findings in ways that are equally indispensable to scientific progress, especially over longer timescales.

*The SNSF bases its funding decisions on rigorous and competitive **peer-review-based evaluation**.* The SNSF is recognised as a global leader in how to support excellence in research, including in our evaluation processes. We reinforce our credibility and accountability by selecting the best projects that have been assessed by independent experts in line with the highest international standards. We also responsibly develop and use state-of-the-art evaluation tools. Fairness and proportionality, assured through the provision of clear criteria and robust peer-review procedures, remain essential to funding decisions that are well-founded and consistent with the SNSF's mission and values.

The framework conditions for excellence

The SNSF aims to foster the framework conditions that enable and sustain excellent research. In addition to funding individual projects, the SNSF strengthens the research system to facilitate a conducive environment for researchers to pursue ambitious, independent work over the long term. This principle recognises that excellent research does not happen by chance. It requires deliberate and sustained investment in the conditions, people and infrastructures that allow researchers to thrive across all career stages.

*The SNSF seeks to foster **good working conditions** that enable researchers to consistently pursue excellent research.* Achieving excellence requires that researchers have the freedom and capacity to shape and pursue independent research agendas across all career stages. Maximising returns on research investment over the long term depends on maintaining a dynamic and adaptive system that fosters intellectual renewal, embraces diversity and balances continuity and agility. Sustaining research support and enabling agility also require good working con-

ditions, such as contracts of sufficient duration, opportunities for career development and training and constructive working environments.

*The SNSF dedicates specific support to **early-career researchers**.*

Today's early-career researchers are tomorrow's leaders in research and beyond. They are also vital contributors to novel research and the intellectual capital on which society depends. Yet they often face hurdles in a highly competitive research landscape, including systemic conditions that can give rise to highly precarious career paths. The SNSF supports promising early-career researchers in dedicated ways, serving Switzerland's need for highly qualified researchers and experts across civil society, academia, industry, media, government and other areas.

*The SNSF contributes to sustaining Switzerland's research **capacity**, including the **infrastructure** necessary for excellent research.* SNSF funding reinforces the research system's overall human, institutional and infrastructural capacity. Adequate infrastructure – from laboratories to data resources and digital platforms – forms an essential foundation for a vibrant and resilient research community.

Diversity and cooperation

The SNSF promotes diversity in research and among research groups. The SNSF understands diversity as reflecting a variety of research types, disciplines and researcher communities. This breadth is not an end in and of itself, rather it is a condition for excellence. A diverse portfolio of projects is more likely to generate unexpected insights, novel synergies and pioneering ideas that no single research tradition or community could

produce alone. The SNSF therefore supports a wide range of research forms: from curiosity-driven to use-inspired research; from open calls to targeted thematic schemes where these add distinct value. It funds disciplinary research as well as multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches that break down boundaries.

The SNSF fosters cooperation and networking as a cornerstone of research practice. The SNSF supports cooperation and networking within Switzerland – across institutions, regions and language communities – as well as internationally. Cooperation on a national level strengthens cohesion and the collective capacity of the Swiss research system. Internationally, deep integration into global research networks and cooperation with actors supporting research and innovation is essential, especially for a country the size of Switzerland, to attract talent, exchange ideas and remain at the frontier of knowledge. The SNSF is firmly engaged in both national and international collaborations, which we consider to be a defining feature of the research environment that we seek to strengthen.

Integrity and transparency

The SNSF holds itself and the researchers it funds to the highest standards of integrity. Integrity is essential to the quality and credibility of the research the SNSF supports since its priorities as a funder can influence research trajectories. Integrity depends on clear governance as well as responsibility for aims and incentives. It also requires safeguards that ensure that high methodological standards and the norms of responsible research culture are non-negotiable. The SNSF upholds the highest national and international standards in research assessment, ethical requirements and scientific integrity. It actively

contributes to shaping best practice and requires funded researchers to conform to such standards and practices. Its processes are structured with clarity, regularly monitored and continuously refined to protect quality and fairness.

The SNSF is strongly committed to transparency. Transparency is the means by which integrity is made visible and accountable to society. This entails open and honest communication towards society and stakeholders, visibly responsible stewardship of public resources and the ability to demonstrate that funding is allocated and used effectively. Our commitment to Open Science and to the wide dissemination of research findings within and beyond academia is a primary means by which the return on public investment is both delivered and demonstrated.

We thus insist on implementing transparent procedures. We provide precisely formulated evaluation criteria that are publicly available, rigorous conflict of interest rules, clear feedback to applicants, accessible appeal mechanisms and standardised reporting requirements so that accountability is structurally embedded in how we operate. As an expression of our responsibility, we monitor our funding continuously, learn from what we find and share our findings with the community, remaining responsive to evolving needs and expectations.



3 Challenges and oppor- tunities for advancing knowledge in a rapidly changing world

3 Challenges and opportunities for advancing knowledge in a rapidly changing world

Change is continual, but its current pace, scale and intensity appear to be accelerating. In this challenging context, research is growing in importance rather than declining. It helps society understand complex developments, anticipate risks, generate solutions and strengthen its capacity to act under uncertainty.

At the same time, the conditions in which research is conducted are themselves changing. The digital transformation, sustainability challenges, demographic shifts, geopolitical fragmentation, pressures on academic freedom and evolving professional skill needs – these are among the many factors reshaping both the questions that research must address and the way research is organised, conducted and put into practice. For Switzerland, this changing environment creates both challenges and opportunities.

The 2029–2032 period is likely to be marked by economic and political uncertainty, strained public finances and increasing international tensions. Under these circumstances, a strong research and innovation base becomes a strategic asset. Switzerland is well-placed to build on its high-quality research system, strong economic environment, international connectivity and institutional stability. By maintaining strong framework conditions, robust infrastructures and openness to talent and cooperation, it can reinforce its position as a trusted and competitive hub for research and knowledge creation.

In this context, the SNSF has a central role to play. By funding excellent research across the full spectrum of disciplines and providing conditions in which research can thrive, the SNSF is vital to ensuring that Switzerland successfully navigates major transformations – both present and future.

The following sections outline the main challenges and opportunities that are expected to mark the next funding period and indicate how the SNSF intends to address them.

Digital transformation

Digital transformation and other emerging technologies will affect nearly all the opportunities and challenges of the next funding period. Artificial intelligence (AI) can accelerate discovery, improve productivity, make cross-language collaboration more efficient and unlock novel modes of analysis. At the same time, AI is raising ethical and integrity questions, new challenges for research evaluation and amplifying risks of misinformation, disinformation and misconduct.

The SNSF will continue to encourage and support research related to AI and the digital transformation. It contributes to making Switzerland a leader in this field by funding research projects and infrastructures, attracting talent and promoting cooperation in AI research. It will develop and set standards for the rules and practices of responsible AI use in research as well as in its own research evaluation practices.

Ensuring greater equity when using AI in education

AI-based tools promise to help reduce educational inequalities, for example by providing students with highly personalised



support. At the same time, studies highlight the risk of biased algorithms. They could thus exacerbate inequalities if developed without proper guidance.

With the support of Project Funding, Ken Horvath and his team at the Zurich University of Teacher Education examined how algorithmic sorting in school education is being designed and implemented.

Bringing together education specialists and software developers, this study aims to determine what constitutes a 'good and fair education' in the age of AI, while taking into account everyday realities. Rather than passively accepting the digitalisation of education, the project aims to guide its development in order to avoid pitfalls and maximise benefits. This endeavour is particularly critical in the field of education, which is central to the future and stability of our society.

Sustainability crisis

The sustainability crisis represents a grand and complex challenge. The drivers of acute environmental degradation are enmeshed with the systems of production and consumption upon which society has come to rely. The risks related to climate change, biodiversity loss, energy and sustainability transitions as well as societal instability will profoundly affect society, with varied impact on different populations.

This crisis not only reshapes the questions that researchers are pursuing but also calls for new ways of doing research that make research itself more sustainable – economically, socially and environmentally. Addressing the sustainability crisis demands

high-quality insights across research disciplines. It necessitates interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches that facilitate the transformation of frontier knowledge into solutions that support people and reinforce societal cohesion, while simultaneously improving environmental protection.

The SNSF provides the sustained funding commitments necessary to translate this ambition into lasting impact.

Improving the tracking of nano- and microplastics

Microplastics – a marker of industrial lifestyles – are readily released into ecosystems. Their presence is widely reported across various environmental systems, but assessing their quantity, distribution and impact remains difficult, in part due to challenges with measurements.

Environmental scientist Denise Mitrano developed a new strategy to study the fate, transport and biological interactions of nano- and microplastics. Her first independent research project at the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology supported by the SNSF was awarded with the Marie Heim-Vögtlin Prize. She then moved to ETH Zurich for a SNSF-funded assistant professorship. Over the course of a decade, she developed analytical methods to understand the different pathways through which plastics find their way into the environment.

Her findings provide an important basis for informed decision-making about how to reduce emerging environmental threats. Her research also contributes to the development of new materials and sustainable technologies.



Health and wellbeing

Ageing, multimorbidity and rising mental health issues are expected to present further challenges in the coming years. In addition, health systems are themselves in the midst of a digital transformation. Biotechnology and AI may be accelerating diagnosis and treatment, yet scalability, safety and other constraints will remain challenging.

The SNSF contributes substantially to addressing these challenges through the wide range of research that it supports. It promotes knowledge transfer by improving interfaces with other actors in the health domain. It sets standards for responsible research, encouraging transparency and traceability in the research process as well as data stewardship. The SNSF also supports Investigator Initiated Clinical Trials (IICTs) that address medical and societal challenges, while actively including the affected populations. Through this approach, the SNSF strengthens the knowledge base needed to respond to major health challenges.



Bioartificial pancreases to treat diabetes

New biotechnological tools are accelerating research and opening up new possibilities. Among the rapidly expanding fields are organoids – clusters of cells capable of partially replicating the function of organs – and immunomodulation, which is increasingly being used in oncology as well as to treat autoimmune diseases.

A team at the University of Geneva is combining these advances to propel regenerative medicine into the future. Surgeon

and researcher Ekaterine Berishvili has received Project Funding to develop bioartificial pancreases.

Her idea is to create subcutaneous implants to effectively treat patients with type 1 diabetes. These mini-pancreases – organoids protected by a gel designed to support their survival and reduce immune rejection – could provide durable insulin production without relying on donor organs. This would represent a major advance over current treatments, such as lifelong insulin injections or transplants, which entail lifelong immunosuppression and are limited by a shortage of donors.

Future-oriented professional skills

Education systems prepare society for rapid change of all kinds. Significant skills gaps across domains may persist in the coming years. Current analyses indicate continuing mismatches between curricula and workplace requirements. This is in part due to the rate of technological change outpacing the evolution of teaching and training.

The skills that are most at risk of falling short are not narrow technical ones. What will be needed are the deeper capacities that allow people to navigate complexity: analytical thinking, methodological rigour, problem-solving under uncertainty and the ability to learn and adapt continuously. Labour shortages are expected to remain a key concern, as Europe's capacity to develop and retain talent comes under increasing pressure.

Switzerland will need to respond to such challenges. The research and researchers funded by the SNSF will make an important contribution to doing so. With their advanced

analytical, methodological and problem-solving skills, they will constitute a strong knowledge base and be best suited for tackling future challenges and seizing new opportunities.

Trained to work in the face of uncertainty, SNSF-funded researchers will strengthen Switzerland's capacity for innovation. Most of them will work in a wide range of sectors beyond academia and integrate into the Swiss labour market, where their expertise will create significant value for society.

Societal fragmentation

Fragmented norms, distorted information, lack of social and political trust, cyber threats and uncertainty in multilateral cooperation are likely to persist in the coming years. These forces directly affect how research is conducted since they could potentially constrain data access, disrupt projects and careers and reshape collaboration patterns.

Within the broad spectrum of research it funds, the SNSF provides support for analyses of the causes and consequences of societal fragmentation. These research projects develop the evidence base needed to rebuild social cohesion, trust and resilience. To enable such research, the SNSF can build on its proven funding system, strong partnerships and long-term access to data and infrastructures as well as its flexibility and autonomy as a funding agency.

It will also need to heed how changing norms, disinformation, threats and uncertainties impact the trust that society places in research in general and in the SNSF as one steward of that research.

Pressures on academic freedom

Switzerland's strong tradition of research independence, openness to international cooperation and institutional stability have led to its leading international standing in the global research and innovation landscape.

Today, these same elements place Switzerland in a distinctly favourable position as pressures on academic freedom mount in many parts of the world. Geopolitical tensions, shifting security landscapes and the fragmentation of multilateral research cooperation make Switzerland's role as a reliable and neutral hub for research even more valuable. This is not only true for the talent it attracts and retains but also for the national and international partnerships that it anchors.

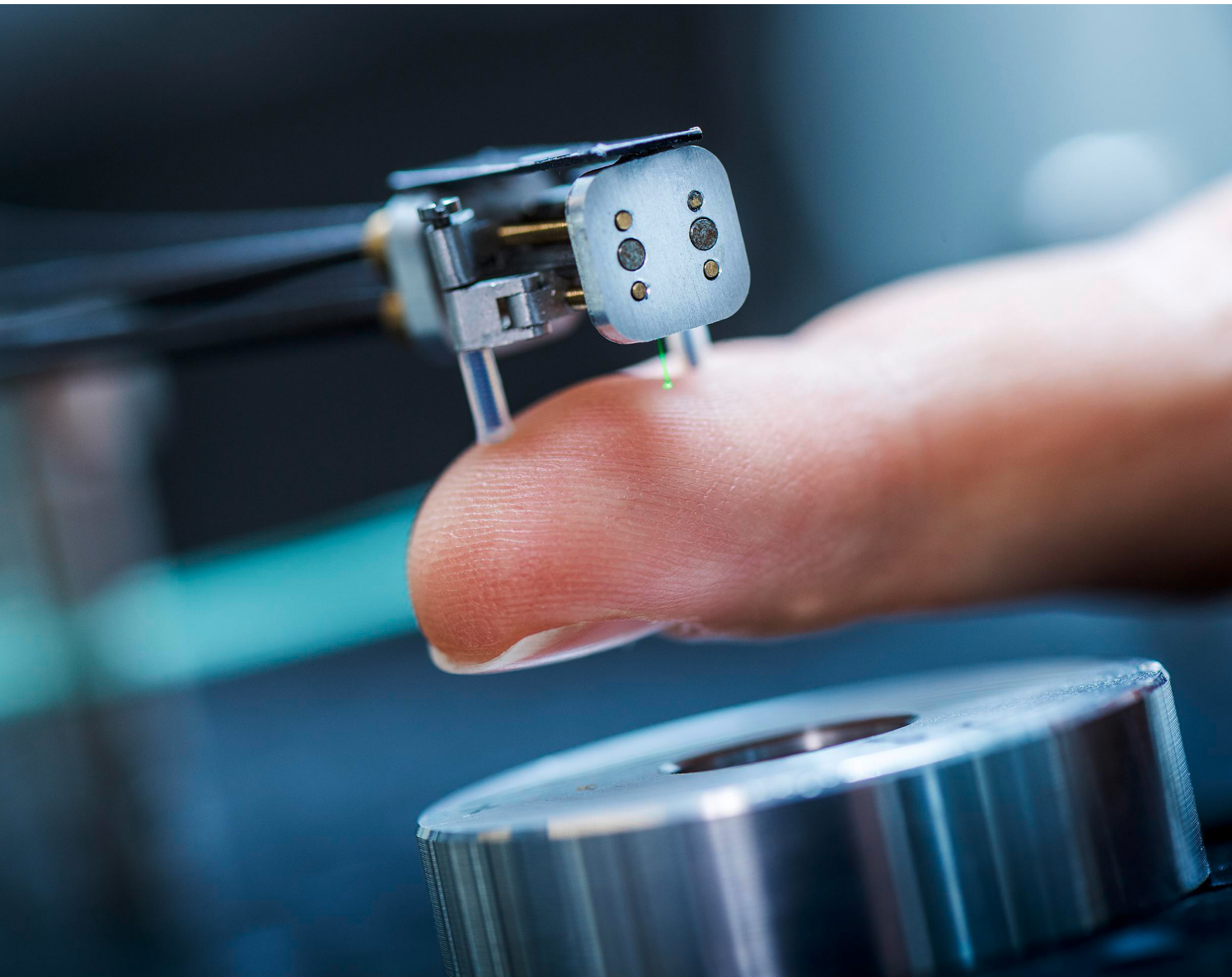
Clear and transparent communication, knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange are key to countering or preventing attacks on academic freedom. The SNSF will ensure that its communication is not only effective, but also grounded in demonstrable integrity, fairness and societal relevance. This is how we can address the erosion of trust in institutions as well as short-sighted decision-making. In doing so, the SNSF will reinforce both the autonomy of researchers in Switzerland and the broader system of open, trust-based cooperation on which research depends.

Changing research environment

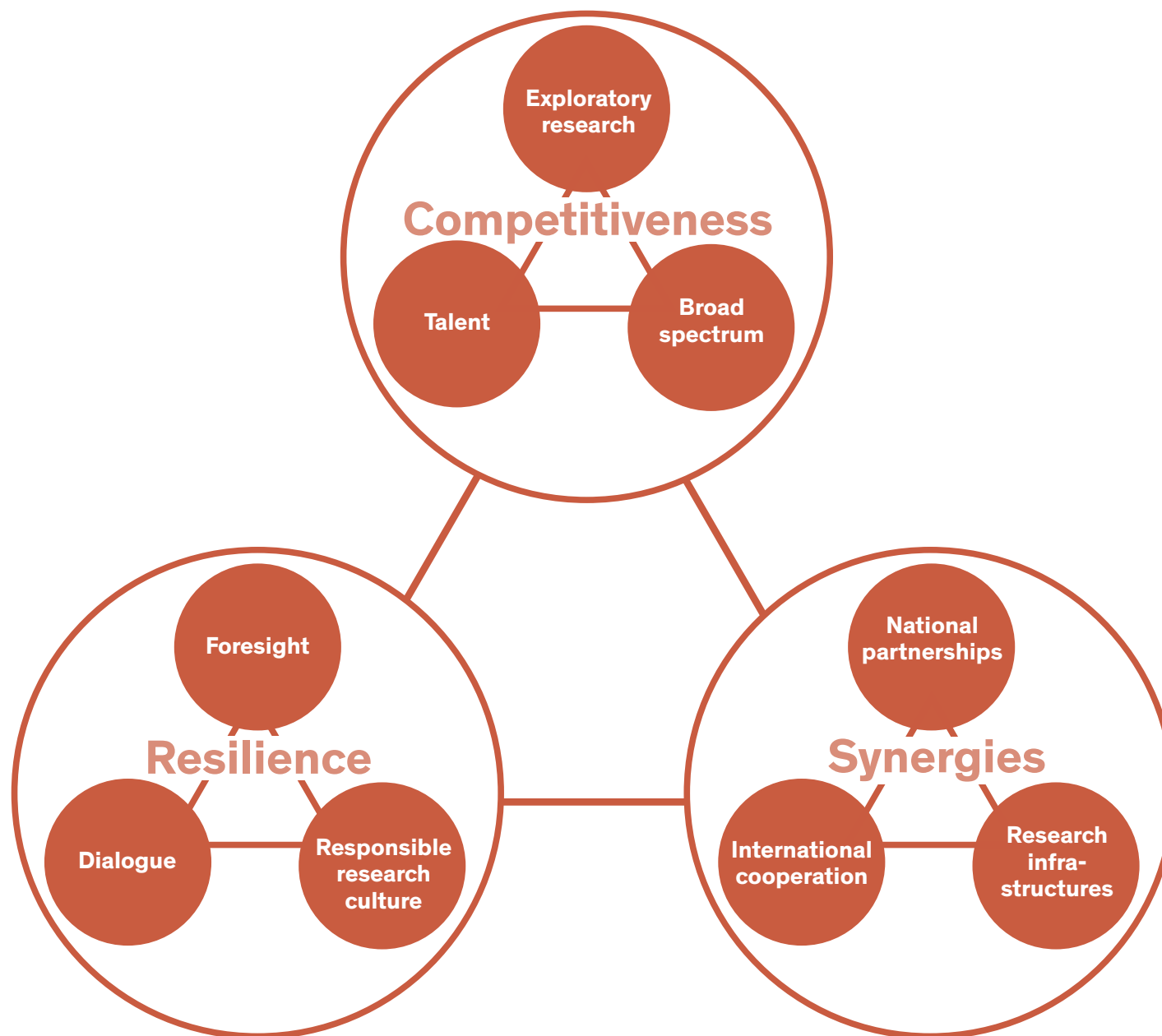
Over the past decades, the professionalisation and organisation of research and indeed the whole research system have changed – and they will continue to change substantially. In the next period, rapid technological development is expected to fundamentally reshape the landscape, raising the question of

how academic institutions can attract and retain top researchers. A healthy research environment, in which careers are sustainable, evaluation is credible and collaboration is rewarded, will be essential for retention.

The SNSF has to respond to this shifting landscape by adapting its funding schemes appropriately, supporting sustainable research careers, reducing administrative burdens wherever possible and ensuring that evaluation practices set the right incentives. The SNSF aims to respond to this challenge by improving the conditions to enable researchers to do their best work. The goal is to foster an environment in which diversity is valued and a responsible research culture is incentivised. The next generation of researchers should be equipped not only with technical expertise but with the resilience and adaptability that a rapidly changing research landscape demands.



4 Priorities



Our three main priorities and their sub-priorities for the 2029–2032 period for advancing knowledge in a rapidly changing world.

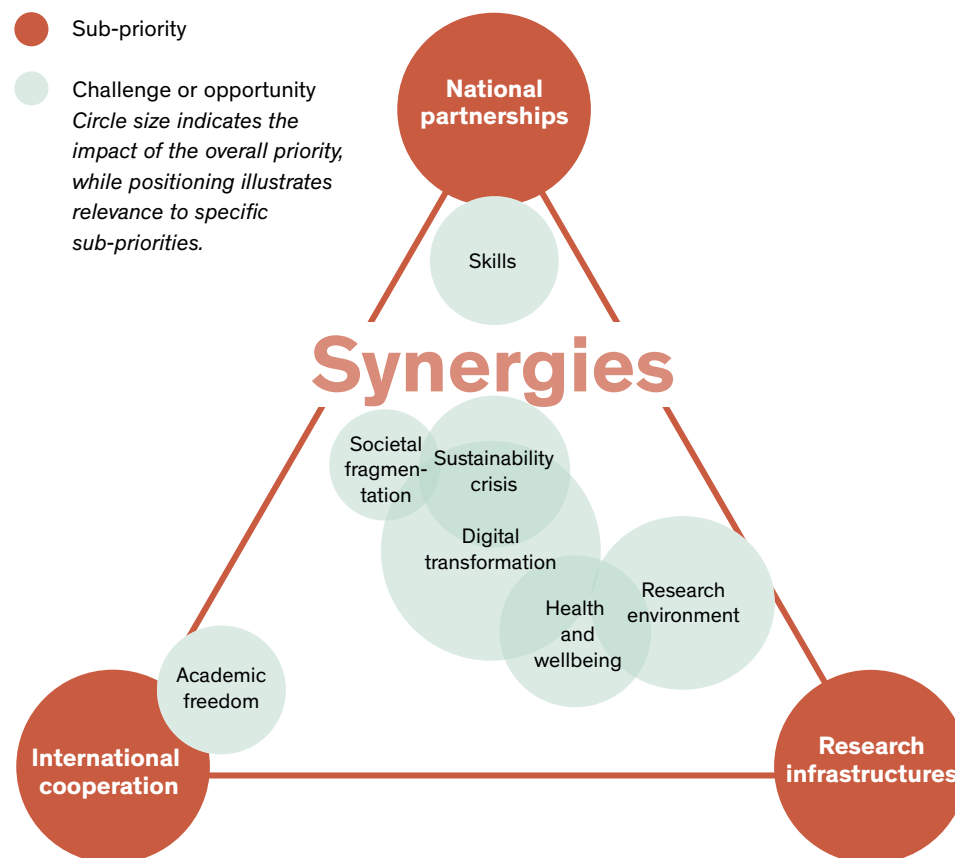
4.1 Strengthening synergies in the research landscape

Fulfilling the commitment to seize opportunities in the challenging world depicted in the previous chapter requires harnessing synergies among researchers, institutions and funders as well as societal and economic actors. By exploiting synergies with national and international partners, the SNSF will better leverage its funding and expertise. This is how we ensure that the available public funds are used even more efficiently and responsibly to maximise their benefit for society.

We aim to unlock the full potential of Switzerland's research sector through targeted actions across three areas, both nationally and internationally.

- We will **engage in new partnerships** with public funders or private foundations in Switzerland to turn individual efforts into synergistic coordinated action and to co-fund important research initiatives. Such collaborations are vital for addressing technological and environmental disruptions and other societal challenges.
- We will **promote coherence and efficiency in the research infrastructure landscape**. By developing an evaluation framework and co-funding mid-sized state-of-the-art research infrastructures, we will reduce their fragmentation and increase their interoperability and long-term sustainability. This is essential in order to adapt to the transformations arising from new technologies and the correlated changes within the research system.

- We will **cooperate globally to maintain Swiss research at the cutting edge**. Building on existing partnerships, we will consolidate our strategic worldwide network to ensure that Swiss research continues to thrive internationally and can prevail disruptions. We will ensure our international funding schemes are aligned with the SNSF's strategic priorities as well as the ERI transversal themes.



We will engage in new national partnerships

Why it matters

The SNSF collaborates closely with its national partners, in particular Innosuisse, the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences (a+) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). These strategic partnerships, which also encompass co-funding mechanisms, make a significant difference for Switzerland. They allow researchers to bridge discovery and innovation, to generate value and to support sustainable development.

New, mutually beneficial partnerships can play a key role in mobilising the full potential of the Swiss research landscape to deliver excellent research for society. Partners such as public funders and private philanthropic foundations can engage with the SNSF in both funding activities and policy development. Further forms of cooperation that benefit Swiss research may, within the SNSF's legal mandate, include collaboration with public authorities and non-profit organisations, and, where appropriate, with private companies.

Through these partnerships, the SNSF can strengthen the coherence, resilience and overall performance of the Swiss ERI landscape. Joint initiatives can strategically address gaps in topics, expertise and methods, enabling Switzerland to benefit from complementarities across the research landscape. Collaboration with other actors enhances implementation and impact, while allowing the SNSF to complement its own expertise with additional perspectives and capabilities.

What we plan

Complementarity in expertise and funding. To capitalise on synergistic effects that go beyond the sum of individual contributions, the SNSF will actively seek to cooperate with other public funders or private foundations in order to co-fund important research initiatives. These partnerships will aim both at maximising the impact of the resources invested and at enabling the SNSF and its partners to exploit synergies between their areas of expertise. They will also minimise redundancies. Beyond joint funding opportunities, these collaborations could include access to data and infrastructure and enable researchers to address topical issues.

Contribution to ERI themes. The SNSF will determine which areas are suitable for such partnerships. ERI themes such as sustainable development and digital transformation (in particular AI) lend themselves particularly well, while the SNSF is open to cooperation in other areas. In the field of quantum science and engineering, the SNSF will continue its collaboration with a+, Innosuisse and the Swiss Quantum Commission. The SNSF will implement further thematic calls supported by an additional mandate and specific funds by State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). Meanwhile, the SNSF supports quantum projects through its existing schemes. In addition, two NCCRs in

Strategic partnership between the SNSF and Innosuisse

BRIDGE is the SNSF and Innosuisse's joint funding programme, which has been running since 2017. The programme offers funding opportunities at the intersection of scientific research and implementation based on an integrative and iterative understanding of innovation. BRIDGE aims to enable research and research-based innovation to deliver tangible benefits for Switzerland. It strengthens connections spanning knowledge creation, application and impact. Open to all fields, the programme supports both early-career and leading researchers with promising findings in need of validation to accelerate research transfer to society.

quantum science and engineering have been launched in 2026 and are expected to be funded through 2038.

The research-innovation continuum. The SNSF will reaffirm its strong commitment to cooperation with Innosuisse, Switzerland's primary innovation funder. The BRIDGE funding schemes will continue to provide a seamless link between basic research and innovation. To reinforce the funding continuum between the two funders, the SNSF and Innosuisse are already strengthening the programme to be more agile and implementation-focused in the 2025–2028 period. Further refinements will increase flexibility and emphasis on societal and economic benefits, introduce milestone-based monitoring and strengthen clear implementation pathways.



Turning a liver-on-a-chip and a citizens' assembly into reality

Designed to promote the transition from scientific research to practical application, BRIDGE grants also foster collaboration between different institutions as well as public and private stakeholders. This has led to tangible successes across a wide range of fields.

One example is a collaborative project between Laura Suter-Dick (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland), Loïc Burr (Swiss Center for Electronics and Microtechnology) and Alexandra Kaempfer-Homsy (Arc University of Applied Sciences, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland). Combining their respective expertise in toxicology and cell culture, microfluidics and microsensors, this

interdisciplinary project developed physiological liver models. These human livers-on-a-chip can be used as replacements for animals in toxicological testing.

In a completely different field, the first BRIDGE project in political science led by Daniel Kübler (University of Zurich) and Nenad Stojanovic (University of Geneva) has implemented the first Swiss Citizens' Assembly. Their research draws on the tenets of deliberative democracy and includes the development of an AI-based tool to assess the quality of deliberations at various scales.

Both of these BRIDGE grants show how research findings can be transformed into real-world solutions by drawing on collective expertise.

We will promote coherence and efficiency in the research infrastructure landscape

Why it matters

Switzerland is the home of world-class infrastructures and is highly interconnected with international research infrastructures and networks. A sustained commitment to quality research infrastructures is necessary for a well-functioning education, research and innovation system. More specifically, it supports alignment and cooperation among key actors, helps surface complementarities across initiatives and facilitates synergies that span institutional, national and international investments. When effectively coordinated, research infrastructures provide an important public service.

Fragmented investments and inconsistent evaluation practices weaken the overall coherence of the Swiss research landscape. Addressing these issues requires not only rigorous, science-driven assessment, but also funding schemes designed to reinforce what institutions cannot achieve alone – effective use of public resources, interoperability and long-term sustainability. The SNSF's expertise can contribute to optimising public investment in strategic research infrastructures.

What we plan

Co-funding for mid-sized research infrastructures. The SNSF will provide co-funding for the creation and development of community-driven, multi-user facilities, platforms and services. Targeting infrastructures with broad relevance to their research communities, this support will allow the efficient use of capacities and will promote interoperability and the sharing of expertise. It will thereby contribute to a more coherent and efficient Swiss research infrastructure ecosystem.

Funding access to research infrastructures. The SNSF will continue to include cost-reflective funding for infrastructure access in its grants, ensuring that researchers can make equitable use of essential infrastructures, irrespective of their institutional affiliation. Access support will be linked to quality criteria in the evaluation framework. This should incentivise infrastructures to strengthen their openness, user services and data stewardship.

A coherent evaluation framework. The SNSF will develop a coherent framework for evaluating research infrastructures across their various functions and lifecycle stages. It will be grounded in transparent criteria spanning scientific excellence, governance,

access arrangements, cost efficiency, long-term sustainability and data stewardship best practices. The SNSF will thus provide a shared reference point for the broader ERI landscape. This will help actors identify complementarities, reduce duplication and strengthen alignment across institutional, national and international investments.

We will cooperate globally to maintain Swiss research at the cutting edge

Why it matters

Switzerland's ability to remain at the cutting edge of science depends on the active participation of its researchers in the world's leading research networks, partnerships and funding competitions. Isolation, even if only partial, carries significant risks: the loss of talent, reduced first-hand access to breakthroughs and a weakening of Switzerland's position as a centre for world-class research and innovation. Current global developments and volatility are affecting the Swiss research and innovation landscape, as well as its science diplomacy, in multiple ways. Switzerland faces both new threats and new opportunities for cooperation.

Historically, the SNSF has adaptively strengthened international cooperation across its portfolio by putting measures in place to counter the risk for Swiss researchers of marginalisation or exclusion from international networks. Anticipating future developments is particularly challenging at present, given the international context.

Continuing to engage proactively in international cooperation is essential for the SNSF in the coming years. Our commitment to established partners – particularly through strategic partnerships with countries in the European Union – remains a pillar of our international networks. At the same time, remaining connected to the world’s leading research requires us to further develop our global strategic network. We must set geographical priorities while also diversifying partnerships that complement national funding, thereby ensuring Swiss researchers retain access to opportunities worldwide.

What we plan

Strong ties with our core partners. To this end, we will ensure complementarity within our funding portfolio by consolidating and further developing international agreements embedded in our main funding scheme, Project Funding, with key partners such as strategic European countries and the USA. We will also strategically prioritise the joint European calls in which we participate, notably the European Partnerships, and closely monitor negotiations regarding Switzerland’s association to the European Framework Programmes.

Strategic global networks. Guided by principles of knowledge security and responsible internationalisation, we will further develop our global partnerships. We aim to consolidate our collaboration with India, building on developments during the 2025–2028 period. In parallel, we will pursue new or expanded engagements with Canada, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and selected Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea and Vietnam. We will also explore potential for renewed institutional cooperation with China, as well as for cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Alignment with overarching goals. We will ensure our international funding schemes are aligned with the SNSF’s strategic priorities as well as the ERI transversal themes. Across our funding portfolio, we will continue to offer opportunities for international cooperation.

International stability through groundwater management

Underground water reserves play a vital role in ensuring a supply of drinking water all over the world. In the context of increasing crises and conflicts, or in the face of the risks posed by climate change, disasters and pandemics, integrated groundwater management is particularly important for ensuring stability and resilience.

Oliver Schilling and Yama Tomonaga, both affiliated with the University of Basel and Eawag, are collaborating on this topic with Yuji Sano from Kochi University in Japan. Launched with the support of the Strategic Japanese-Swiss Science and Technology Programme, this project brought together international partners, working across fields ranging from the monitoring of aquatic microorganisms to gas geochemistry, hydrological modelling and climate projections.

Thanks to their pooled expertise, the study provides a better understanding of groundwater flow in densely populated volcanic regions. It enabled the development of water management strategies that can be adapted on a global scale and better anticipation of the consequences of climate change.



4.2 Strengthening Switzerland's competitiveness

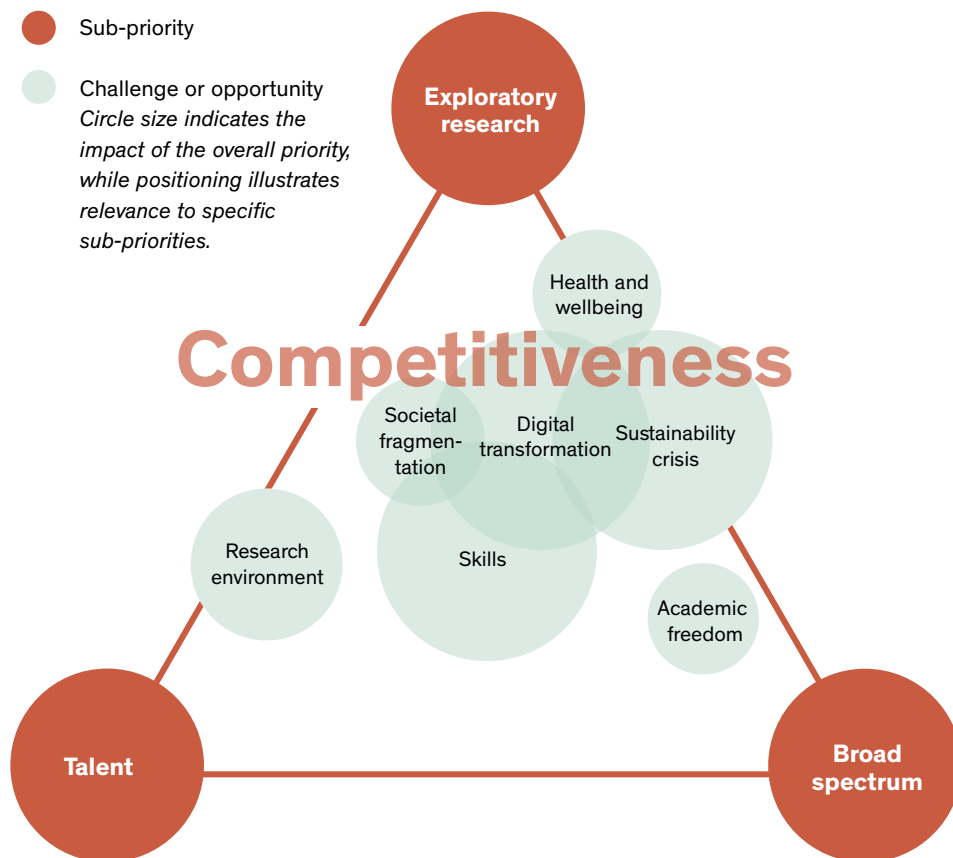
Switzerland's global leadership in providing innovative and comprehensive answers to societal and scientific challenges is based on excellent research and the people who drive it. This leadership depends on the ability to produce, absorb and apply new knowledge to create high-value products, services and solutions.

Several of the identified challenges, such as the risks posed by international marginalisation in the field of digital technologies or a lack of professional skills essential for a rapidly changing economy, threaten to undermine precisely this pillar of Swiss society. Addressing these challenges and exploiting new opportunities require multifaceted approaches provided by broad-based research. In this respect, all types of research contribute to strengthening Switzerland's competitiveness.

Our goal is to enhance our impact on Switzerland's competitiveness through targeted initiatives in three areas, ensuring Swiss research remains top-tier and beneficial to society.

- We will **strengthen our support for exploratory research**, promoting flexible, short-term funding that paves the way for larger research projects and innovations. This will enable a more agile response to rapidly evolving developments and to the growing demand for future-oriented skills complementing our primary funding scheme Project Funding.

- We will **leverage potential across the broad spectrum of research**, fostering a range of approaches along the continuum between basic and use-inspired research, as well as interdisciplinary and collaborative research. To this end, we will explore potential improvements to our evaluation processes and ensure the openness of our funding portfolio, including Project Funding. A rich variety of knowledge is crucial for Switzerland's capacity to conduct breakthrough research and innovation, address societal and technological developments, and meet the demand for future-oriented skills.
- We will **invest in research talent across our funding portfolio**, providing support for early-career researchers both in dedicated career schemes and in other funding areas. To this end, we will seek to foster smoother transitions between different career phases, reduce precarity and better recognise their contribution to funded research projects. Talented researchers are vital for Switzerland's innovation in the context of the economy, academia and society. They help ensure that Switzerland is equipped with the skills required to face future challenges.



We will strengthen our support for exploratory research

Why it matters

All SNSF funding schemes are designed to support research that makes a tangible contribution to expanding the frontiers of knowledge. The SNSF's core contribution in this respect remains project-based funding, which enables researchers to undertake ambitious multi-year studies.

At the same time, our portfolio also needs space for particularly bold and unconventional ideas, including projects that involve levels of risk that are less suited to long-term grants.

Small-scale exploratory grants are essential for testing new approaches, methods, standards and lines of inquiry at an early stage. They allow researchers to generate an initial premise, examine its feasibility and decide whether a promising idea should be pursued further.

Such projects can lay the groundwork for larger follow-up proposals in the main funding schemes, open up new research directions or strengthen the practice of research itself. For instance, they may encompass exploratory work in rapidly developing fields such as AI or test innovative research practices. These grants could also range from ambitious research addressing grand challenges like the sustainability crisis to pioneering approaches that go beyond established research pathways.

Exploratory funding is valuable across the portfolio. It can support early-career and advanced researchers alike. It can also be useful in collaborative settings when teams want to test a shared idea before committing to a larger project.

In this sense, exploratory grants do not stand in opposition to the SNSF's main funding schemes. They complement them by creating room for timely, transformative contributions that support the research system as a whole and stimulate Swiss competitiveness and innovation.

What we plan

More flexibility for new ideas. To strengthen exploratory research, we will further develop Spark as a dedicated funding opportunity for small-scale, high-risk projects. While retaining its clear focus on novel and unconventional ideas, Spark will offer greater flexibility in both duration and budget. This will allow researchers to investigate new ideas in a more modular way, whether at the start of a novel line of inquiry or as a new initiative during an ongoing project. We will explore how Spark can complement Project Funding as well as other SNSF funding opportunities.

Ideas in focus. We will continue to refine the evaluation methods used in Spark so that the scheme also serves as a testing ground for funding approaches that are appropriate for high-risk, unconventional research. We will encourage proposals from researchers at all career stages. We will ensure that principles such as equality, diversity and inclusion as well as open research data and other practices inherent to responsible research culture are considered from the outset where relevant.

**Using AI to advance cancer immunotherapy**

Cancer immunotherapy has evolved significantly since the 2010s, alongside major advances in AI. At the intersection of these fields, Vincent Zoete, a specialist in computer-assisted drug design, and oncologist Alexandre Harari initiated a joint exploratory research project at the University of Lausanne to put their combined expertise to the test.

A Spark grant enabled the duo, together with their collaborator David Gfeller, to use AI to systematically analyse and classify

resistance-mediating mutations in cancer cells. They then tested whether the identified mutations could be targeted by new immunotherapies, thereby turning cancer's own resistance strategies against itself.

After successfully establishing their concept, the two researchers embarked on a larger-scale project supported by Project Funding. By fine-tuning and validating their approach, their teams aim to refine its potential application in cancer immunotherapy.

We will leverage potential across the broad spectrum of research**Why it matters**

Over the years, the SNSF has developed procedures to ensure that it supports a broad range of types and fields of research. According to its legal mandate, the SNSF funds all disciplines pursued at Swiss research institutions. It is open to all research that does not directly serve commercial purposes, including both use-inspired and basic research, with particular emphasis on the latter. While significant progress will have been achieved by the end of the current period (see box on page 41), supporting the entire research continuum represents a long-term challenge with considerable untapped potential.

Encouraging a broad spectrum of research strengthens the relevance of research outcomes along the full value chain. It ensures that both short- and long-term knowledge advancement receive appropriate attention and that a wide range of needs and

perspectives is considered. It thereby enhances the innovation readiness of Swiss research and increases the capacity of the ERI landscape to navigate risks amid the uncertainties of a rapidly changing world.

Together with other measures – notably the strengthening of national and international collaboration and of our portfolio's resilience – funding a broad spectrum of research is essential to the SNSF's pivotal role in enhancing Switzerland's competitiveness.

What we plan

Assessment of research methods and topics. We will explore potential for improvements to ensure the best possible evaluation of research methods and topics. For instance, we plan to examine how best to evaluate proposals along the continuum of basic and use-inspired research and then to recalibrate related processes.

Supporting inter- and transdisciplinary and collaborative research. We will renew our focus on improving support for inter- and transdisciplinary research, domains that integrate different disciplinary perspectives and are particularly important for addressing complex societal challenges. In addition, we will explore options to further sustain collaborative research, which is a significant driver for innovation.

Monitoring and evaluation. We will evaluate our core funding scheme Project Funding to identify improvements guaranteeing that we support the full spectrum of research questions as well as research practices that sustain excellence in our funded research during a time of rapid change.

Leveraging the power of Super-Recognisers, who outperform facial recognition algorithms

Super-Recognisers can recognise a person whom they have seen only once before in a photo in a video of a large crowd. This is a skill that algorithms struggle with, as they require large amounts of training data and sufficient information to first detect the presence of a face.

During her SNSF-funded assistant professorship at the universities of Fribourg and Lausanne, neuroscientist Meike Ramon studied the mechanisms specific to Super-Recognisers. Her research involved collaborations well beyond the field of neuroscience, including with international security experts and the law enforcement agencies.

Now Professor of Applied Data Science at the Bern University of Applied Sciences, Ramon continues her work on Super-Recognisers. Her research interests extend to abilities in different sensory domains (e.g. voices) and deepfakes, which represent a new major challenge for privacy and trust in our society.



We will invest in research talent across our funding portfolio

Why it matters

Switzerland's competitiveness relies on its ability to generate, absorb and translate new knowledge into high-value products, services and solutions. In a small, highly internationalised economy with limited natural resources, Switzerland's sustained prosperity depends on its knowledge economy. It counts on the

capacity of the research and innovation system to produce value through knowledge creation and impacts beyond academia.

This in turn requires a reliable and generous supply of talent. Investing in people is one of the most direct levers Switzerland has to safeguard its knowledge economy. Strengthening research careers is important not only to optimise knowledge creation but to enhance exchange with society.

The SNSF has made attracting, developing and retaining talent a priority. By the start of the 2029–2032 period, it will have launched a new funding scheme for postdoctoral researchers. The grant will offer funding of up to four years and the opportunity for substantial mobility. Bolstered by a high level of responsibility for and ownership of their own research, early-career researchers will be able to pursue an independent and substantial research agenda and to acquire key skills and networks.

At the same time, the SNSF is attentive to the broader framework of research careers. Expanding early-career support is meaningful only if the overall conditions in which research talent can flourish in Switzerland are strengthened.

What we plan

Support for talent across the portfolio. The SNSF supports researchers across career stages in two major areas. Career schemes target early-career researchers directly to help them build responsibility and progress through career stages. Project Funding primarily funds original research projects led by advanced researchers, with much of the funding covering the salaries of early-career researchers.

In the next funding period, the SNSF will take stock of how these SNSF funding schemes, within the larger context of all funding opportunities for early-career researchers in Switzerland, together shape the experiences and prospects of researchers at all career stages. This holistic view will inform targeted actions to strengthen the experience of early-career researchers across the full portfolio.

Smoother transitions. The SNSF is striving to improve the progression from doctoral to self-directed research, which is often characterised by precarity. We will identify critical points at which working conditions are particularly volatile and marked by uncertainty, short-term contracts, lack of recognition and access to mentoring and resources. We will develop targeted measures that take into account that a large share of excellent researchers will build impactful careers in society, government, the economy, or other areas, a career trajectory that needs to be better valorised.

Definition of the roles of early-career researchers in all funding schemes. We will take a closer look at the roles of early-career researchers in all the SNSF's funding schemes and explore how their contributions can be better recognised. In addition, we will consider ways in which early-career researchers may participate in or lead various components of projects – from the proposal design phase through implementation.



From international trade to health – investing in Switzerland's future professionals

Attracting, fostering and retaining bright minds are key to sustaining Switzerland's competitiveness and ability to overcome challenges.

Supported by SNSF career grants, economist David Torun (University of Zurich) is exploring the resilience of international trade in the face of prevailing uncertainty. He uses mathematical models to determine which products, industries, trade routes or partners promote long-term growth. His aim is to produce data that can inform crucial economic policy decisions for Switzerland's open economy.

In the field of health, clinician and researcher Maria-Luisa Balmer, from the University of Bern, is investigating the rise in obesity and diabetes, a major health and economic challenge. Her research explores the influence of gut microorganisms on metabolism and immune function, with the aim of identifying new approaches for prevention and treatment. She is following up on her SNSF-funded early independence research project, for which she was awarded the Marie Heim-Vögtlin Prize, with the support of a Project Funding grant.

These two career paths demonstrate the importance of supporting a diverse range of profiles to ensure the expertise required to respond to contemporary challenges.

4.3 Strengthening the resilience of research and society

Resilience refers to a system's ability to withstand shocks, adapt and maintain its functionality. Resilience is of particular importance in times when numerous parallel challenges threaten to disrupt research and society. Strengthening the resilience of society requires improving the ability to foresee, withstand and adapt to disruption. To fulfil this responsibility, research itself must be resilient and able to navigate an increasingly complex world.

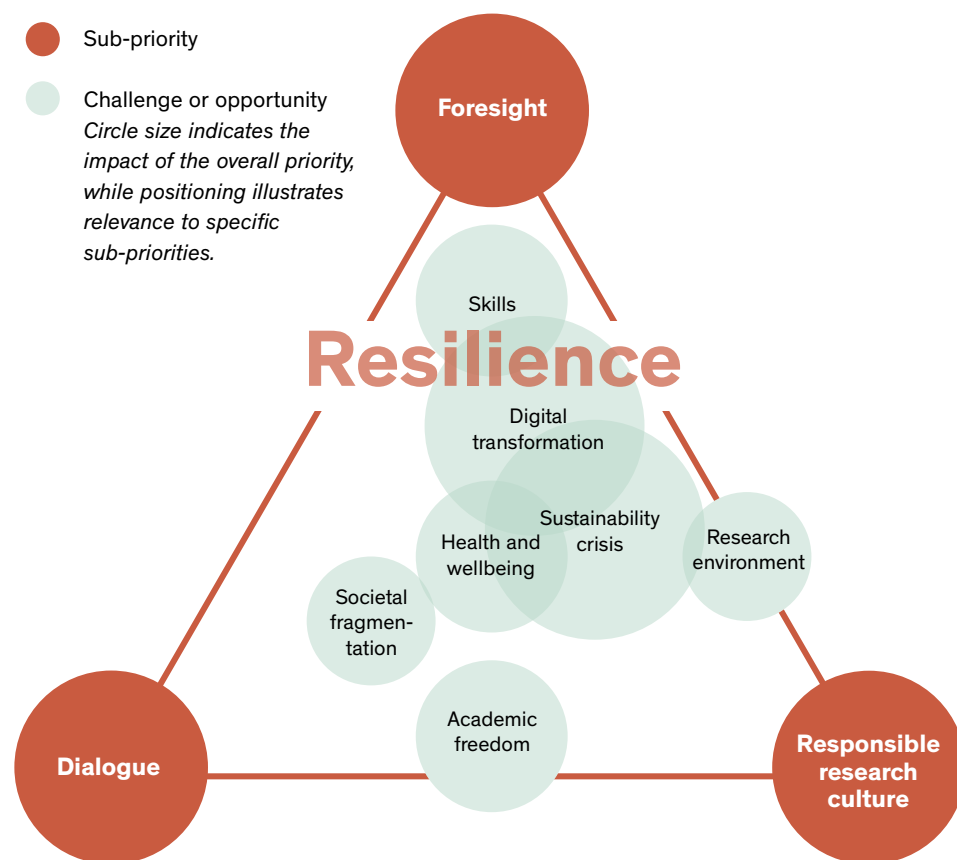
To enhance the resilience of the SNSF, research and ultimately society, we aim to implement targeted measures across three key areas to ensure continued knowledge creation and transfer.

- We will **enhance our foresight capacity** to improve our readiness to anticipate, prepare for and respond to emerging needs within research and society. Strategic foresight will ensure that Swiss research is equipped to address challenges proactively and effectively. These can range from disruptions stemming from the digital transformation or the sustainability crisis to the growing need for future-oriented professional skills.
- We will **strengthen dialogue between research and society** across the entire funding portfolio, enhancing the capacity of researchers to engage meaningfully with society and key stakeholders. Alongside science communication, we will strengthen knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange. This is essential for addressing

technological and socio-economic challenges and for fostering public trust in research.

- We will further **advance a responsible research culture** by promoting best practices and fostering environments that enable excellence. We will combine multiple dimensions of research culture, such as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Work Culture, Sustainability, Research Integrity, Open Science, and Responsible Use of AI. A responsible research culture is key to a resilient research system and supports researchers in adapting to challenges that directly affect research practices.

By ensuring that both research funding and research operate in a responsive and sustainable manner, we will contribute to safeguarding the long-term adaptability and endurance of society.



We will enhance our foresight capacity

Why it matters

An evidence-driven approach to the SNSF funding portfolio has guided our strategic planning for decades. This requires the ability to gather, interpret and react to signals from the research system and society to build a strong evidence base. This allows us to align our portfolio development and strategic decisions

with actual needs and respond to emerging opportunities or challenges.

Foresight is essential to be prepared to react in an agile manner to long-term structural changes and emerging opportunities relevant to research, researchers and their funding. It helps set and, when needed, adjust strategic priorities in a timely and evidence-informed manner. It enables the early identification of trends, allowing us to prepare, adapt funding schemes and steer resources proactively rather than reactively.

Agility in funding is equally critical. Extraordinary events – whether health emergencies, natural disasters or sudden disruptions such as loss of access to critical data – do not wait for funding cycles to catch up. The ability to respond swiftly and in a targeted way ensures that research support remains relevant and effective precisely when the stakes are highest.

What we plan

Development of foresight capacity. We will establish clear responsibilities and processes for foresight within the organisation and define ways of turning foresight into mid- and long-term strategic planning. In this respect, we will collaborate with external partners and networks to avoid duplication of effort and to exploit the expertise available in other institutions. Furthermore, we will develop scenarios to prepare for situations that may pose particular challenges for research and research funding.

Increased agility. In the case of short-term developments, for instance technological breakthroughs or disruptions in data availability, we will use foresight evidence to launch transient temporary measures within existing funding schemes. This will

allow the SNSF to respond in an agile manner to emerging opportunities or crises. To implement such measures adequately, we will develop a clear framework for identifying potential areas of action and making appropriate decisions.

We will strengthen dialogue between research and society

Why it matters

The SNSF has long championed the idea that the value of research needs to be anchored in society and made visible. To this end, we have a dedicated funding scheme for science communication projects and systematically involve practitioners in solution-oriented schemes. We also sustain collaboration platforms with industry partners in our long-term research environments. In addition, we offer training courses for researchers and engage in our own science communication.

Three aspects are particularly relevant in this work: science communication, knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange:

- Science communication focuses on making research processes and results visible, understandable and accessible to broader audiences, thereby fostering public trust and engagement with society.
- Knowledge transfer refers to the targeted translation and application of research findings into policy, practice or general knowledge.
- Knowledge exchange emphasises the reciprocal nature of interaction between researchers and societal actors,

recognising the value of knowledge co-produced through dialogue and mutual learning.

Strengthening dialogue between research and society matters because it helps to ensure that research is not only communicated clearly, but also understood, trusted and used. Greater emphasis on knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange increases the likelihood that evidence will inform policy and practice and that societal needs and perspectives will shape research more effectively. In addition, successful approaches can generate wider benefits across disciplines and funding schemes. Engagement with societal actors contributes to the practical relevance of research as well as to mutual learning, stronger long-term relationships between science and society and sustained public trust and support for research.

What we plan

Broadened scope of Agora. We will further develop Agora, which already focuses on supporting science communication projects that promote interaction between researchers and the public. By revising this funding scheme, we aim to enhance its role in facilitating knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange. This will be a further step towards multi-directional models of dialogue with society. In this context, Agora will be complementary to existing funding offers, such as the National Research Programmes (NRPs), that already fulfil an important function in this area.

Incentives for dialogue across the portfolio. Alongside policy recommendations on potential approaches to engagement with society, we will enable researchers to undertake small-scale science communication, knowledge transfer or knowledge

exchange activities within ongoing projects. To this end, we will provide limited financial support within existing grants. In addition, we will expand our training courses to address a broader range of use cases, including for instance knowledge exchange.



From ecology to social security – research in dialogue with society

To address issues and put solutions into action, research benefits from involving societal and economic actors, policymakers and government bodies.

As part of the National Research Program 80 “Covid-19 and Society”, the social scientist Oliver Hümbelin and his team at the Bern University of Applied Sciences are exploring the economic impact of the pandemic in Switzerland. The study aims to identify gaps in Switzerland’s social safety net and develop a tool for monitoring poverty.

The project is intended to help improve crisis management in the future. It is notable for its close collaboration with Caritas Switzerland, which facilitates the direct transfer of knowledge into practice and ensures that the realities on the ground are taken into account.

Building on previous SNSF-funded research, Charlotte Grossiord, head of the Plant Ecology Research Laboratory at EPFL, launched the Agora outreach project “Dear2050: Entangled Forests”. Through this project, she shares her group’s work on how forests are responding to climate change. With artist residencies and interactive exhibitions across Switzerland, this project facilitates direct dialogue between science and society.

We will further advance a responsible research culture

Why it matters

Excellent research does not happen in a vacuum. It depends on the conditions, norms and relationships that shape how knowledge is created and shared. The SNSF has committed itself to the principle that research quality and research culture are inseparable. How research is done matters as much as what is discovered because excellence in the latter is founded upon excellence in the former.

We see responsible research culture not as a compliance requirement, but as shared norms and collective practices across the research community. In this context, the SNSF acts alongside research institutions and other partners, all of whom have complementary roles in shaping the conditions in which research is conceived, conducted and shared.

Responsible research culture supports social wellbeing, safeguards the environment and cultivates transparency in knowledge creation. It encompasses six interconnected dimensions:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
- Work Culture
- Sustainability
- Research Integrity
- Open Science
- Responsible Use of AI

Together these dimensions shape the conditions in which excellent research can thrive.

Investing in responsible research culture is also an investment in the long-term resilience and relevance of the Swiss research system. When funding is grounded in clear values and transparent practices, it becomes more impactful, more efficient and more trusted by researchers, by institutions and by the public.

Cultivating a strong responsible research culture also reinforces Switzerland's capacity to attract, develop and retain a diverse pool of talent. Researchers are more likely to commit to and thrive in systems that reflect their values and offer fair, supportive conditions. In this sense, responsible research culture and talent development at all career stages are mutually reinforcing.

Responsible research culture is also aligned with the ERI transversal themes sustainable development, equity, digital transformation, including the responsible and transparent use of AI.

What we plan

Incentivise and recognise researchers' achievements in responsible research culture. Responsible research culture thrives when it is made visible and actively valued. The SNSF will develop concrete mechanisms to acknowledge and reward researchers who demonstrate meaningful achievements in the six dimensions of responsible research culture. These may entail funding opportunities for individual dimensions. The goal is to move beyond compliance-based approaches and towards positive incentives that establish responsible practices as reason for recognition and as markers of research excellence.

Assess, monitor and set targets for contributions to the six dimensions of responsible research culture. Translating commitment into practice requires clarity. The SNSF will provide

accessible, targeted guidance to researchers at all career stages on what we expect in terms of responsible research culture in concrete terms and how they can actively contribute to it.

Evaluate the possibility of introducing aspects of responsible research culture into the evaluation process across funding schemes. The SNSF will undertake a careful, evidence-informed assessment of how to meaningfully integrate elements of responsible research culture into its funding evaluation processes. The focus will be on exploring how evaluation criteria can better reflect the full scope of excellent research today, while remaining practicable and applicable across disciplines and contexts.

Navigating the tension between Open Science and knowledge security

Openness is key to a responsible research culture. Sharing data, methods and findings freely accelerates discovery, enables peer scrutiny, guarantees a more efficient use of resources and builds public trust. Yet, as research becomes more globally connected and strategically significant, it also becomes more exposed to the misuse of its findings, undue foreign influence and engagement, sometimes unwittingly, with parties whose interests conflict with democratic values or security concerns.

Switzerland's open, internationally oriented research system is one of its greatest strengths and, simultaneously, a source of vulnerability. The question is not whether to be open or secure, but how. Transparency about research outputs, and mindfulness of how they are used, are two sides of the same commitment.

What we plan on the topic of Open Science

Adapt evaluation processes to assess Open Science practices when considering proposals' methods. The expectations related to the **F**indability, **A**ccessibility, **I**nteroperability, and **R**euse (FAIR) of research output will be progressively integrated into reviewer guidance and panel training. The aim is to ensure that openness, reproducibility and responsible handling of data and other outputs are recognised as integral dimensions of research excellence.

Adapt role and contribution towards open access (OA). We have required OA for publications resulting from our funding for

years and offer grants to cover OA publishing costs, achieving an OA share of 80% by 2023. The ever-rising costs for scholarly publishing and the role of research funders are an ongoing challenge. The SNSF is reconsidering its role, pursuing alternatives to the direct funding of individual scholarly publications. Together with swissuniversities, the SNSF is committed to the Swiss National Open Access Strategy to aid the Swiss scholarly publishing landscape in evolving towards sustainability and diversity. We will also continue collaborating on the topic internationally.

What we plan on the topic of knowledge security

Monitor the development of security risks. The SNSF will work with ERI partners and the federal government to track emerging risks, including sensitive technologies, dual-use research of concern and international partnerships. At the same time, the SNSF will maintain an open, country-agnostic approach consistent with our international strategy. Assessments will be evidence-based and focused on specific risks.

Keep researchers informed about security and ethical risks. The SNSF will endeavour to ensure applicants have access to clear, practical guidance on potential security risks and ethically sensitive practices when submitting proposals and throughout the lifetime of grants. Our goal is to equip researchers to make informed decisions without burdening them with compliance.

Alignment with the priorities of the 2025–2028 period

During the 2025–2028 period, the SNSF is focusing on four priorities: “Strengthening international networks and competitiveness”, “Exploiting research potential to the full”, “Working together for a sustainable future”, and “Expanding, extending and critically reflecting on digitalisation in science”. In the following table, we set out the efforts that we plan to continue during the 2029–2032 period.

Strengthening international networks and competitiveness

Aims stated in the Action Plan 2025–2028:

We aim to strengthen researcher-driven, open-topic international cooperation within Project Funding by ensuring sufficient resources for the Weave, Lead Agency and International Co-Investigator schemes and by expanding these networks.

In the context of our programmes, we seek to consolidate Switzerland’s participation in European research consortia through ongoing and new European Partnerships. We are broadening Swiss research networks beyond Europe and the global West, ensuring coherence with existing international schemes.

Expected outcomes by the end of the 2025–2028 period:

Due to reductions in the federal contribution to the SNSF, we have had to decrease resources for European Partnerships and the newly planned global networks. Qualitatively, we expect the core objectives to be achieved, although limited resources will restrict the intended scale of implementation.

Lines of action for 2029–2032:

Within the priority “Strengthening synergies in the research landscape”, the continued development of international co-operation will remain a central focus of the new Multi-Year Programme. We will strategically renew and expand the networks established during the current period.

Given the resource constraints in 2025–2028, we plan to increase the resources available for international cooperation in the next funding period, provided that sufficient funding is secured.

Exploiting research potential to the full

Aims stated in the Action Plan 2025–2028:

We aim to intensify the involvement of societal and economic actors in NRPs. We are expanding and developing the IICTs, for example by facilitating (inter)national networks of clinical trial leaders. Together with Innosuisse, we are reinforcing BRIDGE by increasing support for early-career researchers, social innovation and implementation-oriented projects.

In addition, as part of our monitoring and analysis activities, we are developing new tools to better understand key developments in research carried out in SNSF-funded projects.

Expected outcomes by the end of the 2025–2028 period:

We expect all aims to be achieved by the end of the current period.

Lines of action for 2029–2032:

The developments achieved in this period will remain part of the funding portfolio. Related priorities for 2029–2032 concern fostering dialogue between research and society and supporting the broad spectrum of research (see sections 4.3 and 4.2).

Working together for a sustainable future**Aims stated in the Action Plan 2025–2028:**

We aim to promote sustainable research practices in the field of responsible scientific travel. We also strive to make our own operations more resource efficient and to embed sustainability within our organisational structures.

Together with the SDC, we support SOR4D, which funds research that contributes to *sustainable development* and reduces poverty in low-income countries

Expected outcomes by the end of the 2025–2028 period:

Overall, we expect to achieve the aims defined in the Action Plan. However, a major measure planned in the original Multi-Year Programme – promoting *sustainable development* research via living laboratories – could not be implemented due to insufficient resources, even prior to the federal budget cuts.

Lines of action for 2029–2032:

Sustainable development (see respective section in chapter 6) is embedded across several priorities of the new Multi-Year Programme, particularly within responsible research culture and as a potential focus for new national collaborations (see sections 4.3 and 4.1).

Expanding, extending and critically reflecting on digitalisation in science**Aims stated in the Action Plan 2025–2028:**

We aim to advance digitalisation in science by promoting research data that follows the FAIR principles, and that is open access. In addition, we will closely monitor developments in AI to inform future funding measures.

Expected outcomes by the end of the 2025–2028 period:

We expect Open Research Data to have become a standard of SNSF-funded research. Moreover, we anticipate that we will have attained a systemic understanding of the consequences of AI for research.

However, the most significant measures envisioned regarding digitalisation – special calls for early-career researchers to strengthen their research competencies for the *digital transformation* – could not be implemented due to the ERI Dispatch's financial constraints.

Lines of action for 2029–2032:

The rapid and continued advances in *digital transformation* will constitute a central element in the new sub-priority on responsible research culture (see section 4.3). This is particularly the case for Open Science and the responsible use of AI in research. *Digital transformation* is also expected to be a key aspect in the context of national and international cooperation (see respective sections in chapter 6).



5 Funding portfolio

5 Funding portfolio

In the next funding period, the SNSF will maintain a lean funding portfolio, keeping its offer streamlined while remaining dynamic and adaptive to emerging needs. A lean portfolio strengthens coherence across the overall funding offer by addressing different needs within the existing schemes rather than expanding the number of funding schemes. It also enhances clarity for researchers and improves the overall efficiency of funding activities and evaluation processes.

We will ensure that the legally mandated funding activities contribute meaningfully to the creation of research value. Through *project schemes* and *career schemes*, promoting basic research and research careers will continue to form the core of our funding portfolio.

At the same time, our research funding *programmes* will encourage solution-oriented research as well as international co-operation. Our support for *infrastructures* will strengthen Switzerland's long-term research capabilities, and *science communication* funding will enhance knowledge transfer and engagement with society.

As detailed above (see chapter 2), a set of guiding principles underpin our funding portfolio: excellence in research, framework conditions for excellence, diversity and cooperation as well as integrity and transparency. These converge to generate the value of research.

Excellence in research is the backbone of the entire portfolio. Our funding schemes support research projects that are researcher driven. They are competitively selected following rigorous, multidimensional peer review that focuses on scientific quality, originality and feasibility. Our portfolio ensures that research questions originate from within the research community, that basic research is supported as the SNSF's core mission and that Swiss research remains internationally connected.

The framework conditions for sustaining excellence are fostered by the SNSF to support a favourable environment for excellent research in Switzerland over the medium and long term. This is particularly central to our support of early-career researchers, as it enables them to realise their ideas and potential into the future. It is also a key motivation behind our efforts to reinforce infrastructures. Our aim is to provide access to the necessary data and tools to allow research to be successfully carried out.

Diversity and cooperation refer to the ability to support a variety of research types and groups, while enabling researchers to develop meaningful networks. This principle forms the very structure of the portfolio. Our main funding schemes are open towards different research types and methods. They are complemented by a limited number of funding schemes that addresses specific needs, such as various types of collaboration at the national and international level.

Integrity and transparency shape our funding activities, as we ensure the high quality of funded research, and actively promote responsible research practices. Moreover, integrity and transparency are intrinsic to the way we manage the portfolio, through transparent processes and continuous monitoring.

These four principles contribute to the overarching mission guiding all SNSF activities: **advancing the value of research**. Research creates long-term scientific, economic and societal value by expanding knowledge, informing solutions, and promoting prosperity and wellbeing. Supporting this value through research funding requires a targeted portfolio that is driven by guiding principles, enables excellence, and sustains a resilient research system.

The table on the following page summarises how our major funding categories relate to our guiding principles. More details are provided in the tables in the sections on each funding category.

	Value of Research			
	Excellence in research	Framework conditions for excellence	Diversity and cooperation	Integrity and transparency
Projects	Researcher driven, thematically open projects Selected based solely on scientific quality	Enable qualification of early-career researchers Particularly relevant at the doctoral level	Open to all disciplines and methods Support for interdisciplinary and collaborative research	High scientific standards Benchmark for the whole portfolio
Careers	Support outstanding early-career researchers	Support for careers embeds excellence structurally over time	Broad disciplinary coverage and inclusive career paths Support for international mobility	Reliable, transparent career opportunities Career funding strengthens trust in the system
Programmes	Specific scopes combined with researcher-driven projects Evaluation according to high scientific standards	Development of lasting research capacities and structures, and qualifications of early-career researchers, both in specific areas	Support for specific needs: international cooperation, solution-oriented research	High standards across schemes Strong societal and international visibility reinforce trust
Infrastructures	Evaluation and coordination ensure high quality, reliability and sustainability of infrastructures	Support for infrastructures underpins excellent research over the long term	Broad, discipline-spanning conception of infrastructures Contribution to national cooperation	Essential for reproducibility and transparency of research Responsible use of public resources
Transversal measures	Responsible research practices as an essential component of excellence	Targeted contribution to the development of the ERI landscape	EDI and mobility measures support diversity and the resilience of the research community	Responsible research culture strengthens the credibility and trustworthiness of research

Projects

As the SNSF's primary funding scheme, *Project Funding* will continue to play a central role in our funding portfolio. It allows researchers in all disciplines to conduct research projects on all topics and with all designs, attaining high quality, productivity and reliability. Furthermore, it enables them to lead research teams and collaborate nationally and internationally – the latter through agreements such as the *Weave*, *Lead Agency* and *International Co-Investigator* schemes.

Given its central role in the portfolio, *Project Funding* will be especially shaped by the developments outlined under the priority “Strengthening Switzerland’s competitiveness” during the 2029–2032 period. We will consider changes to the way we support *projects* to align them more strongly with the diversity of the research we support, including strengthening our commitment to interdisciplinary and collaborative research (see section 4.2). Further enhancing evaluation processes in light of wider developments, such as evolving AI (see section 4.3 and chapter 7), will be essential for our main funding scheme.

In addition, as regards supporting talent across the funding portfolio (see section 4.2), we will clarify and reinforce the roles of early-career researchers within *Project Funding*.

Spark will continue to complement *Project Funding* by assuming a distinct role in sustaining exploratory and novel research. As already detailed in section 4.1, this funding scheme will be developed and enhanced to provide stronger support for small-scale projects exploring bold, unconventional ideas, while being open to researchers in different career stages.

How our guiding principles are put into practice through *Project Funding* and *Spark*

Excellence in research	– Targeted support for researcher-driven projects across all disciplines and topics – Funding decisions based exclusively on scientific excellence
Framework conditions for excellence	– Essential for training early-career researchers, particularly at the doctoral level – Principal investigators lead research teams and mentor early-career researchers
Diversity and cooperation	– Open to different types of scientific research as well as collaborative and inter- and transdisciplinary research – Essential for the development of research networks at both the national and international level
Integrity and transparency	– High scientific standards established in Project Funding serve as a key reference point for the entire portfolio

Careers

Career schemes are essential to incentivise talent development and respond to Switzerland’s need for highly qualified researchers and highly skilled workforce across different sectors. They support researchers at early career stages whose contributions to the renewal of ideas play a key role in Swiss research and beyond.

In the next funding period, career schemes will reflect the reform of career funding that the SNSF will have completed by the end of 2028. The reform aims to make support for research careers clearer, more coherent and more sustainable, while promoting the autonomy of early-career researchers, reducing precarity and improving long-term career prospects.

In this regard, we will continue our commitment to streamlining our portfolio. *Ambizione* and *Postdoc.Mobility* will have been merged into one funding scheme that supports postdoctoral researchers. They will be able to lead their research project with a high level of responsibility for their budget, research agenda, career development and national and international research stays, thus promoting their ability to lead research projects in the academic, private and public sectors.

As part of the current career funding reform, the SNSF is also exploring ways to further develop funding opportunities for more experienced postdoctoral researchers who wish to continue their academic career and are ready to lead their own research group. Until potential changes are implemented in the next funding period, the SNSF will continue to support talents at this career stage through the *SNSF Starting Grants*.

With regard to the sub-priority “We will invest in research talent across our funding portfolio” (see section 4.2), the reform of our *career schemes* will play a particularly important role in ensuring smoother transitions between career stages and between funding opportunities. At the same time, the revised funding schemes will be instrumental in recognising the variety of career paths, both within academia and beyond.

How our guiding principles are put into practice through *career schemes*

Excellence in research	– Support for outstanding early-career researchers – Projects in early career phases often make a crucial contribution to research renewal and knowledge advancement
Framework conditions for excellence	– Excellence embedded structurally through support at key career stages – Preservation of the long-term capacity of the research system
Diversity and cooperation	– Support for a wide range of researchers across all disciplines and research types – Promotion of mobility, enabling early-career researchers to build networks
Integrity and transparency	– High-quality standards as the primary criterion for career support – Transparent and reliable career perspectives through dedicated funding schemes, contributing to trust in the research system

Programmes

Our programmes complement the funding portfolio by offering targeted funding opportunities for specific fields, themes or needs. They serve three main purposes:

- **Aim 1.** Solving real-world problems through solution-oriented research in the form of both focused calls on specific issues and thematically open funding schemes
- **Aim 2.** Connecting Swiss research globally by integrating it into international networks
- **Aim 3.** Building lasting research capacities and structures and laying the groundwork for the long-term development in key fields

We will pursue these aims through different types of funding schemes. First, we will offer schemes that are designed and financed entirely by the SNSF. *Investigator Initiated Clinical Trials (IICT)*, for example, contribute to the first aim by strengthening clinical research capacity in Switzerland. The IICT programme supports studies that are relevant for patients and society but are not a priority for industry. *Scholars at Risk* grants contribute to the second aim by supporting researchers from countries where academic freedom is under threat and helping them continue their work in a safe environment. We will also explore further schemes that promote international cooperation and thereby support our sub-priority “We will cooperate globally to maintain Swiss research at the cutting edge” (see section 4.1).

Second, we will continue to run funding schemes together with other funders. *BRIDGE*, which we offer together with Innosuisse, supports projects at the interface between basic research and innovation and thereby contributes to the first aim: supporting research that can help address concrete challenges and create

value for society (see text box on page 29). With the SDC, we will continue *Solution-oriented Research for Development (SOR4D)*. This scheme contributes to both the first and second aims, as it supports transdisciplinary research, particularly related to sustainable development, while bringing together partners from Switzerland and developing countries. In line with our sub-priority “We will engage in new national partnerships”, we will also seek new cooperations with partners in Switzerland (see section 4.1). Internationally, we will continue to work with other European funders through the thematic calls of the *European Partnerships*. These calls contribute mainly to the second aim, as they allow Swiss researchers to take part in European research networks. We will prioritise the calls aligning with the SNSF’s overall strategic aims (see section 4.1).

Third, we will carry out measures on behalf of the Federal Council. The *National Research Programmes (NRPs)* contribute to the first aim by funding research that generates scientific knowledge to help address major societal challenges and to inform policy and practice. The *Swiss Quantum Initiative*, mandated by the Confederation to a+, the SNSF and Innosuisse, aims to consolidate Switzerland’s leadership in quantum research and innovation across the full value chain. *National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCRs)* contribute to the third aim by supporting long-term, strategically oriented research networks that strengthen Switzerland’s research capacity in key fields and international competitiveness. Within the framework of the *Bilateral Programmes* and, if confirmed, of the *Bi- and multilateral research cooperations*, we will provide joint funding initiatives with other countries. These programmes contribute to the second aim by deepening international cooperation and creating opportunities for Swiss researchers to work with partners abroad.

How our guiding principles are put into practice through *programmes*

Excellence in research	– Projects are entirely designed by researchers, despite the specific thematic or programmatic scopes of these funding schemes – Research proposals compete within a broad pool of applications and are selected based on scientific quality
Framework conditions for excellence	– Qualification of early-career researchers in specific areas such as engagement with societal actors and participation in global research networks – NCCRs play a central role in strengthening long-term research capacities
Diversity and cooperation	– Addressing specific needs supports a broad range of research types, disciplines, and research communities – Collaboration with societal actors and partners in the national research landscape – Promotion of international cooperation through participation in global research networks
Integrity and transparency	– High-quality standards across all schemes, complemented by specific evaluation criteria

Infrastructures

During the next funding period, the SNSF will reaffirm and strengthen its commitment to promoting *research infrastructures*. This engagement contributes to stable research environments and enables access to shared facilities and data platforms. Ultimately, it fosters long-term scientific capacity building and structural development.

The SNSF will continue its support for a diverse portfolio of *research infrastructures* across different disciplines, including national data services, measurement networks, platforms, editions and major longitudinal studies. This will ensure long-term access to essential resources for the research community.

As mandated by the Confederation, the SNSF will also continue to offer *FLARE (Funding Large international REsearch projects)*. This scheme supports the development and operation of research infrastructures for major international projects in particle physics, astrophysics and astroparticle physics.

In line with our sub-priority “We will promote coherence and efficiency in the research infrastructure landscape” (see section 4.1), we will create a new funding scheme to co-fund the creation and major upgrades of mid-sized *research infrastructures*. These will primarily take the form of facilities, platforms or services, including physical equipment and specialised laboratories. We will further provide evaluation services for mid-sized *research infrastructures* across their various functions and lifecycle stages.

How our guiding principles are put into practice through *research infrastructures funding*

Excellence in research	– Quality and reliability of research infrastructures subject to standards of excellence – Rigorous evaluation, coordination, and targeted support of research infrastructures
Framework conditions for excellence	– Access to high-quality research infrastructures ensures stable, state-of-the-art facilities, including shared equipment and data resources – Coordinated support for national research infrastructures strengthens the backbone of the research system
Diversity and cooperation	– Broad conception of research infrastructures, covering the needs of diverse research communities from the humanities and social sciences to the life and natural sciences – Promotion of national cooperation through support for a well-coordinated research infrastructure landscape
Integrity and transparency	– Research infrastructures play a key role in enhancing the integrity and reproducibility of research results – Especially given their high costs, efficient funding of research infrastructures supports the responsible and targeted use of public resources

Science communication

Our support for *science communication* is an integral component of our funding portfolio and a key mechanism for strengthening dialogue between research and society. This is how we contribute to making research outcomes visible, comprehensible and accessible, thereby fostering public trust in science and sustaining societal support for research.

We will continue to support science communication through *Agora*, our dedicated funding scheme that encourages researchers to engage directly with societal stakeholders. In line with our sub-priority “We will strengthen dialogue between research and society” (see section 4.3), we plan to enhance and to develop this funding scheme further.

Alongside science communication, we also aim to support complementary activities such as knowledge transfer and exchange (see section 4.3). We will also explore opportunities embedded in the ongoing grants to support such activities.

In addition, we will continue the *Scientific Exchanges* scheme, which promotes scientific events and research stays to enable researchers to share their expertise, methods and results across institutional, disciplinary and national boundaries.

How our guiding principles are put into practice through *science communication schemes*

Excellence in research	– Engaging with societal actors as an integral part of excellent research
Framework conditions for excellence	– Engagement in dialogue with society shapes, over the medium and long term, the conditions under which research is conducted – Research systems that fail to foster knowledge transfer undermine their own capacity to sustain excellence
Diversity and cooperation	– Promotion of the variety of research by encouraging societal openness to different disciplines, approaches, and research communities
Integrity and transparency	– Essential role of science communication, knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange for research integrity and a transparent research system – Contribution to societal understanding of science and trust in research, as a basis for sustained public support in Switzerland

Transversal measures

The SNSF also offers *transversal measures* that complement the existing funding portfolio by enabling targeted responses to cross-cutting challenges. Researchers typically access these opportunities as small-scale additional funding to address specific aspects within ongoing projects.

In the next funding period, the SNSF will continue to support doctoral mobility and to address researcher needs related to EDI. In this context, EDI-related measures will build on the ongoing reform of the *Flexibility Grant*, which supports researchers with care duties.

More broadly, transversal measures will generally be organised around the sub-priority “We will further advance a responsible research culture” (see section 4.3). This includes exploring additional forms of support for relevant emerging needs. These could include addressing previously underexplored dimensions of Open Science, supporting the implementation of sustainable research practices or tackling challenges related to the responsible use of AI.

How our guiding principles are put into practice through *transversal measures*

Excellence in research	– Responsible research practices as an essential component of excellent research
Framework conditions for excellence	– Central importance of the research framework for responsible research practices – Transversal measures as a contribution to the conditions necessary for excellent research
Diversity and cooperation	– Targeted EDI actions to contribute to a diverse and resilient research community
Integrity and transparency	– Responsible research culture as a foundation for trustworthy and reliable research



6 SNSF contribution to the federal ERI themes

6 SNSF contribution to the federal ERI themes

The federal government has confirmed the continued relevance of the four current ERI themes for the 2029–2032 ERI Dispatch: *digital transformation*, *sustainable development*, *equity* and *national and international cooperation*. The SNSF has contributed to these themes for many years. Its most important contributions proposed for the 2029–2032 period are summarised below.

Digital transformation

As a transversal ERI theme, *digital transformation* encompasses the broad potential of digital technologies, including data infrastructures and data use. Of particular relevance are the opportunities and challenges presented by AI. The SNSF has been a leader in this area, particularly in the context of Open Science and research infrastructures, for many years. A related priority was already defined for the 2025–2028 period (see box on page 41).

During the 2029–2032 strategic period, we will continue to contribute to this theme in several ways. As part of our commitment to a responsible research culture, we will promote the responsible use of AI in research and reaffirm our support for Open Research Data (see section 4.3).

Additional contributions will stem from our engagement in the field of research infrastructures. A significant number of the services and platforms that we will fund in our Research Infra-

structures portfolio, as well as the new mid-sized research infrastructures that we will support in the next period, are closely linked to digital technologies.

Furthermore, important opportunities related to *digital transformation* are expected to emerge in the context of the new partnerships and collaborations envisaged for the 2029–2032 period, at both the national and international levels (see section 4.1).

Building on the ongoing efforts in the current period, we will also continue to develop our evaluation processes to further exploit the potential of AI more effectively and responsibly (see chapters 3 and 7).

Digital transformation as focus of collaborative national research

Following the completion of the NRP “Digital Transformation”, the call for the NRP “Digital Resilience” was published in 2026. NCCR Automation addresses the reliability, explainability and governance of AI-driven systems in energy, mobility, manufacturing and robotics. In 2026, the SNSF and Innosuisse awarded nine projects in the field of quantum technologies, awarding a total of 17.4 million Swiss francs in funding via the BRIDGE Quantum call.

Sustainable development

During the next funding period, we will pay particular attention to various aspects of the ERI *sustainable development* theme, namely ecological responsibility, social solidarity and economic performance. The SNSF has engaged with this theme at the level of research practices and research funding as well as its internal policy for its own activities. This engagement formed the basis of the related priority that was defined for the 2025–2028 period (see box on page 41).

In the next strategic period, we will strengthen our commitment to sustainable research practices by integrating them into the broader responsible research culture framework (see section 4.3). We consider *sustainable development*, in all its facets, to be a particularly promising area for potential national partnerships. Numerous other public funders or private foundations are highly active in this field and could form impactful partnerships with the SNSF (see section 4.1).

Further opportunities to promote research in *sustainable development* are also expected to arise through our international partnerships (see section 4.1). We also intend to reaffirm our support for SOR4D, our joint funding programme with the SDC that supports transdisciplinary, solution-oriented research partnerships aimed at advancing *sustainable development* and reducing poverty in low- and middle-income countries.

Sustainable development as focus of collaborative national research

Two new NCCRs, launched by the Confederation in 2026, will be key reference points for this topic: NCCR CLIM+ enables interdisciplinary research on societal transformations in the context of climate change, while NCCR Separations aims to revolutionise environmental and energy sustainability by developing new chemical separation processes.

Equity

SERI defines the transversal theme of equity (*Chancengerechtigkeit*) as promoting the full realisation of Switzerland's talent potential. The theme encompasses diversity, equal opportunities and inclusion across the entire ERI sector and all levels of education. Over the years, the SNSF has taken a pioneering role in this field by promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in research. The EDI Action Plan 2025–2028 sets out several measures to achieve this goal.

During the 2029–2032 strategic period, we will further strengthen our commitment to EDI, embedding it within the framework of a responsible research culture. Our conviction that diverse research teams are essential for scientific progress underpins our longstanding commitment to equal opportunities in research funding. We view EDI as integral to research excellence, with gender equality remaining a central priority.

We will continue to identify and to address barriers linked to gender and other exclusion factors and to provide targeted

transversal measures that complement the support offered by research institutions.

In general, the subject of *equity* also informs other key aspects of this Multi-Year Programme. Our commitment to supporting early-career researchers across the funding portfolio and facilitating smoother transitions between career stages aims to maximise the potential of Switzerland's research talent. Similarly, our renewed commitment to improving the working conditions of SNSF-funded research staff strives to maximise the retention of talent in the research landscape.

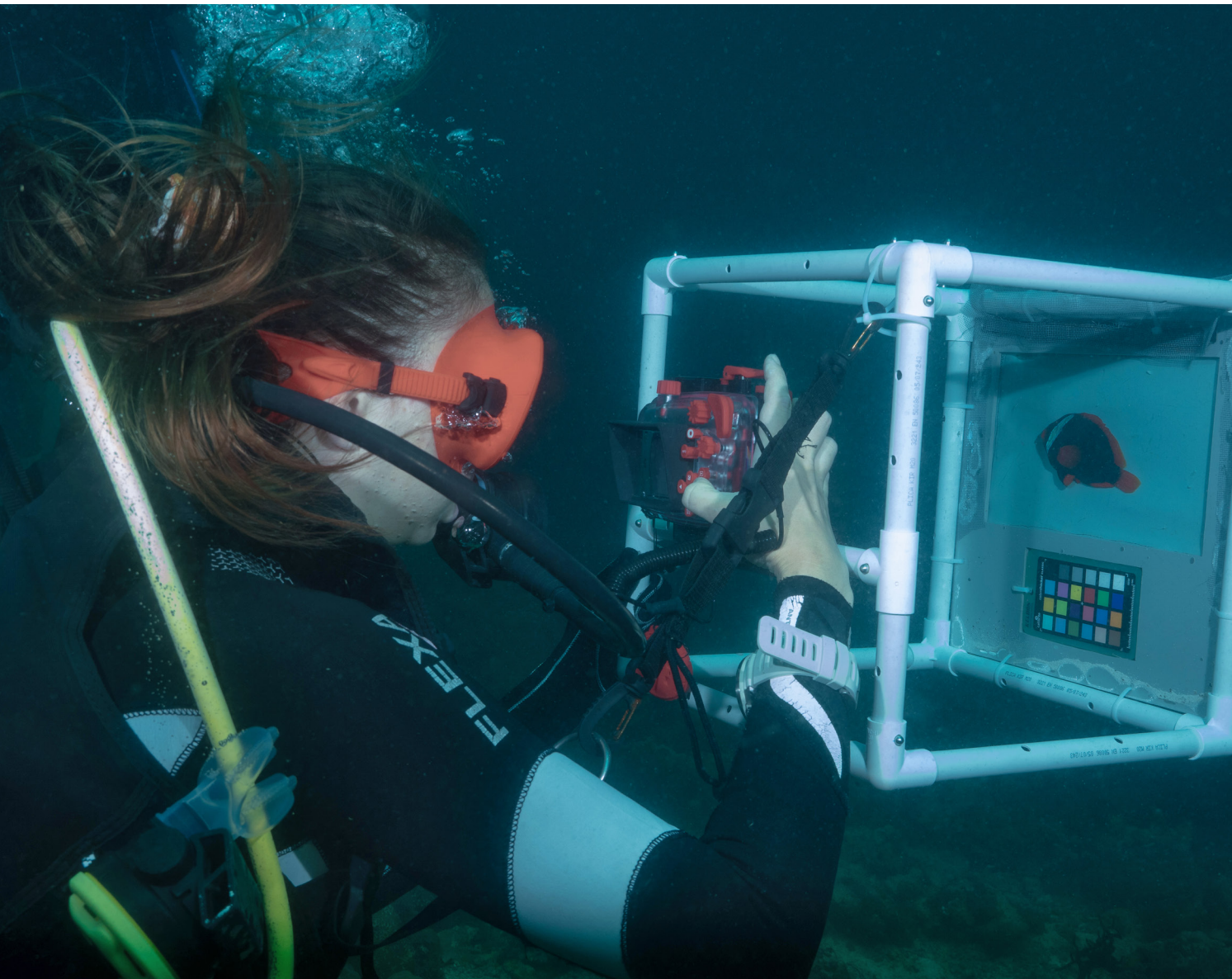
National and international cooperation

The ERI theme *national and international cooperation* aims to strengthen collaboration among stakeholders in Switzerland and beyond. The overarching goals are to enhance the competitiveness and performance of the Swiss ERI system as well as to reinforce its resilience in the face of geopolitical and economic change.

Over the past few years, the SNSF has built several successful partnerships with other Swiss actors, including Innosuisse, the SDC and a+. Furthermore, it has systematically fostered international cooperation, which is one of the priorities for the 2025–2028 period.

Further exploiting the potential of *national and international cooperation* is a key focus of our activities for the 2029–2032 period. Our priority “Strengthening synergies in the research landscape” (see section 4.1) reflects this commitment.

We will work to mobilise the full potential of the Swiss research environment by establishing new, mutually beneficial partnerships with funders in both the public and non-public sectors. We will expand our efforts to promote coherent and efficient national research infrastructures. In addition, we will further develop our international networks and reinforce internationalisation across our entire funding portfolio.



7 Service provision

7 Service provision

A minor proportion of the federal contributions is allocated to the operations of the SNSF's governing bodies, expert panels and the Administrative Offices.

The SNSF's service provision covers the costs to deliver a rigorous, transparent and fair evaluation process – from peer review to the development of IT systems – as well as the efficient support of research projects throughout their lifetime and value chain.

The SNSF's contribution to research and innovation in Switzerland extends beyond the design of its portfolio, evaluation procedures and policies. As part of our service provision, we also foster close cooperations with ERI partners and establish and maintain international networks. We also shape research policies and set standards together with both national and international partners. By supporting and engaging in science communication to connect research with society and political bodies, we accelerate putting the transfer of knowledge into practice.

In the following, we set out how we will address the challenges expected to mark the 2029–2032 period with regard to our service provision.

Challenges to address

As laid out in chapter 3, we expect research and research funding to face significant challenges in the coming period. The sharply increasing volume of proposals is putting the SNSF and external reviewers under considerable pressure, while federal contribu-

tions are not keeping pace. This pressure is compounded by new demands due to the changing environment, such as requirements to ensure knowledge security.

Maintaining high-quality effective funding for excellent research obliges us to anticipate and adapt to transformations in the research system due to the rapidly changing context marked by geopolitical volatility and AI developments. The SNSF will continue to simplify the processes underpinning its funding and evaluation procedure. Targeting efforts that reconcile upholding our high overall quality standards with the sustainable use of limited resources will ensure the efficacy and efficiency of our services.

Strengths to build on

Since its foundation in 1952, the SNSF has continuously developed both its research funding and the organisation itself. An enduring goal has been to maximise its contribution to maintaining Switzerland at the cutting edge of research and innovation and deliver the benefits of research to society.

A key milestone in this regard was the organisational reform of our governance at the beginning of the 2025–2028 period. The revised structure comprises a governing Foundation Council, a scientific Research Council, an Executive Management and a Delegates Assembly serving as a representative forum for the research community. These bodies, which are all advised and supported by the Administrative Offices, will enable us to continue to perform our tasks effectively in the future.

Changes in research and research funding, the higher education landscape, public governance as well as technology and the

geopolitical context are all accelerating. We strive to continuously adapt and enhance the expertise, infrastructure and processes of our bodies and the Administrative Offices. We monitor and anticipate developments in research and its environment.

To ensure federal funds are used effectively to meet the needs of society and the research community, we base our decisions on evidence and data. For their collection and interpretation, as well as to ensure efficient and timely services, we rely on innovative approaches and strong IT systems. With the launch in 2023 of the new SNSF Portal for submitting and evaluating proposals and their lifecycle management, we have already laid a crucial foundation for efficient, evidence-based decision-making.

A major share of the federal contributions goes towards our evaluation processes. We therefore are continuously developing our practices to increase their efficiency, at the same time maintaining their fairness, openness and overall quality. Especially in the light of the growing complexity and workload in research evaluation due to an ever-increasing number of project proposals, approaches to reduce the workload and boost resource efficiency will be adopted after successful piloting.

Responsible use of AI plays an increasingly important role in increasing the efficiency of our processes while maintaining their quality. We consider AI to be a supportive tool to carry out specific tasks. In this context, we exchange with other funding organisations and drive international standards. To systematically leverage AI's potential in research funding, we have established procedures for identifying opportunities for improvement using AI tools. For instance, in a pilot project, we successfully evaluated both the benefits and risks of using an AI tool to match proposals

with panel members' expertise. This tool is now integrated in the organization of our evaluation process and continues to be refined.

Objectives for 2029–2032

The SNSF requests 7% of total federal contributions, excluding overhead contributions, for the service provision over the entire period. We remain firmly committed to leveraging federal contributions in the most effective, efficient and responsible manner possible. We uphold this standard in fulfilling all our tasks and also always strive to limit work for researchers and reviewers.

Building on the principles outlined in this Multi-Year Programme (see chapter 2), we will elaborate a portfolio strategy to further the coherence, openness and effectiveness of our funding. We will develop new approaches for assessment and learning. For example, we will work with impact models to assess whether our activities are achieving the desired outcomes.

While further elaborating measures to achieve the priorities identified for the upcoming period and further develop our funding portfolio, we will critically consider related administrative costs and workloads to free up the necessary resources within the service provision for taking on these responsibilities.

The new tasks that the SNSF will take on include developing a coherent evaluation framework for research infrastructures (described in detail in section 4.1) and expanding our foresight capacities (described in detail in section 4.3). The former will enable more effective use of resources and boost the performance of the research infrastructure landscape. The latter will enable the SNSF to remain well-positioned to adapt to structural

changes and emerging opportunities relevant to research and its funding.

As detailed in the related sections of chapters 3 and 6, the SNSF has been a front runner in realising the potential of digital transformation for research for many years. To maintain our ability to identify excellent research with increasing use of agentic generative AI, it is imperative to keep pace with developments. We will continue to monitor these, taking note of the far-reaching changes in the way research is designed and conducted (see chapter 3). To ensure the systematic and responsible use of AI within our evaluation processes, we will continuously evolve our practices.

To effectively address the identified challenges, we will continue our efforts to develop the expertise, culture and processes of the SNSF. This commitment extends to investing in our employees and recruiting skilled professionals to maintain our position as an attractive employer.



8 Finances

8 Finances

Maintaining Switzerland's position as a global leader

Switzerland's longstanding global leadership in research and innovation is the result of a deliberate and sustained policy choice. A uniquely dense ecosystem – one that links public research, effective knowledge transfer and corporate research and development (R&D) – has allowed the country to generate exceptional economic value and attract global talent and professionals. This model thrives on openness, collaboration and reliable public funding. It is precisely this combination that has enabled Switzerland to remain at the forefront of high-value innovation.

This position can no longer be taken for granted. Slower growth in research investment, coupled with the uncertainties regarding cooperation with Europe, are beginning to erode Switzerland's competitive edge. Peer countries are expanding their commitments at high pace, while Switzerland is falling behind. Without decisive action, Switzerland risks a gradual loss of innovation capacity, with direct consequences for productivity, competitiveness and the ability to address major societal challenges or seize opportunities.

Investing in Swiss research means investing in Switzerland's future. National and international studies show that investments in research and research funding generate high economic returns and increase gross domestic product¹, with positive effects in the short, medium, and long term². Reinforcing the

Swiss research and innovation system must therefore be given highest priority. Sustained research and innovation capacity fundamentally rely on robust investment. Currently, compared to other countries, public investment dedicated to research funding remains below Switzerland's economic capabilities, as shown by statistical data (see the larger text box on the next page).

Insufficient resources for research funding affect Switzerland's status as a research hub far beyond the SNSF itself. As a funding body, the SNSF allocates the available financial resources directly to the ERI system as a whole. The declining funding rates of recent years have already resulted in the SNSF being unable to grant funding to many excellent research proposals that could be carried out by Swiss researchers.

To realise Switzerland's full innovative potential, a concerted effort from policymakers, industry leaders and the research community is essential. In the face of global challenges, it is imperative to sustain a resilient and long-lasting research and innovation ecosystem that underpins Switzerland's continued societal wellbeing and global leadership for the decades ahead.

¹ See for example: BiGGAR Economics (2017): The Economic Contribution of the Institutions of the ETH Domain. URL: https://ethrat.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/BiGGAR_Studie.pdf; Torben Schubert (März 2021): The macroeconomic effects of the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft. Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI; Christian Keuschnigg et al. (Dezember 2021). Wirkung von Forschungsausgaben. Wirtschaftspolitisches Zentrum der Universität St. Gallen.

² Jürgen Janger et. al. (November 2024): The Contribution of Basic Research Projects Funded by the Austrian Science Fund to Economic and Societal Impacts, Österreichisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (WIFO), S. 2. URL: <https://www.wifo.ac.at/publication/pid/54837521>

Switzerland's global position in research and innovation

Over the years, Switzerland has regularly taken first place in internationally recognised rankings and has been looked up to as a positive example for research and innovation systems worldwide. These dynamics are changing. Figures from the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) show that Switzerland has slipped in the rankings, especially regarding its investments in R&D, and is now only in eighth place internationally. While this still places Switzerland well above the OECD and EU average, it has fallen behind countries like the USA, Japan, South Korea, Sweden, Belgium and Austria.

The picture is also changing in key sectors such as the chemical-pharmaceutical industry, in which Switzerland is traditionally considered a powerhouse. According to the Global Industry Competitiveness Index (GICI), Switzerland is coming under pressure, as other countries are catching up.

Sustaining national excellence in research: 3.0% annual growth

As we have argued above, Switzerland should continue to invest in research and innovation in line with its overall economic capabilities. Investing in excellence-based competitive funding ensures that public resources are directed to research that generates significant value for society.

The positive long-term effects of research funding on public revenues together with Switzerland's need to remain a global leader in research and innovation must be balanced with the current fiscal constraints. We propose an average annual growth rate of 3.0% for the SNSF.

This growth rate will enable the SNSF to maintain competitive research funding as a key driver of innovation, sustain scientific excellence, technological progress and knowledge-based wealth. It is the growth rate necessary for the SNSF to continue to support its core funding schemes in a robust and sustainable manner and to invest in the urgent needs of the Swiss research ecosystem, such as research infrastructures and international cooperation.

Starting point: a lean portfolio

As recommended by the Swiss Science Council (SSC) in its 2022 evaluation of the SNSF, we have streamlined our funding portfolio over the past few years to improve the effectiveness of our funding schemes.

In line with the Multi-Year Programme 2025–2028, we discontinued direct funding for PhD researchers (Doc.CH and MD PhD), support for standalone research equipment (R'Equip) and a scheme aimed at facilitating transitions from professional to academic careers (Practice to Science). The resources that were freed up were reinvested in strengthening the SNSF's core funding schemes.

How the growth rate is calculated

The SNSF budget for a given funding period is calculated on the basis of an assumed annual growth rate. The baseline for this calculation is the final year of the preceding period, namely 2028 for the next funding period. For this purpose, we take as a reference the amount originally approved in the ERI Dispatch, reduced by 5% in line with Parliament's decision under the federal budget relief package (EP27).

In the current funding period, we have taken this consolidation further than originally planned by discontinuing additional schemes, notably the Implementation Networks and COST projects. As part of the reform of career funding, we are merging two postdoctoral schemes into a single scheme to improve efficiency. We are also reducing our engagement in open access funding.

As a result, by the beginning of the next funding period, the SNSF will already have implemented a range of measures to ensure a lean and efficient funding portfolio.

Basic contribution and further federal mandates

The basic contribution refers to the federal funding allocated to the SNSF to fulfil its statutory mandate. It finances the SNSF's main funding schemes and services and provides the primary basis for medium-term financial planning.

Further federal mandates refer to specifically earmarked federal funds assigned to the SNSF for clearly defined assignments such as National Research Programmes (NRPs), National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCRs), or "additional tasks", such as international programmes or the Swiss Quantum Initiative.

How we will use the basic contribution

With its basic contribution, the SNSF finances its core funding activities. An average annual growth rate of 3.0% will – in addition to compensating for inflation-related cost increases – allow the SNSF to ensure reliability and effectiveness in its funding activities, with resources focused on its key strategic priorities. In this respect, we will invest additional funds in areas of particular importance to the Confederation, notably research infrastructures and international cooperation.

Relative allocation of the federal contribution in the 2029–2032 period in the 3% scenario

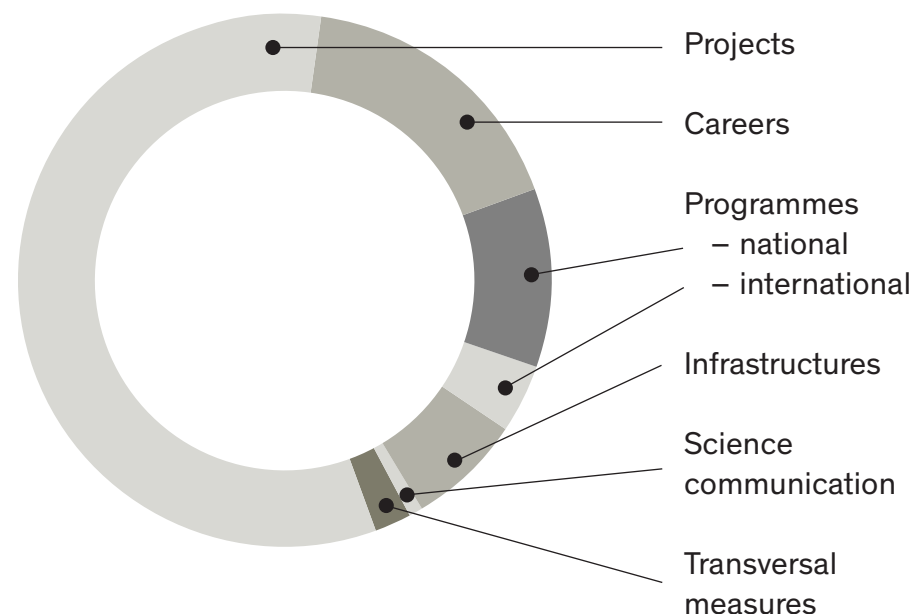


Table A. Allocation of the federal contribution in the 2029–2032 period in the 3% scenario
(in CHF million)

	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2029– 2032
Research funding						
– Basic contribution	998	1,047	1,081	1,103	1,139	4,370
<i>hereof: Projects</i>	635	630	652	665	689	2'635
<i>Careers</i>	188	181	188	191	198	758
<i>Programmes – national</i>	37	44	45	46	48	184
<i>– international</i>	17	27	28	28	29	112
<i>Infrastructures</i>	25	61	63	64	67	255
<i>Science communication</i>	11	13	14	14	15	56
<i>Transversal measures</i>	15	19	20	20	21	80
<i>Service level provision</i>	70	72	72	73	73	290
– National Research Programmes	16	17	17	17	17	66
– National Centres of Competence in Research	57	58	59	59	59	234
Overhead	126	130	133	137	142	542
Additional tasks	48	32	32	46	46	156
<i>hereof: FLARE</i>	12	12	12	12	12	47
<i>Bilateral programmes</i>	8	9	9	9	9	34
<i>Bi- and multilateral research cooperations</i>	14	12	12	12	12	46
<i>Swiss Quantum Initiative</i>	14	0	0	14	14	28
Total	1,246	1,283	1,321	1,361	1,402	5,367

Note on the calculations in Table A

For clarity of presentation, decimal places are not shown; any differences between the totals and the individual amounts are therefore due to rounding effects.

The figures showing the distribution of the basic contribution across funding categories are a simplified representation. They are derived by splitting the basic contribution according to the planned annual commitments for the new funding period. The actual figures depend on several factors, in particular prior commitments to grants approved in previous years.

The figures for service provision costs assume an almost constant level throughout the period, as the SNSF is committed to limiting its administrative costs. Depending on the actual development, these costs may amount to up to 7% of the total federal contribution, excluding overheads.

With regard to Bi- and multilateral research cooperations, the same level of funding as in the previous period is assumed, with an even distribution across the years.

With regard to the Swiss Quantum Initiative, we have assumed that funding allocated to the SNSF would be concentrated in the final two years of the period. We are open to any amendments to the call planning, in collaboration with the other partners involved.

Priority “Strengthening synergies in the research landscape”

As swissuniversities has also stated, significant funding gaps have emerged in the Swiss research infrastructure landscape. To contribute to adequate national funding in this area, the SNSF will require additional resources, with new annual commitments for research infrastructures rising by an average of almost 40 million Swiss francs³. In financial terms, this is the most significant measure in the Multi-Year Programme.

These additional resources will put us in a position to implement the sub-priority “We will promote coherence and efficiency in the research infrastructure landscape”, in particular with regard to co-funding mid-sized research infrastructures. Such co-funding is needed to incentivise institutional contributions, to leverage complementary investments and to enable the coordinated establishment and development of community-driven infrastructures. A sufficiently strong funding signal is also crucial to engage host institutions and to stimulate the submission of competitive proposals for new mid-sized infrastructures or upgrades of existing ones.

In the sub priority “We will cooperate globally to maintain Swiss research at the cutting edge”, further financial resources will enable the SNSF to consolidate and expand global networks with new partner countries, which represents a central pillar of our international strategy. Annual commitments for programmes at

the international level under the basic contribution would therefore increase substantially, by an average of 11 million Swiss francs, complementing the additional mandate in this area.

To implement the priority “We will engage in new national partnerships”, nationally oriented programmes would need adequate financial resources, with an increase in annual commitments by an average of 9 million Swiss francs. These are particularly required to establish the planned new national partnerships, notably those potentially related to the ERI priorities sustainable development and digital transformation. In addition, financial resources in this area are especially needed for the SNSF’s strategic cooperation with Innosuisse through BRIDGE, which ensures a particularly effective use of funds to support research-based innovation.

Priority “Strengthening Switzerland’s competitiveness”

The funding schemes under the categories projects and careers form the backbone of the SNSF’s activities and are central to sustaining Switzerland’s scientific competitiveness. As in recent years, they will remain a priority in the coming period. Adequate financing of these core schemes is indispensable to maintaining and strengthening the competitiveness of the Swiss research system. At the same time, the resources required to implement other strategic measures of the Multi-Year Programme – in particular the co-funding of mid-sized research infrastructures – limit the financial resources available. The result is that annual commitments for projects and careers are projected to increase only by an average of 25 million Swiss francs per year.

³ The figures concerning budget increases refer to the average annual commitments for the period from 2029 to 2032, compared to the annual commitments for the baseline year of 2028.

In line with the sub-priority “We will strengthen our support for exploratory research”, Spark will take on a greater role in financial terms within the funding category projects. The other sub-priorities concerning the broad spectrum of research and support for talent across the portfolio focus on qualitative measures.

However, they presuppose a robust level of funding for our core funding schemes.

Priority “Strengthening resilience of society and research”

For this priority, we can increase value substantially with only small adjustments to the budget. In particular, the sub-priority “We will enhance our foresight capacity” focuses on monitoring developments in the research landscape and its economic and societal context. The aim is to ensure effective funding allocation over the medium and long term. Should temporary measures be required to respond to major unforeseen developments, they would be implemented within existing schemes through targeted budget reallocations.

The sub-priority “We will strengthen dialogue between research and society” primarily focuses on qualitative measures and the further development of the existing dedicated funding scheme. To enhance the impact of these funding opportunities, annual commitments for the funding category science communication are planned to increase moderately.

The final sub-priority “We will further advance a responsible research culture” requires financial resources for transversal measures. At the same time, this sub-priority also encompasses a range of policy-related and budget-neutral measures.

Federal mandates

Regarding the mandates carried out on behalf of the Federal Council, according to indications provided by SERI, we expect funding amounts for the National Research Programmes (NRPs), the National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCRs), FLARE and the bilateral programmes (see chapter 5) to stay at the same level as in the present funding period.

With regard to the Swiss Quantum Initiative and Bi- and multilateral research cooperations, the SNSF would be ready to support these under additional federal mandates, should the Confederation decide to maintain them. For the purpose of scenario calculations, the continuation of these measures has been provisionally assumed.

Alternative scenarios: 2.5% and 1.5% annual growth

While the SNSF deems an annual growth rate of 3.0% to be essential for Swiss research, the economy and society, it has also examined additional financial scenarios. It has assessed the potential for further concentration of resources, including identifying what further measures would no longer be possible to implement, also referred to as ‘posteriorities’.

As mentioned above under “Starting point: a lean portfolio”, the SNSF has already considerably streamlined its funding portfolio and will continue to do so during the ongoing 2025–2028 period. This means that by 2029, it will no longer be possible to discontinue additional funding schemes without causing severe damage to the research community.

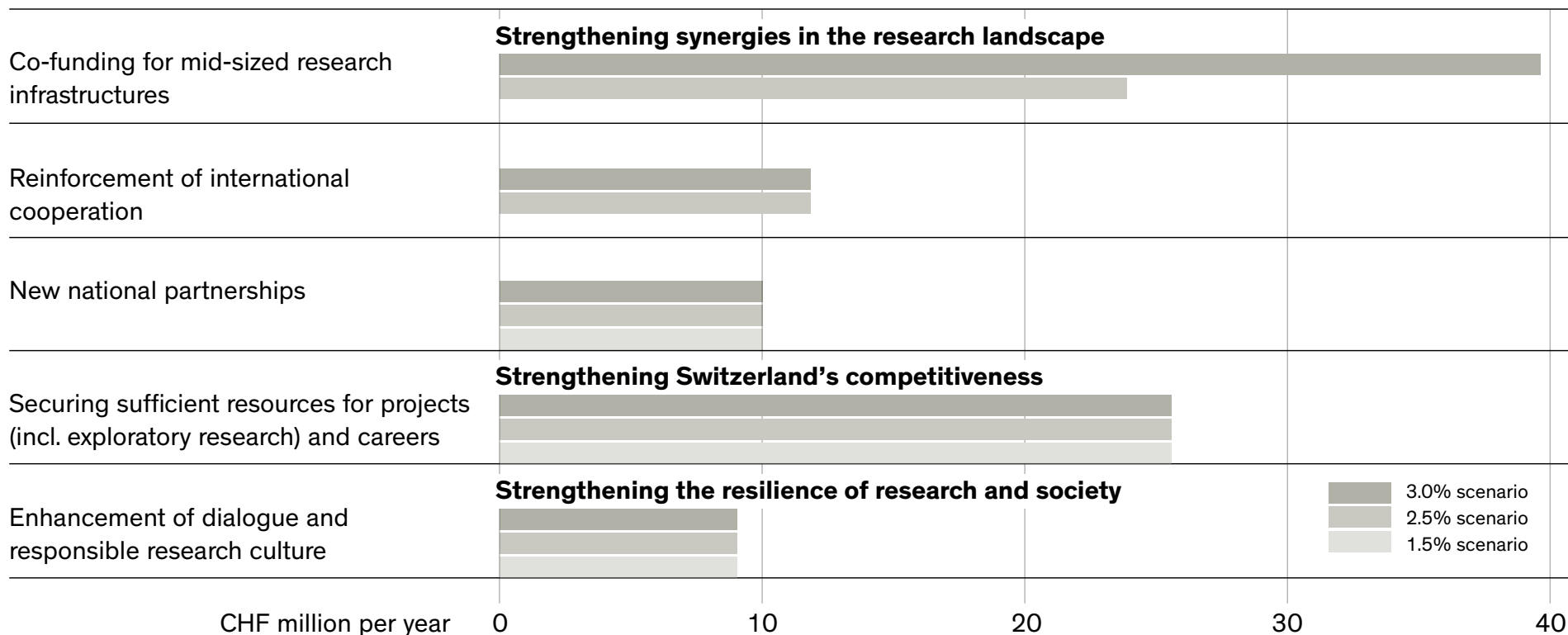
Table B. Main features of the potential financial scenarios

3.0% scenario	2.5% scenario	1.5% scenario
Enables the implementation of the Multi-Year Programme, including co-funding for state-of-the art research infrastructures and measures to strengthen international cooperation and foster exploratory research.	Allows for strengthening of international cooperation and partial implementation of co-funding for mid-sized research infrastructures.	Focuses on ensuring the continuity of the funding activities that are closely aligned with the SNSF's core mandate. Does not allow for co-funding for state-of-the art research infrastructures or measures to strengthen international cooperation.

Measures under the sub-priority on new national partnerships, as well as those under the priorities on competitiveness and resilience, are secured at the same level in every scenario. This is due to their relevance for the SNSF's core mandate and/or high return on investment at limited costs, not because the level of funding is immaterial to them. First, ensuring sufficient resources for the funding schemes under projects and careers remains essential for the Swiss research system, with proposed increases remaining moderate relative to their overall financial scale. Second, new national partnerships will entail co-funding with partners, and are therefore expected to generate substantial spill-over effects. Third, planned increases for science communication and transversal measures have only a limited financial impact, while playing an important strategic role.

Table C. Financial impact of measures by scenario

(average increase in annual commitments in CHF million, compared to the 2028 baseline)



The contribution granted to the SNSF for the next funding period will determine the budget available to support these new research infrastructures and international cooperation measures. Over 2029–2032, the 2.5% and 1.5% scenarios provide roughly 66 million Swiss francs and 195 million Swiss francs less, respectively, than the 3.0% scenario (see Table C).

In the scenario of an annual growth rate of 2.5%, the SNSF would need to reduce the average annual new approvals for research infrastructures by approximately 15 million Swiss francs (compared to the 3.0% scenario). Limited federal funds would considerably constrain providing co-funding for research infrastructures in line with the mandate on this specific topic assigned by SERI to the SNSF.

With an annual growth rate of 1.5%, we would not be able to implement the co-funding measures foreseen to support research infrastructures. This would result in a major strategic setback for the Swiss research landscape. In the absence of co-funding and the associated coordination efforts, the SNSF's contribution would be largely limited to evaluation-related input within the framework of the Swiss Roadmap for Research Infrastructures. This would considerably reduce our ability to foster broader alignment, incentivise joint investments, or shape a coherent, system wide evaluation framework. Similarly, in the 1.5% financial scenario, the measures aimed at strengthening global networks could not be realised.

Overhead and service provision

Through overhead contributions, the SNSF finances part of the indirect research costs incurred by SNSF-funded projects at host research institutions. The applicable contribution rate is set by the federal government. We assume that it will remain capped at 15% of the eligible funding approved by the SNSF, as has been the case to date. The actual level of overhead contributions varies depending on the volume of overhead eligible proposals approved in the preceding year.

We plan to allocate up to 7% of the total SNSF budget (excluding overheads) to service provision (see chapter 7). The maximum costs for service provision will be agreed in the service level agreement with the federal government.

Federal funds required

The table below presents the federal funding requirements for the next funding period under three scenarios, assuming annual growth rates of 3.0%, 2.5% and 1.5%. As outlined above, the

reference year for these calculations is 2028. The 2028 baseline is calculated on the basis of the amount originally approved in the ERI Dispatch, reduced by 5% in line with Parliament's decision under EP27. As previously mentioned, the financial scenarios assume the continuation of the Swiss Quantum Initiative and Bi- and multilateral research cooperations under the additional federal mandates. If the Confederation were to decide not to maintain these, the annual growth rate required for the implementation of each scenario would decrease by around 0.5%.

When compared with the funding level initially planned for 2028, the effective growth rate of the 3.0% scenario would be just 1.4%. Therefore, overall, the proposed 3.0% scenario reflects a moderate development of federal funding for research. Conversely, even by the end of the new strategic period, the 1.5% scenario would not permit a full return to the level planned for 2028 in the original ERI dispatch of 2024.

Table D: Annual federal contributions required per scenario

(in CHF million)

	Baseline year 2028		2029	2030	2031	2032	2029–2032	Average growth rate p.a. 2029–2032	
	before EP27	after EP27						before EP27	after EP27
3.0% scenario	1,328	1,246	1,283	1,321	1,361	1,402	5,367	1.4%	3.0%
2.5% scenario	1,328	1,246	1,277	1,309	1,341	1,375	5,301	0.9%	2.5%
1.5% scenario	1,328	1,246	1,264	1,283	1,302	1,322	5,172	–0.1%	1.5%

Abbreviations

a+	Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences
AI	artificial intelligence
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EP27	federal budget relief package (Entlastungspaket 27)
ERI	education, research and innovation
ERI Dispatch	Federal Dispatch on the promotion of education, research and innovation
EU	European Union
FAIR	Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reusability
FLARE	Funding LARge international REsearch projects
FSO	Federal Statistical Office
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GICI	Global Industry Competitiveness Index
IICT	Investigator Initiated Clinical Trials
NCCR	National Centres of Competence in Research
NRP	National Research Programmes
OA	open access
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

R&D	research and development
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SNSF	Swiss National Science Foundation
SOR4D	Solution-oriented Research for Development
SSC	Swiss Science Council

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