

MAPS (Multilateral Academic Projects)

Call for Proposals 2024, Second Swiss Contribution

Opening Date: 02.04.2024
Deadline Pre-Registration: 01.05.2024
Closing Date: 01.07.2024

1 Introduction

The second Swiss contribution is a key part of Switzerland's European policy, helping to foster cohesion and stability in Europe as well as to consolidate and develop bilateral relations with partner countries. The CHF 1.302 billion contribution runs until 2029 and will be used to support the countries that joined the EU after 2004 (the EU-13) or countries facing major migration flows. The second Swiss contribution aims to reduce economic and social disparities in Europe and to promote measures to manage migration. The supported countries include Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania, who have chosen research cooperation with Switzerland as one of their priorities and who are committed to participate in a multilateral call for Joint Research Projects called MAPS – Multilateral Academic Projects.

Basic research is an important engine for economic growth for any country and provides new insights into humans and their environment, paving the ways for both technical and social innovation. Ultimately, basic research is essential for social and economic prosperity. In a nutshell, basic research starts a process that continues with use-inspired research and ends with the development of real-world applications. Collaborations beyond a bilateral relationship allow networks to be built between research groups from the participating countries. Also, building on the complementarity of research groups from different countries and institutions allows for tackling more complex research questions. Furthermore, additional expertise is concentrated among the research partners and access to knowledge and technologies can be facilitated. Multilateral cooperation additionally fosters capacity building and generates exchange opportunities for all involved countries. Fostering cross-border collaboration also helps overcoming fragmentation within the European research landscape and boosts brain circulation within these countries.

For the present MAPS call, the SNSF is mandated by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The cooperation in the field of scientific research between Switzerland and the participating EU-13 countries builds on previous experience in three similar bilateral programmes with Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia.

2 Rationale of MAPS

The call for Multilateral Academic Projects (MAPS) responds to the scientific community's demand for more international integration and cooperation with colleagues based in Switzerland and Europe. It does so by mobilising research capacities in Switzerland and in the participating EU-13 countries, and by supporting scientific cooperation in the form of Joint Research Projects (JRPs). JRPs enable scientists in the participating EU-13 countries, jointly with scientists in Switzerland, to undertake research activities addressing specific problems in any scientific discipline.

MAPS aims at promoting excellent science in the participating EU-13 countries and at increasing the competitiveness in the European Research Area (ERA). Furthermore, JRPs implemented under MAPS will strengthen the research cooperation amongst the participating EU-13 countries and Switzerland and contribute to the multilateral cooperation between all countries involved.

3 Joint Research Projects (JRPs)

MAPS will be implemented through Joint Research Projects (JRPs) that are aimed at promoting collaborative projects with clearly defined goals, involving one applicant based in Switzerland and two to five additional applicants in two to five different participating EU-13 countries (max. one applicant per participating country, i.e., Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland or Romania). The research is to be carried out at the research facilities involved; reciprocal visits and short stays are possible within the scope of a JRP.

Project duration: the JRPs last between 36 and 48 months. All projects will have to be finalized before the 30 June 2029.

4 Research Fields

This call for proposals is open to all research areas, allowing for both basic research and use-inspired basic research.

5 Eligibility

Each proposal must include at least one applicant based in Switzerland and two to five applicants in two to five different participating EU-13 countries (max. one applicant per country). Note that each applicant can submit only one proposal for the present call. Within a research consortium, all applicants have the same rights, responsibilities, and obligations.¹ They bear the main responsibility for the project, including its technical and administrative coordination as well as the timely delivery of scientific and financial reports. As the SNSF communicates with the Swiss Principal Investigator (PI) only, they are also the corresponding PI. This is, however, only an administrative term.

5.1 Eligibility Criteria in Switzerland

The applicants based in Switzerland must meet the eligibility criteria of the SNSF. The [SNSF Funding Regulations](#), the [General implementation regulations](#) and the SNSF [Regulations on Project Funding](#) are applicable, or applicable mutatis mutandis where not stated otherwise. Applicants can submit a proposal to MAPS even if they hold another SNSF grant or have applied for one. Moreover, grantees may submit proposals to all SNSF funding schemes during the funding period of a JRP, provided that there is no substantial thematic overlap. Please note that the present call is not in conflict with the restrictions applicable to the SNSF's national project funding in accordance with Article 13 of the Regulations on Project Funding.

Project partners as described in Article 12 paragraph 4 of the SNSF [Regulations on Project Funding](#) and Article 11 paragraph 2 of the [SNSF Funding Regulations](#) can be included in the budget of the Swiss PI only. The PIs from the partner countries are not entitled to include project partners (nor to spend any funds on project partners), see also Annex 2 for further information). Furthermore, project partners are not entitled to receive funds from the SNSF if their affiliated institution is located in one of the participating countries (see table below).

¹ According to the terminology of the SNSF, applicants are designated as researchers when they submit their applications for funding. If a project is funded, applicants become Principal Investigators (PIs).

5.2 Eligibility Criteria in Participating EU-13 Countries

In each participating country, a Support Measure Partner (SMP) is responsible for the implementation of MAPS. Please note that each SMP has its own restrictions on the eligibility of potential applicants and proposals. Before applying, please consult Annex 2 which contains each SMP's eligibility rules, additional requirements, funding mandates, policies and eligible costs. The SNSF will not consider proposals that have been rejected by one of the Support Measure Partners for non-fulfilment of formal requirements, including of the eligibility criteria.

Country	SMP	Funding CHF
Bulgaria	Ministry of Education and Science	CHF 6'176'471
Croatia	Croatian Science Foundation HRZZ.	CHF 6'176'470
Hungary	National Research, Development, and Innovation (NRDI) Office	CHF 3'948'749
Poland	Polish National Science Centre, Poland (NCN)	CHF 5'250'000
Romania	Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCD)	CHF 10'294'117

Table 1 Available funds per country

6 Funding

The maximum amount of funding per team and per country is CHF 350'000 for four years (for example, in a project consisting of three PIs from Bulgaria, Croatia, and Switzerland, the Bulgarian team could ask for CHF 350'000, the Croatian team for CHF 350'000, and the Swiss team for CHF 350'000 as well). The grants are co-funded: 85% of the grant is covered by funds of the second Swiss Contribution, while each SMP contributes 15% to the budget (Poland being an exception, see Annex 2). This has further implications for the financial reporting (see chapter 9, reporting).

Each country has committed a fixed amount to MAPS (see table 1). The best projects can be funded as long as the financial resources of the respective countries involved are sufficient. If the funds for a country are exhausted, the entire proposal must be rejected.

Eligible costs for JRP grants include:

- Personnel / staff costs of researchers, technicians, and other supporting staff directly involved in the project. Such costs can be claimed if they do not exceed the usual remuneration practices in the respective country.
- The salaries of the Swiss staff (e.g. PhD students, postdoctoral fellows etc.) must follow the usual SNSF guidelines. The salary of the Swiss PI cannot be claimed from the JRP budget.
- The salaries of the PIs from certain of the participating EU-13 countries can be covered according to regulations of the respective SMP and the usual remuneration practices at the host institutions involved (see Annex 2). This also applies to other staff members.

- Travel & subsistence allowances and conference fees (if applicable) for staff and PIs taking part in the JRP in order to visit each other and to participate in international conferences thematically linked to the JRP.
- Equipment costs in JRPs to the extent that these are used for the research activities. The maximum percentage for equipment within a JRP should not exceed 30% of the total project costs.
- Consumables can be charged by all PIs. They include materials, supplies and consumables used in the framework of the JRP and for research activities.
- Other direct costs: e.g. for organising seminars and conferences, dissemination of results, etc., provided they are directly linked to the JRP implementation.
- Project partners: the Swiss PI can delegate minor tasks and research activities to a project partner (anywhere in the world except for Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, or Romania) for up to a maximum of 20% of their own budget. The project partner is part of the consortium and can be a researcher from a public research institution or – under specific circumstances – a private company (see in particular section 1.2 paragraph 3 of the [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#)). In this last case, the private company will have to sign a declaration by which it states that it will not use the results for commercial purposes. Please note that the PIs from the partner countries cannot include a project partner in their budget.
- The cost of buying in specific research services from external providers that are necessary for the project (subcontractors) is eligible for PIs from all countries.
- The cost of project partners and services provided by subcontractors generally cannot exceed a maximum of 20% of the grant in total.
- Overhead: PIs from the participating EU-13 countries are eligible to request a flat rate of 5% of their budget for overhead costs to be transferred to the host institution. The Swiss PI is not eligible to claim overhead costs.

The following costs are not eligible within JRPs (non-exhaustive list):

- salary of the Croatian PI and the Swiss PI;
- expenditure incurred before the start and after the completion of the project;
- interest of debt, purchase of land / real estate;
- fines, financial penalties, and expenses of litigation;
- activities supported from other sources;
- losses connected with currency exchange that could not be covered by the reserve;
- costs which exceed the usual market prices;
- VAT, if it could be recoverable by the beneficiary under national regulation;
- costs for open access publications, except if they are requested separately via the OA platform of the SNSF.

Value added taxes (VAT):

- The JRP grants are not subject to VAT or other taxes and charges in Switzerland. In some of the participating countries,² research is not excluded from VAT. Therefore, all costs budgeted in a JRP (e.g., equipment, consumables, etc.) will be charged to the programme, VAT included. However, VAT will not be considered as an eligible expenditure if the research institution (e.g., universities, public research organizations, etc.) is able to recover the VAT.

² See Annex 2 for further information.

7 Submission

Proposals are to be jointly prepared by the applicants involved in the consortia. However, the Swiss applicant has the responsibility to submit the proposal via the SNSF's electronic submission system *mySNF* (www.mysnf.ch). Please verify in Annex 2 whether it is necessary to submit the same application also in the national application system of your host country. All applicants can have access to the electronic submission system *mySNF* through their Swiss partner. After login, the correct funding instrument must be chosen (Programmes > Enlargement contribution > MAPS).

The application consists of two parts:

- The administrative part which must be completed online on *mySNF*
 - Personal data of the Swiss applicant
 - Personal data of the consortium applicants
 - Basic data on the project (e.g., title, field of research, starting date, duration, summary)
 - Requested funding (incl. requested positions)
 - Information on required authorisations (if applicable)
 - Other indications (e.g. whether the project is related to other SNSF projects, the name of the Swiss university/research institution at which the planned project will be implemented, statement concerning already available funds or funds requested elsewhere)
- PDF documents that are to be uploaded onto *mySNF*
 - The research plan (must have the structure given in the guidelines, see Annex 1)
 - CVs of the all the applicants
 - For the PIs from the partner countries, a letter signed by the Heads of the research institutions involved, confirming the support to the project according to the rules and procedure as described in this call must be submitted. If further researchers are employed by a third institution, an additional confirmation from all heads of institutions involved in the project is required.
 - Other documents

Data Management Plan (DMP): A Data Management Plan (DMP) is only requested for approved grants according to the requirements issued by the SNSF. At the time the proposal is submitted, no DMP needs to be included. Funds can only be released once the DMP has been submitted. Missing or inaccurate statements in the DMP need to be added/revised at the latest before the release of the payment of the second instalment. A definitive and updated version of the DMP must be provided by the end of the project grant. For more details on the DMP format requirements and procedure see: [Data Management Plan \(DMP\) - Guidelines for researchers.](#)

Please note that costs for **Open Research Data (ORD)** must be taken into account at the time of submission of the application. They cannot be covered by a supplementary grant.

For specific questions related to *mySNF*, please call the technical support hotline at +41 31 308 22 00 or contact mysnf.support@snf.ch. Please note that a user account is needed in order to submit proposals to *mySNF* (the Swiss applicant is responsible for the submission). To open an account, the Swiss applicant must register with the SNSF as a user. Please note that opening a new account can take two to five days. Applicants with existing user accounts need not apply for new ones.

Please note that the SNSF uses a new CV format³. Filling in the information might take some additional time. It is advised that CVs for all applicants are submitted in the new format on mySNF, even though it is only mandatory for Swiss applicants.

Pre-registration: In order to facilitate the evaluation procedure, the Swiss applicant is requested to open their JRP proposals in mySNF by 01.05.2024⁴. They are requested to name the applicants to be involved as well as their countries, the relevant discipline, and, if possible, the title of the application.

Deadline for pre-registration: 01.05.2024

Deadline for submission of applications: 01.07.2024 (5pm, Swiss Local Time). Late and incomplete applications will not be considered.

Language: All documents are to be submitted in English.

8 Evaluation

8.1 Formal Eligibility Check

The formal check of submitted applications is performed by the SNSF, involving all SMPs. The check will consist of an appraisal of the completeness of the data as requested by the call. Additionally, the requested funding amount will be appraised internally by the SNSF's financial specialists. The eligibility of the applicants and their institutions will be verified by the SNSF and the SMPs.

After the submission deadline, neither new applications nor changes to the research plans will be accepted.

The Swiss applicant will receive an acknowledgement of receipt. If any of the consortium applicants fails to meet the formal criteria, the application will be returned to the Swiss applicant with a **ruling**, explaining the reasons for the non-consideration of the whole application. If the Swiss applicant does not agree, they have the right to request a reconsideration (SNSF internal procedure) or to initiate an appeal procedure before an independent Court (regulated in the Funding Regulations of the SNSF, in the Federal Law on the Promotion of Research and in the Federal Law on Administrative Procedure).

8.2 Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria used to determine the scientific quality of the proposals include (not listed in the order of priority):

- scientific relevance;
- originality of the aims and objectives;
- appropriateness of the methodology and feasibility;

³ Additional information can be found here: Your curriculum vitae – all about the CV format (snf.ch)

⁴ Proposals will still be accepted even if the pre-registration deadline is missed. Furthermore, the composition of the consortia can still be modified after the pre-registration deadline.

- track record and expertise of the researchers;
- complementarity of the research partners.

8.3 Peer Review

Proposals will be reviewed according to international peer review standard procedures. For each eligible proposal, the SNSF will obtain a minimum of two reviews. The external experts peer-review the applications using a score system to determine their scientific quality.

8.4 Evaluation Panel

Depending on the number of proposals submitted, one or several evaluation panels will be set up; the panel(s) will be composed of international experts proposed by the SNSF and SMPs. Panel members will be approved by the SNSF and SMPs. Based on the peer reviews, the evaluation panel(s) will discuss, rate, and rank the proposals. The panel members' recommendation will include a rationale for the rating.

8.5 Funders Forum

Based on the results of the panel meeting(s) and taking into account the financial resources available in each country⁵, staff members of the SMPs and the SNSF will prepare a list of fundable projects. In case two or more applications are rated equally from a scientific point of view (primary criteria), gender balance decides on funding (secondary criteria), with preference given to applications with more female applicants. The list of projects to be funded will be submitted to the Steering Committee of MAPS for approval (see also 8.6 Decision).

8.6 Decision

The Steering Committee (SC) of MAPS is responsible to confirm the list of projects to be funded. This list is based on the results of the evaluation panel(s) and takes into account the available budget in the respective countries. No further discussion on scientific merit will take place in the SC. In addition, the JRPs proposed for funding must be formally approved by the Specialised Committee for International Co-operation and the Presiding Board of the SNSF and get the approval of the co-funding SMPs. Both the SNSF and the SMPs will inform their respective applicants about the final decision in the form of a ruling (applicants from Poland will be informed via the Swiss PI). The rulings on applications that are not funded include a relative ranking of the application as well as the main arguments for the rejection.

8.7 Communication

The evaluation results will be communicated to the Swiss and consortium PIs by the end of March 2025. **Earliest possible starting date for the projects: 1 April 2025.** It is mandatory to start the projects until 1 July 2025 (at the latest), since all projects need to be completed by 30 June 2029.

8.8 Appeal Procedure

Along with the ruling, the Swiss corresponding applicant will be informed that they have the right to appeal to the competent authority in Switzerland in accordance with national legislation. They also have the right to request a reconsideration of the proposal in accordance with SNSF internal regulations.

⁵ If the budget of a country is exhausted, no further consortium with partners from this country can be funded.

9 Contractual Arrangements

For funded projects, the Swiss PI and the consortium PIs need to sign a Grant Agreement (see example in Annex 3) before starting the project. Some SMPs from the respective countries may request to sign an additional Agreement with the consortium PIs. Please consult Annex 2 for further information.

10 Reporting

10.1 Scientific Reports

The preparation of the annual and final scientific reports is under the responsibility of all PIs involved in a single JRP. The reports will be submitted to the SNSF by the Swiss PI. The scientific reports shall inform on the advancement of their project, providing information about timeliness and progress made in implementing the research project. The PIs will be requested to use a template provided by the SNSF. These reports are shared with all SMPs. The scientific reports need to be submitted no later than 3 months after the completion of each implementation year.

10.2 Financial Reports

The Swiss PIs will provide an annual and a final financial report to the SNSF, reporting on all the expenses and revenues of the JRP from the second Swiss contribution (including the funds dedicated to the Swiss PI and the funds shared with the PIs in the respective partner countries). The reports are shared with the SMPs. Financial reports will compare expenditures with the approved budgets and will also be checked against the guidelines established at the start of the programme. A template will be provided as part of the Grant Agreement.

In addition, each consortium PI, or the host institution of the PI from the participating countries (Poland being an exception) will have to submit a separate financial report to the SMP (or other entity with which it has the specific contract for the use of the country contribution) reporting on the country's contribution (see annex 2 for further information).

10.3 Financial Control

The responsibility for overseeing the correct management of the Swiss contribution lies first with the Swiss PI. The Swiss PI, together with their institution, must ensure that expenditure reflects the realities and is consistent with the work done, also for the part claimed by the PIs from the partner countries. Then, the SNSF controls the financial reports of the Swiss contribution in connection with the project progress and on the basis of the supporting documents (receipts, reports, etc.) attached to the reports. The SMPs must verify the financial reports for the national contribution according to their own defined processes/rules. The financial reports submitted by the Swiss PI will be shared with the SMPs.

Templates for both types of report will be provided as part of the Grant Agreement. The reports shall be written in English.

11 Publications and Patents

11.1 Publications

The PIs are obliged to publish research results achieved through the JRPs in appropriate form and according to the SNSF's standards (requirements will be set out in the Grant Agreements). The publication will mention the support received from the second Swiss Contribution. The following rules also apply:

- Publications must be accessible and must comply with Open Access regulations.
- The data collected within a JRP must be accessible to other researchers for secondary research. The SNSF expects that researchers share at least the data underlying their publications, but only to the extent to make the published results reproducible. This data should be shared as soon as possible, but at the latest together with the relevant scientific publication.
- The SNSF and the SMPs may request that publications containing data gained in the framework of JRPs be submitted to them.
- All results of research activities undertaken within the scope of the JRPs are subject to the regulations of the respective institutions. Applicants must consult all host institutions concerning their internal intellectual property regulations. It is important that an agreement be reached in advance. It is the responsibility of all PIs to make sure such an agreement is signed before the project starts.
- For publications and conferences, PIs indicate the financial source as follows: *Project co-financed by a grant in the framework of the second Swiss Contribution to selected EU member states.*

11.2 Patents

The SNSF and the SMPs are to be informed – during and after the JRP – about any patents resulting from the JRP.

12 Contact

Bulgaria
Zornitsa Georgieva
Science Directorate, Ministry of Science and Education
E-Mail: z.georgieva@mon.bg

Croatia
Milan Čanković
Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ)
E-Mail: milan@hrzz.hr

Hungary:
Borbála Schenk
Department for International Affairs
National Research, Development and Innovation (NRDI) Office
E-mail: borbala.schenk@nkfih.gov.hu

Poland
Barbara Świątkowska
National Science Centre (NCN)
E-Mail: Barbara.Swiatkowska@ncn.gov.pl

Romania
Monica Cruceru
Executive Agency for Higher Education,
Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCD)
E-Mail: monica.cruceu@uefiscdi.ro

Switzerland:
Isabelle Fellner & Timothy Ryan
International Cooperation
Swiss National Science Foundation
E-mail: international@snf.ch

Annex 1

Guidelines for Writing the Project Proposal

Proposals are to be jointly prepared by all applicants involved in a project and the following guidelines must be respected. For your proposal, we kindly ask you to use the section headings indicated below. The proposals will be sent out for external review. In order to ensure that the scientific content of your proposal can be adequately assessed, please provide detailed documentation which clearly sets out the aims, subject matter and methods of the project you are planning. Please note that the SNSF and SMPs do not consider proposals that do not meet the formal requirements and/or are manifestly inadequate.

1 **Summary of the Research Plan** (Max. 4,000 characters with spaces, does not count to the 17 pages).

This should include the most important features of your research plan and place your project in a broader scientific context. This summary must be identical with the one you have provided in the *my*SNSF data container “Basic data II”. At least font size 10 and line spacing 1.5 must be used.

2 **Research Plan**

The research plan must not exceed 17 pages and 68,000 characters (with spaces). The first limit reached applies. This includes the title or front page, footnotes, illustrations, formulae, tables (and, if applicable, the table of contents), but not the bibliography. At least font size 10 and line spacing 1.5 must be used. The research plan may not contain any annexed documents.

The research plan must be structured as follows:

2.1 **Current state of research in the field**

Describe your project in the context of the current state of knowledge in your field. Make reference to the most important publications, particularly by other authors. Please describe:

- which previous insights provided the starting point and basis for the planned studies;
- in which areas research is needed and why, and what your project can contribute to closing this gap;
- which relevant research projects are currently underway in Switzerland and abroad;
- to what extent the various disciplines – in interdisciplinary projects – contribute a variety of perspectives to the proposed research; the extent to which the targeted research goals require the integration of elements (e.g. theories, methods, concepts) from two or more disciplines which is not yet customary in this combination in the field.

2.2 Current state of your own research and partnership aspects

Please describe the research work undertaken in the relevant field by members of the research group, the results obtained so far as well as the relevance of these preliminary undertakings for the current project. If your project follows on from a preliminary project supported by the SNSF, please report on the work conducted and the results obtained in the preliminary project. Together with the CV, this information serves as a basis for assessing your academic qualifications, particularly your expertise with regard to the project.

2.3 Detailed research plan

Based on the information provided under 2.1 and 2.2, please specify the approach you are taking and the concrete objectives that you aim to achieve in the period of funding.

- Describe the specific investigations or experiments that are required and/or envisaged to reach the set goals. Assess the risks involved and propose alternatives if necessary.
- Characterise existing sources and datasets and describe the data collection strategy and possible alternative strategies.
- Describe the methods by which the research goals are to be reached (applicant and collaborations) and methods that first have to be developed.
- Explain the role of each member of the research team (incl. applicants, employees, project partners and collaborations). Please also explain why the expertise and scientific contribution of several applicants is necessary and why the collaboration is essential in order to achieve the research results and delivers an additional benefit.

The scope and detail of the information should enable an expert to assess whether your methodology is appropriate and your project feasible. Ensure that you refer to the work described here in the budget you submit via the SNSF portal.

2.4 Schedule and milestones

Please compile a schedule that includes the most important milestones.

2.5 Relevance and impact

Describe the scientific relevance and expected impacts of your project for the discipline and for science as a whole (research and education/teaching). Please mention the form in which you wish to publish your research results (articles in specialist journals, monographs, conference proceedings, etc.).

2.6 Bibliography (does not count to the 17 pages)

2.7 Ethical, safety, and regulatory issues (does not count to the 17 pages)

Does your proposed work raise ethical, safety or regulatory issues? If yes, how will you deal with them? Please indicate.