

Swiss Contribution for the reduction of economic and social disparities in the enlarged European Union

Conceptual Elements for a Polish-Swiss Research Programme

1. Introduction

Purpose and objectives of this paper

This paper presents the position of Switzerland regarding the implementation of the Research Programme. It suggests:

- the procedures for submitting research projects,
- the main characteristics of research projects,
- the criteria for approving research projects,
- the institutional set-up for implementing the programme.

This paper was elaborated in consultation with research institutions in Switzerland. It takes into consideration the other existing bilateral and multilateral initiatives¹. This final version presents the consolidated Swiss position and considers the agreements made with the National Coordination Unit (NCU) of the Ministry of Regional Development, that is responsible for the overall Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme orientation.

Basis

- The Bilateral Framework Agreement that indicates in general the funding area, the eligible projects and the procedures.
- Discussions with Polish and Swiss representatives of research institutions.
- Established Polish-Swiss networks in the field of research, such as SCOPES (up to 1999), International PhD School Switzerland-Poland (EMPA, ETH Zurich, AGH Cracow, WUT, University of Warsaw, Jagiellonian University), Network in Life Sciences between EPFL and Polish Universities.
- Discussions between representatives of the Swiss and the Polish Governments.

Expectations on the Swiss side referring to:

- **Partnerships**
 - Polish-Swiss Joint Research Projects as well as Institutional Partnerships between Swiss and Polish research institutions should be favoured.

¹ The inventory of main existing bilateral (SCOPES, Swissnex, Leading Houses etc.) and multilateral (6th and 7th FRP of the EU) initiatives is presented in a separate document.

- **Quality**
 - Recognised research institutions of both countries should be involved in determining project selection criteria as well as in the assessment and the selection of projects.
 - Scientific quality as well as the quality of the partnership should be the core evaluation criteria.
- **Visibility**
 - The programme and its results should be visible in both countries.
- **Time frame**
 - Rapid and easy procedure for project collection, assessment, selection, and final decision (indicative time frame 9 months).
 - Enough time for research institutions to establish partnerships (indicative time frame 6 months).
- **Timing**
 - Pre-warning of the call should take place at least three months before the launching of the call.
 - The call should be launched during the academic period, preferably at the beginning of an academic semester (September/October).
- **Transparency**
 - Potential applicants are informed about the overall conditions (domains, time frame, number and timing of the call, allocation, selection procedure, selection criteria).

2. Focussing the area „Research and Development“

Framework Agreement

The bilateral Framework Agreement between Switzerland and Poland, Annex 1, words the objective of the Polish-Swiss Research Programme² as following:

- To contribute to the knowledge based economy through the enhancement of the knowledge base and in particular through applied research as well as know-how and technology transfer.

It fixes the four following types of eligible projects:

- Joint Research Projects and Institutional Partnerships ;
- Equipment for applied research Projects;
- Incubators to facilitate spin-offs;
- Capacity building in innovation management.

However, for the Polish-Swiss Research Programme it has been agreed to focus only on the first type of eligible projects, means Joint Research Projects and Institutional Partnerships.

² Objective 3 of the Focus Area „*Research and Development*“ in Annex 1 of the Framework Agreement

Type of eligible projects / Instruments

As indicated above, the programme should focus on **Joint Research Projects (JRP) and Institutional Partnerships (IP)** in research since they are the most attractive instruments for a Polish-Swiss cooperation programme:

- The Swiss Contribution is a bilateral cooperation programme having the potential to bring high value out of partnerships between the two countries; JRP and IP contribute at most towards establishing and deepening existing Polish-Swiss relations in research;
- The limited amount available speaks in favour of focusing the number of areas; JRP and IP allow for easy and efficient implementation of the contribution;
- The recent experience of the Polish-Norwegian Research Fund shows that interest and demand for JRP and IP on both sides are important;
- Bilateral partnerships offer good visibility, both in Poland and in Switzerland.

Thematic focus

After consultation with the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, it has been decided that projects can only be presented, if they are implemented in the following five research areas: ICT, Energy – Renewable Energy Sources, Nanotechnologies, Health and Environment.

Size of projects and duration

In order to keep the research programme accessible for a broad variety of research institutions, the programme should support two types of project sizes: projects between CHF 300'000 and CHF 1 million (tentatively 60% of the total allocation) and projects amounting between CHF 1 and CHF 2 million (tentatively 40% of the total allocation).

The Joint Polish – Swiss Selection Committee is entitled to change the above percentage proportion in justified cases.

3. Procedural Arrangements

Programme approach

The programme approach implies a delegated authority for decision-making on individual projects. The programme approach includes among other i) an initial assessment of the instrument, ii) the definition of objectives, guidelines and budgets, iii) all characteristics of the eligible projects, iv) the selection criteria and evaluation/decision procedure for projects, v) a programme implementation plan, vi) a sector monitoring and evaluation concept.

Financing Request for the Polish-Swiss Research Programme

The present document, based on common arrangements of the Polish and Swiss side, constitutes the programme outline (first loop). The second loop is the final programme proposal (ProDoc) elaborated by the Executing Agency (operator) - the Information Processing Centre (IPC) , inspected/checked by the NCU in its role as Intermediate Body and finally approved by SDC. It is expected that the proposed programme is the result of a consultative process between Poland and Switzerland that involves representatives of research institutions and related organisations of both countries.

The financing request for the Polish-Swiss Research Programme shall cover the whole set of projects as well as the management arrangement. It will amount to about CHF 19.1 million (see Budget and Co-financing under Point 4).

After the approval of the financing, the programme is subject to a Programme Agreement signed by the NCU and SDC.

Selection process of the research project applications

IPC carries out a formal appraisal of projects submitted after a call for proposals. A preliminary assessment of each project application is done through a peer review, in principle from international experts. However, in case the competence is available, the review should be done by Polish and/or Swiss experts. The peer review experts are designated by IPC based on national and international peer databases. IPC, based on content – related appraisal, establishes a list of project applications with scores and ranking. The decision on projects co-financing is made by the Joint Polish-Swiss Selection Committee, based on the list of ranked project applications (see annex 2).

Final decision should be confirmed formally by SDC in form of an exchange of letter with the NCU, provided that the conditions expressed in the Framework Agreement and in the Programme Agreement are respected.

The Joint Selection Committee is a scientific panel. It should be constituted by 3 Polish and 3 Swiss members including one Polish and one Swiss co-chairs. Members should be legitimated representatives of umbrella organisations of national research institutions and research authorities. The Swiss members will be designated in a later stage.

Swiss side (SDC/SCO) will have the possibility to participate as an observer in the selection committee. The objective is to monitor the selection process, provide and receive general information on the development of the programme, and identify additional measures.

Project Selection Criteria

The general project selection criteria should be approved by the Polish and the Swiss parties. They should be clearly mentioned in the programme document.

At this stage, following formal and content related criteria are suggested:

- Scientific quality, novelty of project, methodology, complementarity of the teams/management of the project, quality of the partners, feasibility.

Programme management

The programme shall be managed by the Information Processing Centre (IPC) as Executing Agency (operator). Projects are implemented independently by the respective research partners (see annex 1). Reporting, payment claims and reimbursement requests are to be consolidated for the whole programme.

- **Role of the NCU:** The NCU has the overall responsibility of the Swiss Contribution, together with the overall Monitoring Committee³. It organises the implementation of the research programme. It leads, based on the present conceptual elements, the development of a comprehensive programme document and the final programme proposal to be submitted to Switzerland for the financing request. In coordination with the Ministry of Higher Education and Research the NCU appoints an Executing Agency for the management of the programme.
- **Executing Agency (operator):** The Executing Agency manages the programme. Main management tasks encompass: launch the calls, collect the applications, organise the assessment and selection according to the defined procedures and structures, make contractual arrangement with the selected project partners, provide reporting and payment

³ Committee in charge of monitoring the entire Swiss Contribution to Poland.

claims to the NCU, manage the fund and provide consolidated reporting to the NCU, monitor the projects.

- **Joint Selection Committee:** Additional to its task to select the project applications, the Joint Selection Committee will participate in the determining of project selection criteria; it will be consulted in the conditions of the calls and in the organisation of reviews and evaluations.

Reporting and Monitoring at Programme level

- **Reporting:** Consolidated Interim Reports, Annual Reports and a Completion Report are to be submitted at programme level by the Executing Agency, on the base of similar reports at project level and of the monitoring performed by the Executing Agency.
- **Programme Review:** A joint mid term review should be carried out, with the participation of representatives of the selection committee.
- **Financial control:** Additional to the financial control to be performed by the IB, the programme is subject to annual financial audit.
- **Programme evaluation:** A joint programme evaluation may be carried out at the completion of the programme.

4. Financial Plan

Budget and Co-financing

- **Co-financing by the Polish Government:** The Polish Government is co-financing the programme with a minimum share of 15%, according to the Framework Agreement.
- **Programme management cost:** total costs for the Executing Agency, project assessments and selection committee should not exceed 10% of the total budget.
- **Total gross amount of the research programme** amounts to CHF 21.2 million, resulting of CHF 18 million of the Swiss Contribution plus 15% of national co-financing amounting to CHF 3.2. million.
- **Indicative remaining net amount for projects** amounts to approximately CHF 19.1 million, calculated with the assumption of up to 10% for management costs amounting up to CHF 2.1 million.

Eligible activities and eligible costs

- **Eligible activities and eligible costs of the Polish partner** should be approved by the Polish and the Swiss parties. They should respect the conditions expressed in the FA.
- **Max. admissible participation in the eligible costs of the Swiss partner:** shall not exceed 50%.

5. Key Elements of the Call for Proposal

Promotion campaign:

Before launching the call for proposals, an intensive promotion campaign, supported by appropriate informative documents, should be carried out in Poland and in Switzerland in order to make all potential applicants aware of the opportunities and conditions of the programme. In Poland the campaign shall be organised by the Executing Agency and the NCU. In Switzerland,

it will be organised by official umbrella research organisations representing Swiss research institutions⁴.

Call for Proposals

Documents for call for proposal should be elaborated by the Executing Agency and approved by the selection committee. The main characteristics for call for proposals are:

- **Number of calls:** One call.
- **Timing:** The call should be launched beginning of September/October 2009.
- **Duration of the call:** deadline for submitting project application should be of 3 months. At least 3 months before the launching of the call, a pre-warning should be undertaken in both countries (see above).
- **Focus:** Open for JRP and IP in the following disciplines: ICT, Energy – Renewable Energy Sources, Nanotechnologies, Health and Environment. Multidisciplinary projects should be given preference.
- **Eligible applicants:** The application should be open on the Swiss side and on the Polish side to: public and non-public higher education institutions, research institutions⁵, non-governmental research organisations conducting scientific activity, other entities running activities in the area of research and development.

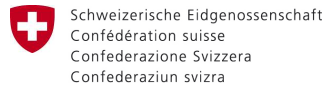
Please note that if an applying entity runs the economic activity, or if the proposed research project is connected with the economic activity, aid can be granted in accordance with the provisions of the Commission Regulation (EC) no 800/2008 of 6 August 2008, declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the common market in application of Articles 87 and 88 of the Treaty (General block exemption Regulation)⁶.

- **Eligible costs:** according to general practice. The financing of the costs of the Swiss partner should not exceed 50% of the contribution to the project.

⁴ Suggested by KFH: together CRUS and KFH or SNF and KTI

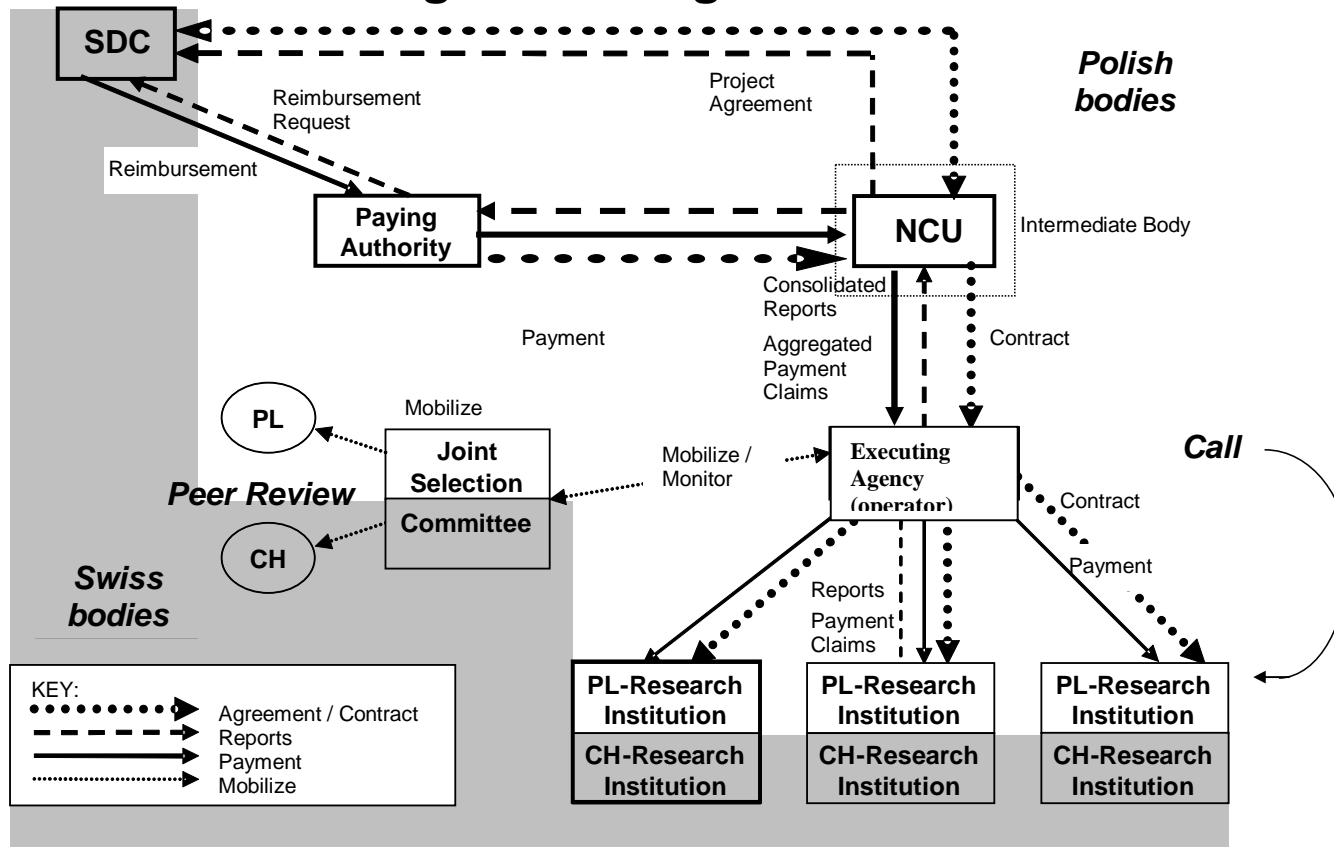
⁵ On the Polish side this category encompasses research and development entities and scientific centres of the Polish Academy of Sciences; on the Swiss side, this term includes research institutes, institutions and other entities linked to public and non public higher education institutions mentioned above

⁶ OJ L of 9.8.2008 No 214



Embassy of Switzerland
Swiss Contribution Office Poland

Programme Organisation



Annex 2

Selection Procedure

