MSCA Staff Exchanges for Swiss Participants

Overview
Switzerland currently has the status of a non-associated Third Country in Horizon Europe and Swiss institutions can only participate as ‘Associated Partners’ in MSCA Staff Exchanges unless their contribution is deemed to be essential. The Swiss status can be changed at any time, but for all calls with call identifier 2021 (meaning 2021 is included in the call ID on the Funding & tenders portal) Switzerland will be considered a non-associated Third Country.

As Associated Partner, a Swiss institution cannot claim any costs from the EU. However, the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) offers direct funding to participants in collaborative projects as long as Switzerland is considered a non-associated Third Country in Horizon Europe (www.horizon-europe.ch). This also applies to MSCA Staff Exchanges (SE), thus, in a successful MSCA SE project, staff exchanges from Swiss institutions to other partners in the consortium as well as from low to middle income Third Countries listed in the Horizon Europe Programme Guide to Swiss institutions can be directly financed by SERI. These additional secondments, financed by SERI, do not count towards the European Budget.

SERI can fund secondments based on the same rules given by MSCA Staff Exchanges. Once the proposal receives a positive funding decision, the Swiss institution can follow the SERI procedure to obtain the respective funding. No action is required on the SERI side during the proposal phase but only once the proposal has been positively evaluated.

Here we provide recommendations how the Swiss participation may be included in a MSCA SE proposal.

Secondments of staff financed by SERI
The number and length of secondments of the staff members financed by SERI should be described in the proposal (for example: Section 1.1, 3.1, Table 1 2 and 3). It is important to specify that the seconded staff is financed by Switzerland’s own funding.

Same Rules
Be aware that the same rules apply to the staff exchanges financed by SERI as to the EU funded staff exchanges.
Secondments from Staff members of Swiss Research Institution to hosting institutions in European Member States and Associated Countries as well as to any non-associated Third Country are eligible for funding under SERI. Hosting secondments of research staff members from low and middle income Third Countries can also be financed by SERI.

Funding provided by SERI
SERI will provide exactly the same financial contribution as the European Commission would have provided if Switzerland was associated. The Swiss partners thus receive the same unit contributions per person months.

Letter of Commitment and Budget
A Letter of Commitment is mandatory. For the Swiss partners Euresearch provides a template explaining the financial contribution and commitment.
In Part A of the application, the budget of the proposal is calculated based on the number of staff seconded by the different partners and their number of person months. Since the Swiss partner cannot claim costs, the Swiss institutions and the staff employed there are not part of the Budget table in Part A. The financial contribution from the Swiss partner is however specified in the Letter of Commitment.
Funding and Tenders Opportunities Portal

Please be aware that Associated Partners cannot be added to the consortium list in the Funding and Tenders Opportunities Portal. This means, that the Swiss partner has no access to the proposal in the portal and that the Coordinator will have to forward every project related communication by the EU/REA to the Swiss partner. A possible solution as work-around would be that the coordinator adds the Associated Partner contacts under the coordinator’s contacts.

Partnership and Consortium Agreement

Consortia are strongly advised to sign a partnership agreement between the Associated Partners and the Beneficiaries to regulate the internal relationship between all participating organisations. The partnership agreement(s) must comply with the grant agreement and is often part of a consortium agreement. Such an agreement covers for example
- Responsibilities
- Governance structure (representation in meetings, voting rights)
- Financial provisions
- Intellectual property rights: access, ownership, exploitation and dissemination

We recommend to discuss expectations already during the proposal writing phase and to imagine the project in all its details.

FAQ

Can the Swiss partner be involved in MSCA Staff Exchanges?
Yes, this is possible. Swiss partners can be added to a consortium as Associated Partners. (In exceptional cases Swiss partners can be Beneficiaries, but only if their contribution is deemed to be essential).

Can Swiss partners host staff seconded from other project partners?
Yes, this is possible.

Will Staff Exchanges to Swiss partners be financed by the EU?
Yes, if the project foresees staff exchanges from members of the consortium (from EU Member States or associated countries) to a Swiss partner, these can be financed by the EU.

Will Staff Exchanges from Swiss partners to other members of the consortium be financed by the EU?
No, the EU will not finance such secondments. However, there will be direct funding of these exchanges provided by SERI.

Can companies or SME in Switzerland participating in a MSCA Staff Exchanges project also receive funding from SERI?
Legal entities (including companies and SME) based in Switzerland can participate in MSCA Staff Exchanges and will receive funding from SERI.

Can a MSCA Staff Exchanges project be coordinated by a Swiss partner?
Only beneficiaries (who receive funding from the EU) can coordinate collaborative projects. So in principle a Swiss partner can’t coordinate. However, if a Swiss partner's contribution is deemed to be essential, this partner can be a beneficiary and thus coordinate a consortium. But this is a high-risk setup.

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