

# MSCA Doctoral Networks for Swiss participants

## Swiss-based doctoral candidates on top of EU contribution

Doctoral candidates employed at Swiss host institutions can be added **on top** of the EU contribution if Switzerland is not classified by the EC as a 'country to be associated' before the deadline of the corresponding call. The Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) guarantees that Swiss participants will receive direct national funding.

## Overview

Currently Switzerland is considered a non-associated third country for the submission of project proposals under the EU's Horizon Europe framework programme for research and innovation. Therefore, Swiss institutions participate in Doctoral Networks as '**associated partners**' unless their contribution is deemed to be essential. As an **associated partner**, a Swiss institution **cannot claim costs** from the EU and therefore may not employ researchers under the action. However, as long as Switzerland participates in Horizon Europe as a non-associated third country, the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) will fund Swiss partners in collaborative projects. This also applies to MSCA Doctoral Networks. Thus, a doctoral candidate employed by a Swiss institution will be directly financed by SERI. The doctoral candidate employed by the Swiss partner does not have the status of an official MSCA grantee (they are 'SERI-funded MSCA DN Grantees') but can complement the network if the consortium agrees. To receive funding from SERI, the candidate must be **employed at a Swiss institution**. Once the proposal receives a positive funding decision, the Swiss institution can follow the SERI procedure to obtain the respective funds.

## Same rules

Be aware that the rules of the DN also apply to the doctoral candidate financed by SERI (eligibility rule, especially mobility rule). The **same legal and financial obligations and rights** apply to the candidates of the Swiss partner. The **recruitment** of candidates should also follow the same procedure. It is strongly recommended that all candidates have the same conditions for their fellowship.

## Funding provided by SERI

The SERI will provide the same financial contribution as the European Commission would have provided if Switzerland had been associated. The Swiss partners receive the same unit contributions per person-month and the living allowance is adjusted with the Swiss country correction coefficient.

## Project of the doctoral candidate employed by a Swiss partner

It should be demonstrated that the participation of the Swiss partner is important for the network and contributes to the overall scientific and training objectives of the proposal. The project of the doctoral candidate employed by a Swiss partner should be described in the proposal. Please make sure to list the number of fellows with the indication of the specific person-months in the description. Specify that the candidate is financed by Switzerland's own funding. Be careful to distinguish between the *official* MSCA fellows and the candidate employed by the Swiss partner.

## Secondments

While an MSCA fellow cannot be employed by the Swiss partner and the Swiss partner's doctoral candidates can't be employed outside Switzerland, secondments are a way to ensure transfer of knowledge, which is crucial in any Doctoral Network. Highlight in the proposal how the Swiss partner

contributes to the training elements of the network by **hosting secondments** and **seconding their candidates** to other institutions within the consortium.

## Letter of Commitment

A Letter of Commitment is not mandatory, but we still recommend preparing one. Euresearch provides a template for the Swiss partners explaining the financial contribution and commitment. In Part A of the application, the budget of the proposal is calculated based on the number of researchers recruited by the beneficiaries and their number of person-months. Since the Swiss partner is not a beneficiary and cannot claim any costs, the Swiss organizations and the researchers employed there are not part of the budget table in Part A. The financial contribution from the Swiss partner can however be specified in the Letter of Commitment.

## Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal

Please note that **associated partners** cannot be included in the consortium list in the Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal (FTOP). This means, that the Swiss partner does not have access to the proposal in the FTOP and that the coordinator must forward every project related communication by the EC/REA to the Swiss partner. A possible solution as workaround would be that the coordinator adds the contacts of the associated partner under the coordinator's contacts.

## Partnership and Consortium Agreement

We strongly recommend the signing of a partnership agreement between the **associated partners** and the beneficiaries to regulate the internal relationship between all participating organizations. The partnership agreement(s) must be consistent with the grant agreement and are often part of a consortium agreement. We recommend discussing expectations already at proposal writing stage and envisioning the project in full detail. A helpful basis is a [specific template based on the DESCA CA](#) (Swiss partner are called 'Employing Associated Partner') or the [LERU ITN CA template](#).

## FAQ

### Can the Swiss partner be involved in an Industrial or Joint Doctorate?

Yes, they can, however two rules to consider are:

- 1) Official MSCA candidates can't be employed by a Swiss host since Switzerland is an associated partner.
- 2) In order to receive funding from SERI, the candidate from the Swiss partner can only be employed at a Swiss institution.

Since the Doctoral Networks 2022 call the limitation of the duration of secondments have been lifted. Therefore, researchers financed by SERI can be employed by the Swiss institution and sent to any European MS/AC for secondment of longer than half of their fellowship time.

**NEW: in the Doctoral Networks 2024 call it will be possible to have joint degrees with non-associated Third Countries.**

### Can a DN be coordinated by a Swiss partner?

No, this is not possible. Only beneficiaries can coordinate collaborative projects.

### Can the Swiss partner be a work package leader in a DN?

Yes, 'associated partners' are able to lead work packages – except for the management ones.

### Can companies or SME in Switzerland participating in a DN also receive funding from SERI?

Legal entities (including companies and SME) based in Switzerland participate in DN and will receive funding via the SERI.

### How does the 40% rule apply for the Swiss participant?

The SERI follows the same rule and the Swiss Budget should not exceed 40% of the total EU financial contribution (budget of all beneficiaries).