

Agreement between Switzerland and the EU:
 Provisional partial association of Switzerland with Horizon 2020 (September 2014)
Switzerland needs full association with Horizon 2020

The ETH Board's views:
1. Partial association as an important interim solution

The ETH Board welcomes the partial association with Horizon 2020 as an important interim solution. In the short term, it prevents Switzerland from being strongly disadvantaged as a centre for education and research. For a limited period, it allows Switzerland to participate as an associated state in all activities of the first of the three pillars of Horizon 2020, and to receive EU funding.

2. Switzerland needs full association

The ETH Board regards it as vital that Switzerland should once more be able to participate as an associated and equally entitled state in all pillars and programme sections of Horizon 2020 from 2017 onwards at the latest. Full association alone enables Swiss researchers to have an influence on the strategic orientation of the

EU Research Framework Programmes, coordinate Europe-wide projects without restriction and benefit fully from EU funding. This in turn is an important prerequisite if Switzerland is to attract and retain top researchers against international competition.

3. Maintaining Switzerland's leading position over the long term

Switzerland is partially associated until the end of 2016 only. It has not yet been decided whether Switzerland can then be a full associate in Horizon 2020 or whether it will be demoted to third country status. As a centre for research and innovation, however, Switzerland needs the security of long-term planning at the earliest opportunity if it is to retain its leading international position.

Switzerland was an associate in the 6th EU Research Framework Programme (from 2004 onwards) and in the entire 7th Research Framework Programme (2007–2013). Following the adoption of the initiative against mass immigration in February 2014, the EU Commission broke off negotiations with Switzerland on the latter's association with Horizon 2020 shortly before the agreement was due to be concluded. This had the effect of demoting Switzerland to third country status. According to the provisional agreement between Switzerland and the EU, Switzerland can participate in Horizon 2020 as a partial associate until the end of 2016: Swiss researchers will thus receive unrestricted access to "Excellent Science", the first of the three pillars of Horizon 2020, which covers ERC grants, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, Future and Emerging Technologies (FET) and Research Infrastructures (see chart).

The ETH Board welcomes the partial association with Horizon 2020. For Switzerland and for the ETH Domain in particular, this nevertheless continues to impose far-reaching restrictions compared with a full association: as a third country, Switzerland receives no EU funding under the two pillars "Industrial Leadership" and "Societal Challenges",

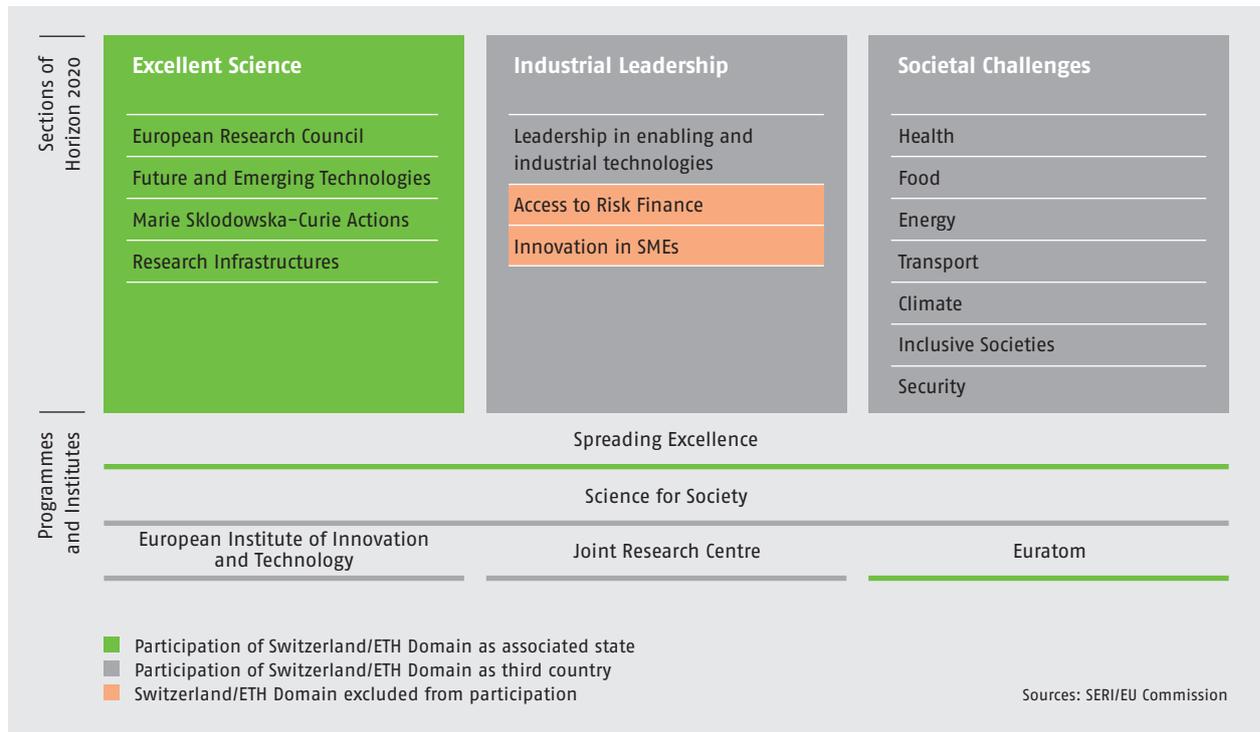
which means that the federal government has to take over the direct funding as far as available resources permit. In concrete terms:

- "Industrial Leadership" pillar:

Swiss researchers and Swiss companies receive no EU funds for joint European projects and are placed at a disadvantage compared with their competitors in other European countries. Furthermore, in the ETH Domain, Empa (for example) can no longer benefit from its most important direct EU funding for bringing innovations with industry partners to market readiness, because Swiss SMEs are excluded from the special EU package of measures for SMEs.

- "Societal Challenges" pillar:

Swiss researchers no longer receive any EU funds for collaborative projects with European partners. Also, there is only a partial guarantee that Swiss consortium partners will be able to participate in strategic decisions on the topics to be covered in future calls for the EU Research Framework Programmes.

Partial association of Switzerland with Horizon 2020 (2014–2016)

Benefits of EU research funding 2004–2013

Switzerland's association with the EU Research Framework Programmes from 2004 to 2013 was very successful. For example, the net inflow of funds has been EUR 200 million so far, but is expected to rise considerably by 2016.

The ETH Domain has been exceptionally successful in applying for EU funding: of the ERC grants awarded in 2013, ETH Zurich won the third-biggest amount and EPFL the fourth-biggest; only the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford were more successful. The ETH Domain received EU research grants totalling CHF 135 million in 2013. This was therefore the most important source of competitive funding after the Swiss National Science Foundation.

One of the two winning projects for the Future and Emerging Technologies (FET) programme funded by the EU is the EPFL-led FET Flagship Human Brain Project: EPFL is expecting funds from Horizon 2020 totalling CHF 35 million for the period 2017–2020.

Conclusion

The partial association of Switzerland is valid only until the end of 2016. The continuity of joint research projects and participation in calls such as those of the European Research Council can only be provisionally guaranteed. To ensure that Switzerland retains its leading position in research over the long term, the ETH Board regards it as crucial that Switzerland should once again be able to participate in Horizon 2020 as an associated state at the earliest opportunity.

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