

## SNSF position on the development of FP8

The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) is aware of the great impact the 8<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme will have on the further development of the European Research Area (ERA). The details of the programme are therefore of key importance for the success of the ERA.

In this context we would like to highlight the importance of the complementarity of the FP8 initiatives and strategic aims and national efforts in the area of research funding. Real and efficient repartition of work is needed in order to avoid duplication of funding instruments. The EU should thus avoid any funding instruments that can better be offered at the national level and concentrate on activities that present a clear European added-value. In return, national research organisations must take their roles seriously as well and provide the framework conditions to make their researchers competitive in the European arena.

The SNSF would like to highlight a number of points that should be a priority in the development of FP8.

### **Investment into investigator-driven research is the basis of a dynamic innovative economy.**

The support of basic, investigator-driven research is crucial for the success of the ERA. It provides the foundation of all applied research and innovation endeavours, which it feeds with new knowledge and discoveries. Adequate support of basic, investigator-driven research today secures successful applied research and innovation in the future.

Thus the SNSF asks for continued and strengthened support of all funding instruments for basic and investigator-driven research as well as individual researchers. Particularly important are a strong and independent ERC, collaborative research projects and Marie Curie actions. Output-based funding would undermine these efforts as it would make high-risk/high reward projects impossible.

### **Excellence should be the prime criterion of research-funding.**

In its research funding, the 8<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme needs to put its focus on excellence. Excellence is needed in order to stay internationally competitive, especially in the long run. Cohesion measures are important to make Europe as a whole more effective; however, both targets must not be mixed and all mechanisms seeking cohesion need to be declared as such.

The SNSF advocates that the status of the ERC needs to be maintained and strengthened and that excellence ought to be the prime evaluation criterion for all FP8 instruments. Cohesion measures should not be part of FP8; however, larger parts of the structural funds should be earmarked for research in order to improve the conditions for research(ers) in countries that are currently lagging behind.

**The creation of an attractive research environment has long-term spillover effects.**

Nurturing talent and offering a stimulating environment encourages researchers and firms to come to, stay in and invest in Europe. Initiatives with a clear European interest and added-value should be prioritised. The special support of both world class researchers and infrastructure creates a multiplication effect in terms of attractiveness for local and foreign talent and also for private investments.

Therefore, the SNSF calls for strong measures to make research careers an attractive option for the best brains in Europe. This means that structural conditions to facilitate mobility have to be created: social security issues and visa problems have to be solved, insecurities regarding intellectual property rights and movement of samples have to be clarified. Also, the Marie Curie scheme needs to be continued and further refined.

Further, the development of and the access to world-class research infrastructures must be ensured. The Framework Programme needs to become a key financial instrument to establish pan-European infrastructures that would not be affordable for individual countries (European added-value). The realisation of the ESFRI roadmap needs to be secured. Additionally, measures for the maintenance of and access to research infrastructures need to be reinforced. Initiatives for the creation of synergies between research infrastructures should be continued and further developed.

**A consolidated and comprehensive programme with consistent rules creates clear added-value.**

All research-related funding should be dealt with under one responsibility (“one roof”) and a common logic, with the same rules and procedures and an efficient and transparent management. If new aspects are introduced, it must be clearly communicated if they are conceptual frameworks or instruments. The number of instruments and topics should be kept as low as possible; however, a certain flexibility needs to be built into them to cater for research areas which do not traditionally work in large consortia (such as the social sciences and the humanities) or to allow for interdisciplinary research. Both social sciences and the humanities and interdisciplinary research are crucial for tackling the Grand Challenges.

The SNSF supports the establishment of a complementary portfolio of instruments (joint research projects, ERA-NETs, ...) at the disposal of these frameworks (Joint technology initiatives, Joint Programming). In order to tackle the inherent interdisciplinarity of the Grand Challenges, focused instruments are needed. Solid funding must be provided for the cornerstones of the programme: ERC, mobility schemes, infrastructures and research with regard the Grand Challenges.

**Follow an open and trust-based approach to ensure attractiveness for researchers.**

FP8 instruments must follow an open and trust-based approach in order to be attractive for the best researchers and thus produce world-class results. The rules and procedures must be consistent throughout the programmes, making the lives of the participating researchers as easy as possible. The rules should be flexible enough to be useful for all instruments and should also allow the researchers to collaborate with their colleagues in non-European countries.

The SNSF asks to take seriously the various criticism that has been voiced regarding the current complex and sometimes hard-to-follow rules and regulations. Crucial factors of a trust-based approach are Rules that remain valid for the whole funding period, consistency of rules and their application throughout the different research programmes and especially the acceptance of the concept of tolerable risk. Further, researchers should be allowed to use the accounting systems of their institutions which would avoid unnecessary duplication of work.

*The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) is the principal Swiss agency promoting scientific research. On behalf of the Swiss Federal government, it supports research projects in all disciplines, from philosophy and biology, to the nanosciences and medicine.*

Contact details:

SNSF, International Co-operation

[international@snf.ch](mailto:international@snf.ch)

+41-31 308 22 22

[www.snf.ch](http://www.snf.ch)