

Swiss-Croatian Cooperation Programme

SUPPORT MEASURE AGREEMENT

between

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

and

Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds as the National Coordination Unit

on

the Support Measure

Research Programme Croatia

REF: 7F-11087.01

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, acting through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, hereinafter referred to as "SDC" and

The Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, hereinafter referred to as the "NCU",

Together hereinafter referred to as the "Parties",

Referring to the Framework Agreement, including its Annex 1 (Country-Specific Set-Up), between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of the Republic of Croatia concluded on 18 October 2022, ratified by the Croatian Parliament on 21 April 2023, as well as to the Regulations on the implementation of the Second Swiss Contribution in the area of Cohesion issued by Switzerland and containing the general rules and procedures on the implementation of the Swiss-Croatian Cooperation Programme, hereinafter referred to as "Framework Agreement" and "Regulations",

Considering the financing of the Support Measure: Research Programme Croatia (hereinafter referred to as the "Support Measure") in Croatia,

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1 – General provisions

The legal Framework as defined in Article 2 of the Framework Agreement shall apply.

Article 2 – Objective and eligibility period

1. The Support Measure is assigned to the following thematic area: Promoting economic growth and social dialogue, reducing (youth) unemployment, Research and innovation.
2. The objective of the Support Measure is to contribute to the economic growth and competitiveness of Croatia by strengthening the research excellence and innovation capacities of Croatian research organisations, universities, and enterprises and by facilitating research and innovation cooperation with internal partners.
3. The Support Measure starts on the date of the conclusion of this Support Measure Agreement and ends on 31 July 2029. Only expenditures incurred during this period are deemed to be eligible in accordance with Chapter 6 of the Regulations.

Article 3 – Obligations of the Parties

1. Switzerland agrees to grant a contribution of up to 8 million Swiss francs for the implementation of the Support Measure according to the budget (Annex B).
2. The contribution of Switzerland shall cover a maximum of 85% of the total eligible expenditures of the Support Measure as mentioned in Chapter 6 of the Regulations.
3. Switzerland's contribution to the Support Measure is based:

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- a) on the final version of the Support Measure proposal 7F-11087.01 submitted on 5 February 2024, attached to this Support Measure Agreement (Annex A); and
 - b) on the conditions put forward by Switzerland as part of the final decision to support the Support Measure and communicated to Croatia by means of the letter 771.20-01-PYR/FST, dated 12.01.2024 attached (Annex C).
4. In accordance with Article 7 of the Framework Agreement, the responsibility of Switzerland with regard to this Support Measure is limited to providing funds in accordance with Article 3, paragraph 1 of this Support Measure Agreement.
 5. Croatia shall ensure the timely provision of the co-financing of the total eligible expenditures of the Support Measure, as described in Article 4 Paragraph 5 of the Framework Agreement, and in Article 3.1 Paragraph 1 and Chapter 6 of the Regulations.
 6. Costs for staff of the Programme Component Operator for Programme Component 1, Croatian Science Foundation, comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, are eligible expenditure under this Support Measure, within the limits set in the budget in Annex B of this Support Measure Agreement and in accordance with Chapter 6 of the Regulations.

Article 4 – Implementation Responsibility

1. The NCU, Paying and Audit Authorities shall have the roles and responsibilities as defined in the Regulations, in particular in Articles 3.1 to 3.6, and further specified in the Country Specific Set-up, and this Support Measure Agreement.
2. For this Support Measure there is not a formal Programme Operator. The NCU shall submit an Annual Support Measure Report comprising both Programme Components, not later than three months after the end of the reporting period (calendar year). The NCU shall have no obligation to add or amend the report in terms of its “sectorial” (research-related) content, but only to combine reports prepared by Programme Component Operators into one single report.
3. The Programme Component(s) have the following Programme Component Operator(s):
 - a) Programme Component 1: Multilateral Call for Joint Research Projects (MCJRP)
 Programme Component Operator (i.e. Support Measure Partner to the Swiss Programme Component Operator): Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ)
 Swiss Programme Component Operator: Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)
 - b) Programme Component 2: Eurostars
 Programme Component Operator: Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovation and Investments (HAMAG-BICRO).
4. For Programme Component 1, the funds of the Swiss contribution will be managed by SNSF. To this end, a Mandate Agreement will be concluded between SDC and SNSF, in line with the Programme Component Document (Annex D). This document defines in

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detail the roles and responsibilities of all participating entities (NCU, SNSF, HRZZ), including the specific rules on financial flows, audit and reporting deviating from the Regulations and represents an integral part of this Agreement (Annex D).

SDC after concluding a contract with the SNSF (mandate), shall inform the NCU and submit the contract (equally applies to all subsequent amendments).

5. In line with the Support Measure Implementation Agreements between the NCU and each Programme Component Operator, the responsibilities of the latter include the following:

a) The main responsibilities of the Croatian Science Foundation, in addition to its roles and responsibilities as defined in the Regulations, Framework Agreement, and Programme Component Document are as follows:

- Provide reporting,
- Maintain contact with and inform relevant institutions in the country about the MCJRP,
- Ensure the provision of co-financing by Croatia for the MCJRP,
- Check all invoices and supporting documents of costs incurred under the MCJRP, verify the adequacy of the documentation, to the extent necessary to obtain reasonable assurance as to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions (Croatian Science Foundation unit in charge of checking all invoices and supporting documents must be independent from the Croatian Science Foundation unit in charge for the implementation of the MCJRP),
- Investigate and decide on the complaint regarding Irregularity under the MCJRP, and notify the Irregularity Authority and the NCU,
- Provide all necessary expert support to the NCU to carry out evaluations at the MCJRP level, and participate in the evaluation process,
- Comply with the Description of the Management and Control System.

b) The main responsibilities of the HAMAG-BICRO, in addition to its roles and responsibilities as defined in the Regulations, and Framework Agreement, are as follows:

- Ensure the provision of co-financing by Croatia for the EUROSTARS,
- Check all invoices and supporting documents of costs incurred under the EUROSTARS, verify the adequacy of the documentation, to the extent necessary to obtain reasonable assurance as to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions (HAMAG-BICRO unit in charge for checking all invoices and supporting documents must be independent of the HAMAG-BICRO unit in charge for the implementation of the EUROSTARS),
- Investigate and decide on the complaint regarding Irregularity under the EUROSTARS, and notify the Irregularity Authority and the NCU,
- Provide all necessary expert support to the NCU to carry out evaluations at the EUROSTARS level, and participate in the evaluation process,
- Comply with the Description of the Management and Control System.

6. **The Programme Component 1: Multilateral Call for Joint Research Projects**, shall be implemented in partnership with Swiss research and innovation institutions, agencies, and research infrastructures, as the Swiss Support Measure Partners.

7. **The Programme Component 2: EUROSTARS**, shall be implemented in partnership with Innosuisse - Swiss Innovation Agency – who will also be acting as a technical backstopping.

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Article 5 – Support Measure Steering Committees

1. The NCU shall establish the Support Measure Steering Committee as defined in Article 4.11 of the Regulations. The Support Measure Steering Committee shall assume the tasks as defined in Article 4.11 of the Regulations.
2. The Support Measure Steering Committee shall be composed of the following members:
 - a) National Coordination Unit (NCU, as Chair)
 - b) Ministry of Science and Education (for Programme Component 1)
 - c) Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (for Programme Component 2)
 - d) HRZZ (as Programme Component Operator 1)
 - e) HAMAG-BICRO (as Programme Component Operator 2)
 - f) Swiss Contribution Office (SCO)
3. The following members shall have a voting right:
 - a) NCU
 - b) Ministry of Science and Education (for Programme Component 1)
 - g) Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (for Programme Component 2)
4. Decisions in SC shall be reached by consensus of voting members,
5. The Programme Component Operator 2 (HAMAG-BICRO) shall act as secretary and shall assume the tasks set forth in Article 4.11 Paragraph 7 of the Regulations.
6. The Steering Committee meeting shall take place at least once a year in line with Article 4.11 paragraph 6 of the Regulations.
7. In addition to the Support Measure Steering Committee, for the Programme Component 1 (MCJRP), there is a separate Steering Committee organised and with responsibilities as foreseen in the Programme Component Document (Annex D).

Article 6 – Advance payments

In accordance with Article 8.3 of the Regulations no advance payments shall be made under this Support Measure for Programme Component 2. For Programme Component 1 pre-financing to SNSF is planned under the Mandate Agreement with SDC.

Article 7 – Policy dialogue

A policy dialogue is not foreseen for this Support Measure.

Article 8 – Procurement

The procurements under this Support Measure Agreement shall be made according to Chapter 7 of the Regulations (Croatian/national and EU Public procurement legislation).

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Article 9 – Post-completion obligations and ownership of assets

1. The post-completion obligations related to the assets (operating assets as well as equipment, installations and buildings) financed by the Swiss contribution under this Support Measure as well as their ownership are described in Article 4.15 of the Regulations.
2. In accordance with Article 4.15 paragraph 7 of the Regulations the Parties agree that for the duration of the Support Measure the ownership of the assets provided with the Swiss Contribution shall be with the receiving entities (grantees).

For the duration of the Support Measure the assets shall be used in accordance with Article 4.15 paragraph 6 of the Regulations.

The NCU or the Executing Agency shall ensure that the receiving entity agrees under contract to fulfil the obligations set out in Article 4.15 paragraph 2 of the Regulations concerning equipment, installations and buildings financed by the Contribution.

3. In accordance with Article 4.15 paragraph 7 of the Regulations the Parties agree that following completion of the Support Measure the use and ownership of the assets provided with the support of the Swiss Contribution shall be with the receiving entities (grantees).

The NCU or the Executing Agency shall ensure that the receiving entity agrees under contract to fulfil the obligations set out in Article 4.15 paragraph 2 of the Regulations concerning equipment, installations and buildings financed by the Contribution.

4. In accordance with Article 4.15 paragraph 9 of the Regulations the Parties hereby agree that the receiving entities (grantees) shall have full proprietary rights in and to the results of the activities performed under this Support Measure, shall retain the rights to any intellectual property, including copyright, and shall have the right to any revenues generated by the intellectual property rights.

5. Specificities for Component 1 - In accordance with Article 4.15, paragraph 7 of the Regulations, the Parties agree that for the duration and after completion of each Joint Research Project, the use and ownership of the assets provided with the support of the Swiss contribution shall be established by the applicable funding regulations of the SNSF. In accordance with Article 4.15 paragraph 9 of the Regulations, the Parties agree that the property of the results, and all property rights (including their revenues) shall be established by the applicable funding regulations of the SNSF.

Article 10 – Reimbursement Procedures, Reporting, Audits, Compliance

1. Reimbursement Procedures, Reporting, Auditing and compliance rules are set out in the Framework Agreement and the Regulations.
2. The specific provisions of Programme Component 1 in relation to the provisions of Article 10.1 are regulated in the Programme Component Document as stated in Article 4.5.
3. For Programme Component 1, the external audit of SNSF's annual statements is carried out as part of the regular audit of the SNSF by the Federal Audit Office. The corresponding audit results are sent to the SDC.

Article 11- Annexes

The following Annexes are governed by this Support Measure Agreement:

Annex A: Final version of the Support Measure Proposal 5 February 2024, including Log frame

Annex B: Budget

Annex C: Decision Letter from SDC

Annex D: Programme Component Document (MCJRP)

Article 12 - Amendments

The Support Measure may be modified according to Article 4.12 of the Regulations. In the cases as described in Article 4.12 Paragraph 8 of the Regulations, the modification of the Support Measure shall be formalised by way of an amendment to this Support Measure Agreement. This shall be done by signing the amendment by the Parties.

Article 13 - Suspension and Termination

The Support Measure Agreement may be suspended or terminated in accordance with Article 4.16 of the Regulations.

Article 14 - Clause on electronic signature

The Parties expressly agree that this agreement and its amendment may be validly concluded by means of an electronic signature process and then archived exclusively in electronic form. By electronic signature, the parties mean a technical process which, on the one hand, makes it possible to ensure the identity of the signatory and his membership of the signing party and, on the other hand, guarantees the integrity of the signed document.

Article 15 – Entry into force and duration

1. This Support Measure Agreement covers the duration of the Support Measure as stated in Article 2 paragraph 3.
2. This Support Measure Agreement shall enter into force on the date of the last signature of the Parties and remain in force until all obligations under it have been fulfilled.

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Signed in Zagreb on 12 March 2024, in two original copies in the English language.

For the Swiss Agency for Development and
Cooperation

For the National Coordination Unit of Croatia



Urs Hammer
Ambassador of Switzerland to the Republic of
Croatia



Sime Erlic
Minister of Regional Development and EU
Funds

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Annex A:

**Final version of the Support Measure Proposal
5 February 2024, including Logframe**

on
the Support Measure
Research Programme Croatia

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Second Swiss Contribution

Croatia

Support Measure Proposal

05.02.2024

Title	
Executing Agency	The Croatian Science Foundation, Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovation and Investments (HAMAG-BICRO)
Partner State Support Measure Code (if any)	
Support Measure Type	Programme

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1. Basic information

Title	
Support Measure Type	Programme
Objective	Promoting economic growth and social dialogue, reducing (youth-) unemployment
Thematic Area	Research and innovation
Planned Duration [months]	72
Requested Swiss contribution (CHF)	8.000.000
Requested co-financing rate of Switzerland [%]	85%
Name of the Executing Agency 1	
Croatian Science Foundation	
Type of entity	National administration
If type of entity is "other", describe the type briefly	
Name of contact person	Ms Jasminka Boljević
Position	Head of International Cooperation Department
Correspondence address	Ilica 24
E-Mail	jasminka@hrzz.hr
Webpage and social media (if any)	www.hrzz.hr Twitter: @hrzz_science https://www.linkedin.com/company/76932401/
Phone	0038512356990
	Mobile
Name of the Executing Agency 2	
Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovation and Investments (HAMAG-BICRO)	
Type of entity	National administration
If type of entity is "other", describe the type briefly	
Name of contact person	Ms Marija Galeković
Position	Acting Head of International Cooperation Unit

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Correspondence address	Ksaver 208, 10 000 Zagreb	
E-Mail	marija.galekovic@hamagbicro.hr	
Webpage and social media (if any)	https://hamagbicro.hr/ https://www.linkedin.com/company/hamag---croatian-agency-for-sme-s/ https://www.facebook.com/HAMAG.BICRO/	
Phone	0038514891863	Mobile
Has the Executing Agency previously received funding from the Swiss Contribution? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		

2. Strategic Support Measure description

2.1 Lead

The programme contributes to Croatia's economic growth and competitiveness by strengthening research excellence and innovation capacities of Croatian research organizations, universities and enterprises and by facilitating the research and innovation cooperation with international partners. Among others, the expected outcomes are:

- Creation of long-lasting networks between Switzerland and Croatia
- Enhancing innovation capacities of research institutions and/or the private sector
- National research institutions produce internationally recognized research results and shape national debates and policy dialogue.

The current proposal builds upon the two programmes successfully implemented within the previous Swiss-Croatian Cooperation Programme – Croatian-Swiss Research Programme 2017-2023 and EUROSTARS. These two programmes were implemented as separate programmes but were joined into a single programme with two separately managed components due to similar objectives.

2.2 Context and relevance

PC1: MCJRP

According to Eurostat, the percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) expenditure on R&D (GERD) of Croatia increased from 0.73% in 2006 to 1.25% in 2020, growing at an average annual rate of 4.21%. Despite improving, this is well below the EU-28 average (2,32% in 2020). Another issue in R&D in Croatia is low mobility of Croatian researchers. International mobility can have a significant impact on research outcomes and discovery. Researchers who cross international borders are more productive and tend to have higher citation rates than those with no international experience. According to the publication "[A research landscape assessment of Croatia](#)" (Elsevier, 2020), 86% of Croatian researchers can be considered "sedentary", i.e., have never been affiliated with an institution outside their country of origin. Croatia's research impact (measured by citations) is at or slightly below the global average. The percentage of scientific publications of Croatian researchers in most quoted scientific

publications in Croatia scores 3.2%, which is well below the EU average (10%). In comparison, the share of publications in the top 10% most cited is 9.3%, with values similar to other widening countries that will be participating in the Programme proposed herein, such as Poland and Bulgaria (source: Croatian Smart Specialization Strategy). According to the European Patent Office, Croatia had 4,26 patents per 1 million inhabitants (the EU average was 110 patents per 1 mil. inhabitants).

International collaboration, or the number of publications published by two or more authors from different countries, can be regarded as one possible driver for impact. In 2018, 43% of Croatian publications stemmed from international collaboration and efforts are still needed to stimulate international cooperation and mobility.

At the same time, cross-border collaboration is in line with ERA (European Research Area) actions set by the [ERA Policy Agenda](#) for the period 2022-2024, in particular its Action 4. Promote attractive research careers, talent circulation and mobility and Action 9. Promote international cooperation. High researcher mobility is likely to foster new knowledge creation and spillover benefits for the economy. This accelerates the development of new production processes, products and services, which drive innovation and stimulate economic growth. Implementation of multilateral research projects will ensure cooperation between scientists from EU-13 countries and Switzerland, guarantee the transfer of scientific knowledge and promote international cooperation among involved countries, thus improving EU-wide access to excellence.

One of the strategic goals of the **National Development Strategy 2030 (NRS)** is to increase the competitiveness and innovation of the Croatian economy through the development of science and technology, which is based on greater investment in research, development and innovation, and especially on strengthening scientific excellence, encouraging open science and better connecting the academic, research and business sectors. NRS also emphasizes the importance of greater investment in the development of research careers, given that scientists are the most important part of human capital. NRS advocates the creation of better working conditions for scientists and researchers in the early stages of career development, which largely depend on encouraging and promoting scientific excellence, advancement and rewards based on achieved scientific results, and opportunities for international networking and cooperation.

National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NPOO) defines policy priorities in the field of science and technology, which are, among others:

- (i) reform of science and the academic scientific research sector in order to achieve high standards of excellence and creation of innovations,
- (ii) development of research capacities, with an emphasis on human potential in STEM and ICT fields,
- (iii) reform in the financing of research and innovation through a new institutional framework and programs for research, technological development and innovation, especially in the fields of information and communication technology, artificial intelligence and robotics, biotechnology and green technologies.

The reform of the research capacities includes application of several instruments for enhancing human research capacities, including start-up programmes, international mobility and mobility with economic sector. MCJRP is complementary to these NPOO instruments aimed at enhancing human capacities in research and it does so by enabling international cooperation and international transfer of knowledge, but also by supporting employment of young researchers.

The goals and interventions defined in the draft version of the **Smart Specialization Strategy 2029 (S3)** relate to increasing productivity and economic diversification of Croatia by improving

scientific excellence, intensifying the connection between the research and business sector and increasing the innovation capacity of the business sector.

The improvement of scientific excellence is based on improving the financing conditions for scientific excellence, developing the capacity of researchers and strengthening the research infrastructure.

Developing the capacity of researchers at an early stage of career development is important in order to strengthen human resources for conducting excellent science and retaining talented scientists in Croatia. They should get opportunities to develop research skills, participate in the work of top international research groups, and have the opportunity to establish their own research group and lead research projects. The activities that support these special sub-goals are the Young Researchers Career Development Project - training of new PhDs, which HRZZ has been implementing since 2014, as well as the Mobility Program for Young Researchers, the Program for Establishing an Independent Career, and the Career Development Program for Young Researchers, which HRZZ will implement through NPOO.

Another special goal assumes a better connection and transfer of knowledge between the research and business sectors through collaborative research projects, by seeking new partnerships after completed projects and by bringing the results of research and development closer to the market. The activity that supports this special sub-goal is the Targeted Scientific Research Program, which will be implemented by HRZZ as an implementing body through NPOO.

HRZZ is the central organization for financing scientific research and researchers in the early stages of career development in all scientific fields in the Republic of Croatia. In order to finance the best Croatian scientists and their ideas, HRZZ has developed an independent and competitive funding system based on international quality criteria in science. HRZZ has developed strong and heterogeneous portfolio of national and international funding instruments where leading Croatian scientists conduct nationally significant or internationally competitive research and enables international networking and connection.

HRZZ has already gained significant experience of running schemes devoted to fostering scientific excellence. Their programmes have enabled Croatian scientists to contribute to the global effort in tackling grand challenges but also to develop their individual careers, launch original ideas, establish research groups, and to attract young talents to science, especially through the three national grant schemes: Research Projects, Installation Research Projects and Young Researchers' Career Development. The HRZZ has also explored collaboration with foreign partners in order to diversify and expand its offer to the scientific community in Croatia, e.g., through the "WEAVE Programme", ERA-NET or "Tenure Track Pilot Programme". The national programmes have continued largely unchanged through repeated funding calls utilising the state budget. The proposed Multilateral Call for Joint Research projects complements HRZZ portfolio of programmes. The added values of MCJRP, in comparison to other international programmes within HRZZ portfolio, are the following: 1) necessary inclusion of a Swiss partner, 2) equal distribution of budget among partners and 3) collaboration of widening countries.

The S3 strategy mentioned above also provides for establishment of institutional dialogue and collaboration between HRZZ and other partner agencies, primarily HAMAG-BICRO. In the new programme portfolio defined by S3, HRZZ and HAMAG-BICRO have been defined as two leading agencies in Croatia for financing Research, Development and Innovation activities (R&D&I). HRZZ should be focused on lower TRL stages, while HAMAG-BICRO should cover higher TLR stages. The S3 Strategy 2029 also provides for HRZZ and HAMAG-BICRO to be part of the same Unit for implementing and monitoring S3 activities.

The Multilateral Call for Joint Research Projects (MCJRP) builds upon the previous experience under the 1st Swiss contribution where SNSF has implemented several bilateral programmes

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with interested EU-13 countries. Croatian Swiss Research Programme (CSRP) is a bilateral programme (2017-2023) which supported scientific cooperation in the form of Joint Research projects between Switzerland and Croatia, in all scientific disciplines. CSRP is implemented jointly by the SNSF, being the Executing Agency, and the HRZZ, being the Croatian partner. Total budget foreseen for the implementation of the CSRP is CHF 4,67 mil., of which CHF 4 mil. has been secured within the Swiss contribution and CHF 0,67 mil. is co-financed by the Republic of Croatia. The Call for Proposals, which was open between October 2017 and January 2018, saw almost 120 project proposals submitted, which shows great interest in this type of collaboration. A total of 11 sub-projects were selected for financing, which started in the period between 1 January 2019 and 1 September 2019 and were implemented for a period of 3-4 years. These projects ensured a direct co-operation, know-how and technology transfer between 14 research organisations in Croatia and Switzerland that are hosting sub-projects. Outputs of the JRPs are presented below:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Scientific Publications	6	15	24	14	59
Data Sets	0	0	1	0	1
Academic Events	17	8	31	2	58
Knowledge Transfer	2	1	2	3	8
Public Communication	1	4	2	2	9
Collaboration	-	-	-		12 countries
Use inspired outputs	1	4	1	0	6
Third party funds	0	0	0	0	0
Follow up projects	0	3	0	0	3
Awards	0	1	2	1	4

Within the 11 JRPs, 12 doctoral students, 5 post-doctoral researchers, 4 expert associates have been employed at Host organisations in Croatia and 7 doctoral students, 3 postdoctoral researchers and 3 further staff have been employed at Host organisations in Switzerland,

The collaboration between HRZZ and SNSF has been strengthened through this joint implementation. There were altogether five trainings between SNSF and HRZZ in total within CSRP implementation, which were more an exchange of experiences than a unilateral transfer of knowledge. Overall, it can be said that the outputs delivered through CSRP were very solid, especially given the difficult situation with COVID and the earthquake when many researchers could not work in their labs for extended periods of time. Moreover, most of the publications resulting from project implementation were peer-reviewed, which attests to their quality. It was

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decided that a questionnaire will be used in order to gain more qualitative information for the CSRP.

The Multilateral Call for Joint Research Projects (MCJRP) responds to the Croatian scientific community's demand for the continuation of CSRP and more international integration. It does so by mobilising research capacities in Switzerland and in participating EU-13 countries and by supporting scientific cooperation in the form of Joint Research Projects (JRPs) among Switzerland, Croatia and partner countries through the provision of research grants. JRPs shall enable scientists from Croatia and other EU-13 countries, jointly with scientists from Switzerland, to undertake, in the form of consortia, research activities addressing specific problems in all scientific disciplines. Research is carried out at the respective research facilities involved. At the same time, reciprocal visits and short stays in Switzerland or other participating countries of a few weeks for researchers from Croatia and vice-versa may also be supported within JRPs. HRZZ will be responsible for the preparation and implementation of the national component of the MCJRP.

PC2: EUROSTARS

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the Croatian economy as they make up a significant portion of registered businesses in Croatia.

SMEs generate employment, contribute to increased production, drive development and innovation, and enhance the competitiveness of the Croatian economy. They will continue to play a key role in the economic, societal and environmental challenges. Despite being engines of growth, SMEs face various challenges, with access to funding sources for research and development being one of the most significant obstacles.

According to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, Croatia, per capita, has increased budget allocations for research and development, but not enough to reach the EU level. Between 2015 and 2018, the Croatian GBAORD (Government budget appropriations or outlays for R&D) remained at approximately 350 million euros, which represents an increase of only 50 million euros compared to the situation before joining the EU, and this is still less than half of the EU average per inhabitant.

Total investments in research and development have been increased from 0.86% of GDP in 2017 to 1.11% of GDP in 2019, but investments of the business sector stagnate at 0.49% of GDP.

Also, according to the European Innovation Scoreboard, which compares innovation performance among EU countries and neighbouring regions, Croatia falls into the group of emerging innovators. This scoreboard helps countries assess the strengths and weaknesses of their national innovation systems and identify areas that require attention. The EU countries are categorized into four performance groups: Innovation Leaders, Strong Innovators, Moderate Innovators, and Emerging Innovators. Although almost all EU countries have improved their innovation performance over the period 2015-2022 compared to the EU in 2015, the EU's innovation divide remains. The performance groups tend to be geographically concentrated, with the Innovation Leaders and most Strong Innovators being located in Northern and Western Europe, and most of the Moderate and Emerging Innovators in Southern and Eastern Europe.

Croatia is currently an Emerging Innovator, with performance at 66.5% of the EU average. Performance is above the average of the Emerging Innovators group (50.0%) and is increasing (15.5%-points) at a rate higher than that of the EU (9.9%-points), but improvements are still necessary as Croatia remains to be in the group of Emerging Innovators. For comparison, Switzerland is in an Innovation Leader, with performance at 142.4% of the EU average (the performance average for the Innovation Leader group is at 134.4%).

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Eureka is an international inter-governmental network established in 1985 as an agreement between countries to foster European competitiveness and integration and to encourage research, development, and innovation (R&D&I) collaboration. Since then, Eureka has expanded to include the European Commission and over 48 countries in Europe and beyond with shared values and a common understanding of the importance of international cooperation. The network supports market-oriented R&D&I projects of companies, universities, and research organisations in all technology fields. During the last decades, Eureka has been committed to delivering simple, accessible, and highly visible programmes that are attractive options for both the R&D&I community and public authorities.

Eurostars, a program under the Eureka Network, is the largest international funding initiative for SMEs collaborating on research and development (R&D) projects to create innovative products, processes, or services for commercialization, thereby gaining a competitive advantage. Eurostars provides funding for transnational innovation projects that can be swiftly brought to market. It supports innovative SMEs and their partners, such as large companies, academic institutions, and research organizations, by funding collaborative R&D and innovation projects that result in the creation of new products, processes, and services with the potential for rapid commercialization in European and global markets.

Croatia's participation in the Eurostars program aims to enhance the competitiveness of Croatian companies by enabling SMEs to develop innovative products, processes, or services through partnerships. The goal is to achieve better business results and improve competitiveness by commercializing newly developed innovations.

This proposal is aligned with two national strategies: the 2030 National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

The goals of the abovementioned strategies are to support the development of a circular economy, encourage investment in research, technological development, and innovation; encourage cooperation between business and the research sector; improve the business environment and quality of management in the public sector; and finally encourage the modernization and decarbonisation of energy-intensive industries.

During the initial participation in Eurostars, Croatia faced challenges such as a low number of project applications with Croatian partners and difficulties finding project partners. To address these challenges, HAMAG-BICRO, the National Funding Body for the Eurostars in Croatia, initiated the first Swiss-Cro cooperation programme in 2017, which incorporates the Eurostars. The goal of the programme was to increase the number of approved applications in which Croatian small and medium-sized enterprises are partners through various activities.

Since the implementation of the first Swiss-Cro cooperation programme, Croatia increased number of project applications and approvals involving Croatian SME partners. Various activities were conducted, including the co-financing of approved projects and support activities such as allocation of vouchers for writing project applications, and organization of workshops and guidance for Croatian companies participating in matchmaking events within the Enterprise Europe Network project.

Before the first Swiss-Cro cooperation program, Croatia had only one approved project. From 2016-2019, the number of applications varied between 4-9 per year, in 2020 it jumped to 27 and in 2021 to as many as 32 applications. Number of approved applications varied from 1-2 through the years until 2022 when 6 applications were approved. The average yearly number of applications for the period from 2016-2022 is 14, while the yearly average of approved projects for the same period is 2. The vouchers for consulting services proved to be exceptionally beneficial supporting activity, as a significant number of approved projects utilized this support (out of a total of 12 projects approved in the period from 2018-2022, 5 of them used vouchers for consulting services). Guiding Croatian companies to events also proved useful for partner search, although limitations in sector-specific events prevented the

participation of many entrepreneurs. It is also important to note that establishing partnerships for program applications takes time, and immediate results are not to be expected.

From the above presented statistics, it is evident that the first Swiss-Cro cooperation programme was successful and through it a positive trend has been initiated.

2.3 Impact hypothesis / Objectives

The programme contributes to the economic growth and competitiveness of Croatia by strengthening the research excellence and innovation capacities of Croatian research organizations, universities and enterprises and by facilitating the research and innovation cooperation with international partners.

The overall programme objective is to be achieved through two distinctive components: one focusing at the outcome level on increasing the competitiveness of the researchers by facilitating their participation in Multilateral Call for Joint Research Projects as well as enabling their better integration within European and international research networks and the other on improving the innovation capacities and international competitiveness of Croatian SMEs by strengthening their participation in the EUROSTARS programme.

The experience acquired through participation in MCJRP will enable researchers to contribute to the knowledge-based Croatian economy and to build up long-term sustainable research partnerships between Croatia, Switzerland and additional four participating EU-13 countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania), with a view to, among other things, encourage joint participation in the EU Framework Programme Horizon Europe. By providing grants for collaborative projects, outputs of the programme component relate primarily to strengthening individual capacities, strengthening research institutions, transfer and sharing of knowledge, as well as strengthening the research cooperation.

The Eurostars programme component primarily aims to generate increased interest of Croatian SMEs in programme itself, leading to a higher participation rate within EUROSTARS programme compared to previous years. The increased level of international research and development cooperation between Croatian and foreign SMEs will result in the introduction of innovative products, processes and services to the market thus in turn stimulating economic growth and job creation.

Beyond providing direct financial support for selected projects, within this component priority will be given to different supporting activities for SMEs, such as provision of expertise for preparing quality project applications, provision of guidance through selection process as well as facilitation of SMEs networking for establishing project partnerships. Special emphasis will be made in enabling potential cooperation between Croatian and Swiss SMEs.

2.4 Intervention Strategy

PC1: MCJRP

Multilateral Call for Joint Research Projects will ensure additional source of funding for research projects (beside ESIF, RRF and state budget funds), increase the mobility and competitiveness of Croatian researchers and promote their integration within international networks. It will contribute to the improvement of the quality of Croatian PhD studies by know-

how and technology transfer between Swiss and participating EU-13 countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania).

From an organisational point of view, the multilateral approach allows for the reduction of administrative costs and simplifies the administrative procedures for research funding organisations. Instead of having each funding agency implement separate calls reserved for applicants from their own country and evaluation procedures, a single procedure is implemented, thus reducing the labour. Calls with a larger pool of eligible applicants increase the competition in comparison to calls reserved for applicants from a single country, thereby improving the quality of research teams and funded research proposals.

Collaborations beyond a bilateral relationship allow networks to be built between research groups from the participating countries. Also, building on the complementarity of research groups from different countries and institutions allows for tackling more complex research questions. Furthermore, additional expertise is concentrated among the research partners and access to knowledge and technologies can be facilitated. Multilateral cooperation additionally fosters capacity building and generates exchange opportunities for all involved countries. Fostering cross-border collaboration also helps overcoming fragmentation within the European research landscape and boosts brain circulation within these countries.

Expected key outputs from the programme are:

1. at least 10 doctoral and master graduates (of the partner state) who receive their degrees one to two years following their participation in the joint research project
2. at least 30 joint research papers submitted and/or published by researchers within the project
3. at least 5 newly established or extended joint networks
4. at least 20 seminars, workshops and conferences attended in which researchers financed through the MCJRP played an active role
5. 10 researchers who have gained experience abroad in the framework of research activities
6. joint or single applications to other sources of funding, including Horizon

These outputs will in the longer term contribute to increased competitiveness of Croatian researchers and research institutes in the European Research Area and integration of Croatian researchers within international networks.

Dedicated EU-13 cooperation will develop stronger ties among participating EU-13 research funding organizations (RFOs) and new collaborative networks on the researchers' level which should result in new applications to bilateral and multilateral calls under above mentioned programmes and instruments. On the organisational level it is expected that participating countries' RFOs will develop stronger cooperation and exchange of best practice. It is expected that forming stronger ties on the organisational level could contribute to developing instruments and measures aimed at giving a stronger push to internationalisation of researchers and thus decreasing the science divide in the EU-13 countries compared to older EU member states. This will have an overall positive effect on future participation of all partners in the European Research Area.

The Swiss National Science Foundation, as the Programme Component operator, is responsible for the set-up, management and implementation of the MCJRP, for the build-up, contracting and supervision of the JRPs, and for the overall reporting on the MCJRP. For many of the tasks, SNSF collaborates closely with the Support Measure Partners of the participating EU-13 countries. SNSF is responsible for financial management of the Swiss contribution. The full amount of the Swiss contribution (85% in the case of Croatia) for each project selected for funding will be transferred by the SNSF to the Swiss researchers in annual instalments as advanced payments. The Swiss researcher will be responsible for transferring a predefined share to research teams from other participating countries, while retaining a portion of the

funds for its own research costs. These shares will be defined in the Grant Agreement, but funds should be distributed equally among the consortium members. The partner RFOs from Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania will be responsible for distributing the national contribution (15% in the case of Croatia) to the research teams from their respective countries as well as monitoring how these funds are spent. Research teams from the participating EU-13 countries will then receive funds from two sources – a portion of funds from the Swiss PI and the remaining portion from their national RFO.

Support Measure Partners of the participating EU-13 countries will participate in the preparation and implementation of the MCJRP and are responsible for the implementation of the MCJRP on the national level. More detail about the modalities of collaboration will be defined in the Memorandum of Understanding that will be signed between SNSF and all the Support Measure Partners.

PG2: EUROSTARS

Eurostars, as the largest international funding programme, provides support to research-performing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in developing innovative products, processes, and services to gain a competitive advantage. It achieves this by offering funding for transnational innovation projects that are swiftly brought to market.

Eurostars is an established programme involving 37 countries, and the evaluation process takes place at the programme level, reducing evaluation costs. The competition at the programme level ensures that only the best applications succeed.

The EUREKA Secretariat (ESE) in Brussels serves as the central support unit for the network, managing the EUREKA project database, and handling marketing, communication, and network development activities. It is also responsible for the overall implementation of the Eurostars program, evaluation process included.

Within each participating country, a representative national funding body supports organizations by funding international R&D projects and conducts legal and financial viability checks on organizations applying for the Eurostars programme from their respective countries. HAMAG BICRO, as a Croatian funding body for Eurostars programme, performs such individual eligibility checks as part of the application process.

Croatia has been participating in the Eurostars programme since 2015, aiming to enable Croatian SMEs to develop innovative solutions through partnerships. However, during the initial implementation in Croatia, applications with Croatian partners received low evaluations due to poor quality of the applications.

With the initiation of the first Swiss-Cro cooperation programme, which incorporated the Eurostars programme, a positive trend was observed. The continuation of the programme aims to support Croatian R&D-performing SMEs, enabling them to hand in Eurostars projects (with Swiss partners or partners from other countries) and to compete successfully within the Eurostars programme.

To achieve these objectives, HAMAG- BICRO will implement combination of financing and diverse supporting activities which proved successful during the first Swiss-Cro cooperation programme.

HAMAG-BICRO will sign contracts and provide co-financing to selected beneficiaries after creation of a ranking list for each call by EUREKA Secretariat. Throughout the implementation of the contracted projects, HAMAG-BICRO will also provide financial monitoring to ensure proper utilization of the funds and adherence to the agreed-upon project plans and objectives.

Supporting activities consists of promoting the programme through organizing workshops and info days with the aim to raise awareness of the Programme, facilitate networking opportunities

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by providing assistance to entrepreneurs in finding international partners and providing consultancy support for project application preparation and evaluation of project selection results.

Promotion of the programme will be implemented directly by HAMAG- BICRO staff, while for networking activities HAMAG- BICRO will grant vouchers directly to entrepreneurs on an open call basis (entrepreneurs will apply for a networking event of their choosing). Additionally, vouchers will be granted for consultants to prepare project proposals and provide feedback to EUROSTARS applicants on how to improve the project proposal in case of negative selection results. .

Expected key outputs of the programme component are as follows:

- at least 100 vouchers for consultancy services granted
- at least 50 companies supported to travel to matchmaking events by granting vouchers
- at least 5 info days organized
- at least 14 co-financed projects

It is expected that at least 100 project applications will be submitted for EUROSTARS during the first 4 year of implementation of the Programme and out of them, at least 14 will be supported for EUROSTARS financing. The maximum amount of public co-financing per SME application is 200.000 euros, out of which 25% is granted by Horizon and 75% by HAMAG-BICRO through this Programme. Obligatory private co-financing differs as it is regulated by state aid rules, but at minimum 40% of total foreseen eligible SME costs should be financed by SMEs own sources.

Croatia and Switzerland are both members of the Eureka initiative and support research & development (R&D) cooperation with partners from both countries through different EUREKA instruments, especially the Eurostars programme.

HAMAG- BICRO will specifically focus its attention on facilitating collaboration of Croatian and Swiss SMEs. In this regard, the already established cooperation with Implementation Agency Innosuisse will be continued and encouraged.

The cooperation between HAMAG-BICRO and Innosuisse will specifically focus on Eurostars as the program follows clear rules, tight deadlines and adheres to strict auditing procedures. It will include efforts to support companies in matchmaking, B2B and mentoring of companies interested in the programme and support all countries matching with Croatian entities who achieve the Eurostars label and funding.

HAMAG BICRO plans to support joint networking events and workshops where Swiss and Croatian SMEs can come together, discuss common challenges, and find potential and learn about the business environment, best practices, and network in the other country.

2.5 Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiaries are researchers at the public or private universities, scientific institutes, non-profit research institutions and SMEs in Croatia and partner countries, as well as executive agencies. Indirect beneficiaries are scientific community, general population and policy makers.

PC1: MCJRP

The MCJRP supports the implementation of multilateral joint research projects realised by a group of researchers from Croatia, Switzerland and four other participating EU-13 countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania). Research group from each country is headed by a Principal Investigator (PI), while the Swiss PI will be considered the Lead PI of the entire

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consortium. As per the Act on the Croatian Science Foundation, researchers working within the following types of public institutions are eligible to receive funding from the Croatian Science Foundation:

- Public or private universities,
- Scientific institutes
- Non-profit research institutions
- Croatian academy of sciences and arts

Of the 11 JRPs funded within the First Swiss contribution (CSRP programme), 10 were implemented in the City of Zagreb (HR05), while one project was implemented in the Adriatic Region (HR03). Since the major Croatian research institutions are located in Zagreb, we expect that the more than half of projects within MCJRP will again be funded in this region.

The Programme Component budget has been planned for the scenario in which each Support Measure Partner would fund 10 teams from its country. Taking into account various country combinations, around 20 multilateral research projects are expected to be funded in total.

PC2: EUROSTARS

The Eurostars programme component is specifically designed to cater to the needs of SMEs, focusing on the development of new products, processes, and services, as well as providing access to transnational and international markets.

The component will not be geographically focused, but special attention will be paid to the promotion of the programme in the areas outside Zagreb. This will be achieved throughout organization of the info days.

The programme involves the participation of 37 countries. While non-participating countries are not eligible for direct funding, organizations from these countries can still join a Eurostars consortium if they are willing to self-fund their portion of the project.

Each participating country has the flexibility to determine the types of organizations it will support to participate in the programme. In the case of Croatia, SMEs participating in the program must be registered as companies and not as sole traders or crafts.

Several stakeholders can indirectly benefit from this support measure:

- **Research and Development (R&D) Institutions:** R&D institutions can indirectly benefit from the support measure as they may collaborate with the supported SMEs in research projects. The partnerships fostered through the project can lead to knowledge exchange, joint research activities, and potential future collaborations, strengthening the overall R&D ecosystem.
- **Academia and Universities:** Academic institutions and universities can benefit indirectly by engaging in collaborative research projects with the supported SMEs. This collaboration can provide opportunities for faculty and researchers to work closely with industry partners, access funding for research activities, and contribute to knowledge creation and dissemination.
- **Innovation Ecosystem:** The overall innovation ecosystem can benefit indirectly from the support measure. By supporting SMEs in developing innovative products, processes, and services, the project contributes to the growth and vibrancy of the ecosystem. This can lead to the creation of new job opportunities, increased competitiveness, and the establishment of a supportive environment for future innovation initiatives.

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- **Local Communities:** The support measure can have indirect positive effects on local communities. As SMEs develop innovative solutions, it can lead to economic growth, job creation, and increased market competitiveness. This, in turn, can contribute to the overall prosperity of the local communities, including potential indirect employment opportunities and improved living standards.
- **Other SMEs and Start-ups:** The success and impact of the supported SMEs can inspire and motivate other SMEs and start-ups within the region. The achievements of these companies can serve as examples of what can be accomplished through innovation and collaboration, encouraging other businesses to pursue similar paths and seek support for their own initiatives.

While the primary focus of the support measure is on the direct beneficiaries, namely the supported SMEs, these indirect beneficiaries play a vital role in fostering a dynamic innovation ecosystem, promoting knowledge sharing, and contributing to the overall economic and social development within the region.

2.6 Programme Component Characteristics and regional focus

Is the benefit of the Project national or regional? National Regional

If regional, indicate the benefiting NUTS-2 region(s):

2.7 Overview Swiss Support Measure Partners

Is/are a/several Swiss Support Measure Partner(s) foreseen to be involved in and contributing to the implementation of the Support Measure? Yes No

PC1

Name of the partner organisation Swiss National Science Foundation

If collaboration foreseen in Programme Component, indicate name of Component Multilateral Calls for Joint Research Projects MCJRP

Partnership status Initial contacts established

Type of organisation Choose an element.

Type of support or partnership Choose an element.

Name of contact person Mr Timothy Ryan

Position Scientific Officer

Correspondence address Wildhainweg 3
P.O. Box
CH-3001 Bern

Webpage and social media (if any)

E-Mail	timothy.ryan@snf.ch	
Phone	0041 31 308 21 69	Mobile
Has the partner organisation been previously involved in the Swiss Contribution		
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		

PC2

Name of the partner organisation	Innosuisse – Swiss innovation funding agency	
If collaboration foreseen in Programme Component, indicate name of Component	Eurostars	
Partnership status	Partnership agreement signed - Cooperation within Eureka based on Innovative SME Programme Agreement co-funded by the EU	
Type of organisation	Federal Administration	
Type of support or partnership	Institutional partnership	
Name of contact person	Ms. Colette John-Grant	
Position	Programme Manager	
Correspondence address	Einsteinstrasse 2 P.O. Box CH-3001 Bern	
Webpage and social media (if any)	https://www.innosuisse.ch	
E-Mail	colette.john@innosuisse.ch	
Phone	0041 58 466 77 32	Mobile
Has the partner organisation been previously involved in the Swiss Contribution		
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		

2.8 Sustainability

Since joining EU, Croatian Government is gradually increasing its funding for research and development.

In 2022, the highest amount of funding for research and development was allocated from the state budget, with total amount of 439.6 million euros allocated for R&D activities, which represents an increase of the nominal amount of 6.3 percent compared to the amounts allocated in 2021. However, regarding the share of allocated funds in GDP the budget allocations in the last year made up only 0.66%. One of the main goals of National Development Strategy until 2030 is to increase the competitiveness and innovation of the

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Croatian economy by implementing, amongst other measures, policy priorities in the field of science and technology, such as:

- reform of the system of science and the academic scientific research sector, development of research capacities, with an emphasis on human potential in STEM fields, strengthening scientific excellence and encouraging open science by investing in research infrastructure and internationally significant research projects
- support for research and development activities in the academic scientific research and business sector
- ensuring the conditions for the creation of innovations, the transfer of knowledge and technologies to entrepreneurial ventures in Croatia
- continuous support to the innovation system in order to ensure its strengthening and sustainability through financial programs for research, technological development and innovation, especially in the areas of information and communication technology, artificial intelligence and robotics, biotechnology and green technologies

The continuous evaluation and feedback loops highlighting key achievements and challenges of financed activities within this Programme can help in further fine-tuning of national funding initiatives for research and innovation as well as ensure that the resources are used in the most efficient manner.

PC1: MCJRP

Dedicated EU-13 cooperation will develop stronger ties among EU-13 RFOs and new collaborative networks on the researchers' level, which should enhance their collaboration and enable them to apply with further proposals to the EU framework programme Horizon Europe and other international funding programmes.

Previous research and new knowledge and ideas increase the chances of scientists involved in projects to develop new project ideas and obtain future grants. The Programme will produce a critical mass of researchers from the five participating EU-13 countries that would launch initiatives for easier cross-border access to research infrastructures and freedom of movement within ERA.

On the organisational level, it is expected that participating countries' RFOs will develop stronger cooperation and exchange of best practices. Forming stronger ties on the organisational level is expected to contribute to developing instruments and measures to give a stronger push to internationalisation of researchers and thus decreasing the science divide in the EU-13 compared to older EU member states. This will have an overall positive effect on future participation in ERA for all partners.

The new organizational structure of HRZZ, introduced in 2022, saw the formation of a new department focused on monitoring the impact of funded project and programmes. All the programmes implemented within NPOO under HRZZ's jurisdiction also provide for post-implementation monitoring of beneficiaries in the period of 2 and 5 years after the end of the financing period by means of surveys and indicators that can be measured in the long run, such as number and value of submitted grant applications and value of awarded grants. Due to the complexity of the consortia, it is not realistic that the impact can be monitored on the level of whole consortia; rather, each Partner Organization should monitor research teams from its respective country in line with its existing procedures.

In terms of risks to viability, we predict a risk of lack of willingness to continue multilateral collaboration with other consortium members or in general.

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PC2: EUROSTARS

The sustainability of the programme can be observed in two ways, one of which refers to the sustainability of the component itself, while the other refers to the sustainability of the sub-projects that will be financed. Both are intertwined and can be viewed through following:

- **Long-term partnerships:** One measure of sustainability is the establishment of long-term partnerships between Croatian companies and their international counterparts. If the project successfully facilitates these partnerships, it can contribute to ongoing collaboration and future joint projects beyond the duration of the current initiative.
- **Enhanced innovation capabilities:** The project aims to support Croatian companies in developing innovative products, processes, and services. If the project effectively enhances the innovation capabilities of these companies, it can lead to long-term sustainable growth and competitiveness in the market.
- **Market access and commercialization:** Another measure of sustainability is the ability of the supported companies to access transnational and international markets. If the project assists Croatian companies in successfully entering and expanding their presence in these markets, it can have a positive long-term impact on their business sustainability.
- **Knowledge transfer and capacity building:** The project's success in facilitating knowledge transfer and capacity building within Croatian companies can contribute to their long-term sustainability. If the project enables the transfer of skills, expertise, and best practices, it can strengthen the overall capabilities of the companies involved.
- **Policy impact:** The project's outcomes and experiences can also inform policy development and decision-making processes related to supporting SMEs and fostering innovation. If the project generates valuable insights and lessons learned that influence future policies and programs, it can contribute to a more sustainable and supportive ecosystem for Croatian companies in the long run.
- **Continuation and expansion:** If the project prove to be successful and demonstrates clear value, there may be opportunities for its continuation or expansion beyond the initial implementation phase. This would provide further support to Croatian companies and sustain the positive outcomes achieved.

HAMAG BICRO is dedicated to continuing to provide technical support for SMEs who will show interest in participating in EUROSTARS programme, beyond the support provided through the Swiss contribution. HAMAG BICRO staff allocate time and effort each year in extensive promotion of the EUROSTARS programme and provision of expertise and guidance to the interested SMEs. The results of such efforts are visible mainly through the yearly growth of the number of projects selected for EUROSTARS funding and increased SMEs interest in general towards the Programme. The Swiss contribution presents an added value to further strengthen observed positive trends. In case the implementation of the programme proves successful beyond the initial plans and more applications will be selected for funding through EUROSTARS than available budget within tis Programme Component, HAMAG BICRO will provide co-financing from its own funds to enable SMEs to implement their projects.

2.9 Overview tentative budget

Programme Name	Component	Programme Operator /Type	Proposed Budget Allocation
Multilateral Calls for JRP		HRZZ	7,058,823,53 CHF
Sub-projects			5,294,117,65 CHF
Management costs of SNSF			529.411,76 CHF
Management costs partner country			176.470,59 CHF
Reserve			176.470,59 CHF
EUROSTARS		HAMAG-BICRO	2.352.941,27 CHF
Management costs PC2			16.983,71 CHF
Sub- projects			1.910.803,64 CHF
Supporting activities			425.153,82 CHF

PC1: MCJRP

	Contribution Switzerland in CHF	Contribution partner country in CHF	Total CHF
Total contribution	6.000.000,00	1.050.000,00	7.058.823,53
	85%	15%	100%
Grants for JRPs	5.294.117,65	882.352,94	6.176.470,59
Management costs of SNSF (7,5%)	529.411,76		529.411,76
Management costs partner country (up to 2.5%)		176.470,59	176.470,59
Reserve (2.5%)	176.470,59		176.470,59

PC2: EUROSTARS

	Contribution Switzerland in CHF	Contribution partner country in CHF	Total CHF
Total contribution	2.000.000,00	352.941,17	2.352.941,17
	85%	15%	100%
Management cost programme component			16.983,71
Subprojects			1.910.803,64
Support activities			425.153,82

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2.10 Other strategic issues

There will not be a formal Programme Operator for the Croatian Research Programme (as indicated in the Framework Agreement)

As the two Components have been presented under one Support Measure, there will be only one Support Measure Agreement between the NCU and SDC.

The NCU will conclude two separate Support Measure Implementation Agreements, one with each Programme Component Operators.

The reporting (Annual Reports and Completion Report) will be done at the Support Measure level including the two components. In this regard, the NCU will take on the responsibility of ensuring that formally the two components will be included in one single report. The NCU will not add to or amend the report in terms of its "sectorial" (research-related) content, but act as NCU as defined in the regulations.

With regards to the Reimbursement Requests, they will be provided only for the Eurostars component (as there will be no reimbursements under the MCJRP component).

3. Support Measure readiness

3.1 Context

Is the Support Measure proposal a continuation of a Project or Programme supported under the Swiss Contribution (I)? Yes No

Was the Support Measure proposal declined during a funding-application process by other donors (e.g. EU, Norway/EEA)? Yes No

If it was declined, explain why.

3.2 Preparation process and documents

Feasibility study None necessary / Not applicable

Baseline study, assessment or analysis None necessary / Not applicable

Estimated number of tender dossiers to be prepared	# of dossier not yet prepared	
	# of dossier provisionally prepared	
	# of dossier completely prepared	

Permit(s)/Authorisations required and pending? Yes No

If permit(s)/authorisation(s) required, specify (e.g. building, environmental,

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purchase of land etc.) and note when the corresponding permit(s)/authorisation(s) are expected.

Are legislative changes necessary to implement the Support Measure? Yes No

If legislative changes are necessary, explain and note when the corresponding change is expected to have been made.

Are other (political) decisions necessary to implement the Support Measure? Yes No

If other (political) decisions are necessary, explain and note when the corresponding decisions are expected to have been taken.

PC1:

The implementation of the MCJRP programme is coordinated by SNSF and all participating EU-13 countries. SNSF envisages the following timeframe for the adoption of all relevant documentation and launch of activities.

Milestone	Envisioned timing	Responsible organizations
M1. Finalisation of Project Document	Final draft prepared - Q4 2023	Partner RFOs
M2. Support Measure Agreement between SDC and NCU signed	upon approval of Support Measure Proposal - Q1 2024	SDC, NCU
M3. Mandate Agreement between SDC and SNSF signed	upon completion of M1-: Q1 2024	SDC, SNSF
M4. Support Measure Implementation Agreement between NCU and Programme Operator signed	upon completion of M2- : Q1 2024	NCU, HRZZ
M5. Memorandum of Understanding between Support Measure Partners and SNSF	upon completion of M4 in all participating EU-13 countries – Q1 2024	Partner RFOs
M6. Preparation of the call document	Final draft prepared Q4 2023	Partner RFOs
M7. Launch of the call	Q1 2024 (open for three months)	Partner RFOs

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M8. Eligibility check, peer review, evaluation panel and funding decisions	Q2-Q3 2024	Partner RFOs
M9. Agreement between the Support Measure Partners and the country PIs	Upon completion of M8 (estimation: Q4 2024 – Q1 2025)	Partner RFOs
Consortium Agreement between country PIs and Swiss PIs per JRP	Upon completion of M8 (estimation: Q4 2024 – Q1 2025)	End beneficiaries
Implementation of JRPs	Late 2024/early 2025 - late 2028/early 2029	End beneficiaries

PC2:

Milestone	Envisioned timing	Responsible organizations
Implementation of Eurostars projects		
Announcing the call for Croatia (EUREKA Secretariat is responsible for opening the call)	Periodically twice a year, before the call is open	HAMAG-BICRO
Financial & Viability check of proposals (Croatian Applicants)	Five weeks after a call is closed	HAMAG-BICRO
Synchronization of results and award decision letter	3 months after a call is closed	HAMAG-BICRO, EUREKA Secretariat
Budget clearing	Before contracting	HAMAG-BICRO
Grant Agreement signing between HAMAG-BICRO and Croatian Partner in the Project		HAMAG-BICRO
Payments to the Eurostars Projects	Periodically, based on approved budget of the sub-project	HAMAG-BICRO
Financial and technological monitoring of Eurostars Projects	Continuously	HAMAG-BICRO
Support Activities		
Announcing and opening the Call for Vouchers	Two to three months before the call for proposals and call for proposals are open twice a year (usually in July and December)	HAMAG-BICRO

Organizing evaluation and selecting projects for awarding vouchers	One month after the applications are received	HAMAG-BICRO
Payments of the Vouchers	After evaluation	HAMAG-BICRO
Open call for joint events voucher	Once a year and will be open the whole year	HAMAG-BICRO
Organizing evaluation and selecting projects for joint events voucher	One month after the application is received	HAMAG-BICRO
Payment for the joint event voucher	After evaluation	HAMAG-BICRO
Organization of Info days and workshops	At least one Info Day a year	HAMAG-BICRO

3.3 Application for funds from Support Measure Preparation Fund

Is support from the Support Measure Preparation Fund requested? Yes No

4. Operational Support Measure description

4.1 Applying organisation (Executing Agency)

4.1.1 Financial and personnel information (only to be completed for non-state institutions)

Name of the applying organisation 1
Croatian Science Foundation

Date of establishment 2001 Tax number (if applicable) HR88776522763

Number of employees (last day of previous month): 36

Financial Turnover for each of the 3 previous years [in EUR]
2020 21.355.846,30
2021 30.539.423,72
2022 23.694.945,60

Name of the applying organisation 2
Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovation and Investments (HAMAG-BICRO)

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Date of establishment	2002.	Tax number (if applicable)	25609559342
Number of employees	317		
Financial Turnover for each of the 3 previous years [in EUR]	2020	18.507.513,00	
	2021	24.540.715,00	
	2022	14.299.051,00	

4.1.2 Organisation structures of Executing Agency and Support Measure

The Croatian Science Foundation was established for the purpose of promoting science, higher education and technological development in the Republic of Croatia and supporting scientific, higher education and technological programmes and projects. Ever since its establishment, the Foundation has been funding competitive scientific, developmental and innovation projects, enabling Croatian scientific institutions to conduct state-of-the-art research, thus facilitating them to compete for internationally competitive projects.

MCJRP will be under the jurisdiction of HRZZ's Office for Innovation, R&D and Public Policies, Department for International Cooperation. The Department plans and proposes measures to support the inclusion of Croatian scientists and institutions in European scientific associations and organizations, monitors the implementation of programs such as ERA-NETs and programs within the EU Framework Programs for Research and Innovation. The Department also monitors the implementation of bilateral, multilateral and transnational programs and projects. Jasminka Boljević, the Head of the Department, will be responsible for the overall implementation of the Support Measure Programme. Within the management budget HRZZ has planned part-time employment of an expert who will be responsible for the implementation, monitoring, coordination and promotional activities of the MCJRP.

Their main responsibilities of the Department in relation to the management of the Programme Component include the following activities:

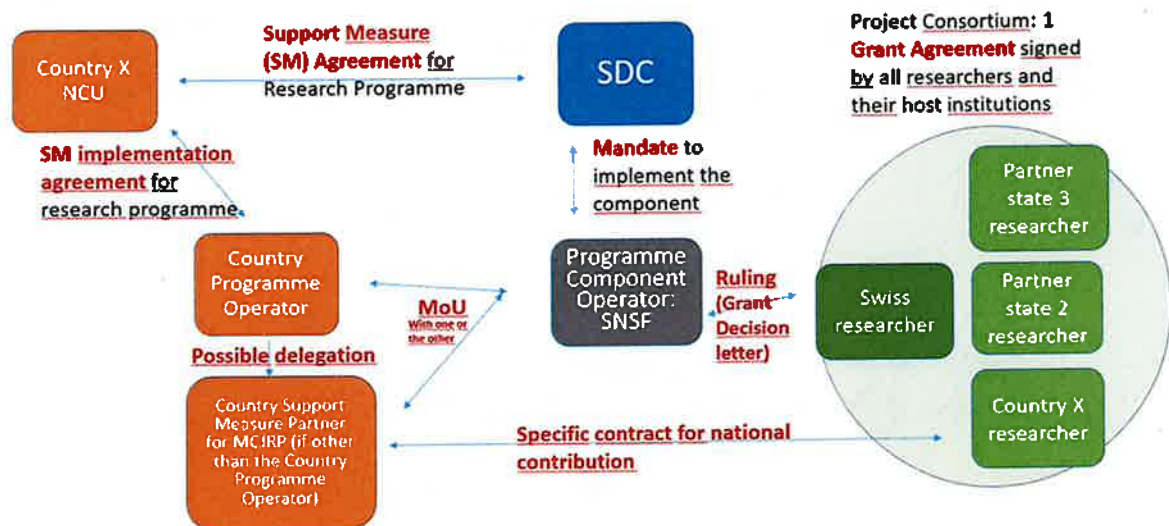
- Provide feedbacks, participate in the discussions of elaboration of the Programme Component Documents;
- Arrange all legal aspects required for the implementation of the MCJRP;
- Organise communication/visibility/information about MCJRP and the call through adequate channels in country;
- Operate as national information point for the national researchers;
- Check eligibility of applicants from country;
- Propose and support SNSF in the identification of experts for the peer reviews and members for the evaluation panel;
- Propose an own member (Board member, Scientific Council member) as voting member of the Steering Committee;
- Staff participate in the Funders Forum;
- Staff participate in the Steering Committee (without voting rights);
- Inform the national PIs about the Ruling (decision) regarding their submitted project;

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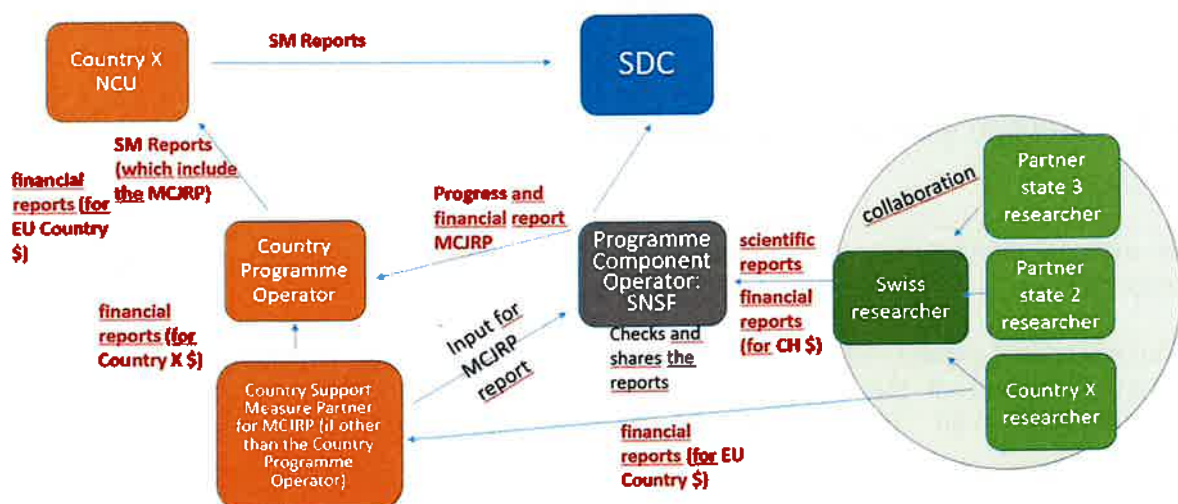
- Ensure specific contract signing with the national PIs and their host institutions for the national contribution for the selected JRP;
- Execute the payments of the national contribution (15%) to the national PIs or the host institution of the PIs;
- Collect, control and approve the annual and final financial reports provided by the national PIs or the host institutions of the PIs;
- Collaborate with the SNSF for the elaboration of the annual and final progress and financial reports for the entire MCJRP;
- Maintain contact with and inform relevant institutions in the country about the MCJRP.

THE MCJRP : CONTRACTUAL SET-UP

(NB: MCJRP is a Programme Component of the Research Programme in each country)



THE MCJRP : REPORTING SET-UP



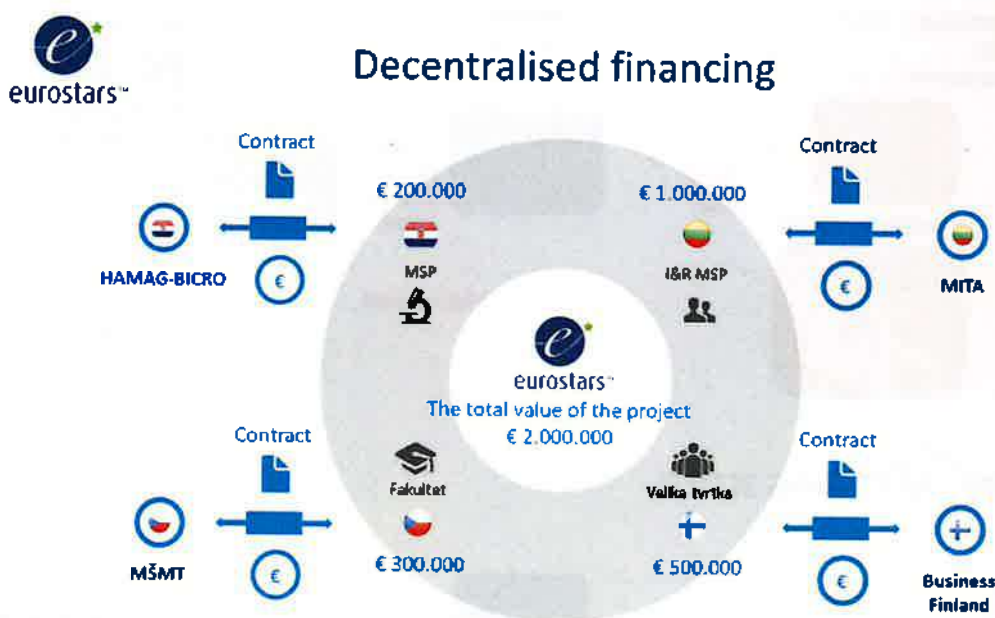
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HAMAG-BICRO is the Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovation and Investments, established by the Government of the Republic of Croatia to enhance SME development, catalyse the innovation process and promote investment. The Agency is an independent institution supervised by the Ministry of Economy, SMEs and Crafts.

The main objective of HAMAG-BICRO is to support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, improve the innovation process and encourage investments and to create a unique system that would support entrepreneurs through all development stages of operation - from research and development of an idea to commercialization and placement on the market.

The Agency implements all programs and projects following prescribed instructions and procedures, ensuring that funds are allocated as intended and all performance indicators are met. The same approach will be upheld for the execution of this programme component.

The International Cooperation Unit within the Entrepreneurship Support and Development Coordination and International Cooperation Sector will oversee the execution of Programme Component 2: Eurostars. As per the organizational structure, this particular unit holds the responsibility for carrying out the Eurostars program. At present, it is actively engaged in the execution of the Eurostars Project funded by the first Swiss contribution and will also be tasked with implementing Programme Component 2 of the Research Programme in Croatia.



4.1.3 Support Measure management team

1.MCJRP

Will external management personnel be hired to implement the Support Measure? Yes No

What personnel capacity will be dedicated for the management of the Support Measure implementation (in full-time equivalents FTE)?

	Internal resources	External resources
PC1		

PC1 Internal resources External resources

14

	0.25 FTE	0.20
PC2	0,5 FTE (2 persons *0,25 FTE)	

For Programme Component 1, Mrs Jasminka Boljević, the Head of the Department for International Cooperation will be responsible for the overall implementation of the Support Measure Programme. Within the management budget HRZZ has planned a part-time employment of an expert who will be responsible for the implementation, monitoring, coordination and promotional activities of the MCJRP.

The Support Measure Management team at HAMAG-BICRO will comprise two part-time staff members responsible for executing the proposed Support Measure. Here are their profiles with responsibilities:

1. Marija Galeković, National Project Coordinator for Eurostars:

- Specializes in coordinating innovation-focused programs and international collaborations, including EUREKA, Eurostars, and Horizon Europe.
- Offers daily advisory services to SMEs in areas such as research, innovation, and accessing financial resources.
- Organizes B2B brokerage events and workshops through the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)
- In charge of coordinating Legal and Financial Viability check with Sector for Evaluation and entering data into Eurostars system.
- In charge of creating and managing voucher calls.

2. Iva Špoljar Šarić, Deputy National Project Coordinator for Eurostars:

- Functions as a Communication Advisor, International Cooperation Officer, and Communication Champion for EEN Croatia.
- Provides guidance on communication, public relations, communication ambassadors, social media, and press relations.
- Manages all communication matters, ensuring compliance with the Communication and Dissemination plan of the European Partnership on Innovative SMEs / Euro-stars-3 and Innowide.
- Handles inquiries from Eurostars beneficiaries and SMEs interested in the Euro-stars program.
- Supervises Eurostars beneficiaries' progress reports and financial reports.
- Organizes B2B brokerage events and workshops through EEN and assists SMEs attending these events.

Are CVs attached to this documentation?

Yes No

Are terms of reference for the management functions to be established attached to this documentation? Yes No

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4.1.4 Programme and project management experience

Under the First Swiss Contribution, HRZZ has been responsible for the implementation of two programmes:

1) "Croatian Swiss Research Programme 2017-2023" (CSRP) is implemented jointly by the SNSF, being the Executing Agency, and HRZZ, being the Croatian partner. Total budget foreseen for the implementation of the CSRP is CHF 4,67 mil., of which CHF 4 mil. has been secured within the Swiss contribution and CHF 0,67 mil. is co-financed by the Republic of Croatia.

The overall goal of the CSRP is to contribute to the knowledge-based Croatian economy through the enhancement of the knowledge base and to strengthen the research cooperation between Croatia and Switzerland through the know-how and technology transfer.

CSRP aims at promoting excellent science in Croatia and increasing Croatia's competitiveness in the European Research Area. It does so by mobilising research capacities in Switzerland and Croatia, and by supporting scientific cooperation in the form of Joint Research Projects (JRPs) between Switzerland and Croatia through the provision of research grants. Up to CHF 400,000 per JRP has been secured.

For this purpose, the SNSF and the HRZZ collaborated on all stages in the process (drafting the call documentation, implementing call for proposals, nominating the panel members (20), administrative check). SNSF is additionally securing support to the HRZZ through organising annual trainings for the HRZZ employees.

A total of 11 sub-projects were selected for financing, which started in the period between 1 January 2019 and 1 September 2019. These projects are offering a direct co-operation, know-how and technology transfer between 14 research organisations that are hosting sub-projects.

Jasminka Boljević from HRZZ and Timothy Ryan have been involved since the beginning of the programme in its implementation.

2) Tenure Track Pilot Programme is the second programme implemented by the Croatian Science Foundation through the Swiss-Croatian Cooperation Programme. This programme is aimed at enabling excellent young researchers to pursue their career in Croatia by offering them a full position at a research organization based on the evaluation of their work as Principal Investigators. Three projects are being financed through this programme.

In addition to two projects funded through the 1st Swiss contribution, HRZZ has extensive experience in the implementation of transnational research programmes, EU funded projects and development of research funding schemes.

HAMAG-BICRO has extensive experience in the implementation of EU-funded projects and Project Cycle Management, as well as strengthening the absorption ability of EU funds in research and development in Croatia, especially in the private sector.

The total number of implemented programmes and projects in the respective period of 5 years is 13, and three are described in detail in section 6.4. including Eurostars in the first Swiss-Cro Cooperation Programme.

4.2 Detailed intervention strategy and activities

4.2.1 Detailed description of activities and intervention strategy

PC1: MCJRP

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Support Measure Agreement will be concluded with each participating EU-13 country and SDC. Support Measure Implementation Agreement will be concluded between each NCU and the Programme Operator for the country's Research Programme.

Mandate Agreement will be concluded between the SDC and SNSF as Programme Component Operator for the MCJRP.

All partners in the MCJRP programme component are national research funding organisations whose mandate is to fund research, programmes and projects on a competitive basis. SNSF will be the coordinator of the proposed programme, whereas each national RFO will be mandated by their respective government to participate in the programme. Each RFO is responsible for following tasks:

- Arrange all legal aspects required for the implementation of the MCJRP;
- Organize communication/visibility/information about MCJRP and the call through adequate channels in country;
- Operate as national information point for the national researchers;
- Check eligibility of applicants from country
- Propose and support SNSF in the identification of experts for the peer reviews and members for the evaluation panel;
- Staff participate in the Funders Forum and Steering Committee (without voting rights);
- Ensure specific contract signing with the national PIs and their host institutions for the national contribution for the selected JRP and Execute the payments of the national contribution (15%) to the national PIs or the host institution of the PIs;
- Collect, control and approve the annual and final financial reports provided by the national PIs or the host institutions of the PIs;
- Collaborate with the SNSF for the elaboration of the annual and final progress and financial reports for the entire MCJRP.

Call for proposals

One single call for proposals is foreseen. The call document will be elaborated by the SNSF together with the Support Measure Partners from each participating EU-13 country, and then approved by the Research Council and presiding board of the SNSF. Information on the call for proposals shall be announced and published simultaneously in all countries.

The deadline for the submission of proposals will be at the earliest 3 months after the official launch of the call for proposals.

Individual researchers from at least two participating EU-13 countries together with researchers based in Switzerland can submit proposals for Joint Research Project (JRPs). For each country there is a team that is headed by a Principal Investigator (PI)^[1]. All PIs within the consortium have the same rights, responsibilities and obligations. Nevertheless, the Swiss PI is responsible to submit the annual reports to the SNSF and is therefore also the corresponding PI (administrative term).

Evaluation procedure

The evaluation procedure will be organized by the SNSF in collaboration with the Support Measure Partners. Each proposal will be reviewed by two external experts according to international peer review procedure standards. On the basis of the international reviews, an evaluation panel, including experts from all participating EU-13 countries and from Switzerland, will be established. The number of panel members to be identified will depend on the number

of proposals submitted. On average, a single panel member is responsible for not more than 7-8 proposals. During the panel meeting, all proposals submitted will be comparatively assessed and assigned a rating by members of the joint evaluation panel, resulting in a ranking list. After the selection and approval process, joint research projects can be implemented.

Implementation of the JRP

Each JRP is subject to the following contractual arrangements:

- a decision letter from SNSF to the Swiss PI containing all information concerning rights and obligations of the relevant funded project.
- "Grant Agreement" between HRZZ and the "Croatian PI" on the use of the Croatian Co-financing
- "Consortium Agreement" between the "Swiss PI" and all PIs from participating countries which includes tasks and obligations of the teams (on the basis of the application)

Payments and financial reporting

The Swiss contribution of each JRP is transferred to the Swiss project coordinator appointed by Swiss PI via the SNSF. The "Swiss PI" is responsible for the transfer of funds to the "Croatian PI". The Croatian contribution (co-financing) is transferred to the "Croatian PI" via the HRZZ in four annual instalments. The grant agreement between the Croatian PI and HRZZ will be signed only for the Croatian contribution.

In her/his role as project coordinator, the "Swiss PI" is responsible for the establishment of the annual financial reports according to the budgets which are defined in the corresponding agreements. The Croatian PI has to report the expenses of the relevant reporting period to the Swiss PI.

Scientific monitoring

For the Swiss and Croatian side, the SNSF will be responsible for the monitoring and controlling of the annual and final scientific reports.

[1] Note: applicants are researchers in the status when submitting an application. If successful, the researchers become Principal Investigators.

PC2: EUROSTARS

Eurostars, as the largest international funding programme, provides support to research-performing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in developing innovative products, processes, and services to gain a competitive advantage. It achieves this by offering funding for transnational innovation projects that are swiftly brought to market.

Eurostars is an established programme involving 37 countries, and the evaluation process takes place at the programme level, reducing evaluation costs. The competition at the programme level ensures that only the best applications succeed.

The EUREKA Secretariat (ESE) in Brussels serves as the central support unit for the network, managing the EUREKA project database, and handling marketing, communication, and network development activities. It is also responsible for the overall implementation of the Eurostars program, evaluation process included.

Within each participating country, a representative national funding body supports organizations by funding international R&D projects. These national funding bodies conduct legal and financial viability checks on organizations applying for the Eurostars programme from their respective countries. Each participating organization undergoes an individual check performed by its national funding body as part of the application process.

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Croatia has been participating in the Eurostars programme since 2015, aiming to enable Croatian SMEs to develop innovative solutions through partnerships. However, during the initial implementation in Croatia, applications with Croatian partners received low evaluations due to poor quality of the applications.

With the initiation of the first Swiss-Cro cooperation programme, which incorporated the Eurostars programme, a positive trend was observed. The continuation of the programme aims to support Croatian R&D-performing entrepreneurs, enabling them to hand in Eurostars projects (with Swiss partners or partners from other countries) and to compete successfully within the Eurostars programme.

To achieve these objectives, two main activities will be implemented. The first activity is co-financing of positively evaluated and contracted projects. Projects will be co-financed with the maximum amount of 200.000 EUR (the average amount foreseen per SME is circa 140.000 EUR) The level of SMEs engagement and participation in the Programme will be monitored throughout implementation and in case the foreseen max amount of co-financing proves to be an impediment for SMEs participation in Eurostars programme, it will be subject to subsequent modifications. The second activity consists of supporting initiatives which proved successful during the first Swiss-Cro cooperation programme.

HAMAG-BICRO, as the organization responsible for project financing in Croatia, will proceed to sign contracts with the selected beneficiaries after creation of a ranking list for each call. Throughout the implementation of the approved projects, HAMAG-BICRO will also provide financial monitoring to ensure proper utilization of the funds and adherence to the agreed-upon project plans and objectives.

Support activities will be implemented through three sub-components. The first sub-component is assistance to entrepreneurs in finding international partners throughout networking events vouchers. The aim is to facilitate networking opportunities for participants. The second sub-component involves providing vouchers for consulting services to aid entrepreneurs in preparing their project proposals and the third sub-component focuses on promoting the programme through workshops and info days. The aim of this sub-component is to raise awareness and to promote the programme.

Expected key outputs of the programme component are as follows:

- at least 100 vouchers for consultancy services granted
- at least 50 companies supported to travel to matchmaking events by granting vouchers
- at least 5 info days organized
- at least 14 co-financed projects

The support activities to be conducted as part of the support measure will now be explained in greater detail.

The networking events vouchers will be implemented throughout the Calls for Expression of Interest (EoI) for supporting individuals from organizations established in the Republic of Croatia in participating in networking Events organized abroad, with the aim to encourage the selection of potential partners and entice their participation in Eurostars programme. More specifically, the voucher granted on the basis of the submitted EoI would cover the travel costs of individuals to participate to Events that offer important opportunities for finding partners and collaborating with entities abroad, aiming to enhance the proposal submission to Eurostars programme. The participants are expected to have active participation in the Events (e.g. scheduled meetings, short and/or detailed presentations etc), in order to enhance networking opportunities and establishing collaborations.

Furthermore, it is planned to continue with the Consultant Voucher Scheme designed in the First Swiss-Cro Cooperation Programme to enable expert help for the SMEs in project

preparation. This scheme has proven to be very useful within the first Swiss-Cro cooperation program. From 2016-2019, the number of applications varied between 4-9 per year, in 2020 it jumped to 27 and in 2021 to as many as 32 applications. Number of approved applications varied from 1-2 through the years until 2022 when 6 applications were approved. The average yearly number of applications for the period from 2016-2022 is 14, while the yearly average of approved projects for the same period is 2. The vouchers for consulting services proved to be exceptionally beneficial supporting activity, as a significant number of approved projects utilized this support (out of a total of 12 projects approved in the period from 2018-2022, 5 of them used vouchers for consulting services)

This activity involves the issuance of consultant vouchers for comprehensive project application preparation for the Eurostars program. The scheme is going to be further elaborated to include provision of consultant feedback for the unsuccessful project applications. This particular endeavour will be executed in a manner that ensures ample time for interested entrepreneurs to participate. Specifically, no later than two months before the Eurostars program's full application cut-off date, a preliminary call will be opened for entrepreneurs who plan to submit their applications to the program.

Considering that there are two application submission cut-off dates annually for the Eurostars program, the intention is to announce two separate tenders each year for the allocation of consulting service vouchers. The precise budget and quantity of vouchers to be granted will be determined at the time of each tender's commencement.

These vouchers will be granted to the pre-applications (project concept notes) that receive the highest ratings for co-financing expert services geared toward assisting in project preparation. The criteria for selecting these pre-applications will align with the same criteria used to evaluate full applications within the program.

EUREKA Secretariat (ESE) in Brussels is responsible for organizing the calls, assessing and administrating the projects. Usually, there are two organized calls per year. Generally, 19 weeks after the cut-off date, the funding decision is communicated to the applicants by the EUREKA Secretariat. The projects are funded along the ranking list by the national funding organizations. Not more than three months later, the Consortium Agreement between the project partners should be finalized. All in all, the time to contract a project lasts about 8-9 months. Eurostars applications undergo a peer review process to determine which applications will be recommended for funding. Each eligible application is first assessed and scored by three remote experts. Applications are assessed against three evaluation criteria, all of which have equal weighting: Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Q), Impact (I), and Excellence (E). Applications that receive a score above a minimum quality threshold (and pass the legal and financial viability check) then progress to the Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP), a body made up of up to 20 experts. Only applications rated by the panel to be above a minimum quality threshold are recommended for funding.

The evaluation process is designed to ensure that only excellent projects receive funding. The scores reflect the quality of the application, while the ranking (if the application progresses to the panel review) reflects the position with regards to the competition.

HAMAG-BICRO funds R&D costs for SMEs participating in the Eurostars programme and is responsible for providing "Legal and financial viability check" according to predetermined criteria prescribed by the ESE (as is the responsibility of each EUROSTARS country funding organization/body).

The legal, financial and viability check c aims to verify:

- The applicant's organisation has provided a valid Commitment and Signature form as part of the application form.

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- that applicant's organisation fits the definition of SME as laid out in the EU recommendation 2003/361.
- The applicant's organisation is a legal entity in the country it is applying for funding in.
- The applicant's organisation has not been convicted for fraudulent behaviour.
- If the applicant's organisation is located in the European Union or the European Economic Area, it is not an undertaking in difficulty (based on article 2, no 18 of COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014 of June 2014), or if located elsewhere, it is not in a financial situation that would render it ineligible to receive national funding according to national regulations.
- The applicant's organisation complies with the national rules needed to be fulfilled to receive Eurostars public funding.
- The applicant's organization declares it is willing and able to self-fund participation in the project without receiving any Eurostars public funding.
- The applicant's organisation has the financial capacity to support the remaining part of the project costs, after considering available Eurostars public funding that may receive (based on national funding rules). The assessment of the organization financial capacity is based on national criteria established by each national funding body.

While HAMAG-BICRO only partially participates in the evaluation and selection process for Eurostars projects through this eligibility checks, it will be fully responsible for the opening of the calls for networking vouchers and consultant vouchers as well as for the evaluation of received applications.

Lastly, the program will be promoted through the organization of info days. As mentioned previously, particular emphasis will be placed on promoting the program in cities beyond Zagreb. Plan is to include arranging a minimum of one Info Day per year, supplemented by a workshop covering strategies for crafting high-quality project applications.

With regards the support of Swiss partner in implementation of this Programme, Hamag-Bicro and Innosuisse meet at regular network meetings which are scheduled three times a year (usually in the country that holds the chairmanship) and make time for bilateral exchanges on process as well as supporting measures to promote Eurostars in HR and discuss the outcome and progress of implemented measures. This allows for international coaching between the countries and helps further develop the programme in Croatia.

4.2.2 Detailed description of selection process for Programme Components

PC1: MCJRP

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) main responsibilities for the Programme component selection include the following activities:

- negotiate and conclude the Support Measure Agreement with the NCUs for the Research Programs of the participating EU-13 countries (Research Program of which the MCJRP is one component);
- negotiate and conclude a contract with the SNSF (mandate) as the Programme Component Operator for the implementation of the MCJRP;
- approve the MCJRP documents (Programme Component Document, and the Call document)

Furthermore, SDC will supervise the operational monitoring and the financial controlling of the SNSF and analyse the regular reporting of the SNSF, assess the implementation progress and discuss the reporting in the framework of the Steering Committee for the MCJRP.

In relation to the evaluation and selection procedure of JRPs, following will be performed:

Evaluation procedure

- **Call document:** The SNSF provides a call document which is binding to both the funding organisations and the applicants. The call document contains information about the minimum (and/or maximum) number of projects to be funded, the budgets and funding categories, the topic(s) for the call, the eligibility criteria, the submission and the evaluation procedure and criteria, as well as information about the structure of the research plan.
- **Submission of applications and administrative measures:** The proposals are jointly prepared by the research consortia and submitted on the SNSF's online system *mySNF*. The partner organisations are granted access to *mySNF*. After the call has ended, the administrative offices from all funding organisations verify that all formal requirements have been met. Each funding organisation is responsible for applicants from the respective country. Croatian applicant will have to submit application to HRZZ EPP online system for the purpose of eligibility check and project monitoring. Should one applicant not be eligible, the whole proposal by the respective consortium will not be considered for evaluation.
- **Evaluation:** The evaluation consists of two steps. In first step, the applications are assessed by external reviewers according to international peer-review standards. Subsequently, the proposals are assessed comparatively and ranked by the members of the joint evaluation panel. The evaluation panel consists of international research experts jointly nominated by the SNSF and the participating funding organisations.
- **Decision:** During the evaluation panel meeting, each proposal is discussed by the evaluation panel members, resulting in a ranking list. According to the funds available to the involved funding organisations (see table 1), the best proposals are then selected for funding (this process will be explained in more detail in the following section).
- **Information to applicants:** The SNSF informs the applicants in Switzerland of the final decision, giving reasons for rejection where applicable. Each funding organisation is responsible for informing the applicants from the respective countries about the decision.

Selection procedure of Joint Research Projects

The evaluation procedure described above determines which projects are fundable and which should not be funded, based on their scientific quality. However, it is the available funding available for each country that determines which proposals can actually be supported, which is illustrated in the table below. Projects are approved from top to bottom as long as each involved partner country has funds available. For any project, each country is charged its national share plus a share of the Swiss part of the budget (see figure 1 and 2) which is proportional to the country's share of the overall project budget.

As a consequence of this procedure, some projects may not be funded for financial reasons. In the example below, country A and C can finance four projects and country B and D five projects, depending on their budgets allocated to this programme component. As the four best-ranked projects have a participation from country C and use up its budget, project 5 and 6 cannot be funded anymore. Project 7, despite being evaluated slightly lower, can be funded since the involved countries A and B still have funds left. The Swiss part can always be financed, as involvement by a researcher based in Switzerland is mandatory. Any remaining funds of a call may be transferred to other research and innovation programme components.

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Ranking List	Country A, 10 projects	Country B 10 projects	Country C 10 projects	Country D 10 projects	Switzerland	Decision
Project 1	X		X	X	X	Funded
Project 2	X		X	X	X	Funded
Project 3	X	X	X		X	Funded
Project 4	X		X	X	X	Funded
Project 5	X	X	X	X	X	Funded
Project 6	X		X		X	Funded
Project 7	X	X			X	Funded
Project 8	X	X			X	Funded
Project 9	X		X		X	Funded
Project 10	X		X		X	Funded
Project 11	0	X		X	X	Rejected
Project 12	0	X	X		X	Rejected
Project 13		X	X	X	X	Funded

Table 2: Selection procedure MCJRP

X = project part fundable by the respective country

0 = project part not fundable by the respective country (available funds already allocated)

Project = project to be funded (provided that the ranking assures the required scientific quality)

PC2: EUROSTARS

Selection processes for these two activities are described below:

Selection process for Networking Events Vouchers

HAMAG-BICRO will open a Call for Expression of Interest (EoI) yearly for supporting individuals from Organizations in participating in networking Events organized abroad, with the aim to encourage their participation in proposals to be submitted in the context of Eurostars Programme.

For the EoI that will be submitted, an eligibility check process will follow, based on the following criteria:

- The minimum requirements in regard to the beneficiary eligibility are met (such as the applicant has no tax debt),
- The rationale for participating in the Event is justified and the expected impact of participation is adequately described, and particularly relating to the enhancement of the Entity's capacity is participating in Eurostars programme

Applications will be examined on a first-come-first-served basis (according to the date of submission of the Application Form) and funded if it pass eligibility criteria described above

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until the total requested funding of approved applications, equals the total Call for Expression of interest budget.

Selection process for Consultant Vouchers

Similar to the Expression of Interest (EOI) process for networking event vouchers, HAMAG BICRO will initiate a call for proposals for Consultant Vouchers, inviting interested applicants to submit their voucher applications. The condition to receive this voucher will be to submit application to EUROSTARS programme. The application template will consist of general questions already found in the full proposal to prevent redundancy in writing.

These vouchers will be granted to the pre-applications (project concept notes) that receive the highest ratings for co-financing expert services geared toward assisting in full project preparation. The criteria for selecting these applications will align with the same criteria used to evaluate full applications within the program. Applications will be assessed against three evaluation criteria all of which have equal weighting:

Quality and efficiency of the implementation

Impact (market and commercialisation)

Economic, environmental, and societal impact

4.2.3 Communication activities

PC1: MCJRP

Planned communication activities shall consist of the following:

1. Workshop on the Multilateral call
 - Aims and target groups: Inform the general public and potential final beneficiaries on the objectives of the project, inform on possibilities for financing and eligibility and attract excellent researchers to apply for the JRP grants.
 - Communication tools: online workshops and social media
 - Information on how the communication activities will be evaluated: Number of participants at workshops, number of articles in media, number of received applications
2. Open an e-mail address for receiving inquiries from potential applicants and later on from selected Principal Investigators (PIs).
 - Aims and target groups: to inform interested applicants about the requirements of the call
 - Communication tools: e-mail
 - Information on how the communication activities will be evaluated: Number of inquiries, number of received applications
3. Preparing promotional materials (brochures, pens, notes, roll-up banner and similar)
 - *Aims and target groups:* Inform the general public, final beneficiaries and stakeholders on the objectives of the project
 - *Communication tools:* promotional materials
 - *Information on how the communication activities will be evaluated:* printed promotional materials
4. Grant signing conference
 - Aims and target groups: to inform stakeholders and general public of the call results and signing contracts with selected grantees
 - Communication tools: conference
 - Information on how the communication activities will be evaluated: Number of participants, number of articles in the media

5. Study visits to selected projects
 - Aims and target groups: to inform stakeholders about the results on projects
 - Communication tools: visits
 - Information on how the communication activities will be evaluated: Number of stakeholders and participants in study visits
6. Closing conference
 - Aims and target groups: to inform stakeholders and general public of the call results and signing contracts with selected grantees
 - Communication tools: conference
 - Information on how the communication activities will be evaluated: Number of participants, number of articles in the media

PC2: EUROSTARS

Communication activities will consist of following:

1. Launching event (official signature of the project contract) will be accompanied with publication of an article about it with included photos and Eurostars and Swiss-Croatian Cooperation logos.
Such news is published on HAMAG-BICRO's website, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter channels as well as on other relevant websites and communication channels managed by this HAMAG-BICRO's employees (e.g., Enterprise Europe Network, FINNO, etc.). In addition to the information on the signed contract at the highest level and the attendees, there is information on the specific projects signed with their value in CHF.
2. each action in connection with this cooperation will be published, starting with the publication of a public call for cooperation between Switzerland and Croatia on research and development projects through the Eurostars program, which will also include promotion photo, Eurostars and Swiss-Croatian Cooperation logos and relevant documents (Joint call announcement CH-HR; leaflet Eurostars-Croatia-Switzerland).
3. bilateral project missions are also announced with all the specificities, as a call for expression of interest and, after the mission itself, as a summary of the mission (number of companies, number of meetings held and names of Swiss companies with which the meetings were held). Photos are also published as well as Eurostars and Swiss-Croatian Cooperation logos. Furthermore, trips to organized thematic conferences are also published as a call for expression of interest and, after the trip, as a summary about the mission. Such news usually includes the participants' quotes in which Swiss-Croatian cooperation is additionally emphasized.
4. Within educational informational events (mainly virtual events at which leading experts and professionals could share their knowledge, experience and ideas with the participants), project calls and voucher opportunities can be announced and discussed, and their providers would be used to enlarge the possible Eurostars applicant database and increase the number of project applications. Such events could be outsourced, enabling access to relevant SME databases in Croatia.
5. Voucher scheme calls for consultant services will be opened at least once per year, providing vouchers toward selected SMEs with expert consultant services in preparing project proposals for the Eurostars program. The calls will be widely communicated to SMEs using HAMAG-BICRO's, EEN's and FINNO websites and communication channels. Therefore, the voucher scheme could also be regarded as Eurostars communication activity.

Target groups of such communication activities are usually SMEs and support organizations, as well as the media that can further disseminate the news if they find it interesting for the general public. The communication tools used are HAMAG-BICRO's website and other communication channels (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) as well as the website and other communication channels of EEN, FINNO, etc. Other communication tools can be utilized, such as sponsored articles in selected newspapers. The events such as trips organized, or company missions can also be announced at other events organized by HAMAG-BICRO or Enterprise Europe Network.

Communication activities will be evaluated based on specified indicators and their success rate will be elaborated on in the project's Annual Reports.

4.2.4 Detailed implementation schedule

Detailed implementation Schedule is annexed to this document.

4.3 Logframe

Strategy of Intervention:	Key Indicators (incl. target values and baseline)	Sources & Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks (External Factors)
<p>Definition: The strategy of intervention defines the hierarchy of objectives and follows the logic of the results chain.</p> <p>Hints: Use one-sentence statements, in the form of a status achieved or an infinitive (to do something)</p>	<p>Definition: Features which can be measured or at least described precisely in terms of quantity and quality respectively and which show a change in situation.</p> <p>Hints: Indicators measure whether the results on each level (impact, outcome, output) are achieved. Indicators include targets and require baselines to assess progress. Indicators are time-bound The need to disaggregate indicators and baselines by other criteria (such as age, social and economic status etc.) depends on objectives and targeting.</p>	<p>Definition: Sources refer to relevant data/information on results and to the documents where this information is to be found. Means of verification refer to methods to collect these data/information.</p> <p>Hints: The timely availability and quality of information on the achievement of results are important criteria when defining indicators. When having several indicators for the same result level, sources and means of verification should be clearly attributed to the specific indicators.</p>	<p>Definition: Assumptions and risks are conditions which could affect the progress of the Support Measure, but which are not under direct control of the Support Measure management. An assumption is a positive statement of a condition that must be met for the Support Measure's objectives to be achieved. A risk is a negative statement of a condition that might prevent the Support Measures' objectives from being achieved.</p> <p>Hints: The risk analysis under point 4.6 below should feed into the Logframe.</p>
Impact	Impact Indicators	Impact Sources and Means of Verification	
<p>Definition:</p>	<p>Hint:</p>	<p>Hints: On impact level, sources and means of verification are usually beyond the scope</p>	

<p><u>Improvements of a situation in terms of social, economic or any other benefits which respond to identified development needs of the target population under a long-term vision.</u></p> <p>Scope of Support Measure management:</p> <p><u>The achievement of the development objective lies outside the direct reach of the Support Measure and depends on the assumptions formulated at outcome level. However, outcomes of the Support Measure should represent a relevant contribution to it.</u></p> <p>1. To contribute to the economic growth and competitiveness of Croatia by strengthening the research excellence and innovation capacities of Croatian research organizations, universities and enterprises and by facilitating the research and innovation cooperation with international partners.</p>	<p><u>Impact indicators are essentially used during evaluations.</u></p> <p>PC1: MCJRP</p> <p>1.1. Number of received grants and newly established collaborations by Croatian PIs Baseline: 0, Target: 5</p> <p>PC2: EUROSTARS</p> <p>1.2. R&I_CI_3 Number of innovations in products, processes or services. Baseline 0, Target: 14</p>	<p><u>of the Support Measure management. Information depends on documents of others (e.g. reports of ministries, laws, national statistics etc.), are based on national monitoring systems or may result from joint evaluations.</u></p> <p>PC1: MCJRP</p> <p>1.1. MZO statistics and reports, Croatian bureau of statistics, Croatian Agency for science and higher education statistics and reports, the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, Eurostat, CSF reports, host institutions' reports. Travel reports by employees. Evaluation manual and program</p> <p>PC2: EUROSTARS</p> <p>1.2. Final Reports and Market Impact Reports, Croatian bureau of statistics</p>	
<p>Outcomes (Support Measure objectives /purpose)</p> <p>Definition:</p> <p><u>The short or medium term effects (=changes in quality and quantity) expected from the outputs of the Support Measure. Intended situation at the end of or soon after the Support Measure's lifespan in terms of gains in performance (as a result of changes in knowledge and behaviour) - e.g. better ac-</u></p>	<p>Outcome Indicators</p> <p>Definition:</p> <p><u>Conditions towards the end of the Support Measure indicating that the purpose has been achieved and that benefits are sustainable.</u></p> <p>Hints:</p>	<p>Outcome: Sources and Means of Verification</p> <p>PC1: MCJRP</p> <p>program</p> <p>1.1. Annual and Final Reports of researchers</p> <p>1.2. A dedicated questionnaire (with quantitative/qualitative elements) will be</p>	<p>Outcome Assumptions & Risks</p> <p>Hints:</p> <p><u>To ensure a proper vertical logic, it is essential to attribute assumptions to the corresponding level of intervention. In this box the assumptions at outcome level which are relevant for achieving the intended impact (development objective) need to be stated.</u></p>

<p><u>cess to infrastructure and services / increased quality of infrastructure and services / implementation of policy reforms / more efficient systems / increased knowledge, change of attitudes and behaviour of key stakeholders and beneficiaries etc.</u></p> <p>Scope of Support Measure management:</p> <p><u>The attainment of outcomes is primarily dependent on the Support Measure outputs, but depends also on factors beyond the Support Measure's control.</u></p> <p><u>Monitoring of outcomes is part of Support Measure management.</u></p> <p>Hints:</p> <p><u>The number of outcomes has to be limited to 2-3 outcomes. (in exceptional cases max. 5)</u></p> <p><u>Logframes outcomes indicating change for the population as well as outcomes indicating institutional change.</u></p> <p>PC1: MCJRP</p> <p>1. Increased competitiveness of Croatian researchers and research institutes in the European Research Area and integration of Croatian researchers within international networks.</p> <p>PC2: EUROSTARS</p> <p>2. The Croatian SMEs enhances their capacities for innovation through increased interest and participation within EUROSTARS programme</p>	<p><u>Keep the number of outcome indicators limited: as few as possible, as many as necessary to assess intended changes.</u></p> <p><u>Outcome indicators are used for monitoring, reviews and evaluations.</u></p> <p>PC1: MCJRP</p> <p>1.1. R&I_C1_1 Number of scientific publications Baseline 0, Target: 30</p> <p>1.2. Number of participating researchers who have increased their competitiveness and are better integrated within European and international research networks. Baseline:0, Target: 10</p> <p>PC2: EUROSTARS</p> <p>2.1. Increased number of applications within programme implementation period compared to previous 4-year period Baseline (2023 for the period 2019-2022): 80 Target (2029, for the period 2024-2027): 100</p> <p>2.2. Increased number of approved applications and co-financed projects within programme implementation period compared to previous 4-year period Baseline (2023, for the period 2019-2022): 8</p>	<p>developed and submitted to all participating researchers, to which they will respond in the framework of their final project report.</p> <p>PC2: EUROSTARS</p> <p>2.1. Eurostars call results, yearly reviewed by the National Project Coordinator</p> <p>2.2. Eurostars call results, yearly reviewed by the National Project Coordinator</p>	<p>PC1: MCJRP</p> <p>Croatian and Swiss PI's motivated to successfully implement the Joint Research Projects.</p> <p>PC2: EUROSTARS</p> <p>Budget allocated to Eurostars programme is sufficient</p> <p>The stable political and economic situation in Croatia</p>
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	<p>Target (2029, for the period 2024-2027): 14</p>		
Outputs: Support Measure deliverables/results per outcome	Output Indicators	Output: Sources and Means of Verification	Output Assumptions & Risks
<p>Definition: <i>Products and services produced or competences and capacities established directly as a result of Support Measure activities.</i></p> <p>Scope of the Support Measure management: <i>Outputs are under the control / responsibility of the Support Measure management.</i></p> <p>PC1: MCJRP</p> <p>1. Facilitated transfer of knowledge and strengthened research cooperation among participating researchers and research institutions through the implementation of Joint Research Projects.</p> <p>2. International recognition of JRP's is achieved through publication in leading academic journals and participation in conferences</p>	<p>Definition: <i>Measures of the quantity and quality of outputs.</i></p> <p>Hint: <i>Output indicators are used during monitoring and review.</i></p> <p>PC1: MCJRP</p> <p>1.1. Number of doctoral and master graduates (of the partner state) who receive their degrees one to two years following their participation in the joint research project Baseline: 0, target: 10 for the whole programme</p> <p>2.1. Number of joint research papers submitted and/or published by researchers within the project Baseline: 0, target: 30 for the whole programme</p> <p>3.1. Newly established or extended joint networks</p>	<p>PC1: MCJRP</p> <p>1.1. Narrative reports from JRPs 2.1. Narrative reports from JRPs and post-implementation surveys 3.1. Narrative reports from JRPs 3.2. Narrative reports from JRPs 3.3. Narrative reports from JRPs 3.4. Annual programme reports 3.5. Annual programme reports 3.6. Annual programme reports</p> <p>PC2: EUROSTARS</p> <p>4.1. Info days Attendance List 5.1. HAMAG- BICRO records 6.1. HAMAG- BICRO records 7.1. Grant Agreements signed</p>	<p>Hint: <i>Formulate assumptions at output level which are relevant for achieving the Support Measure's objective(s).</i></p> <p>PC1: MCJRP Croatian PIs motivated to join new or existing international networks after the project</p> <p>PIs motivated to establish Europe-wide cooperation</p> <p>HRZZ proposes to participate in the implementation of working packages within trans-national collaborations of research funders in the 2028-2034 programming period</p> <p>PC2: EUROSTARS SME's capability to find an adequate partner</p>

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<p>3. Capacities are enhanced through exchange of expertise in evaluating and monitoring procedures between SNSF and all participating research funders</p> <p>PC2: EUROSTARS</p> <p>4. Croatian SMEs are informed about the Eurostars programme</p> <p>5. The quality of project applications to Eurostars is improved through consulting the experts (Voucher system)</p> <p>6. Partner search enabled through travel vouchers for networking events</p> <p>7. Croatian SMEs financially supported for implementation of collaboration projects with international partners</p>	<p>Baseline: 0, target: 5 for the whole programme</p> <p>3.2. Number of seminars, workshops and conferences attended in which researchers financed through the MC-JRP played an active role</p> <p>Baseline: 0, target: 20 for the whole programme</p> <p>3.3. R&I_Cl_2 Number of researchers having gained experience abroad in the framework of scientific research or innovation initiatives</p> <p>Baseline: 0, target: 10 for the whole programme</p> <p>3.4. Overall number of seminars, workshops, conferences organised by the projects.</p> <p>Baseline: 0, target: 10 organised event per project.</p> <p>3.5. Number of Programme Steering Committee meetings.</p> <p>Baseline: 0, target: 1 Steering Committee meeting per year</p> <p>3.6. Number of meetings of programme management teams from each research funder.</p> <p>Baseline: 0, target: 1 meeting per year</p> <p>PC2: EUROSTARS</p> <p>4.1. Number of Info days</p> <p>Baseline 0, Target: 5</p> <p>5.1. Number of vouchers for project application preparation</p> <p>Baseline 0, Target: 100</p>	<p>Croatian SME's capability to apply with a project</p>
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	<p>6.1. Number of supported companies to travel to matchmaking events Baseline 0, Target: 50</p> <p>7.1. Number of co-financed projects Baseline 0, Target: 14</p>		
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4.4 Swiss Support Measure Partner(s)

PC1

Foreseen Partner for Programme Component 1 is Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). Mandated by the Swiss federal government, the SNSF supports basic research in all academic disciplines. The SNSF is Switzerland's foremost research funding organisation and finances over 3'200 projects involving 14'800 researchers each year (approximately CHF 880 million). To ensure its independence, the SNSF was established as private foundation in 1952. Its core task is the evaluation of research proposals. The SNSF's strategic goals are derived from the statutes and the mission statement:

1. Support high-quality research as well as researchers in their quest for excellence.
2. Bring research funding closer into line with the researchers' needs.
3. Support the spread of knowledge in society, economy and politics and demonstrate the value of research.

The Swiss National Science Foundation is responsible for the set-up, management and implementation of the MCJRP, for the build-up, contracting and supervision of the JRPs, and for the overall reporting on the MCJRP. The main tasks of the SNSF include:

- drafting the MCJRP call document;
- arrange all legal aspects required for the implementation of the MCJRP;
- participate in the Steering / Selection Committee and assume secretarial tasks;
- prepare and implement the calls together with research funders including CSF;
- operate as the submission point for applications;
- organise the evaluation and the selection process;
- propose and elect members of the evaluation panel and experts for the peer reviews;
- inform the applying Swiss PIs about the decision regarding their submitted project;
- prepare and conclude contracting arrangement with the grant beneficiaries;
- establish and apply an adequate financial and operational controlling system for JRP implementation; intervene if required and inform SDC about irregularities immediately;
- transfer of funds to the "Swiss PIs" in the JRP (other PIs will receive the Swiss contribution through the "Swiss PI" and their national contribution directly from national research funder);
- collect, control and approve the annual and final scientific reports;
- collect, control and approve the annual and final financial reports;
- monitor the JRPs and report to SDC on the programme's finances and the JRPs' implementation; reporting includes one annual progress report and financial reports;
- submit audit reports, if any, to SDC and NCU and ensure the follow-up of audit recommendations;
- organise publicity in cooperation with research funders.

The detailed tasks required for the management of the MCJRP will be included in the mandate agreement between SDC and SNSF. The SNSF will allocate the necessary human resources for management of the programme.

PC2

Foreseen partner for Programme Component 2 is Swiss Innovation Agency- Innosuisse. Hamag-Bicro and Innosuisse meet at regular network meetings which are scheduled three times a year (usually in the country that holds the chairmanship) and make time for bilateral exchanges on process as well as supporting measures to promote Eurostars in HR and discuss the outcome and progress of implemented measures. This allows for international coaching between the countries and helps further develop the programme in Croatia.

4.5 Stakeholder consultations

In accordance with Article 4.4 of the Regulations, HAMAG-BICRO engaged in consultations with stakeholders concerning the support activities to be implemented as part of the Programme component.

During the preparation of the proposal for the consultation, research was conducted among innovation agencies, members of the Taftie network, about the support activities they provide to entrepreneurs when looking for an international partner to apply for the program as well as for preparatory grants.

A query about activities that would be complementary to the services provided within the Enterprise Europe Network was addressed to 34 innovation agencies and 5 responses were received. From the responses received, it was concluded that the support activities provided by the agencies refer to variations of:

- Travel grants
- Preparatory grants
- Partner search platforms

HAMAG-BICRO proposed three activities to be implemented to support entrepreneurs with EUROSTARS programme. Proposed activities were:

1. Program promotion through organization of Info Days and targeted workshops, whereby these events would also take place outside Zagreb region,
2. Travel vouchers for B2B events that would cover travel and accommodation costs up to a specific amount,
3. Consultation services vouchers for the application preparation

In addition, the consultations themselves were preceded by conversations with the current users of the EUREKA and Eurostars programs, and feedback was obtained. They informed us that they had used the support activities and were very satisfied with them. They also liked the new proposed activities.

There were 45 registrations for the stakeholder consultations but in total 21 person participated.

After the consultations were held, another inquiry was sent to all applicants to comment on the proposed support activities, and not a single response was received.

During all the consultations held, three main conclusions were drawn:

- Promotion of Eurostars program should be enhanced, especially by organizing Info Days outside the capital (Zagreb) as well.
- Voucher scheme proved to be a good activity and it would be kept in an unmodified form.
- Regarding the travel scheme, since the most criticism was directed towards predetermined events, a modified version is proposed that would include the specific travel voucher amount and that the entrepreneurs themselves propose the events they would attend.

The entire minutes of the meeting can be found as an attachment to this document.

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4.6 Tentative Budget

4.6.1 Detailed tentative budget

Detailed budget is annexed to this proposal.

4.6.2 Tentative Disbursement Plan

Reimbursement Period	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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Estimated reimbursement of Swiss Contribution in CHF

Not applicable for PC1: MCJRP as the full amount of Swiss Contribution will be disbursed through SNSF.

EUROSTARS

IR 1	218.889,83
IR2	218.889,83
IR 3	278.827,24
IR 4	278.827,24
IR 5	277.708,46
IR 6	277.708,46
IR 7	224.574,47
IR 8	224.574,47

4.7 Risk Analysis and Risk Management

Risk	Impact [1 – 5]	Likelihood [1 – 5]	Risk level	Mitigation measure(s)
Research partner search unsuccessful (Programme Component 1 & 2)	5	1	Low-Medium	Prolongation of the deadline for submission and intensified announcement of the call to the public.
Not enough proposals submitted (Programme Component 1 & 2)	4	1	Low-Medium	Active promotion prior to call.
Research project /Eurostars project	5	3	Medium-High	Possibility to prolong project duration (additional 6 months)

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goals not achieved in time (Programme Component 1 & 2)					
JRP reports not delivered in time (Programme Component 1)	3	1	Low		Retention of financial instalment until reports delivered
Choose risk level					
Overall Risk Level	Support Measure	Medium-low			

Comments on the overall risk level (if any)

The overall risk level for MCJRP is identified as low to medium. For each of 5 identified risks adequate preventive measures as well as mitigation measures are foreseen. All potential unexpected challenges will be discussed and resolved by experienced international programme Steering Committee

The Eurostars program has been implemented in Croatia since 2016, and the procedures are well established. There is minimal anticipation of significant risks occurring. As for support activities the only anticipated risk is potentially lower interest of applicants, but mitigation measures will be taken if risk occurs.

The above is confirmed by the fact that the successful implementation of the first Swiss contribution is near the end with the absorption of funds in 2023 exceeding 95%.

4.8 Monitoring and Steering

PC1: MCJRP

The NCU shall establish the Support Measure Steering Committee. The SM Steering Committee decides on monitoring programme outcomes, modifications to the budget of the Programme, proposes and approves strategic directions and amendments, oversees the Programme progress and makes suggestions to improve the Programme implementation. The Support Measure Steering Committee shall be composed of the following members:

- National Coordination Unit (NCU)
- Ministry of Science and Education
- Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
- HRZZ (as Programme Component Operator 1)
- HAMAG-BICRO (as Programme Component Operator 2)
- Swiss Contribution Office (SCO)
- a public or private sector entity with a close thematic, financial or operational connection to the Support Measure (to be defined with the NCU)

1A.

- Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

The Support Measure Steering Committee shall meet at least once a year. Additional meetings may be held, if deemed necessary or useful, at the request of at least one member of the Support Measure Steering Committee. In exceptional cases and in-between Steering Committees, a written procedure may be employed to conduct a Support Measure Steering Committee meeting.

HRZZ will use the information in the SNSF reports to compile their reporting to the NCU. One evaluation is foreseen at the end of Programme implementation, procured, and supervised by HRZZ.

Steering / Selection Committee specific to Programme Component 1 MCJRP

In addition to Support Measure Steering Committee, separate committee will be formed which will hold simultaneously the function of program steering and project selection: the Steering/Selection Committee. The following representatives are granted with a voting right each:

- SDC
- One NCU representative from each participating EU-13 country (alternating in the role of the chair – modality to be defined)
- One representative from each Support Measure Partner from the participating EU-13 country (Board members or Scientific Council members)
- SNSF, Member of the National Research Council

Staff members of Support Measure Partners take on the responsibilities of the secretariat and participate without voting rights. Staff members of the Swiss Contribution Offices also participate without voting rights. In its steering function, the Steering/Selection Committee will meet at least once a year in order to provide guidance on strategic matters with a view to meeting the objectives of the MCJRP and with regard to ethics, compliance with applicable laws and regulatory policies, financial practices, disclosure and reporting. The meetings will be organised alternately in the participating EU-13 countries.

It is responsible for overseeing management and ensuring that systems are in place to manage the risks involved in the programme. The tasks include (but are not limited to):

- Propose and approve strategic amendments with a view to meeting the objectives of the MCJRP;
- Decide on modifications of plan and budget of the programme;
- Oversee the programme progress and make suggestions in order to improve the project implementation;
- Propose additional measures to address the full achievement of the planned objectives and to utilize the funds available according to the goals of the SM.
- Discuss and endorse the Annual Reports as well as a yearly activity and budget planning.

In its selection function, the Steering/Selection Committee shall approve the list of JRPs proposed for funding by the evaluation panel.

The ToRs for the Steering Committee will be elaborated by the SNSF in consultation with the Support Measure Partners.

With regards to reporting and monitoring JRPs results following scheme is foreseen:

At JRPs level:

Scientific reports: The preparation of the annual and final scientific reports is under the responsibility of all PIs involved in a single JRP. The reports will be submitted to SNSF by the

Swiss PI. The scientific reports shall inform on the advancement of their project, providing information about timeliness and progress made in implementing the research project. The scientific reports need to be submitted no later than 3 months after the completion of each implementation year (calendar years).

Financial reports: The Swiss PIs will provide an annual and a final financial report to the SNSF, reporting on all the expenses and revenues of the JRP from the Swiss contribution (including the funds dedicated to the Swiss PI and the funds shared with the PIs in the respective partner countries from the Swiss contribution). These reports are shared with the RFOs on mySNF. Financial reports will compare expenditures with the approved budgets and will also be checked against the guidelines established at the start of the programme. A

In addition, each consortium PI or the host institution of the PI from the participating EU-13 countries will have to submit a separate financial report to the RFOs reporting on the country's contribution.

Financial control: The responsibility for overseeing the correct management of the Swiss contribution lies first with the Swiss PI. The Swiss PI, together with

his/her host institution, must ensure that expenditure reflects the realities and is consistent with the work done, also for the part claimed by the PIs from the partner countries. Then, the SNSF controls the financial reports of the Swiss contribution in connection with the project progress and then on the basis of the

supporting documents (receipts, reports, etc.) attached to the reports. The RFOs must verify the financial reports for the national

contribution according to own defined processes/rules. The financial reports submitted by the Swiss PI will be shared with the Country RFOs.

Overall MCJRP level:

The SNSF elaborates annual financial and operational reports as well as final financial and operational reports at the end of the implementation phase. For this, it will also request the collaboration and contribution of the RFOs. The annual and final operational reports include information about

management activities and progress made in the JRPs, including the experience gained through implementing the programme. Furthermore, operational report

documents and comments the overall achievement of outputs and outcome against the original plan, the compliance with principles such as gender and sustainability, and suggests lessons learned and conclusions. Finally, the reports shall assess achievements of the overall programme based on the indicators as listed in the logframe.

The annual and final financial reports shall provide information on the financial progress of the programme. These reports will also include a comparison of actual with planned expenses and a confirmation of financing.

The SNSF reports, prepared in collaboration with the SRFOs, will be sent at the same time to SDC.

PC2: EUROSTARS

The NCU shall establish the Support Measure Steering Committee. The SM Steering Committee decides on monitoring programme outcomes, modifications to the budget of the Programme, proposes and approves strategic directions and amendments, oversees the Programme progress and makes suggestions to improve the Programme implementation. The Support Measure Steering Committee shall be composed of the following members:

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- National Coordination Unit (NCU)
- Ministry of Science and Education
- Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
- HRZZ (as Programme Component Operator 1)
- HAMAG-BICRO (as Programme Component Operator 2)
- Swiss Contribution Office (SCO)
- a public or private sector entity with a close thematic, financial or operational connection to the Support Measure (to be defined with the NCU)
- Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

The Support Measure Steering Committee shall meet at least once a year. Additional meetings may be held, if deemed necessary or useful, at the request of at least one member of the Support Measure Steering Committee. In exceptional cases and in-between Steering Committees, a written procedure may be employed to conduct a Support Measure Steering Committee meeting.

The information on PC progress in terms of achieving outputs and outcomes as well as financial progress for the Steering Committee meeting will be compiled by HAMAG- BICRO.

The Audit Authority is responsible for preparing an audit strategy and for performing audits to verify the effective functioning of the management and control system(s) as well as audits of the Support Measures. One mid-term evaluation is foreseen at the fourth year of Programme implementation, procured and supervised by HAMAG BICRO.

4.9 Other operational issues

There will not be a formal Programme Operator for the Croatian Research Programme (as indicated in the Framework Agreement)

As the two Components have been presented under one Support Measure, there will be only one Support Measure Agreement between the NCU and SDC.

The NCU will conclude two separate Support Measure Implementation Agreements, one with each Programme Component Operators.

The reporting (Annual Reports and Completion Report) will be done at the Support Measure level including the two components. In this regard, the NCU will take on the responsibility of ensuring that formally the two components will be included in one single report. The NCU will not add to or amend the report in terms of its "sectorial" (research-related) content, but act as NCU as defined in the regulations.

With regards to the Reimbursement Requests, they will be provided only for the Eurostars component (as there will be no reimbursements under the MCJRP component).

5. Annexes

#	Annex
1	MCJRP Project document (drafted by SNSF)
2	Implementation Schedule

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#	Annex
3	Budget
4	Programme Characteristics
5	Terms of Reference – outsourced HRZZ staff
6	Report Stakeholder Consultations
7	European Partnership on Innovative SMEs / Eurostars eligibility guidelines
8	How Eurostars assesses and ranks Eurostars applications
9	Eurostars legal and financial viability check guidelines

10.

Detailed Information to Programme Component

Basic Programme Component Information

Title	Multilateral Calls for Joint Research Projects (MCJRP)		
Planned Duration [months]	72		
Programme Component Budget	In CHF	7,058,823,53	In Choose.
Requested grant	In CHF	6,000,000,00	In Choose.
Assumed exchange rate			
Requested co-financing rate of Switzerland [%]		85%	

6. Programme Component Operator

6.1 Basic Information

Name of Programme Component Operator	Croatian Science Foundation	
Type of entity	Public sector	
If type of organization is "other", describe the type briefly		
Contact person	Ms Jasminka Boljević	
Position	Head of Department for International Cooperation	
Address:	Illica 24, Zagreb Croatia	
E-Mail	jasminka@hrzz.hr	
Phone	+38512356990	Mobile

Date of establishment	2001	Tax number (if applicable)	
Number of employees (last day of previous month)			36
Number of employees that left the organisation in each of the 3 previous years			2019: 1 2020: 5 2021: 2 2022: 3
Financial Turnover for each of the 3 previous years [in HRK]			2021: 230,099,288 HRK

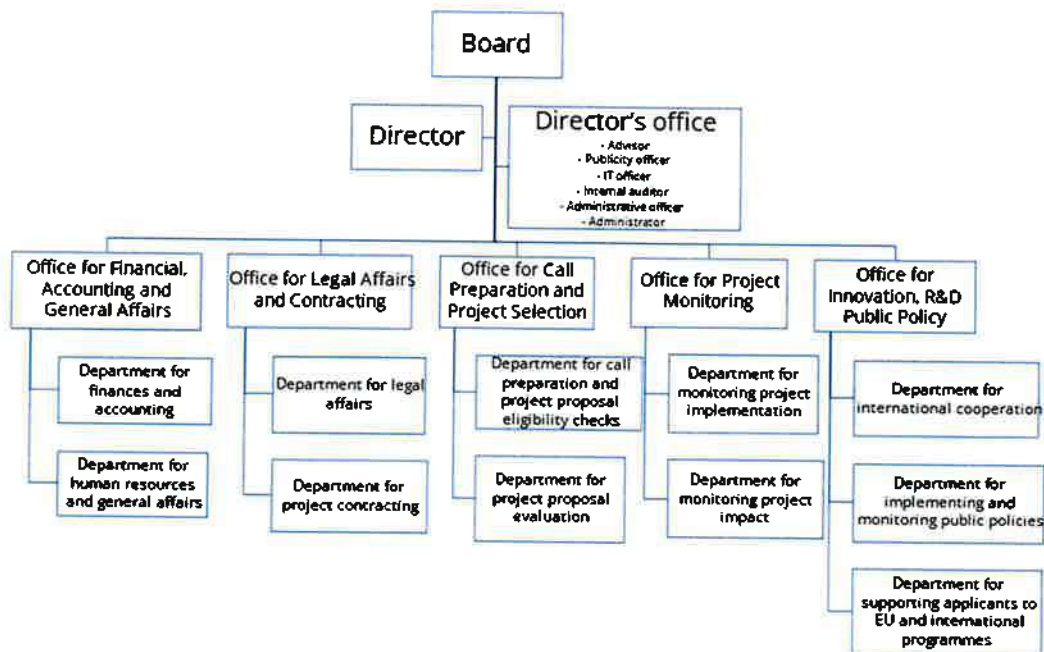
2020: 160,905,624 HRK

2019: 174,116,773 HRK

Has the Programme Operator previously received funding from the Swiss Contribution? Yes No

6.2 Programme Component Operator Management

Organization structure of HRZZ:



The Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ) was established through a special act by the Croatian Parliament (Official Gazette No. 117/2001) in 2001 as the National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development of the Republic of Croatia. The Foundation was established for the purpose of promoting science, higher education and technological development in the Republic of Croatia and supporting scientific, higher education and technological programmes and projects. Ever since its establishment, the Foundation has been funding competitive scientific, developmental and innovation projects, enabling Croatian scientific institutions to conduct state-of-the-art research, thus facilitating them to compete for internationally competitive projects.

The Foundation is governed by the Board, which is composed of seven members, which are appointed by the Croatian Parliament upon nomination by the Government of the Republic of Croatia, who selects them from the pool of excellent Croatian scientists, taking into account equal representation of all scientific areas. The Foundation is represented by the Director, who is also in charge of day-to-day operation of the Foundation and the lawfulness of its activities. Administrative, professional and other duties within the Foundation's competence are handled by 11 Departments organized within 5 Office units located in Zagreb and Opatija.

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6.3 Programme Component Management

Will external management personnel be hired to implement the Programme Component?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
What personnel capacity will be dedicated for the management of the Programme Component implementation (in full-time equivalents FTE)?	Internal resources 0.25 FTE	External resources 0.20

MCJRP will be under the jurisdiction of HRZZ's Office for Innovation, R&D and Public Policies, Department for International Cooperation. Programme Component management funds will be used to employ on a part-time basis (1 day per week) a person who will be in charge of the implementation of the programme. This person should hold a MSc degree with at least one year of relevant experience in science administration and/or project monitoring and implementation, and will be responsible for:

- preparation of call documentation
- assist the candidates during the application
- organise communication/visibility/information about MCJRP
- administratively sift the applications after the deadline for application, i.e. verify that submitted documentation is in accordance with the call
- Propose and support SNSF in the identification of experts for the peer reviews and members for the evaluation panel;
- communication with all the partner countries, with the PIs
- invite Evaluation Panel members and organise meetings
- prepare, participate and coordinate meetings
- prepare the feedback materials for the applicants
- prepare and coordinate Contracts
- prepare and distribute dissemination material
- prepare the reports and other materials for SDC and NCU
- liaise between the top management of HRZZ and other stakeholders
- Prepare payments orders for the national contribution (15%) to the national PI;
- Collect, control and prepare the annual and final financial reports provided by the national PIs for the approval of the Board of HRZZ, share these reports with the other Support Measure Partners involved;
- Collaborate with the SNSF for the elaboration of the annual and final progress and financial reports for the entire MCJRP;
- Provide reporting to the Programme Operator (if the Support Measure Partner is not the Programme Operator on monthly and annual basis
- Maintain contact with and inform relevant institutions in the country about the MCJRP
- Monitor results of the projects.
- prepare surveys for follow up of projects

This person shall liaise and cooperate with other HRZZ departments during the implementation and will be responsible to Head of Department for International Relations.

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Are CVs attached to this documentation? Yes No

Are terms of reference for the management functions to be established attached to this documentation? Yes No

6.4 Support Measure Management Experience

The MCJRP will be managed jointly by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ). These two institutions have collaborated in the past on the implementation of the Croatian-Swiss Research Programme 2017-2023 (CSR) since 2017, in which the SNSF acted in the capacity of Executive Agency and HRZZ as its Croatian Partner. Projects implemented within CSR entailed research collaboration of a Swiss-based and a Croatian-based Principal Investigator. The budget of the programme was CHF 4,670,000, 85% of which (CHF 4,000,000) was provided by the first Swiss grant to Croatia. SNSF managed the Swiss part of the grant by distributing it to both the Swiss and the Croatian teams, while HRZZ was responsible for disbursing the national contribution to the Croatian institutions. The Programme is expected to finish in 2023. Both persons responsible for CSR implementation in HRZZ and SNSF, Ms Jasminka Boljević and Mr Timothy Ryan respectively, are involved in the current proposal as well.

In addition, both organizations are a part of the Weave initiative, a cross-European initiative to fund and support bilateral and trilateral scientific cooperation in Europe. Weave is an instrument whose intention is to simplify the application and selection procedure for joint project proposals, which are submitted jointly by researchers from not more than three European countries or regions, by conducting a single evaluation procedure. Weave was launched in 2021 not as a new, separate funding programme; rather, project proposals are submitted to existing national or regional funding programmes following the Lead Agency procedure. Weave enables researchers from two or more countries to submit a joint research project proposal to one of the funding agencies (the Lead Agency). This agency conducts the evaluation procedure according to its internal procedures. The funding recommendation is then forwarded to the other organizations (partner agencies) for their approval, without additional evaluation, pursuant to the Agreement on mutual recognition of evaluation procedures. As signatories of the Multilateral Lead Agency Agreement (MLA), HRZZ and SNSF signed a Bilateral Agreement, which enabled Croatian scientists to team up with their Swiss colleagues and to submit a joint project proposal to SNSF's calls, which are open twice a year. For successful implementation of MCJRO, HRZZ and SNSF should be joined by other participating research funding organizations (RFOS) from EU-13 countries mandated by their government to support basic research in all academic disciplines. At the time of presenting this proposal, it is not yet known which countries will participate in the MCJRP.

In addition, the Croatian Science Foundation participates in several programmes supporting transnational collaboration. These are programmes co-funded through Horizon programme (*CHANSE*, *QUANTERA* and *BlueBIO*) each dedicated to different scientific area, each involving more than 20 EU research funding organizations and research performing organizations. Since 2020, HRZZ has also been part of the Trans-Atlantic Platform for Social Sciences and Humanities (T-AP), a consortium of research funding organizations from Europe and North and South America. Partners in these transnational programmes jointly prepare calls for transnational projects and participate in additional activities aimed at promoting the development of scientific areas.

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7. Programme Component Description

7.1 Short Summary

Building on the successful bilateral research programmes implemented within the first Swiss grant (called enlargement contribution) with the EU-13 countries, the Swiss National Science Foundation supports the idea of organising multilateral calls including multiple partner countries in one programme under a new funding mechanism called Multilateral Calls for Joint Research Projects (MCJRP).

The MCJRP supports the implementation of multilateral joint research projects realised by a group of researchers from Croatia, Switzerland and other participating EU-13 countries, each group being headed by a Principal Investigator (PI). A team-oriented approach from different countries and institutions allows addressing more complex research questions, where further expertise is concentrated among the research partners and access to knowledge and technologies can be facilitated. Furthermore, multilateral cooperation fosters capacity building and generates exchange opportunities among the EU-13 countries and Switzerland. Fostering cross-border collaboration also helps overcoming segregation within the European research landscape and boosts brain circulation within these countries.

7.2 Activities and Expected Results

The Programme Component consists of three main activities, divided into several stages/sub-activities:

Activity and sub-activity	Description of activity/sub-activity	Outputs
<p>1. Call preparation and implementation</p> <p>1.1. Preparation and signing of Consortium Agreement among SNSF and all participating EU-13 research funders.</p> <p>1.2. Preparing, announcing and opening the call.</p> <p>1.3. Administrative check of proposals.</p> <p>1.4. Selecting international peer reviewers.</p> <p>1.5. Organizing evaluation panel and selecting projects for financing.</p> <p>1.6. Financial negotiations and</p>	<p>1.1. SNSF, HRZZ and other RFOs will sign a Consortium Agreement defining their individual and shared commitments, the call procedures and budgets.</p> <p>1.2. The Call for Proposals will be launched simultaneously by all RFOs and will be open to proposals of joint research projects consisting of partners from Switzerland and at least two other countries. The Call will be open for three months. A partner-finding tool will be made available.</p> <p>1.3. Each RFO will conduct an administrative check of proposals submitted by partners from their respective countries. If a partner is deemed ineligible by one RFO, the whole project proposal is eliminated.</p>	<p>1.1. Consortium Agreement between SNSF, HRZZ and other RFOs is signed.</p> <p>1.2. The call for proposals is opened and published on HRZZ, SNSF and other participating agencies' websites.</p> <p>1.3. Administrative check finalised and eligible proposal list formed.</p> <p>1.4. Obtained reviews by international experts.</p>

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Activity and sub-activity	Description of activity/sub-activity	Outputs
<p>sending decision letter to the Swiss PIs.</p> <p>1.7. Grant Agreement signing between HRZZ and Croatian PIs and between all PIs.</p> <p>1.8. Payments to the Joint Research Projects</p>	<p>1.4. Proposals will be evaluated following a two-step procedure. Each proposal will first be reviewed by at least two international peer reviewers nominated by RFOs.</p> <p>1.5. All proposals evaluated positively by peer reviewers will be presented to the Evaluation Panel, consisting of experts nominated by each RFOs (number TBC). The Evaluation Panel will draft a ranking list of proposals based on the peer reviewers' assessments.</p> <p>1.6. Based on the Evaluation Panel rankings, each RFO will need to calculate how many JRPs it is able to finance and adopt funding decisions according to its internal procedures. Each RFO is expected to fund at least ten national teams.</p> <p>1.7. The PIs of each funded national team will sign an agreement on the implementation of the JRP, while they will also sign funding agreements with their respective RFOs.</p> <p>1.8. Upon conclusion of the funding agreements, RFOs will distribute the funds to the JRPs in the modality defined in the Consortium Agreement.</p>	<p>1.5. Ranking list of evaluated proposals is formed.</p> <p>1.6. Defined number of JRPs per each RFO</p> <p>1.7. Agreements between PIs, national team and RFOs signed.</p> <p>1.8. Funds distributed to the JRPs.</p>
<p>2. Implementation of sub-projects</p> <p>2.1. Implementation of JRPs</p> <p>2.2. Financial and scientific monitoring of JRPs</p>	<p>2.1. JRPs are expected to last for a maximum of four years and they are to be implemented in accordance with the submitted Work Plan. The PI of the Swiss national team is considered the Lead PI and is responsible for the functioning of the whole JRP.</p>	<p>2.1. JRP started.</p> <p>2.2. Report submitted to SNSF. Financial report submitted to the HRZZ.</p>

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Activity and sub-activity	Description of activity/sub-activity	Outputs
2.3. On-the-spot visits to JRPs	<p>2.2. Scientific reports on the whole JRP will be submitted to SNSF by the Lead PI, while each RFO may define additional monitoring procedures for their respective national teams. HRZZ requires Croatian PIs to submit annual financial reports.</p> <p>2.3. RFOs may pay occasional visits to JRPs, either jointly or each RFO to their national team.</p>	2.3. Visits, to verify the claims stated in the reports or for promotional purposes, to JRPs were held.
<p>3. Programme management</p> <p>3.1. Establishing Programme Steering Committee and Terms of Reference</p> <p>3.2. Operational management of the overall programme by SNSF in cooperation with participating EU-13 research funders.</p> <p>3.3. Promotion and visibility of the MCJRP</p> <p>3.4. Exchange of practices among the partners,</p>	<p>3.1. The top-level body monitoring the implementation of the Programme Component will be the Steering Committee, consisting of representatives from each RFO and each NCU.</p> <p>3.2. Each RFO shall be required to submit annual budget statements to SNSF</p> <p>3.3. Activities include a joint kick-off conference, at which the names of grantees will be revealed, a joint closing conference, at which the results of all JRPs will be presented. In addition to this, each RFO will be informing the public about the results of their respective national teams.</p> <p>3.4. This includes visits of staff to other partner countries's funding organisations and exchange of experience</p>	<p>3.1. The roles of the Steering Committee are defined in the Terms of Reference.</p> <p>3.2. Annual budget statement submitted.</p> <p>3.3. Joint kick-off and closing conferences held.</p> <p>3.4. Short-term visits between partners held.</p>

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7.3 Beneficiaries

The MCJRP supports the implementation of multilateral joint research projects realised by a group of researchers from Croatia, Switzerland and other participating EU-13 countries, each group being headed by a Principal Investigator (PI). The grant beneficiaries in Croatia are the PIs working within the following types of public institutions:

- Public or private universities,
- Scientific institutes
- Non-profit research institutions
- Croatian academy of sciences and arts

In order to reach a critical mass, better justify the administrative workload and provide a reasonable success rate to the participating researchers, funds for each call should allow for the support of between 10 and 20 projects from each EU-13 country involved.

The geographical area of the intervention are Switzerland, Croatia and other participating EU-13 countries. The research will be conducted in the relevant institutions linked to the PIs with no geographical priority within participating countries.

Is the benefit of the Programme Component a national or regional benefit? National Regional

 If regional, indicate the benefiting NUTS-2 regions and if possible give additional information on locations:

7.4 Sustainability

Dedicated EU-13 cooperation will develop stronger ties among EU-13 research funders and new collaborative networks on the researchers' level which should result in new applications to bilateral and multilateral calls under above mentioned programmes and instruments. On the organisational level it is expected that participating countries research founders will develop stronger cooperation and exchange of best practice. It is expected that forming the stronger ties on the organisational level could contribute to develop instruments and measures aimed at giving stronger push to internationalisation of researchers and thus decreasing the science divide in the EU-13 compared to older EU member states. This will have an overall positive effect on future participation in ERA for all partners.

7.5 Budget

Detailed budget is included as Annex

7.6 Public Procurements

#	Procurement name	Value [Choose.] with VAT*	Foreseen procedure	Preparedness of tender dossier
1				Choose an element.

17.

* If VAT is considered an eligible expense, according to Regulations, Article 6.6

7.7 Detailed Implementation Schedule

Detailed implementation schedule is included as Annex.

7.8 Risk Analysis and Risk Management

Risk	Impact [1 – 5]	Likelihood [1 – 5]	Risk level	Mitigation measure(s)
Research partner search unsuccessful	5	1	Low-Medium	Prolongation of the deadline for submission and intensified announcement of the call to the public.
Not enough proposals of excellent science	4	1	Low-Medium	Active promotion prior to call.
Research goals not achieved in time	5	3	Medium-High	Possibility to prolong project duration (additional 6 months)
JRP reports not delivered in time	3	1	Low	Retention of financial instalment until reports delivered

Basic Programme Component Information

Title	EUROSTARS		
Planned Duration [months]	72		
Programme Component Budget	In CHF	2.352.941,17	In Choose.
Requested grant	In CHF	2,000,000,00	In Choose.
Assumed exchange rate			
Requested co-financing rate of Switzerland [%]	85%		

8. Programme Component Operator

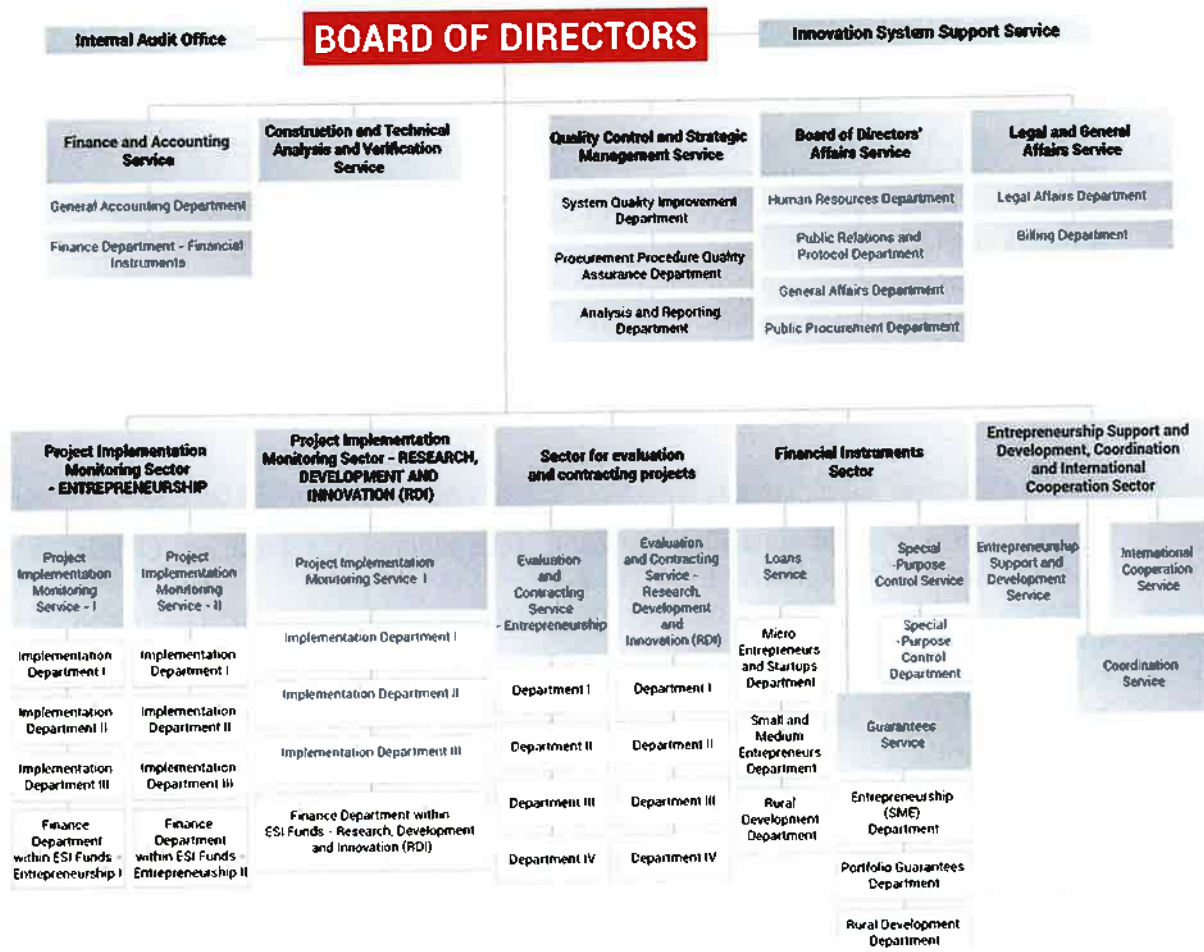
8.1 Basic Information

1M.

Name of Programme Component Operator	Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovation and Investments		
Type of entity	National administration		
If type of organization is "other", describe the type briefly	N/A		
Name of contact person	Marija Galeković		
Position	Head of International Cooperation Unit		
Correspondence address:	Ksaver 208, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia		
E-Mail	marija.galekovic@hamagbicro.hr		
Webpage and social media (if any)	https://hamagbicro.hr/		
Date of establishment	19.04.1994.	Tax number (if applicable)	25609559342
Number of employees	317		
Financial Turnover for each of the 3 previous years [in Choose.]	N/A		
Has the Programme Component Operator previously received funding from the Swiss Contribution?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>

8.2 Programme Component Operator Management

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Regarding the organizational structure of the Agency, it is governed by a four-member board, and its operations are divided into five sectors, each led by a director. Some sectors include various services, which, in turn, may have departments. In other sectors, services stand alone. Each organizational unit is overseen by a designated manager.

The Agency implements all programs and projects following prescribed instructions and procedures, ensuring that funds are allocated as intended and all performance indicators are met. The same approach will be upheld for the execution of this programme component.

8.3 Programme Component Management

Will external management personnel be hired to implement the Programme Component?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
What personnel capacity will be dedicated for the management of the Programme Component implementation (in full-time equivalents FTE)?	Internal resources 0,5	External resources 0

The Support Measure Management team at HAMAG-BICRO will comprise two part-time staff members responsible for executing the proposed Support Measure. Here are their profiles with responsibilities:

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1. Marija Galeković, National Project Coordinator for Eurostars:
- Specializes in coordinating innovation-focused programs and international collaborations, including EUREKA, Eurostars, and Horizon Europe.
 - Offers daily advisory services to SMEs in areas such as research, innovation, and accessing financial resources.
 - Organizes B2B brokerage events and workshops through the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)
 - In charge of coordinating Legal and Financial Viability check with Sector for Evaluation and entering data into Eurostars system.
 - In charge of creating and managing voucher calls.

2. Iva Špoljar Šarić, Deputy National Project Coordinator for Eurostars:
- Functions as a Communication Advisor, International Cooperation Officer, and Communication Champion for EEN Croatia.
 - Provides guidance on communication, public relations, communication ambassadors, social media, and press relations.
 - Manages all communication matters, ensuring compliance with the Communication and Dissemination plan of the European Partnership on Innovative SMEs / Eurostars 3 and Innowide.
 - Handles inquiries from Eurostars beneficiaries and SMEs interested in the Euro-stars program.
 - Supervises Eurostars beneficiaries' progress reports and financial reports.
 - Organizes B2B brokerage events and workshops through EEN and assists SMEs attending these events.

Are CVs attached to this documentation? Yes No

Are terms of reference for the management functions to be established attached to this documentation? Yes No

8.4 Programme and Project Management Experience

EUROSTARS 2017-2024

- name of programme/project: Project Agreement between the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds as the National Coordination Unit on the grant for the project "Eurostars" to be implemented during the period 1 June 2017 – 31 May 2024; HAMAG-BICRO is the Intermediate Body
- budget, duration: CHF 1,176,471.00, -- 84 months (01.06.2017-31.05.2024)
- funding-source and co-financing: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (85%), co-financing: Republic of Croatia (15%)
- main purpose: The project's objective is to support innovation performing SME, improve their competitive capacity and encourage cooperation with partners in Europe, particularly with Swiss partners.
- executed procurements as part of the programme/project CHF 100,00.00 (coaching and promotion activities)
- programme/project team are still part of the applying organization

14.

EEN 2020-2021

- name of programme/project: Services in Support for Business and Innovation in Croatia (SSBI-CRO) within the COSME Request for proposal "Consultation of Enterprise Europe Network partners on the work programme for 2020-2021 COSME activities" (COS-EEN-SGA4-2020-2021)
- budget, duration: EUR 740.089,00 (total consortium); EUR 161.500,00 (HB), 24 months (01.01.2020-31.12.2021)
- funding-source and co-financing: European Commission, Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME), co-financing: HAMAG-BICRO
- main purpose: The overall objective of the Croatian consortium was to improve SME's competitiveness through the creation of a supportive environment for entrepreneurial activities in Croatia, fostering internationalization and innovation and promoting entrepreneurial culture for both Croatian and European SMEs. The overall objective of the project was realized through specific goals: 1) Internationalization of SMEs, 2) Development of internationally competitive SMEs, 3) Making accessible IPR management and support to SMEs and the scientific community, 4) Promote EU funding opportunities and programmes, 5) Presentations of EU funding opportunities, 6) Ensure visibility, national recognition and local awareness of EEN activities with particular emphasis on the European dimension and 7) achieving positive impact among SME community
- executed procurements as part of the programme/project: EUR 61,000.00 (promotion, cost of events, promotional material)
- programme/project team are still part of the applying organization

EEN 2019

- name of programme/project: Services in Support for Business and Innovation in Croatia (SSBI-CRO) within the COSME Request for proposal "Consultation of Enterprise Europe Network partners on the work programme for 2019 COSME activities" (COS-EEN-SGA3-2018-2-01)
- budget, duration: EUR 624.928,00 (total consortium); EUR 134.348,00 (HB), 12 months (01.01.2019-31.12.2019)
- funding-source and co-financing: European Commission, Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME), co-financing: HAMAG-BICRO
- main purpose: The overall objective of the Croatian consortium was to improve SME's competitiveness through the creation of a supportive environment for entrepreneurial activities in Croatia, fostering internationalization and innovation and promoting entrepreneurial culture for both Croatian and European SMEs. The overall objective of the project was realized through specific goals: 1) Internationalization of SMEs, 2) Development of internationally competitive SMEs, 3) Making accessible IPR management and support to SMEs and the scientific community, 4) Promote EU funding opportunities and programmes, 5) Presentations of EU funding opportunities, 6) Ensure visibility, national recognition and local awareness of EEN activities with particular emphasis on the European dimension and 7) achieving positive impact among SME community
- executed procurements as part of the programme/project: EUR 33,000.00 (promotion, cost of events, promotional material)
- programme/project team are still part of the applying organization

9. Programme Component Description

9.1 Short Summary

Eurostars is a publicly financed programme currently supported by 37 EUREKA member countries and the European Union. It supports research-performing small and medium enterprises, which develop innovative products, processes and services, to gain competitive advantage. Eurostars does this by providing funding for transnational innovation projects, the products of which are then rapidly commercialized. Since 2007, Eurostars has been connecting R&D-performing SMEs to collaborate on innovative projects. With its bottom-up approach, Eurostars supports the development of rapidly marketable innovative products, processes and services that help improve the daily lives of people around the world. It has been carefully developed to meet the specific needs of SMEs and presents an ideal first step in international cooperation, enabling small businesses to combine and share expertise and benefit from working beyond national borders.

The programme component is to provide support for Croatian R&D-performing entrepreneurs, enabling them to hand in Eurostars projects with Swiss partners and compete successfully within the Eurostars programme.

The programme contributes to Croatia's economic growth and competitiveness by strengthening research excellence and innovation capacities of Croatian research organizations, universities and enterprises and by facilitating the research and innovation cooperation with international partners. Among others, the expected outcomes are:

- Creation of long-lasting networks between Switzerland and Croatia
- Enhancing innovation capacities of research institutions and/or the private sector

The goal of the programme component is to increase the innovation competencies and capacities of Croatian SMEs as a relatively new EU member state. The programme is focused on the needs of SMEs and specifically targets the development of new products, processes and services and access to transnational and international markets.

9.2 Activities and Expected Results

Eureka Eurostars is the only European funding programme that is solely dedicated to supporting early-stage R&D-performing companies, including start-ups. It is a consortium programme that welcomes international collaborations, mainly between small companies and academic researchers. Eurostars is a joint programme between EUREKA and the European Commission, co-funded from the national budgets of 37 Eurostars Participating States and Partner Countries, and by the European Union through Horizon Europe. The specific rules and regulations for applicants differ for each country. In each case they are set by the respective National Contact Point (NCP). The focus of the Eurostars programme is on collaborative international early-stage R&D projects working on a marketable product, process or service. Eurostars supports the first three years of development of marketable innovative products, processes and services that address global markets to help improve the daily lives of people around the world. A Eurostars project can address any technological area for any market, but must have a civilian purpose and be aimed at the development of a new product, process or service. Eurostars has two submission deadlines per year, typically one in spring and one in autumn. Eurostars is designed to support SMEs from Eureka member countries in their innovative projects. SMEs fitting the description of an innovative SME are eligible to lead a consortium.

Activity and sub-activity	Description of activity/sub-activity	Outputs
<p>1. Implementation of Eurostars projects</p> <p>1.1. Announcing the call for Croatia (EUREKA Secretariat is responsible for opening the call)</p> <p>1.2. Legal and Financial Viability Check of proposals (Croatian Applicants)</p> <p>1.3. Synchronization of results and award decision letter</p> <p>1.4. Budget clearing</p> <p>1.5. Grant Agreement signing between HAMAG-BICRO and Croatian Partner in the Project</p> <p>1.6. Payments to the Eurostars Projects</p> <p>1.7. Implementation of Eurostars Projects</p> <p>1.8. Financial and technological monitoring of Eurostars Projects</p>	<p>1.1. The Call for Proposals will be launched by EUREKA Secretariat and will be open to proposals of joint projects consisting of partners from 37 countries. The Call will be open twice a year for two months.</p> <p>1.2. HAMAG-BICRO as Croatian NFB will conduct Legal and Financial Viability Check of proposals submitted by Croatian partners. If a partner is deemed ineligible by one NFB, the whole project proposal is eliminated.</p> <p>1.3. EUREKA Secretariat prepares Synchronization of results and award decision letter</p> <p>1.4. HAMAG-BICRO as Croatian NFB will conduct Budget Clearing for Croatian participants before signing the Grant Agreement with them</p> <p>1.5. Grant Agreement signing between HAMAG-BICRO as NFB and beneficiary</p> <p>1.6. Upon conclusion of the funding agreements, HAMAG-BICRO will distribute the funds to the Beneficiaries in the modality defined in the Consortium Agreement.</p> <p>1.7. Beneficiaries are obliged to report semi-annually on the progress of project implementation</p> <p>1.8. Based on the received report, HAMAG-BICRO issues an opinion on project implementation, which is the basis for the next payment</p>	<p>1.1. The call for proposals is opened and published on HAMAG-BICRO website.</p> <p>1.2. Evaluation form for Legal and Financial Viability Check</p> <p>1.3. Synchronization list</p> <p>1.4. Evaluation form for Budget Clearing</p> <p>1.5. Grant Agreement</p> <p>1.6. Administrative check finalised and eligible proposal list formed.</p> <p>1.7. Report submitted to HAMAG-BICRO</p> <p>1.8. Opinion on project implementation</p>
<p>2. Support Activities</p> <p>2.1. Announcing and opening the Call for Vouchers</p>	<p>2.1. The Call for Proposals will be launched by HAMAG-BICRO at least</p>	<p>2.1. The Call for Vouchers is opened and published on HAMAG-BICRO website.</p>

Activity and sub-activity	Description of activity/sub-activity	Outputs
<p>2.2. Organizing evaluation and selecting projects for awarding vouchers</p> <p>2.3. Payments of the Vouchers</p> <p>2.4. Open call for joint events (Company Missions, B2B)</p> <p>2.5. Organizing evaluation and selecting applicants for networking events voucher</p> <p>2.6. Payment for the networking event voucher</p> <p>2.7. Organization of Info days and workshops</p>	<p>two months before cut-off for full project proposals.</p> <p>2.2. HAMAG-BICRO will conduct evaluation of proposals and prepare awarding list</p> <p>2.3. Payment will be made</p> <p>2.4. The Call for Proposals will be launched by HAMAG-BICRO once a year until the funds are used for this year.</p> <p>2.5. HAMAG-BICRO will organize evaluation and select applicants for networking event voucher</p> <p>2.6. Payment will be made</p> <p>2.7. HAMAG-BICRO will organize Info days to promote the programme and support activities</p>	<p>2.2. Evaluation form for Voucher Scheme</p> <p>2.3. Internal payment order and payment confirmation</p> <p>2.4. The call for joint events is opened and published on HAMAG-BICRO website.</p> <p>2.5. Evaluation form for Networking events voucher</p> <p>2.6. Internal payment order and payment confirmation</p> <p>2.7. Agenda and Attendance list</p>
<p>3. Programme management</p> <p>3.1. Establishing Programme Steering Committee</p> <p>3.2. Operational management of the overall programme</p> <p>3.3. Promotion and visibility of the Eurostars</p>	<p>3.1. The top-level body monitoring the implementation of the Programme Component will be the Steering Committee.</p> <p>3.2. Overall implementation of the Programme Component</p> <p>3.3. Activities include informing the public about the results of their respective national teams.</p>	<p>3.1. The roles of the Steering Committee are defined in the Terms of Reference.</p> <p>3.2. Interim and Annual Reports</p> <p>3.3. Calls and promotional events published on HAMAG-BICRO website.</p>

9.3 Beneficiaries

The programme component is focused on the needs of SMEs and specifically targets the development of new products, processes and services and the access to transnational and international markets. SMEs make up 99.7% of all active business entities in Croatia. More than 2/3 of SMEs are operating in following 5 key sectors: trade, production, construction, services and hospitality industry. Slightly more than 98% of SMEs are micro and small enterprises that employ up to 50 people.

Is the benefit of the Programme Component a national or regional benefit?

National Regional

PH.

9.4 Sustainability

The sustainability of the project can be observed in two ways, one of which refers to the sustainability of the component itself that will be implemented, while the other refers to the sustainability of the sub-projects that will be financed. Both are intertwined and can be viewed through following:

- **Long-term partnerships:** One measure of sustainability is the establishment of long-term partnerships between Croatian companies and their international counterparts. If the project successfully facilitates these partnerships, it can contribute to ongoing collaboration and future joint projects beyond the duration of the current initiative.
- **Enhanced innovation capabilities:** The project aims to support Croatian companies in developing innovative products, processes, and services. If the project effectively enhances the innovation capabilities of these companies, it can lead to long-term sustainable growth and competitiveness in the market.
- **Market access and commercialization:** Another measure of sustainability is the ability of the supported companies to access transnational and international markets. If the project assists Croatian companies in successfully entering and expanding their presence in these markets, it can have a positive long-term impact on their business sustainability.
- **Knowledge transfer and capacity building:** The project's success in facilitating knowledge transfer and capacity building within Croatian companies can contribute to their long-term sustainability. If the project enables the transfer of skills, expertise, and best practices, it can strengthen the overall capabilities of the companies involved.
- **Policy impact:** The project's outcomes and experiences can also inform policy development and decision-making processes related to supporting SMEs and fostering innovation. If the project generates valuable insights and lessons learned that influence future policies and programs, it can contribute to a more sustainable and supportive ecosystem for Croatian companies in the long run.
- **Continuation and expansion:** If the project proves to be successful and demonstrates clear value, there may be opportunities for its continuation or expansion beyond the initial implementation phase. This would provide further support to Croatian companies and sustain the positive outcomes achieved.

HAMAG BICRO is dedicated to continuing to provide technical support for SMEs who will show interest in participating in EUROSTARS programme, beyond the support provided through the Swiss contribution. HAMAG BICRO staff allocate time and effort each year in extensive promotion of the EUROSTARS programme and provision of expertise and guidance to the interested SMEs. The results of such efforts are visible mainly through the yearly growth of the

number of projects selected for EUROSTARS funding and increased SMEs interest in general towards the Programme. The Swiss contribution presents an added value to further strengthen observed positive trends. In case the implementation of the programme proves successful beyond the initial plans and more applications will be selected for funding through EUROSTARS than available budget within tis Programme Component, HAMAG BICRO will provide co-financing from its own funds to enable SMEs to implement their projects.

9.5 Budget

Budget annexed to this document.

9.6 Risk Analysis and Risk Management

Risk	Impact [1 – 5]	Likelihood [1 – 5]	Risk level	Mitigation measure(s)
Research partner search unsuccessful	5	1	Low-Medium	Help throughout Enterprise Europe Network project in partner search.
Not enough interest for the Networking Events Vouchers	4	1	Low-Medium	Active promotion prior to call. Info days.
Not enough interest for the Voucher Programme	4	1	Low-Medium	Active promotion prior to call. Info days.
Not enough proposals submitted	4	2	Low-Medium	Active promotion prior to call. Info days.
Not enough proposals positively evaluated and contracted	4	3	Medium-High	Info days with workshops on how to submit successful application.
Project goals not achieved in time	4	3	Medium-High	Possibility to prolong project duration (additional 6 months)

The Eurostars program has been implemented in Croatia since 2016, and the procedures are well established. There is minimal anticipation of significant risks occurring. As for support activities the only anticipated risk is potentially lower interest, but mitigation measures will be taken if risk occurs.

The above is confirmed by the fact that the successful implementation of the first Swiss contribution is near the end with the absorption of funds in 2023 exceeding 95%.]

14.

Annex B: Budget

on

the Support Measure

Research Programme Croatia

RESEARCH PROGRAMME
Budget

Instructions																		
No	Budget items	EUR	EUR	EUR	%	CHF	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	CHF	CHF	
		Unit costs	Quantity	Budget 100%	Co-financing rate (CH co-financing)	Swiss contribution (co-financing)	Quantity	Budget Year 1	Quantity	Budget Year 2	Quantity	Budget Year 3	Quantity	Budget Year 4	Quantity	Budget Year 5	Budget Year 6	
	Exchange rate CHF/EUR, 1 CHF=1,04668 EUR	1,04668																
1	Management Costs			0,00	85,00%	0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00	0,00	
1.1	Personnel																0,00	
N/A				0,00				0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00			0,00	
1.2	External expertise and services																0,00	
N/A				0,00				0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00			0,00	
1.3	Swiss experts and partners																0,00	
N/A				0,00				0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00			0,00	
1.4	Information and communication																0,00	
N/A	add lines as needed			0,00				0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00			0,00	
1.5	Miscellaneous																0,00	
N/A	add lines as needed			0,00				0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00			0,00	
2	Programme Component 1			7.388.329,41	85,00%	6.000.000,00		156.463,27		1.736.026,52		1.723.518,70		1.725.193,39		1.725.193,39	321.964,93	
2.1	Management costs SNSF	554.124,70	1,00	554.124,70	100,00%	529.411,76		92.354,12		92.354,12		92.354,12		92.354,12		92.354,12	92.354,12	
2.2	Management costs HRZZ			184.708,24	0,00%	0,00		64.109,15		27.475,35		14.967,52		16.642,21		16.642,21	44.871,79	
	2.2.1. Personnel cost	872,23	72	62.800,80			12	10.466,80	12	10.466,80	12	10.466,80	12	10.466,80	12	10.466,80	12	10.466,80
	2.2.2. Travel costs (Panel members, Steering committee members, HRZZ administrative staff)	1.413,02	30	42.390,54			15	21.195,27	5	7.065,09	2	2.826,04	2	2.826,04	2	2.826,04	4	5.652,07
	2.2.3. EPP system upgrade	27.213,68	1	27.213,68			1	27.213,68	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00
	2.2.4 External evaluation	13.576,06	1	13.576,06			0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	1	13.576,06
	2.2.5. Sub-project meetings and on-the-spot-checks	837,34	10	8.373,44			0	0,00	0	0,00	2	1.674,69	4	3.349,38	4	3.349,38	0	0,00
	2.2.6. Costs of dissemination events (Call info workshop, kick-off and closing conference)	9.943,46	2	19.886,92			0	0,00	1	9.943,46	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	1	9.943,46
	2.2.7. Promotional materials	5.233,40	2	10.466,80			1	5.233,40	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	1	5.233,40
2.3	Sub-projects	646.478,82	10,00	6.464.788,23	85,71%	5.294.117,65	0	0,00	0,25	1.616.197,06	0,25	1.616.197,06	0,25	1.616.197,06	0,25	1.616.197,06		184.739,02
2.4	Reserve	184.708,24	1,00	184.708,24	100,00%	176.470,59												
3	Programme Component 2			2.462.776,47	85,00%	2.000.000,00		539.415,42		685.972,56		683.972,56		553.415,93		0,00	0,00	
3.1	Management costs Programme Component 2			32.776,51				4.694,00		4.694,00		4.694,00		18.694,51		0,00	0,00	
	3.1.1. Travel costs (HAMAG administrative staff)	2.347,00	8,00	18.776,00			2	4.694,00	2	4.694,00	2	4.694,00	2	4.694,00	2	4.694,00	0,00	
	3.1.2 External evaluation	14.000,51	1,00	14.000,51				0,00		0,00		0,00	1	14.000,51		0,00	0,00	
3.2	Sub-projects	142.857,14	14,00	1.999.999,96			3	428.571,42	4	571.428,56	4	571.428,56	3	428.571,42		0,00	0,00	
3.3	Support activities			430.000,00				106.150,00		109.850,00		107.850,00		106.150,00		0,00	0,00	
	3.3.1. Networking events vouchers	1.700,00	50,00	85.000,00			12	20.400,00	13	22.100,00	13	22.100,00	12	20.400,00		0,00	0,00	
	3.3.2. Consultant vouchers	3.350,00	100,00	335.000,00			25	83.750,00	25	83.750,00	25	83.750,00	25	83.750,00		0,00	0,00	
	3.3.3. Promotion (Organization of Info days)	2.000,00	5,00	10.000,00			1	2.000,00	2	4.000,00	1	2.000,00	1	2.000,00		0,00	0,00	
	TOTAL			9.851.105,88		8.000.000,00		695.878,69		2.421.999,06		2.407.491,26		2.278.609,32		1.725.193,39	321.964,93	

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Annex C: Decision Letter from SDC

on
the Support Measure
Research Programme Croatia

Annex 2: Decision letter 2nd stage approval



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
MENA-Europe Division

CH-3003 Bern, DEZA

A Post

Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds
National Coordination Unit NCU
Miramarska cesta 22, Zagreb

Your reference:
Our reference: 771.20-01-PYR/FS
Bern, 12 January 2024

Subject: 2nd Swiss Contribution to Croatia
Decision Letter on 2nd stage Support Measure proposal
Support Measure Name: Research Programme Croatia
Support Measure N°: 7F-11087
Swiss Contribution: CHF 8'000'000.--

Dear Ms Laštro,

We are pleased to inform you that the 2nd stage proposal of the Support Measure mentioned above, which was submitted by the NCU on 15 December 2023, has been approved subject to the following conditions:

Condition	Indicator of fulfilment	Date/period
<p><u>Steering Committee (SC):</u></p> <p>>It is strongly recommended to reconsider having a single SC for the Support Measure. This would be in line with the Programme Approach (1 SMP, 1 SMA, 1 reporting line), and allow not only to steer the Eurostar's Component, but also to discuss and decide Croatian-specific and overarching (Support Measure level) issues.</p> <p>>The ownership of the sectorial Ministries for the Programme is important. The relevant Ministries shall be represented in the Steering Committee with voting rights.</p>	Steering Committee regulated in the Support Measure Agreement	To be fulfilled prior to the signature of the SMA.
<p><u>Institutional eligibility for the MCJRP:</u></p> <p>It appears that, according to the SMP, private entities/research organisations are not eligible. The Prodoc of the MCJRP imposes the exclusion of commercial entities/organisations.</p>	Annex 2 of the call document confirmed or amended	Prior to the launch of the Call for the MCJRP

<p>Private research centers/universities which are conducting research activities of higher academic level, and in which the funding bodies or owners are not gaining pecuniary advantages from the research activities should however in principle be eligible. The Committee recommends that this point is clarified with/by the Programme Component Operator (and if necessary, taken up with SNSF). It is important that the Croatian Annex 2 to the Multilateral call document is unambiguous.</p>		
<p>Budget: >The budget for the "MJRP" Component is incorrect. The Management Fee of the SNSF, as stated in the Prodoc, is 7.5% and corresponds therefore to CHF 529'412. The sub-projects amounts have consequently also to be adapted. >Minor formal adaptation: indicate in the first cell currently named "Exchange rate CHF/EUR", the words 1 CHF = 1,04668 EUR.</p>	<p>Revised Budget</p>	<p>To be fulfilled prior to the signature of the SMA (revised budget is annexed to the SMA)</p>
<p>Logframe: in view of reporting and aggregation of results for the 2nd Swiss contribution, the exact formulations of the relevant Core Indicators shall be included in the Logframe. For the "MJRP" Component, all the indicators (Core Indicators and others) can be copied- from the Prodoc. For Eurostars, the Core Indicator R&I_CI_3 shall be integrated in its exact formulation.</p>	<p>Revised Logframe</p>	<p>Latest one month after signature of the SMA</p>
<p>Duration of the SMP: Duration of the SMP: >The initial date can only be after the signing of the Support Measure Agreement. >End date of the SMP: the 3.12.2029 is the last date of eligibility of expenses. The activities of the components would have to be completed early enough to allow for final controls, reporting, auditing and evaluation also to be executed before the 3.12.2029 for the PCOs as well as the NCU for the overall programme. The Committee recommends to take this into consideration for determining the end date of the SMP.</p>	<p>Start and End date regulated in the SMA</p>	<p>To be fulfilled prior to the signature of the SMA.</p>


You are kindly requested to take into account the conditions expressed above when finalising the above mentioned documents. The Swiss Contribution Office will remain at your disposal to assist with the clarifications required.

We would like to thank you for the excellent cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
 MENA-Europe Division

Andrea Studer
 Assistant Director General, Head of Division

 Studer Andrea 5N4KBG
 22.01.2024
 Info: admin.ch/signature | validator.ch
 Copy: SECO, SCO Croatia

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Swiss-Croatian Cooperation Programme

Annex D: Programme Component Document (MCJRP)

on
the Support Measure
Research Programme Croatia

Berne, December 2022

Programme Component Document

Title of Programme Component: Multilateral Call for Joint Research Projects

SPECIFIC COUNTRY NEEDS: in terms of the organisational set-up in the participating EU-13 countries, please note that this document reflects and presents a typical scenario. Adaptations to the proposed set-up are possible if required to respond to specific country needs. These deviations shall however be negotiated directly between the concerned country NCU and SDC and regulated in the Support Measure Agreements. We thank you for not raising/addressing them in this round of consultation, but to address them to through the NCU to SDC directly. SDC will inform SNSF accordingly.

1 Glossary for this document (complementing or deviating from Regulations)

Regulations: refers to the "Regulations on the implementation of the second Swiss contribution to selected Member States of the EU to reduce economic and social disparities within the EU", to which it is referred in the Framework Agreements and which the NCUs have.

Participating EU-13 countries: the countries which are participating in the MCJRP, as agreed upon in the respective Framework Agreements. These are Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania.

Programme Operator: according to the regulations, the Programme Operator is "any public or private sector legal entity having responsibility for preparing and managing a Programme". For the research, this is the entity who is responsible for the overall "Research Programme" for a specific country, of which the MCJRP is a component.

Programme Component Operator: for the MCJRP, this is the Swiss National Science Foundation

Support Measure Partners (from the participating EU-13 countries): these are the entities from the participating EU-13 countries whom the Programme Operator entrusts the responsibility of collaborating with the SNSF for the preparation and implementation of the MCJRP. (more details on the role in the document). In most countries, the Programme Operator and the Support Measure Partner will be the same entity.

Applicants: these are researchers in the status when they submit their applications for funding (once the funding is approved, they become Principal Investigators). In the MCJRP, there will be one applicant from each country for one application.

Principal Investigator (PI): the PI is a researcher who is heading a research group (e.g. PhDs, Master students, fin./admin staff etc) implementing the research activities. In the MCJRP, there will be a PI in each country involved in a project.

2 Programme Component Operator

In line with the Framework Agreements between the participating countries and Switzerland, The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) is the Programme Component Operator for this Component.

Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF):

Mandated by the Swiss federal government, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) supports basic research in all academic disciplines. The SNSF is Switzerland's foremost research funding organisation and finances over 5'700 projects involving 20'000 researchers each year (approximately CHF 882 million). To ensure its independence, the SNSF was established as private foundation in 1952. Its core task is the evaluation of research proposals.

3 Description of the general context and background:

Basic research is an important engine for economic growth for any country and provides new insights into humans and their environment, paving the ways for both technical and social innovation. Ultimately, basic research is essential for social and economic prosperity in the long term. In a nutshell, basic research starts a process that continues with use-inspired research and ends with the development of real-world applications. Collaborations beyond a bilateral relationship allow networks to be built between research groups from the participating countries. Also, building on the complementarity of research groups from different countries and institutions allows for tackling more complex research questions. Furthermore, additional expertise is concentrated among the research partners and access to knowledge and technologies can be facilitated. Multilateral cooperation additionally fosters capacity building and generates exchange opportunities for all involved countries. Fostering cross-border collaboration also helps overcoming fragmentation within the European research landscape and boosts brain circulation within these countries.

From an organisational point of view, the multilateral approach allows for the reduction of administrative costs and simplifies the administrative procedures. Larger calls increase competition, thereby improving the quality of funded research proposals.

The Multilateral Call for Joint Research Projects (MCJRP) responds to the scientific community's demand for more international integration and cooperation with colleagues based in Switzerland and Europe. It does so by mobilising research capacities in Switzerland and in the participating EU-13 countries, and by supporting scientific cooperation in the form of Joint Research Projects (JRPs). JRPs enable scientists from the participating EU-13 countries, jointly with scientists based in Switzerland, to undertake research activities addressing specific problems in all scientific disciplines. Research is carried out at the respective research facilities involved, while reciprocal visits and short stays may also be supported. The cooperation in the field of scientific research between Switzerland and the participating EU-13 countries builds on previous experience in three similar bilateral programmes with Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia.

The participating EU-13 countries to the MCJRP are Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, as agreed upon in the respective Framework Agreements.

4 Description of the Programme Component

The MCJRP aims at promoting excellent science in the participating EU-13 countries and at increasing the competitiveness in the European Research Area (ERA). Furthermore, JRPs implemented under the MCJRP will strengthen the research cooperation amongst the participating EU-13 countries and with Switzerland and contribute to the bilateral cooperation between all countries involved.

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The MCJRP will provide an additional source of funding for research projects (beside European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), Horizon Europe and state budget funds), allow cooperation amongst researchers and host institutions of the participating countries; increase the mobility and competitiveness of researchers and promote their integration within European and international networks. Thereby, the MCJRP directly contributes to the achievement of goals set in the Swiss Strategy of education, science and technology and in the relevant strategic documents of the participating EU-13 countries. At the same time, the MCJRP is in line with ERA principles – the evaluation and monitoring system described below helps improving the research system in the participating EU-13 countries;

The maximum amount of funding per applicant in a JRP is approximately CHF 350'000 for four years. The MCJRP will be implemented through Joint Research Projects (JRPs) jointly proposed by a Swiss applicant and at least two additional applicants from two participating EU-13 countries (further referred to as consortium Principal Investigators - PIs). JRPs shall enable scientists to undertake research activities on specific problems in all thematic areas. When announcing the call, proposals from social sciences and humanities (e.g. on social inclusion, marginalised groups of society, etc.) shall be encouraged (i.e. at least a certain amount – to be decided in the preparation of the call document – shall be funded within these disciplines, provided they meet the required standards of excellence).

4.1 Objectives

As the MCJRP constitutes a component of the Research Programmes of the participating EU-13 countries, it is at the level of the Programme that the Overall Goal will be defined. The Component MCJRP will be one of the components contributing to the defined Overall Goal. Such an Overall Goal for the Research Programs might select relevant indicators at national level such as, e.g. Increased success rate of national researchers in European programs; human resources in science and technology as share of active population, increase % of internationally co-authored papers, etc.

a) Outcome

The main outcome targeted with the MCJRP is the following: the participating researchers have increased their competitiveness and are better integrated within European and international research networks.

In order to assess the success of the MCJRP in achieving this outcome, a dedicated questionnaire (with quantitative/qualitative elements) will be developed and submitted to all participating researchers, to which they will respond in the framework of their final project report. The results will then be analysed and reported on by SNSF in the final report for the MCJRP.

b) Outputs

Outputs relate to strengthening individual capacities, strengthening research institutions, transfer and sharing of knowledge, as well as strengthening the research cooperation.

Relevant indicators may include (non exhaustive list)

- Number of doctoral and master graduates (of the partner state) who receive their grades during or one year following the participation in the joint research project
- Number of publications written by researchers within the joint research project
- Number of scientific events (e.g. conference, convention seminar, congress, symposium, etc.) in which researchers financed through the MCJRP played an active role. "Active role" refers for example to giving a speech or presenting a poster during the event.

4.2 Implementing strategy:

Call for proposals

One single call for proposals is foreseen. The call document will be elaborated by the SNSF together with the Support Measure Partners from each participating EU-13 country, and then approved by the Research Council and presiding board of the SNSF. Information on the call for proposals shall be announced and published simultaneously in all participating countries.

The deadline for the submission of proposals will be at the earliest 3 months after the official launch of the call for proposals.

Individual researchers from at least two participating EU-13 countries together with researchers based in Switzerland submit proposals for Joint Research Project (JRPs). For each country there is a team that is headed by a Principal Investigator (PI)¹. All PIs within the consortium have the same rights, responsibilities and obligations. Nevertheless, the Swiss PI is responsible to submit the yearly reports to the SNSF and is therefore also the corresponding PI (administrative term).

Evaluation procedure

The evaluation procedure will be organised by the SNSF in collaboration with the Support Measure Partners. Each proposal will be reviewed by two external experts according to international peer review procedure standards. On the basis of the international reviews, an evaluation panel, including experts from all participating EU-13 countries and from Switzerland, will be established. The number of panel members to be identified will depend on the number of proposals submitted. On average, a single panel member is responsible for not more than 7-8 proposals. During the panel meeting, all proposals submitted will be comparatively assessed and assigned a rating by members of the joint evaluation panel, resulting in a ranking list.

Decision procedure

The evaluation procedure is based on the scientific quality of the proposal and follows a strict procedure and according to several evaluation criteria communicated in the call document. However, it is the available funding available for each country that determines which proposals can ultimately be supported (which is illustrated, as an example, in the table below). Projects are approved from top to bottom as long as each involved partner country has funds available. For any project, each country is charged its national share plus an equal share of the Swiss part of the budget.

¹ Note: applicants are researchers in the status when submitting an application. If successful, the researchers become Principal Investigators.

As a consequence of this procedure, some projects may not be funded for financial reasons. In the example below, researchers from country A are represented in the 12 strongest proposals. However, as the funds from country A are sufficient to support 10 projects only, the proposals ranked 11th and 12th need to be rejected for financial reasons. The project in the 13 position can be funded, as no researchers from country A is involved and both country B and C still have sufficient funds available. The Swiss part can always be financed, as involvement by a researcher based in Switzerland is mandatory.

Ranking List	Country A, 10 projects	Country B 10 projects	Country C 10 projects	Country D 10 projects	Switzerland	Decision
Project 1	X		X	X	X	Funded
Project 2	X		X	X	X	Funded
Project 3	X	X	X		X	Funded
Project 4	X		X	X	X	Funded
Project 5	X	X	X	X	X	Funded
Project 6	X		X		X	Funded
Project 7	X	X			X	Funded
Project 8	X	X			X	Funded
Project 9	X		X		X	Funded
Project 10	X		X		X	Funded
Project 11	0	X		X	X	Rejected
Project 12	0	X	X		X	Rejected
Project 13		X	X	X	X	Funded

Table 1 Selection procedure MCJRP

X = project part fundable by the respective country

0 = project part not fundable by the respective country (available funds already allocated)

The reviewers and panel members rate the applications on a uniform scale of 1 to 9. A grade of 1 means that an application has few or no merits and many serious weaknesses. Projects graded with a 9, on the other hand, are outstanding in all respects. The scale creates clarity and comparability. Proposals that with an average rate lower than 5 cannot be considered for funding.

The MCJRP Steering Committee² (SC) will take the final decision on proposals to be funded, based on the recommendation of the evaluation panel(s) and the list of fundable projects prepared by the Funders Forum³, taking into consideration the financial resources available in the participating countries. No scientific discussion will take place in the meeting of the SC. Furthermore, the Research Council as well as the Presiding Board of the SNSF need to internally approve the selected projects. The Support Measure Partners need to provide a written confirmation to the SNSF confirming that the decision procedure was executed as agreed upon in the call document. Once the decisions are approved, the results will be communicated to the Swiss applicants. If the consortium does not agree, the Swiss PI has the right to request a reconsideration (SNSF internal procedure) or to start an appeal procedure (regulated in the Funding Regulations of the SNSF, in the Federal Law on the Promotion of Research and in the Federal Law on Administrative Procedure).

In case a specific country will not be able to utilise all of the budget foreseen for the MCJRP, the country's Steering Committee of the Research Programme will need to decide on the potential transfer of the remaining funds to other components of the Support Measure.

Implementation of the JRP

Each JRP is subject to the following contractual arrangements once it is approved for funding (further information will be provided below):

- a Ruling (decision letter from SNSF) to the Swiss PI containing all information concerning rights and obligations around the funded project.
- Grant Agreement between all the PIs and host institutions involved in the JRP, which includes tasks and obligations of the groups (on the basis of the application).
- Specific contracts between the PIs or the host institutions of the PIs and the Support Measure Partner from their country on the use of the national financing part.

Payments

The Swiss contribution for each JRP is transferred by the SNSF to the Swiss PI in yearly instalments as advanced payments. The Swiss PI is responsible for transferring a predefined share (defined in the Grant Agreement) to the other PIs in the consortium.

The contribution of each participating EU-13 country for each JRP is transferred by the Support Measure Partner (or an entity that has been delegated that task) to the PI or to the host institution of the PI in annual instalments as advanced payments. For this, the middle exchange rate of the respective National Bank stated in the Specific contract mentioned above as a reference to calculate each instalment in the national currency.

Reporting (see Chapter 5)

4.3 Location(s) and subcontracting

The geographical range is limited to Switzerland and participating EU-13 countries. The research will be conducted in the relevant institutions linked to the PIs with no geographical priority within these countries (refer to 4.7 for eligible institutions).

If allowed by the national regulations, the PIs can delegate part of his/her own work to a project partner external to the consortium, except for the main research activities. This project partner can be in any part of the world. The project partner can be a public research institution or a private company, but in case it is a private company, the company will have to sign a declaration by which it will say that it will not make a commercial use of the results. The maximum amount that each PI will be able to delegate is 20% of his/her budget.

4.4 Beneficiaries and target groups

The grant beneficiaries under the MCJRP are the Principal Investigators (PI) working within the following types of institutions:

² More information on this Committee in Chapter 5.2

³ More information on Funders Forum in Chapter 5.2

PI from Switzerland hosted at:

- Higher education research centres according to Art. 4c of the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation.

PI from participating EU-13 countries:

- To be defined by each participating country individually (but commercial enterprises/ organisations are excluded.)

4.5 Duration and time frame:

The MCJRP will start in the second half of 2023 with the launching of the call. The individual JRPs will run between 36 and 48 months. Exceptionally and if justified, the project duration could be extended for an additional 4-6 months. All projects will have to be finalised before the 31st of August 2029.

4.6 Risk Analysis:

Risk	Impact ⁴ [1 – 5]	Likelihood ⁵ [1 – 5]	Risk level	Mitigation measure(s)
Research partner search unsuccessful	5	1-2	Low	- Intensive promotion of MCJP on national level - Use network on LinkedIn or Xing to help finding partner
Not enough proposals of excellent science	5	1	Low	- Active promotion of the call in all participating countries
Delays in finalizing and signature of the project document (agreements)	5	3	Low-Medium	- Start preparing documents in 2022 already - Raise awareness about upcoming tasks among participating countries - Close contact with programme operators/NCUs/NPOs
Research goals not achieved in time	3	1	Low	- Possibility of extending projects by 6 months on cost-neutral basis
Reports not delivered in time	3	3	Low-Medium	- Extend deadline for submission of reports - Restrain of financial instalment until reports delivery
Fluctuations in the exchange-rate	5	3	Low-Medium	- Measure to be agreed by Steering Committee

4.7 Sustainability:

The programme will provide a good platform for facilitating and increasing joint research activities and projects between researchers from the participating EU-13 countries and Switzerland in a sustainable way. For some cases, it will be a start of a long-lasting collaboration, that will sustain beyond the completion of the MCJRP. Furthermore, the MCJRP is an opportunity to foster the partnerships, the mutual learning and networking among the Support Measure Partners, mostly the main National Funding Agencies for basic research in the respective countries.

4.8 Gender

With appropriate measures, the SNSF aims to contribute to gender equality in research funding. It has adopted the principle of gender mainstreaming and defined gender equality as a target for all its bodies and across all its activities. For example, at least 40% of the panel members should be female researchers. Furthermore, if two applications are rated equally from a scientific point of view (primary criteria), gender balance decides on funding (secondary criteria), with preference given to female researchers.

5 Implementation arrangements

5.1 Contractual arrangements and other applicable “rules” (basic scenario: as mentioned above specific ad hoc set-ups might be agreed upon)

- Support Measure Agreement: as the MCJRP is a Programme Component of the Research Programs for each participating EU-13 country, it will also be covered by the Support Measure Agreement that each participating EU-13 country will conclude with SDC. The Support Measure Agreement is defined in the Regulations.
- Support Measure Implementation Agreement: as defined in the Regulations, it will be concluded between each NCU and the Programme Operator for the country's Research Programme.
- Mandate Agreement: will be concluded between the SDC and SNSF as Programme Component Operator for the MCJRP. It will be defined on the basis of the present Programme Component Document.

⁴ 1=very low impact, 5=very strong impact
⁵ 1=low, 5=high

- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU): will be signed between the SNSF and the Support Measure Partners in order to better coordinate the common implementation of the Programme and define in more detail the modalities of collaboration. The basis for this MoU will be the Support Measure Agreement and the present Programme Component Document. Ideally a single MoU will be concluded between SNSF and all participating Support Measure Partners.
- Ruling of the SNSF: the SNSF communicates its result with a ruling (decision awarding the funding) The ruling of the SNSF will refer the grantees to the specific rules the grantees will need to adhere to: the call document, [the regulations on project funding](#), [the funding regulations](#) as well as [the general implementation regulations of the funding regulations](#). These are regulations that SNSF applies across all its funding instruments.
- Grant Agreements: will be signed for each research consortium by all participating PIs and their host institutions. It specifies the role of the grantees, the duration of the project, the financial flow, ownership of equipment, reporting, intellectual property rights as well as exploitation of results. It has to be signed before the start of the activities.
- Specific contract: each PI or the host institution of the PI from the participating EU-13 country will sign some form of contract with the entity that provides him/her with the country financing (in most cases the Support Measure Partner). The form and content of this contract is defined by the country rules. It has to be signed before the start of the activities.

5.2 Roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Swiss National Science Foundation - SNSF

The Swiss National Science Foundation, as the Programme Component operator, is responsible for the set-up, management and implementation of the MCJRP, for the build-up, contracting and supervision of the JRPs, and for the overall reporting on the MCJRP. For many of the tasks, SNSF collaborates closely with the Support Measure Partners of the participating EU-13 countries. The main responsibilities of the SNSF include the following activities:

- Draft the MCJRP Programme Documents (in particular MCJRP Programme Document, Call document) and consult them with SDC and with the Support Measure Partners of the participating EU-13 countries;
- Finalise the MCJRP Programme Documents
- Arrange all legal aspects required in Switzerland for the implementation of the MCJRP;
- Prepare and implement the calls;
- Organise communication/visibility/information activities about MCJRP and the call through adequate channels in Switzerland
- Operate as the contact point for the projects submission process (through mySNF or SNSF Portal);
- Organise the evaluation and the selection process;
- Propose and elect members of the evaluation panel and experts for the peer reviews;
- Participate in the Steering Committee and the Funders Forum and assume secretarial tasks;
- Send the Ruling (decision letter) to the Swiss PIs on their submitted project;
- Establish and apply an adequate financial and operational controlling system for the MCJRP implementation; intervene if required and inform SDC about irregularities immediately;
- Execute the payments of the Swiss contribution (85%) to the Swiss PIs;
- Collect, control and approve the annual and final scientific reports provided by the Swiss PIs; share these reports with the Support Measure Partners involved
- Collect, control and approve the annual and final financial reports provided by the Swiss PIs;
- Provide the Programme Operator and SDC with annual and final progress and financial reports for the entire MCJRP;

The detailed tasks required for the management of the MCJRP will be included in the mandate agreement between SDC and SNSF. The SNSF will allocate the necessary human resources for management of the programme.

Responsibilities of the Support Measure Partners of the participating EU-13 countries:

The SNSF shall cooperate with and be supported by the Support Measure Partners of the participating EU-13 countries for the preparation and implementation of the MCJRP. Their main responsibilities include the following activities:

- Provide feedbacks, participate in the discussions of elaboration of the Programme Component Documents (in particular Programme Component Document and Call document), and contribute to the final text of these documents, to be jointly agreed upon;
- Arrange all legal aspects required for the implementation of the MCJRP;
- Organise communication/visibility/information about MCJRP and the call through adequate channels in country;
- Operate as national information point for the national researchers;
- Check eligibility of applicants from country (ideally: Proforma upload of application on national submission platform);
- Propose and support SNSF in the identification of experts for the peer reviews and members for the evaluation panel;
- Propose an own member (Board member, Scientific Council member) as voting member of the Steering Committee;
- Staff participate in the Funders Forum;
- Staff participate in the Steering Committee (without voting rights);
- Inform the national PIs about the Ruling (decision) regarding their submitted project;
- Ensure specific contract signing with the national PIs and their host institutions for the national contribution for the selected JRP;
- Execute the payments of the national contribution (15%) to the national PIs or the host institution of the PIs;
- Collect, control and approve the annual and final financial reports provided by the national PIs or the host institutions of the PIs;;
- Collaborate with the SNSF for the elaboration of the annual and final progress and financial reports for the entire MCJRP;

- Provide reporting to the Programme Operator (if the Support Measure Partner is not the Programme Operator);
- Maintain contact with and inform relevant institutions in the country about the MCJRP.

Responsibilities of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation - SDC

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is the main funding agency for the MCJRP and is accountable within the Swiss Government and towards the Swiss Parliament for the efficient and effective use of the funding provided in the framework of the Second Swiss contribution to selected EU Member states. In relation to the implementation of the MCJRP, its main responsibilities include the following activities:

- negotiate and conclude the Support Measure Agreement with the NCUs for the Research Programs of the participating EU-13 countries (Research Program of which the MCJRP is one component);
- negotiate and conclude a contract with the SNSF (mandate) as the Programme Component Operator for the implementation of the MCJRP;
- approve the MCJRP documents (in particular the present Programme Component Document, and the Call document);
- supervise the operational monitoring and the financial controlling of the SNSF;
- participate in the Steering Committee;
- analyse the regular reporting of the SNSF, assess the implementation progress and discuss the reporting in the framework of the Steering Committee for the MCJRP;
- request immediate reporting in case of irregularities and ensure follow-up;
- can decide to carry out reviews and evaluations on the MCJRP in general;
- contribute to the communication/visibility/information about MCJRP and the call in Switzerland and through the Contribution offices in the participating EU-13 countries.

National Coordination Unit – NCU and Programme Operator

The National Coordination Unit of each participating EU-13 countries is SDC's contractual partner for the Support Measure on Research, of which the MCJRP is a Component. The Programme Operator is the Unit to which the NCU has delegated the responsibility for the preparation and implementation of the Support Measure (e.g. Research Program for a specific country). It is "any public or private sector legal entity having responsibility for preparing and managing a Programme". For the research, this is the entity who is responsible for the overall "Research Programme" for a specific country, of which the MCJRP is a component. The PO's role and responsibilities are defined in the Regulations. Specificities will be addressed in the Support Measure Agreements and Support Measure Implementation Agreements.

A particularity of the MCJRP will be that a specific Steering Committee will be set-up for this Component of the Research Programme (see next subchapter). The NCU shall be participating in the Steering Committee. One NCU (rotating amongst the participating countries) will be Chairing the Selection Committee.

The NCU can delegate to the Programme Operator this responsibility in the Steering Committee (only for the countries in which the Programme Operator is not also at the same time the Support Measure Partner).

Funders Forum

After the panel meeting(s), staff members of the Support Measure Partners and Programme Component Operator (SNSF) will meet separately, as a group, to view and officially put together the list of projects - recommended by the adjudication panel(s) - to be funded. In determining the list, the guiding principle will be scholarly merit as suggested by the ranking of the evaluation panel(s). In case two applications are rated equally from a scientific point of view (primary criteria), gender balance decides on funding (secondary criteria), with preference given to female researchers. The final list will be reviewed and approved by the Steering Committee (see below).

Steering Committee

in the Steering Committee, the following representatives are granted with a voting right each:

- SDC
- One NCU representative from each participating EU-13 country (alternating in the role of the chair – modality to be defined)
- One representative from each Support Measure Partner from the participating EU-13 country (e.g., Board members or Scientific Council members)
- SNSF, Member of the National Research Council

Staff members of Support Measure Partners take on the responsibilities of the secretariat and participate without voting rights. Staff members of the Swiss Contribution Offices also participate without voting rights. The Steering Committee will meet at least once a year in order to provide guidance on strategic matters with a view to meeting the objectives of the MCJRP and with regard to ethics, compliance with applicable laws and regulatory policies, financial practices, disclosure and reporting. The meetings will be organised alternately in the participating EU-13 countries.

It is responsible for overseeing management and ensuring that systems are in place to manage the risks involved in the programme. The tasks include (but are not limited to):

- Propose and approve strategic amendments with a view to meeting the objectives of the MCJRP;
- Decide on modifications of plan and budget of the MCJRP;
- Oversee the programme progress and make suggestions in order to improve the implementation of the programme and individual projects;
- Propose additional measures to address the full achievement of the planned objectives.
- Discuss and endorse the Annual Reports as well as a yearly activity and budget planning, based on input provided by SNSF and Support Measure Partners.

The Steering Committee shall approve the list of JRPs proposed for funding by the Funders Forum).

The ToRs for the Steering Committee will be elaborated by the SNSF in consultation with the Support Measure Partners.

5.3 Proposed steering and monitoring structure:

The monitoring and reporting of the MCJRP has to be performed at both the JRPs and the MCJRP level:

JRPs level:

Scientific reports: The preparation of the annual and final scientific reports is under the responsibility of all PIs involved in a single JRP. The reports will be submitted to SNSF by the Swiss PI. The scientific reports shall inform on the advancement of their project, providing information about timeliness and progress made in implementing the research project. The PIs will be requested to use a template provided by the SNSF. These reports are shared with all Support Measure Partners by granting the respective access rights on the submission platform mySNF⁶. The scientific reports need to be submitted no later than 3 months after the completion of each implementation year (calendar years).

Financial reports: The Swiss PIs will provide an annual and a final financial report to the SNSF, reporting on all the expenses and revenues of the JRP from the Swiss contribution (including the funds dedicated to the Swiss PI and the funds shared with the PIs in the respective partner countries from the Swiss contribution). These reports are shared with the Support Measure Partners on mySNF. Financial reports will compare expenditures with the approved budgets and will also be checked against the guidelines established at the start of the programme. A template will be provided as part of the Grant Agreement. In addition, each consortium PI or the host institution of the PI from the participating EU-13 countries will have to submit a separate financial report to the Support Measure Partner (or other entity with which it has the specific contract for the use of the country's contribution) reporting on the country's contribution.

Financial control: The responsibility for overseeing the correct management of the Swiss contribution lies first with the Swiss PI. The Swiss PI, together with his/her host institution, must ensure that expenditure reflects the realities and is consistent with the work done, also for the part claimed by the PIs from the partner countries. Then, the SNSF controls the financial reports of the Swiss contribution in connection with the project progress and then on the basis of the supporting documents (receipts, reports, etc.) attached to the reports. The Country Support Measure Partners must verify the financial reports for the national contribution according to own defined processes/rules. The financial reports submitted by the Swiss PI will be shared with the Country Support Measure Partners.

Overall MCJRP level:

The SNSF elaborates annual financial and operational reports as well as final financial and operational reports at the end of the implementation phase. For this, it will also request the collaboration and contribution of the Support Measure Partners. The annual and final operational reports include information about management activities and progress made in the JRPs, including the experience gained through implementing the programme. Furthermore, operational report documents and comments the overall achievement of outputs and outcome against the original plan, the compliance with principles such as gender and sustainability, and suggests lessons learned and conclusions. Finally, the reports shall assess achievements of the overall programme based on the indicators as listed in the logframe.

The annual and final financial reports shall provide information on the financial progress of the programme. These reports will also include a comparison of actual with planned expenses and a confirmation of financing.

The SNSF reports, prepared in collaboration with the Support Measure Partners, will be sent at the same time to SDC, as well as to the Programme Operators of the participating EU-13 countries no later than 2 months after each reporting phase. The Programme Operators will use the information in the SNSF reports to compile their reporting to the NCU. The NCU will submit, in accordance to the Regulations, their Support Measure Reports (for the entire Research Programme) not later than three months after the end of the reporting period. The reporting period is per calendar year, with the exception of the first and the final report. As contractual partner of the SNSF, SDC decides on the acceptance or adjustment of all annual and final reports by the SNSF.

A yearly activity and budget planning elaborated by the SNSF, discussed and endorsed in the Steering Committee shall be the basis for the annual payments.

5.4 Audit activities

Switzerland (on the Swiss contribution)	The usual controlling and audit mechanisms of the SNSF and Federal Administration are applied: internal controlling by the SNSF; internal auditors reporting to the Foundation Council (=statutory external auditors); financial supervision by the Swiss Federal Audit Office.
Partner countries (on the country's contribution)	The Regulations apply (Chapter 9)

5.5 Key Milestones in view of the start of the implementation of the MCJRP

The sequencing of the contracts will be as follow:

⁶ mySNF is the web platform of the SNSF and it enables interaction between applicants, reviewers, research institutions and the administrative offices of the SNSF. It facilitates the submission, evaluation and administration of applications and projects

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Milestone	Envisioned timing
Finalisation of present Document	February 2023
Support Measure Agreement between SDC and NCU	Variable but latest before Opening of call (planned in October '23)
Mandate Agreement between SDC and SNSF	As soon as all Support Measure Agreements between SDC and the NCUs of the participating countries are signed
Support Measure Implementation Agreement between NCU and Programme Operator	As soon as Support Measure Agreement between SDC and NCU is signed
Memorandum of Understanding between Support Measure Partners and SNSF	As soon as Support Measure Agreement between SDC and NCU is signed in all participating EU-13 countries
Preparation of the call document	As soon as the Programme Component Document is finalised
Launch of the call	October 2023
Agreement between the Support Measure Partners and the consortium PIs	Q2-Q3 2024
Grant Agreements between consortium PIs and Swiss PIs per JRP	Q2-Q3 2024

6 Programme Budget:

Grant as defined in the MCJRP:

For each participating EU-13 countries, 85% of the MCJRP will be covered with Swiss funding, while 15% will be covered by the country itself.

The maximum amount per applicant for a JRP is CHF 350'000 for four years. In a trilateral research consortium, a participating EU-13 country's budget for the call would be charged CHF 525'000; CHF 350'000 for the researcher from their own country and CHF 175'000 to co-fund the Swiss part together with the third participating EU-13 country. For a research consortium involving four countries including Switzerland, the financial charging would decrease to CHF 466'000 for each participating EU-13 country, as the research costs for the applicant based in Switzerland would be shared equally by all three participating EU-13 countries involved.

Overall Budget MCJRP

Budget MCJRP (CHF)	Bulgaria	Croatia	Hungary	Poland	Romania
Contribution Switzerland	6'000'000	6'000'000	-3'740'000 (tbc)	6'000'000	10'000'000 (tbc)
Contribution Partner Country (rounded)	1'058'800	1'058'800	-660'000 (tbc)	-	1'764'705 (tbc)

Example of funds distribution

EXAMPLE	Contribution Switzerland in CHF	Contribution partner country in CHF	Total CHF
Total contribution	6'000'000	1'058'824	7'058'824
	85%	15%	100%
Grants for JRPs	5'294'118	862'353	6'176'471
Management costs of SNSF (7.5%)	529'412		529'412
Management costs Support Measure Partner (up to 2.5%)		176'471	176'471
Reserve (2.5%)	176'471		176'471

The SNSF's management costs represent 7.5% of the overall budget and the management costs of the Support Measure Partner amounts to maximum 2.5% of the overall budget. For the eligibility of expenditures Art. 6.4 of the Regulations applies by analogy (if Support Measure Partner is another entity than the Programme Operator).

The reason for the higher management costs of the SNSF can be explained by the fact that it has the main responsibility for the design of the MCJRP. Furthermore, the SNSF bears the main responsibility of the implementation and the wages and social contribution costs differ from those of the participating EU-13 countries. The costs for the panel meetings (selection process) will be covered by the SNSF management budget. This includes the remuneration fees of the panel members as well as the travel and board costs for the panel meeting(s). The meetings for the SC are planned to be organised alternately in the participating EU-13 countries. The costs for the meetings of the SC will be covered individually by all parties involved and their respective management budget (SNSF, NCU, Support Measure Partners, SDC). The programmes reserves amount to 2.5% of the overall budget.

Eligible costs for JRP grants include:

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- Personnel / staff costs of researchers, technicians and other supporting staff directly involved in the project. Such costs can be claimed if they do not exceed the usual remuneration practices at the host institutions involved.
- The salaries of "Swiss PI" cannot be claimed from the JRP budget. The salaries of the other Swiss staff (e.g. Ph.D. students, postdoctoral fellows) must follow the usual SNSF guidelines.
- The salaries of the PIs from the participating EU-13 countries can be covered according to the respective national regulations. Other staff members will be paid according to the national regulations and the usual remuneration practices at the host institutions involved. Further information about the respective national guidelines will be provided in the call document.
- Travel & subsistence allowances and conference fees (if applicable) for staff and PIs taking part in the JRP in order to visit each other and to participate in international conferences thematically linked to the JRP.
- Equipment costs in JRPs to the extent that these are used for the research activities. The maximum percentage for equipment within a JRP should not exceed 30% of the total project costs.
- Consumables can be charged by all PIs. They include materials, supplies and consumables used in the framework of the JRP and for research activities.
- Other direct costs: e.g. for organising seminars and conferences, dissemination of results, etc., provided they are directly linked to the JRP implementation.
- Project partner (not formally part of the consortium): each participating PI can delegate minor tasks and research activities to a project partner (anywhere in the world) for up to a maximum of 20% of his own budget. The project partner can be a public research institution or a private company. In this last case, the private company will have to sign a declaration by which it states that it will not use the results for commercial purposes.
- Overhead: PIs from the participating EU-13 countries are eligible to request a flat rate of 5% of the team budget for overhead costs, to be transferred to the host institution. The Swiss PI is not eligible to claim overhead costs.
- Costs for open access publications can be requested separately via the OA platform of the SNSF.

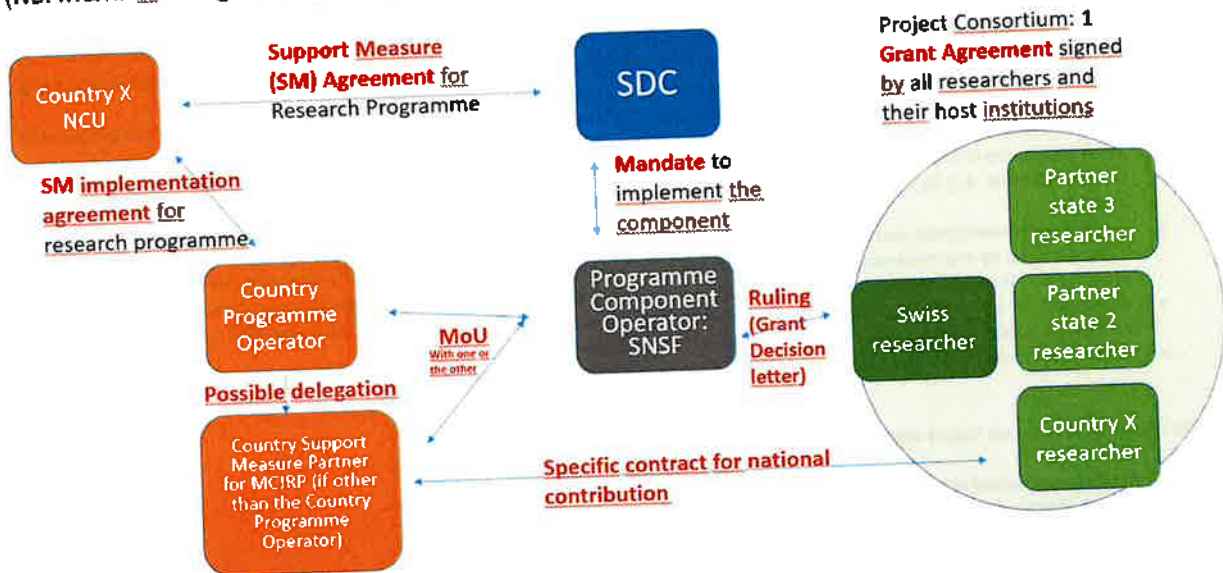
The following costs are not eligible within JRPs:

- Expenditure incurred before the start and after the the completion of the project
- Interest of debt, purchase of land / real estate
- Fines, financial penalties and expenses of litigation
- Activities supported from other sources
- Losses connected with currency exchange that could not be covered by the reserve
- Costs which exceed the usual market prices
- VAT, if it could be recoverable by the beneficiary under national regulation.

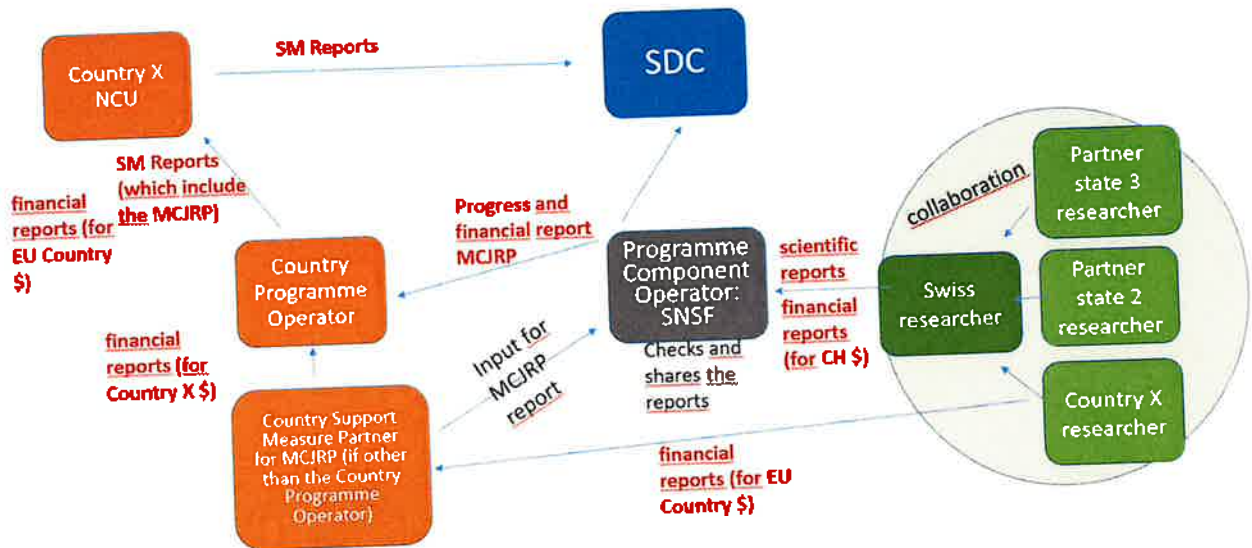
Annex 1 Contractual and Reporting Set-up
Annex 2 Abbreviations

THE MCJRP : CONTRACTUAL SET-UP

(NB: MCJRP is a Programme Component of the Research Programme in each country)



THE MCJRP : REPORTING SET-UP



17.

Annex 2 Abbreviations

JRP	Joint Research Project
MCJR	Multilateral Call for Joint Research Projects
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCU	National Coordination Unit
NPO	National Programme Officer (in the Swiss Contribution Office)
PI	Principal Investigator
SC	Steering Committee
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SNSF	Swiss National Science Foundation, executing agency and intermediary body

17.

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention	Key Indicators (incl. target values and baseline)	Sources & Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks (External Factors)
Impact	Impact Indicators	Impact Sources and Means of Verification	
TO BE DEFINED BY THE COUNTRY ON THE BASIS OF ALL COMPONENTS PART OF THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME	Suggested examples - Success rate of national researchers in European programs, ¹ - human resources in science and technology as share of active population, ² - increase share of internationally co-authored papers.	To be filled in by the country	To be filled in by the country
COMPONENT X: MULTILATERAL CALL FOR JOINT RESEARCH PROJECTS (MCJRP)			
Outcomes (Support Measure objectives /purpose)	Outcome Indicators	Outcome: Sources and Means of Verification	Outcome Assumptions & Risks
The participating researchers have increased their competitiveness and are better integrated within European and international research networks.	- Increased competitiveness and better integration in research networks are the main indicators for the outcome, but the elements defining them will be elaborated at a later stage when preparing the questionnaire	- Questionnaire with quantitative/ qualitative elements that will be developed and submitted to all participating researchers.	- Not enough interest for instrument. - Not sufficient high qualified proposals are submitted.
Outputs: Support Measure deliverables/results per outcome	Output Indicators	Output: Sources and Means of Verification	Output Assumptions & Risks
Outputs relate to strengthening individual capacities, strengthening research institutions, transfer and sharing of knowledge, as well as strengthening the research cooperation.	- Number of doctoral and master graduates (of the partner state) who receive their grades during or one year following the participation in the joint re-search project. - R&I_Core Indicator_1: Number of peer reviewed scientific articles published. The article should be a direct result from the work done with the support of the second Swiss Contribution. - Number of scientific events (e.g. conference, convention seminar, congress, symposium, etc.) in which researchers financed through the MCJRP played an active role. "Active role" refers for example to giving a speech or presenting a poster during the event.	- Narrative reports from projects and fellowships - Research institutions' annual reports - Grant agreements - Programme reports: travel reports; evaluation reports - call documentation	- Not enough PhD students involved in the projects. - Not enough scientific articles published. - Not enough scientific events visited or organised.

¹ The participation in European programs is influenced by a vast number of indicators. Presumably it will be rather challenging to determine the influence of the Swiss contribution, which is limited.
² Taking into consideration that only max. 10 projects are funded per country, no major changes in the science system can be expected.