

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities

Programme Document for

Sciex-NMS^{ch}

Scientific Exchange Programme
between Switzerland and the New
Member States of the European Union

2009 – 2016

Final

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Abbreviations

CCO	Clearing and Coordination Office at the CRUS General Secretariat
CHF	Swiss Francs
CRUS	Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities
EEA	European Economic Area
ERC	European Research Council (Funding Instrument within FP7)
ESKAS	Swiss Government grants foreign students university scholarships
EU	European Union
FP	Framework Programmes in Research of the European Union
FP7	Seventh Framework Programme
IB	Intermediate Body
KFH	Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCU	National Coordination Unit
NMS	New Member States
Sciex-NMS ^{ch}	Scientific Exchange Programme with the New Member States of the EU
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SER	State Secretariat for Education and Research
SIU	Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education
SNSF	Swiss National Science Foundation
UAS	University of applied Sciences
VKHS	University Preparatory Courses for Studies in Switzerland

PART A The Setting

1 Introduction

The enlargement of the European Union (EU) represents a major step towards securing peace, stability and prosperity in Europe. To support this process, the Swiss Parliament has decided to finance a contribution to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the enlarged European Union. The contribution is specifically allocated to the ten New Member States (NMS) that have joined the EU on the 1st of May 2004. Bilateral framework agreements on the Swiss contribution were concluded with each member state, detailing the specific funding lines and areas in which programmes and projects are to be financed.

Eight of the NMS, i.e. the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, have decided that scientific cooperation, and in particular scholarships, are to be part of the Swiss contribution. The resulting scientific exchange programme is to be open to all faculties and sciences.

Based on a first round of consultations with the partner states¹ as well as on discussions among core institutions of the Swiss scientific community², the Scientific Exchange Programme with the New Member States of the EU (Sciex-NMS^{ch}) has been conceptualised. The programme is to last from 2009 to 2016, and a total amount of CHF 29.08 Million of Swiss funding has been earmarked for this purpose. The present Programme Document outlines the proposed Sciex-NMS^{ch} design.

2 Background

The countries that today form the NMS of the EU had already given considerable importance to higher education and scientific research before 1989. A high and specialised research standard had been established – particularly in the natural and technical sciences. Lacking the necessary support for the research system and structures after the former political systems disintegrated, research standards deteriorated. During the socialist era, researchers had developed few international contacts with western countries and were left isolated when the transition process started in the early 90s and the networks established within the socialist countries ceased to function.

The NMS reacted promptly to this process and had already started to address the deficits before joining the EU. They have since successfully developed high quality research institutions along

¹ See Fact Sheet Research Scholarships within the Swiss Contribution, 30.11.2007

² The main stakeholders are the State Secretariat for Education and Research, the Swiss National Science Foundation, the cantonal Universities and Federal Institutes of Technology, the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences, and the Federal Research Institutions. Discussions among these organisations on the programme started in 2005.

with equally qualified human resources. Integrating into the international scientific discourses and research communities has played a major role in these efforts. In a short period of time, the NMS have achieved a good scientific reputation in Europe and Switzerland³. Consequently, demand for increased inter-country scientific cooperation is equally high from the NMS side as well as in the European and Swiss universities and research institutions.

Switzerland is particularly attractive for NMS researchers as it offers a qualified research area with renowned researchers and institutions⁴ combined with top working conditions, high quality of life and adherence to the principle of equal remuneration without regard to sex, age or nationality. Consequently, demand for research- and degree-related exchange by NMS scholars with Swiss universities and research institutions is high.

3 The Current Research Promotion Landscape in the NMS

Switzerland has considerable experience with international mobility programmes for university students and scientists. It participates in the EU's Seventh Framework Programme/FP7 (2007-2013) as well as the Erasmus Programme for inter-university cooperation (since 1996).

Since 1990, the NMS have been included in Switzerland's promotion efforts in research and higher education in the context of its independent cooperation with Eastern Europe. Under the ESKAS programme, the State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER) provides grants for university scholarships to foreign students to further their education and to undertake research work in the fields in which the Swiss universities are particularly active.

The Scientific Cooperation Programme between Eastern Europe and Switzerland (SCOPES) of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) is a partnership programme between Swiss and Eastern European research institutions with the aim of maintaining scientific capacities and fostering international scientific exchange. Also worth mentioning is the private sector foundation sponsored Swiss Baltic Net that came to an end in 2008.

Other relevant exchange and scholarship programmes in the NMS are operated under the EU Research Framework Programme (FP), the European Economic Area (EEA) and by Norway.

In FP7, specific programmes work together to promote and encourage the creation of European poles of (scientific) excellence. The European Research Council (ERC) complements other funding activities in Europe such as those of the national research funding agencies, and is a flagship component of the 'Ideas Programme' of FP7⁵.

³ Results of an inquiry in the twelve Swiss universities, conducted by CRUS in 2005.

⁴ More than half of the twelve Swiss universities are regularly ranked among the 200 best universities of the world. Switzerland is globally on the fourth position with respect to innovation.

⁵ Switzerland is one of the countries, which are most successful in grant writing to the ERC. The Swiss scientific culture underlying the applications was identified as the major cause for this success.

The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU) is the national focal point in Norway for the scholarship- and training funds established through the EEA grants. The funds encompass 11 countries and will disburse around Euro 28 million over five years.

4 Major Lessons Learnt

Past experience from European and Swiss scholarship programmes is relevant when designing a new programme. The essence of this experience is:

- In order to be effective, a new programme needs to be complementary to programmes financed through the EU, EEA and Norway as well as to other Swiss programmes. It should therefore focus on activities that are not, or at least only partially, considered within other financial sources.
- Brain drain continues to be a pertinent problem in the NMS⁶. Mobility of researchers must have an added value not only for the individual researcher but also for the home country and its scientific institutions⁷. Programmes therefore need to be designed to minimise the risk of brain drain.
- Quality should come before quantity. Fewer but better designed research stays can be expected to produce the targeted scientific results and yield more sustainable relationships and networks.
- Research projects that provide opportunities for junior researchers with fellowships must be co-designed by cooperating scientists, who can rely on the support of their institutions. Consequently, all involved parties are mutually responsible for the quality of their projects.
- For junior researchers participating in a scientific exchange programme, clear agreements on career steps are essential. Mentoring of junior researchers by experienced scientists is equally crucial.
- Reasonable remunerations motivate high quality applications.
- Satisfying working and living conditions are important 'soft factors' for success of research exchange ventures. Next to reasonable wages as well as professional scientific advice and supervision, proximity assistance in the host country is relevant for this purpose.
- Finally, flexible programmes with lean administrative requirements are more effective.
- Furthermore, the time period between applications and approval needs to be kept short. The European Commission has formulated a broad set of recommendations, principles and requirements which are considered to provide employers, funders and researchers with a

⁶ Kelo, Maria, et. al, 2004. Brain Drain and Brain Gain. ACA Brussels.

⁷ European Commission, DG-Research Communication, 2008: Open Labour Market for Researchers.

valuable instrument to undertake initiatives for the improvement and consolidation of researchers' career prospects.⁸

Based on these lessons learnt, the Sciex-NMS^{ch} has been designed accordingly:

The following Part B presents the details of the Programme in terms of (1) Participating Organisations, (2) goal and objectives, (3) overall design, (4) instruments, (5) organisation, (6) selection procedures, (7) management, (8) funding and budget, (9) monitoring and reporting, and (10) risks and mitigating strategies.

Annexes then provide further operational details.

⁸ Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. www.europa.eu.int/eracareers/europeancharter

PART B The Programme

1 Participating Organisations

In the NMS, the National Coordination Units (NCU) are formally in charge of administering the entire Swiss Contribution. The NCU may delegate implementation responsibilities for the Sciex-NMS^{ch} to specific national Coordination Bodies.

On the Swiss side, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is responsible for the implementation of the Sciex-NMS^{ch} programme. The Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) has been designated as the Swiss Intermediate Body. For programme implementation and management, it acts also on behalf of the Rectors' Conference of the Universities of Applied Sciences (KFH).

Direct beneficiaries of the programme are researchers from renowned research and higher education institutions in eight NMS. The selection of participating institutions is made by each country.

Swiss participating institutions are the cantonal Universities and the Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology (members of CRUS), the Universities of Applied Sciences (members of KFH) the Federal Research Institutes of the ETH Domain and Research Institutions outside the university sector, which are subsidised according to Article 16 of the Federal Law on Research⁹.

2 Programme Goal and Objectives

The Scientific Exchange Programme (Sciex-NMS^{ch}) aims at contributing to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the enlarged European Union through fostering the scientific capacities of researchers in NMS and promoting sustainable research partnerships between the eight NMS and Switzerland.

The main goal of the programme is to establish scientific partnerships, which will:

- (1) Develop individual researchers' capacities (human capital);
- (2) Foster scientific progress and innovation (scientific prospects); and
- (3) Establish or enhance networks between researchers (networking).

⁹ The participating Swiss institutions must have signed a CRUS declaration concerning their HR-strategy, stating their adherence to «The European Charter for Researchers» and «The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers».

This goal is to be achieved by three specific Programme objectives. Objectives 1 and 2 directly refer to the main programme instruments (research fellowships and short-term research visits), while objective 3 refers to the 'downstream' impact that the programme intends to achieve.

Objective 1

Develop capacities. Junior Researchers conduct research projects that allow them: to enhance their research skills; attain higher degrees; and proceed in their academic careers.

Objective 2

Foster progress and innovation. Senior Researchers of the NMS meet Swiss partners to conceptualise, design and steer research projects. In general, these projects will: provide room for Junior Researchers (objective 1); require the mentoring by the Senior Researchers; foster the exchange of know-how between all researchers involved; and may require the sharing of research infrastructure.

Objective 3

Networks. Successful research partnerships lead to: sustainable research networks between researchers and research institutions; and enhanced cooperation in the future (follow-up or new projects).

3 Overall Programme Design

In principle, Sciex-NMS^{ch} provides funding for research projects in all academic disciplines and subjects where two Swiss and NMS researchers or departments want to cooperate and have the required expertise and qualified human resources. The selection of candidates will be based exclusively on the quality of the fellowship proposal. All candidates will have equal opportunities and rights, independently of their gender or ethnic origin. Evidently, this requires a robust qualification and selection process for research ventures to be financed (see Chapter 6). Rules and regulations for the committees, which will evaluate the research ventures, are based on European best practice models with respect to ensuring gender balance.

Any eligible research project has to be based on cooperation between two (or more) researchers or departments from the NMS and Switzerland. The individual research projects are conceptualised and designed by two (or more) Senior Researchers, usually professors, who are acknowledged specialists in their respective fields. Under their leadership, Junior Researchers are to conduct their research in order to attain higher degrees and/or to proceed in their academic careers. Junior Researchers are usually team members. Senior Researchers applying for visits and for mentoring of Junior Researchers are usually team leaders with mentoring experience.

Consequently, the two interlinked programme instruments provide for (1) Research fellowships for Junior Researchers as well as for (2) Short-term research visits for Senior Researchers, who

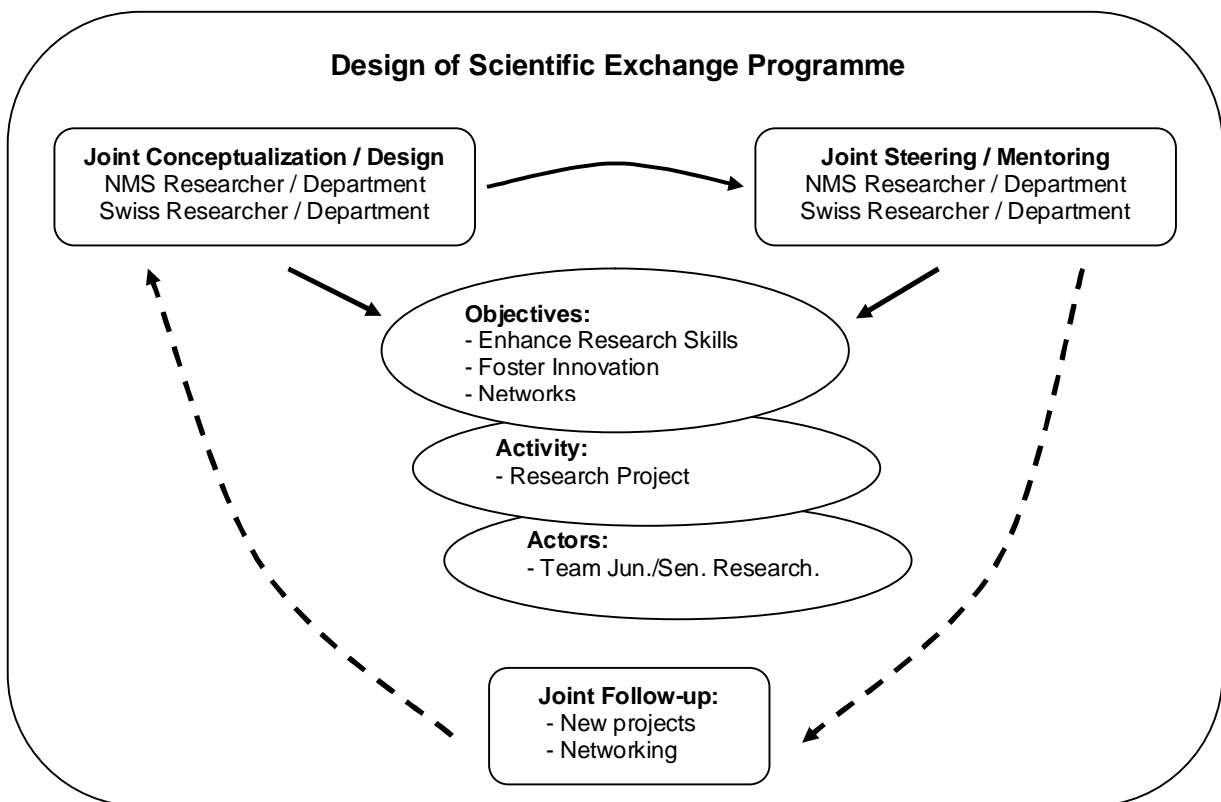
are encouraged to engage in their own research activities and act as mentors to the Junior Researchers.

Research fellowships are only provided for NMS Junior Researchers. Short term research visits are provided for both NMS and CH Senior Researchers.

Preference is given to 'package' research projects that – at the same time – allow (1) Junior Researchers to attain higher degrees (PhD) or pursue postdoctoral (PostDoc) studies, and (2) involve Senior Researchers who, next to their own research activities, act as responsible mentors to the Junior Researcher.

In order to attain the Programme objectives of fostering scientific progress and establishing networks, Swiss PhD or PostDoc students should preferably also form part of the research endeavour, but must be financed from other independent sources.

The following illustration depicts the main components of the programme.



4 Programme Instruments

41 Research Fellowships

Research fellowships have a duration between a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 24 months. These fellowships are reserved for promising postgraduate NMS Junior Researchers who (1) aim at attaining a PhD Degree or (2) pursue postdoctoral research, normally with the intention to qualify for professorship.

Scientific supervision, monitoring and support to the fellowship recipient are provided by the two Senior Researchers employed at an eligible institution, who act as mentors. To this end, the Senior Researcher from the NMS can access funding for short term research visits (see below).

Each Junior Researcher can participate in a course module on Swiss Scientific Culture (VKHS¹⁰ course) in Fribourg. Basically, researchers will be provided with information about Swiss culture, history, languages, education and political system. In addition, essential scientific skills are taught (for details see Annex 5). The course also allows participants to meet other NMS-funded researchers and to establish new scientific and social contacts. The VKHS course is optional.

Past experience has shown that, in addition to qualified scientific mentoring and supervision, effectiveness and ultimately success of a research stay depend also on so-called soft factors. To ensure a satisfactory stay in Switzerland, the euraxess service centres can provide Junior Researchers with proximity assistance (relocation, housing, insurances, language courses, opening of bank accounts, telephones, assistance to family members, dual careers, etc.) on a demand basis.

Deliverables of research fellowships

Expected results or deliverables of research fellowships are defined separately for each Junior Researcher and are part of the Multi-partite Contract (see chapter 522). Normally they will include:

- The long-term obligation of attaining the intended degree by submitting the respective thesis to the home institution and passing the required examinations.
- Active participation in colloquia, units of doctoral programmes and other provisions for doctoral candidates.

Depending on the individual situation and in particular for PostDoc researchers, deliverables may also consist of:

- Submission of paper(s) in renowned scientific journals;
- Presentation(s) at professional conventions in Switzerland;

¹⁰ VKHS means Vorbereitungskurse auf das Hochschulstudium in der Schweiz or University Preparatory Courses for Studies in Switzerland.

- Teaching experience.

Eligible costs

An average fellowship for each 6-month period will be CHF 25'000 (in the 1st year) and CHF 27'500 (in the 2nd year) in the case of a PhD candidate and CHF 40'000 for Post Docs. The fellowship is composed of employment costs, excluding costs of infrastructure. Employment costs of Sciex Junior Researchers vary slightly among cantons and correspond to standards of salaries of scientific collaborators with corresponding qualifications. Travel costs between home country and Switzerland, transport costs within Switzerland, participation in conferences and publication costs will be covered up to a maximum amount. If opted by the Junior Researcher, the VKHS course in Fribourg may be financed. More detailed information on the eligible costs is given in the Annex 4.

Employment and taxes

Junior Researchers are formally employed at the host institution¹¹. The contract of employment is governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of Switzerland.

Sciex Junior Researchers have the same status and performance requirements as scientific collaborators at their host institution. In the multipartite contract the Junior Researchers performance requirements are described. The Junior Researcher will undergo an initial three-month trial period to ensure that his/her qualifications and performance meet the standards agreed upon in the multipartite contract.

The host university and the Junior Researcher may agree on an initial payment at the beginning of the stay in Switzerland. The initial payment will be deducted proportionally from the first six monthly salaries. The modalities of the initial payments will be defined in the multipartite contract.

In accordance to Swiss Law, taxes and social security fees will be deducted directly from monthly salaries. Accident insurance of employees is covered. According to the Federal Health Insurance Act, health insurance coverage is compulsory for all persons domiciled in Switzerland. Health insurance coverage will not be deducted directly from monthly salaries and insurance premiums have to be paid by the Sciex Junior Researcher. On request Sciex Junior Researchers can be exempted from the compulsory Swiss health insurance, if they provide evidence about insurance in their home country, covering all compulsory fields.

¹¹ "Employers and/or funders of researchers should ensure that researchers enjoy fair and attractive conditions of funding and/or salaries with adequate and equitable social security provisions (including sickness and parental benefits, pension rights and unemployment benefits) (...)" General Principles applicable to Employers and Funders, Charter & Code for Researchers 2005.

42 Short-term research visits

Senior Researchers from the NMS and from Switzerland can apply for short-term research visits. Application for financing can be made for the following purposes:

- (1) Designing and implementing with the partner scientist a joint research project that employs a junior scientist who has a fellowship;
- (2) Mentoring visit(s) to support Junior Researchers involved in the research project.
- (3) Setting-up follow-up research projects which do not include further fellowships financed by the Swiss contribution.

In principle, financing is provided for 5-day visits. If appropriately justified, the visits may be extended or repeated (but restricted in general to one visit per person per year). Criteria for justification of extended or repeated visits are foremost related to workload. This may be the case where several junior researchers have to be supervised and/or the senior researcher pursues his/her own research endeavour as part of the wider research project.

The maximal allowance for a 5-day visit is CHF 2'500.- including travel. More detailed information and maximal allowances are described in the Annex 4.

Deliverables from short-term visits

Expected results or deliverables from short-term visits are defined in the contractual arrangement and normally will include:

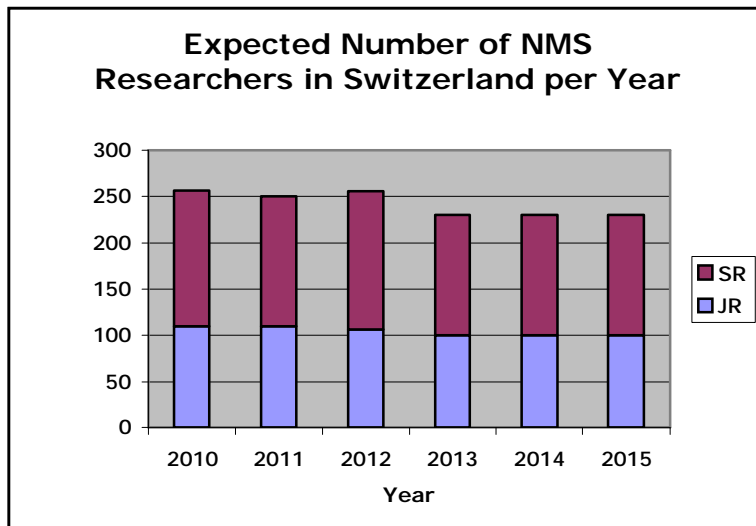
- A brief report on the visit (main results; guidance provided to the Junior Researcher; etc.)

If applicable, deliverables may also include:

- (Joint) publication of paper(s) in renowned scientific journals or chapters in reference books;
- Presentation(s) at professional conventions.

43 Expected Number of Participants and Impact

Preliminary financial calculations have led to the following estimate of assignments of fellowships and short-term research visits per year. These estimates are made for average costs per 12 six-months periods. Actual figures may differ as these will depend on the effective costs of admitted proposals.



Tentative figures indicate that over 600 six-months fellowships and about 800 short-term visits are expected. This means that about 1600 Senior (800 from the NMS + 800 from Switzerland) and between 200 and 600 Junior Researchers (depending on the length of their stay) will have engaged in scientific cooperation and exchange

Senior and Junior Researchers may form research networks in various academic fields and thus contribute to the establishment of long-term, sustainable academic relationships.

5 Programme Organisation

51 Levels of Organisation

The Programme organisation consists of three main levels:

- The first level consists of SDC and the National Coordination Units (NCU) in the NMS, which are in charge of supervising the entire Swiss contribution.
- In Switzerland, the second level consists of CRUS as the designated Intermediate Body for Switzerland and its related structures (see below under Programme Management) as well as its subcontractors.

In the partner countries, the second level consists of the Coordination Bodies that may be set-up specifically for implementing Sciex-NMS^{ch}. These Bodies act as a counterpart to CRUS. In each partner country, their role and responsibility may vary.

- The third level in the NMS and Switzerland consists of the participating research departments, research institutions as well as the involved Junior and Senior Researchers.

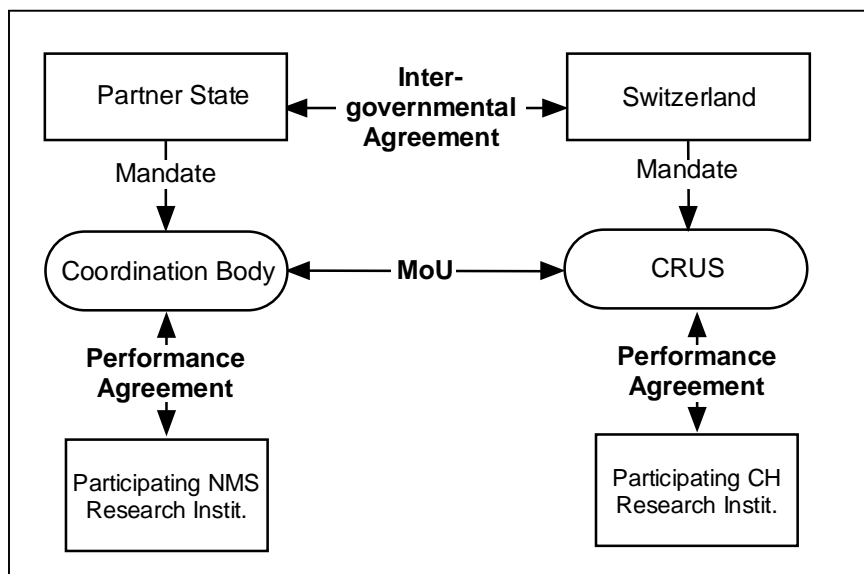
52 Contractual Arrangements

Given the rather significant number of institutions and individuals involved in implementing the Programme, a range of contractual arrangements are required. In this context, it is important to distinguish between:

- (1) Contractual arrangements on the institutional programme level;
- (2) Contractual arrangements for fellowships;
- (3) Contractual arrangements for short-term visits.

521 Contractual arrangements on the institutional programme level

The following illustration depicts actors and contractual arrangements at the institutional programme level. The illustration is applicable, if the Coordination Body is mandated by the NCU. There may be deviations from the depicted contractual arrangement, e.g. the Coordination Body may be mandated by CRUS.



Inter-governmental agreement. Switzerland will conclude an inter-governmental project agreement with each NMS. This agreement provides the legal framework for implementing Sciex-NMS^{ch}. The agreement details among other the main roles, rights, and obligations of the contracting partners, as well as the procedures, budgets, as per the present Programme Document.

Mandating agreement with CRUS. In Switzerland, SDC concludes an agreement with CRUS, which retains, among other, the implementation, planning and management responsibilities of

CRUS. Details of tasks and procedures as well as the related operational structures are provided in this agreement.

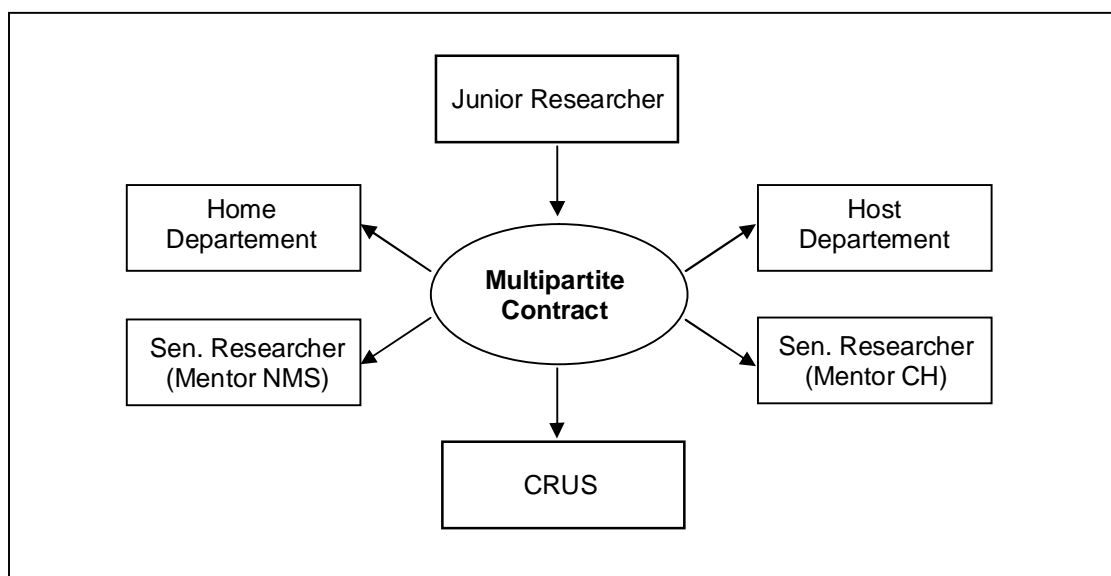
Mandating agreement with the Coordination Body. The NCU may conclude a similar mandate with the Coordination Body. The agreement details the respective roles, tasks and responsibilities.

Memorandum of Understanding CRUS - Coordination Body. Based on the mandating agreements, a separate Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) may be concluded between each Coordination Body and CRUS. The MoUs detail the coordination arrangements, scoring mechanism and assessment criteria, planning of calls and timing, reporting and monitoring arrangements as well as information and communication arrangements. Ideally, these MoU would be annexed to the above Inter-governmental Agreements.

Agreements with research institutions. CRUS will conclude Performance Agreements with the participating Swiss research institutions. These agreements outline the different roles and obligations for all procedural steps for research fellowships and short-term research visits (concerning scoring obligation of the Scoring Committee, financial flows and adherence to the Charter and Code for Researchers). If deemed necessary, the Coordination Body in the NMS may conclude Performance Agreements with the participating institutions in the NMS.

522 Contractual arrangements for research projects and fellowships

The following illustration depicts contractual arrangements for fellowship within a research project.



Multipartite contract. For each formally approved research cooperation that includes a fellowship, a multipartite contract is concluded. Contracting parties are the involved institutions, the Junior and Senior Researchers and CRUS. The contract defines the scope of the research project and the fellowship and details for the parties involved their respective tasks, time frames, budgets as well as the expected results and deliverables.

The contract part applicable to the researchers is based on the Charter & Code for researchers¹² “General Principles and Requirements applicable to Researchers” and the contract part applicable to the institutions is based on the Charter & Code “General Principles and Requirements applicable to Employers and Funders”.

Short-term research visits for mentoring and/or furthering of the research project may be included in the multi-partite contract. The same holds true for the participation in the VKHS module.

523 Contractual arrangements for short-term research visits

Contract research visit. Contracting parties are the visiting Senior Researcher and the host department. The contract retains the purpose of the visit, the main tasks and the deliverables.

6 Selection Procedures

Senior researchers in the NMS and in Switzerland initiate the conceptualization of a research partnership that provides room for research fellowships. An experienced Senior Researcher (Mentor NMS) and a Junior Researcher from the partner state will develop together with a Swiss Senior Researcher (Mentor CH) a joint proposal. The assessment of the proposal will be accomplished by a Sciex Scoring Committee at the Host and Home Institutions and, if applicable, by the Coordination Body in the partner state. Scoring Committees at the Host Institutions will ensure an assessment according to the Code of Conduct for Recruitment, and hence also include best practice models with respect to gender balance. The decision for financing of fellowships will be accomplished by the Steering Committee of the Programme and will be based on the assessment of the institutions and the available financial allocation for fellowships. Simplified selection procedures are foreseen for short term research visits of Senior Researchers who engage in research cooperation with a Swiss partner and supervise Junior Researchers.

¹² See http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index_en.cfm?l1=0&l2=3

61 Eligible participants

Eligible research institutions. Eligible research institutions in Switzerland and the NMS are in principle the following:

	Switzerland	Partner Countries
Research partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities (incl. ETHZ and EPFL) • Institutions of the Federal Institutes of Technology Domain • Universities of Applied Sciences • Research Institutes subsidised by the Confederation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities • Academies • National Research Institutes

The Coordination Body in the NMS will designate eligible research institutions in their country and communicate these to CRUS.

The above Swiss Research Institutions are definitely registered, after undersigning a Performance Agreement.

Eligible researchers. There are no age restrictions. Researchers, who apply for a Junior Researcher's fellowship in a research institution or a university, must hold a Master's or a PhD degree¹³.

62 Information

CRUS will coordinate its information activities with the Coordination Body in the partner country. Furthermore, CRUS will actively inform research institutions in Switzerland and – if desired – will inform directly partner organisations in the NMS¹⁴. Participating partner organisations will receive a procedural manual that details all steps and deadlines from submission to completion of a research fellowship application. This manual will provide information about the eligible projects

¹³ Until 2011 the PhD degree should not have been obtained more than two years prior to the envisaged research stay, otherwise the employment visa cannot be issued. After 2011 free circulation holds also for the NMS concerned in this programme.

¹⁴ CRUS will actively inform the following target groups:

- Researchers in Switzerland via Website www.euraxess.ch and Swiss Euraxess Network
- Euresearch Switzerland
- Swiss Embassies and Cooperating Offices in NMS
- NMS embassies in Switzerland
- Research Institutions in NMS
- Euraxess Offices in NMS (Extranet)
- European Euraxess (conferences and meetings in Brussels)
- NMS Rectors' Conferences (EUA)
- NMS Funding Agencies

CRUS will also inform partners directly in the NMS, if desired or more information is needed

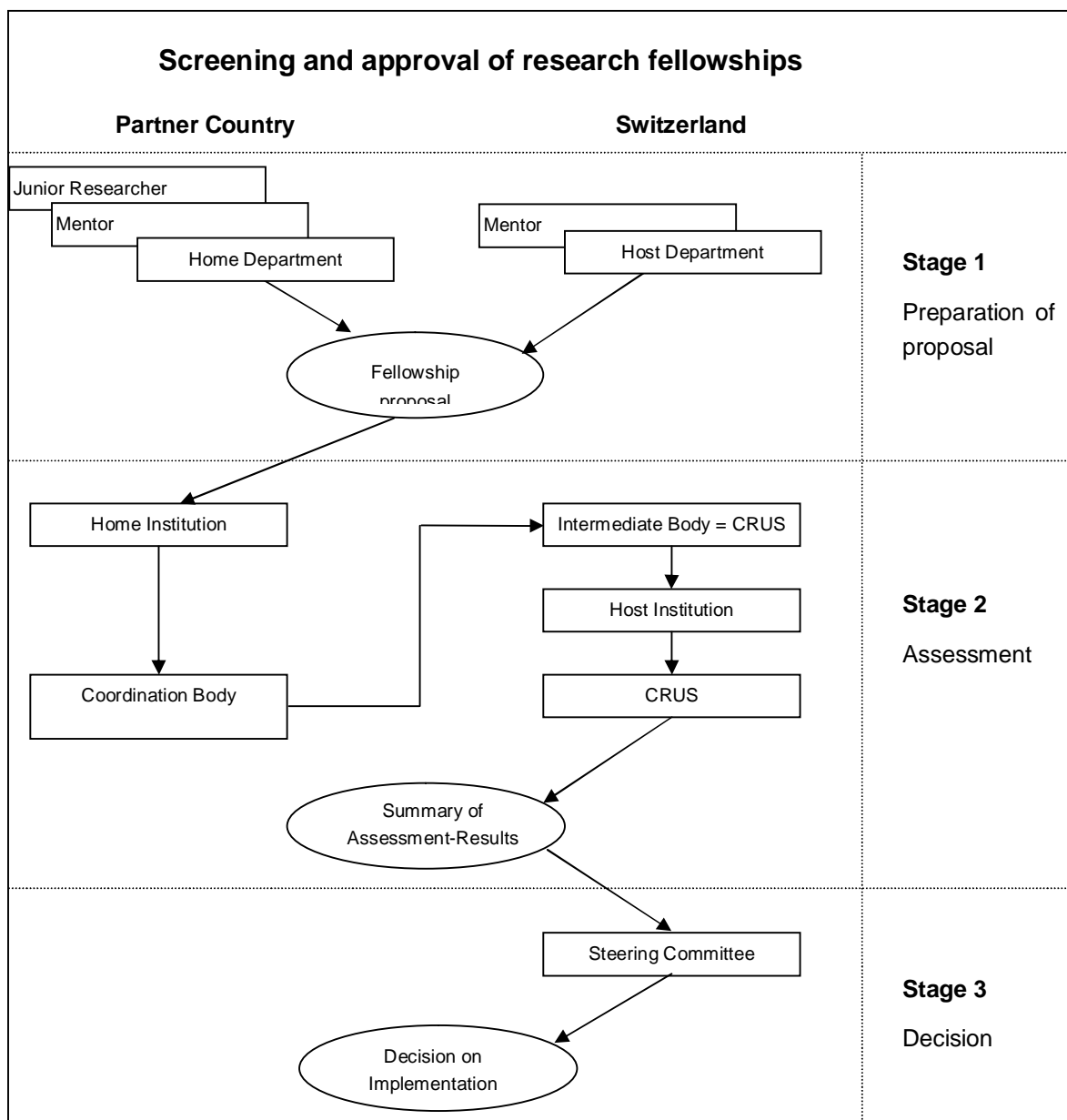
and the assessment criteria. Applicants will be able to access the submission process and related forms on-line.

63 Number of calls

Calls for proposals will take place annually. The Coordination Body and CRUS may mutually decide to launch calls semi-annually.

64 Approval process for research fellowships

The following schematic provides an overview of the process of proposal preparation, assessment and decision making.



Stage 1: Preparation of Proposals

The Junior Researcher defines a research stay project together with a Senior Researcher from his home department (home mentor). Contacts are established with a Senior Researcher from the envisaged host department in Switzerland (host mentor). A fellowship proposal is prepared by the Junior Researcher in close cooperation with the Senior Researchers from the host and the home department. The proposal includes details on the scientific cooperation and the Senior Researchers professional status, the potential and objectives of the fellowship candidate, description and justification of the research stay project, theoretical and methodological aspects and context, requests for funding and envisaged research environment (e.g. PhD programme, research team etc.). Application of the NMS Senior Researcher for a short term research visit for mentoring and the application of the Junior Researcher for a participation in the VKHS module can be included or they can also be made later during the Junior's research stay. The researchers submit the proposal to the home institution.

Stage 2: Assessment

Each involved institution evaluates the fellowship proposal according to predefined criteria, which are described in annex 3. The main stages of the assessment process are described below.

a) Home department/institution

The home department screens and the home institution scores the proposal with respect to the potential of the researcher, the potential of the scientific project and the sustainability of the fellowship. The assessment results and the fellowship proposal are transmitted to the Coordination Body in the partner country.

b) Coordination Body NMS (if applicable)

The NMS Coordination Body screens the proposal (administrative decision, formal check) and assesses the relevance of the planned project for the home country. The Coordination Body scores all proposals and transmits the assessment results to CRUS, which forwards them to the host institution. Appeal procedure in relation to formal and eligibility check (administrative decisions) may be addressed to the Coordination Body.

c) Host institution

The host institution's Scoring Committee screens and scores the proposal with respect to the potential of the researcher and the potential of the scientific project¹⁵. The Scoring Committee confirms that both the research project and the involved researchers fit the institution's quality standards. The Scoring Committee acts in adherence to the Charter & Code and especially with respect recommendations concerning gender balance. After the assessment is completed, the

¹⁵ The research commission of the institution involved.

host institution transmits the documentation to CRUS. No appeals for the quality assessment done by Scoring Committees are envisaged.

d) CRUS

CRUS screens the proposals formally and the scores used for ranking the proposals. It will scrutinize the scoring process at the host institutions. CRUS prepares the documentation for decision making of the Steering Committee.

Stage 3: Decision

The Steering Committee makes the final decision about the allocation of funds according to the ranking of the proposals. Following the Charter & Code recruitment recommendations, panels of experienced screening specialists from the SNF pool will be appointed, whenever deemed necessary by the Steering Committee.

Approval (or denial) will be communicated by CRUS.

A contract is subsequently prepared and sent to the host and home institution for signature. The signing of the Multi-partite Contract and relocation can take place within three months after the decision of the Steering Committee.

65 Approval process for short term research visits

A simplified procedure is foreseen for the approval of short-term research visits. Two Senior Researchers, one from the partner country and one in Switzerland, apply for a short-term research visit to meet in Switzerland or in the partner country, to intensify their cooperation and discuss a joint research project.

Their application is made directly to the CRUS. The application contains the professional status of the researchers, a description of their joint research interest and the activities envisaged. CRUS checks the formalities and decides on the funding of the short term research visit on the basis of criteria fixed by the Steering Committee. CRUS notifies the applicants, the Coordination Body, involved researchers and institutional contact points about the decision.

A contract is subsequently prepared and signed by the host institution and the NMS researcher.

7 Programme Management

71 “Coordination Bodies” in NMS

The NCU may designate a Coordination Body to be in charge of the in-country management of the Programme. Though its exact shape and role may vary, the main tasks will be along the following lines:

A. General

- Conclude a Memorandum of Understanding with CRUS;
- Advertise the Sciex-NMS^{ch} and communicate related procedures in country;
- Install at the beginning of the programme a national Sciex website.

B. Programme Cycle

- Disseminate information about the programme and calls among eligible institutions;
- Provide assistance to researchers in their native language;
- Control formal requirements of all fellowship proposals;
- Coordinate the scoring of / assess the fellowship proposals according to the predefined scoring system;
- Send all the formally correct fellowship proposals and the details of allocated scores to the CRUS;
- Coordinate the signing of the multipartite contract and confirm the signatures of the national contractors;
- Send originals of nationally signed multipartite contracts to CRUS and distribute copies of the contracts with Swiss signatures to national contractors.

C. Monitoring and Reporting

- Provide data on the eligibility and quantity of received proposals to CRUS for compilation of the required progress reports;
- Monitor the long-term success of the fellowships and the projects in which the fellowship recipient has been involved (press articles, satisfaction of researchers and institutions, success rates).

The detailed tasks and respective procedural steps may be defined in the MoU between CRUS and the Coordination Body.

72 CRUS

SDC mandates the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) as the Swiss Intermediate Body with the responsibility for Programme implementation and management. CRUS will supervise and control the necessary Swiss bodies and organisations that allow it to fulfil the mandate according to the specifications as contained in this Programme Document.

Internally, CRUS sets up a **Clearing and Coordination Office (CCO)** as a unit within its Secretariat General.

The CCO is in charge of day-to-day programme management, including controlling of the subcontractors. The ten euraxess offices in Switzerland, which are coordinated by CRUS, will provide regional case management. The main tasks of the CCO are described below.

Related to Sciex-NMS^{ch} Agreements:

- Develop, sign and monitor the implementation of MoUs with Coordination Bodies;
- Develop, sign and monitor the implementation of the agreements with Swiss host institutions;
- Develop, sign and monitor and supervise contracts with Swiss sub-contractors.

Related to overall Programme management:

- Draft half-yearly Plans of Operation and related budget proposals for approval by the Steering Committee;
- Submit half-yearly country-wise and overall physical and financial progress reports to the Steering Committee for approval;
- Provide secretarial support for the Steering Committee;
- Set-up and operate an overall management and reporting system;
- Set-up and operate a financial management and reporting system, including the transfer of funds to participating host institutions;
- Cooperate with Coordination Bodies in the partner countries (information activities, reporting requirements, etc.);
- Advertise Sciex-NMS^{ch} within the Swiss research community and communicate procedures and requirements;
- Organise information flow to European research organisations and to the Swiss public.

Related to Programme Cycle:

- Provide the Steering Committee with fellowship proposals for scientific screening;
- Communicate the Steering Committee's decisions to applicants, the Coordination Body and euraxess offices in Switzerland;
- Draft, circulate and co-sign the Multi-partite Agreement for each approved fellowship;
- Set-up and operate a standard system to monitor the fellowship implementation and to intervene in case of delays or problems;
- Ensure the timely completion of fellowships and follow-up obligations as defined in the individual multi-partite agreements;

The main tasks of the regional case management offices¹⁶ in Switzerland are:

- Advertise and communicate the Sciex-NMS^{ch} programme to interested researchers regionally;
- Monitor researcher's progress at host institutions of the region according to their competence;
- Provide financial and case progress reports as per agreed schedule;
- Provide demand-based on-location assistance to researchers;
- Cooperate with the euraxess units in the partner countries, especially regarding relocation and follow-up.

73 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee of the SciexNMS^{ch} Programme is responsible for the general operational decisions of the programme. It also discusses and approves the list of proposed fellowships based on the ranking of the proposals and approves the correct implementation of the predefined criteria. The main functions of the Steering Committee are:

- Approval of half-yearly Plans of Operation and related budget proposals;
- Approval of half-yearly reports on reached objectives and financial progress;
- Definition of scoring criteria in Switzerland and final approval of proposed research fellowships and short-term research visits on the basis of the scoring results;
- Definition of criteria for the appointment of panels for re-consideration of proposals, if necessary, or for selection, if too many proposals are submitted;
- Advice in any matter directly relevant to the Programme (arbiter of last resort will jointly be SDC and the NCU).

The Steering Committee is composed of the Swiss research stakeholders, i.e. delegated representatives of the following organisations: CRUS (1 delegate as President of the Steering Committee); State Secretariat for Education and Research (1 delegate ESKAS); the Swiss National Science Foundation (1 delegate career development, 1 delegate international cooperation); Swiss cantonal universities and Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology (1 delegate elected by CRUS); Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences (1 delegate elected by KFH); ETH-Domain (1 delegate elected by ETH-Rat); Bridge to the Research Institutions outside the university sector, which are subsidised according to Article 16 of the Federal Law on Research (1 delegate elected by SER) as well as SDC (1 delegate). Each partner state may delegate an observer to the Steering Committee.

¹⁶ Cooperating with Euraxess network

One delegate from CRUS chairs the Steering Committee. The CRUS Clearing and Coordination Office (CCO) provides the secretarial support to the Committee.

74 Participating Universities and Research Institutions

Participating NMS universities and research institutions will foremost be responsible for:

- Signature of and adherence to Performance Agreements with Coordination Bodies (if applicable);
- Disseminating information on Sciex-NMS^{ch} to faculty and staff;
- Screening and assessment of fellowship proposals;
- Submission of assessment results the fellowship proposals to Coordination Body;
- Co-signing of Multi-partite Contracts for formally approved fellowships;
- Reporting to the Coordination Body as per agreed schedule.

Participating Swiss universities and research institutions will foremost be responsible for:

- Signature of performance agreements with CRUS;
- Disseminating information on Sciex-NMS^{ch} to faculty and staff;
- Quality screening (scoring) of proposals with respect to the scientific and HR strategy of the institution;
- Co-signing of Multi-partite Contracts for formally approved fellowships;
- Arranging work space, etc. for fellowship holders;
- Ensuring a flow of funds to fellowship holders, including account keeping and financial reporting;
- Reporting to CRUS/CCO.

8 Funding and Budget

Main costs incurring in Switzerland include research fellowships, short-term research visits, programme reviews and programme management by CRUS. All these costs will be financed by the Swiss Contribution. A budget overview is provided in Annex 1 and 2.

Main costs incurring in the NMS include the information on Sciex-NMS^{ch}, the selection process for fellowships done by the home institution and the management costs of the Coordination Body. All local costs will be financed by the partner country, either as co-financing of the Swiss contribution, or as a financing based on other funding sources.

The Swiss part of the overall Programme budget is CHF 29.08 Million. The geographic distribution according to the bilateral framework agreements is as follows:

Country	Million CHF
Poland	12.00
Hungary	3.00
Czech Republic	4.00
Slovak Republic	1.50

Country	Million CHF
Estonia	1.58
Latvia	2.00
Lithuania	4.00
Slovenia	1.00

CHF 2.24 Million or 7.7 % of the total Programme budget is earmarked for Programme management and will be deducted proportionally from the above country budgets. For details on the programme management budget, see the annex 1.

CRUS is responsible for the financial administration of the entire Programme budget (budgeting, account keeping, reporting). SDC will transfer instalments to a separate CRUS account on a call forward-basis.

CRUS releases funds to specific Sciex account positions within the host institutions financial accounts for fellowships assigned by the Steering Committee. Refunding of officially approved Senior's visits will be issued by CRUS to the host institution within each month. The universities and host institutions release funds to the Senior and Junior Researchers bank account and provide CRUS with the appropriate financial reports.

Audits will be done annually at the host institutions and at CRUS.

9 Monitoring and Reporting

As with the contractual arrangements, a distinction has to be made between (1) monitoring and reporting on the entire Sciex-NMS^{ch} Programme and (2) monitoring the fellowships in the research stay projects as well as the short-term research visits. A detailed financial and operational monitoring system will be developed by CRUS at the beginning of the Programme implementation. The system will include quantitative and qualitative components.

91 Quantitative Component

The main quantitative controlling instrument is the data base that will be developed and operated by CRUS. It will allow the case management of individual fellowships and the monitoring of the overall programme implementation. The data base will be user friendly and will allow integrating

the qualitative monitoring instruments described below. Actual data will be available upon short notice.

92 Qualitative Component

The following table lists the qualitative instruments that will be used for case monitoring, along with the data contained in the data base mentioned above.

Monitoring subject	Instrument / Responsible	Timing
Short-term research visits	Questionnaire and report / visiting researcher	End of visit
Research fellowship:		
- Trial period	Brief report / Swiss mentor	After 3 months
- Progress assessment (incl. final assessment)	Brief progress report on the reached objectives / fellowship recipient and mentors	Every 6 months
- Personal assessment («Your personal comment on the programme»-section www.sciex.ch)	Free reporting / fellowship recipient	End of fellowship
- Note on completion of degree (based on research performed in Switzerland)	Brief note / fellowship recipient	Upon completion of degree
- gender balance	Database and reports	annually
VKHS	Questionnaire / Course participant	End of module

Standardised reporting forms and questionnaires will be provided by CRUS.

93 Independent Programme Progress Reviews

The seven year Sciex-NMS^{ch} Programme with its substantial budget warrants two brief external reviews to:

(1) Assess progress achieved against set objectives and targets, and

(2) Provide advice and direction for corrective measures, if required.

Tentatively, the mid-term review is scheduled for around 2011. An independent evaluation may be conducted after the Programme completion. 10 Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Risks	Mitigation Strategies
Too many proposals submitted and consequent rejection and disappointments in NMS (too high demand)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selections by scientific panels (nominated ad hoc) • Communication on programme limitations
Insufficient quantity of submitted proposals in a given country (too low demand, under-utilised country budget)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of PR activities in NMS and CH • Matchmaking efforts between Swiss and NMS institutions
Insufficient quality of research projects, which provide the frame for the fellowship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the role of the Senior Researchers (short-term visits) to improve the quality of the research projects
Drop-outs among fellowship holders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification with CRUS and home institutions on the minimum requirements for participants
Sub-standard performance (mentoring, scientific performance, subcontractors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanctions (up to stopping payments)
No gender balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustment in proposal forms • Training of Scoring Committees • Intensify support structures

Annex 1: Budget for Management of the Swiss part of the Programme

The amounts corresponding to the budgetary items shown below are indicative and may be adjusted during the implementation of the programme.

Management Budget Sciex-NMS^{CH}	CHF
CCO-CH: salaries/indirect costs	1'959'160
Database	80'000
Conferences	100'000
Print Material / Brochures / Reports	70'000
Reviews	30'000
Total	2'239'160

Annex 2: Budget overview for fellowships

A. Indicative budget for 6 months Fellowships and short term research visits per Country in CHF

Country	Budget Fellowships (in CHF)	No of 6 months Fellowships	Budget short term research visits (in CHF)	No of short term research visits
Czech Republic	3'402'000	86	290'000	116
Estonia	1'308'340	33	150'000	60
Hungary	2'534'000	64	235'000	94
Latvia	1'701'000	43	145'000	58
Lithuania	3'402'000	86	290'000	116
Poland	10'326'000	261	750'000	300
Slovak Republic	1'276'000	32	117'500	47
Slovenia	833'000	21	90'000	36
Total in CHF	26'840'840	626	2'067'500	827

Remarks: numbers are rounded;

Annex 3: Assessment process for research fellowships

The Evaluation process follows a 3 stage procedure with institutions involved from the partner states and Switzerland. All institutions base their evaluation on one common set of criteria which are described below. More detailed criteria will be described in the Memorandum of Understanding between CRUS and the Coordination Body. The scores are transmitted to CRUS, which prepares the results for the Steering Committee. Based on the scoring provided and the available financial allocation for fellowships, the Steering Committee decides on the assignment of the research fellowship.

Stages for the appraisal by the involved bodies

Stage 1: Preparation of proposals

Stage 2: Assessment

Stage 3: Decision

The requirements and criteria for evaluation of the proposals follow the framework described below. The binding evaluation criteria including the corresponding country specific scores will be defined in the inter-governmental agreements. Each host and home country can assign maximally 50 points in total.

Stage 1: Proposal Preparation

	Requirements / Evaluation Criteria
R ¹⁷ 1	Professional qualification of the mentor and the Junior Researcher and confirmation of the language skills
R2	Scientific relevance of the project / project description
R3	Integration of the Junior Researcher in an existing Swiss research team and/or planned graduation programme
R4	Description of follow-up activities (reintegration in the home department upon return)
R5	Description of further competences of the researcher

¹⁷ R = Requirements

Stage 2: Assessment

a) Home Department/Institution

	Requirements / Evaluation Criteria	Max score
C ¹⁸ 1	Track record of the participating researchers as publications, lectures, accomplished projects and results	
C2	Scientific relevance of the planned project	
C3	Support for the follow-up activities	

b) Coordination Body NMS

	Requirements / Evaluation Criteria	Max score
C4	Relevance of the planned project for the home country	

	<u>Total of Home Scoring</u>	50
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c) Host Department/Institution

	Requirements / Evaluation Criteria	Max Score
R6	Modalities of the employment contract according to c&c (declaration of the rectorate)	
R7	Budget and length of the project	
R8	Not obligatory: Confirmation of the admission to qualification programmes (doctorate) and nomination of a PhD supervisor	
C5	Compatibility of the qualifications of the researcher with the institutional HR strategy and the team (institute).	
C6	Compatibility of the scientific orientation and quality of the project with the research strategy of the institution	
C7	Language skills of the researcher	

¹⁸ C = Evaluation Criteria

C8	Mobility experience and networking potential	
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	<u>Total of Host Scoring</u>	50
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Stage 3: Decision by Steering Committee

	Requirements / Evaluation Criteria
	Decision based on the scoring provided by the institutions (according to Stage 2) and the available financial allocation for fellowships

Annex 4: Eligible Costs for Fellowships and short term research visits

Component	Description	Duration	Max allowance (CHF)
A. Fellowship	Fellowship for the junior researcher NMS	6-24 months	120'000.- ¹⁹
B. Short term research visit	Mentor visit and research cooperation of the senior researchers	5 days	2'500.-

A. Eligible costs for Fellowships for the junior researcher

Category	Eligible costs
Fellowship	Fellowship: PhD candidates for the first twelve months of stay CHF 50'000.- PhD candidates for the second twelve months of stay CHF 55'000.- Post Docs CHF 80'000.- for twelve months (maximum length of stay 18 months) Plus social taxes as fixed by SNF and Research Institutions.
Transport	Travel costs between home country and Switzerland (maximum CHF 1000.-) Transport within Switzerland (maximum CHF 1000.-)
Research	Participation in Conferences (including external meals and possible hotel costs) Publication costs (Maximum CHF 500.-)

Not covered are:

- Admission fees (equivalent to other scientific collaborators at the RI with an employment contract)

¹⁹ Maximal allowance does not include social taxes. The amount may be exceeded in specific cases.

B. Eligible costs for short term research visits (CH & NMS Researcher)

Costs for short term visits by NMS Researchers will be remunerated according to actual expenses. Costs for short term visits by Swiss researchers will be remunerated according to their home institution's specific regulations.

Category	Eligible costs
Transport	Travel costs between home country and Switzerland Transport within country
Accommodation and Food	Hotel costs Daily allowance

Not covered are:

- Admission fees (equivalent to other scientific collaborators at the RI)



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Rektorenkonferenz der Schweizer Universitäten
Conférence des Recteurs des Universités Suisses
Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Svizzere
Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities

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Annex 5: Allowances for VKHS

Description

The VKHS²⁰ Module in Fribourg will provide insights into Swiss Research Culture, social life and history. Transferable skills like grant writing are subjects to be thought. VKHS is the summer school for Researchers, who want to learn about Swiss Scientific Culture and plan on a longer stay or a joint research project with a Swiss partner.

VKHS is especially designed for researchers, who want to learn, how Swiss Researchers manage to be amongst the most successful grant writers in Europe.

Participants will live at the Fribourg site and visit the course at the VKHS building, which is located next to the University of Fribourg. There will be time reserved to socialise and make excursions to Switzerland and other Research Institutions in addition to the University of Fribourg.

Average costs per person for three to four weeks CHF 2'750.-

Eligible costs include

- Course programme covering 20 lessons per week (Mo-Fr 9-12 and Tue/Thu 2-4p.m.)
- Accommodation and Food during course

Not covered by the VKHS

- Food and accommodation outside the site
- Language courses provided by VKHS (may be booked separately)

²⁰ VKHS is a swissuniversity.ch member, legitimated by the government and the Swiss Universities, to train students and researchers with a non-Swiss degree to get admission to the Swiss Universities' programmes.