


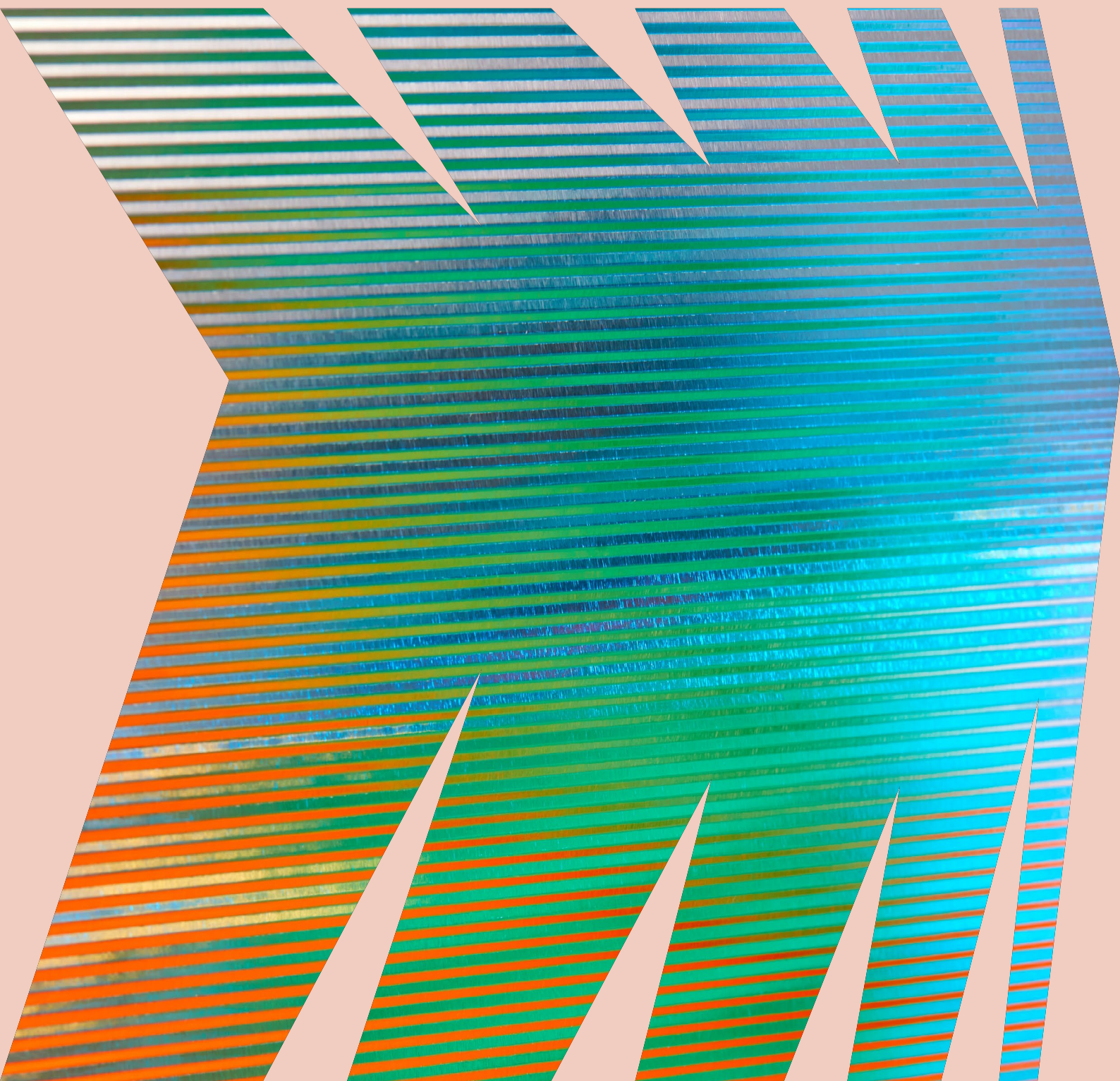
# Evaluation of the Innosuisse Portfolio

## Analysis and Recommendations by the Swiss Science Council SSC

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 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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## Der Schweizerische Wissenschaftsrat

Der Schweizerische Wissenschaftsrat SWR berät den Bund in allen Fragen der Wissenschafts-, Hochschul-, Forschungs- und Innovationspolitik. Ziel seiner Arbeit ist die kontinuierliche Optimierung der Rahmenbedingungen für die gedeihliche Entwicklung der Schweizer Bildungs-, Forschungs- und Innovationslandschaft. Als unabhängiges Beratungsorgan des Bundesrates nimmt der SWR eine Langzeitperspektive auf das gesamte BFI-System ein.

## Le Conseil suisse de la science

Le Conseil suisse de la science CSS est l'organe consultatif du Conseil fédéral pour les questions relevant de la politique de la science, des hautes écoles, de la recherche et de l'innovation. Le but de son travail est l'amélioration constante des conditions-cadre de l'espace suisse de la formation, de la recherche et de l'innovation en vue de son développement optimal. En tant qu'organe consultatif indépendant, le CSS prend position dans une perspective à long terme sur le système suisse de formation, de recherche et d'innovation.

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## The Swiss Science Council

The Swiss Science Council SSC is the advisory body to the Federal Council for issues related to science, higher education, research and innovation policy. The goal of the SSC, in conformity with its role as an independent consultative body, is to promote the framework for the successful development of the Swiss higher education, research and innovation system. As an independent advisory body to the Federal Council, the SSC pursues the Swiss higher education, research and innovation landscape from a long-term perspective.

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# Zusammenfassung

Der vorliegende Evaluationsbericht zum Förderportfolio von Innosuisse basiert auf einem Auftrag des Staatssekretariats für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation SBFI an den Schweizerischen Wissenschaftsrat SWR. Im Zentrum der Analyse stehen folgende Fragen:

- Wie ist das Förderportfolio von Innosuisse auf den Kernauftrag der Agentur ausgerichtet?
- Wie fügt sich das Förderportfolio in sein Umfeld ein?
- Wie werden vom Bundesrat in Auftrag gegebene Programme ins Förderportfolio von Innosuisse integriert?
- Gibt es innerhalb oder ausserhalb des Förderportfolios von Innosuisse relevante Komplementaritäten, Lücken oder Überschneidungen?
- Muss das Förderportfolio von Innosuisse angepasst werden?

Bei der Beantwortung dieser Fragen berücksichtigte der SWR das gesamte Schweizer Innovationssystem mit seinen kantonalen, regionalen, nationalen und internationalen Dimensionen. Darüber hinaus bezieht der Bericht auch die Grundprinzipien der Schweizer Innovationspolitik ein, namentlich Subsidiarität, Autonomie, Zusammenarbeit, Wettbewerbsfähigkeit und Exzellenz. Schliesslich untersuchte der SWR Entwicklungen und Herausforderungen, die für das Portfolio von Innosuisse von Bedeutung sind. Dazu gehören der Zugang zu den Forschungsrahmenprogrammen der EU, mögliche Kürzungen im Bundeshaushalt, Dual-Use- und militärische Forschung und Entwicklung sowie die abnehmende Innovationsfähigkeit von KMU.

Die Methodik der Evaluation fusst einerseits auf eigenen Analysen des SWR. Dazu gehören frühere SWR-Studien, die Auswertung relevanter Forschungsliteratur, Interviews mit Expertinnen und Experten sowie ein Workshop mit Innosuisse. Zusätzlich hat Innosuisse dem SWR eine Selbstbeschreibung ihres Portfolios vorgelegt. Der SWR hat zudem zwei externe Mandate zur Rechtsgrundlage von Innosuisse (von Prof. A. Lienhard, Universität Bern) und zu internationalen Innovationsprogrammen (von Technopolis Wien) in Auftrag gegeben.

Der SWR kommt zum Schluss, dass das Portfolio von Innosuisse den gesetzlichen Aufgaben entspricht. Insgesamt ist das Portfolio kohärent, und die Förderinstrumente ergänzen sich gut. Der Schwerpunkt liegt auf der Bottom-up-Förderung, wobei die Flagship-Initiative die Festlegung thematischer Schwerpunkte und die proaktive Behandlung von Querschnittsthemen wie der nachhaltigen Entwicklung ermöglicht. Darüber hinaus kann der Bundesrat Innosuisse mit Sonderprogrammen, themenorientierten Programmen sowie nationalen Initiativen beauftragen. In der Regel werden diese zeitlich begrenzten Programme nach den Grundsätzen der Innosuisse-Projektförderung umgesetzt.

Aus systemischer Sicht fügt sich das Portfolio von Innosuisse gut in das übergeordnete Innovationsumfeld ein. Es besteht eine klare Aufgabenteilung mit anderen Förderprogrammen. Dazu gehören die kantonale Innovationsförderung, die Neue Regionalpolitik (NRP), die Ressortforschung, die Förderinstrumente des Schweizerischen Nationalfonds (SNF) sowie die Forschungs- und Innovationsprogramme der EU. Bei einigen Instrumenten gibt es Überschneidungen zwischen dem Portfolio von Innosuisse und anderen Innovationsakteuren, beispielsweise hinsichtlich des anvisierten Technologiereifegrades (Technology Readiness Level TRL) oder der Ausgestaltung des Instruments. Diese Überschneidungen führen in der Regel nicht zu Doppelungen im Förderangebot, da sich die Instrumente in anderen Aspekten unterscheiden (z. B. hinsichtlich des geografischen Geltungsbereichs oder der Zielgruppe).

Zu den Förderinstrumenten, zu denen Schweizer Innovationsakteure auf nationaler und internationaler Ebene keinen oder nur begrenzten Zugang haben, gehören das Small Business Innovation Research Programme (SBIR-Programm) und die Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA). Beide Programme stammen aus den USA und sind traditionell eng mit der dortigen Ressortforschung verbunden.

Im Hinblick auf Anpassungen des Innosuisse-Portfolios kommt der SWR zu folgenden Schlüssen: Ein Potenzial für eine bessere Koordination oder Konsolidierung der Innosuisse-Instrumente besteht bei Projekten ohne Umsetzungspartner sowie bei Dienstleistungen in den Bereichen Vernetzung, Coaching und Training. Die Flagship-Initiative sollte noch stärker mit den themenübergreifenden Prioritäten der Planungsinstrumente und Strategien des Bundesrats abgestimmt werden. Auch die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Innosuisse und der Ressortforschung könnte in bestimmten Bereichen intensiviert werden, etwa im Hinblick auf die Kommerzialisierung von Innovationen oder die Lancierung eines ARPA-Piloten. Der SWR schlägt zudem vor, Hürden für Umsetzungspartner in Innosuisse-Projekten abzubauen und Umsetzungspartner aus der Praxis, der Gesellschaft und öffentlichen Einrichtungen stärker zu berücksichtigen. Weiter empfiehlt der SWR, den Zugang zu Risikokapital und Eigenkapitalfinanzierung zu erleichtern.

Schliesslich hat der vorliegende Evaluationsbericht in einigen Bereichen noch Bedarf an weiterführenden Analysen geortet. Dies betrifft die Erfolgsraten von Anträgen und deren Auswirkungen auf das Förderportfolio von Innosuisse, die Frage von Direkt- und Einzelförderung von Unternehmen sowie die strategische Bewertung von Dual-Use- und militärischer Forschung und Entwicklung.

## Empfehlungen

Auf der Grundlage seiner Analyse und der Bewertung der Evaluationsfragen gibt der SWR folgende Empfehlungen ab<sup>1</sup>:

### Strategische Überlegungen

#### I. Bereitstellung einer Analyse zu den Erfolgsraten und ihren Auswirkungen auf die einzelnen Förderinstrumente und das gesamte Portfolio von Innosuisse

Die Erfolgsraten innerhalb eines Instruments (z. B. für verschiedene disziplinäre Gruppen) und zwischen verschiedenen Instrumenten liefern wichtige Erkenntnisse über die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit, Attraktivität und Zugänglichkeit von Förderprogrammen. Sie geben auch relevante Informationen über die Mittelzuweisung und potenzielle Risiken im Zusammenhang mit einer Portfolioanpassung. Sind die Erfolgsraten zu hoch, könnte der Wettbewerb zu gering sein. Sind die Erfolgsraten zu niedrig, können Förderprogramme an Attraktivität verlieren und vielversprechende Projektideen werden möglicherweise nicht mehr eingereicht, insbesondere wenn die Förderagentur unzureichendes Feedback gibt.<sup>2</sup>

Vor dem Hintergrund aktueller Herausforderungen wie Sparmassnahmen und der ungewissen Teilnahme der Schweiz an den europäischen Forschungsrahmenprogrammen muss Innosuisse auf grössere Anpassungen ihres Portfolios vorbereitet sein. Dazu gehören die mögliche Umgruppierung, Beendigung oder Anpassung bestehender Instrumente, die Einführung neuer Instrumente sowie Entscheidungen zur Budgetverteilung.

Der SWR empfiehlt, eine Studie zu den direkten und indirekten Auswirkungen der Erfolgsraten innerhalb des Portfolios von Innosuisse durchzuführen. Dies würde eine wichtige Grundlage für weitere Entscheidungen bilden.

<sup>1</sup> Sofern nicht anders angegeben, richten sich die Empfehlungen an das SBFI, das die Evaluation in Auftrag gegeben hat.

<sup>2</sup> Zu den Auswirkungen der Erfolgsquoten siehe Janger et al. 2019: 21; Langfeldt et al. 2024; EC 2025a: 65. Zu den Rückmeldungen von Innosuisse an die Antragstellenden siehe Barjak et al. 2026: 83 und Rieder et al. 2026: 15.

## II. Durchführung einer strategischen Bewertung von Dual-Use- und militärischer Forschung und Entwicklung

Innosuisse hat bisher wenig Dual-Use- und militärische Forschung und Entwicklung gefördert, obwohl es diesbezüglich keine gesetzlichen Beschränkungen gibt<sup>3</sup> (im Gegensatz zu den EU-Forschungsprogrammen, die sich bisher ausdrücklich auf zivile Forschung und Innovation konzentriert haben). Mit der Idee, eine Flagship-Initiative zu Themen zu lancieren, die sich an Prioritäten der Verteidigung orientieren, erwägt Innosuisse eine strategische Neuausrichtung.

Der SWR empfiehlt, dass Innosuisse eine Bewertung der Risiken und Chancen von Dual-Use- und militärischer Forschung und Entwicklung vornimmt. Zu den Chancen könnten eine engere Zusammenarbeit mit der Ressortforschung und Spillover-Effekte für zivile Anwendungen gehören. Zu den Risiken zählen ethische Bedenken, Wissenssicherheit, asymmetrische F&E-Kapazitäten zwischen zivilen und militärischen Forschungseinrichtungen sowie eine geringere Unterstützung für zivile Innovationen.

## III. Erstellung einer eingehenden Analyse der Direkt- und Einzelförderung von Unternehmen

Innosuisse hat kein Mandat zur Direktförderung von auf dem Markt etablierten Firmen, ausser in Zeiten, in denen «Schweizer Unternehmen der Zugang zu Förderangeboten für Einzelprojekte der Europäischen Kommission verwehrt ist».<sup>4</sup> Die dauerhafte Einrichtung eines Instruments zur Direktförderung von Unternehmen würde eine Anpassung der bestehenden Rechtsgrundlage erfordern und könnte sich auf das gesamte Portfolio von Innosuisse auswirken. Standard-Innovationsprojekte mit Umsetzungspartnern beispielsweise könnten dann an Attraktivität verlieren.

Angesichts der aktuellen Herausforderungen sollte die Option der Direktförderung jedoch nicht ausgeschlossen werden. Zahlen zum Swiss Accelerator zeigen, dass in der Schweiz eine grosse Nachfrage nach solchen

Fördermöglichkeiten besteht. Im Falle einer erneuten Nichtassoziiierung im Rahmen künftiger EU-Forschungsrahmenprogramme würden Schweizer Unternehmen erneut von einer Direkt- und Einzelförderung ausgeschlossen. Dies würde die Frage nach einer längerfristigen Lösung auf nationaler Ebene dringlich machen.<sup>5</sup> Eine Untersuchung von direkten Forschungs- und Entwicklungszuschüssen durch Innosuisse wurde auch in den jüngsten Studien von Barjak et al. (2026) und Rieder et al. (2026) vorgeschlagen.<sup>6</sup>

Vor diesem Hintergrund empfiehlt der SWR, verschiedene Optionen und Szenarien für die Umsetzung eines dauerhaften Förderinstruments zu prüfen, das (Einzel-)Zuschüsse an Unternehmen vorsieht. Ein solches Instrument muss sowohl mit dem Portfolio von Innosuisse als auch mit dem gesamten Schweizer Innovationssystem vereinbar sein. Ausgangspunkt für diese Überlegungen könnte die Evaluation des Swiss Accelerator sein.

## Neugruppierung bestehender Instrumente

### IV. Verschiebung von «Projekte ohne Umsetzungspartner» zu «BRIDGE Discovery»

Der SWR begrüsst die geplante Verlagerung des Innosuisse-Instruments «Projekte ohne Umsetzungspartner» in das «BRIDGE Discovery»-Format (für 2027). Beide Instrumente richten sich an Angehörige von Hochschulen oder Forschungszentren und decken ähnliche TRLs ab.<sup>7</sup> Die Integration würde potenzielle Doppelungen bei der Finanzierung verhindern, zur Kohärenz des Innosuisse-Portfolios beitragen und das BRIDGE-Programm näher an den Markt bringen. Darüber hinaus könnte die Kombination der beiden Instrumente auch die Erfolgsquote erhöhen.

In Übereinstimmung mit früheren Empfehlungen des SWR sollte der Beteiligung von Fachhochschulen am (überarbeiteten) BRIDGE-Programm besondere Bedeutung beigemessen werden.<sup>8</sup>

3 Solange Projekte «die Grundsätze der wissenschaftlichen Integrität und der guten wissenschaftlichen Praxis beachten», wie in Art. 19, Abs. 6 FIFG festgehalten ist.

4 Art. 19, Abs. 3<sup>ter</sup> FIFG.

5 Innosuisse 2026, Anhang I: KPI-Entwicklung 2018–2024; Technopolis 2026: 38; SERI 2024: 64.

6 Barjak et al. 2026: 92–93 (mit Schwerpunkt auf nachhaltigen Innovationen); Rieder et al. 2026: 28 (mit einem Fokus auf kleine Unternehmen).

7 Innosuisse verortet BRIDGE Discovery auf den TRL-Stufen 2–5 und Innovationsprojekte ohne Umsetzungspartner auf den TRL-Stufen 3–6 (Innosuisse 2026: 42; 59).

8 SSC 2022b: 25; SSC 2023a: 25.

## Beendigung bestehender Instrumente

### V. Mögliche Beendigung von Instrumenten für Vernetzung, Coaching und Ausbildung

Die Instrumente von Innosuisse für Vernetzung, Coaching und Ausbildung überschneiden sich mit den Dienstleistungen kantonaler Standortförderungsstellen, Technologietransferstellen von Hochschulen und privaten Einrichtungen.<sup>9</sup> Angesichts möglicher Budgetkürzungen empfiehlt der SWR, dass Innosuisse prüft, ob einige dieser Instrumente eingestellt werden könnten, insbesondere wenn sie nicht in direktem Zusammenhang mit der Vorbereitung von Innovationsprojekten stehen.<sup>10</sup> Solche Massnahmen sollten nicht zu Lasten von Regionen gehen, in denen keine alternativen Dienstleistungen verfügbar sind, wie z. B. ländliche und/oder Berggebiete.

## Einführung neuer Instrumente

### VI. Unterstützung der Einführung eines ARPA-Pilotprojekts

In seinem Bericht über missionsorientierte Forschung und Innovation (F&I) in der Schweiz (2023) hat der SWR eine eingehende Analyse des ARPA-Ansatzes vorgelegt. Dieses Instrument verspricht bahnbrechende und missionsorientierte technologische Entwicklungen innerhalb von kurzer Zeit. ARPA basiert zudem stark auf aktivem Projektmanagement. Da ein solches Instrument in anderen Ländern – insbesondere in den USA – erfolgreich ist und im Schweizer F&I-System fehlt, empfahl der SWR in diesem Bericht die Umsetzung eines ARPA-Pilotprojekts bei Innosuisse. Diese Empfehlung wurde anschliessend in der BFI-Botschaft 2025–2028 aufgegriffen.<sup>11</sup> Die vorliegende Portfolioanalyse von Innosuisse hat bestätigt, dass innerhalb der Schweizer Innovationsförderung in Bezug auf ARPA weiterhin eine Lücke besteht.<sup>12</sup> Im Gegensatz dazu verstärken die EU und nationale Innovationsagenturen in Europa ihre Bemühungen zur Umsetzung von ARPA-Instrumenten.

Zum Zeitpunkt der vorliegenden Analyse gibt es Anzeichen dafür, dass ein ARPA-Pilotprojekt im Rahmen des SWEET-Programms des Bundesamtes für Energie (Ressortforschung) initiiert wird. Der SWR empfiehlt, dass Innosuisse die beteiligten Akteure bei ihren Bemühungen zur Umsetzung eines solchen Pilotprojekts unterstützt, z. B. im Bereich der Evaluation und Kommerzialisierung. Wenn das Pilotprojekt erfolgreich ist, könnten Aspekte des ARPA-Ansatzes auch in das Portfolio von Innosuisse aufgenommen werden.<sup>13</sup>

9 Bereits in seiner Stellungnahme zur Änderung der Innosuisse-Beitragsverordnung (2022) hat der SWR die Bedeutung einer stärkeren Zusammenarbeit zwischen Innosuisse und den Hochschulen im Bereich der Entrepreneurship-Ausbildung hervorgehoben. SSC 2022a: 3–4.

10 Das Instrument «Networking Event Series» wurde aufgrund von Budgetbeschränkungen bereits bis 2028 pausiert. Das Instrument wird danach wahrscheinlich dauerhaft aus dem Portfolio von Innosuisse entfernt.

11 SSC 2023b; Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 110.

12 Innosuisse 2026: 13. Siehe auch Barjak et al. 2026: 107 (Anhang 10).

13 Es könnte Synergien zwischen dem ARPA-Ansatz und der Förderung hochqualifizierter Personen geben; im letzteren Instrument sieht Innosuisse ausdrücklich Entwicklungspotenzial für die Zukunft (Innosuisse 2026: 18). Es könnte auch zu Kooperationen zwischen Innosuisse und anderen europäischen Innovationsagenturen kommen, wie dies bereits bei SPRIN-D, Bpifrance und Vinnova der Fall ist (SPRIN-D 2025; Bergstrand 2025). Schliesslich sollte bedacht werden, dass ein echtes ARPA-Programm hohe Anforderungen an die Ressourcen und Fähigkeiten einer entsprechenden Förderagentur stellt. Kompromisse beim Kernkonzept und den Anforderungen von ARPA bergen daher ein erhebliches Risiko, dass das Instrument unwirksam wird.

## Anpassungen bestehender Instrumente

### VII. Beseitigung von Hürden für Umsetzungspartner

Die bestehende Förderung von Innosuisse von Projekten mit Umsetzungspartnern ist ein erfolgreicher Ansatz, der beibehalten werden sollte. Allerdings sind die Hürden für Umsetzungspartner, sich an solchen Projekten zu beteiligen, relativ hoch. Sie müssen 40 bis 60 % der erstattungsbaren Projektkosten beitragen, davon mindestens 5 % in bar.

Angesichts der rückläufigen Innovationsaktivitäten Schweizer Unternehmen und des schwierigen wirtschaftlichen Umfelds empfiehlt der SWR, Hindernisse für die Teilnahme von Umsetzungspartnern zu beseitigen. Dies könnte beispielsweise durch den Verzicht auf den Barbeitrag erreicht werden.<sup>14</sup> Vor der Umsetzung spezifischer Massnahmen sollten deren potenziellen Risiken bewertet werden (z. B. unerwünschte Nebenwirkungen wie sinkende Erfolgsraten aufgrund erhöhter Nachfrage und geringerer Budgets).

### VIII. Stärkere Einbindung von Umsetzungspartnern aus Praxis, Gesellschaft und öffentlichen Einrichtungen

Innosuisse konzentriert sich traditionell auf akademische Akteure und Unternehmen. Andere potenzielle Umsetzungspartner wie NGOs, Praktiker<sup>15</sup> und öffentliche Einrichtungen sind derzeit unterrepräsentiert. Während die Flagship-Initiative solche Akteure ausdrücklich anspricht, gibt es im Rahmen der Standardprojektförderung noch ungenutztes Potenzial. Eine Erweiterung des Spektrums der Umsetzungspartner würde

auch dazu beitragen, Aspekte der Gesellschaft und der nachhaltigen Entwicklung einzubeziehen, wie sie in der Rechtsgrundlage und den strategischen Zielen von Innosuisse vorgesehen sind.<sup>16</sup>

Der SWR erkennt die grosse Bedeutung von Unternehmen, insbesondere von KMU, für die Förderaktivitäten von Innosuisse und die wissenschaftsbasierte Innovation an. Gleichzeitig empfiehlt der Rat Innosuisse, geeignete Massnahmen zu ergreifen, um zusätzliche Umsetzungspartner stärker einzubeziehen. Dies könnte unter anderem durch die Stärkung der sozialen Innovation<sup>17</sup> und den Abbau finanzieller Hürden erreicht werden, wie dies bereits weiter oben empfohlen wurde.

### IX. Verknüpfung der Instrumente von Innosuisse mit internationalen Förderprogrammen

Nationale und internationale Innovationsagenturen verknüpfen ihre Förderinstrumente zunehmend mit den Forschungsrahmenprogrammen der EU. Dies bietet die Möglichkeit eines vereinfachten Zugangs zu diesen EU-Programmen sowie höherer Erfolgsraten. Ein relevantes Beispiel für die Schweiz ist das Plug-in-Programm von Horizon Europe, das es Förderstellen ermöglicht, Projekten aus ihrem Portfolio einen direkten Zugang zur zweiten Antragsphase des EIC Accelerator zu gewähren.<sup>18</sup>

Der SWR empfiehlt, dass Innosuisse geeignete Instrumente aus ihrem Portfolio für das Plug-in-Programm von Horizon Europe zertifiziert, um Schweizer Akteuren den Zugang zum EIC Accelerator zu vereinfachen. Mögliche Instrumente für eine solche Zertifizierung sind Innovationsprojekte mit Umsetzungspartnern, Start-up-Innovationsprojekte, das Start-up-Coaching sowie BRIDGE Proof of Concept (PoC).<sup>19</sup>

14 Barjak et al. erwähnen als Ergebnis ihrer Analyse die Option, «die Barbeiträge von Unternehmen an gemeinsamen Innosuisse-Projekten unter bestimmten Bedingungen, z. B. für Kleinstunternehmen und kleine Unternehmen, zu erlassen» (Barjak et al. 2026: 96; siehe auch Rieder et al. 2026: 14; 26 für eine ähnliche Schlussfolgerung). Die Nationalrätin Franziska Ryser reichte eine parlamentarische Motion ein, in der sie die Prüfung von Innovationsgut-scheinen vorschlägt, «welche bei einem Innosuisse-Projekt Teile des / den gesamten von den Unternehmen zu erbringenden Beitrag abdecken und damit die Innovationskraft der KMUs stärken» (Ryser 2025). Die Nationalrätin Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter nannte in einer Interpellation die Möglichkeit «einer deutlichen Senkung oder eines temporären Verzichts auf Cash-Eigenbeiträge» (Schneider-Schneiter 2025).

15 Dazu gehören z.B. Organisationen und Akteure von Spitälern, Strafverfolgungsbehörden oder Blaulichtorganisationen.

16 Lienhard 2026: II; 19–20.

17 Vgl. Art. 2 FIFG, der ausdrücklich die gesellschaftliche Dimension von Innovation festlegt. Foray 2025a stellt fest, dass soziale Innovationen oft dort entstehen und verbreitet werden, wo Märkte fehlen und daher nicht ohne Weiteres durch den Markt validiert werden können: «La découverte économique et l'expérimentation entrepreneuriale sont remplacées par une forme d'expérimentation sociale» (262–263). Vor diesem Hintergrund könnte Innosuisse Partnerschaften zwischen Unternehmen, Wissenschaftlern, NGOs, Praktikern und Gemeinden unterstützen, um soziale Innovationen zu entwickeln und durch Experimente in der Praxis rigoros zu testen.

18 Mittal 2025; TAFTIE 2023.

19 Mittal 2025: 18–21.

## X. Stärkung der Abstimmung der Flagship Initiative mit übergreifenden Themen des Bundesrechts, Planungsinstrumenten und Strategien des Bundesrats

Die Flagship-Initiative bietet Innosuisse die Möglichkeit, Innovationen in vordefinierten Bereichen zu fördern. Damit können übergreifende Themen, die im Bundesrecht (z. B. FIG) verankert sind, sowie Ziele des Bundesrats wie nachhaltige Entwicklung oder Digitalisierung proaktiv angegangen werden. Die Flagship-Initiative fördert auch die transdisziplinäre Zusammenarbeit mit Akteuren, die bei anderen Projektförderungen nicht im Vordergrund stehen (z. B. Gemeinden, Praktiker, NGOs usw.). Der SWR ist daher der Ansicht, dass die Flagship-Initiative – die über ein vergleichsweise kleines Budget verfügt – eine sinnvolle Ergänzung zum stark bottom-up-orientierten Förderportfolio von Innosuisse darstellt. Aus rechtlicher Sicht ist eine ausdrückliche Verankerung der Flagship-Initiative im Bundesrecht zwar nicht zwingend erforderlich, aber dennoch wünschenswert.

Der SWR empfiehlt, dass Innosuisse die Flagship-Initiative stärker auf die Querschnittsthemen des Bundesrechts (FIG) und die Planungsinstrumente (BFI-Botschaft, Ziele und Strategien des Bundesrats) abstimmt. Innosuisse könnte bereits in der Phase der Themenfindung für neue Flagship Initiativen mit dem SBFI und anderen Bundesämtern Rücksprache halten. Die Interdepartementale Koordinationskommission für die Forschung des Bundes (KoorA-RF) würde eine geeignete Plattform für einen solchen verstärkten Austausch bieten. Dieser Ansatz steht im Einklang mit der Strategie des Bundesrats, die Koordination zwischen Innosuisse und der Ressortforschung zu stärken.<sup>20</sup>

## XI. Erleichterung des Zugangs zu Risiko- und Eigenkapitalfinanzierungen

Der Zugang zu Risikokapital ist eine erhebliche Hürde für die Kommerzialisierung und Skalierung von Innovationen. Während Förderprogramme wie der EIC Accelerator Projektfinanzierungen für hochinnovative KMU und Start-ups mit dem Zugang zu Eigenkapitalinvestitionen kombinieren, fehlt Innosuisse ein solcher Mechanismus. Die Studie von Barjak et al. (2026) schlägt eine stärkere Einbindung von Schweizer Pensionsfondsvermögen in die Finanzierung von Start-ups vor. Sie weist auch auf die Möglichkeit eines Innovationsfonds hin, um neben öffentlichen Beiträgen «zusätzliche private Finanzmittel für Start-ups» zu mobilisieren.<sup>21</sup>

Vor diesem Hintergrund empfiehlt der SWR, dass Innosuisse ihre Unterstützung für Unternehmen beim Zugang zu Eigenkapitalinvestitionen intensiviert. Mögliche Massnahmen sind:

- die Verbesserung der Sichtbarkeit von Unternehmen über die Website von Innosuisse, Mailings und Matchmaking-Veranstaltungen;
- die Vergabe von Gütesiegeln für Unternehmen, die von Innosuisse finanziert und betreut werden;
- die Unterstützung von Unternehmen bei einem «Spin-out-Pfad».<sup>22</sup>

20 Swiss Federal Council 2024a. Die BFI-Botschaft 2025–2028 sieht im Übrigen eine detaillierte Bewertung der Flagship-Initiative bis 2028 vor. Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 110.

21 Barjak et al. 2026: 91.

22 Zur Option eines Spin-outs siehe auch Rieder et al. 2026: 21; 28–29.

## Zusammenarbeit/Koordination

### XII. Verbesserung der Zusammenarbeit und Koordination mit der Ressortforschung

In Übereinstimmung mit früheren Empfehlungen des SWR beschloss der Bundesrat 2024, die Koordination zwischen der Ressortforschung, Innosuisse, dem SNF und dem ETH-Rat zu optimieren. Zu den konkreten Massnahmen gehören die Stärkung des Interdepartementalen Koordinationsausschusses für die Forschung des Bundes (KoorA-RF) und die Weiterentwicklung der ARAMIS-Datenbank.<sup>23</sup>

Auf dieser Grundlage empfiehlt der SWR, dass Innosuisse ihre Zusammenarbeit mit der Ressortforschung weiter intensiviert, wo dies sinnvoll erscheint. Innosuisse könnte etwa die Bundesämter bei ihrer Zusammenarbeit mit Unternehmen und der Kommerzialisierung von Innovationen unterstützen.<sup>24</sup> Darüber hinaus könnte ein systematischeres Monitoring via ARAMIS Überschneidungen, Lücken und Komplementaritäten bei den von den verschiedenen Förderorganen unterstützten Innovationsprojekten aufzeigen.

<sup>23</sup> SSC 2023b; Swiss Federal Council 2024a.

<sup>24</sup> Ein Beispiel ist das SWEET-Programm des Bundesamtes für Energie. Experteninterview Haselbacher 2025.

# Résumé

Ce rapport d'évaluation du portefeuille de financement d'Innosuisse a été réalisé sur mandat du Secrétariat d'Etat à la formation, la recherche et à l'innovation (SEFRI) et confié au Conseil Suisse de la Science (CSS). L'analyse se concentre sur les questions suivantes :

- Dans quelle mesure le portefeuille de financement d'Innosuisse est-il conforme à la mission principale de l'agence ?
- Comment le portefeuille de financement s'intègre-t-il dans son environnement ?
- Comment les programmes mandatés par le Conseil fédéral sont-ils intégrés dans le portefeuille de financement d'Innosuisse ?
- Existe-t-il des complémentarités, des lacunes ou des redondances significatives au sein ou en dehors du portefeuille de financement d'Innosuisse ?
- Est-ce que le portefeuille de financement d'Innosuisse nécessite d'être ajusté ?

Pour répondre à ces questions, le CSS a considéré l'ensemble du système d'innovation suisse, y compris ses dimensions cantonales, régionales, nationales et internationales. En outre, le rapport examine les principes fondamentaux de la politique suisse en matière d'innovation, à savoir la subsidiarité, l'autonomie, la coopération, la compétitivité et l'excellence. Enfin, le CSS a analysé les développements et les défis qui présentent un intérêt pour le portefeuille d'Innosuisse. Il s'agit notamment de l'accès aux programmes-cadres européens de recherche, des éventuelles coupes dans le budget fédéral, de la R&D à double usage et militaire, ainsi que du déclin de la capacité d'innovation des PME.

La méthodologie de l'évaluation repose sur les propres analyses du CSS, notamment ses études antérieures, un état de la littérature, des entretiens avec des experts et un atelier auquel a participé Innosuisse. De plus, Innosuisse a fourni au CSS une auto-analyse de son portefeuille. Le CSS a aussi commandé deux mandats externes, l'un sur les bases légales d'Innosuisse (par le Prof. A. Lienhard de l'Université de Berne) et l'autre sur les programmes d'innovation internationaux (par Technopolis Vienne).

Le CSS conclut que le portefeuille d'Innosuisse est en accord avec les tâches légales. De manière générale, le portefeuille est cohérent, et les instruments de financement se complètent bien entre eux. L'accent est mis sur le financement bottom-up, alors que l'Initiative Flagship permet de fixer des priorités thématiques et d'aborder de manière proactive des sujets transversaux tels que le développement durable. De plus, le Conseil fédéral peut mandater Innosuisse pour des programmes spéciaux/thématiques ainsi que des initiatives nationales de soutien. En général, ces programmes temporaires sont mis en œuvre selon les principes du financement de projets d'Innosuisse.

D'un point de vue systémique, le portefeuille d'Innosuisse s'intègre bien au sein de l'environnement global de l'innovation. Il existe une répartition claire des responsabilités avec les autres programmes de financement, notamment les programmes cantonaux, la Nouvelle Politique Régionale, la recherche de l'administration fédérale, le FNS et les programmes européens d'innovation. Pour certains instruments d'innovation, on peut trouver des redondances entre le portefeuille d'Innosuisse et d'autres acteurs de l'innovation, par exemple en ce qui concerne le niveau de maturité technologique (Technology Readiness Level TRL) ou le design de l'instrument. Ces redondances ne constituent généralement pas des doublons dans l'offre de financement, étant donné que les instruments diffèrent sur d'autres aspects (par exemple en termes de portée géographique ou de public cible).

Les instruments de financement auxquels les acteurs suisses de l'innovation n'ont pas ou peu accès au niveau national et international comprennent le programme Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) et l'Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA). Ces deux programmes proviennent des Etats-Unis et ont traditionnellement été associés à la recherche de l'administration fédérale états-unienne.

Concernant les adaptations du portefeuille d'Innosuisse, le CSS formule les conclusions suivantes. Il existe un potentiel d'amélioration de la coordination ou de la consolidation des instruments d'Innosuisse pour les projets sans partenaire de mise en œuvre, ainsi que pour les services dans les domaines de la mise en réseau, du coaching et de la formation. L'Initiative Flagship devrait être davantage alignée sur les priorités transversales des instruments de planification et des stratégies du Conseil fédéral. La coopération entre Innosuisse et la recherche de l'administration fédérale pourrait être intensifiée dans certains domaines, par exemple en ce qui concerne la commercialisation des innovations ou le lancement d'un projet pilote ARPA. Le CSS propose également de supprimer les obstacles au sein des projets Innosuisse pour les partenaires de mise en œuvre et d'inclure davantage les partenaires de mise en œuvre issus de la pratique, de la société et des organismes publics. En outre, le CSS recommande de faciliter l'accès au capital-risque et au financement par capitaux propres.

Enfin, ce rapport d'évaluation a identifié un certain nombre de domaines qui nécessitent une analyse plus approfondie. Il s'agit notamment des taux de succès des candidatures et de leur impact sur le portefeuille de financement d'Innosuisse, de la question des subventions directes et des aides individuelles aux entreprises, ainsi que de l'évaluation stratégique de la R&D à double usage et militaire.

## Recommandations

A partir de son analyse et des questions évaluatives, le CSS formule les recommandations suivantes<sup>25</sup> :

### Considérations stratégiques

#### I. Fournir une analyse des taux de succès et de leur impact sur les instruments de financement individuels et sur le portefeuille d'Innosuisse dans son ensemble

Les différents taux de succès relatifs à un instrument (par exemple pour différents groupes de disciplines) et entre différents instruments fournissent des informations importantes en termes de compétitivité, d'attractivité et d'accessibilité des programmes de financement. Ils fournissent également des indications clés sur l'allocation budgétaire et les risques potentiels associés à un ajustement du portefeuille. Si les taux de succès sont trop élevés, la concurrence peut être trop faible. Si les taux de succès sont trop bas, les programmes de financement peuvent perdre de leur attrait et des idées de projet prometteuses ne plus être soumises, en particulier lorsque l'agence de financement ne fournit pas suffisamment de retours.<sup>26</sup>

A l'aune des défis actuels tels que les mesures d'austérité et la participation incertaine de la Suisse aux programmes-cadres de recherche européens, Innosuisse doit se préparer à des adaptations majeures de son portefeuille. Cela inclut le potentiel regroupement l'abandon et l'adaptation d'instruments existants, la mise en œuvre de nouveaux instruments, ainsi que des décisions en matière d'allocation budgétaire.

Le CSS recommande au SEFRI de conduire une étude sur les effets directs et indirects des taux de succès au sein du portefeuille d'Innosuisse. Cela constituerait une base importante pour la prise de décision ultérieure.

<sup>25</sup> Sauf indication contraire, les recommandations s'adressent au SEFRI, qui a commandé l'évaluation.

<sup>26</sup> Concernant les effets des taux de succès, voir Janger et al. 2019 : 21 ; Langfeldt et al. 2024 ; EC 2025 : 65. Concernant la question des retours aux candidats par Innosuisse, voir Barjak et al. 2026 : 83 et Rieder et al. 2026 : 15.

## II. Conduire une évaluation stratégique de la R&D à double usage et militaire

Historiquement, Innosuisse a accordé peu de soutien à la R&D à double usage et militaire, bien qu'il n'existe aucune restriction légale<sup>27</sup> (contrairement aux programmes-cadres de l'Union Européenne, qui se sont jusqu'à présent explicitement concentrés sur la recherche et l'innovation civiles). Avec la perspective de lancer une Initiative Flagship sur des domaines qui servent les priorités de défense, Innosuisse envisage un changement stratégique.

Le CSS recommande qu'Innosuisse établisse une évaluation des risques et des opportunités de la R&D à double usage et militaire. Les opportunités pourraient résider dans une coopération plus étroite avec la recherche de l'administration fédérale et des retombées pour des applications civiles. Les risques comprennent les préoccupations éthiques, la sécurité des connaissances, les capacités de R&D asymétriques entre les entités de recherche civiles et militaires, ainsi qu'un soutien moindre à l'innovation civile.

## III. Fournir une analyse approfondie des subventions directes et des aides individuelles accordées aux entreprises

Innosuisse n'a pas pour mandat d'octroyer des contributions directes aux entreprises établies sur le marché, mis à part lorsque « les entreprises suisses se voient refuser l'accès aux offres d'encouragement de la Commission Européenne destinées aux projets individuels »<sup>28</sup>. La mise en place permanente d'un instrument accordant des subventions directes aux entreprises nécessiterait l'adoption d'une base légale et pourrait influencer l'ensemble du portefeuille d'Innosuisse. Les projets d'innovation standard avec des partenaires de mise en œuvre, par exemple, pourraient alors devenir moins attractifs.

Toutefois, compte tenu des défis actuels, l'option des subventions directes ne devrait pas être écartée. Les chiffres du Swiss Accelerator montrent qu'il y a une forte demande pour de telles opportunités de financement en Suisse. Dans le scénario d'une nouvelle non-association dans le cadre des futurs programmes-cadres de l'UE, les entreprises suisses seraient de nouveau exclues des subventions individuelles. Cela rendrait urgente la question d'une solution à plus long terme au niveau national.<sup>29</sup> Un examen des subventions directes à la R&D par Innosuisse a également été suggéré par les récentes études de Barjak et al. (2026) et Rieder et al. (2026).<sup>30</sup>

Dans ce contexte, le CSS recommande d'évaluer différentes options et scénarios pour la mise en œuvre d'un programme permanent d'octroi de subventions (individuelles) aux entreprises. Un tel programme doit être compatible à la fois avec le portefeuille d'Innosuisse et avec le système d'innovation suisse dans son ensemble. Ces réflexions pourraient avoir comme point de départ l'évaluation du Swiss Accelerator.

## Regroupement d'instruments existants

### IV. Transférer les « Projets sans partenaire de mise en œuvre » vers « BRIDGE Discovery »

Le CSS salue le transfert prévu de l'instrument Innosuisse « Projets sans partenaire de mise en œuvre » vers le programme BRIDGE Discovery (à l'horizon 2027). Ces deux instruments s'adressent au personnel des établissements d'enseignement supérieur ou des centres de recherche et couvrent des niveaux de maturité technologique (TRLs) similaires.<sup>31</sup> Cette intégration permettrait d'éviter des doublons dans le financement, contribuerait à la cohérence du portefeuille d'Innosuisse et rapprocherait le programme BRIDGE du marché. En outre, la combinaison des deux instruments pourrait également augmenter le taux de succès.

27 Tant que les projets respectent « les principes de l'intégrité scientifique et des bonnes pratiques scientifiques », tels que définis au §19.6 LERI.

28 §19.3<sup>er</sup> LERI.

29 Innosuisse 2026, annexe 1: Évolution des KPI 2018-2024 ; Technopolis 2026 : 38 ; SERI 2024 : 64.

30 Barjak et al. 2026 : 92-93 (avec un accent sur les innovations durables) ; Rieder et al. 2026 : 28 (avec un accent sur les petites entreprises).

31 Innosuisse classe BRIDGE Discovery dans la catégorie TRL 2-5 et les projets d'innovation sans partenaire de mise en œuvre dans la catégorie TRL 3-6 (Innosuisse 2026 : 42 ; 59).

Conformément aux recommandations précédentes du CSS, une attention particulière devrait être portée à la participation des Hautes Ecoles Spécialisées au sein du programme BRIDGE (révisé).<sup>32</sup>

## Suppression d'instruments existants

### V. Suppression potentielle d'instruments de mise en réseau, de coaching et de formation

Les instruments de mise en réseau, de coaching et de formation d'Innosuisse recouvrent partiellement des services fournis par les offices cantonaux de promotion économique, les bureaux de transfert de technologie d'établissements d'enseignement supérieur et les entités privées.<sup>33</sup> Compte tenu de potentielles coupes budgétaires, le CSS recommande qu'Innosuisse évalue dans quelle mesure certains de ces instruments pourraient être supprimés, notamment lorsque ceux-ci ne sont pas directement liés à la préparation de projets d'innovation.<sup>34</sup> De telles mesures ne devraient pas se faire au détriment de régions où aucun autre service n'est disponible, telles que les zones rurales et/ou de montagne.

## Mise en œuvre de nouveaux instruments

### VI. Soutenir l'introduction d'un projet pilote ARPA

Dans son rapport sur la recherche et innovation (R&I) orientées mission en Suisse (2023), le CSS a fourni une analyse approfondie de l'approche ARPA. Cet instrument promet un développement technologique révolutionnaire et axé sur les missions dans un court laps de temps, et repose fortement sur une gestion active des projets. Etant donné qu'un tel instrument a fait ses preuves dans d'autres pays, en particulier aux Etats-Unis, et qu'il fait défaut au sein du système suisse de R&I, le CSS a recommandé de mettre en œuvre un projet pilote ARPA au sein d'Innosuisse. Cette recommandation a ensuite été reprise dans le message FRI 2025-2028.<sup>35</sup> La présente analyse du portefeuille d'Innosuisse a confirmé qu'il y a toujours un manque de financement dans ce domaine en Suisse.<sup>36</sup> En revanche, l'Union Européenne et les agences nationales d'innovation en Europe intensifient leurs efforts pour mettre en œuvre des instruments ARPA.

Au moment de la présente analyse, certains indices laissent penser qu'un projet pilote ARPA sera lancée dans le cadre du programme SWEET de l'Office fédéral de l'énergie (recherche de l'administration fédérale). Le CSS recommande qu'Innosuisse soutienne les parties prenantes impliquées dans leurs efforts pour mettre en œuvre un tel projet pilote, par exemple dans le domaine de l'évaluation et de la commercialisation. Si le projet pilote se révèle performant, certains aspects de l'approche ARPA pourraient également être intégrés au sein du portefeuille d'Innosuisse.<sup>37</sup>

32 SSC 2022b : 25 ; SSC 2023a : 25.

33 Dans sa prise de position concernant la révision de l'ordonnance sur les contributions d'Innosuisse (2022), le CSS a déjà souligné l'importance d'une collaboration plus étroite entre Innosuisse et les établissements d'enseignement supérieur dans le domaine de la formation à l'entrepreneuriat. CSS 2022a : 3-4.

34 A noter que l'instrument « Networking Event Series » a déjà été suspendu jusqu'en 2028 en raison de restrictions budgétaires. Il sera probablement définitivement supprimé du portefeuille d'Innosuisse après cette date.

35 SSC 2023b ; Swiss Federal Council 2024b : 115-116 (version française).

36 Innosuisse 2026 : 13. Voir également Barjak et al. 2026 : 107 (annexe 10).

37 Il peut y avoir des synergies entre l'approche ARPA et la promotion des personnes hautement qualifiées ; cette dernière est mentionnée par Innosuisse comme l'une des opportunités de développement pour l'avenir (Innosuisse 2026 : 18). Il pourrait également y avoir des coopérations entre Innosuisse et d'autres agences européennes d'innovation, comme l'ont fait SPRIN-D, Bpifrance et Vinnova (SPRIN-D 2025 ; Bergstrand 2025). Enfin, il convient de considérer qu'un véritable programme ARPA est très exigeant en termes de ressources et de capacités de l'agence. Par conséquent, tout compromis sur la conception et les exigences fondamentales de l'instrument comporte un risque important de le rendre inefficace.

## Adaptations d'instruments existants

### VII. Suppression des obstacles pour les partenaires de mise en œuvre

Le financement standard d'Innosuisse pour des projets avec des partenaires de mise en œuvre constitue une approche qui fonctionne et qui devrait être maintenue. Cependant, les obstacles à la participation des partenaires de mise en œuvre à de tels projets sont relativement élevés. Ils doivent contribuer à hauteur de 40 à 60% des coûts éligibles du projet, dont au moins 5% en espèces.

Compte tenu du déclin des activités d'innovation des entreprises suisses et du contexte économique difficile, le CSS recommande de supprimer les obstacles à la participation. Cela pourrait s'opérer, par exemple, en renonçant à la contribution en espèces.<sup>38</sup> Avant de mettre en œuvre des mesures spécifiques, il convient d'évaluer les risques potentiels (par exemple, les effets secondaires indésirables tels que la baisse des taux de succès en raison de l'augmentation de la demande et de la réduction des budgets).

### VIII. Implication accrue des partenaires de mise en œuvre issus de la pratique, de la société et des organismes publics

Innosuisse se concentre traditionnellement sur les parties prenantes issues du monde académique et des entreprises. D'autres partenaires de mise en œuvre potentiels, tels que les ONGs, les praticiens<sup>39</sup> et les organismes publics, sont actuellement sous-représentés. Bien que l'Initiative Flagship s'adresse explicitement à ces parties prenantes, il existe encore un potentiel inexploité dans le cadre du financement standard des projets. L'élargissement du champ des partenaires de mise en œuvre contribuerait également à cibler certains aspects de la société et du développement durable, comme le prévoient les bases légales et les objectifs stratégiques d'Innosuisse.<sup>40</sup>

Le CSS reconnaît l'importance fondamentale des entreprises, en particulier des PME, pour les activités de financement d'Innosuisse et l'innovation basée sur la science. Dans le même temps, le Conseil recommande qu'Innosuisse prenne les mesures appropriées pour impliquer davantage de nouveaux partenaires de mise en œuvre. Cela pourrait notamment passer par le renforcement de l'innovation sociale<sup>41</sup> et la suppression des obstacles financiers, comme recommandé plus haut.

38 Barjak et al. mentionnent la possibilité de « supprimer la contribution financière des entreprises participant à des projets collaboratifs d'Innosuisse sous certaines conditions, par exemple pour les micro-entreprises et les petites entreprises » comme l'un des résultats de leur analyse (Barjak et al. 2026 : 96, traduction du CSS ; voir également Rieder et al. 2026 : 14 ; 26 pour une conclusion similaire). La conseillère nationale Franziska Ryser a déposé une motion parlementaire proposant l'évaluation des « bons d'innovation qui, dans le cadre de projets Innosuisse, couvriront une partie ou la totalité des frais des PME, ce qui renforcera leur innovativité ». Ryser 2025. La conseillère nationale Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter a déposé une interpellation sur « une réduction nette, voire un abandon temporaire des prestations propres en numéraire ». Schneider-Schneiter 2025.

39 Par exemple, les hôpitaux, les organismes chargés de l'application de la loi, les premiers secours.

40 Lienhard 2026 : 11 ; 19-20.

41 Cf. §2 LERI, qui stipule explicitement la dimension sociétale de l'innovation. Foray 2025a note que les innovations sociales sont souvent générées et diffusées là où les marchés font défaut et ne peuvent donc pas être facilement validées par le marché : « La découverte économique et l'expérimentation entrepreneuriale sont remplacées par une forme d'expérimentation sociale » (262-263). Dans ce contexte, Innosuisse pourrait soutenir des partenariats entre des entreprises, des universitaires, des ONG, des praticiens et des communautés afin de concevoir et de tester rigoureusement des innovations sociales par le biais d'expériences dans un environnement réel.

## IX. Associer les instruments d’Innosuisse aux programmes de financement internationaux

Les agences d’innovation nationales et internationales associent de plus en plus leurs instruments de financement aux programmes-cadres européens. Cela permet de simplifier l’accès et d’augmenter les taux de succès. Un exemple pertinent pour la Suisse est le programme Horizon Europe Plug-in, qui permet aux organismes de financement d’accorder aux projets de leur portefeuille un accès direct à la phase de candidature complète de l’EIC Accelerator.<sup>42</sup>

Le CSS recommande qu’Innosuisse certifie les instruments appropriés de son portefeuille pour le programme Horizon Europe Plug-In, afin de simplifier l’accès des parties prenantes à l’EIC Accelerator. Les instruments potentiels comprennent les projets d’innovation avec des partenaires de mise en œuvre, les projets d’innovation pour les start-up, le coaching pour les start-up et BRIDGE Proof of Concept (PoC).<sup>43</sup>

## X. Favoriser l’alignement de l’Initiative Flagship sur les thèmes transversaux relevant du droit fédéral, les instruments de planification et les stratégies du Conseil fédéral

L’Initiative Flagship donne l’opportunité à Innosuisse de promouvoir l’innovation dans des domaines pré-définis. Elle permet ainsi d’aborder de manière proactive les thèmes transversaux inscrits dans la législation fédérale (p. ex. LERI) ainsi que les objectifs du Conseil fédéral, tels que le développement durable ou la digitalisation. L’Initiative Flagship promeut également la coopération transdisciplinaire avec les acteurs qui ne figurent pas au premier plan d’autres financements de projet (par exemple les communes, les praticiens, les ONGs, etc.). Le CSS considère donc que l’Initiative Flagship, dont le budget est relativement modeste, constitue un complément utile au portefeuille de financement d’Innosuisse fortement orienté bottom-up. D’un point de vue juridique, un ancrage explicite de l’Initiative Flagship dans la loi fédérale n’est peut-être pas strictement nécessaire, mais serait souhaitable.

Le CSS recommande qu’Innosuisse aligne davantage l’Initiative Flagship sur les domaines transversaux inscrits dans la loi fédérale (LERI) et les instruments de planification (Message FRI, objectifs et stratégies du Conseil fédéral). Innosuisse pourrait consulter le SEFRI et d’autres offices fédéraux dès la phase d’identification des thèmes pour les nouvelles Initiatives Flagship. Le Comité interdépartemental de coordination de la recherche de l’administration fédérale (KoorA-RF) offrirait une plateforme adéquate pour l’intensification de tels échanges. Cette approche rejoint la stratégie du Conseil fédéral visant à renforcer la coordination entre Innosuisse et la recherche de l’administration fédérale.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Mittal 2025; TAFTIE 2023.

<sup>43</sup> Mittal 2025: 18-21.

<sup>44</sup> Swiss Federal Council 2024a. Il convient de noter que le message FRI 2025-2028 prévoit une évaluation détaillée de l’Initiative Flagship jusqu’en 2028. Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 115-116 (version française).

## XI. Faciliter l'accès au financement à risque / au financement par capitaux propres

L'accès au capital-risque constitue un obstacle important à la commercialisation et à la mise à l'échelle des innovations. Alors que des programmes de financement tels que l'EIC Accelerator combinent le financement de projets pour les PME et les start-up hautement innovantes avec l'accès à des investissements en fonds propres, Innosuisse ne dispose pas d'un tel mécanisme. L'étude de Barjak et al. (2026) a proposé une implication plus forte des actifs des fonds de pension suisses dans le financement des start-up. Elle a également souligné la possibilité de créer un fonds d'innovation pour mobiliser « des fonds privés supplémentaires pour les start-up, en complément des fonds publics ».<sup>45</sup>

Dans ce contexte, le CSS recommande qu'Innosuisse intensifie son soutien aux entreprises pour leur permettre d'accéder à des investissements en capital. Les mesures potentielles comprennent :

- L'amélioration de la visibilité des entreprises grâce au site web d'Innosuisse, à des mailings et à des événements de mise en relation
- La fourniture de labels de qualité aux entreprises financées et accompagnées par Innosuisse
- Le soutien des entreprises dans leur « parcours de spin-out »<sup>46</sup>

## Coopération / coordination

### XII. Améliorer la collaboration et la coordination avec la recherche de l'administration fédérale

Conformément aux recommandations précédentes du CSS, le Conseil fédéral a décidé en 2024 d'optimiser la coordination entre la recherche de l'administration fédérale, Innosuisse, le FNS et le Conseil des EPF. Les mesures spécifiques comprennent le renforcement du Comité interdépartemental de coordination de la recherche de l'administration fédérale (KoorA-RF) et le développement de la base de données ARAMIS.<sup>47</sup>

Sur cette base, le CSS recommande qu'Innosuisse intensifie sa coopération avec la recherche de l'administration fédérale, le cas échéant. Innosuisse pourrait soutenir les offices fédéraux dans leur collaboration avec les entreprises et la commercialisation des innovations.<sup>48</sup> En outre, un suivi plus systématique via ARAMIS pourrait révéler des redondances, des lacunes et des complémentarités dans les projets d'innovation financés par les différents acteurs du domaine.

45 Barjak et al. 2026 : 91.

46 Concernant l'option d'une spin-out, voir également Rieder et al. 2026 : 21 ; 28-29.

47 SSC 2023b ; Swiss Federal Council 2024a.

48 Le programme SWEET de l'Office fédéral de l'énergie en est un exemple. Entretien avec l'expert Haselbacher 2025.

# Riassunto

Il presente rapporto di valutazione del portafoglio di finanziamento di Innosuisse è stato elaborato su mandato della Segreteria di Stato per la formazione, la ricerca e l'innovazione (SEFRI) e affidato al Consiglio svizzero della scienza (CSS). L'analisi si concentra sulle seguenti domande:

- In che modo il portafoglio di finanziamento di Innosuisse è allineato al compito principale dell'agenzia?
- In che modo il portafoglio di finanziamento si inserisce nel suo contesto?
- In che modo i programmi commissionati dal Consiglio federale sono integrati nel portafoglio di finanziamento di Innosuisse?
- Vi sono complementarità, lacune o sovrapposizioni significative all'interno o all'esterno del portafoglio di finanziamento di Innosuisse?
- Il portafoglio di finanziamento di Innosuisse necessita di essere adeguato?

Per rispondere a queste domande, il CSS ha preso in considerazione l'intero sistema svizzero dell'innovazione con le sue dimensioni cantonali, regionali, nazionali e internazionali. Inoltre, il rapporto esamina i principi fondamentali della politica svizzera in materia di innovazione, vale a dire sussidiarietà, autonomia, cooperazione, competitività ed eccellenza. Infine, il CSS ha analizzato gli sviluppi e le sfide pertinenti per il portafoglio di Innosuisse. Tra questi figurano l'accesso ai programmi quadro di ricerca dell'UE, eventuali tagli al preventivo della Confederazione, ricerca e sviluppo (R&S) a duplice uso e a scopi militari, nonché il declino della capacità innovativa delle PMI.

La metodologia di valutazione si basa sulle analisi interne del CSS, tra cui i suoi studi precedenti, su una rassegna della letteratura pertinente, su interviste con esperti e su un workshop con Innosuisse. Inoltre, Innosuisse ha fornito al CSS una descrizione del proprio portafoglio. Il CSS ha altresì commissionato due mandati esterni: uno sulle basi giuridiche di Innosuisse (affidato al Prof. A. Lienhard, Università di Berna) e uno sui programmi internazionali di innovazione (affidato a Technopolis Vienna).

Il CSS conclude che il portafoglio di Innosuisse è conforme ai compiti previsti dalla legge. Nel complesso, esso risulta coerente e gli strumenti di finanziamento si integrano bene tra loro. L'accento è posto sul finanziamento bottom-up, mentre l'iniziativa Flagship consente di definire priorità tematiche e di affrontare in modo proattivo temi trasversali, come per esempio lo sviluppo sostenibile. Inoltre, il Consiglio federale può incaricare Innosuisse di attuare programmi speciali o tematici e iniziative nazionali di sostegno. Di norma, tali programmi temporanei vengono realizzati secondo i principi del finanziamento di progetti di Innosuisse.

Da un punto di vista sistemico, il portafoglio di Innosuisse si inserisce bene nel contesto generale dell'innovazione. Esiste una chiara ripartizione dei compiti rispetto ad altri programmi di finanziamento, tra cui la promozione cantonale dell'innovazione, la Nuova politica regionale (NPR), la ricerca del settore pubblico, gli strumenti di finanziamento del Fondo nazionale svizzero (FNS) e i programmi di ricerca e innovazione dell'UE. Per alcuni strumenti si riscontrano sovrapposizioni tra il portafoglio di Innosuisse e altri attori dell'innovazione, ad esempio per quanto riguarda il livello di maturità tecnologica (Technology Readiness Level, TRL) previsto o la concezione dello strumento. Tali sovrapposizioni non comportano di norma duplicazioni nell'offerta di finanziamento, poiché gli strumenti differiscono sotto altri aspetti, ad esempio in relazione alla portata geografica o ai destinatari.

Tra gli strumenti di finanziamento ai quali gli attori svizzeri dell'innovazione, a livello nazionale e internazionale, non hanno accesso o dispongono solo di un accesso limitato figurano il programma «Small Business Innovation Research» (SBIR) e l'«Advanced Research Projects Agency» (ARPA). Entrambi i programmi sono nati negli Stati Uniti e sono stati tradizionalmente associati alla ricerca del settore pubblico statunitense.

Per quanto riguarda gli adeguamenti del portafoglio di Innosuisse, il CSS giunge alle seguenti conclusioni: sussiste un potenziale di miglioramento nel coordinamento o nel consolidamento degli strumenti di Innosuisse per i progetti senza partner attuatore, nonché per i servizi nei campi della creazione di reti (networking), dell'accompagnamento (coaching) e della formazione. L'iniziativa Flagship dovrebbe essere ulteriormente armonizzata con le priorità trasversali degli strumenti di pianificazione e con le strategie del Consiglio federale. Anche la collaborazione tra Innosuisse e la ricerca del settore pubblico potrebbe essere intensificata in determinati ambiti, ad esempio per quanto riguarda la commercializzazione delle innovazioni o l'avvio di un progetto pilota ARPA. Il CSS propone inoltre di eliminare gli ostacoli per i partner attuatori nei progetti Innosuisse e di tenere maggiormente conto dei partner attuatori provenienti dalla pratica, dalla società e dalle istituzioni pubbliche. Infine, il CSS raccomanda di facilitare l'accesso al capitale di rischio e al finanziamento con capitali propri.

Infine, il rapporto di valutazione evidenzia la necessità di ulteriori analisi in alcuni ambiti, in particolare per quanto riguarda i tassi di successo delle domande e il loro impatto sul portafoglio di finanziamento di Innosuisse, i sussidi diretti e i contributi individuali alle imprese, nonché la valutazione strategica della R&S a duplice uso e a scopi militari.

## Raccomandazioni

Sulla base della propria analisi e della verifica delle domande di valutazione, il CSS formula le seguenti raccomandazioni<sup>49</sup>:

### Considerazioni strategiche

#### **I. Fornire un'analisi dei tassi di successo e del loro impatto sui singoli strumenti di finanziamento e sul portafoglio Innosuisse nel suo insieme**

I tassi di successo all'interno di uno stesso strumento (ad esempio tra diversi gruppi disciplinari) e tra strumenti differenti forniscono indicazioni importanti sulla competitività, sull'attrattiva e sull'accessibilità dei programmi di finanziamento. Essi offrono inoltre informazioni rilevanti per l'attribuzione delle risorse e per la valutazione dei potenziali rischi associati agli adeguamenti del portafoglio. Tassi di successo troppo elevati possono segnalare una concorrenza insufficiente; viceversa, tassi troppo bassi possono ridurre l'attrattiva dei programmi, scoraggiando la presentazione di idee progettuali promettenti, soprattutto quando l'agenzia di finanziamento non fornisce riscontri sufficienti.<sup>50</sup>

Alla luce delle attuali sfide, quali le misure di austerità e l'incerta partecipazione della Svizzera ai programmi quadro di ricerca europei, Innosuisse deve prepararsi ad adeguamenti significativi del proprio portafoglio. Tali modifiche possono comprendere l'eventuale raggruppamento, l'abbandono o l'adattamento degli strumenti esistenti, l'introduzione di nuovi strumenti, nonché decisioni relative all'attribuzione delle risorse.

Il CSS raccomanda alla SEFRI di condurre uno studio sugli effetti diretti e indiretti dei tassi di successo all'interno del portafoglio Innosuisse, al fine di disporre di una base solida per le decisioni successive.

49 Salvo indicazione contraria, le raccomandazioni sono rivolte alla SEFRI, che ha incaricato questa valutazione.

50 Per quanto riguarda gli effetti dei tassi di successo, cfr. Janger et al. 2019: 21; Langfeldt et al. 2024; EC 2025: 65. Sulla questione dei riscontri forniti da Innosuisse ai candidati, cfr. Barjak et al. 2026: 83 e Rieder et al. 2026: 15.

## II. Condurre una valutazione strategica della R&S a duplice uso e a scopi militari

Innosuisse ha tradizionalmente fornito un sostegno limitato alle attività di R&S a duplice uso e a scopi militari, pur in assenza di restrizioni legali specifiche<sup>51</sup> (a differenza dei Programmi quadro dell'UE, che finora si sono concentrati esplicitamente sulla ricerca e l'innovazione di carattere civile). Nell'ottica di lanciare un'iniziativa Flagship in ambiti che rispondono alle priorità della difesa, Innosuisse sta valutando un cambiamento strategico.

Il CSS raccomanda che Innosuisse elabori una valutazione dei rischi e delle opportunità associati alla R&S a duplice uso e a scopi militari. Tra le opportunità figurano una cooperazione più stretta con la ricerca del settore pubblico e potenziali effetti di ricaduta sulle applicazioni civili. I rischi comprendono invece considerazioni etiche, aspetti legati alla sicurezza delle conoscenze, possibili asimmetrie nelle capacità di R&S tra enti civili e militari, nonché un minor sostegno all'innovazione civile.

## III. Fornire un'analisi approfondita dei sussidi diretti e dei contributi individuali alle imprese

Innosuisse non dispone del mandato per erogare sussidi diretti alle imprese stabilite sul mercato, salvo nei casi in cui «alle imprese svizzere sia precluso l'accesso alle offerte di promozione della Commissione europea destinate a progetti individuali»<sup>52</sup>. L'istituzione permanente di uno strumento destinato a fornire sussidi diretti alle imprese richiederebbe l'adozione di una base legale specifica e potrebbe influire sul portafoglio di Innosuisse nel suo insieme. I progetti di innovazione standard con partner attuatori, ad esempio, potrebbero divenire meno attrattivi.

Tuttavia, alla luce delle sfide attuali, l'opzione dei sussidi diretti non dovrebbe essere esclusa. I dati dello Swiss Accelerator indicano che in Svizzera esiste una forte domanda per questo tipo di opportunità di finanziamento. Qualora la Svizzera non venisse nuovamente associata ai futuri programmi quadro dell'UE, le imprese svizzere verrebbero nuovamente escluse dai sussidi individuali, rendendo urgente la definizione di una soluzione nazionale di più lungo periodo.<sup>53</sup> Un esame dei sussidi diretti alla R&S da parte di Innosuisse è stato inoltre suggerito anche dai recenti studi di Barjak et al. (2026) e Rieder et al. (2026).<sup>54</sup>

In questo contesto, il CSS raccomanda di esaminare diverse opzioni e scenari per l'introduzione di un programma permanente volto a erogare sussidi (individuali) alle imprese. Un Tale programma deve essere compatibile sia con il portafoglio di Innosuisse sia con il sistema svizzero dell'innovazione nel suo insieme. La valutazione dello Swiss Accelerator potrebbe costituire un punto di partenza utile per tali considerazioni.

## Riorganizzazione degli strumenti esistenti

### IV. Trasferimento dei «Progetti senza partner attuatore» a «BRIDGE Discovery»

Il CSS accoglie con favore il previsto trasferimento dello strumento Innosuisse «Progetti senza partner attuatore» al programma BRIDGE Discovery (dal 2027). Entrambi gli strumenti si rivolgono al personale delle scuole universitarie o dei centri di ricerca e coprono livelli di maturità tecnologica (TRL) simili.<sup>55</sup> L'integrazione consentirebbe di evitare potenziali duplicazioni nei finanziamenti, rafforzerebbe la coerenza del portafoglio di Innosuisse e avvicinerebbe il programma BRIDGE al mercato. Inoltre, la combinazione dei due strumenti potrebbe contribuire ad aumentare il tasso di successo.

51 A condizione che i progetti rispettino «i principi dell'integrità scientifica e della buona prassi scientifica», come definito al §19.6 LPRI.

52 §19.3ter LPRI.

53 Innosuisse 2026, Allegato I: Sviluppo degli indicatori chiave di prestazione (KPI), 2018–2024; Technopolis 2026: 38; SEFRI 2024: 64.

54 Barjak et al. 2026: 92–93 (con particolare attenzione alle innovazioni sostenibili); Rieder et al. 2026: 28 (con particolare attenzione alle piccole imprese).

55 Innosuisse classifica BRIDGE Discovery come TRL 2–5 e i progetti di innovazione senza partner attuatori come TRL 3–6 (Innosuisse 2026: 42; 59).

In linea con le precedenti raccomandazioni del CSS, occorre attribuire particolare importanza alla partecipazione delle scuole universitarie professionali (SUP) al programma BRIDGE riveduto.<sup>56</sup>

## Soppressione degli strumenti esistenti

### V. Potenziale soppressione degli strumenti di creazione di reti (networking), accompagnamento (coaching) e formazione

Gli strumenti di creazione di reti, accompagnamento e formazione di Innosuisse presentano sovrapposizioni con i servizi forniti dagli uffici cantonali di promozione economica, dagli uffici di trasferimento tecnologico delle scuole universitarie e da soggetti privati.<sup>57</sup> In vista di eventuali tagli al preventivo, il CSS raccomanda che Innosuisse valuti se alcuni di questi strumenti potrebbero essere soppressi, in particolare quando non risultano direttamente collegati alla preparazione di progetti di innovazione.<sup>58</sup> Tali misure non dovrebbero tuttavia tradursi in uno svantaggio per le regioni in cui non sono disponibili servizi alternativi, come le aree rurali e/o montane.

## Attuazione di nuovi strumenti

### VI. Sostenere l'introduzione di un progetto pilota ARPA

Nel suo rapporto sulla ricerca e l'innovazione (R&I) orientata alla missione in Svizzera (2023), il CSS ha fornito un'analisi approfondita dell'approccio ARPA. Questo tipo di strumento promette uno sviluppo tecnologico rivoluzionario e orientato alla missione in tempi brevi, basandosi in misura significativa su una gestione attiva dei progetti. Poiché tale approccio ha avuto successo in altri paesi – in particolare negli Stati Uniti – e risulta assente nel sistema svizzero di R&I, il CSS ha raccomandato di avviare un progetto pilota ARPA presso Innosuisse. Questa raccomandazione è stata successivamente accolta nel messaggio ERI 2025–2028.<sup>59</sup> La presente analisi del portafoglio di Innosuisse conferma che continua a sussistere una lacuna nella promozione dell'innovazione svizzera per quanto riguarda l'ARPA,<sup>60</sup> mentre l'UE e agenzie nazionali per l'innovazione in Europa stanno intensificando i propri sforzi per introdurre strumenti analoghi.

Al momento della presente analisi, vi sono indicazioni che un progetto pilota ARPA sarà lanciato nell'ambito del programma SWEET dell'Ufficio federale dell'energia (ricerca del settore pubblico). Il CSS raccomanda che Innosuisse sostenga gli attori coinvolti nei loro sforzi di attuazione del progetto pilota, ad esempio nelle attività di valutazione e di commercializzazione. Se il progetto pilota avrà successo, anche alcuni elementi dell'approccio ARPA potrebbero essere integrati nel portafoglio di Innosuisse.<sup>61</sup>

56 SSC 2022b: 25; SSC 2023a: 25.

57 Nella sua presa di posizione relativa alla modifica dell'Ordinanza sui sussidi di Innosuisse (2022), il CSS ha già sottolineato l'importanza di una collaborazione più stretta tra Innosuisse e le scuole universitarie nel campo della formazione all'imprenditorialità. SSC 2022a: 3–4.

58 Lo strumento «Networking Event Series» è stato sospeso fino al 2028 per motivi di bilancio e, con ogni probabilità, sarà successivamente eliminato in via definitiva dal portafoglio Innosuisse.

59 SSC 2023b; Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 109 (versione italiana).

60 Innosuisse 2026: 13. Vedi anche Barjak et al. 2026: 107 (Appendice 10).

61 Potrebbero emergere sinergie tra l'approccio ARPA e la promozione di persone altamente qualificate, ambito che Innosuisse identifica come una delle opportunità di sviluppo future (Innosuisse 2026: 18). Inoltre, vi è il potenziale per collaborazioni con altre agenzie europee per l'innovazione, come già sperimentato da SPRIN-D, Bpifrance e Vinnova (SPRIN-D 2025; Bergstrand 2025). Occorre infine considerare che l'attuazione di un autentico programma ARPA è altamente impegnativa in termini di risorse e capacità dell'agenzia; di conseguenza, eventuali compromessi relativi alla struttura o ai requisiti fondamentali dello strumento comporterebbero un rischio significativo che lo strumento perda efficacia.

## Adattamenti degli strumenti esistenti

### VII. Rimuovere gli ostacoli per i partner attuatori

Il finanziamento standard di Innosuisse per i progetti con partner attuatori è un approccio collaudato che dovrebbe essere mantenuto. Tuttavia, gli ostacoli alla partecipazione dei partner attuatori risultano relativamente elevati: essi devono contribuire dal 40 al 60% dei costi ammissibili del progetto, compreso un contributo in contanti minimo del 5%.

Considerato il calo delle attività di innovazione delle imprese svizzere e il difficile contesto economico, il CSS raccomanda di eliminare tali ostacoli alla partecipazione. Ciò potrebbe essere ottenuto, ad esempio, rinunciando al contributo in contanti.<sup>62</sup> Prima di introdurre misure specifiche, occorre tuttavia valutarne i potenziali rischi (ad es. effetti collaterali indesiderati quali un calo dei tassi di successo dovuto all'aumento della domanda e alla riduzione dei mezzi finanziari).

### VIII. Maggiore coinvolgimento dei partner attuatori provenienti dalla pratica, dalla società civile e dagli enti pubblici

Innosuisse si concentra tradizionalmente sugli attori del mondo accademico e sulle imprese. Altri potenziali partner attuatori, quali le ONG, professionisti<sup>63</sup> e gli enti pubblici, risultano tuttavia attualmente sottorappresentati. Sebbene l'iniziativa Flagship si rivolga esplicitamente anche a tali attori, permane un potenziale ancora inesplorato nell'ambito del finanziamento standard dei progetti. Ampliare la cerchia dei partner attuatori contribuirebbe inoltre a rafforzare l'attenzione sugli aspetti sociali e sullo sviluppo sostenibile, come previsto dalle basi legali e dagli obiettivi strategici di Innosuisse.<sup>64</sup>

Il CSS riconosce la grande importanza delle imprese, in particolare delle PMI, per le attività di finanziamento di Innosuisse e per l'innovazione basata sulla scienza. Allo stesso tempo, raccomanda che Innosuisse adotti misure adeguate ad ampliare il coinvolgimento di ulteriori partner attuatori. Ciò potrebbe essere ottenuto, tra l'altro, rafforzando l'innovazione sociale<sup>65</sup> e rimuovendo le barriere finanziarie, come raccomandato in precedenza.

62 Barjak et al. menzionano, tra le possibili misure, l'opzione di «esentare dal contributo in denaro le imprese nei progetti collaborativi di Innosuisse a determinate condizioni, ad esempio per le microimprese e le piccole aziende» (Barjak et al. 2026: 96, traduzione del CSS; cfr. anche Rieder et al. 2026: 14, 26, per una conclusione analoga). La consigliera nazionale Franziska Ryser ha inoltre presentato una mozione parlamentare che propone la valutazione di «incentivi dedicati all'ambito dell'innovazione che, nel quadro di un progetto Innosuisse, coprono una quota o la totalità dei costi delle imprese, in modo da rafforzare la capacità innovativa delle PMI» (Ryser 2025). La consigliera nazionale Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter ha infine presentato un'interpellanza nella quale solleva l'opzione di «una riduzione significativa o un abbandono temporaneo delle prestazioni proprie in denaro» (Schneider-Schneiter 2025).

63 Ad esempio, ospedali, autorità di polizia e servizi di emergenza.

64 Lienhard 2026: 11; 19–20.

65 Cfr. §2 LPRI, che sancisce esplicitamente la dimensione sociale dell'innovazione. Foray (2025a) osserva che le innovazioni sociali emergono e si diffondono frequentemente in contesti in cui i mercati sono assenti e non possono quindi essere facilmente validate attraverso meccanismi di mercato: «La découverte économique et l'expérimentation entrepreneuriale sont remplacées par une forme d'expérimentation sociale» (pp. 262–263). In questo contesto, Innosuisse potrebbe sostenere partenariati tra imprese, accademici, ONG, professionisti e comunità, con l'obiettivo di progettare e testare rigorosamente le innovazioni sociali mediante sperimentazioni in contesti reali.

### **IX. Collegare gli strumenti di Innosuisse ai programmi di finanziamento internazionali**

Le agenzie nazionali e internazionali per l'innovazione collegano sempre più spesso i propri strumenti di finanziamento ai Programmi quadro europei. Ciò offre l'opportunità di un accesso semplificato e di tassi di successo più elevati. Un esempio significativo per la Svizzera è il programma Horizon Europe Plug-in, che consente agli organismi di finanziamento di accordare ai progetti presenti nei rispettivi portafogli un accesso diretto alla fase di candidatura completa dell'EIC Accelerator.<sup>66</sup>

Il CSS raccomanda che Innosuisse certifichi gli strumenti idonei del proprio portafoglio per il programma Horizon Europe Plug-in, al fine di facilitare l'accesso degli attori svizzeri all'EIC Accelerator. Tra i potenziali strumenti figurano i progetti di innovazione con partner attuatori, i progetti di innovazione per start-up, l'accompagnamento per start-up e il BRIDGE Proof of Concept (PoC).<sup>67</sup>

### **X. Promuovere l'allineamento dell'iniziativa Flagship con i temi trasversali del diritto federale, gli strumenti di pianificazione e le strategie del Consiglio federale**

L'iniziativa Flagship offre a Innosuisse l'opportunità di promuovere l'innovazione in settori predefiniti. In questo modo, è possibile affrontare in modo proattivo i temi trasversali sanciti dal diritto federale (ad es. la LPRI) così come gli obiettivi del Consiglio federale, tra cui lo sviluppo sostenibile e la digitalizzazione. L'iniziativa Flagship favorisce inoltre la cooperazione transdisciplinare con attori che non rientrano tra i destinatari principali di altri strumenti di finanziamento di progetti (ad es. comuni, professionisti, ONG, ecc.). Il CSS ritiene pertanto che l'iniziativa Flagship – il cui budget è relativamente modesto – rappresenti un utile complemento al portafoglio di finanziamento di Innosuisse, fortemente orientato bottom-up. Da un punto di vista legale, un ancoraggio esplicito dell'iniziativa Flagship nel diritto federale potrebbe non essere strettamente necessario, pur risultando auspicabile.

Il CSS raccomanda che Innosuisse allinei più strettamente l'iniziativa Flagship ai temi trasversali del diritto federale (LPRI) e agli strumenti di pianificazione (messaggio ERI, obiettivi e strategie del Consiglio federale). A tal fine, Innosuisse potrebbe consultarsi con la SEFRI e con altri uffici federali già nella fase di identificazione dei temi per le nuove iniziative Flagship. Il Comitato interdipartimentale di coordinamento della ricerca del settore pubblico (comitato di coordinamento RSP) offrirebbe una piattaforma adeguata a intensificare tale scambio. Questo approccio si inserisce nella strategia del Consiglio federale volta a rafforzare il coordinamento tra Innosuisse e la ricerca del settore pubblico.<sup>68</sup>

### **XI. Agevolare l'accesso al capitale di rischio e al capitale proprio**

L'accesso al capitale di rischio rappresenta un ostacolo significativo per la commercializzazione e il cambiamento di scala (scale-up) delle innovazioni. Mentre programmi di finanziamento quali l'EIC Accelerator combinano il sostegno a progetti promossi da PMI e start-up altamente innovative con l'accesso a investimenti in capitali propri, Innosuisse non dispone attualmente di un meccanismo analogo. Lo studio di Barjak et al. (2026) propone un maggiore coinvolgimento degli attivi dei fondi pensione svizzeri nel finanziamento delle start-up e indica inoltre la possibilità di istituire un fondo per l'innovazione volto a mobilitare «finanziamenti privati aggiuntivi per le start-up a complemento dei fondi pubblici».<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Mittal 2025; TAFTIE 2023.

<sup>67</sup> Mittal 2025: 18-21.

<sup>68</sup> Swiss Federal Council 2024a. Si noti che il messaggio ERI 2025-2028 prevede una valutazione dettagliata dell'iniziativa Flagship fino al 2028. Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 109 (versione italiana).

<sup>69</sup> Barjak et al. 2026: 91, traduzione del CSS.

In questo contesto, il CSS raccomanda che Innosuisse intensifichi il proprio sostegno alle imprese nell'accesso agli investimenti in capitali propri. Tra le misure potenziali figurano:

- migliorare la visibilità delle imprese attraverso il sito web di Innosuisse, invii informativi ed eventi di matchmaking;
- fornire label di qualità alle imprese finanziate e accompagnate da Innosuisse;
- Sostenere le imprese in un «percorso di spin-out»<sup>70</sup>

## Cooperazione/coordinamento

### **XII. Migliorare la collaborazione e il coordinamento con la ricerca del settore pubblico**

In linea con le precedenti raccomandazioni del CSS, nel 2024 il Consiglio federale ha deciso di ottimizzare il coordinamento tra la ricerca del settore pubblico, Innosuisse, l'FNS e il Consiglio dei politecnici federali (Consiglio dei PF). Tra le misure specifiche figurano il rafforzamento del Comitato interdipartimentale di coordinamento della ricerca del settore pubblico (comitato di coordinamento RSP) e l'ulteriore sviluppo della banca dati ARAMIS.<sup>71</sup>

Su questa base, il CSS raccomanda che Innosuisse intensifichi la sua cooperazione con la ricerca del settore pubblico, ove opportuno. Innosuisse potrebbe ad esempio sostenere gli uffici federali nella loro collaborazione con le imprese e nella commercializzazione delle innovazioni.<sup>72</sup> Inoltre, un monitoraggio più sistematico tramite ARAMIS potrebbe contribuire a individuare sovrapposizioni, lacune e complementarità nei progetti di innovazione finanziati dai diversi attori del settore.

<sup>70</sup> Sull'opzione di uno spin-out si veda anche Rieder et al. 2026: 21; 28-29.

<sup>71</sup> SSC 2023b; Swiss Federal Council 2024a.

<sup>72</sup> Il programma SWEET dell'Ufficio federale dell'energia ne è un esempio. Intervista con l'esperto Haselbacher 2025.

# Abstract

This evaluation report on the Innosuisse funding portfolio is based on a mandate assigned by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI to the Swiss Science Council SSC. The focus of the analysis is on the following questions:

- How is the funding portfolio of Innosuisse aligned with the agency's main task?
- How does the funding portfolio fit in with its environment?
- How are programmes commissioned by the Federal Council integrated into Innosuisse's funding portfolio?
- Are there significant complementarities, gaps or overlaps within or outside the Innosuisse funding portfolio?
- Does Innosuisse's funding portfolio need to be adjusted?

In answering these questions, the SSC took into account the Swiss innovation system as a whole, encompassing its cantonal, regional, national and international dimensions. In addition, the report also considers the fundamental principles of Swiss innovation policy, namely subsidiarity, autonomy, cooperation, competitiveness and excellence. Finally, the SSC examined developments and challenges which are of relevance to the Innosuisse portfolio. These include access to the European Research Framework Programmes, possible cuts in the federal budget, dual use and military R&D, and the declining innovation capacity of SMEs.

The methodology of the evaluation is based on the SSC's own analyses, including previous SSC studies, a literature review, expert interviews and a workshop with Innosuisse. Furthermore, Innosuisse provided a self-description of its portfolio to the SSC. The SSC also commissioned two external mandates on the legal basis of Innosuisse (by Prof. A. Lienhard, University of Bern) and international innovation programmes (by Technopolis Vienna).

The SSC concludes that the Innosuisse portfolio complies with the legal tasks. Overall, the portfolio is coherent, and the funding instruments complement each other well. The focus is on bottom-up funding, whereby the Flagship Initiative allows thematic priorities to be set and cross-cutting topics such as sustainable development to be addressed proactively. In addition, the Federal Council may mandate Innosuisse with special/topic-specific programmes and national support initiatives. In general, these temporary programmes are implemented on the principles of the Innosuisse project funding.

From a systemic view, the Innosuisse portfolio fits well into the overall innovation environment. There is a clear division of responsibilities with other funding programmes, including cantonal innovation promotion, the New Regional Policy, departmental research, the funding instruments of the SNSF and the EU research and innovation programmes. For some instruments, overlaps between the Innosuisse portfolio and other innovation actors can be found, for instance regarding the targeted Technology Readiness Level (TRL) or the design of the instrument. These overlaps do normally not amount to duplications of the funding offer, as the instruments differ in other aspects (e.g., in terms of geographical scope or target group).

Funding instruments to which Swiss innovation actors have no or limited access at national and international level include the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) programme and the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA). Both programmes originate from the USA and have traditionally been closely linked to departmental research there.

With regard to adjustments to the Innosuisse portfolio, the SSC has reached the following conclusions: Potential for better coordination or consolidation of Innosuisse instruments exists for Innovation projects without implementation partner as well as for services in the fields of networking, coaching and training. The Flagship Initiative should be aligned more closely with the cross-cutting priorities of the Federal Council's planning instruments and strategies. Cooperation between Innosuisse and departmental research could be intensified in certain areas, for example concerning the commercialisation of innovations or the launch of an ARPA pilot. The SSC also proposes removing barriers for implementation partners in Innosuisse projects and giving greater consideration to implementation partners from practice, society and public bodies. Furthermore, the SSC recommends facilitating access to risk-finance and equity funding.

Finally, this evaluation report has identified areas where further analysis is needed. These include the success rates of applications and their impact on Innosuisse's funding portfolio, the question of direct subsidies and individual grants for companies, as well as the strategic assessment of dual use and military R&D.

## Recommendations

Based on its analysis and the assessment of the evaluation questions, the SSC provides the following recommendations<sup>73</sup>:

### Strategic considerations

#### I. Provide an analysis of the success rates and their impact on the individual funding instruments and the Innosuisse portfolio as a whole

Success rates within an instrument (e.g., for different disciplinary groups) and between different instruments provide important insights about competitiveness, attractiveness and accessibility of funding schemes. They also provide key information on budget allocation and potential risks associated with a portfolio adjustment. If success rates are too high, competition may be too low. If success rates are too low, funding schemes may lose their appeal and promising project ideas may no longer be submitted, especially when insufficient feedback is provided by the funding agency.<sup>74</sup>

Against the backdrop of current challenges such as austerity measures and Switzerland's uncertain participation in the European Research Framework Programmes, Innosuisse has to be prepared for major adaptations of its portfolio. This includes the potential regrouping, discontinuation and adaptation of existing instruments, the implementation of new instruments, as well as decisions in budget allocation.

The SSC recommends conducting a study on the direct and indirect effects of success rates within the Innosuisse portfolio. This would provide an important basis for further decision-making.

<sup>73</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the recommendations are addressed to SERI, which commissioned the evaluation.

<sup>74</sup> On the effects of success rates see Janger et al. 2019: 21; Langfeldt et al. 2024; EC 2025a: 65. On the issue of feedback to applicants by Innosuisse see Barjak et al. 2026: 83 and Rieder et al. 2026: 15.

## II. Conduct a strategic assessment of dual use and military R&D

Innosuisse has traditionally provided little support for dual use and military R&D, although no specific legal restrictions exist<sup>75</sup> (unlike the EU FPs, which have been so far explicitly focusing on civil research and innovation). With the idea of launching a Flagship Initiative on topics that serve defence priorities, Innosuisse considers a strategic shift.

The SSC recommends that Innosuisse provide an assessment of the risks and opportunities of dual use and military R&D. Opportunities may include a closer cooperation with departmental research and spill-over effects for civil applications. Risks include ethical concerns, knowledge security, asymmetric R&D capabilities between civilian and military research entities, as well as less support for civil innovation.

## III. Provide an in-depth analysis of direct subsidies and individual grants for companies

Innosuisse has no mandate to provide direct contributions to companies established in the market, except in times when “Swiss companies are denied access to European Commission funding opportunities for individual projects”.<sup>76</sup> The permanent establishment of an instrument providing direct subsidies to firms would require an adoption of the legal basis and could influence the Innosuisse portfolio as a whole. Standard Innovation projects with implementation partner, for instance, could then become less attractive.

However, given the current challenges, the option of direct subsidies should not be ruled out. Figures from the Swiss Accelerator show that there is a great demand for such funding opportunities in Switzerland. In the scenario of a renewed non-association under future EU FPs, Swiss companies would again be excluded from individual grants. This would make the question of a longer-term solution at national level a pressing one.<sup>77</sup> An examination of direct R&D subsidies by Innosuisse has also been suggested by the recent studies of Barjak et al. (2026) and Rieder et al. (2026).<sup>78</sup>

Against this backdrop, the SSC recommends assessing different options and scenarios of implementing a permanent scheme which provides (individual) grants to companies. Such a scheme must be compatible with both the Innosuisse portfolio and the Swiss innovation system as a whole. The starting point for these considerations could be the evaluation of the Swiss Accelerator.

## Regrouping of existing instruments

### IV. Shift “Innovation projects without implementation partner” to “BRIDGE Discovery”

The SSC welcomes the planned shift of the Innosuisse instrument “Innovation projects without implementation partner” to the BRIDGE Discovery scheme (for 2027). Both instruments are targeting staff at HEIs or research centres and cover similar TRLs.<sup>79</sup> The integration would prevent potential duplications in funding, contribute to the coherence of the Innosuisse portfolio and bring the BRIDGE scheme closer to the market. In addition, combining the two instruments could also increase the success rate.

In line with previous recommendations by the SSC, particular importance should be attached to the participation of UAS in the (revised) BRIDGE programme.<sup>80</sup>

75 As long as projects “follow the principles of scientific integrity and good scientific practice”, as stipulated under §19.6 RIPA.

76 §19.3<sup>ter</sup> RIPA.

77 Innosuisse 2026, Annex 1: KPI Development 2018–2024; Technopolis 2026: 38; SERI 2024: 64.

78 Barjak et al. 2026: 92–93 (with a focus on sustainable innovations); Rieder et al. 2026: 28 (with a focus on small companies).

79 Innosuisse classifies BRIDGE Discovery as TRL 2-5 and Innovation projects without implementation partner as TRL 3-6 (Innosuisse 2026: 42; 59).

80 SSC 2022b: 25; SSC 2023a: 25.

## Discontinuation of existing instruments

### V. Potential discontinuation of networking, coaching and training instruments

Innosuisse's networking, coaching and training instruments overlap with services provided by cantonal location promotion offices, technology transfer offices of HEIs, and private entities.<sup>81</sup> In view of potential budget cuts, the SSC recommends that Innosuisse assess whether some of these instruments could be discontinued, especially when they are not directly related to the preparation of innovation projects.<sup>82</sup> Such measures should not be at the expense of regions where no alternative services are available, such as rural and/or mountain areas.

## Implementation of new instruments

### VI. Support the introduction of an ARPA pilot

In its report on mission-oriented R&I in Switzerland (2023), the SSC provided an in-depth analysis on the ARPA-approach. This instrument promises ground-breaking and mission-oriented technological development within a short period of time and is strongly based on active project management. As such an instrument has been successful in other countries – particularly the USA – and is missing in the Swiss R&I system, the SSC recommended to implement an ARPA pilot at Innosuisse. This recommendation was subsequently taken up in the ERI Dispatch 2025–2028.<sup>83</sup> The present portfolio analysis of Innosuisse has confirmed that there is still a gap in Swiss innovation promotion when it comes to ARPA.<sup>84</sup> In contrast, the EU and national innovation agencies in Europe are stepping up their efforts to implement ARPA instruments.

At the time of the present analysis, there are indications that an ARPA pilot will be launched within the SWEET programme of the Swiss Federal Office of Energy (departmental research). The SSC recommends that Innosuisse support the involved stakeholders in their efforts to implement such a pilot, e.g., in the area of evaluation and commercialisation. If the pilot is successful, aspects of the ARPA-approach might be also implemented into the Innosuisse portfolio.<sup>85</sup>

81 In its position statement regarding the amendment of the Innosuisse Contribution Ordinance (2022), the SSC already emphasised the importance of a stronger collaboration between Innosuisse and HEIs in the field of entrepreneurship training. SSC 2022a: 3–4.

82 Note that the Networking Event Series instrument has already been discontinued until 2028 due to budget constraints. It will probably be permanently removed from the Innosuisse portfolio thereafter.

83 SSC 2023b; Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 110 (German version).

84 Innosuisse 2026: 13. See also Barjak et al. 2026: 107 (Appendix 10).

85 There may be synergies between the ARPA approach and the promotion of highly qualified individuals; the latter is mentioned by Innosuisse as one of the development opportunities for the future (Innosuisse 2026: 18). There might also be cooperations between Innosuisse and other European innovation agencies, as has been done by SPRIN-D, Bpifrance and Vinnova (SPRIN-D 2025; Bergstrand 2025). Finally, it should be considered that a genuine ARPA scheme is highly demanding in terms of agency resources and capabilities. Therefore, compromising on the instrument's core design and requirement carries a significant risk that the instrument will become ineffective.

## Adaptions of existing instruments

### VII. Removing barriers for implementation partners

Innosuisse's standard funding for Innovation projects with implementation partner is a successful approach that should be maintained. However, hurdles for implementation partners to participate in such projects are relatively high. They must contribute 40 to 60% of the eligible project costs, including a minimum of 5% cash contribution.

In view of declining innovation activities of Swiss firms and the difficult economic environment, the SSC recommends removing barriers for the participation of implementation partners. This could be achieved, for example, by waiving the cash contribution.<sup>86</sup> Before implementing dedicated measures, their potential risks should be assessed (e.g., undesired side-effects such as declining success rates due to increased demand and lower budgets).

### VIII. Greater involvement of implementation partners from practice, society and public bodies

Innosuisse traditionally focuses on academic stakeholders and companies. Other potential implementation partners such as NGOs, practitioners<sup>87</sup> and public bodies are currently underrepresented. While the Flagship Initiative explicitly addresses such stakeholders, there is still untapped potential here within standard project funding. Widening the scope of implementation partners would also contribute to targeting aspects of society and sustainable development, as provided for in the legal basis and strategic objectives of Innosuisse.<sup>88</sup>

The SSC recognises the great importance of companies, especially SMEs, for Innosuisse's funding activities and science-based innovation. At the same time, the Council recommends that Innosuisse take appropriate measures to more strongly involve additional implementation partners. This could be achieved, among other things, by strengthening Social Innovation<sup>89</sup> and removing financial barriers, as recommended further above.

### IX. Link Innosuisse instruments to international funding programmes

National and international innovation agencies increasingly link their funding instruments to the European Framework Programmes. This offers the opportunity for simplified access and higher success rates. One relevant example for Switzerland is the Horizon Europe Plug-in scheme, which allows funding bodies to grant projects in their portfolio direct entry to the full application stage of the EIC Accelerator.<sup>90</sup>

The SSC recommends that Innosuisse certify suitable instruments from its portfolio for the Horizon Europe Plug-in scheme, to simplify access of Swiss stakeholders towards the EIC Accelerator. Potential instruments include Innovation projects with implementation partner, Start-up Innovation Projects, Start-up Coaching and BRIDGE Proof of Concept (PoC).<sup>91</sup>

86 Barjak et al. mention the option of "waving the corporate cash contribution of firms in collaborative Innosuisse projects under certain conditions, e.g., for micro-enterprises and small companies" as one outcome of their analysis (Barjak et al. 2026: 96; see also Rieder et al. 2026: 14; 26 for a similar conclusion). National Councillor Franziska Ryser submitted a parliamentary motion which proposes the assessment of "Innovation vouchers, which cover part or all of the contribution to be made by companies in an Innosuisse project, thereby strengthening the innovative capacity of SMEs". Ryser 2025. National Councillor Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter submitted an interpellation which raised the option of "a significant reduction or temporary waiver of cash contributions". Schneider-Schneiter 2025.

87 E.g., from hospitals, law enforcing organisations, first responders.

88 Lienhard 2026: 11; 19–20.

89 Cf. §2 RIPA, which explicitly stipulates the societal dimension of innovation. Foray 2025a notes that social innovations are often generated and diffused where markets are missing and therefore cannot easily be validated by the market: "La découverte économique et l'expérimentation entrepreneuriale sont remplacées par une forme d'expérimentation sociale" (262–263). Against this backdrop, Innosuisse could support partnerships between firms, academics, NGOs, practitioners and communities to design and rigorously test social innovations through experiments in a real-world setting.

90 Mittal 2025; TAFTIE 2023.

91 Mittal 2025: 18–21.

## X. Foster alignment of the Flagship Initiative with cross-cutting topics of federal law, planning instruments and strategies of the Federal Council

The Flagship Initiative gives Innosuisse the opportunity to foster innovation in pre-defined areas. With this, cross-cutting topics that are enshrined in federal law (e.g., RIPA) as well as objectives of the Federal Council, such as sustainable development or digitalisation, can be proactively addressed. The Flagship Initiative also promotes transdisciplinary cooperation with actors who are not at the forefront of other project funding (e.g., municipalities, practitioners, NGOs, etc.). The SSC therefore considers that the Flagship Initiative – which has a comparatively small budget – is a useful addition to Innosuisse’s strongly bottom-up-oriented funding portfolio. From a legal perspective, an explicit anchoring of the Flagship Initiative in federal law may not be strictly necessary but would nevertheless be desirable.

The SSC recommends that Innosuisse align the Flagship Initiative more closely with the cross-cutting topics of federal law (RIPA) and the planning instruments (ERI Dispatch, objectives and strategies of the Federal Council). Innosuisse could consult with SERI and other federal offices as early as the topic identification phase for new Flagship Initiatives. The Interdepartmental Coordination Committee for Federal Government Research (KoorA-RF) would offer an adequate platform for such an intensified exchange. This approach aligns with the Federal Council’s strategy to strengthen the coordination between Innosuisse and departmental research.<sup>92</sup>

## XI. Facilitate access to risk finance / equity funding

Access to venture capital is a significant hurdle for the commercialisation and upscaling of innovations. While funding programmes such as the EIC Accelerator combine project funding for highly innovative SMEs and start-ups with access to equity investment, Innosuisse lacks such a mechanism. The study by Barjak et al. (2026) proposes a stronger involvement of Swiss pension fund assets in the funding of start-ups. It also points to the possibility of an innovation fund to mobilise “additional private funding for start-ups alongside public funds”.<sup>93</sup>

Against this backdrop, the SSC recommends that Innosuisse intensify its support to companies in accessing equity investment. Potential measures include:

- Improve visibility of companies through the Innosuisse website, mailing and matchmaking events
- Provide quality labels for companies funded and coached by Innosuisse
- Support companies for a “spin-out path”<sup>94</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Swiss Federal Council 2024a. Note that the ERI Dispatch 2025–2028 foresees a detailed evaluation of the Flagship Initiative until 2028. Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 110 (German version).

<sup>93</sup> Barjak et al. 2026: 91.

<sup>94</sup> On the option of a spin-out see also Rieder et al. 2026: 21; 28–29.

## Cooperation/coordination

### **XII. Improve collaboration and coordination with departmental research**

In accordance with previous recommendations of the SSC, the Federal Council decided in 2024 to optimise the coordination among departmental research, Innosuisse, the SNSF and the ETH Board. Dedicated measures include strengthening the Interdepartmental Coordination Committee for Federal Government Research (KoorA-RF) and the further development of the ARAMIS database.<sup>95</sup>

On this basis, the SSC recommends that Innosuisse further intensify its cooperation with departmental research, where appropriate. Innosuisse could support federal offices in their collaboration with companies and the commercialisation of innovations.<sup>96</sup> In addition, more systematic monitoring via ARAMIS could reveal overlaps, gaps and complementarities in innovation projects funded by the different actors in the field.

<sup>95</sup> SSC 2023b; Swiss Federal Council 2024a.

<sup>96</sup> One example is the SWEET programme of the Federal Office of Energy. Expert interview Haselbacher 2025.

First part:  
Analytical foundations

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Evaluation questions

On 27 February 2025, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI mandated the Swiss Science Council SSC with the analysis of the funding portfolio of the Swiss innovation agency Innosuisse. According to the SERI mandate, “the aim of the analysis is to provide a neutral and systemic assessment of the funding portfolio of Innosuisse, taking into account the standards of the Swiss Evaluation Society SEVAL.<sup>97</sup> This will serve as a basis for the owner<sup>98</sup> of Innosuisse to assess proposals for the introduction of new instruments (e.g., ARPA) and for its future innovation policy strategy.”

The leading evaluation questions are:

- I. *How is the funding portfolio of Innosuisse aligned with the agency’s main task (consistency with objectives<sup>99</sup>)?*
- II. *How does the funding portfolio fit in with its environment<sup>100</sup>?*
- III. *How are mandates from the Federal Council (special/topic-specific programmes & national support initiatives)<sup>101</sup> integrated into Innosuisse’s funding portfolio respectively handled as a mandate or an additional activity?*
- IV. Against this backdrop (questions I–III):
  - (IV.I) *Are there significant complementarities, gaps or overlaps within the funding portfolio or with other offerings in the overall innovation system (regional, cantonal, national, international)?*
  - (IV.II) *Does Innosuisse’s funding portfolio need to be adjusted (regrouping, discontinuation, implementation of new or adaptation of existing instruments, cooperation/coordination)?*

## 1.2 Methodology and scope

This evaluation was carried out in accordance with the SSC’s established working methods and the SEVAL standards.<sup>102</sup> An interdisciplinary working group of five Council members was established, who were supported by two scientific advisors of the SSC secretariat. A monitoring group (“Begleitgruppe”), consisting of scientific advisors of the SSC secretariat, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI, the General Secretariat of the Swiss Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research GS-EAER (optional), and the Innosuisse office, accompanied the entire evaluation process. The aim of this monitoring group was to provide feedback at the different stages of the SSC analysis, to exploit synergies and avoid duplication of other relevant activities.

For the evaluation, the SSC developed an implementation plan in consultation with the monitoring group. The SSC working group met at regular intervals to discuss the analysis results prepared by the SSC secretariat. On 18 September 2025, a workshop with representatives of Innosuisse and members of the SSC was held to address relevant aspects of the Innosuisse portfolio on site.<sup>103</sup> The interim results were discussed by all Council members at five SSC plenary meetings. The report and recommendations were approved by the SSC at the beginning of January 2026 in written consultation. On 15 January 2026, the SSC submitted the evaluation via the monitoring group to SERI, the GS-EAER and Innosuisse for a fact-checking review. The final report was adopted by the SSC during its plenary meeting on 23 February 2026 and submitted to SERI on 27 February 2026.

<sup>97</sup> SEVAL 2016.

<sup>98</sup> The “owner” of Innosuisse is the Swiss Confederation.

<sup>99</sup> In particular §2 RIPA, taking into account §6 and §7 RIPA (including explanations).

<sup>100</sup> The following aspects should be taken into account: Innovation system as a whole; principles of innovation policy in Switzerland; distribution of tasks as well as delimitations in relation to the cantons/regions, the SNSF, departmental research and international programmes (including European Framework Programmes). Technology Competence Centres according to §15 para. 3 letter c RIPA might be considered as well.

<sup>101</sup> Special programmes and topic-specific funding programmes relate to §7(3) RIPA, national support initiatives relate to §41(5) RIPA.

<sup>102</sup> SSC 2025; SEVAL 2016.

<sup>103</sup> The workshop’s programme is to be found in the annex of this report.

The evaluation is based on the following resources:

- Analysis SSC: Previous SSC studies, statements and recommendations on Innosuisse; review of research literature, legal texts, regulations and other written sources; expert interviews; workshop with Innosuisse
- Self-description Innosuisse: Main analysis, Appendix I: KPI-Development 2018–2024, Appendix II: Mandate to draw up the strategic multi-year plan for 2025–2028, Appendix III: Impact analysis and evaluations
- External mandate I: *The Legal Basis of Innosuisse*, by Prof. A. Lienhard, University of Bern
- External mandate II: *Evaluation of the Innosuisse Portfolio: International Innovation Programmes*, by Technopolis Vienna

The analysis focuses on the portfolio as a whole and does not assess the impact of individual funding instruments nor the governance of Innosuisse. An overview of the Innosuisse approach on impact analysis is provided in Appendix 3 of its self-description.<sup>104</sup> A first review of governance aspects of Innosuisse was conducted in 2019 on behalf of the General Secretariat of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER. A comprehensive evaluation of Innosuisse’s governance would be welcomed by the SSC and is to be expected in the coming years, as the Federal Council regularly reviews the compliance of federally funded independent units (including Innosuisse) with the principles of Corporate Governance.<sup>105</sup>

Besides Innosuisse, other public innovation promoting organisations such as the SNSF, departmental research and the European Framework Programmes are considered in this study. Public innovation *performing* organisations such as the ETH domain or Agroscope are outside the scope. Finally, the innovation promotion of the private sector cannot be dealt with in depth, either.

Evaluation questions	SSC	Innosuisse self-description	External mandate I (legal analysis)	External mandate II (international programmes)
How is the funding portfolio of Innosuisse aligned with the agency’s main task?	●	●	●	
How does the funding portfolio fit in with its environment?	●	●		●
How are mandates from the Federal Council handled as a mandate or an additional activity?	●	●	●	
Are there significant complementarities, gaps or overlaps within or outside the funding portfolio?	●	●		●
Does Innosuisse’s funding portfolio need to be adjusted?	●			

Table 1: Analytical basis for answering the evaluation questions.

<sup>104</sup> Innosuisse 2026. Appendix 3: Impact analysis and evaluations. Of specific interest is the study by Hulfeld et al. (2024), that “investigates the causal effect of funding research and development (R&D) cooperation with public universities on the performance of firms.” (1).

<sup>105</sup> Econcept 2020; FFA 2024: 3 (Leitsatz 17).

### 1.3 Principles of the Swiss innovation system

In Switzerland, education, research and innovation (ERI) are mainly steered via the ERI Dispatches, which are submitted by the Swiss Federal Council to the Parliament every four years. An important legal basis constitutes the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA). Unlike other European countries, Switzerland does not have an overarching national strategy on innovation.<sup>106</sup> Rather, public innovation funding is based on a few fundamental principles, including the *subsidiarity* and *autonomy* of actors:

*“The principle of subsidiarity stipulates that private actors can and should act independently. The state only takes on tasks that are explicitly assigned to it. [...] The autonomy of the actors is not only derived from the principle of subsidiarity but is also reinforced by the freedom of science and economic freedom guaranteed in the constitution. The two principles of subsidiarity and autonomy of actors thus ensure that decisions on content are made wherever possible at the level where they are implemented.”<sup>107</sup>*

Further principles of the Swiss innovation system include cooperation, competitiveness and excellence (quality awareness). *Cooperation* balances the strong emphasis on autonomy, as it requires private actors to collaborate horizontally and vertically to develop joint solutions. *Competitiveness* should enable the best innovations to prevail. *Excellence* refers to quality as the main selection criterion.<sup>108</sup>

The Swiss innovation policy strongly relies on basic research, which is reflected in the significantly higher budget of the Swiss National Science Foundation SNSF compared to Innosuisse.<sup>109</sup> Other characteristics include a strong emphasis on economic freedom and a reluctance regarding direct subsidies to companies.<sup>110</sup> In fact, Innosuisse’s most important funding instrument is based on cooperation between Higher Education Institutions (research partners) and companies (implementation partners), whereby only the former receive direct funding and the latter must make their own contribution.<sup>111</sup>

At the national level, Switzerland also refrains from other common innovation promotion measures, such as patent boxes or tax relief on R&D investments (cantons may use such measures since 2020).<sup>112</sup> In many cases, funding approaches that do not or only partially exist in the Swiss innovation system – e.g., direct subsidies to firms or mission-oriented instruments – are accessible via international programmes. Consequently, the Federal Council considers the European Framework Programmes as “complementary to the Swiss national funding system”.<sup>113</sup>

106 Federal Council 2018: 44–45. Examples of research and innovation policies of other countries include Federal Ministry of Education and Research 2023 (Germany); Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate 2024 (Netherlands); Government of Austria 2020 (Austria).

107 Federal Council 2018: 24–25, English translation by SSC. On the legal foundations for public innovation promotion see also Lienhard 2026.

108 Federal Council 2018: 25.

109 In 2024, the SNSF spent CHF 1,149 million in research projects, whereas Innosuisse had a budget of CHF 346 million (both numbers include transitional measures for Horizon Europe); Innosuisse 2025a. For Innosuisse, it should be noted that, as a rule, only the research partner is funded and companies must provide additional contributions of their own. See also Barjak et al. 2026: 87.

110 See also Swiss Federal Council 2023: 68; Lienhard 2026: 3–4.

111 Gersbach/Wörter 2024: 2; Barjak et al. 2026: 87.

112 Hulfeld et al. 2024: 9.

113 “The FRPs thus offer complementary funding instruments that are not available in the Swiss national funding landscape. Examples of this include opportunities for direct financing of companies and cross-border cooperation between researchers, institutions and companies.” Swiss Federal Council 2020a: 4876. English translation by SSC.

In recent years, the Swiss innovation promotion has undergone significant development, which has even been called a “paradigm shift”.<sup>114</sup> A revision of the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA) in 2022 enabled the direct financial support of innovation projects by Swiss start-ups “for first time market entry” (§19 RIPA). This significant step was welcomed by a clear majority of stakeholders in the consultation process that preceded the parliamentary adoption of the revision. The revision of RIPA also paved the way for direct subsidies of Swiss firms within international innovation projects.<sup>115</sup> A parliamentary initiative by National Councillor Fathi Derder (Free Democratic Party), which proposed the possibility for individual direct funding for companies via Innosuisse, was rejected by Parliament in 2021. However, this issue has recently been brought back into the political debate.<sup>116</sup>

The non-association of Switzerland under Horizon Europe between 2021 and 2024 also had consequences for the national innovation system. In this period, Swiss stakeholders were excluded from important EU funding instruments, such as the EIC Accelerator scheme, which provides direct subsidies via project grants to highly innovative companies. Consequently, the Swiss government decided to implement a “Swiss Accelerator” into the Innosuisse portfolio as a transitional measure, based on §19 RIPA.<sup>117</sup> This enabled Innosuisse to provide direct company funding of up to CHF 2.5 million per project.<sup>118</sup> Even though this measure was only temporarily implemented, it was still a novelty in Swiss innovation policy and allowed Innosuisse to gain experience in evaluating and implementing such a scheme.<sup>119</sup>

The strong focus on bottom-up processes – which exists even in thematic-driven areas such as the sectoral policy – has led to a cautious attitude towards mission-oriented research and innovation (R&I) in Switzerland.<sup>120</sup> Mission-oriented R&I “aims at achieving predefined societal and/or technological goals” and requires “special incentives and structures to influence the direction of research and innovation activities.”<sup>121</sup> Such an approach is not entirely foreign to Switzerland, though. Until the 1960s there had been “large-scale R&I projects such as the development of a nuclear experimental reactor in Lucens.”<sup>122</sup>

114 Philippe 2024.

115 SERI 2020b; Hofmänner 2023: 66.

116 Derder 2019; Schneider-Schneiter 2025; Ryser 2025. On the perception of direct subsidies by companies see Rieder et al. 2026: 20–21; 26.

117 §19.3<sup>ter</sup> RIPA: “Where Swiss companies are denied access to European Commission funding opportunities for individual projects, Innosuisse may support projects with significant innovation potential from start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises that target rapid and efficient commercialisation and corresponding growth. Innosuisse’s contribution may be used to partially or fully cover both the company’s own direct project costs and the costs for third-party services. Innosuisse shall specify the eligibility criteria and the criteria for determining the amount of the companies’ own contributions in its Funding Ordinance.”

118 Innosuisse 2022. Note that the Swiss Accelerator only mirrored the grant element of the EIC Accelerator. The latter also provides access to equity investment, an aspect which was not taken up by the Swiss Accelerator.

119 Note that Horizon 2020 (2014–2020) already included an instrument that provided individual grants to companies (“Innovation in SMEs”). Switzerland had no access to this instrument during 2014 to 2016 (partial association). At that time, a national replacement measure was not yet under discussion, which also points to a change in comparison with the replacement of the EIC Accelerator through the Swiss Accelerator during the non-association under Horizon Europe from 2021 to 2024. SERI 2018: 58.

120 SERI 2020a: 16. Within thematically oriented departmental and sectoral R&I, calls for proposals are often issued on a bottom-up basis, e.g., regarding vocational training (SERI), agriculture (FOAG), or environmental technology promotion (FOEN). An exception is the energy programme SWEET, which launches top-down calls (SFOE). Regarding the implementation of thematic programmes mandated by the Swiss Federal Council see Federal Council 2018: 26.

121 SSC 2023b: 10.

122 SSC 2023b: 20.

In what followed, the Swiss authorities moved away from this type of state-controlled initiatives. However, targeted technology promotion continued to play a role thereafter, for instance in the 1980s during the watch crisis, when the Swiss Centre for Electronics and Microtechnology CSEM was founded. A more recent example is the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Transfer Centers (AM-TTC) initiative, which is supported by both the Swiss government and the ETH Board.

The exclusion of Switzerland from strategic technology areas under Horizon Europe and Digital Europe (including the areas of Space and Quantum Technologies) has led to new impetus in mission-oriented innovation funding. In 2022, the Federal Council introduced the Swiss Quantum Initiative “to consolidate Switzerland’s outstanding position in the field of quantum technologies and boost its international competitiveness.” Additionally, a Swiss Chips Initiative was launched to support the national semiconductor sector and mitigate the exclusion of Switzerland from Digital Europe.<sup>123</sup> Not least against the backdrop of international trends (the European Green Deal, the US Inflation Reduction Act, the US CHIPS and Science Act as well as various ARPA-based initiatives<sup>124</sup>), one might thus speak of a new era of mission-oriented research and innovation, which also affects Switzerland.<sup>125</sup>

Another relevant development for the Swiss innovation system takes place on the cantonal level. It is related to the OECD tax reform, which established a 15% global minimum tax for multinational enterprises and has been implemented in Switzerland as of 2024. This has prompted cantons that had to implement tax increases to take additional measures for location promotion. One example is the canton of Basel-Stadt, which plans to refund several hundred million Swiss francs in tax surpluses to the R&D budgets of companies. This can certainly have a positive effect on innovation activity in the Basel region. However, the question arises as to whether other cantons, that do not have such options, are at a competitive disadvantage.<sup>126</sup>

123 SERI 2025b; Digital Switzerland Strategy 2025. Innosuisse is together with the Swiss Academies of Sciences and the SNSF involved in the Quantum Initiative. In the period 2025–2028, the innovation agency will launch several calls, amongst others within the BRIDGE scheme (together with SNSF). The total budget of Innosuisse for the Quantum Initiative is CHF 29.6 million.

124 ARPA refers to “Advanced Research Projects Agency” and has its origins in the USA. The ARPA-approach is defined by a strong mission-orientation and an active project management by highly qualified programme managers with decision power in the selection, design and implementation of innovation projects. Recent ARPA-inspired programmes in Europe include SPRIN-D (Germany) and ARIA (UK). Aspects of ARPA have also been implemented in the European Innovation Council EIC.

125 SSC 2023b.

126 Vonplon 2025; Erlanger 2025; Gersbach/Wörter 2024: 18–19; Hutter/Schmid 2023; Silberschmidt 2025.

## 1.4 The environment of the Innosuisse funding portfolio

The following section provides an overview of the innovation environment relevant to the Innosuisse portfolio. The focus is on public innovation promotion on cantonal, regional, national and international level. Individual aspects are examined in greater depth in the second part of the report, which addresses the evaluation questions.

### Cantonal and regional level

*Cantons:* Cantons offer a wide range of opportunities for innovation, including coaching and training services, infrastructure facilities, project funding and awards.<sup>127</sup> A study commissioned by the Swiss Science and Innovation Council SSIC (today: SSC) in 2015 pointed out that, unlike Innosuisse, cantons provide direct subsidies to companies, with cantonal banks playing an important role. As mentioned above, the OECD tax reform of 2024 has given direct subsidies additional momentum. A study commissioned by SECO (2022) examined cantonal equity capital programmes, an instrument which so far does not exist on the national level. Dedicated programmes have been implemented in the cantons of Basel-Stadt, Fribourg, Ticino, Geneva and Valais.<sup>128</sup>

*New Regional Policy (NRP):* Via the NRP, “the federal government and the cantons support mountain and border regions as well as rural areas in coping with changes in economic structures.”<sup>129</sup> The NRP encourages innovative regional development projects throughout Switzerland. Furthermore, the NRP provides additional knowledge and ensures continuing education in the field of regional development, and connects regional stakeholders, companies and universities. Funding stems from both the federal government and the cantons and is provided via the NRP funds. During the period 2016–2023, “the NRP has supported over 2,600 projects with more than CHF 240 million in non-repayable contributions and just under CHF 320 million in loans. In the current multi-year programme for 2024–2031, the federal government has CHF 400 million available in the form of non-repayable contributions and CHF 400 million in loans.”<sup>130</sup>

One of the main NRP instruments are the Regional Innovation Systems (RIS). RIS are intercantonal economic spaces. They bring together different actors such as companies, universities and the public sector (Triple Helix) in order to stimulate regional innovation activities. The innovation approach of RIS “goes beyond the science and technology-based approach and also encompasses organisational innovations that create added value for companies. Innovation is primarily viewed from an economic perspective.”<sup>131</sup>

<sup>127</sup> SSIC 2015. Beside cantons, cities and communes sometimes also have instruments for innovation promotion.

<sup>128</sup> SSIC 2015; SECO 2022a: 17–18.

<sup>129</sup> Regiosuisse 2025.

<sup>130</sup> SECO 2025b. For the period 2024–2031 the estimated budget for RIS is around 140 million CHF, including both federal and cantonal contributions (the latter must be at least equal to the federal contributions). Expert interview Kollbrunner/Weber 2025.

<sup>131</sup> SECO 2025a, English translation by SSC.

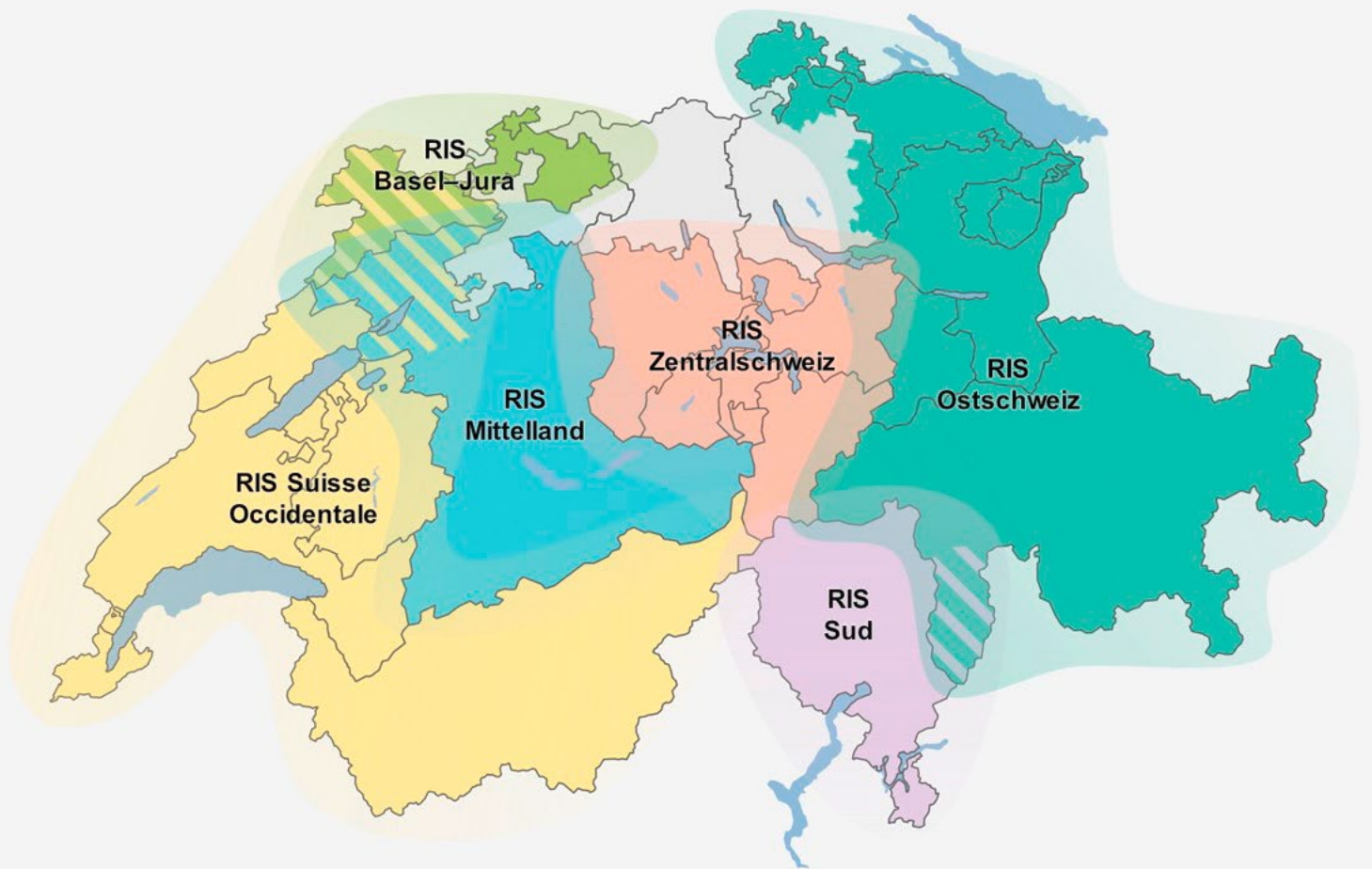


Figure 1: Regional Innovation Systems (RIS). Source: SECO 2025a.

## National level

*Departmental research:* According to §16 RIPA, “departmental research provides results which enable the Federal Administration to fulfil its tasks. This includes providing scientific evidence to find solutions for problems of political relevance. Departmental research lies at the interface between scientific research and policy/real-world applications.”<sup>132</sup> Contrary to what the term “research” implies, departmental research often promotes innovation.

According to the ERI dispatch for the years 2025–2028, the planned budget for departmental research amounts to CHF 1,552 million (CHF 388 million per year), although cuts are likely to be made here due to the relief package proposed by the Federal Council.<sup>133</sup> In addition, the federal administration implements programmes that are relevant to innovation but fall outside departmental research. These include the environmental technology promotion by the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) or the resource programme agriculture (“Ressourcenprogramm Landwirtschaft”) by the Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG).

*The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF):* The SNSF is Switzerland’s leading funding agency for scientific research. It operates as an independent foundation and is financed through a budget approved by Parliament. The SNSF’s core tasks include evaluating and funding outstanding research across all disciplines. While the emphasis is on basic research, use-inspired and solution-oriented science may also be supported. Like Innosuisse, the SNSF can be mandated by the Federal Council to implement special programmes, topic-specific funding and support programmes as well as national support initiatives according to §7 and §41 RIPA. Since 2017, the SNSF has cooperated directly with CTI/Innosuisse within the funding programme “BRIDGE” that connects basic research with innovation. The SNSF research funding amounted to CHF 1.1 billion in 2024. As of 2027, the SNSF might face major cuts due to the federal relief package.<sup>134</sup>

*Research facilities of national importance and Switzerland Innovation Parks:* Even though infrastructures do not provide direct funding for innovation projects, they are important as innovation enablers. According to §15 RIPA, the Swiss Confederation may provide institutional funding to research facilities of national importance. Those research facilities include technology competence centres, which are fostering the collaboration between higher education institutions and the private sector. The Swiss Centre for Electronics and Microtechnology CSEM is one of the facilities funded under §15 RIPA, as well as various institutions of the advanced manufacturing technology transfer centres (AM-TTC) initiative. For the period 2025–2028, the ERI dispatch foresees a budget of CHF 210 million for technology competence centres under §15 RIPA. Additional funding stems from cantons and the private sector.<sup>135</sup>

Switzerland Innovation Parks are geared towards “knowledge and technology transfer between research and industry, private investment and the establishment of research groups and companies from Switzerland and abroad.” The main sites of Switzerland Innovation Parks are located in Basel, Biel, Lausanne (EPFL), Zurich, Villigen (PSI), and St. Gallen, partially with antennas in other regions. As a public-private-partnership initiative, they are mainly financed by the cantons and the private sector, while the federal government provides subsidiary support (CHF 4 million via direct subsidies, as well as financial guarantees and land).<sup>136</sup>

## International level

*European Framework Programmes and Digital Europe:* The European Framework Programmes (EU FPs) aim “to support and foster research, technological development, and innovation across Europe and beyond.”<sup>137</sup> The 9th EU FP Horizon Europe (2021–2027) has an annual budget of around € 14 billion per year, which makes it the largest research and innovation programme worldwide.

<sup>132</sup> SSC 2023b: 21.

<sup>133</sup> Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 209; Swiss Federal Council 2025a: 28.

<sup>134</sup> SSC 2022b: 10; Swiss Federal Council 2025a: 27.

<sup>135</sup> Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 118; SSC 2024.

<sup>136</sup> Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 113.

<sup>137</sup> Technopolis 2026: 6.

Due to the termination of negotiations on an institutional framework agreement with the European Union by the Swiss government, Switzerland had only third-country status under Horizon Europe from mid-2021 to 2024. Consequently, Swiss participants were excluded from around a third of the programmes, including the mono-beneficiary schemes of the ERC, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), and EIC. For non-accessible programmes, Switzerland implemented transitional and complementary measures, including the Swiss Accelerator, which was managed by Innosuisse. Swiss participants in collaborative Horizon Europe projects were financed directly through SERI. However, these measures could not fill all the funding gaps.<sup>138</sup> As of 2025, Switzerland has been able to participate again in most Horizon Europe calls; first through a transitional agreement, and from November 2025 as a fully associated country (a status that has been retroactively applied as from 1 January 2025).<sup>139</sup>

Under the previous EU FP Horizon 2020 (2014–2020), CHF 3.043 billion went to Swiss participants (CHF 435 million per year). Swiss participation in Horizon Europe is more difficult to interpret due to its non-association from 2021 to 2024. Between 2021 and 2024, approximately CHF 2.435 billion was committed to Swiss participants under Horizon Europe transitional measures (CHF 609 million per year). Most of the Swiss proposals went to the ERC and MSCA programmes (which fund mainly fundamental research) as well as to collaborative projects in the areas ICT, Health, Climate, Energy and Mobility (with a focus on innovation). Swiss overall success rates have been above average both in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe.<sup>140</sup>

Digital Europe was established in 2021 and complements the EU FPs. It has a budget of more than € 1 billion per year, with a focus on “accelerating the deployment and uptake of digital technologies across Europe”.<sup>141</sup> Digital Europe is close to the market and targets high TRLs (7–9). Swiss participants are eligible as of 2025 but excluded from the “strategic” areas cybersecurity and semiconductors.

*Interreg:* The Interreg programme belongs to the European Union and aims at fostering regional development across Europe. There are three sub-programmes: Interreg A “supports regional R&I across shared borders”; Interreg B “addresses challenges in non-contiguous regions”, and Interreg C “focuses on policy learning and the effectiveness of regional development policies”. The Swiss participation under Interreg is financed via the New Regional Policy (NRP) and coordinated by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). The total Swiss budget for 2021–2027 includes federal and cantonal contributions and amounts to CHF 108.3 million (~CHF 15.5 million per year).<sup>142</sup>

*Eureka:* Access to the Eureka programme is provided via Innosuisse. Within its different programmes, Eureka offers member countries the opportunity for collaborative innovation. The focus is on Europe, but Eureka members include also Canada, South Africa, Singapore, South Korea, Brazil, Israel and Turkey. With Eurostars, Eureka supports SMEs in collaborative projects with a bottom-up approach. Globalstars offers the opportunity to collaborate with non-Eureka countries on a global scale with predefined calls (top-down). Eureka Clusters are industry-led communities in strategic areas, which provide opportunities for networking and project development. Eureka Network Projects provide flexible funding opportunities for consortia. Between 2019 and 2024, the total budget for Swiss participants under Eureka (including Eurostars) amounted to CHF 134.4 million (CHF 22.4 million per year).<sup>143</sup>

138 For example, the Swiss Accelerator, which was implemented as a transitional measure for the EIC Accelerator, was unable to grant access to equity funding (unlike the EIC Accelerator). Furthermore, Swiss legal entities were excluded from the coordination of collaborative projects during the time of the non-association under Horizon Europe.

139 Technopolis 2026: 6–8.

140 SERI 2024: 47–48; SERI 2025c (as of 17.10.2025); Technopolis 2026.

141 Technopolis 2026: 9.

142 Technopolis 2026: 24–26.

143 Technopolis 2026: 24.

*Bilateral projects:* According to §22 RIPA, Innosuisse “may enter into cooperation agreements with foreign funding organisations or funding agencies”. Such cooperations exist with Canada, Germany, Israel, South Korea, Sweden, Brazil and the UK (for the last two countries, cooperation was paused in 2025).<sup>144</sup> The budget for bilateral projects is relatively modest; it amounted to CHF 33.1 million between 2019 and 2024 (CHF 5.5 million per year).<sup>145</sup>

*Enterprise Europe Network (EEN):* The EEN is facilitating networking opportunities for innovative SMEs in Europe and abroad. Its services include international partnering support and matchmaking, as well as advice and information on national and international funding programmes. Swiss participation in the EEN dates back to 2008. Innosuisse has been administering the network since 2018. The EEN does not directly provide funding for innovation projects.

<sup>144</sup> “The portfolio of bilateral relationships is maintained, adapted and expanded to maximise the impact for Swiss companies in terms of market access, technological leadership and global competitiveness – in line with Innosuisse’s international strategy, the available resources and in consultation with SERI”. Innosuisse 2026: 30.

<sup>145</sup> Technopolis 2026: 28.

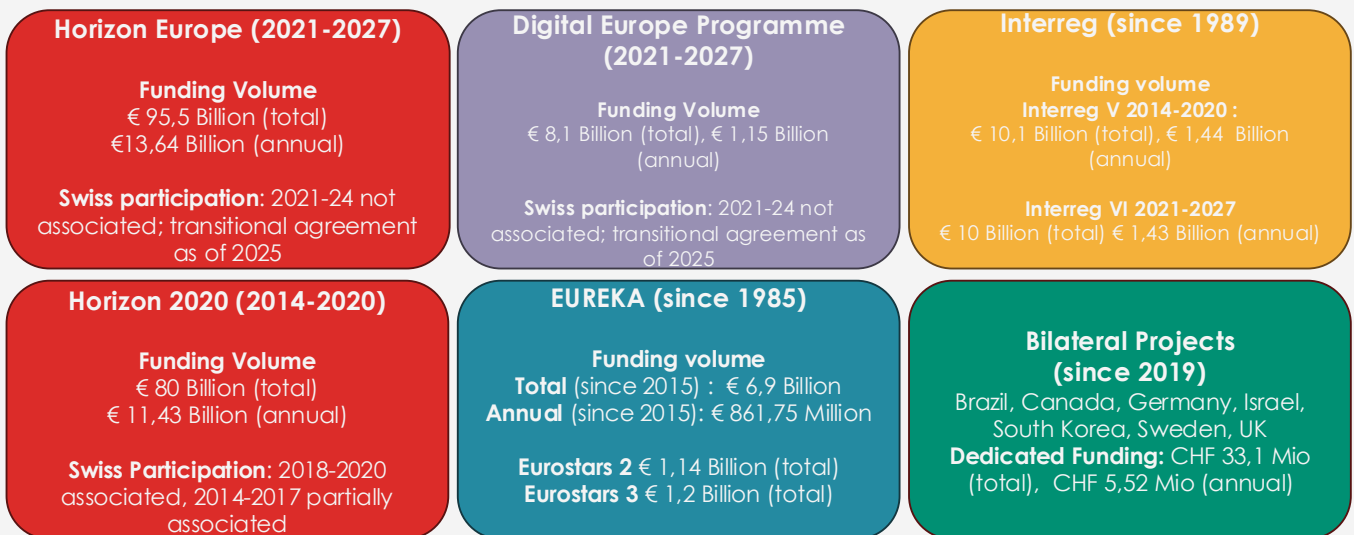


Figure 2: International programmes fostering innovation. Source: Technopolis 2026: 6.

The table below provides an overview of the Swiss public innovation promotion landscape, including a mapping of the value chain (TRL). It is based on a joint project between SERI and SECO.<sup>146</sup>

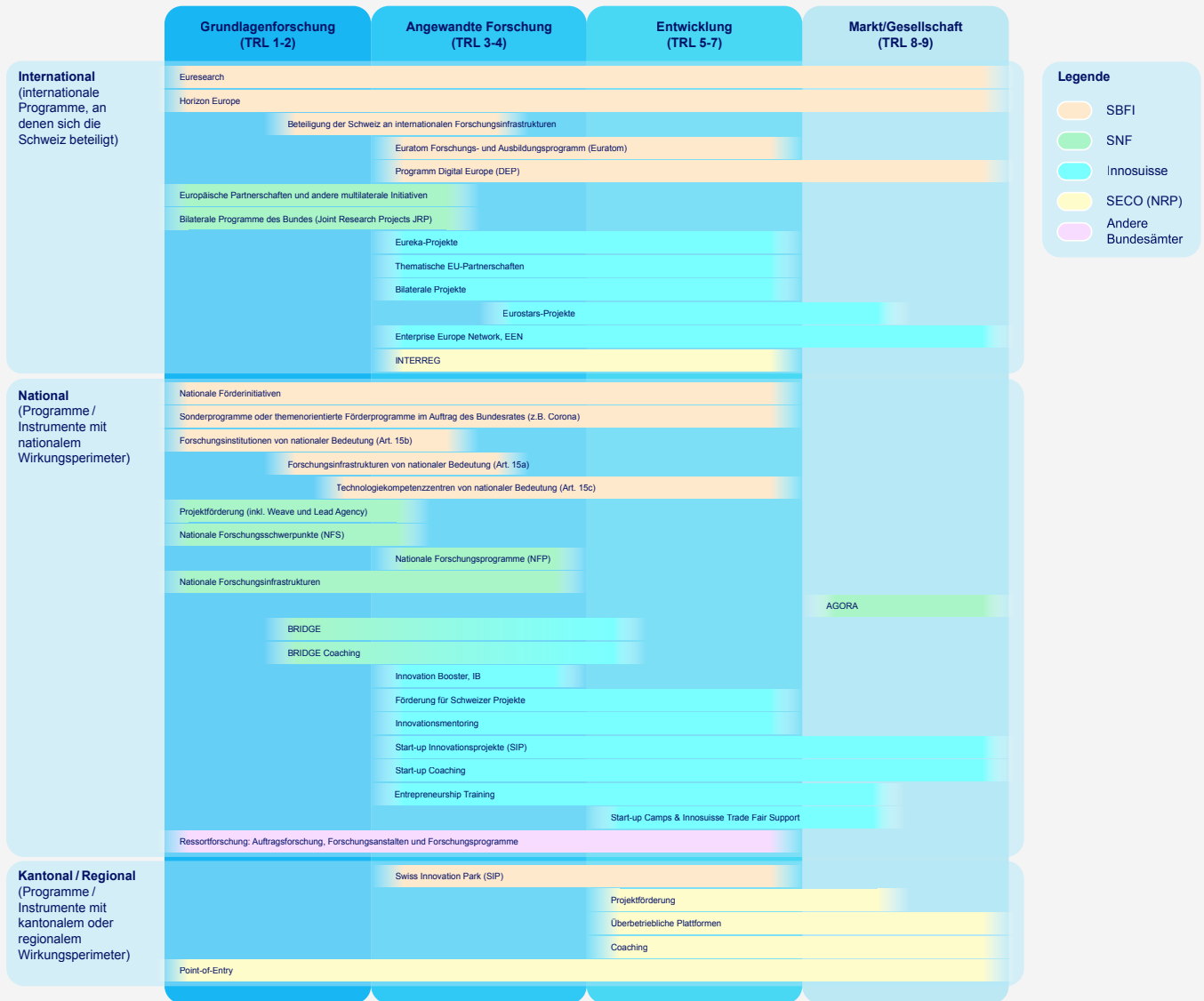


Figure 3: Overview of the Swiss public innovation promotion landscape. Source: SERI 2026.

146 Project "Forschungs- und Innovationsförderlandschaft der Schweiz". See SERI 2026.

## 2 Innosuisse: organisation and funding portfolio

### 2.1 Genesis and governance of Innosuisse

In 1943, Switzerland established its first public innovation funding agency, the Commission for the Promotion of Scientific Research (KWF). The aim of the KWF was to combat the recession and secure jobs by promoting application-oriented research and development. This thematic focus of early innovation policy in Switzerland is also evident in the fact that in 1954 the promotion of “technological research” was enshrined in the Federal Act on Preparing for Crisis Management and Job Creation. The law remained in force until 2010, when it was replaced by the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA).<sup>147</sup>

In 1996, the KWF was renamed Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI). The CTI was an extra-parliamentary commission with an advisory role but without decision-making powers. With the establishment of the Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) in 1997, the Confederation actively promoted the expansion of UAS research. In this context, the CTI was provided with additional resources to support and guide UAS in their research development.<sup>148</sup>

In 2006, the revision of the Swiss Constitution made promotion of innovation an explicit federal task. In 2011, the CTI was upgraded to an independent authoritative commission with decision-making powers. The fully revised RIPA, which entered into force in 2014, further clarified the tasks and responsibilities of the CTI. Subsequently, it became evident that the CTI would operate more efficiently as a federal entity under public law.<sup>149</sup> The Federal Council and the Swiss Parliament thus endorsed a restructuring of the organisation. In 2016, the Federal Act on the Swiss Innovation Agency SIAA was adapted. This laid the foundation for the establishment of Innosuisse, which became operational in 2018.<sup>150</sup>

The governance structure of Innosuisse is defined in SIAA. Its main strategic body is the Board of Directors, which consists of 5–7 members representing both industry and academia. The Innovation Council (15–25 members) is responsible for funding decisions as well as the development of the funding strategy. It is supported by experts, who are assigned to review the applications. The office is the operational body of Innosuisse and in charge of implementing the funding activities. In 2019, the General Secretariat of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER initiated a review of the governance and cooperation between the various Innosuisse bodies. On this basis, Innosuisse implemented dedicated optimisations.<sup>151</sup>

147 Bundesgesetz (1954) §4. “Der Bund kann Hochschulen [...] Beiträge für zusätzliche wissenschaftliche und technische Forschungen gewähren [...] soweit diese Forschungen der Krisenbekämpfung und Arbeitsbeschaffung dienen.” See also Lienhard/Kettiger 2007: II; Hofmänner 2023: 32–40.

148 Federal Council 1997; Mayer et al. 2006; OECD 2002.

149 A parliamentary motion submitted by Felix Gutzwiller, member of the Council of States, in 2011 played an important role in this regard. Gutzwiller 2011.

150 Swiss Federal Council 2014: 8–10; SERI 2015.

151 Econcept 2020. Optimisations were made, amongst others, in the areas of the collaboration between the Innosuisse Board and the Innosuisse office, the communication, and the quality management of proposal reviews. Innosuisse 2020.

## 2.2 Funding portfolio

When Innosuisse became operative in 2018, it took over most of the funding instruments from its predecessor organisation CTI.<sup>152</sup> Subsequent adaptations of the portfolio were mainly driven by special/topic-specific programmes and national support initiatives of the Federal Council. These mandates are based on §7 and §41 RIPA and allow the Federal Council in times of exceptional challenges to respond with temporary measures. The implementation of these mandates into the Innosuisse portfolio will be discussed in chapter 6.

Innosuisse introduced also some permanent new funding instruments into its portfolio. In 2021, the Flagship Initiative was launched, inspired by the mission-oriented energy programme Swiss Competence Centers for Energy Research (SCCER), which expired in 2020.<sup>153</sup> Even though the Flagship Initiative strongly relies on the principles of the Innosuisse project funding, it differs from the traditional model by its transdisciplinary and thematic-oriented approach.

In 2023, an amendment of RIPA facilitated the introduction of a new Innosuisse instrument, which provides direct funding to innovative start-ups before market entry. As already mentioned, this marked a shift away from the paradigm of only indirectly promoting companies via a research partner towards individual grants for firms. In 2024, Innosuisse discontinued the Networking Event Series instrument due to budget constraints. Finally, the integration of Innovation projects without implementation partner into the BRIDGE scheme is planned for 2027.

<sup>152</sup> Econcept 2020: 1.

<sup>153</sup> SSC 2023b: 27. On the SCCER programme see Rieder et al. 2022.

# Swiss Innovation and Funding Initiatives Timeline

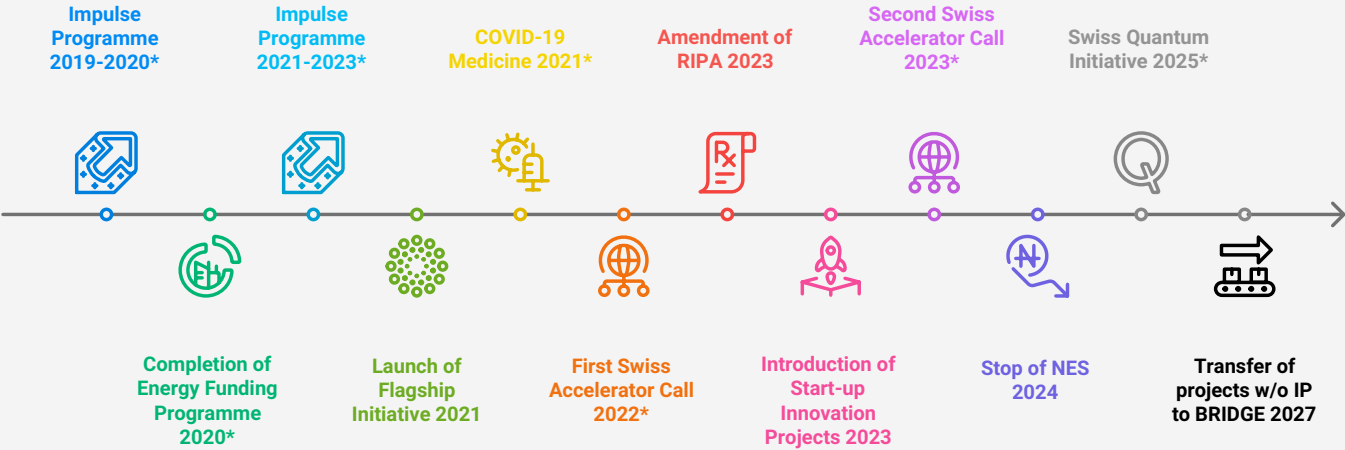


Figure 4: Changes of the Innosuisse portfolio since 2018. Programmes with asterisk refer to temporary programmes mandated by the Federal Council. Source: Innosuisse 2026: 16.

From a historical perspective, it can be observed that the introduction or adaption of instruments by both CTI and Innosuisse was often linked to economic or social upheavals. This is not surprising in the case of the Federal Council's mandates, as these are intended for extraordinary situations. The Innovation Cheque was introduced (initially as a pilot) in the wake of the financial crises of 2008/09. The implementation of Market Entry Camps coincided with the period of the strong Swiss Franc (2011–2015). Innosuisse also took the option of using existing instruments in a flexible way. One example of this is the launch of an SME call in 2025 in the context of a difficult economic situation. Here, Innosuisse made use of its existing scope for action to waive companies' own contributions to the project costs in whole or in part.

The current Innosuisse funding portfolio can be divided into three clusters<sup>154</sup>:

1. *Funding of innovation projects*: This cluster includes various instruments for the funding of innovation projects. In addition to the actual project funding, the Innovation Cheque, which relates to the preliminary stage of a project, is also integrated here. International instruments include bilateral projects, co-funded programmes such as Eureka and the EU Thematic Partnerships.<sup>155</sup>
2. *Project set-up assistance and networking (Knowledge and Technology Transfer)*: Instruments of this cluster include innovation mentoring, national and international networking opportunities. The Innovation Booster supports challenge-based co-creation and idea-testing.
3. *Support for start-ups*: The focus of this cluster is on the creation and development of knowledge and technology-based start-ups, by training, coaching, as well as internationalisation and trade fair offers.

Furthermore, the Innosuisse clusters may involve special programmes of the Federal Council as well as other time-limited measures (e.g., in the context of EU FPs).

The figure below shows Innosuisse's funding portfolio with the budget allocation for 2023. Note that for this year, the cluster "innovation projects" involves a transitional measure (Swiss Accelerator) as well as budget contributions from a special programme (Impulse Programme "Digitalization").

<sup>154</sup> These clusters evolved over time. In 2018, Innosuisse divided its funding portfolio into four major areas: "Start your innovation project"; "Start and grow your business"; "Be connected"; "Go global". Interestingly, it also mentioned two "theme-oriented programmes" (Energy funding programme and BRIDGE [sic]). Innosuisse 2018: 7–9.

<sup>155</sup> EU Thematic Partnerships include the programmes Transforming Health and Care Systems (THCS, since 2023), Key Digital Technologies (KDT, managed by SERI as of 2025), Personalised Medicine (PerMed, no further participation of Innosuisse), Driving Urban Transition (DUT, no further participation of Innosuisse). Innosuisse 2026: 64–65.

# Innosuisse portfolio

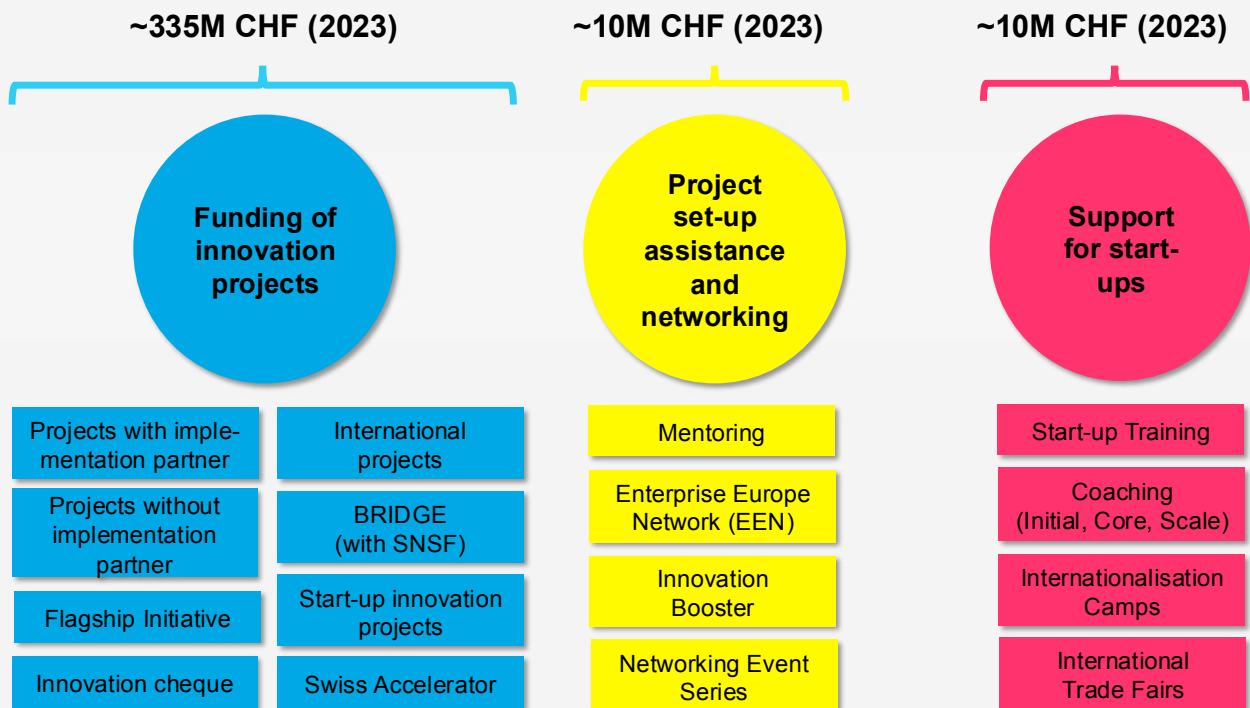


Figure 5: Innosuisse portfolio and budget (including transitional measures). Source financial data: Innosuisse 2025a: 25.

## 2.3 Funding approach and target groups

The basic task of Innosuisse is stipulated in the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA). §19 RIPA describes Innosuisse as “the Confederation’s funding body for science-based innovation”. §2 RIPA defines science-based innovation as “the development of new products, methods, processes and services in industry and society through research, particularly applied research, and the exploitation of its results.” This definition implies also certain limitations of Innosuisse’s funding activities, e.g., regarding innovation which is more “practice-based” or “experience-driven”.<sup>156</sup>

The concept of science-based innovation strongly relies on the cooperation between (academic) researchers and (private) implementation partners. In principle, Innosuisse only provides direct subsidies to research partners, i.e., Higher Education Institutions and other public research organisations. However, and as mentioned further above, in the last years some exceptions have been implemented (start-up promotion, international projects, Swiss Accelerator).

The importance of the various target groups of CTI and Innosuisse evolved over time. In the mid-1990s, Universities of Applied Sciences were established as a new type of HEI in Switzerland. In what followed, the CTI was an important source of funding for the development of UAS.<sup>157</sup> In 2012, National Councillor Louis Schelbert complained in a parliamentary interpellation about “the Re-orientation of the CTI with increased focus on ‘economic efficiency’”, which “makes it increasingly difficult for Universities of Applied Sciences to finance their research”.<sup>158</sup>

This fear appears to have been at least partially unfounded. In terms of the proportion of research partners, UAS remain the most strongly represented type of higher education institution at Innosuisse to date with a share of around 50% of approved innovation projects.<sup>159</sup> At the same time, the strategic emphasis of Innosuisse is on the support of companies and not so much on academic partners.<sup>160</sup> This is also reflected in the legal provisions of RIPA, where SMEs and start-ups are explicitly mentioned as target groups.<sup>161</sup>

Innosuisse’s focus on companies becomes evident when looking at their participation rate in comparison with other types of implementation partners. The table below illustrates that the private sector accounts for around 90% of the implementation partners within the scheme “Innovation projects with implementation partner”. And for the future, “Innosuisse wants to attract [even] more SME customers for innovation projects”.<sup>162</sup>

	2024	2025
Public administration (including hospitals)	4.4%	3.4%
NGOs, NPOs, foundations/associations	2.7%	5.2%
Private sector	92.9%	91.4%
Total	100%	100%

Table 2: Participation rate of implementation partners within completed Innosuisse “Innovation projects with implementation partner”. Source: Innosuisse.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>156</sup> Innosuisse 2026: 27.

<sup>157</sup> Swiss Federal Council 1997.

<sup>158</sup> Schelbert 2012.

<sup>159</sup> Innosuisse 2026: 40.

<sup>160</sup> Consequently, Innosuisse mentions in its self-description strengthening the support of SMEs and start-ups as two of the most important development opportunities for the portfolio. Innosuisse 2026: 18; 20.

<sup>161</sup> §18–20 RIPA.

<sup>162</sup> Innosuisse 2026: 18. Against this backdrop it is noteworthy that a recent study by Rieder et al. (2026) found that Innosuisse lacks visibility among SMEs. Rieder et al. 2026: 11; 25.

<sup>163</sup> Unpublished numbers provided by Innosuisse to the SSC based on its internal reporting (14.01.2026).

Other potential implementation partners such as communes, practitioners<sup>164</sup> (e.g., from hospitals, law enforcing organisations, first responders) and NGOs are significantly less represented in Innosuisse funding schemes. These stakeholders can be of relevance for “the development of new products, methods, processes and services” in society, as stipulated under §2 RIPA. They might also contribute to Social Innovation, which can be defined as “new individual and collective behaviours and forms of organisation that contribute to solving social or economic problems and thus create social added value”.<sup>165</sup>

Innosuisse has already taken action in this field and funded the NTN Innovation Booster Co-Designing Human Services, which has been set up by the Swiss Association for the Promotion of Social Innovation.<sup>166</sup> The Flagship Initiative on “Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies” (IICT), which focuses on persons with disabilities, includes also aspects of Social Innovation.<sup>167</sup> Social Innovation can also be supported through project funding or start-up coaching, provided that the relevant criteria are met.

## 2.4 Success rates

Within the Innosuisse portfolio, different success rates exist both between thematic areas and between instruments. The table below provides an overview of Innosuisse’s main funding instrument, the Innovation projects with implementation partner and the success rates for the thematic areas between 2018 and 2024.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Average
Total	57%	64%	58%	54%	46%	47%	43%	53%
Energy & environment	62%	79%	59%	57%	43%	46%	39%	55%
Engineering	65%	65%	64%	61%	52%	56%	54%	60%
ICT	55%	54%	54%	50%	42%	38%	38%	47%
Life sciences	52%	69%	62%	51%	49%	46%	41%	53%
Social sciences & business management	37%	59%	46%	38%	35%	32%	32%	40%

Table 3: Success rates of Innovation projects with implementation partner. Source: Innosuisse 2026, Annex I: KPI Development 2018-2024.

164 Practitioners are individuals or organisations with professional and operational expertise. They are often end-users of innovative technologies or services. The European Framework Programmes are actively involving and funding practitioners and end-users in innovation projects. This includes, amongst others, law enforcement authorities, border guards, first responders, healthcare providers, farmers, etc. EC 2025b; Technopolis 2026: 30.

165 EFI 2024: 97. Regarding the variety of definitions of Social Innovation see Büchele et al. 2024: 76. On the role of non-academic stakeholders in Social Innovation see CoSIE 2019: 8. On the involvement of non-academic stakeholders in the EU FP see Technopolis 2026: 30.

166 Swiss Association for the Promotion of Social Innovation 2025. Note that in this NTN Innovation Booster various Universities of Applied Sciences are included, which covers the “science-based” aspect.

167 University of Zurich 2026. For the political discussion of Social Innovation in Switzerland see Fivaz 2021 and Nussbaumer 2025. The study of Rieder et al. (2026: 25) demonstrates that Social Innovation is not seen as a major characteristic of Innosuisse.

This overview shows a clear trend towards lower success rates over time, while also revealing significant differences between the thematic areas. For example, the average success rate for engineering is 60%, whereas for social sciences and business management it is only 40%.<sup>168</sup>

The table below illustrates the success rates of the different project funding instruments.

Again, the comparison reveals significant differences. On average, Innovation projects with and without implementation partner have the highest success rates (53% and 40%). The BRIDGE programme, on the other hand, has a significantly lower success rate (21%). Only isolated figures are available for other instruments. Nevertheless, it is striking that instruments with direct project funding for SMEs have low to very low approval rates (start-up innovation projects: 21% and Swiss Accelerator: 8%). The Flagship Initiative ranks in the middle of the field (26%), with only two calls since 2021.

Success rates are highly significant for both portfolio strategy and budget allocation, particularly in times of potential austerity measures. For instance, certain instruments may become less attractive if success rates fall below a certain threshold. If the success rate is too high, the question of competitiveness arises.<sup>169</sup> In the context of this analysis, it is not possible to examine the reasons for the different success rates in depth. To date, no study has been conducted on this topic for Innosuisse.<sup>170</sup>

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Average
Innovation Projects with IP	57%	64%	58%	54%	46%	47%	43%	53%
Innovation Projects without IP	51%	38%	41%	34%	40%	43%	36%	40%
Start-up Innovation Projects	-	-	-	-	-	23%	18%	21%
Flagship Projects	-	-	-	19%	-	33%	-	26%
BRIDGE Programme	22%	18%	18%	20%	26%	24%	19%	21%
Swiss Accelerator	-	-	-	-	-	7%	9%	8%

Table 4: Success rates of Innosuisse project funding instruments. Source: Innosuisse 2026, Annex 1: KPI Development 2018-2024.

<sup>168</sup> See also Rieder et al. 2026: 25.

<sup>169</sup> Regarding success rates in Horizon Europe: “there is strong qualitative evidence that for a substantial share of applicants the application cost is not proportionate to their chances of securing Horizon Europe funding.” EC 2025a: 65. For basic research grant funding, “low success rates reduce researchers’ productivity and through hypercompetition may also negatively affect other elements of the scientific knowledge production process, such as collaboration. Of course, very high success rates may also imply that more projects get funded which should not have been funded.” Janger et al. 2019: 21. On the effects of low success rates see also Langfeldt et al. 2024.

<sup>170</sup> The study of Interface (2019) on “reasons for the development of applications received” did not go into detail about success rates.

### 3 Challenges at the time of the evaluation

In order to assess the political and economic context of the Innosuisse portfolio, some of the major challenges for the future promotion of innovation in Switzerland are addressed below.

#### 3.1 Relation Switzerland–European Union

Access to international programmes – especially the European Framework Programmes – is of great importance to Swiss innovation actors. The Federal Council considers them to be “complementary” to the national innovation promotion.<sup>171</sup> The (partial) non-associations under Horizon 2020 (2014–2016) and Horizon Europe (2021–2024) have hampered innovation activities in Switzerland. Restricted access to programmes such as the ERC and EIC could only be partially mitigated at national level. Corresponding replacement measures by the SNSF, Innosuisse and other actors involved considerable effort.<sup>172</sup>

The future association of Switzerland under European Framework Programmes is an integral part of the EU package agreement, which also includes other issues such as electricity, health and the free movement of persons. The agreement will be put to the Swiss electorate in 2027 at the earliest. If approval is granted, it can be assumed that the complementarity between national and European innovation funding will continue. In the event of a prolonged non-association, as is to be expected if the EU package is rejected, longer-term or even permanent national measures might have to be taken. This would also have an effect on the Innosuisse portfolio, e.g., regarding the direct funding of innovative companies.<sup>173</sup>

#### 3.2 Federal budget cuts

Major federal budget cuts are debated in parliament at the time of the present evaluation. They would have a particularly strong impact on the areas of education, research and innovation. The consultation on the 2027 relief package provides for a 10% reduction in the federal contribution to Innosuisse (CHF 32 million in 2027 and CHF 33.1 million in 2028). To achieve this savings goal, the Federal Council proposes the following permanent measures<sup>174</sup>:

- Setting Innosuisse’s contribution to innovation projects at a maximum level of 50% (instead of a range of 40 to 60% and the option of exceptional amounts above and below this range)
- Setting Innosuisse’s participation in innovation projects by start-ups (start-up innovation projects) at a maximum of 50% (instead of up to 70%)
- Restricting the funding of Innovation projects without implementation partner to joint programmes with research funding institutions (currently specifically BRIDGE with the SNSF)
- Deletion of the legal basis that would allow Innosuisse to introduce funding for highly qualified individuals if the budget is sufficient

According to Innosuisse, the above-mentioned saving targets would substantially reduce the budgets in instruments with large funding volumes in the short term (i.e., Start-up innovation projects, Innovation projects with implementation partner, Innovation projects without implementation partner, International projects). In the longer term, networking and project initiation instruments would have to be suspended to continue with the project funding schemes. However, less money would be available for the project funding as well, which would lead to a reduction in success rates.<sup>175</sup>

171 “The FRPs thus offer complementary funding instruments that are not available in the Swiss national funding landscape. Examples of this include opportunities for direct financing of companies and cross-border cooperation between researchers, institutions and companies.” Swiss Federal Council 2020a: 4876, English translation by SSC.

172 SERI 2025a; Haering et al. 2025.

173 In case of a non-association under future EU FPs, Innosuisse would have the possibility to provide direct subsidies for “projects with significant innovation potential from start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises”. §19.3<sup>ter</sup> RIPA.

174 Swiss Federal Council 2025a: 55. See also Innosuisse 2025b.

175 Innosuisse workshop (September 2025).

It is important to note that federal budget cuts would also have an impact on the Swiss innovation system beyond Innosuisse. This concerns, among other things, the New Regional Policy (NRP) and the dedicated fund for regional development. The relief package stipulates that this fund shall no longer be replenished and that the legal basis for the value preservation of the fund's assets should be abolished. This would call into question the NRP's funding activities in the medium term, including the Regional Innovation Systems (RIS) and the participation in the Interreg programmes. As for departmental research, the Federal Council proposes discontinuing pilot and demonstration programmes in the fields of energy and environmental technology.<sup>176</sup>

It can therefore be assumed that the austerity measures would further exacerbate the tense situation for Swiss innovation stakeholders. In the event of extraordinary challenges – such as the high US tariffs in 2025 – the Federal Council could intervene at short term with special programmes.<sup>177</sup> Such interventions have already taken place in the past, for instance during the financial crisis (2008–2009), the period of a strong Swiss Franc (2011–2015) or the Covid-19 pandemic (2020–2022). However, long-term and structural problems such as the declining innovation activity of Swiss SMEs described below cannot be remedied in this way.

### 3.3 Geopolitical tensions: dual use, military innovation and Knowledge Security

While in countries such as the USA and Israel research and development have traditionally been closely intertwined with the military, European countries have been more reluctant in this regard. EU Framework Programmes have so far been limited to civilian applications. Geopolitical upheavals in the past years and especially Russia's war against Ukraine have called this approach into question. Consequently, the current FP Horizon Europe will be opened for dual-use applications.<sup>178</sup> In Switzerland, the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport plans to gradually increase the share of the army budget allocated to R&D to 2% by 2030 and to intensify collaborations with HEIs.<sup>179</sup>

Apart from the basic principles of scientific integrity and good scientific practice, Innosuisse has no specific restrictions regarding the funding of dual use or military R&D.<sup>180</sup> Even though there have been no significant numbers of proposal submissions in the area of defence to date, this could change in the future. At the time of the evaluation, Innosuisse is considering launching a joint Flagship Initiative on defence priorities with the Federal Office for Defence Procurement *armasuisse*.<sup>181</sup>

Such a shift towards dual use and military R&D bears both opportunities and risks. In principle, a stronger cooperation and coordination between Innosuisse with departmental research corresponds to the strategy of the Federal Council.<sup>182</sup> Furthermore, the development of military technology might have spill-over effects for civil applications. Risks include ethical concerns, issues of Intellectual Property, a higher complexity in the submission and evaluation process due to security protocols, as well as further challenges in the context of Knowledge Security.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>176</sup> Swiss Federal Council 2025a: 67; 76; 79–80.

<sup>177</sup> The United States of America announced new additional tariffs on its trading partners on 31 July 2025. On 7 August 2025, an additional tariff of 39% was imposed on Swiss exports to the USA. After negotiations with Switzerland, the USA applied a (retroactive) tariff ceiling of 15% on imports from Switzerland from 14 November 2025. Particularly the 39% tariff was a painful competitive disadvantage for Swiss companies. *Swissmem*, the association for the Swiss technology industry, urged the Federal Council in August 2025 to greatly increase the Innosuisse project financing and to forego the company contribution as of 2026. *Swissmem* 2025. On the (limited) effect of the US tariffs see also Rieder et al. 2026: 23.

<sup>178</sup> Council of the EU 2025; *Greenacre* 2025b.

<sup>179</sup> Swiss Federal Council 2025c: 33; *Della Torre* 2025.

<sup>180</sup> §19.6 of RIPA stipulates that project funding “must follow the principles of scientific integrity and good scientific practice”.

<sup>181</sup> Innosuisse 2026: 19.

<sup>182</sup> Swiss Federal Council 2024a; Swiss Federal Council 2025b. On the issue of security technologies see also Swiss Federal Council 2020b.

<sup>183</sup> *Foray* 2025b; *SNSF* 2024; *Swiss Academies* 2021: 20.

### 3.4 Declining innovation capacity of SMEs

Switzerland is to be found regularly on top positions of innovation rankings. However, innovation statistics indicate “a significant decline in the fraction of research & development active companies in Switzerland” over the last years. SMEs are particularly affected by this trend.<sup>184</sup> In 2024, the National Council’s Committee for Science, Education and Culture submitted a postulate on “Declining innovation activities of Swiss companies. Identify the causes and remove the obstacles”. The postulate was accepted by the National Council. In what followed, SERI commissioned a study on “New Innovation Models in Switzerland”, which was published in 2026 by Barjak et al.<sup>185</sup>

The study is based on survey insight from more than 1,100 Swiss companies as well as two Delphi rounds of in-depth interviews. Outcomes of the survey point to the need for fostering transformative (radical) innovations and digitisation, more flexibility in policy instruments, adapting regulations and facilitating partnerships between companies and academia. The Delphi interviews highlighted the following needs expressed by the involved stakeholders<sup>186</sup>:

- Strengthening start-up and innovation financing across all stages
- Making regulation more innovation friendly
- Strengthening collaboration and partnership ecosystems
- Strengthening talent development, skills and education
- Increasing data openness and sharing

The study also raised some specific challenges and possible solutions regarding Innosuisse<sup>187</sup>:

184 Barjak et al. 2026: 13. See also SATW/Swissmem 2024 with a focus on the Swiss manufacturing industry and the study by FSO 2025 that comes to a more positive conclusion. Insights are also provided by Spescha et al. 2022; Spescha et al. 2024; Spescha et al. 2025.

185 Barjak et al. 2026. The study is a follow-up project on an earlier analysis on “Mastering Multiple Complexities – a Rising Challenge for Swiss Innovation Models” (Barjak et al. 2023).

186 Barjak et al. 2026: 10–11.

187 Barjak et al. 2026: 95–96.

Challenge	Solution
Lack of information about the Innosuisse services <sup>188</sup>	Stronger involvement of industry associations in promoting those services
Potential misalignments due to the standard innovation project approach, which subsidises the academic partner only <sup>189</sup>	Stronger monitoring of standard innovation projects by Innosuisse
Contracting issues (e.g., regarding Intellectual Property)	Enhance support and guidance
Restrictions on involving international research and implementation partners in innovation projects	Relax restrictions
Too narrow focus of funded innovation activities and phases	Broadening the scope of funded activities and phases in the innovation process
Insufficient feedback on rejected applications by Innosuisse <sup>190</sup>	Provide more elaborate and technically competent feedback
Requirement of contributions of implementation partners in Innosuisse projects	Waive cash contribution of implementation partners <sup>191</sup>

Table 5: Operational improvements of Innosuisse. Source: Barjak et al. 2026: 93–94.

Other recommendations of the study with relevance for the Innosuisse portfolio include:

- Mobilising start-up funding, e.g., by a public-private innovation fund or matching instruments<sup>192</sup>
- Test and implement the idea of direct R&D subsidies targeted at sustainable innovations<sup>193</sup>
- Implement a Current Research Information System (CRIS)<sup>194</sup>

188 See also Rieder et al. 2026: 11; 25.

189 “There is a price to pay for subsidising the academic partner only while the company has to provide matching funds. In some cases, misalignment happens, the academic partner does not deliver what was expected by the implementation partner – leading to poor results and effects.” Barjak et al. 2026: 95. On the role of the research partner see also Rieder et al. 2026: 19.

190 The study of Rieder et al. (2026: 15) concludes, however, that companies perceive the debriefing by Innosuisse as “useful and transparent”.

191 See also Rieder et al. 2026: 14; 26.

192 Barjak et al. 2026: 91.

193 Barjak et al. 2026: 92–93.

194 Barjak et al. 2026: 96–97. Note that the Administration Research Actions Management Information System (ARAMIS) database already includes important aspects of a CRIS, as it contains information regarding research projects and evaluations that are run or funded by the Confederation (including Innosuisse projects).



# Second part: Answers and recommendations

## 4 Alignment of the Innosuisse portfolio with the agency's main task

**Evaluation question I: How is the funding portfolio of Innosuisse aligned with the agency's main task (consistency with objectives<sup>195</sup>)?**

The basis for answering this question is the legal analysis by Prof. A. Lienhard, which was commissioned by the SSC as an external mandate.<sup>196</sup>

The legal regulations for Innosuisse include:<sup>197</sup>

- The Federal Constitution
- The Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA)
- The Research and Innovation Promotion Ordinance (RIPO)
- The Federal Act on the Swiss Innovation Agency (SIAA)
- The Federal Act on Financial Assistance and Subsidies (SA)
- The Financial Budget Act
- The Federal Act on the Federal Assembly (ParlA)
- The Innosuisse Funding Ordinance
- The Innosuisse Remuneration Ordinance
- The Innosuisse Personnel Ordinance
- Organisational regulations of Innosuisse
- The Innosuisse Implementing Provisions

Of relevance for Innosuisse's portfolio are furthermore the planning instruments ("Planungsinstrumente"), including the ERI Dispatch, the strategic goals of the Federal Council as well as the multiannual programmes according to §45 RIPA.

The overarching tasks of the Swiss Confederation regarding innovation support are outlined in §18 RIPA. They include the support of innovation projects, measures to develop and support science-based entrepreneurship, measures for setting up and developing science-based companies, measures to support highly qualified persons in the field of innovation, the exploitation of knowledge and the knowledge and technology transfer between higher education institutions, the private sector and society, as well as the provision of information on support options at national and international level.

The specific tasks regarding the funding instruments of Innosuisse include:<sup>198</sup>

- Promotion of Innovation projects with implementation partner, without implementation partner, start-up projects, feasibility studies (innovation cheques), as well as transitional measures during the time of non-association under the European Framework Programmes (§19 RIPA)
- Support for science-based entrepreneurship through training and awareness-raising, start-up coaching and participation in internationalisation programmes or international trade fairs (§20 RIPA)
- Measures to promote highly qualified individuals by enabling feasibility studies, participation in continuing education and training programmes, and guest residencies to foster interaction between researchers and practitioners (§20a RIPA)
- Support for knowledge and technology transfer and the dissemination of information, including mentoring and training of SMEs, networking and IP measures (§21 RIPA)
- International cooperation in the field of innovation (§22 RIPA)

<sup>195</sup> In particular, §2 RIPA, taking into account §6 and §7 RIPA (including explanations).

<sup>196</sup> Lienhard 2026.

<sup>197</sup> Lienhard 2026: 2–10.

<sup>198</sup> Lienhard 2026: 14–21.

- Joint support measures with other research bodies (§22a RIPA)
- Implementation of special programmes or topic-oriented funding programmes as well as carrying out international cooperation tasks on behalf of the Federal Council (§7 RIPA)
- Implementation of national support initiatives on behalf of the Federal Council (§41 RIPA)
- Cooperation with and funding of departmental research institutions (§16 RIPA)

Innosuisse must also consider cross-cutting topics in its funding activities. Within RIPA, there are explicit obligations to take into account sustainability, equal opportunities and scientific integrity. The ERI Dispatch for the period 2025–2028 mentions digitisation, sustainable development, equal opportunities, as well as national and international cooperation as cross-cutting topics. It also stipulates that Innosuisse contribute to the “substitution of products, services and processes that have a negative impact on society and the environment”.<sup>199</sup>

RIPA provides a high degree of detail at the legislative level concerning the specific tasks that Innosuisse must fulfil with its funding portfolio.<sup>200</sup> The SSC concludes that Innosuisse’s funding instruments are well aligned with these tasks and consistent with the principle of science-based innovation (§2 RIPA). The focus is on the bottom-up approach, corresponding with the Federal Council’s message on the revision of RIPA (2011).<sup>201</sup> The Federal Council plays a central role in launching (temporary) thematic-oriented programmes.<sup>202</sup>

In 2021, Innosuisse introduced the Flagship Initiative as a (permanent) thematic-oriented instrument into its portfolio, with reference to §19 RIPA as the legal basis. In this context, the legal analysis concludes that “there seem to be some uncertainties regarding the relationship between (fundamental) bottom-up and (specific) top-down promotion”. While the Flagship Initiative is not explicitly mentioned in RIPA, it was legitimated by “the ERI Dispatches and the strategic objectives of the Federal Council”.<sup>203</sup>

The SSC considers that the Flagship Initiative does not put at risk the fundamental bottom-up orientation of the Innosuisse portfolio and applicants. The instrument only amounts to a relatively small part of Innosuisse’s innovation promotion (2021: 4.2%; 2022: 3.2%; 2023: 5%; 2024: 2.7%) and gives applicants sufficient scope for their own project ideas within relatively broadly defined subject areas.<sup>204</sup> At the same time, the Flagship Initiative allows Innosuisse to proactively address and tackle cross-cutting priorities and societal challenges, according to the legal basis and the planning instruments. Thanks to its trans-disciplinary approach, the instrument enables the involvement of innovation actors such as municipalities, practitioners or NGOs, who are less represented in other Innosuisse projects. With this, the Flagship Initiative may also contribute to foster Social Innovation.<sup>205</sup>

199 Lienhard 2026: 11; Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 37–50; 100. Of specific importance for sustainable development is the Agenda 2030 and the dedicated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

200 In the context of the RIPA revision the SSC has recommended to examine whether the RIPA should be streamlined in the case of the articles on Innosuisse and whether the high level of detail should be outsourced to a contribution ordinance. SERI 2020b: 7.

201 Swiss Federal Council 2011: 8843.

202 Lienhard 2026: 29; §7(3) RIPA; §3(6) SIAA; §2 RIPO.

203 Lienhard 2026: 18; 22; 29.

204 Budget Flagship Initiative: 2021: CHF 11.5M; 2022: CHF 8.6M; 2023: CHF 17.8M; 2024: CHF 9.6M. Innosuisse 2023; Innosuisse 2025a: 25.

205 This is in line with the ERI Dispatch 2025–2028, which mentions the contributions of the instrument to overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic and tackling issues of sustainable development. It also foresees a detailed evaluation of the Flagship Initiative until 2028. Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 27; 40; 43; 110; see also SERI 2022: 39. Note that the SSC previously pointed out the need to address the aspect of sustainable development more clearly in Innosuisse’s funding activities. SSC 2022a. On the issue of Social Innovation, cf. chapter 2.3.

## 5 Fit of the funding portfolio in its environment

### Evaluation question II: How does the funding portfolio fit in with its environment<sup>206?</sup>

This question is closely linked with evaluation question IV.2 on “complementarities, gaps or overlaps within the Innosuisse funding portfolio or with other offerings in the overall innovation system (regional, cantonal, national, international)”, which is answered in chapter 7. The following section provides a general assessment of the embedding of the Innosuisse portfolio in its environment.

Innosuisse’s funding portfolio offers added value and is complementary to **cantonal and regional** innovation promotion programmes through its national reach and focus on science-based innovation. The funding instruments of the New Regional Policy (NRP), including the Regional Innovation Systems (RIS), represent an important interface between the national level and the regions/cantons. Together with SECO, Innosuisse has implemented internal contact points for the individual RIS regions and is also in regular dialogue with the cantons of Aargau and Zurich, which are currently not integrated in the RIS system. Furthermore, Innosuisse is in contact with mentors from cantonal innovation promotion offices, who advise SMEs and other innovation stakeholders about funding opportunities according to the “no-wrong-door” approach. Finally, together with the SECO, the Conference of Cantonal Departments of Economic Affairs and an annually changing canton, Innosuisse co-organises “Innoday”, a networking event that brings the different public innovation funding actors together.<sup>207</sup>

The expert interviews showed that these collaborations between national, regional, and cantonal levels are considered as crucial. There is some additional potential for companies in rural areas to become more strongly involved in Innosuisse projects. The RIS could contribute to the achievement of this goal.<sup>208</sup> The funding approach between the NRP/RIS and Innosuisse is considered to be complementary: while Innosuisse fosters science-based innovation on a national scale, NRP/RIS have a broader understanding of innovation and focus on demand- and need-driven services of SMEs within cantons and regions.<sup>209</sup>

On the **national** level, Innosuisse is complementary to departmental research. While Innosuisse focuses on the promotion of science-based innovation for industry and society, departmental research has the task to enable research and innovation for the needs of the federal administration. Innosuisse is mainly relying on the bottom-up approach (with the Flagship Initiative as an exception), while departmental research has a thematic mandate. In order to identify potential overlaps, coordination within the Interdepartmental Coordination Committee for Federal Government Research (KoorA-RF) is key.<sup>210</sup> In terms of the value chain, Innosuisse’s market-orientation complements the SNSF approach, which focuses on (use-inspired) basic research. As the SSC has previously noted, BRIDGE is particularly important to bridge the gap in the value chain between the SNSF and Innosuisse.<sup>211</sup> Finally, the Swiss Confederation may support infrastructures which provide knowledge and technology transfer. This includes the Switzerland Innovation Parks and technology competence centres of national importance (according to §15 RIPA). This institutional funding complements the Innosuisse portfolio, which does not provide support for infrastructure.<sup>212</sup>

206 The following aspects should be taken into account: innovation system as a whole; principles of innovation policy in Switzerland; distribution of tasks as well as delimitations in relation to the cantons/regions, the SNSF, departmental research and international programmes (including European Framework Programmes). Technology Competence Centres according to §15(3c) RIPA might be considered as well.

207 Innosuisse 2026: 29–30.

208 Expert interviews with Martinecz Fehér 2025; Klöpper 2025; Collaud 2025; Kollbrunner/Weber 2025.

209 Innosuisse 2026: 29; expert interview Kollbrunner/Weber 2025.

210 Expert interview Herrmann 2025. See also Swiss Federal Council 2024a; Swiss Federal Council 2025b.

211 In the context of the consultation of the ERI Dispatch for the years 2025–2028 the SSC has pointed out that the funding for BRIDGE should be increased and the participation of UAS in this scheme should be further promoted. SSC 2023a: 16–17.

212 Cf. SSC 2024. On the issue of infrastructure, see also Technopolis 2026: 30.

**International** programmes are key for the Swiss innovation system as they provide networking and innovation funding opportunities on European and global scales. Due to their size, the European Framework Programmes are of particular importance. In comparison with Innosuisse, they have a stronger tendency towards top-down funding opportunities and mission-oriented R&I, even though bottom-up funding instruments play an important role as well. Furthermore, the EU FPs “support innovation activities across extended spans of Technology Readiness Levels (TRL)”. They also provide direct funding to companies and other non-academic stakeholders (e.g., citizens, practitioners, NGOs, cities, etc.).<sup>213</sup> Innosuisse represents Switzerland in the Eureka network, to facilitate dedicated funding opportunities. Innosuisse is also conducting bilateral innovation projects with foreign funding agencies. The Swiss participation in the Interreg programme, which supports regional R&I across borders, is coordinated by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO. Overall, the international programmes are highly complementary to Innosuisse due to their geographical scope and different funding approaches.

From a **systemic** view, the Innosuisse portfolio fits well into the innovation environment. There is a clear division of responsibilities with other funding programmes (subsidiarity). The bottom-up orientation guarantees the autonomy of the actors. Cooperation is organised on the cantonal and regional level through the NRP/RIS approach and on the national level through the Interdepartmental Coordination Committee for Federal Government Research (KoorA-RF). Innosuisse is representing Switzerland in international funding programmes and actively involved in the European Network of Innovation Agencies TAF’TIE, which it chaired in 2024. The high success rate of Swiss researchers and innovators in European R&I programmes demonstrates that the Swiss innovation system, including Innosuisse, contributes to international competitiveness and excellence.

213 Technopolis 2026: 29–30.

## 6 Mandates from the Federal Council

**Evaluation question III: How are mandates from the Federal Council (special/topic-specific programmes & national support initiatives)<sup>214</sup> integrated into Innosuisse’s funding portfolio respectively handled as a mandate or an additional activity?**

According to §7(3) RIPA, the “Federal Council may give re-search funding institutions and Innosuisse, individually or jointly, the task of implementing special programmes or topic-specific funding and support programmes.” §41(5) stipulates that the Federal Council “shall coordinate the planning and implementation of national support initiatives in the field of research and innovation which, due to their organisational and financial consequences cannot be implemented within the standard support activities of the research funding institutions and Innosuisse.”<sup>215</sup>

The table below provides an overview of special/topic-specific programmes and national support initiatives, which the Federal Council has mandated to Innosuisse since 2018. In the case of the SCCER, the mandate was given to CTI already in 2013 and subsequently taken over by Innosuisse in 2018.

214 Special programmes and topic-specific funding programmes relate to §7(3) RIPA, national support initiatives relate to §41(5) RIPA.

215 Emphasis added by SSC.

Programme	Duration	Implementation partners	Legal basis	Implementation
Swiss Competence Centers for Energy Research SCCER	2013–2020	CTI (2013–2017), Innosuisse (2018–2020), SNSF	§7(3) RIPA	Funding for the establishment of thematic competence centres. Project funding (innovation projects). Joint activities between competence centres.
Impulse Programme “Digitalization”	2019–2020	Innosuisse	§7(3) RIPA	Implementation of the “Manufacturing Technologies” programme, which consisted in dedicated digitalisation calls (top-down), based on the Innosuisse project funding (bottom-up). The focus was on bigger consortia with several research and implementation partners, and projects with an explorative character. Promotion of digitalisation in 3 SCCER programmes (see above).
Federal Funding Programme for COVID-19 Medicine	2021	Federal Office of Public Health FOPH, Innosuisse	§41(5) RIPA	Cooperation between FOPH (lead) and Innosuisse. The FOPH decided on the funding contributions, while Innosuisse was responsible for the technical aspects on behalf of the FOPH and managed the pool of experts for evaluating the projects.
Impulse Programme “Innovationskraft Schweiz”	2021–2023	Innosuisse	§7(3) RIPA, with adaption of §30 RIPO <sup>216</sup>	Implementation via two measures: 1. Innovation projects: companies’ own contribution could be limited to 30% (instead of 50%) of the project costs and the cash contribution that the company normally makes to its research partners could be waived in individual cases. 2. Support of structural change, disruptive or radical innovation via consulting services for the development of new business models or radical innovation projects: the own contribution could be limited to 20% of the project costs.
Swiss Quantum Initiative	2025–	Swiss Academies of Sciences, SNSF, Innosuisse	§41(5) RIPA	Implementation via BRIDGE (SNSF and Innosuisse) and further calls (Innosuisse).

Table 6: Special programmes / national support initiatives.

216 Adaption of RIPO as of 11 December 2020. The adaption concerned the possibility to set the implementation partners’ share of the project costs at less than 50%.

This analysis highlights that Innosuisse can take on various roles in carrying out (temporary) special programmes and national initiatives. It implements such programmes on its own or in cooperation with other institutions. In general, special programmes and national initiatives are based on the principles of the Innosuisse project funding, but can be combined with special measures, such as a lower cost contribution for implementation partners.<sup>217</sup> While they can set thematic priorities (digitalisation, energy, quantum), applicants are given considerable leeway in the design of their projects. In some cases, implementation partners benefit from special measures, such as the limitation of the cash contribution.

217 Cf. §1(2) RIPO.

# 7 Complementarities, gaps and overlaps

**Evaluation question IV.I: Are there significant complementarities, gaps or overlaps within the funding portfolio or with other offerings in the overall innovation system (regional, cantonal, national, international)?**

The SSC understands complementarities, gaps and overlaps as analytical rather than normative categories. A gap in Innosuisse's funding portfolio does therefore not necessarily have negative implications but may well be justified, e.g., because it is covered by other funding organisations. When looking at the overall innovation system, partial overlaps between instruments of different funding organisations can contribute to their complementarity, as will be shown in chapter 7.4. These interdependencies are taken into account in the following analysis.

Furthermore, the different dimensions of complementarities, gaps and overlaps will be considered, including:

- Position on the value chain (TRL)
- Design of the funding instruments (e.g., top-down vs. bottom-up)
- Thematical focus (e.g., civil, military)
- Geographical scope (cantonal, regional, national, international)
- Target group (academics, companies, practitioners, public bodies, civil society)

Since the evaluation question relates both to coherence within the Innosuisse portfolio and to the relationship between the Innosuisse portfolio and the overall innovation system, these two levels are treated separately.

## 7.1 Complementarities within the Innosuisse funding portfolio

Funding instruments within the Innosuisse portfolio cover a broad spectrum of the value chain (TRL 3–9). Training, networking, and coaching instruments can pave the way for academic partners, companies and other stakeholders towards innovation projects. Targeted support for start-ups complements existing instruments for companies and corresponds to the goals set by the Federal Council.<sup>218</sup> Overall, the Innosuisse portfolio is coherent, and the funding instruments complement each other well.

The figure below provides an overview of the Innosuisse portfolio, which aims at bringing science-based innovation to market implementation.

218 Swiss Federal Council 2025d: 2 (Target 2); Innosuisse 2026.

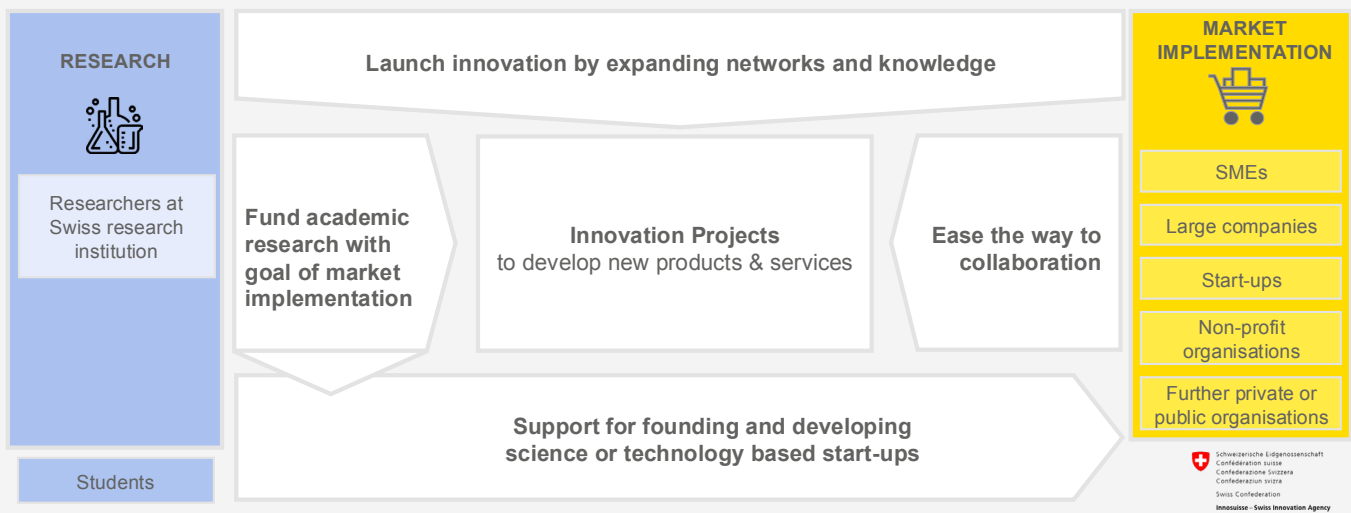


Figure 6: Overview of the Innosuisse funding instruments. Note that the Flagship Initiative is part of the Innovation Projects. Source: Innosuisse 2026: 8.

## 7.2 Overlaps within the Innosuisse funding portfolio

In some cases, overlaps can be found between the different instruments of the Innosuisse portfolio, as is highlighted in the table below. Note that the focus is on the national instruments of the Innosuisse portfolio. The (co-funded) international instruments, such as Eureka, are treated under chapter 7.4, as their scope goes beyond the federal innovation promotion, and additional funding organisations are involved.

Instruments	Overlap	Comment
Innovation projects without implementation partner / BRIDGE Discovery	Both instruments are targeting staff at HEIs or research centres and cover similar TRLs	Maximum funding periods and average success rates differ (Innovation projects without implementation partner: max. 18 months / 30–40%; BRIDGE Discovery: max. 48 months / 12.5%). An integration of Innovation projects without implementation partner into BRIDGE Discovery is planned for 2027. <sup>219</sup>
Flagship Initiative / Innovation projects with implementation partner	Individual projects under the Flagship scheme could also be funded via Innovation projects with implementation partner <sup>220</sup>	Differences exist regarding pre-defining a thematic area (Flagship) vs. a bottom-up approach (Innovation projects with implementation partner). The Flagship Initiative funds larger consortia with several projects that complement each other (clustering). It has a stronger focus on transdisciplinarity and aims at integrating different types of implementation partners (companies, communes, NGOs, etc.).
Mandates from the Federal Council / Flagship Initiative	Mandates from the Federal Council may be theme-oriented, as is the case with the Flagship Initiative	Mandates from the Federal Council are limited in time, policy-driven, come with a separate budget, and implementation varies. The Flagship Initiative is a regular funding instrument in the Innosuisse portfolio, topics are defined within Innosuisse, and the implementation is standardised.
Innovation Booster and Networking Event Series	Both instruments provide networking opportunities for common challenges to academic and non-academic stakeholders. Both instruments include events and workshops.	The Networking Event series can be seen as a precursor to the Innovation Booster. Due to budget restrictions, no Networking Event Series are offered from 2025 to 2028. The scheme will possibly be discontinued.

Table 7: Overlaps within the Innosuisse portfolio.

<sup>219</sup> Innosuisse 2026: 17. See also Swiss Federal Council 2025a: 55.

<sup>220</sup> Innosuisse 2026: 47.

## 7.3 Gaps within the Innosuisse funding portfolio

The following section highlights innovation promotion measures that are not covered by the Innosuisse portfolio and can therefore be described as “gaps”. As will become clear further below, most of these “gaps” are currently covered by other stakeholders. The overview is nevertheless of interest, as it illustrates the dependencies of the Swiss innovation system. For instance, if Switzerland were not to join future EU FPs, Innosuisse would suddenly have to step into the breach, as was already the case in the period 2021–2024 with the Swiss Accelerator.

- In contrast to international innovation programmes and departmental research, Innosuisse cannot provide *direct (project) funding to companies or other implementation partners*. The exception are start-up innovation projects, which may fund companies before market-entry, international innovation projects and transitional measures when Swiss companies are denied access to European Commission funding opportunities for individual projects (§19 RIPA)
- Innosuisse does not fund *infrastructure* projects, in contrast to Switzerland Innovation Parks, technology competence centres of national importance (§15 RIPA), or R&I programmes of the European Union<sup>221</sup>
- Innosuisse has no strong *mission-oriented funding instrument* within its portfolio. Thematic areas of the Flagship Initiative are defined by the Innosuisse Board of Directors and not directly linked to missions of the federal government. Innosuisse may be mandated by the Federal Council via special programmes and national initiatives, but those programmes are limited in time and often implemented bottom-up
- Innosuisse has no *ARPA-instrument*. The ARPA-approach is defined by a strong mission-orientation and an active project management by highly qualified programme managers with decision power in the selection, design and implementation of innovation projects<sup>222</sup>
- Innosuisse has no instruments for *pre-commercial procurement (PCP) or public procurement of innovative solutions (PPI)*, such as the *Small Business Innovation Research programme (SBIR/USA)*
- Start-ups can request an Innosuisse Certificate after completing the Core Coaching. However, Innosuisse does not provide actual innovation prizes, in contrast to the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology (EMPA Innovation Award), the Swiss Economic Forum AG (Swiss Technology Award) or the European Union (EIC Horizon Prizes)<sup>223</sup>
- Innosuisse has not yet implemented certified schemes, which would facilitate a *fast-track to European funding programmes* (i.e., EIC Plug-in schemes)
- Innosuisse does not provide direct access to *equity funding*, as is the case with the EIC Accelerator

221 Technopolis 2026: 30. Note that pilot and demonstration projects with infrastructure components can also be funded through certain offices within the federal administration (e.g., through the environmental technology promotion programme of the Federal Office for Environment FOEN).

222 SSC 2023b: 32.

223 The issue of prizes might be of interest in the context of the lack of visibility of Innosuisse by companies. Cf. Riederer et al. 2026: 25.

## 7.4 Complementarities and overlaps with other offerings in the overall innovation system

This section assesses the relationship between Innosuisse instruments (project funding, coaching, networking and dedicated support for start-ups) and other offerings in the overall innovation system. Chapter 5 has shown that, on the systemic level, there is a good distribution of responsibilities between the different innovation funders. Therefore, overlaps of certain aspects – for example, with regard to the target group or positioning on the value chain – often contribute to an overall complementarity. Overlaps and complementarities are therefore interdependent and will be dealt with together in the following.

### Cantons

Cantonal innovation promotion and the Innosuisse portfolio have overlapping target groups, especially regarding start-ups and SMEs.<sup>224</sup> Cantonal innovation promotion can also tackle TRLs similar to the ones from Innosuisse. When looking at the services, relevant overlaps with Innosuisse exist in consulting, coaching, training and networking activities, e.g., through cantonal innovation promotion offices and technology transfer offices at cantonal HEIs.<sup>225</sup> However, despite this wide range of services, Innosuisse is still relatively unknown among SMEs.<sup>226</sup> Furthermore, cantonal services differ greatly in focus and quality, and access is restricted to local stakeholders. The national scope of Innosuisse thus complements the cantonal innovation offerings.<sup>227</sup>

### New Regional Policy

An evaluation of the NRP for the period 2016–2023 highlighted the importance of enhancing “transparency and coordination, especially with Innosuisse”. The report also mentioned room for improvement regarding the coordination of (overlapping) activities between coaches of the RIS and the Innosuisse mentors. In some cases, coaches/mentors work for both RIS and Innosuisse.<sup>228</sup> In its Dispatch on Economic Promotion Activities 2024–2027, the Federal Council calls for the exploitation of synergies between the NRP and Innosuisse.<sup>229</sup> In the case of the RIS Western Switzerland, for instance, a stronger coordination between the coaching activities of Innosuisse and those of the regional “platinn” programme could be of added value to local companies.<sup>230</sup> In order to improve the coordination of activities between the different stakeholders, SERI and SECO are currently working on a mapping of the Swiss research and innovation landscape.

The geographical scopes of the NRP instruments and the Innosuisse portfolio differs. Major urban areas such as Zurich, Basel or Lausanne are not eligible for direct support via the NRP instruments. Nevertheless, urban areas are indirectly included in RIS, e.g., through collaborations of SMEs and start-ups with students and researchers from UAS. These connections, which may extend beyond the boundaries of RIS cantons, are crucial for the NRP. Through the European Union’s Interreg programmes, the NRP also supports cross-border projects with neighbouring regions and with partners throughout Europe.<sup>231</sup>

224 A (somewhat outdated) overview of the different target groups within cantonal innovation promotion is provided in SSIC 2015: 58–100.

225 Innosuisse 2026: 79–95. On the services of technology transfer offices at Swiss HEIs see swiTT 2025.

226 Rieder 2026: II.

227 Innosuisse 2026: 28–29.

228 SECO 2022b: 75; 179.

229 Swiss Federal Council 2023.

230 Expert interview Collaud 2025. The Association Réseau Innovation Suisse Occidentale (ARI-SO) is managing the RIS Western Switzerland (Suisse Occidentale) and offers strategic support in business and technological innovation. Within ARI-SO, dedicated coaching services for SMEs and start-ups are provided through the programmes “platinn” and “Alliance”. They have complementary objectives: “platinn” focuses on strengthening the innovation, competitiveness (e.g., through organisation, diversification, business, development and operationalisation of cooperations) and fundraising capabilities of companies. “Alliance” aims at forging links between companies, universities and laboratories in order to intensify technology transfer. ARI-SO 2025.

231 Technopolis 2026: 24–25.

NRP instruments focus on thematic areas of economic development, such as tourism and industry, with digitisation and sustainability as cross-cutting priorities. Other sectors for economic development projects include energy, education, health, agriculture and natural resources. While Innosuisse focuses on science-based innovation, NRP fosters innovation that “goes beyond the science and technology-based approach and also encompasses organisational innovations that create added value for companies.”<sup>232</sup>

## National level

**Swiss National Science Foundation:** The Swiss National Science Foundation has a strong focus on basic research but is also open for use-inspired and solution-oriented projects. The evaluation of the SNSF portfolio by the SSC in 2022 confirmed the complementarity of the missions of the SNSF and Innosuisse. The report also identified certain gaps in the value chain. With the BRIDGE programme, which is co-hosted by both the SNSF and Innosuisse, those gaps have at least partly been filled.<sup>233</sup> In BRIDGE, funding activities of the SNSF and Innosuisse therefore deliberately overlap, in order to achieve complementarity.

Besides BRIDGE, there are other SNSF instruments that may fund projects with links to science-based innovation. These instruments include the standard project funding, National Research Programmes<sup>234</sup>, NCCRs, Spark, ICT as well as the SOR4D programme, which is co-hosted by the SNSF and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC. An important difference between the SNSF and Innosuisse is that, while in both funding agencies projects undergo a rigorous competition for funding, the SNSF aims for equitable distribution across research domains. This is not the case for Innosuisse, where success rates may vary considerably across research domains/industry sectors (as discussed in chapter 2.4).

**Departmental research:** According to §16 RIPA, “departmental research provides results which enable the Federal Administration to fulfil its tasks”. Departmental research is highly heterogeneous, and to date there has been no in-depth overview of the various funding approaches. The following section takes a closer look at three areas of departmental research, without claiming to be exhaustive.

**Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN):** The FOEN awards research contracts in numerous environmental fields. Overlaps with Innosuisse may exist both regarding thematic areas that are funded as well as the TRL covered. There are significant differences between the top-down (FOEN) and bottom-up (Innosuisse) approaches, as well as in the requirements for collaboration with research partners.<sup>235</sup> Within departmental research, the FOEN does not launch competitive calls. The chart below provides an overview of the stakeholders and the funding volumes in environmental R&I. Note that the positioning of Innosuisse on the value chain is only an approximate indication, as Innosuisse also supports projects that are significantly closer to the market.

232 Swiss Federal Council 2023: 78; NRP 2025. Citation SECO 2025a, English translation by SSC.

233 SSC 2022b (Annex I): 33–34.

234 The National Research Programme “Smart Materials” (NRP 62) was a cooperation programme between the SNSF and CTI and an important basis for the development of the BRIDGE programme. Examples of other NRPs with aspects of science-based innovation are NRP 70: “Energy Turnaround”, NRP 79: “Advancing 3R – Research, Animals and Society”, as well as NRP 81: “Baukultur”. Expert interview Walther 2025.

235 The FOEN states: “Innosuisse also promotes environmentally relevant projects [...] and intends to align its funding activities even more closely with the Federal Council’s ‘Sustainable Development Strategy 2030’. Coordination with the FOEN’s departmental research is ensured by Innosuisse’s membership of the Advisory Body for Environmental Research (OFU) and the FOEN’s Expert Commission for Environmental Technology Promotion. In addition, there is an exchange of information on the projects promoted by Innosuisse in the environmental field. This cooperation avoids duplication and exploits synergies both at the technical level and between the various financing instruments.” FOEN 2024: 65, English translation by SSC.

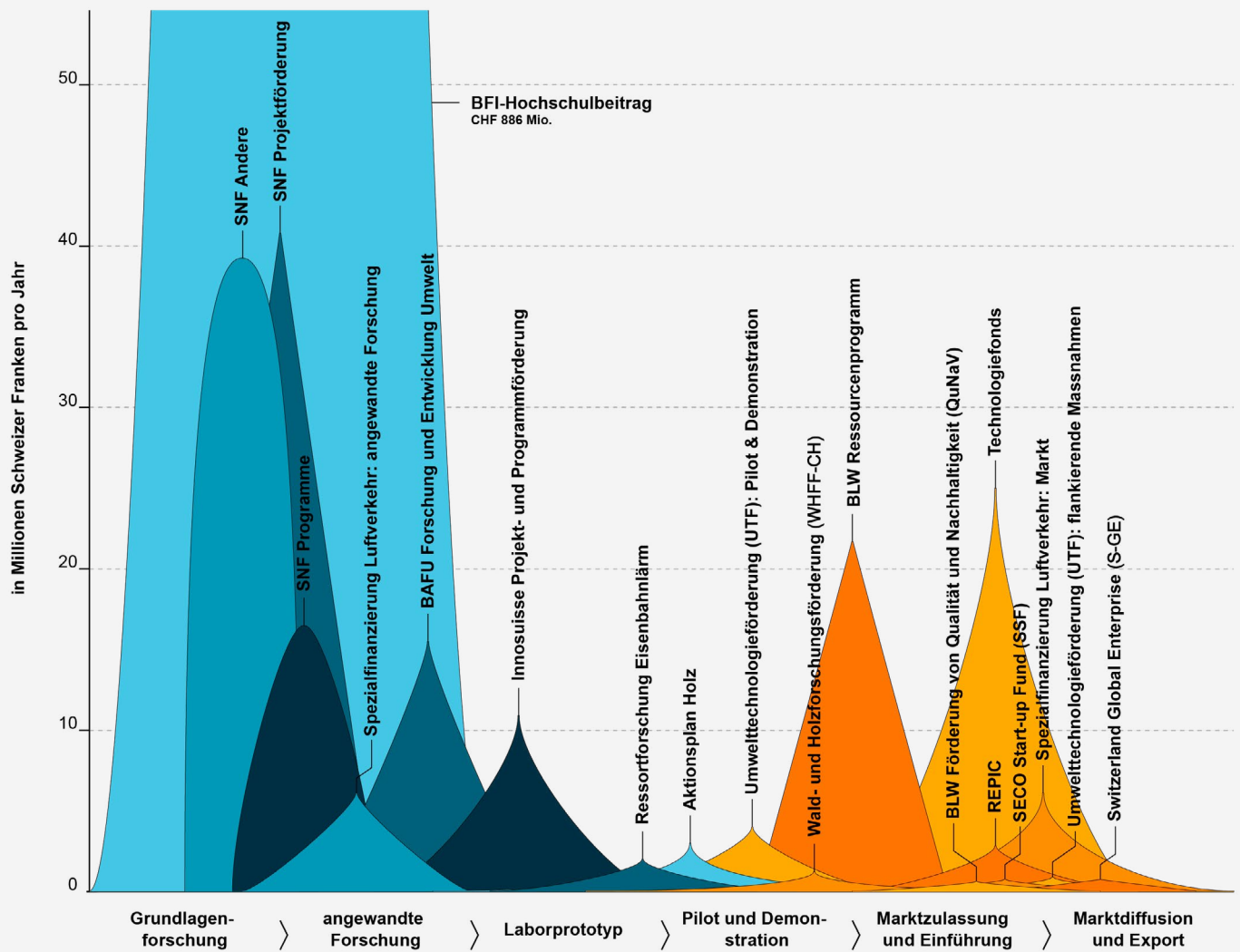


Figure 7: Federal promotion of Research and Innovation in the area of environment. Source: FOEN 2024: 64.

Based on §49 of the Federal Act on the Protection of the Environment, the FOEN also supports companies outside departmental research through environmental technology promotion (budget 2017–2021: CHF 21.4 million).<sup>236</sup> Regarding potential overlaps, the FOEN states that “Innosuisse funding can cover the same phase of the innovation chain, but it does not generally focus on environmental technologies (standard innovation projects, Swiss Accelerator, Start-up innovation projects). Innosuisse’s Flagship Initiative can set specific funding priorities in the field of environmental technology, for example in the 2023 call for proposals (‘Disruptive solutions for the transition to a net-zero world’).”<sup>237</sup>

*Federal Office for Energy (SFOE)*: Following the ending of the Swiss Competence Centers for Energy Research (SCCER) programme, the SFOE launched the new energy programme SWEET in 2021. SWEET is a mission-oriented instrument with the Energy Strategy 2050 as important reference point. It supports consortia with academic and non-academic stakeholders. Overlaps with the Flagship Initiative are to be found in the transdisciplinary approach and the pre-definition of topics. However, there are also notable differences: The SWEET programme is much more policy-driven and top-down oriented than the Flagship Initiative, where participants have considerable leeway in the project implementation. In contrast to the Flagship Initiative, the SWEET programme may also fund implementation partners.<sup>238</sup>

*Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG)*: The biggest part of the budget for departmental research in the domain of agriculture is reserved for the federal research institute Agroscope. As Agroscope conducts in-house research, there is little overlap with Innosuisse’s funding instruments. The same applies to the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL.

Within its departmental research activities, the FOAG has a yearly budget of around CHF 3.3 million for competitive calls for proposals.<sup>239</sup> Agricultural topics within the calls are broadly defined, meaning that project proposals tend to be bottom-up in nature. The involvement of research partners is a prerequisite. Therefore, overlaps with Innosuisse projects cannot be ruled out. In contrast to Innosuisse, the FOAG may fund implementation partners. These are mostly consulting organisations that provide support in knowledge transfer from projects results into (agricultural) practice. Furthermore, Innosuisse and FOAG are in regular contact via the Interdepartmental Coordination Committee for Federal Government Research (KoorA-RF).<sup>240</sup> As of 2025, the FOAG may also launch pilot and demonstration projects.<sup>241</sup>

Finally, FOAG has other project funding instruments under agricultural legislation that are outside departmental research. For instance, the “resource programme agriculture” (“Ressourcenprogramm Landwirtschaft”) that fosters innovative projects for the sustainable use of natural resources.<sup>242</sup> This scheme disposes of a considerable budget (2022: CHF 29.1 million; 2023: CHF 14.9 million).<sup>243</sup> Projects within this programme are practice-oriented and do not appear to be primarily focused on science-based innovation.<sup>244</sup>

236 FOEN 2023: 15.

237 FOEN 2023: 8.

238 SSC 2023b: 26–27.

239 FOAG 2024b: 47; expert interview Herrmann 2025.

240 Expert interview Herrmann 2025.

241 According to §13 of the Ordinance of 6 November 2024 on Agricultural Research (915.7), “pilot projects are projects that utilise scientific findings from research, are carried out on a practical scale and provide important insights for implementation in practice.” English translation by SSC. See also §119 of the Federal Act on Agriculture (910.1).

242 FOAG 2025a; FOAG 2025b.

243 FOAG 2024a. Tabelle 1: Projektkosten seitens BLW des Ressourcenprogramms im Jahr 2023. <https://2024.agrarbericht.ch/de/politik/regionale-und-branchenspezifische-programme/ressourcenprogramm>.

244 “Ressourcenprojekte (RP) funktionieren im Sinne eines ‘Bottom-up-Ansatzes’. Lokalen und regionalen Projektträgerschaften, bestehend aus Landwirten, kantonalen Behörden und der Forschung, wird ermöglicht, innovative Massnahmen in einer aussagekräftigen Breite anzuwenden und auf ihre Praxistauglichkeit zu testen. Ein zentrales Element der RP ist es, interessierten Landwirten die Möglichkeit zu bieten, mit neuen, ökologischen Produktionstechniken Erfahrungen auf dem eigenen Betrieb zu sammeln und durch entsprechende Programmbeiträge vor Zusatzkosten und ungedeckten Ernteausfallrisiken geschützt zu sein.” Swiss Federal Audit Office 2021.

## International innovation promotion

*European Framework Programmes/Digital Europe:* Programmes under the current EU Framework Programme Horizon Europe (2021–2027) fund innovation projects on similar TRL scales as Innosuisse. Apart from the different geographical scope (international vs. national), the instruments of Horizon Europe differ from those of Innosuisse both regarding the design and funding. The Flagship Initiative includes certain aspects of collaborative projects in the Global Challenges pillar of Horizon Europe, as both instruments are consortium-based and address societal challenges. Differences are nevertheless significant: collaborative projects under Horizon Europe have bigger consortia, provide funding for non-academic stakeholders, and are much more prescriptive than the Flagship Initiative. Innosuisse start-up projects include certain aspects of the EIC Accelerator (focus on start-ups, individual grants), but eligibility criteria of the Innosuisse instrument are stricter (only companies that are not yet established in the market) and no access to additional equity funding is provided.<sup>245</sup>

Digital Europe “targets mature technologies at TRL 7–9, focusing on demonstration, system prototyping, and market deployment phases.”<sup>246</sup> The focus of this programme therefore tends to be at a higher TRL level than that of Innosuisse, even though some overlaps on the value chain exist. The instruments of Digital Europe include infrastructure support and public procurement, which are not present within the Innosuisse portfolio. With “Simple Grants”, Digital Europe may provide direct funding to public and private entities.

*Interreg:* Interreg targets similar TRLs as Innosuisse (4–7) and addresses similar innovation actors (SMEs, larger companies, research partners). Unlike Innosuisse, Interreg “follows a top-down logic, where priorities are defined in programme documents aligned with the EU cohesion policy”. Furthermore, Interreg projects require the collaboration of entities from at least two different countries.<sup>247</sup>

*Eureka:* Access to the Eureka programme is provided via Innosuisse. Eureka’s funding instruments are therefore part of the Innosuisse portfolio. However, as the participation in Eureka is an additional mandate which goes beyond federal innovation promotion, the programme is listed separately here.

Eureka programmes target similar TRLs as the national instruments within the Innosuisse portfolio (4–7) and some of the instruments have similar designs (e.g., Eurostars and Innosuisse Innovation projects with implementation partner). Differences exist in terms of international orientation and the possibility of direct funding for implementation partners (up to 70%).

*Bilateral projects:* Similar to Eureka, the bilateral projects are part of the Innosuisse portfolio and at the same time go beyond federal innovation promotion, due to their international scope and the collaboration with foreign innovation agencies.

Bilateral projects overlap in the design with Innosuisse Innovation projects with implementation partner, as they tackle similar TRLs (4–7). However, Swiss implementation partners may receive funding up to 70% of the total project costs. The characteristic feature of bilateral cooperation is also a difference from Innosuisse’s standard innovation projects.

## Private sector

The present analysis focuses on public innovation support. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that overlaps with the private sector may exist regarding funding instruments and target stakeholders. This includes Venture Capital (focus on start-ups), foundations such as Gebert-Rüf or Kick (funding of innovation projects and coaching) and private consultancies (mentoring, networking and training services).<sup>248</sup>

<sup>245</sup> Technopolis 2026.

<sup>246</sup> Technopolis 2026: 27.

<sup>247</sup> Technopolis 2026: 24–26.

<sup>248</sup> Innosuisse 2026: 79–95.

## 7.5 Gaps with other offerings in the overall innovation system

The following innovation promotion instruments are currently restricted or completely inaccessible to Swiss stakeholders on cantonal, regional, national and international scale:

- *Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA):* The ARPA approach is based on highly skilled programme managers from industry, administration or academia, who are temporarily employed by an ARPA agency. During their term of office, which normally lasts 3–5 years, programme managers carry out ARPA projects in their field of expertise. They enjoy a high degree of independence with regard to call design, consortium selection and project implementation. The goal is to enable ground-breaking and mission-oriented technological development within a short period of time.

Examples of ARPA agencies in the USA include DARPA (US Department of Defense), ARPA-E (US Department of Energy), and ARPA-H (US Department of Health).<sup>249</sup> The European Commission is planning to launch an ARPA-pilot in the EIC scheme in 2026, which might be accessible to Swiss firms.<sup>250</sup> The ARPA-approach is also implemented or assessed by various European innovation agencies, which are sometimes collaborating with each other (MoU SPRIN-D and Bpifrance; MoU SPRIN-D and Vinnova).<sup>251</sup> There is currently no ARPA instrument in Switzerland. Aspects of the ARPA approach are included in the Innosuisse scheme for highly qualified individuals, which aims at the “transfer of knowledge and competencies between academia and industry”.<sup>252</sup> Such transfers are also an essential task of ARPA programme managers.

- *Small Business Innovation Research programme (SBIR):* The SBIR approach originates from the USA and is a form of pre-commercial procurement for SMEs. The federal authorities issue calls regarding a specific problem of public interest, e.g., in the fields of infrastructure, agriculture, or health. Companies can propose adequate solutions. The government only funds R&D related to this solution but gives no guarantee to purchase a final product.

Like the ARPA instrument, SBIR programmes are traditionally closely related to departmental research. Several national funding agencies outside the USA have implemented the SBIR approach in their portfolio, including the Netherlands, Australia and Japan.<sup>253</sup>

249 SSC 2023b: 32.

250 Greenacre 2025a.

251 SPRIN-D 2025; Bergstrand 2025.

252 Innosuisse 2026: 18. In its self-description, Innosuisse mentions the promotion of highly qualified individuals as one of the development opportunities for the future (ibid.).

253 Link 2024; SSTC 2009: 46–48.

# 8 Adjustments of the Innosuisse funding portfolio and recommendations

**Evaluation question IV.II: Does Innosuisse’s funding portfolio need to be adjusted (regrouping, discontinuation, implementation of new or adaptation of existing instruments, cooperation / coordination)?**

Based on its analysis and the assessment of the evaluation questions, the SSC provides the following recommendations<sup>254</sup>:

## 8.1 Strategic considerations

### I. Provide an analysis of the success rates and their impact on the individual funding instruments and the Innosuisse portfolio as a whole

Success rates within an instrument (e.g., for different disciplinary groups) and between different instruments provide important insights about competitiveness, attractiveness and accessibility of funding schemes. They also provide key information on budget allocation and potential risks associated with a portfolio adjustment. If success rates are too high, competition may be too low. If success rates are too low, funding schemes may lose their appeal and promising project ideas may no longer be submitted, especially when insufficient feedback is provided by the funding agency.<sup>255</sup>

Against the backdrop of current challenges such as austerity measures and Switzerland’s uncertain participation in the European Research Framework Programmes, Innosuisse has to be prepared for major adaptations of its portfolio. This includes the potential regrouping, discontinuation and adaptation of existing instruments, the implementation of new instruments, as well as decisions in budget allocation.

The SSC recommends conducting a study on the direct and indirect effects of success rates within the Innosuisse portfolio. This would provide an important basis for further decision-making.

### II. Conduct a strategic assessment of dual use and military R&D

Innosuisse has traditionally provided little support for dual use and military R&D, although no specific legal restrictions exist<sup>256</sup> (unlike the EU FPs, which have been so far explicitly focusing on civil research and innovation). With the idea of launching a Flagship Initiative on topics that serve defence priorities, Innosuisse considers a strategic shift.

The SSC recommends that Innosuisse provide an assessment of the risks and opportunities of dual use and military R&D. Opportunities may include a closer cooperation with departmental research and spill-over effects for civil applications. Risks include ethical concerns, knowledge security, asymmetric R&D capabilities between civilian and military research entities, as well as less support for civil innovation.

### III. Provide an in-depth analysis of direct subsidies and individual grants for companies

Innosuisse has no mandate to provide direct contributions to companies established in the market, except in times when “Swiss companies are denied access to European Commission funding opportunities for individual projects”.<sup>257</sup> The permanent establishment of an instrument providing direct subsidies to firms would require an adoption of the legal basis and could influence the Innosuisse portfolio as a whole. Standard Innovation projects with implementation partner, for instance, could then become less attractive.

However, given the current challenges, the option of direct subsidies should not be ruled out. Figures from the Swiss Accelerator show that there is a great demand for such funding opportunities in Switzerland. In the scenario of a renewed non-association under future EU FPs, Swiss companies would again be excluded from individual grants. This would make the question of a longer-term solution at national level a pressing one.<sup>258</sup> An examination of direct R&D subsidies by Innosuisse has also been suggested by the recent studies of Barjak et al. (2026) and Rieder et al. (2026).<sup>259</sup>

<sup>254</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the recommendations are addressed to SERI, which commissioned the evaluation.

<sup>255</sup> On the effects of success rates see Janger et al. 2019: 21; Langfeldt et al. 2024; EC 2025a: 65. On the issue of feedback to applicants by Innosuisse see Barjak et al. 2026: 83 and Rieder et al. 2026: 15.

<sup>256</sup> As long as projects “follow the principles of scientific integrity and good scientific practice”, as stipulated under §19.6 RIPA.

<sup>257</sup> §19.3<sup>ter</sup> RIPA.

<sup>258</sup> Innosuisse 2026, Annex 1: KPI Development 2018–2024; Technopolis 2026: 38; SERI 2024: 64.

<sup>259</sup> Barjak et al. 2026: 92–93 (with a focus on sustainable innovations); Rieder et al. 2026: 28 (with a focus on small companies).

Against this backdrop, the SSC recommends assessing different options and scenarios of implementing a permanent scheme which provides (individual) grants to companies. Such a scheme must be compatible with both the Innosuisse portfolio and the Swiss innovation system as a whole. The starting point for these considerations could be the evaluation of the Swiss Accelerator.

## 8.2 Regrouping of existing instruments

### IV. Shift “Innovation projects without implementation partner” to “BRIDGE Discovery”

The SSC welcomes the planned shift of the Innosuisse instrument “Innovation projects without implementation partner” to the BRIDGE Discovery scheme (for 2027). Both instruments are targeting staff at HEIs or research centres and cover similar TRLs.<sup>260</sup> The integration would prevent potential duplications in funding, contribute to the coherence of the Innosuisse portfolio and bring the BRIDGE scheme closer to the market. In addition, combining the two instruments could also increase the success rate.

In line with previous recommendations by the SSC, particular importance should be attached to the participation of UAS in the (revised) BRIDGE programme.<sup>261</sup>

## 8.3 Discontinuation of existing instruments

### V. Potential discontinuation of networking, coaching and training instruments

Innosuisse’s networking, coaching and training instruments overlap with services provided by cantonal location promotion offices, technology transfer offices of HEIs, and private entities.<sup>262</sup> In view of potential budget cuts, the SSC recommends that Innosuisse assess whether some of these instruments could be discontinued, especially when they are not directly related to the preparation of innovation projects.<sup>263</sup> Such measures should not be at the expense of regions where no alternative services are available, such as rural and/or mountain areas.

## 8.4 Implementation of new instruments

### VI. Support the introduction of an ARPA pilot

In its report on mission-oriented R&I in Switzerland (2023), the SSC provided an in-depth analysis on the ARPA-approach. This instrument promises ground-breaking and mission-oriented technological development within a short period of time and is strongly based on active project management. As such an instrument has been successful in other countries – particularly the USA – and is missing in the Swiss R&I system, the SSC recommended to implement an ARPA pilot at Innosuisse. This recommendation was subsequently taken up in the ERI Dispatch 2025–2028.<sup>264</sup> The present portfolio analysis of Innosuisse has confirmed that there is still a gap in Swiss innovation promotion when it comes to ARPA.<sup>265</sup> In contrast, the EU and national innovation agencies in Europe are stepping up their efforts to implement ARPA instruments.

260 Innosuisse classifies BRIDGE Discovery as TRL 2-5 and Innovation projects without implementation partner as TRL 3-6 (Innosuisse 2026: 42; 59).

261 SSC 2022b: 25; SSC 2023a: 25.

262 In its position statement regarding the amendment of the Innosuisse Contribution Ordinance (2022), the SSC already emphasised the importance of a stronger collaboration between Innosuisse and HEIs in the field of entrepreneurship training. SSC 2022a: 3–4.

263 Note that the Networking Event Series instrument has already been discontinued until 2028 due to budget constraints. It will probably be permanently removed from the Innosuisse portfolio thereafter.

264 SSC 2023b; Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 110 (German version).

265 Innosuisse 2026: 13. See also Barjak et al. 2026: 107 (Appendix 10).

At the time of the present analysis, there are indications that an ARPA pilot will be launched within the SWEET programme of the Swiss Federal Office of Energy (departmental research). The SSC recommends that Innosuisse support the involved stakeholders in their efforts to implement such a pilot, e.g., in the area of evaluation and commercialisation. If the pilot is successful, aspects of the ARPA-approach might be also implemented into the Innosuisse portfolio.<sup>266</sup>

## 8.5 Adaptions of existing instruments

### VII. Removing barriers for implementation partners

Innosuisse's standard funding for Innovation projects with implementation partner is a successful approach that should be maintained. However, hurdles for implementation partners to participate in such projects are relatively high. They must contribute 40 to 60% of the eligible project costs, including a minimum of 5% cash contribution.

In view of declining innovation activities of Swiss firms and the difficult economic environment, the SSC recommends removing barriers for the participation of implementation partners. This could be achieved, for example, by waiving the cash contribution.<sup>267</sup> Before implementing dedicated measures, their potential risks should be assessed (e.g., undesired side-effects such as declining success rates due to increased demand and lower budgets).

### VIII. Greater involvement of implementation partners from practice, society and public bodies

Innosuisse traditionally focuses on academic stakeholders and companies. Other potential implementation partners such as NGOs, practitioners<sup>268</sup> and public bodies are currently underrepresented. While the Flagship Initiative explicitly addresses such stakeholders, there is still untapped potential here within standard project funding. Widening the scope of implementation partners would also contribute to targeting aspects of society and sustainable development, as provided for in the legal basis and strategic objectives of Innosuisse.<sup>269</sup>

The SSC recognises the great importance of companies, especially SMEs, for Innosuisse's funding activities and science-based innovation. At the same time, the Council recommends that Innosuisse take appropriate measures to more strongly involve additional implementation partners. This could be achieved, among other things, by strengthening Social Innovation<sup>270</sup> and removing financial barriers, as recommended further above.

266 There may be synergies between the ARPA approach and the promotion of highly qualified individuals; the latter is mentioned by Innosuisse as one of the development opportunities for the future (Innosuisse 2026: 18). There might also be cooperations between Innosuisse and other European innovation agencies, as has been done by SPRIN-D, Bpifrance and Vinnova (SPRIN-D 2025; Bergstrand 2025). Finally, it should be considered that a genuine ARPA scheme is highly demanding in terms of agency resources and capabilities. Therefore, compromising on the instrument's core design and requirement carries a significant risk that the instrument will become ineffective.

267 Barjak et al. mention the option of "waving the corporate cash contribution of firms in collaborative Innosuisse projects under certain conditions, e.g., for micro-enterprises and small companies" as one outcome of their analysis (Barjak et al. 2026: 96; see also Rieder et al. 2026: 14; 26 for a similar conclusion). National Councillor Franziska Ryser submitted a parliamentary motion which proposes the assessment of "Innovation vouchers, which cover part or all of the contribution to be made by companies in an Innosuisse project, thereby strengthening the innovative capacity of SMEs". Ryser 2025. National Councillor Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter submitted an interpellation which raised the option of "a significant reduction or temporary waiver of cash contributions". Schneider-Schneiter 2025.

268 E.g., from hospitals, law enforcing organisations, first responders.

269 Lienhard 2026: II; 19–20.

270 Cf. §2 RIPA, which explicitly stipulates the societal dimension of innovation. Foray 2025a notes that social innovations are often generated and diffused where markets are missing and therefore cannot easily be validated by the market: "La découverte économique et l'expérimentation entrepreneuriale sont remplacées par une forme d'expérimentation sociale" (262–263). Against this backdrop, Innosuisse could support partnerships between firms, academics, NGOs, practitioners and communities to design and rigorously test social innovations through experiments in a real-world setting.

## IX. Link Innosuisse instruments to international funding programmes

National and international innovation agencies increasingly link their funding instruments to the European Framework Programmes. This offers the opportunity for simplified access and higher success rates. One relevant example for Switzerland is the Horizon Europe Plug-in scheme, which allows funding bodies to grant projects in their portfolio direct entry to the full application stage of the EIC Accelerator.<sup>271</sup>

The SSC recommends that Innosuisse certify suitable instruments from its portfolio for the Horizon Europe Plug-in scheme, to simplify access of Swiss stakeholders towards the EIC Accelerator. Potential instruments include Innovation projects with implementation partner, Start-up Innovation Projects, Start-up Coaching and BRIDGE Proof of Concept (PoC).<sup>272</sup>

## X. Foster alignment of the Flagship Initiative with cross-cutting topics of federal law, planning instruments and strategies of the Federal Council

The Flagship Initiative gives Innosuisse the opportunity to foster innovation in pre-defined areas. With this, cross-cutting topics that are enshrined in federal law (e.g., RIPA) as well as objectives of the Federal Council, such as sustainable development or digitalisation, can be proactively addressed. The Flagship Initiative also promotes transdisciplinary cooperation with actors who are not at the forefront of other project funding (e.g., municipalities, practitioners, NGOs, etc.). The SSC therefore considers that the Flagship Initiative – which has a comparatively small budget – is a useful addition to Innosuisse’s strongly bottom-up-oriented funding portfolio. From a legal perspective, an explicit anchoring of the Flagship Initiative in federal law may not be strictly necessary but would nevertheless be desirable.

The SSC recommends that Innosuisse align the Flagship Initiative more closely with the cross-cutting topics of federal law (RIPA) and the planning instruments (ERI Dispatch, objectives and strategies of the Federal Council). Innosuisse could consult with SERI and other federal offices as early as the topic identification phase for new Flagship Initiatives. The Interdepartmental Coordination Committee for Federal Government Research (KoorA-RF) would offer an adequate platform for such an intensified exchange. This approach aligns with the Federal Council’s strategy to strengthen the coordination between Innosuisse and departmental research.<sup>273</sup>

## XI. Facilitate access to risk finance / equity funding

Access to venture capital is a significant hurdle for the commercialisation and upscaling of innovations. While funding programmes such as the EIC Accelerator combine project funding for highly innovative SMEs and start-ups with access to equity investment, Innosuisse lacks such a mechanism. The study by Barjak et al. (2026) proposed a stronger involvement of Swiss pension fund assets in the funding of start-ups. It also pointed to the possibility of an innovation fund to mobilise “additional private funding for start-ups alongside public funds”.<sup>274</sup>

Against this backdrop, the SSC recommends that Innosuisse intensify its support to companies in accessing equity investment. Potential measures include:

- Improve visibility of companies through the Innosuisse website, mailing and matchmaking events
- Provide quality labels for companies funded and coached by Innosuisse
- Support companies for a “spin-out path”<sup>275</sup>

271 Mittal 2025; TAFITIE 2023.

272 Mittal 2025: 18–21.

273 Swiss Federal Council 2024a. Note that the ERI Dispatch 2025–2028 foresees a detailed evaluation of the Flagship Initiative until 2028. Swiss Federal Council 2024b: 110 (German version).

274 Barjak et al. 2026: 91.

275 On the option of a spin-out see also Rieder et al. 2026: 21; 28–29.

## 8.6 Cooperation/ coordination

### **XII. Improve collaboration and coordination with departmental research**

In accordance with previous recommendations of the SSC, the Federal Council decided in 2024 to optimise the coordination among departmental research, Innosuisse, the SNSF and the ETH Board. Dedicated measures include strengthening the Interdepartmental Coordination Committee for Federal Government Research (KoorA-RF) and the further development of the ARAMIS database.<sup>276</sup>

On this basis, the SSC recommends that Innosuisse further intensify its cooperation with departmental research, where appropriate. Innosuisse could support federal offices in their collaboration with companies and the commercialisation of innovations.<sup>277</sup> In addition, more systematic monitoring via ARAMIS could reveal overlaps, gaps and complementarities in innovation projects funded by the different actors in the field.

<sup>276</sup> SSC 2023b; Swiss Federal Council 2024a.

<sup>277</sup> One example is the SWEET programme of the Federal Office of Energy. Expert interview Haselbacher 2025.

## 9 Annex

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## Expert interviews

Andreas Haselbacher, Technical Specialist, SWEET Programme, Swiss Federal Office of Energy (SFOE), 14.05.2025

Anita Martinecz Fehér, Project Manager, Office for Economic Affairs, Canton of Zurich, 14.08.2025

Christof Klöpffer, CEO, Basel Area Business & Innovation, 03.09.2025

Doris Herrmann, Head, Sector Research, Consulting, Innovation, Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG), 28.08.2025

Margaret Collaud, Program and Administration Director, Association Réseau Innovation Suisse Occidentale (ARI-SO), 02.09.2025

Markus Gusset, Research Manager, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), 22.05.2025

Mélanie Attinger, Scientific Advisor, Swiss Federal Office of Transport (FOT), 03.09.2025

Pascal Walther, Head, Unit National Research Programme, Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), 27.08.2025

Sabine Kollbrunner, Co-Head, Jasmin Weber, Scientific Advisor, Department of Regional and Spatial Planning Policy, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), 18.06.2025

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## Abbreviations and glossary

		RIPO	Research and Innovation Promotion Ordinance
ARAMIS	Administration Research Actions Management Information System	RIS	Regional Innovation Systems
ARI-SO	Western Switzerland Innovation Network (Réseau Innovation Suisse Occidentale)	SA	Federal Act on Financial Assistance and Subsidies
ARPA	Advanced Research Projects Agency	SCCER	Swiss Competence Centers for Energy Research
CHF	Swiss Francs	SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
CRIS	Current Research Information Systems	SERI	State Secretariat of Education, Research and Innovation
CSEM	Swiss Centre for Electronics and Microtechnology	SEVAL	Swiss Evaluation Society
CTI	Commission for Technology and Innovation	SFOE	Swiss Federal Office of Energy
EAER	Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research	SHK	Swiss Conference of Higher Education Institutions
EEN	Enterprise Europe Network	SIAA	Federal Act on the Swiss Innovation Agency (Innosuisse Act)
EIC	European Innovation Council	SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
ERC	European Research Council	SNSF	Swiss National Science Foundation
ERI	Education, Research and Innovation	SOR4D	Solution-oriented Research for Development
ETH-Domain	Domain of the Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology	SRPIN-D	Federal Agency for Disruptive Innovation (Germany)
EU FP	European Framework Programme	SSC	Swiss Science Council (1965–1999; 2018–present)
FDEA	Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research	SSIC	Swiss Science and Innovation Council (2014–2017)
FOAG	Federal Office for Agriculture	SSTC	Swiss Science and Technology Council (2000–2013)
FOEN	Federal Office for the Environment	TRL	Technology Readiness Level
FOPH	Federal Office of Public Health	UAS	Universities of Applied Sciences
FOT	Federal Office of Transport		
FSO	Federal Statistical Office		
GS-EAER	General Secretariat of the Swiss Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research		
HEI	Higher Education Institution		
IICT	Investigator Initiated Clinical Trials		
Innosuisse	Swiss Innovation Agency		
KoorA-RF	Interdepartmental Coordination Committee for Federal Government Research		
KTT	Knowledge and Technology Transfer		
MSCA	Marie-Skłodowska-Curie Actions		
NCCR	National Centres of Competence in Research		
NRP	New Regional Policy		
NRP	National Research Programme		
OFU	Advisory Body for Environmental Research (Beratendes Organ für Umweltforschung)		
ParIA	Federal Act on the Federal Assembly		
RIPA	Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation		

# Programme Innosuisse Workshop



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
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Federal Department of Economic Affairs,  
Education and Research EAER  
**Swiss Science Council SSC**  
Secretariat

## Workshop Portfolio Analysis Innosuisse

**Date:** 18 September 2025  
**Venue:** State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI  
Einsteinstrasse 2, 3005 Bern, Room 01.132 (Medienzentrum)

**Participants SSC:** Sabine Süssstrunk (President), Dominique Foray (Member), Bryn Roberts (Member), Lukas Zollinger (Head Secretariat), Adèle Gaveau (Secretariat), Joël Graf (Secretariat), Sven Hug (Secretariat)

**Participants Innosuisse:** André Kudelski (President Board), Kristina Shea (Member Board), Christoph Rüttimann (Chairman Innovation Council), Dominique Gruhl-Bégin (CEO Office), Berenice Iten (Office), Kathrin Kramer (Office), Annika Nussbaum (Office), Marc Pauchard (Office), Gérald Walti (Office)

## AGENDA

Time	Agenda Item
08.30-09.00 (30')	<b>Registration and coffee</b>
09.00-09.10 (10')	Welcome and aim of the event <i>Sabine Süssstrunk (President SSC)</i>
09.10-09.20 (10')	Input presentation Innosuisse <i>André Kudelski (President Innosuisse)</i>
09.20-10.20 (60')	Context: National and international challenges of the Swiss innovation ecosystem and its effects on the Innosuisse portfolio <i>SSC / Innosuisse</i>
10.20-10.45 (25')	<b>Coffee break</b>
10.45-11:45 (60')	Gaps, overlaps, complementarities: Characteristics of the Innosuisse funding instruments and development opportunities <i>SSC / Innosuisse</i>
11.45-12.45 (60')	Final round: Open questions <i>SSC / Innosuisse</i>
12:45-13:00 (15')	Synthesis and closing remarks <i>Sabine Süssstrunk (President SSC)</i>
13:00	<b>Lunch at restaurant "Essort"</b> (Jubiläumsstrasse 97, 3005 Bern)



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