



FAQ: Flagship Initiative – Strive for systemic innovation

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1 Important documents

[Guide for applicants](#)

[Funding Ordinance](#)

[Explanatory report on Innosuisse's Funding Ordinance](#)

[The Swiss Innovation Agency's implementing provisions for funding innovation projects](#)

[Research and Innovation Promotion Ordinance RIPO](#)

2 General questions

Q: What are the general criteria to participate in the Flagship Initiative?

A: Please see the Guide for applicants that has been published on the Innosuisse website [Guide for applicants](#), all details concerning the Flagship Initiative are available in that specific document. Additional questions have been answered in the present Q&A.

Q: Is there a thematic focus of the Flagship Initiative?

A: Yes. The Flagship topics of the first call have been published on the Innosuisse website [Flagship topics of the first call](#).

Q: Is there a matchmaking event planned?

A: We do not plan such an event for the call 2021. However, you have the possibility to contact the [EEN - an international network for SMEs and Start-ups](#) team of Innosuisse which will help you to find the right partners.

Q: If I currently have an Innosuisse grant can I apply for this programme?

A: Yes. It is possible to apply within the framework of the Flagship topics even if another application has already been granted. However, the same project will not be funded twice and you must have the resources and capacity to carry out two projects at the same time.

Q: What is the main difference of the Flagship Initiative compared to standard innovation projects? (In particular in terms of the contribution of the companies).

A: The Flagship Initiative supports large transdisciplinary projects, which aim to innovate a system in the long term. Generally, Flagships are larger in terms of budget, duration and scope compared to innovation projects. Also must a consortium consist of at least three research partners, of which at least one is an UAS or a university of teacher education, and at least two implementation partners. To summarise, a flagship is more comprehensive, larger in terms of budget and duration, tackle challenges more holistically and involves on average more partners than a regular innovation project.

Regarding the financial contribution of the companies/implementation partners please refer to point 5 of this FAQ.

Q: Is there a maximum budget amount or length for applications submitted within the Flagship Initiative?

A: No.

Q: What is the difference between the Flagship Initiative and the NTN Innovation Booster?

A: The mission of the NTN Innovation Booster is to reunite relevant actors around a topic of national importance, stimulate the formation of innovation teams and the development of novel, verifiable solution, products and service ideas. A Flagship may indeed emerge from an Innovation Booster. This is even desired. Within a Flagship the involved partners already work on a solution for an existing challenge.

Q: How broad can the Flagship topics be interpreted?

A: Innosuisse has defined the topics broadly in order to nevertheless allow a certain bottom-up approach by the applicants. This means that the applicants must of course demonstrate a relation to the chosen topic and focus area(s), but these can be interpreted quite broadly. A flagship does not have to cover all focus areas, but a link to one of the defined areas must be clearly shown.

Q: My proposal was rejected, do I have the option of a resubmission?

A: An application is only possible within a Flagship Call. The Flagship Topics will differ from one call to another. Consequently there is no possibility of a resubmission.

Q: Will the same topics and focus areas of the current call determine the next call, or is this a unique opportunity with regard to these specific topics and focus areas?

A: It is expected that Innosuisse will regularly launch calls within the framework of the Flagship Initiative. The topics of the calls will differ from one call to another. This means that in terms of the call for proposals 2021, applications can only be submitted below the set deadline.

Q: How can systemic innovation be defined?

A: Systemic innovation is a type of innovation where value can only be derived if it is synergistically integrated with other complementary innovations, going beyond the boundaries of a single organization. Systemic innovation requires multiple innovations to be coordinated. Consequently, the different contributory innovations and organizations are organized together into a whole system, where the overall success of the emergent innovation cannot be attributed to just one sub-innovation or participating organization.

Q: Is it possible to address different topics in one Flagship than just one? What if the solution has an impact on several topics?

A: It is possible that a Flagship addresses more than one focus area within a topic or from both topics. However, this has neither an advantage nor a disadvantage on a flagship's chance of success.

Q: What are expected systemic impact outcomes? (economic, social technical)

A: The purpose of this new funding instrument is to stimulate innovation in areas relevant to a large part of the economy or society and to promote transdisciplinary project collaborations. It

is expected that a flagship contributes to a system change, e.g. concerning structural changes, integrated mobility management, circular economy etc.

Q: Can the subprojects have a shorter lifetime within the flagship?

A: Yes.

Q: How often will there be calls?

A: It is expected that Innosuisse will regularly launch calls in the frame of the Flagship Initiative. If possible, we intend to launch one call per year.

3 Questions on structure of a consortium executing a Flagship

Q: What does a consortium exactly mean? What would be an ideal composition of a consortium?

A: A consortium consists of at least three research partners, of which at least one is a UAS or a university of teacher education and at least two implementation partners. An ideal consortium fulfils this formal criteria, and has competences across different disciplines. These are the only criteria we set, as the ideal consortium looks different for different challenges.

Q: Is there a minimum of employees for the implementation partner (e.g. start-ups with a small number of employees)?

A: No.

Q: Can a public institution or NGO be an implementation partner?

A: Yes, the same rules apply as for the innovation projects.

Q: Can a Flagship consortium include foreign research institutions? And can the foreign research institution be funded by Innosuisse as well?

A: A foreign research institution can be part of a flagship. However, they are not considered as an official research partner, but rather as a third-party service provider. The costs of the foreign research institution can be listed as material costs under third party services in the financial plan of the proposal. It is important that it can be clearly demonstrated that the corresponding research service is not available in Switzerland.

Q: Do different departments of one university count as separate research institutions?

A: No. At least three different research institutions (Higher Education Institutions (HEI) or other eligible research institutions) must be part of a consortium.

Q: Can the implementation partners participate in 2 Flagship pre-proposals?

A: Yes in principle this is possible, however, the implementation partner must have the resources and capacities to carry out two projects at the same time.

Q: Where can I find information on the independence of research and implementation partners?

A: A fact sheet is available on our website [Factsheet on independence of project partners](#).

Q: Must each subproject have an implementation partner and a research partner?

A: It is possible that some subprojects do not have an implementation/research partner.

Q: Should the subprojects be interdependent? Or rather mostly independent within a topic and focus area?

A: A flagship should consist of sub-projects that are interdependent and interconnected, where the combination of the results of these subprojects contribute to a system change. This means that the individual subprojects of a flagship may have an economic or societal benefit, but the sum of the individual innovations contributes to a system change. Consequently the overall systemic result must be more than the sum of the individual subprojects.

4 Questions on the submission regulations

Q: How and when can the pre-proposal be submitted?

A: The pre-proposal must be submitted via the PrivaSphere transfer platform. This transfer platform and the corresponding contact form is available on our webpage as of 15 February 2021. The submission deadline is 31 March 2021, noon (CEST).

Q: How does the submission process occur?

A: The application process is competitive and will be a 2-step procedure: pre-proposal and proposal. The submission of a pre-proposal is mandatory to be eligible to submit a proposal. Please refer to the [Guide for applicants](#).

Q: Are there defined deadlines for the submission of the pre-proposal and proposal?

A: Yes, the deadline for submitting the pre-proposal is 31 March 2021, noon (CEST). The deadline for submitting the proposal is 13 August 2021, 12 noon (CEST).

Q: What does a pre-proposal contain?

A: Please refer to the [Guide for applicants](#) section 4.1.

Q: What does a proposal contain?

A: Please refer to the [Guide for applicants](#) section 4.2.

Q: Can I directly submit a proposal?

A: No. The submission of a pre-proposal is a mandatory requirement for submission of a proposal.

Q: Can I submit a proposal even though I have received a Letter of "Non-Recommendation"?

A: Yes, applicants are not bound by the recommendation and can still submit a proposal despite a "Non-Recommendation".

5 Questions on budget and costs

Q: How does the participation of the implementation partners in the project costs apply?

A: The implementation partners shall contribute to the overall project costs and shall at least match the project contributions from Innosuisse. The contribution of the implementation partners comprises an in-kind contribution and a financial contribution to the research partners.

Q: As for the innovation projects, does the 50/50 funding rule continue to apply?

A: Yes. The same funding conditions apply as for the funding of innovation projects.

Q: What is meant by an in-kind contribution on behalf of the implementation partners?

A: In-kind contribution are the actual personnel and material costs incurred by the implementation partners that are directly connected to the Flagship.

Q: What is meant by a financial contribution to the research partners?

A: The financial contribution is the amount paid by implementation partners to research partners and must in total amount to at least 10 per cent of the Innosuisse contribution.

Q: Is a reduction or complete omission of the implementation partner's financial contribution possible?

A: Innosuisse may, in individual cases, allow a share of less than 10 per cent, or waive the financial contribution to the research partner completely if the economic capacity of the implementation partners is insufficient. In this regard, it shall take account of the innovation potential of the Flagship, the risks associated with the flagship and the viability of the financial burden associated with implementation of the flagship.

Q: Is a reduction or complete omission of the implementation partner's in-kind contribution possible?

A: A reduced participation from implementation partners in accordance with Article 30 paragraph 1 RIPO remains reserved [Art. 30 Research and Innovation Promotion Ordinance RIPO](#).

Q: Can the own contribution of the implementation partner be based on 3rd party funds?

A: The own contribution from the implementation partner should be provided as men-hours, material costs or cash contributions in the project. How the implementation partner is financed is not relevant.

Q: Is the Flagship Initiative supporting large global enterprises as well?

A: Yes, the same rules apply as for the innovation projects.

Q: Will the overheads of 15% still be applicable?

A: Yes. The overhead contribution is calculated as a percentage of the personnel costs.

Q: How does it work in terms of the financial participation of an implementation partner from a cantonal department?

A: Implementation partners are private or public institutions or businesses that are responsible for implementation; a cantonal department is considered as a public institution, therefore the same legal basis of Art. 7 of the Innosuisse Funding Ordinance applies [Art. 7 Contribution of implementation partners to project costs](#).

Q: Are the implementation partners also financially funded?

A: No. The same funding conditions apply as for the funding of innovation projects. Innosuisse does not cover the costs of the implementation partners and cannot directly fund implementation partners.

Q: How is the project budget, funding budget and cost ceiling calculated?

A: Personnel costs are calculated on the basis of the standard notional hourly rates stored for the respective research institutions. Together with the material costs applied for, these make up the project budget. There is also an overhead (percentage calculation on the personnel costs) which is added. This gives you the funding budget. The cost ceiling is calculated taking into account the maximum rates for personnel costs, which are laid down in the [Implementing provisions for innovation projects](#).

Q: Which expenses can be covered by management and coordination costs?

A: Personnel costs that are necessary for the coordination and management of the overall flagship can be covered. In addition, some direct costs can be covered as management and coordination costs if this is necessary to conduct the flagship.

Please note that the funding of management and coordination costs is part of the overall funding by Innosuisse. The implementation partners shall contribute to the overall project costs and shall at least match the project contributions from Innosuisse.

Q: What is the implication of the cost ceiling?

A: The cost ceiling is calculated by means of the maximum hourly rates for project staff in the application and is stipulated in the funding agreement together with the flagship budget. The cost ceiling may be used up without amending the funding agreement in the cases specified in Art. 11 of the [Implementing provisions for innovation projects](#).

Q: What is the budget for the Flagship Initiative?

A: The budget for this new instrument is CHF 56 mio for the period 2021-2024.

6 Questions on contracts and project reporting

Q: How will the intellectual property be solved between the different partners?

A: According to [Article 41 para. 3 of the Research and Innovation Promotion Ordinance RIPO](#), all partners have non-exclusive rights. If the situation imposes an exclusive right of use and exploitation on the part of an implementation partner, this may be possible taking into account [Art. 41 Para. 4](#). However, the implementation or achievement of the objectives of the flagship must be maintained ([Art. 41 para. 5 let. a](#)). In addition, it must be clearly stipulated which party receives which rights and under what conditions ([Art. 41 para. 2](#)). Furthermore, a Flagship is considered as a whole and not as a structure of individual subprojects. The subsidy contract specifies whether a copy of the agreement and / or only a copy of the declaration must be submitted to Innosuisse.

Q: How does the Midterm Review take place?

A: The midterm review will take place no later than after half of the duration of the flagship. The mid-term review consists of an interim scientific and financial report and a review meeting. Depending on the length and volume of the flagship, additional evaluations can be defined.

Q: Which project changes must be applied for/notified?

A: You must report all important changes of your Flagship to Innosuisse. In particular changes to project partners, the project plan, the aims of the project and project team members who cannot be replaced at short notice due to their knowledge (key people) may only be made with the prior consent of Innosuisse

Q: Can the project duration be extended?

A: It is possible to apply for a cost-neutral project extension.