Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Innosuisse – Schweizerische Agentur für Innovationsförderung

Statement of the SCCER Steering Committee on the recommendations from the SCCER accompanying research 2017–2019

18 September 2019

In 2017, Innosuisse (then the Commission for Technology and Innovation, CTI) commissioned a bidding consortium made up of Infras AG, EBP Schweiz AG, the Institut de recherches économiques at the University of Neuchâtel and Prognos AG to conduct an external investigation of the Energy Funding Programme. In the context of this "SCCER accompanying research", the bidding consortium has written three reports and a synthesis in which the following recommendations for action have been formulated (SCCER Accompanying Research 2017–2019, Synthesis, p. 8-9):

1) *In the interests of maximising the contribution of energy research to the objectives of the Energy Strategy 2050, the higher education institutions participating in the SCCERs, and the federal government, should commit to maintaining research capacity and strengthening coordination and collaboration in energy research in the long term.*
2) *The higher education institutions participating in the SCCERs should attach greater importance to energy research, draw up the corresponding strategies, and as far as possible maintain the research capacity that has been established.*
3) *The higher education institutions and professorships participating in the SCCERs should make the most of their opportunities to work with other research institutes and implementation partners to maintain, extend, deepen and perpetuate the networks, exchange platforms and cooperation projects that have been established.*
4) *The higher education institutions and professorships participating in the SCCERs should step up their efforts to launch further research projects with implementation partners, especially private enterprise. In addition to more intensive networking, they should respond specifically to their partners' research needs.*
5) *Irrespective of any future funding instrument, the federal administration should support higher education institutions and professorships with the maintenance and expansion of networks and cooperation projects with implementation partners. At the same time, the administration should demand more preparatory activities on the part of HEIs in the interests of maintaining capacity, coordination, and collaboration in energy research. In addition, it is worth looking in to how the allocation of 'regular' funding in the energy sector (e.g. SFOE, Innosuisse, SNSF) might be adjusted to support the added value generated by the Energy Funding Programme more effectively.*
6) *The federal government should draw up a long-term strategy to provide additional support for energy research. Drawing on the objectives of the Energy Strategy 2050, this strategy should define the additional need for energy research (including the underlying conditions and knowledge and technology transfer), as well as principles for the funding. It should combine competition-based project funding with support for networking, including communications. Over time it should be possible to reduce funding provided by the federal government and increase the resources supplied by the higher education institutions and implementation partners themselves.*
7) *Based on the long-term strategy, the federal administration should develop a funding instrument that sets out support for networking (and communications), and competition-based project funding in greater detail in terms of research focus, requirements, available resources, etc. This should be*

updated periodically. Monitoring should be backed up by periodic impact analyses to manage funding, and for communication purposes.

The SCCER Steering Committee gives its opinion on the individual recommendations (see same numbering) as follows:

1) The SCCER Steering Committee recognises the importance of coordinated and long-term energy research. Accordingly, it is conceivable that one of the thematic calls for projects within the framework of the newly planned funding of so-called flagship projects[1] will be in the field of energy. The SCCER Steering Committee also regards it as important that the researchers involved in the SCCER, where possible, make the data and results obtained, quickly and freely accessible as part of an open data policy.
2) The SCCER Steering Committee is likewise of the opinion that the universities participating in the SCCERs have an important role to play in maintaining the capacity that has been built up. Thus it supports the recommendation from the SCCER accompanying research.
3) In the coming years, the innovations developed will reach an increasing degree of maturity, which is why there will also be a growing need for interdisciplinary collaboration (see the report on Module 3b “Networking and (interdisciplinary) collaboration”, p. 29). Therefore, the SCCER Steering Committee in general supports the recommendation from the SCCER accompanying research.
4) The SCCER Steering Committee is confident that the researchers involved in the SCCER will be able to continue to build on the contacts established with the implementation partners and their collaboration with them. This important initial work will in turn lead to new contacts and further consolidate existing ones (see the report on Module 2 “Implementation of scientific results”, p. 33).
5) Innosuisse is currently examining whether and to what extent it can support the maintenance of the networks and collaboration created within the framework of its legal mandate. In addition, Innosuisse seeks an exchange of information with the participating universities regarding the jobs created.
6) As the innovation cycles in the field of energy are comparatively long, the SCCER Steering Committee supports the development of a long-term concept for energy research in Switzerland.
7) In the light of the approach set out in recommendation no. 6, it will be necessary to consider at the appropriate time whether and, if so, how existing funding instruments should be added to.

[1] See the Innosuisse multi-year programme 2021-2024.