



# FAQ : Swiss Accelerator

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Please find all information regarding the Swiss Accelerator programme on the Innosuisse [webpage](#). A short application for a Swiss Accelerator grant can only be submitted during a call for projects using the Innosuisse online tool "[Innolink](#)".

## 1 General Questions

### 1.1 Q: What are the general criteria to participate in the Swiss Accelerator?

**A:** Please see the Innosuisse [webpage](#) for the information regarding the Swiss Accelerator, including the eligibility and evaluation criteria.

### 1.2 Q: Will there be another call in the context of the Swiss Accelerator programme?

**A:** Innosuisse will probably continue to publish calls for projects for the Swiss Accelerator until Switzerland is again associated with the EU's Research Framework Programme. Please see the Innosuisse [webpage](#) for further information.

### 1.3 Q: When will the earliest possible start of the project be?

**A:** The project will start at the earliest after the funding agreement is signed. The duration of the entire process depends very much on the number of applications submitted.

### 1.4 Q: What is the minimal and maximal duration of project that can be requested?

**A:** There is no predefined minimal or maximal duration. However, projects are expected to be similar in nature and size to those supported by the EIC Accelerator and therefore have a duration of approximately 2-3 years.

**1.5 Q: Which level of maturity should a project have that applies for a Swiss Accelerator grant?**

**A:** The required maturity level is similar to that from the EIC Accelerator: TRL 5+ and BRL 4+.

**1.6 Q: Does the project team need to be in place already at the time of the application or can new members be acquired once the project is approved?**

**A:** The competences of the project team (especially the core members) is an evaluation criterion and if the team is insufficiently positioned at the time of application submission, this can have an impact on the evaluation. However, missing expertise can still be obtained in order to carry out the project and implement it as intended on the market.

**1.7 Q: Is it possible to insert images and tables in the application?**

**A:** Yes.

## **2 Eligibility**

**2.1 Q: Our company is owned by a large company with more than 250 Full Time Equivalent (FTE), are we eligible for the Swiss Accelerator?**

**A:** No, for a company that is controlled by another company (i.e. another company commands a direct/indirect majority of votes or has the direct/indirect right to appoint or remove a majority of the members of the executive board or board of directors of the company) and its financials are consolidated by the controlling company, the consolidated group must have less than 250 FTE.

**2.2 Q: Our company is the Swiss branch of a company based abroad. Are we eligible for the Swiss Accelerator programme?**

**A:** Yes, as long as your company is registered in Switzerland, has a Swiss company identification number (UID-number) and meets the other requirements (see [webpage](#)) you can apply for a Swiss Accelerator grant. However, Innosuisse will evaluate how the ownership structure could influence the value creation of the innovation in Switzerland, which is an essential criterion for a positive evaluation of the application.

**2.3 Q: Is this instrument, similar to the other Innosuisse instruments, also accessible to companies based in Liechtenstein?**

**A:** Currently this instrument is not available for companies based in Liechtenstein.

**2.4 Q: When is a company considered "established on the market"?**

**A:** A company is considered established on the market if it produces and sells at least one fully developed product (e.g., a linear motor, software or a medicine) or service (e.g., software as a service) according to corresponding specifications (see also question 2.8).

**2.5 Q: We have already sold a few units of our product/service, does Innosuisse consider us to be established on the market?**

**A:** If the product/service in question is fully developed and marketable, then yes. If, however, the product you mention is not yet finalized and you intend to further develop it in the context a Swiss Accelerator project, then you are not considered to be on the market yet and hence not eligible for the Swiss Accelerator funding.

**2.6 Q: We have already installed prototypes of our product/service at some customers, does this mean our company is considered "established in the market"?**

**A:** No, prototypes or demonstrators are not considered purchasable products or services. The product or service must be sold. This is true even if the prototypes or demonstrators are in operation at the customer's site and the customer pays compensation (cash/in-kind) for their use.

**2.7 Q: Can an early-stage start-up apply?**

**A:** The Swiss Accelerator programme is meant for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups that are established on the market. If your start-up produces and sells at least one fully developed product (e.g. a linear motor, software or a medicine) or service (e.g. software as a service) according to corresponding specifications, it is considered as "established on the market" and therefore eligible for the Swiss Accelerator programme.

**2.8 Q: Our company offers services in the field of research and development, consulting and expertise. Are we thus considered "established on the market"?**

**A:** No, if the service is not the "scalable service" on which the business model of the company is based (i.e. if a company only offers non-scalable services in the field of research and development, consulting or expertise etc. it is not considered as "established on the market")

**2.9 Q: We are involved in/ have been granted another Innosuisse project (e.g. standard Innosuisse project, eurostars project, Innocheque, etc.); are we eligible to submit a Swiss Accelerator project?**

**A:** A Swiss Accelerator project must be different in content from any other project funded by Innosuisse, another funding agency or federal entities. Double funding for the same work is not allowed. Even if the project constellations are totally different on the side of the partners, the content of the project cannot be the same and there must be no overlapping.

We strongly recommend to finish an ongoing Innosuisse project first before applying for a Swiss Accelerator project.

**2.10 Q: Am I allowed to apply for a Swiss Accelerator grant, if I have an ongoing funding by the EIC Accelerator?**

**A:** This is possible, however you have to demonstrate, that the project funded by the EIC Accelerator will be finalised, i.e. all the activities (incl. final report) must be terminated and submitted, before the presumed start of the proposed Swiss Accelerator project. Otherwise, the project is considered as ongoing. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to terminate the ongoing project before applying for a Swiss Accelerator project.

**2.11 Q: We are currently receiving an Innosuisse coaching, can we apply for a Swiss Accelerator grant?**

**A:** Yes, the Innosuisse coaching does not affect your eligibility for the Swiss Accelerator.

**2.12 Q: We have applied for a Start-up Innovation Project (SIP), which is now being evaluated, can we already apply for a Swiss Accelerator, in case the SIP application is rejected?**

**A:** No, the two instruments are considered as mutually exclusive. Since you have applied for a SIP, you consider your company not to be established on the market yet. The Swiss Accelerator programme is open only for companies established on the market.

**2.13 Q: Is it possible to submit several different projects in the context of the Swiss Accelerator?**

**A:** Yes, this is possible, although you must demonstrate that you are able to sustain financially and administratively several projects.

**2.14 Q: Does the company need to show the non-bankability of the project?**

**A:** Innosuisse does not expect any proof of non-bankability. However, you have to show, that the project strongly depends on the Swiss Accelerator grant to be realized.

**2.15 Q: What does Innosuisse mean by “An SME or start-up that aims to commercialise the project results quickly and effectively and to scale accordingly”?**

**A:** On the one hand, the company must show that it intends to quickly bring the developed results to the market (taking into account the industry-specific circumstances) and to achieve the desired effect. On the other hand, the company has to demonstrate that it has the capacity (structures, competences, resources, etc.) that enable the quick and effective commercialization.

### **3 Budget and costs**

**3.1 Q: Is there a lower and/or upper limit to funds that can be requested in a Swiss Accelerator application?**

**A:** The Innosuisse contribution to the total eligible project costs can amount to a maximum of CHF 2.5m. No minimal funding has been defined. However, it is expected that the supported projects are ambitious and that a leverage effect will be achieved with the Innosuisse grant. The experience has shown that mature projects require an average project funding of around CHF 2m.

**3.2 Q: Are there any rules with respect to the use of the Innosuisse funding?**

**A:** Innosuisse can only cover (salary and material) costs that are necessary and directly related to your project, i.e. the expenses for the product/ service to be development. As a general rule, only costs incurred during the project are eligible (not before the start or after the end of the project).

**3.3 Q: Are there restrictions regarding the eligible material costs?**

**A:** As Innosuisse can only cover (salary and material) costs that are necessary and directly related to the development of your innovation, the following categories of costs are eligible (see examples in the table below):

1. Investments in specific infrastructure, equipment and material that are required exclusively for the project
2. Cost of rented/leased infrastructure or existing own infrastructure required for the project
3. Cost of consumables or licences used exclusively for the project
4. Cost of market research and related activities
5. Cost of other third-party services needed for the project
6. Travel expenses for international business trips required for the project

In contrast, costs that have no influence on the design of the solution on the market are not eligible.

*Please note that the above-mentioned categories are not exhaustive.*

The following costs in particular are not eligible (not exhaustive):

- Cost of the general infrastructure and basic equipment of the applying company (e.g., general IT-infrastructure and software, office space and furniture)
- Expenses for travel, accommodation, meals and conferences in Switzerland
- Costs for customer acquisition and promotion of the finished product
- Production and certification costs that do not serve to finalize the development of your product and/or service
- General operating expenses of a company (administration, HR, finance, etc)
- Costs for the publication of research results or fees for the registration of intellectual property rights

Type of cost	Description of eligible cost	Examples of <u>non-eligible</u> cost (not exhaustive)
<b>1. Infrastructure investments</b>	Investments in specific infrastructure and tools required exclusively for the project can be charged.	- General IT infrastructure for employees (e.g., laptops, screens, phones, etc.) - Office space and furniture
<b>2. Renting infrastructure or using own infrastructure</b>	<u>Renting/leasing infrastructure</u> Costs for the use of third-party infrastructure required for the project can be charged based on the supplier's invoice.  <u>Using own infrastructure:</u> The cost of existing own infrastructure that is exclusively used for the project can be charged, based on the depreciation incurred during the project period (evidence of depreciation rates and initial investment). Cost for partially used own infrastructure can be charged with a cost calculation based on the usage rate (logbook entries).	- General IT infrastructure for employees (e.g., laptops, screens, phones, etc.) - Office space and furniture
<b>3. Consumables and licenses</b>	Costs for consumables that are necessary for the project implementation and are purchased and consumed during the project period are chargeable.  Costs for licenses that are specifically required for the project can be charged (e.g. software-licences).	- Licenses for standard business software (Microsoft-Office, CRM-tools, ERP-system, etc.) - Office supplies
<b>4. Market research and related activities</b>	Cost for market research services (customer surveys, competitor analysis, etc.) can be charged.  Other market-related services that have a direct influence on the design of the final product/service (development of pricing models, clarification of licensing or IP issues, execution of beta-testings) can be charged.	- Cost for customer acquisition and promotion of the finished product (brochures, homepages, flyers, videos, etc.) - Cost of external sales support (e.g., telephone marketing, sales promotion, marketing campaigns) - Membership fees in industry associations

<b>5.</b> <b>Other third-party services</b>	<p>In principle, the work in a project must be carried out by the applicant. The involvement of third parties (technical, legal etc.) must be directly related to the project and must be justified and appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Certification cost not directly related to the product or market entry (e.g., company certifications)</li> <li>- Legal service to create individual sales or customer contracts</li> <li>- Financial consulting or accounting services</li> </ul>
<b>6.</b> <b>Travel abroad</b>	<p>Cost for necessary cross-border travel which is directly relevant for the project can be charged.</p> <p>Examples are travels for experiments or clinical studies abroad, for prototype implementation at customer sites, for the presentation of demo results at industry-relevant conferences (booth).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meetings / events which can be done via video conferencing (unless cogent need for physical presence can be explained)</li> <li>- Mere attendance at conferences (without an active part related to the project)</li> <li>- Travel for maintenance of general business relationships</li> <li>- Alcoholic beverages in general</li> </ul>

**3.4 Q: Are subcontracting costs eligible?**

**A:** Yes, they are eligible as third-party services. Costs of third-party services are allowed also if such services are provided by Swiss research institutions or by providers based abroad. There is no maximum defined for third-party expenses, however, these contributions must be a crucial stepping stone for advancing the project. These contributions must be fully associated with the project and be an essential complement to the company's own competence/resources in carrying out the project. The ratio between subcontracted work and the contribution of the company should be plausible and consistent for the project, but most importantly, the lead of the project has to remain under the control of the company.

**3.5 Q: For the realization of our project, we generate costs that are not eligible (e.g. licences for standard software, rents, office supply, etc.). Can we account for them in the 30% of project costs covered by our company?**

**A:** No, all costs accounted for during the Swiss Accelerator project must be eligible. Regardless, of whether they are covered with the Innosuisse grant or with own funds.

**3.6 Q: Does my company need to have the financial capacity to cover the own participation to the project costs (minimum 30% own contribution) already at the time of submission?**

**A:** Yes, at the time you submit your application, you must already demonstrate that your company has the capacity to cover the own participation to the project costs (minimum 30% own contribution).

- 3.7 Q: Can the own participation to the project costs (minimum 30% own contribution) also consist of an in-kind contribution?**
- A:** In the context of the Swiss Accelerator, we do not differentiate between cash and in-kind contributions. Eligible are costs necessary and directly related to the development of you innovation.
- 3.8 Q: Is a reduction or complete omission of the minimum 30% own contribution possible?**
- A:** No, a reduction or omission is not possible.
- 3.9 Q: Are the working hours of start-up founders, who are working without formal salary, eligible as costs?**
- A:** No, working hours of start-up founders *without* formal salary are non-eligible costs.
- 3.10 Q: Will the overheads of 15% be applicable?**
- A:** No.
- 3.11 Q: Are the fees of a company consulting the start-up or SME for the submission of the application eligible as project costs?**
- A:** No, only costs incurred after the start of the project and necessary to develop the innovation are eligible.
- 3.12 Q: Will pre-clinical studies be financed or only clinical studies?**
- A:** Costs for pre-clinical studies may be eligible. It is not possible to make a general statement, about which preconditions must be met in order for the pre-clinical trial costs to be admitted. This will be the matter of the case-by-case evaluation.
- 3.13 Q: Are there maximum hourly rates?**
- A:** No, the compensation of personnel costs is based on
- a) the gross salaries actually paid by the employer;
  - b) the hours worked on the project; and
  - c) the applicable employment rates for the project.
- The maximum eligible gross salary is CHF 220'500 (100%).
- 3.14 Q: Will it be possible to adapt the amount of funding requested in the second phase, i.e. during the preparation of the full application?**
- A:** Yes, this is possible.



**3.15 Q: How will the funds be paid?**

**A:** This depends mainly on the duration of your project. As a general rule, the following applies:

- a) For projects with a duration of 12 months or less, 50% of the Innosuisse contribution will be paid after signing the funding agreement and the remaining 50% at the end of the project.
- b) For projects with a duration of 13 to 24 months, 40% of the Innosuisse contribution will be paid after signing the funding agreement, 40% after an intermediate project review and 20% after the completion of the project.
- c) For projects lasting 25 months or more, 30% of the Innosuisse contribution will be paid after signing the funding agreement, 25% after a first intermediate project review, 25% after a second intermediate project review. The final 20% will be released after the completion of the project.

Deviations from these standards are possible.

## **4 Submission process**

**4.1 Q: How and when can the short application be submitted?**

**A:** The short application must be submitted using the online tool "[Innolink](#)". The submission deadline is on **09 October 2023** (12:00 noon, CEST).

**4.2 Q: How does the submission process occur?**

**A:** The application process is competitive and will be a 3-step procedure as within the EIC Accelerator: short application, full application and a pitch. The submission of a short application is mandatory to be eligible to submit a full application. Please refer to the Innosuisse [webpage](#).

**4.3 Q: Who will evaluate our application?**

**A:** The applications are evaluated at short application and full application stages by three independent Innosuisse experts. Different profiles are selected in order to ensure a variety of high-level skills, knowledge and experience in different domains and sectors. Experts are selected according to their competences.

**4.4 Q: Can we get support from an Innosuisse mentor for our Swiss Accelerator project?**

**A:** This service is not available for this instrument. However, if you need help preparing your application you can reach out to [euresearch](#).

**4.5 Q: Our company was admitted to stage 2 (full application) of the last Swiss Accelerator call. Can we directly submit a full application?**

**A:** No. The submission of a short application is a mandatory requirement for the submission of a full application. Each call for projects is a self-contained process that starts all over again for everyone when a new call is launched.

**4.6 Q: Can I submit a full application even though I have received a rejection letter for my short application?**

**A:** No, the decision by the Innovation Council is definitive and precludes the further participation in the application process.

**4.7 Q: If my application is rejected, am I allowed to resubmit?**

**A:** No, short applications for the Swiss Accelerator can only be submitted in the context of calls for projects and there is no possibility to revise the short application during the same call. However, it is possible to apply again in a next call.

**4.8 Q: Can I appeal against Innosuisse's decision?**

**A:** Yes, within 30 days after the notification of the decision letter you can lodge an appeal to the Federal Administrative Court.

**4.9 Q: When will we receive the funding?**

**A:** Innosuisse releases the first payment once the Funding Agreement has been signed.

## **5 Contracts and project reporting**

### **5.1 Q: Will we have to report about the progress of our project?**

**A:** Yes. The frequency and date of a project review depend on the duration of your project, but also aspects such as risks involved in the project or the financial situation of your company can influence the number of reviews. As most projects have a duration of about 24 months a project review will most likely take place after about 12 months, to which a payment will be attached if the project develops according to the planning. Additional reviews can be initiated by the Innosuisse office, experts, or Innovation Council members.

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

**A:** Significant changes to the project require the prior consent of Innosuisse. Significant changes include among others changes to the project plan, the aims of the project, cost structure and key project team members.

### **5.3 Q: Can the project duration be extended?**

**A:** It is possible to apply for a project extension.