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Assessment of completed BRIDGE Discovery projects

Synthesis at programme level

About the study

This study was conducted on behalf of
Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and Innosuisse - Swiss Agency for Innovation Promotion

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Executive Summary

The aim of this short evaluation was to systematically collect information from the completed projects of the BRIDGE Discovery programme as of June 2023. This will be used for strategic optimisation and decision making for the funding period 2025-2028.

BRIDGE Discovery is an open-topic funding programme at the interface between basic and applied research, which is jointly funded and implemented by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and Innosuisse - Swiss Agency for Innovation Promotion.

The study used a mixed-methods approach to gather information about the programme context and the funded projects: analyses of programme documents; interviews with programme managers, members of the steering committee, the evaluation panel, etc.; analyses of project data and reports; interviews with principal investigators and implementation partners; and an online survey.

The conclusions of the study on the outputs and outcomes of the projects and the mitigating factors for project success can be summarised as follows:

- All completed projects successfully developed innovative milestones towards potential applications. The vast majority of projects are continuing with further research and implementation steps. Due to the complexity of the challenging research projects, the first economic impact can be expected at the earliest 2-5 years after project completion, most of the impacts will only be realised in the next 5 to 10 years, and possibly even longer.

- Three possible implementation paths emerged, each leading to different implementation and exploitation options: (1) implementation via a spin-off company, (2) implementation via an existing industrial partner, and (3) out-licensing of a technology. Each of the three options requires a different approach to financing and transfer, which should be considered at the research stage.

- It is important for management and team members to be aware of the different expectations of academic and industrial partners. In addition to inter- (or even trans-) disciplinary project management skills, cultural values and entrepreneurial attitudes and skills will help to facilitate knowledge transfer within the project.

Suggestions for the further improvement of the programme include the following:

- Minor changes to improve and clarify the communication of the programme's objectives, including a more precise definition of the programme's objectives and the promotion of the support measures.

- Providing coaching, training courses or networking activities to strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit and skills of the project team.

- Different measures should be used to determine the success of a project, depending on its individual objectives. Different implementation routes mean that different outputs and outcomes can be expected depending on the project. Programme monitoring should therefore take this into account.

The results of the study indicate a rather large gap between the portfolios of the SNSF and Innosuisse, resulting in a high demand for BRIDGE Discovery. Given the current budget constraints, options for a more comprehensive picture of portfolio integration are outlined.