



Answers to questions of general interest and relevance (25.01.2024)

1) Participation of PhD students and other young researchers in the research projects:

- a) Is the participation of PhD students a prerequisite to receive funding, and how is the participation of PhD students considered in the evaluation?

Answer: The participation of PhD students is not a prerequisite to receive funding. There are currently projects that receive EWG funding and do not include a PhD student as a team member. There is however an evaluation sub-criterion that states: "promotion of doctoral candidates". This sub-criterion evaluates only if PhD students are working on the project. Not including a PhD student thus results in a low score on that particular sub-criterion. All other things being equal, not having a PhD student working on the project thus results in a lower score / ranking. One can however compensate by scoring high on the other criteria.

- b) Does the sub-criterion "promotion of doctoral candidates" consider only PhD students or also other young researchers like young post-docs or master students?

Answer: The evaluation sub-criterion "promotion of doctoral candidates" is designed specifically for PhD students. The inclusion of other young researchers does not influence the assessment of this sub-criterion.

2) Financing of Professors:

The call text states the following: "Please beware that the EWG research programme expects fully financed Professors (from the ETH domain, Universities etc) to include their work on a project as own contribution (and not ask for SFOE funding)." Does this also apply to titular Professors and Professors abroad?

Answer: Yes, it does. The decisive criterion is whether the Professors are fully financed or not. If they are, they have to include their work as own contribution, if not, they can ask for EWG funding until full financing is reached.

3) Maximum hourly rates:

- a) Are the maximum hourly rates indicated in the call text absolute maxima or is there some leeway?

Answer: The maximum hourly rates are absolute maxima and there is no leeway. These maxima also apply for the calculation of own contributions.

- b) How were the maximum rates established?

Answer: Many factors have been taken into account to define the admissible hourly rates, first and foremost the typical salaries that employees earn in academia and industry. As the Directive for the energy research programmes states, the hourly rate should primarily reflect the gross salary of the employee together with the employer contributions. In addition, SFOE allows a generous supplement that takes into account unproductive periods of the employees and, for private companies, even opportunity costs caused by the research activities (i.e. loss of revenue). In order to facilitate the calculation of these supplements, a "rule of thumb" is used to determine the correct salary rate: The employee's yearly gross salary divided by the regular yearly working hours (usually 2'100 hours for a 100% pensum) and multiplied by a supplement factor. This factor is 1.5 for universities and public research institutions and 2.0 for private companies. As mentioned, for the different functional





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categories, the hourly rate cannot surpass the defined maximum rate, even if the corresponding salary would yield a rate above that limit. It is hence not the idea to simply take the maximum value from the table as the hourly rate, but to calculate it using the rule of thumb and the actual salaries of the employees.

4) Call budget and ranking

a) Is it possible to announce the total budget dedicated to the call in general?

Answer: The total budget allocated to the call will be communicated after the first round of the call.

b) Is the ranking established over all projects and all topics/fields or is there a separate ranking per topic/field with a fixed share of budget attributed to each topic/field?

Answer: The ranking is established across all fields/topics. All pre-proposals and in a second stage all proposals will be evaluated and ranked, and the best projects will be selected for funding. However, if two or several projects have similar content and not enough value added when compared to each other, EWG will only fund one of the projects (provided it qualifies for funding and is ranked high enough).

5) Value creation and innovative content:

Does the SFOE/EWG provide a list of relevant completed/ongoing research work in the fields of the call?

Answer: No. Projects are expected to have a value added to both completed and ongoing research, including SWEET funded research. This value added, novelty and originality of the project also with respect to other national/international ongoing/finalized projects is to be highlighted both in the pre-proposal and the full proposal by the applicants.

6) Submission of 2 pre-proposals by the same main applicant

Can 2 projects with the same main applicant receive funding?

Answer: A main applicant can submit 2 pre-proposal and have 2 pre-proposals selected for the second stage and finally for funding. In this context, it is important that the applicant has the time resources to implement both projects if they are successful in the application process.

7) Scope: the call text states: "In 2024, researchers are invited to submit research proposals in one of the following fields (see below). Projects can concentrate on one aspect of the fields proposed and do not have to treat all sub-points and research questions listed. The projects must be strongly related to Switzerland."

What are fields, sub-points and research questions?

Answer: fields are marked in bold letters, sub-points are listed after the fields and research questions are the various topics in the sub-points. Example:

Future of hydrogen and gas: field

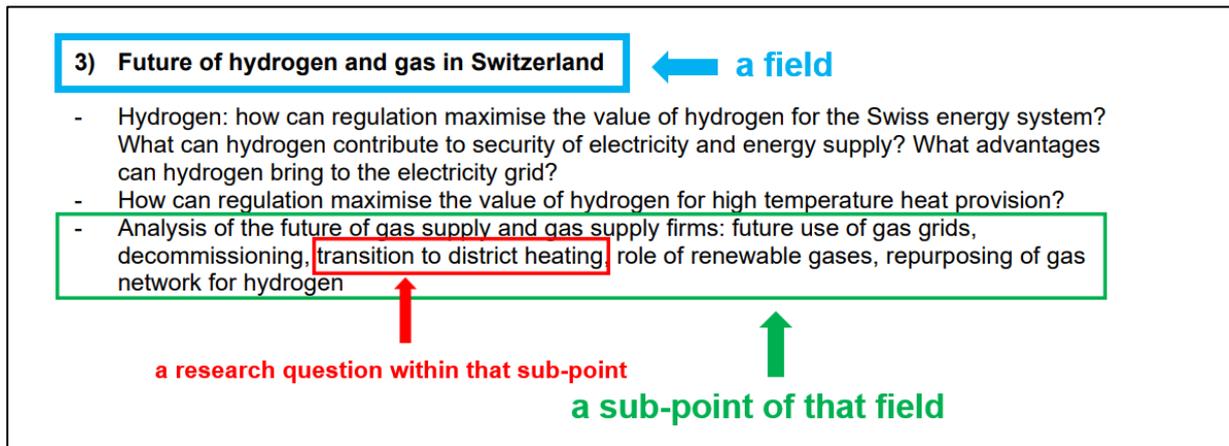


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Analysis of the future of gas supply and gas supply firms: future use of gas grids, decommissioning, transition to district heating, role of renewable gases, repurposing of gas network for hydrogen: sub-point

Transition to district heating: one of the research questions in that sub-point

Here is a visual explanation:



As stated in the call text, projects can concentrate on one aspect of the fields proposed and do not have to treat all sub-points and research questions listed. It is also possible for a project to combine research questions from multiple fields in the call.

8) In-kind contribution of project partners

Is it possible for project partners to make non-monetary contributions to the project?

Answer: it is in principle possible for project partners to make non-monetary contributions to the project like working hours declared as own contributions, accounting for restrictions in eligible cost described in the Directive on the submission and evaluation of applications for financial support for energy research, pilot and demonstration projects and authorisation of sandbox projects:

<https://www.bfe.admin.ch/bfe/en/home/forschung-und-cleantech/forschungsprogramme.exturl.html/aHR0cHM6Ly9wdWJkYi5iZmUuYWRtaW4uY2gvZW4vcH VibGijYX/Rpb24vZG93bmXvYWQvOTk1Mg==.html>

For public institutional partners, the restriction on administrative units of the central Federal Administration (see list in [Anhang 1](#), e.g. Swisstopo or MeteoSchweiz), which are not eligible for SFOE subsidies and whose costs are not chargeable to the project, must also be taken into account.