

LEADING HOUSE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

“RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP GRANTS” – CALL FOR PROJECTS

1. Background

The Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) commissioned the HES-SO as the Leading House (LH) for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. HES-SO has been in charge of the development of scientific collaborations between Switzerland and countries of the MENA region since 2017. The funding period 2021-2024 will involve the launch of a set of three Research Partnership Grants (2021, 2022 and 2023) and of one Consolidation Grants (2023).

The following countries of the MENA region are eligible for this call: **Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Occupied Palestinian territory, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.**

This call allows funding of approximately 10 research partnership grants (RPGs), subject to the number of applications received as well as compliance with the criteria for evaluation and selection (see section 5. Evaluation and selection in this document for details).

2. Goals and objectives

The RPGs aim at developing new joint project proposals or connecting already existing and independently funded projects in Switzerland and in the MENA partner countries into long-lasting cooperation. The goal of this instrument is to allow researchers to conduct desk work, field research or laboratory feasibility studies, in order to apply for grants from other funding agencies (e.g. national funding agencies or EU funding schemes), and/or to develop long-term partnerships between two institutions or research groups.

3. Eligibility

The call is open to all scientific disciplines and fields of research. However, proposals planning developments for military application will be rejected.

All scientists of Swiss federal and cantonal universities, universities of applied sciences and universities of teachers' education, as well as public research institutions (as defined in art. 5 of the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation), are eligible to apply. The Swiss scientist is the main applicant. He or she must hold a position, either permanent or lasting until the end of the project, and have a research or practical experience of three years or more.

The principal investigator/researcher in the MENA region must be affiliated to an accredited university or a public research institute and must hold a faculty or scientist position in addition to several years of research or practical experience.

4. Funding and Budgeting

The maximum amount for a research partnership grant is CHF 15,000. The grant will be disbursed in two instalments: 80% after signing the grant contract and 20% after approval of the final report.

A detailed budget must be provided in the project proposal. Budgeted expenses must be justified and related to the proposed research activities. The total costs of the project should be made explicit, including the contribution of all partners and the remaining amount requested via the RPG. The mutual commitment of the partners in both countries will serve as an indicator for the strength of the partnership and the project's financial sustainability. It includes financial co-funding and in-kind contributions by all partners, and possibly third-party contributions.

Researchers can apply for coverage of research costs as well as for the funding of scientific cooperation, networking and communication. More precisely, the Research Partnership Grants cover the following costs:

Research costs

- **Equipment:** The costs of equipment are eligible for funding if the equipment is of key importance to the research work and is acquired specifically for the research project. Equipment and facilities that generally form part of the basic infrastructure, operation and standards of a scientific institution may not be funded. These include, in particular: standard IT equipment incl. hardware and software, laboratory facilities and equipment, any other facilities and equipment routinely made available for the relevant research field in a research institution or environment.
- **Work-related institutional costs:** the RPG can be used to cover for the time dedicated to the project by staff in the Swiss institution(s), not including the main applicant. This should not exceed 20% of the overall grant. The payment of work-related institutional costs to partners outside of Switzerland is not allowed¹.

Scientific cooperation

- **Travel:** Only travel costs directly linked to the research project may be charged to the grant. Economy class flights may be charged to the grant. A living allowance can be paid as lump sum to cover room and board costs. The rates applicable at mid-price hotels and restaurants constitute the maximum reference price. Please note that this instrument is not designed to support the mobility of researchers in itself; thus applications consisting only of research stays will be considered as ineligible.
- **Subcontracting:** Costs generated by third parties mandated by the research project (outsourcing through subcontracting) may be charged to the grant in exceptional cases if the involvement of third parties is justified and necessary and if the costs of services provided within the scope of subcontracting corresponds to no more than 10% of the grant.

Networking and communication

- **Open Access publications:** Costs for Open Access publications are eligible.

¹ Please note that the funds available for the time dedicated to the project cannot be used to create new positions.

- Conferences and workshops: Organisation and travel costs for conducting conferences and workshops related to the project activities are eligible.

Please note that overhead costs are not admissible.

5. Evaluation and selection

The eligibility of the project proposals will be checked internally by the Leading House. Eligible projects will be evaluated externally by reviewers from the Swiss Leading House network. Each project will be evaluated by two reviewers from two different institutions. The final decision will be taken by a selection committee composed of the Leading House management team and members of the rectorate of the HES-SO.

The evaluation is based on the following criteria:

- Accuracy of the research plan and application
- Feasibility of the project
- Relevance of the expected outputs (e.g., publications, workshops)
- Budget adequacy
- Contributions by all involved partners, including funding and in-kind contributions
- Expertise and complementarities of the partner laboratories/institutes and the applicants
- Potential for long-term collaboration and follow-up activities

6. Reporting

The Swiss main applicant is responsible for managing the funds and reporting. He or she must submit a final scientific and financial report one month after the termination of the innovation project. The latest deadline for reporting is end of February 2025.

7. Application

Applications shall be submitted on the platform accessible on the LHMENA website.

8. Timeline

Launch of the call	17.04.2023
Deadline for submission	21.08.2023
Result notification	End of November 2023
Latest project start date	January 2024
Project duration	Up to 12 months
Reporting due	February 2025

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