



SWEET: SWiss Energy research for the Energy Transition

Short Overview on the Funding Program

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1 Introduction

SWEET (SWiss Energy research for the Energy Transition) is a new funding program managed and operated by the Swiss Federal Office of Energy (SFOE). It is designed for the 12 year period lasting from 2021 to 2032 and complements existing SFOE programs.

The purpose of SWEET is to facilitate transdisciplinary research and innovation activities with a clear focus towards Switzerland's Energy Strategy 2050¹ and the country's climate policy goals². Funding will be available across the range from application-oriented basic research to preparations for deployment. Unlike other instruments, SWEET is specifically designed to enable transdisciplinary consortia to pursue portfolios of interrelated projects of varying maturity in the research and innovation cycle.

In a series of thematic calls, SWEET will invite consortia to propose portfolios of interrelated research and innovation projects. Successful consortia will receive subsidiary funding to pursue their projects over a 6-8 year period. Pending Parliament's approval, the first funding decisions will be taken in 2021.

¹ <https://www.uvek.admin.ch/uvek/de/home/energie/energiestrategie-2050.html>

² <https://www.bafu.admin.ch/bafu/en/home/topics/climate/info-specialists/climate-policy.html>



Application Phase – Thematic Call for Proposals

Based on the input collected in the stakeholder consultation, the SFOE defines the subsequent call for proposals. Given the breadth of guiding themes, it is possible that more than one thematic call is launched within the context of a particular guiding theme.

Once a call is launched, consortia have several months to respond with complete proposals according to SFOE guidelines. Call documents provide more detailed information and guidelines for submission.

After the deadline for submission, proposals are checked for eligibility before they are evaluated and ranked by an expert panel. The main criteria are expected impact, excellence and implementation. Based on the panel's recommendation for funding, the SFOE decides on funding awards within the available call budget.

Consortia Launch and Project Execution

SFOE takes the host institutions of successful consortia under contract, while the partners within a given consortium establish a consortium agreement.

Consortia report regularly on their progress. SFOE monitors the projects and assesses them on an annual basis. Particular attention is paid to the evolution of the consortium's portfolio of interrelated research projects. Monitoring details will be provided in call texts.



3 Consortia

Research challenges in SWEET calls are to be addressed holistically by transdisciplinary teams in a portfolio of projects that cover large parts of the innovation cycle. Hence the research and innovation community is asked to form consortia with all the necessary capabilities to deliver answers to SWEET challenges from portfolios of synergistically connected projects (see Figure 2).

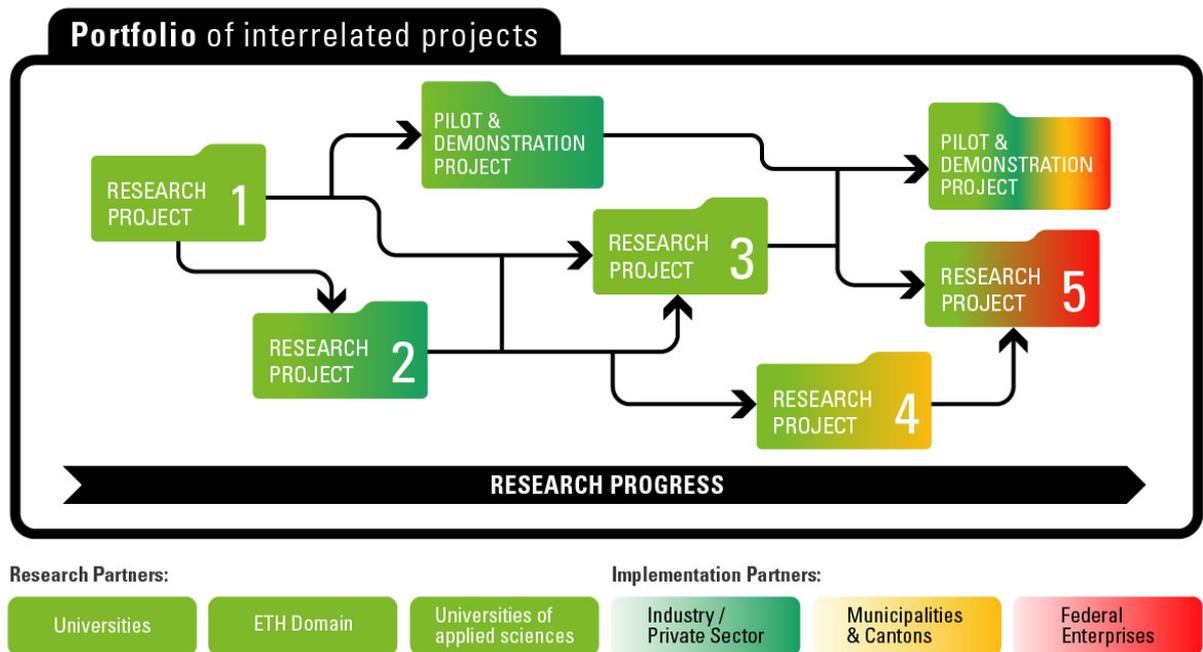


Figure 2: Schematic depiction of a portfolio of interrelated SWEET projects

It is expected that every member delivers unique and impactful contributions to the overall success of a consortium. To facilitate seamless and efficient operations, all consortium members need to take ownership of their roles as host institution, research partner or implementation partner.

The typical lifetime of a consortium may range from 6 to 8 years. It is foreseen that some projects start as soon as a consortium is launched, while others follow later to build on the insights gained in the early projects. Section 4 below provides preliminary information on consortia funding.

Characteristics of successful consortia

Research in sciences and technology as well as in social sciences and humanities is necessary to generate breakthrough innovations for a successful implementation of Switzerland's energy strategy 2050. Such innovations require trans- and interdisciplinary approaches reflecting the diversity of Switzerland's research community.



SWEET Consortia are to be led by a host institution. Preference is given to cooperative consortia comprising the optimal possible range of institutions of the tertiary education sector, research institutes, the private sector (including enterprises affiliated with the Swiss Confederation) as well as the public sector such as cantons and communities. Such cooperative consortia achieve gender balance and reflect Switzerland's diversity in terms of languages and regions.

The private sector is strongly encouraged to join SWEET consortia and participate in their interrelated projects. For pre-competitive research projects, funding from the general core budget (see Section 4 below) for a consortium may also be directed in an unconstrained manner towards project partners from the private sector, as long as their skills and competencies are necessary for the delivery of such projects.

Foreign institutions of higher education may also become consortium partners and receive funds from the consortium's general core budget, under the condition that the skills and competencies of foreign entities are necessary for the delivery of the projects and cannot be met by Swiss partners.



4 Funding

The SFOE will allocate a general core budget to successful consortia. One or more consortia may be funded within a call. Since consortia are expected to integrate pilot and demonstration projects into their portfolio, the core budget will include funds from the SFOE's pilot and demonstration program, provided that the relevant projects meet this program's eligibility criteria.

Given the longevity of consortia and the evolving nature of research challenges, the SFOE may provide an additional, optional budget for ongoing consortia. Such optional budgets would be awarded competitively among consortia that have been operating for at least 3 years at that point in time. Optional budgets are limited to approximately 10 % of the general core budget of a consortium, depending on the amount of general core budget and the justification for the optional budget.

Tentative funding levels

The SFOE anticipates that the overall budget for the very first SWEET Call1-2020 will amount to 35 to 45 Million CHF, of which 10 to 15 Million CHF are envisioned for eligible pilot and demonstration projects.

Depending on the number of research challenges defined within Call 1-2020, the SFOE expects these funds to support up to 5 consortia in parallel over a period of 6 to 8 years. The call budgets of other SWEET calls may differ.

Funding quotas

Depending on the nature of the proposed projects, certain limits on funding quotas may apply (e.g. funding quotas of the SFOE's pilot and demonstration program). The SFOE does not oblige but expects that, upon award, consortia are likely to secure commitments for additional funding from their partners or other funding sources.

For energy research in social sciences and humanities and for research at low TRLs³ up to 100 % of the funding for the execution of projects may be supplied from the consortium's core budget.

As the SWEET program is still under development, this overview document can only provide a first orientation. For program updates and call announcements please check:

www.bfe.admin.ch/SWEET

³ For a description of TRLs see Annex 1 of the current Directive on the Submission and Evaluation of Applications for Financial Support of Energy Research, Pilot and Demonstration projects, available online @ <https://pubdb.bfe.admin.ch/en/publication/download/9952>