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Swiss-Bulgarian Research Programme Launched

Ambassador Raymund Furrer, Bulgarian Minister of Finance Assen Vassilev and Minister of Education and Science Prof. Galin Tsokov signed today the Agreement on the Swiss-Bulgarian Research Programme. This first operational agreement on the implementation of the second Swiss Contribution to selected EU member states reflects the importance of research cooperation for Switzerland and its European partners.

“The Swiss-Bulgarian Research Programme is an exceptional opportunity for Bulgarian and Swiss researchers and institutions to work together through individual projects and joint initiatives. In particular, it will support promising young Bulgarian researchers and strengthen the Bulgarian research system.”, Ambassador Raymund Furrer said prior to the signing. Research and innovation are crucial for economic development and prosperity, and Bulgaria holds a lot of untapped potential in this field. Research and scientific exchanges are a mainstay of the long-lasting excellent relations between Switzerland and Bulgaria. Switzerland is very competitive in research and development and among the countries with the highest spending in the R&D sector.

The Swiss-Bulgarian Research Programme (SBRP) is the first operational programme approved in any of the partner countries supported through the second Swiss Contribution. Its overall budget is nearly 12 million Swiss francs, with a Swiss contribution of 85% (10 million Swiss francs). It will be managed in partnership between Swiss National Science Foundation and the Science Directorate of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science.

Through its three components the SBRP expects to provide more than 40 grants to researchers and research institutions for multilateral joint research projects, exchanges with Swiss research institutions and support for young scholars. Whereas the SBRP is open to researchers and research institutions from all scientific fields, proposals from social sciences and humanities will be particularly encouraged, and gender equality promoted. The first call for project proposals under the “Promotion of Young Scientists in Central and Eastern Europe (PROMYS)” component is planned for the second half of August, and will be published on the website of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

The SBRP builds on the Swiss support to Bulgarian scientific community started in 2012 under the previous Swiss contribution, which had supported 36 successful research projects with participation of Swiss and Bulgarian scientists in areas of environmental protection, agriculture,

waste management, reducing social inequalities, development of new drugs and innovative construction materials.

The SBRP is one of the sub-programmes of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme, on which the Framework Agreement was signed in September 2022. It aims to contribute to the strategic reforms undertaken by Bulgaria, to improve the lives of its people, as well as to strengthen existing and create new Bulgarian-Swiss partnerships between public institutions and private organisations at all levels. The Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme targets areas where there are recognised needs of Bulgaria as well as opportunities for Switzerland to add value with its expertise and experience.

In addition to strengthening innovation through scientific cooperation and exchange, the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme contains measures for:

- protecting the environment and the climate through improved air quality, the disposal of obsolete pesticides and the sustainable use of national resources;
- promoting civic engagement and transparency;
- meeting the health and education needs of vulnerable groups and marginalised ethnic minorities;
- returning and (re-)integrating victims of trafficking and other migrants;
- mainstreaming dual vocational education and training (D-VET);
- improving public safety and security through community policing and the prevention of juvenile delinquency;
- increasing health literacy of children and adolescence; and
- fighting corruption and promoting integrity.

This second Swiss Contribution to Bulgaria amounts to 92.5 million Swiss francs and all projects and initiatives have to be implemented until the end of 2029.

Links:

[Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU](#)

[Science and Research in Switzerland](#)

[Research and Innovation in Switzerland](#)

[Swiss National Science Foundation \(SNSF\)](#)