Exploration of bilateral cooperation:
Landscape of the Swiss scientific collaboration with Latin America
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BACKGROUND OF THE SURVEY AND ROUND TABLE

Survey

For the 2013–2016 phase, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI entrusted the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne EPFL with the mandate of exploring the potential in Latin America for additional partners with high science and technology cooperation prospects for Switzerland.

In this context, EPFL carried out a mapping study among all Swiss universities and research institutes regarding their academic and scientific links with Latin America to identify and propose to the SERI Latin American countries with a high potential for scientific collaboration.

Two complementary questionnaires were designed so as to attain an informed understanding of the scientific and academic relations developed by Swiss universities and research institutions with Latin American countries. One questionnaire targeted the heads of international relations (“administrators”), while the other focused on researchers and professors.

The aim of the survey was to pinpoint existing (past and current) collaborations (agreements, research projects), academic and research exchanges, as well as interest in future partnerships with Latin American countries. The results would then be submitted to the SERI.

Based on the answers, data was gathered and analyses carried out; the information thus obtained can be summarized as follows:

1. People exchanges: Professor/researcher/student exchanges between Latin America and Switzerland
2. Swiss universities’ formal administrative agreements on educational exchanges
3. Total number of joint research projects between Latin America and Switzerland
4. List of Latin American universities/institutes mentioned in ongoing collaborations by Swiss institutions
5. Interest for and planned future collaborations with Latin American partners, by country, by institution and by research area
6. The duration of research collaborations
7. Interest in the most appropriate funding instruments for collaboration with Latin American institutions
8. Types of institutional agreements between Swiss and Latin American institutions
9. Comments, recommendations and challenges faced by researchers and heads of International relations.

To complement the data gathered through the questionnaires, supplementary information was obtained from the:

- Swiss National Science Foundation: programmes, careers and projects supported between 2008 and 2013
- Swiss Federal Statistical Office: number of Latin American students registered in Universities (HEU); Schools of Higher and Pedagogic Studies (HES and HEP)
- National Scholarships Office (Office fédéral des bourses): students from Latin America supported since 1961
- Swiss Embassies in Latin American countries: information on existing collaborations between Switzerland and Latin American countries.

**NB:** Brazil — already considered a priority country — was included in the questionnaire, but in the analysis we focused on the remaining countries.

**Round Table**

The results of the above-mentioned survey are presented in today’s Round Table. Its aim is to inform the Swiss scientific community and raise awareness of the existing and potential areas of collaboration with Latin American countries.

At this occasion, the results of the mapping study and analyses carried out on collaboration between Latin America and Switzerland will be presented and discussed.

During the round table discussions, participants will be able to not only exchange views, practices and lessons learnt, on past and present scientific and academic collaboration with Latin America, but also to identify interest for future research prospects and areas, as well as to assess possible funding mechanisms.

The outcome of the discussions will complement the information gathered through the mapping study.

As additional information, country factsheets were drawn up for each key potential country, summarizing the country’s situation in terms of Education and Research, with a special focus on the country’s Science and Technology relations with Switzerland.

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