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Exploration of bilateral research collaboration with Latin America 2013-2016

A mandate by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)

Seminar on “Seed Money Latin America”, 17 November 2016 at the EPFL campus

“Encouraging Swiss scientific collaboration with Latin America: How to take Seed Money projects to the next level?”

Introduction

During the 2013-2016 period, EPFL Leading House has been leading exploratory activities with Latin America aimed at expanding the scope of SERI cooperation in the form of new strategic partnerships. The mandate encompasses the identification of potential additional partners in the region (with the exception of Brazil, which is already one of the priority countries) that have high science and technology cooperation prospects with Switzerland. This was to be accomplished through an exploration task consisting of an evaluation of the actual and potential bilateral scientific capacities and strengths of selected countries in the region.

Three main complementary tasks were carried out for this purpose:

- A mapping study of the scientific and academic interactions between Switzerland and Latin American countries.
- Organisation of a round table with the Swiss scientific community to discuss existing and potential forms, strengths and areas of collaboration with Latin American countries.
- Production of country reports on the science and technology landscape of Latin American countries and the opportunities for cooperation with Switzerland.

Focus countries: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru

Five countries, namely Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, stood out in particular thanks to the intensity of their already existing collaborations with Switzerland and their potential in terms of increasing scientific and academic cooperation with Swiss scientists or institutions.

Seed Money Grant 2015 - Call for projects with Latin America

Aiming at encouraging these collaborations further, the Seed Money grant for projects with Latin America was introduced in 2015 as a new funding instrument for the 5 focus countries. The Seed Money grant seeks to help researchers to achieve the following: 1) Intensify scientific cooperation between Swiss and Latin American scientists; 2) Establish or reinforce research partnerships of mutual interest and benefit; 3) Develop a joint major project proposal.

The maximum grant for one project was CHF 25,000, and co-funding or in-kind contributions from partners were encouraged. A total of 119 eligible proposals were received in a wide variety of research domains from 25 institutions all around Switzerland. In the end, 28 proposals were selected for a total amount of CHF 600,000 (8 with Argentina, 7 with Mexico, 6 with Colombia, 4 with Peru and 3 with Chile). The projects have been implemented during the last year and will be ended soon.

Argentina in focus

Cooperation with Argentina has advanced firmly in the past year having as punctual result the recent Call for Joint Research Projects following the agreement signed lately between both governments. The Call was open to all thematic areas and is being managed by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).

Collaboration prospects

The exploratory activities carried out by EPFL Leading House reveal a strong interest both by the Swiss and the Latin American scientific communities to expand their collaboration. We observe a demand by the Swiss scientific community for additional mechanisms funding bigger projects likely to take the ongoing collaborations to the next level of intensity in areas of mutual concern.

Seminar on “Seed Money Latin America”

In the frame of the exploratory activities, EPFL Leading House will hold the Seminar “*Encouraging Swiss scientific collaboration with Latin America: How to take Seed Money projects to the next level?*” on Thursday 17th November 2016, from 13:00 to 17:00 at the EPFL campus.

The event will gather Swiss granted researchers, their Latin American partners, the Swiss research community and the general public interested in Swiss – Latin American research cooperation. Granted researchers and their partners will present the results of their projects and discuss their cooperation experiences and prospects with participants. At a second part of the event, representatives of funding agencies and experts will talk about funding instruments for collaboration with Latin American countries and discuss the opportunities and challenges to take Seed Money projects to the next level.

The event is open to the public. Participation is free of charge but registration is mandatory as places are limited.

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