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Switzerland in the European Research Area: Integration Without Legislation

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From the point of view of modes of governance and constellations of interdependence, EU research policy offers ideal conditions for the flexible inclusion of non-member states: it is based on transgovernmental coordination through policy networks rather than supranational legislation, it follows scientific rather than political imperatives, and cooperation is in the interest of both the EU and of Switzerland. This article analyses the degree to which these factors have allowed for Switzerland’s inclusion into the regulatory and organisational aspects of EU research policy, and highlights the limits of such flexible sectoral integration.

KEYWORDS: Switzerland • European Union • Research Policy • Flexible Integration • Network Governance

Introduction

“We are so well integrated in the area of research that an accession to the EU would bring only very marginal additional benefit” (Interview with the Swiss Mission to the European Union, 04.07.2007)

Several considerations make research policy an ideal field for flexible integration in Swiss–EU relations: first, in the EU system, research cooperation it is governed by “soft” modes of coordination rather than supranational legislation, which opens institutional venues for the participation of non-member states; second, the policy field is driven less by political than by technocratic, scientific criteria and actors, which puts the emphasis on

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functional imperatives rather than formal membership considerations in delimiting the geographic scope of cooperation; and third, given the high competitiveness of the Swiss research system, both sides share an interest in association. As one of our interviewees in the Swiss Mission to the EU puts it:

[t]his is a truly very positive context which is genuinely focused on factual cooperation. Given that research policy is not politicised, there are no political interventions. Switzerland and Europe are aware that they are in a win-win situation, and act accordingly.  

The interest in intensified research cooperation has gained importance with the transformation of European countries towards knowledge economies and the strategic priority that research policy has gained in both the EU and in national capitals. Research is a central pillar of the Lisbon agenda adopted by the European Council in 2000 which aims to make the EU “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world”. A key element of the “European Research Area” (ERA) launched in the same year is internationalisation. Although research systems have traditionally evolved at the national level, the shift towards knowledge economies creates strong incentives for coordinating research activities and sharing scientific insights across national borders.

As argued in the introduction to this special issue (Lavenex 2009), “soft” structures of network governance are particularly suited for associating countries that lack formal membership. This is due to the focus on coordination of national research policies, joint programming and implementation that takes place in relatively inclusive committees composed of competent bureaucratic experts of the participating countries as well as through non-governmental scientific channels. The formal legislative procedures through the EU’s central organs, the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the Parliament play a secondary role. Although these structures have allowed for the comprehensive association of several non-member states, the degree to which Switzerland is able to exert influence in these technocratic fora is favoured by the symmetric constellation of

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2 Interview Swiss Mission to the EU, 02.07.2007.


4 The following countries are currently fully associated with the EU research policy: Switzerland, Israel, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, Turkey, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia, Albania and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
interdependence with the EU in this policy area. The analysis of the Swiss case shows that effective organisational inclusion in these decentred institutions involves not only significant financial contributions. Given the informality of the decision-making processes, a third country’s influence stands and falls with its scientific reputation, and the quality of its interventions.

This article starts with a characterisation of the modes of governance in the EU research policy before presenting the formal basis of Swiss association and discussing the constellation of interdependence in this area. The degree to which Switzerland is a de facto member in EU research policy making is addressed in the last section by looking at patterns of both regulatory and organisational inclusion. The article ends with a reflection on the conditions that make Switzerland’s wide-ranging integration possible in this policy field.

“Soft” Modes of Governance in the EU’s Research Policy

Notwithstanding its political salience, the EU’s research policy retains strong national foundations and “the road towards an integrated policy is still a long way off” (Kuhlmann and Edler 2003: 5). As formulated by the European Commission in its Communication on the ERA, “It cannot be said that there is today a European policy on research. National research policies and Union policy overlap without forming a coherent role” (Commission of the European Communities 2000: 7). This multilevel constellation is to some degree also reflected in the three core principles of EU research policy: subsidiarity, which determines that the main responsibility for research is with the member states; additionality, meaning that the benefit of EU-funded research must be greater than the sum of individual actions; and trans-border cooperation.

The absence of an integrated research policy also finds expression in the instruments of governance prevailing in this field, in particular the secondary role of legislative policy-making. Indeed, the main output of decision-making are not directives, regulations or harmonisation measures, but pluri-annual framework research programmes (FPs) defining broad research fields and an overall budget for funding research. As a consequence, EU research policy has traditionally consisted in a distributive policy approach. This is characterised by a focus on increasing overall funding rather than regulatory measures fostering research policy coordination across mem-
ber states (Banchoff 2002: 3). The FPs’ budgets have constantly increased to become the third largest position in the EU budget, after the Common Agricultural Policy and the Structural Funds. However, in relation to the total amount of public civil research spending in the Members States, the EU budget amounts to only some 5 percent of all research expenditures (Banchoff 2003: 81).

The multilevel nature of EU research cooperation is complemented by a polyarchic structure organised along intergovernmental and transnational lines. Apart from the EU institutions, European countries have established a number of intergovernmental research organisations such as Cost and Eureka whose mandates partly overlap with EU activities (see below). In addition, a specificity in the area of research is the self-regulation of science organisations and their relative independence from political intervention, especially in countries with a strong research tradition. The increasing degree of internationalisation and Europeanisation has also led to the national research funding organisations establishing transnational ties and playing an important role in the integration of national research systems. Finally, and beyond these public and para public actors, industry itself is becoming an increasingly important partner in research policy. Recent reforms of EU research policy and in particular the launch of the “European Research Area” in the year 2000 seek to move beyond these fragmented structures and to introduce a stronger regulatory dimension mainly through the coordination of policies between participating countries and with other intergovernmental and transnational actors (Paraskevas 2003: 42, see below).

In terms of governance, EU research policy is based on the joint negotiation and implementation of FPs on the one hand, and, in particular since the launch of the ERA initiative, the establishment of different coordination procedures between member states’ research institutions. The core of cooperation consists in intensive and complex consultations on the contents and priorities of new research programmes between decision-makers and stakeholders at different levels of government, with the active participation of national research institutions. According to Jakob Edler, “R&D [Research and Development] policymaking ... is highly dependent on policy concepts and ideas that are shared by the majority of actors involved” (Edler 2003: 102). This makes it a “classical case of ‘politics of expertise’” (Edler 2003; see also Peterson 2005), since the experts have an important impact on the conceptualisation and the definition of priorities in the field.
According to the theoretical framework presented in the introduction to this special issue (Lavenex 2009), the subordinate role of legislation, the focus on distributive instruments and the importance of coordinative mechanisms involving both governmental and transnational channels provide a good starting point for the comprehensive inclusion of associated countries into the research policy of the EU. The next section briefly introduces the formal basis of Switzerland’s research association before turning to the second main explanatory factor of flexible integration, the constellation of interdependence.

The Formal Basis of Switzerland’s Association

Switzerland has been participating in EU Research Programmes since 1987. The basis for this was laid with the Framework Agreement for Scientific and Technical (S&T) Cooperation concluded in 1986. This Agreement allowed for the project-based participation of Swiss scientists in EU research programmes, on the basis of funding provided by the Swiss Ministry for Research.

A stronger involvement in EU research activities was made possible with the conclusion of a formal association as part of the first Bilateral Agreements. This association is similar to the relevant provisions of the EEA Agreement. One particularity of the Swiss solution is that new agree-


6 This status did, among other things, not give the right to Swiss scientists to act as directors of projects funded by European research programs. In contrast to other countries, participation rates of Swiss scientists in European research programs were, therefore, rather low. This had the disadvantage according to the federal government that Swiss science was excluded from important and cost-intensive technological development programmes that were financed by the European Union. This state of affairs jeopardized technological innovation in Switzerland. This is why the Swiss federal government concluded a bilateral agreement with the European Union in 2000 comprising, among other things, a better recognition and a more equal status of Swiss scientists in future European research programmes (Braun 2004: 117).

7 Within the EEA, research policy is seen as one of the areas relevant to the realisation of the four freedoms of the Single Market in Art. 87ff. of the Agreement. Protocol 31 of the EEA Agreement further specifies that “The EFTA States shall, from 1 January 1994, participate in the implementation of the framework programmes of Community activities in the field of research and technological development ...” (Art. 1).
ments have to be concluded for each new FP. Thus, the original Agreement of 1999 had already to be renewed twice in 2004 and 2007 for participation in the 6th (2003–06) and 7th FPs (2007–13). Put briefly, researchers from the EFTA countries have been able to participate in EC framework research programmes since the creation of a Community competence in research policy with the Single European Act and the launch of the Second Framework Programme in 1987. It is however only since the entry into force of corresponding provisions in the EEA Agreement and the Bilateral Agreement on Research with Switzerland that these countries have gained the status of associated states.

With this status they enjoy full participation rights in the different funding instruments of framework research programmes as well as access to the relevant committees and organisations administering these. This organisational inclusion is backed by a longer-standing web of research cooperation in intergovernmental and transnational research bodies that predate the development of EU competences in the matter. The association status is formally limited to the multiannual framework programmes for research. These were started in 1984 and constitute the “main pillar” of European Research, Technology and Development policy (RTD) (Kuhlmann and Edler 2003: 9). The framework programmes cover the activities of the European Community in the areas of research, technology development and demonstration, as well as research and training in the context of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). They comprise the European Union’s main instrument for implementing its science and technology policy. The aim is to strengthen Europe as a centre for research and to promote growth and employment by means of the cross-border networking of European research capacities.

With these agreements, the associated countries participate on an equal basis in the framework programmes. They enjoy the following privileges: in contrast to other third countries that have signed S&T Agreements, the status of Swiss (and EFTA) scientists in research projects funded under the framework programmes is not limited to that of participants but they may take the role of lead contractors. They are now funded directly by the EU on the same basis as their European partners. Furthermore, these countries have access to the relevant organisations administering and implementing the FPs such as programme committees, expert and evaluation groups, the Scientific and Technical Research Committee (CREST), the Joint Research Centre (JRC), as well as agencies and other bodies such as the European Research Council (ERC).
At the same time, the distributive focus of EU research policy has also the consequence that the processes preceding the launch of new FPs are marked by intensive exchanges between the Commission, participating states, national research institutions, interest groups and members of the European Parliament. Caracostas Paraskevas described this as a “competitive agenda setting process” in which all sides attempt to upload their own research priorities and capacities onto the European level (Paraskevas 2003: 48). According to Thomas Banchoff (Banchoff 2002: 3), this mode of governance based on distribution and complex consultations has led to the institutionalisation of a web of vested interests in national research communities that acts as an obstacle towards more comprehensive reforms of EU RTD policy. While maintaining this distributive emphasis, newer initiatives under the ERA seek to complement it through more regulatory activities targeted at the coordination and integration of national policies. For this purpose, the Lisbon Strategy has introduced the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in research policy in order to “contribute to policy learning and policy integration by encouraging and facilitating mutual exchange of knowledge and best practice” between national research systems (European Commission 2005a: 5).

Switzerland and the EFTA countries have different channels of access to EU research policy both formally on the basis of their associated status and informally due to the de facto integration of their research infrastructures in the emerging ERA. The association agreements grant these countries access to different fora active in the governance of FPs, including those dealing with the OMC. But association also implies some duties, in particular financial ones. Given the distributive focus of EU policy, associated countries have to contribute considerable funds to the research budget. This considerable participation also reflects the priority that the associated countries attribute to research cooperation with the EU. In the case of Switzerland, the amount of financial participation is calculated as a proportion of the GDP in relation to the EU research budget and constitutes currently 2.8 percent of the total budget of FP7 (or approximately 1.5 billion Euro over seven years).\(^8\) In what follows, we will scrutinise more closely what this association entails in terms of regulatory approximation and organisational participation.

\(^8\) In the case of Norway, 75% of Norwegian subscriptions under the EEA Agreement are allocated for research policy (Erawatch 2008a: 11).
Patterns of Interdependence in Research Policy

Despite its increasing centrality for economic growth and competitiveness, research policy is a classical field of low politics driven by functional prerogatives rather than political cleavages. This is particularly true for academic research which takes the properties of a “public good”, while technological research usually works with patents, which turns it into a private good (Braun 2004: 104–05).

The relatively low degree of politicisation of basic research is reflected in the capacity of the research system to exert self-regulation through politically independent research funding agencies as well as the role of expertocracy in policy-making. Functional prerogatives have also sustained an increasing internationalisation of national research policies, despite their role as being “central in the nation-building process of most European nation-states” (Trondal 2002: 332). This trend had already started in the 1960s as a reaction to the perception of a “technology gap” towards the US and has gained new priority at the turn of the millennium. There are robust incentives and mutual advantages to share knowledge across countries, to undertake joint research programmes and to learn from each other (European Commission 2008).

For reasons of economic competitiveness, states, companies and the EU have an interest in attracting the best available knowledge and in the most efficient modalities – wherever these are located. Secondly, internationalisation of research follows the need to respond to global challenges and to combat global public bads. Thirdly, demographic and educational challenges of human resources in European countries create an incentive for an opening up of the European research area (Commission 2008). Interdependence in research matters between the EU and its western neighbours is marked by the latters’ high profile in terms of research performance and their de facto integration in relevant intergovernmental organisations and transnational networks existing outside EU structures. The good performance of Swiss scientists in the FPs underscores their integration into the European research market. Switzerland’s share of participation ranks tenth with a quota of 3.2 percent of all research projects. This is less than the

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9 Switzerland’s research performance is above the EU average when assessed against standard research performance indicators such as publications per head of the population or the number of researchers in percent of the labour force. Switzerland scores much above the EU average in all indicators, see the comparative statistics (Online: http://cordis.europa.eu/erawatch/index.cfm).
“big” and other medium-sized central European member states but more than other “smaller” member states like Austria, Finland or Denmark. Evaluations by the Swiss governments confirm that Switzerland’s financial contributions to the budget correspond broadly with the money that comes back through EU funding for Swiss participation in the FPs. The fact that these funds are allocated on a competitive basis and regardless of national affiliations underlines the competitiveness of the Swiss research system, also beyond the traditional strongholds in pharmaceutics/life sciences and information and communication technologies (Erawatch 2008b: 12). Several other properties of the Swiss research system sustain its competitiveness in the European setting. Already today, it is closer to some of the EU’s main goals under the Lisbon agenda than many member states, such as the ambition to mobilise larger shares of private (industrial) funds in order to achieve overall expenditures of three percent of GDP for research. Private R&D expenditures in Switzerland already make up approximately 70 percent of total R&D (Erawatch 2008b: 2). With its high share of privately funded research, Switzerland has one of the highest R&D intensities among OECD countries and high quality research and tertiary education are seen as main assets of the countries’ economy.

These properties of the Swiss research system signify an equivalence of practices and standards with those of the more performing research systems inside the EU. Given the general move towards an internationalisation, this creates a situation of symmetric interdependence in which both sides benefit from closer ties. In the words of a Commission official, “the quality of EU research increases if Switzerland is in”.

These favourable conditions for deeper cooperation are also reflected in Switzerland’s long-standing integration in overarching European intergovernmental and transnational research institutions outside the EU system. These specialised research organisations persist until today and add to the complexity of actors and fora active in the area of research in Europe. The oldest intergovernmental European research organisation is the European Council for Nuclear Research CERN (Conseil Européen de la Recherche Nucléaire) funded in Geneva in 1953. In the 1960s, a number of other functionally specialised intergovernmental research organisations were created with Swiss participation such as the European Southern Observatory, the

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11 Interview European Commission, DG Research, 02.07.2007.
European Molecular Biology Organisation, the European Space Research
Organisation, and, in 1974, the European Space Agency. From the 1970s
onwards, more cross-cutting funding mechanisms were launched, starting
with COST (Cooperation in the Field of Scientific and Technical Research)
in 1971 with the aim to promote networking among European scientists
and, in 1985, Eureka which is an organisation that funds transnational co-
operation between European firms and research institutes in market-ori-
ented technologies.

A second level of networking outside the EU system exists between
national research funding organisations. As early as 1974, Alterio Spinelli,
then EU Commissioner for Research, sought to bundle the intergovern-
mental and national institutions funding research through the creation of
the European Science Foundation (ESF). His aim to integrate this new in-
stitution in the EC met many obstacles so that until today the ESF persists
as an inter-organisational network of seventy five member organisations,
including Swiss research funding agencies. In addition, the latter are rep-
resented in most relevant transnational networks such as the Academia
Europaea dedicated to promoting the understanding of science in society;
the European Federation of National Academies in Science and Humani-
ties “All European Academies” (ALLEA) created to foster the exchange
of information and experience between European academies and to give
advice to European science and research policy; the “European Univer-
sities Association”, which supports member institutions and advocates the
position of universities in European decision-making processes. By way of
their association, Swiss research funding agencies have also become active
members of the official transnational networks accompanying the FPs, the
European Heads of Research Councils EUROHORCS, and the Informal
Group of RTD Liaison Offices (IGLO) (see below).

This joint membership with EU countries in intergovernmental and
transnational research organisations underlines the symmetry of interests
in cooperation and reinforces the ongoing approximation of research sys-
tems, quite independently from the status of membership in the EU. The
fact that the ERA initiative launched in 2000 seeks inter alia to better inte-
grate these intergovernmental schemes into EU cooperation activities (Par-
askovas 2003: 42) adds to the complementarity of Europeanisation within
and outside EU membership in the area of research. Overall, the practice of
research cooperation reveals that Switzerland acts as equal partners on the
European scene disrespectable the formal status of association.
To sum up, and linking up with the theoretical framework presented in the introduction to this special issue, the character of research cooperation makes enforcement problems an alien concept in this area. At the same time, the competitive orientation of research policy in Europe and the strategic importance of research for national economies point at the existence of a distributive dimension in the constellation of interdependence which is reinforced by the financial focus of EU policies. Whereas, as will be shown, the association with EU research policy does not entail major regulatory adaptations in Switzerland, it is this distributive character of the policy that underlines the importance of organisational inclusion.

**Regulatory and Organisational Inclusion: Intergovernmental and Transnational Channels of Participation**

From the brief characterisation of EU research policy above we could see that the extension of the regulatory boundary to non-member states consists less in the transfer of legislation in terms of EU norms and rules. Rather, openings occur at the level of what the EU describes as the “most concrete manifestation of EU science and technology policy”,\(^{12}\) its multi-annual FPs. Since 2000, this has been complemented by the coordination activities that have been put into place following the launch of the ERA. These modes of governance by programmes and open coordination do not directly interfere with national legislation and hence have at most indirect effects in regulatory terms. This was confirmed in our interviews “Switzerland’s research and technology policy occurs in coordination with –that means in awareness of –the EU programmes, but it is as autonomous as before” and the EU programmes have “hardly any influence on the political orientation of research policy in Switzerland”\(^{13}\).

Formally, the Treaty on the EEA and the Bilateral Agreement on Research concluded with Switzerland only apply to these countries’ association to the FPs since the fourth (1994–98) and the sixth FP (2002–06) respectively. In practice, however, approximation of national research systems reaches further. The EFTA countries subscribe to the goals of the ERA and have become involved in different coordination activities launched\(^{12}\) So the self-description of EU research policy (Online: [http://europa.eu/pol/rd/overview_en.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/rd/overview_en.htm)).

\(^{13}\) Interview with the Federal Secretariat for Education and Research, 25.06.2007.
in its context. These coordination activities take the form of information networks focused on the exchange of best practices and other policy relevant information. Participation is largely at the discretion of the associated countries. Whereas some associated countries, such as Norway, have opted for a wide-ranging cooperation in these consultations, Switzerland participates in a more targeted fashion in those aspects that it sees as being of particular national interest, such as for instance the identification of centres of excellence in research or the activities targeted at the coordination of quality and impact assessment at the European level.

Given the coordinative modes of governance prevailing in this field, regulatory inclusion into the scope of the EU policy usually go along with organisational inclusion. Although having little influence on the formal decisional act launching a new FP which is taken by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, associated states are granted far-reaching participation rights at the stages of agenda-shaping and in particular implementation. These stages are crucial however given that the text of the overall research programme is very open and needs to be specified in the Programme Committees – in which Switzerland is a member. In addition,

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14 In comparison to Switzerland’s targeted and selective participation, the Norwegian government has embedded its research policy broadly in the context of the EU’s Lisbon Strategy. This unilateral adaptation to EU activities is based on the emulation of the coordination processes underway in the EU in the context of the OMC. Norway has started producing annual reports evaluating the relationship between Norwegian policies and the Lisbon strategies and guidelines as a basis for comparison with the corresponding measures in the EU member states (Erawatch 2008a: 10–11). The broader scope of Norwegian alignment with the EU research policy is also reflected in other areas. For instance, coordination with EU policies has been sought to sustain domestic reforms, such as e.g. the attempt at decentralisation and at fostering regional research activities through the participation in the EU “Regions of knowledge” initiative (Erawatch 2008a: 12). According to Jarle Trondal, the Norwegian Research Council, which is the main organisation of public research funding, is one of the most Europeanised branches of the administration (Trondal 2002: 341). Apart from participation in relevant EU committees, its Europeanisation is also visible at the level of networking with other public research funding organisations in Europe. The Norwegian Research Council participates in the majority of ERA-nets, which were introduced first with the sixth FP and are targeted at the transnational networking and coordination of national and regional research programmes at the level of programme managers working in national ministries and funding agencies. According to our interviews, Norway’s comparatively greater degree of participation in EU coordination activities results from the fact that it can benefit from these measures in order to open up and reform its research system, while the Swiss system has already traditionally been more internationalised and more in line with EU targets. Interviews European Commission DG Research 02.07.2007b and Norwegian Research Council 28.06.2007.
different channels of influence exist beyond the official intergovernmental arena at the transnational level through participation in relevant epistemic communities as well as interests groups and industry organisations. It will be argued that the multitude of governmental as well as non-governmental channels characterising the complexity and fragmentation of research policy-making in Europe allow for a comparatively very high inclusiveness of this policy field towards associated non-member states.

**Intergovernmental Channels of Inclusion**

Apart from regulating the terms of participation in research projects, the association status also involves access to a number of organisational bodies dealing with research policy-making. Associated countries have no formal participation rights in neither the Council of Ministers nor the European Parliament which are responsible for the legislative decision-making process during which the overarching FPs are adopted and the general budget is allocated. Here, influence may only take indirect channels, e.g. contacts with the Council Secretariat or through lobbying and coordination with like-minded member states. As one of our interviewees in the Swiss Mission to the EU puts it:

Contacts with my colleagues in the country delegations are very important because they sit in the Council working groups and prepare the Minister’s meetings. For instance, I go to my Austrian colleague and tell her “Could you raise this issue or would you like to receive information on how we deal with this issue in Switzerland?”, these are very important contacts.\(^{15}\)

A more formal channel of influence in the Council structures was opened by the German Presidency in 2007 which decided to invite all fully associated third countries as observers to the informal Research Council meetings, a practice which has persisted since.\(^{16}\) While the governmental contacts with the European Parliament are scarce, non-state actors are recorded to be more active in this respect (see below).\(^{17}\)

More formalised channels of participation exist at the stages of decision-shaping and implementation. The Commission makes use of a dense

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\(^{15}\) Interview Swiss Mission to the EU, 02.07.2007.

\(^{16}\) Interview Federal Secretariat for Education and Research, 25.06.2007 and Norwegian Mission to the EU, 27.06.2007.

\(^{17}\) A further channel of communication exists for non-member states with the detachment of national civil servants to the Commission.
web of consultations in the preparation of each new FP. These consultations encompass the solicitation of position papers by governmental actors (so-called “steering groups”) and non-governmental actors (scientific advisory groups), including from the associated states. Both Norway and Switzerland have made positive experiences at this stage and feel that their positions were taken into account.¹⁸

The central forum responsible for the detailed elaboration and implementation of the FPs are the Programme Committees. Programme Committees are part of the system of commmitology in the Commission and are charged with specification of the overall FP through more concrete working programmes. They define the terms of the calls for proposals including the specification of research themes, budgetary framework, and evaluation criteria. In addition, the Programme Committees monitor the management of the FPs from the moment of the submission of projects until the signature of funding contracts and have to give their assent to the funding of research projects of over 1.5 million Euro. These commmitology committees thus shape the policy process from the phase of decision-shaping to decision-making and implementation.¹⁹ Switzerland is represented by the State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER) which stands in close coordination with the Swiss research community (Swiss Federal Council 2006: 8129). As confirmed in our interviews,

there are very many examples of research themes that were originally suggested by Swiss researchers to the State Secretariat for Education and Research and that were then included in the FP by the Programme Committee. And in the end, the Swiss researchers won the call.²⁰

As in the other intergovernmental fora dealing with research policy in the EU, associated countries share all privileges with the exception of voting rights in the Programme Committees. This caveat loses however much relevance considering that voting practically never takes place in these fora: “the clause according to which Switzerland has no voting rights has no practical relevance. We are treated equally with the member states”.²¹

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¹⁸ Interview Swiss Mission to the EU, 02.07.2007, Federal Secretariat for Education and Research, 25.06.2007 and Norwegian Mission to the EU, 27.06.2007.


²⁰ Interview Swiss Mission to the EU, 02.07.2007.

²¹ Interview Federal Secretariat for Education and Research, 25.06.2007 and Swiss Mission to the EU, 02.07.2007.
A second intergovernmental forum gathering representatives of the national research ministries is the Scientific and Technical Research Committee (CREST). CREST is a more political forum and has been described as a more deliberative setting which is mainly charged with preparing the future strategic orientations in European RTD. It is an advisory body of the Council and the Commission composed of high ranking officials from member states’ research ministries. It is coordinated by the Council secretariat and chaired by a Commission representative. As an advisory body, it is responsible for the development of the research programmes and the strategic orientation of the European Research Area. Its work involves defining the Community’s RTD guidelines, coordinating the RTD activities of the Community and the member states, and evaluating Community RTD activities. CREST is also responsible for coordinating the application of the Open Method of Coordination in the realisation of the European Research Area (see above). The fully associated non-member states are members of CREST. Since the CREST committee “shall as far as possible record the consensual opinion of its members and shall also make mention of minority views” when reporting to the Commission and the Council, the fact that the associated members do not possess voting rights loses much relevance and facilitates the inclusion of their positions. At the same time, the importance of this more deliberative forum is limited in the eyes of the Swiss participants. As our interviewees put it, this is more a forum for general discussions on the shape and future of EU research policy by “high-flying visionaries”. Discussions focus e.g. on the importance of basic research, technological cooperation with industry, or the coordination of national research policies and the promotion of learning processes among member states through the OMC (see above). CREST is not the place where interests over funding priorities and budgets clash and arguing takes place and, given that Switzerland already has a well established and successful research system, its ambitions to participate in exchanges of best practices in the OMC are limited.

Another form of organisational inclusion for associated members exists with the Joint Research Centre (JRC) which is an EU research agency and

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23 Interview Swiss Mission to the EU, 02.07.2007.

24 Interview Federal Secretariat for Education and Research, 25.06.2007, Euresearch 25.06.2007.
where Switzerland is represented in the Board of Governors. The task of the JRC is to provide scientific and technical support for the conception, development, implementation and monitoring of EU policies. As a service of the European Commission, the JRC functions as a reference centre of science and technology for the Union. From the Swiss perspective, participation in the JRC has the following advantages: it is an additional channel for decision-shaping in so far as the JRC’s scientific results may become relevant in EU decision-making; and it provides an additional network for connecting Swiss researchers and research institutions in their European counterparts.\(^\text{25}\)

Finally, our interview partners in the Swiss research administration also underlined the possibility for academic experts from associated countries to participate in project evaluation procedures as an important sign of organisational inclusion. Since EU research policy mainly consists in promoting cooperation in research through funding instruments, the ability to take part in the evaluation and decision-making processes allocating these funds is an important aspect of participation. It goes along with the independence of scientific systems that these evaluation procedures occur outside political interference, they are determined by independent academic experts and follow academic criteria – within the margin of discretion delimited in the calls for proposal formulated by the Programme Committees.

**Transnational Channels of Inclusion**

The formal governmental structures of research cooperation are supplemented by different transnational initiatives that are increasingly influential in shaping EU policy developments. These transnational channels involve both networks of national research funding organisations and industrial research initiatives. Research funding organisations have emerged in all member states as intermediary institutions mediating between the state and scientific community (Braun 1997: 178). Linked to various degrees with “formal” intergovernmental structures and underlying the independence of research from politics, their transnational networks add a dimension of self-regulation to European integration of research activities. The fact that these organisations are not always well coordinated with the EU policymakers underlines the complexity of multi-level and polyarchic governance in this area (Braun 1997; Grande and Peschke 1999).

\(^\text{25}\) Interview Federal Secretariat for Education and Research, 25.06.2007, Euresearch 25.06.2007.
Science organisations, and in particular the European Science Foundation (ESF), have established parallel structures of self-regulation in European research cooperation that complement and sometimes also rival the EU institutions and their intergovernmental channels. The ESF is the most influential partner representing research organisations in EU policy, along with the European Heads of Research Councils (EUROHORCS) and the Informal Group of RTD Liaison Offices (IGLO). A relatively new development is the stronger involvement of industry on the basis of so-called “European Technology Platforms” (ETPs) established for the first time under FP6.

The European Science Foundation was founded in 1974 as a network of publicly funded national research organisations. Today it has 77 member organisations from thirty European countries, the twenty seven EU member states plus the associated members Iceland (Icelandic Centre for Research), Norway (Research Council of Norway and Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters) and Switzerland (Swiss National Science Foundation and Swiss Academies of Arts and Science). The ESF was created in part as a counter-movement to the attempts of the Commission to bring together the national research funding organisations in form of a foundation under the roof of the supranational institutional framework. The ESF underlined in contrast the independence of research and of research funding organisations from the political systems and agreed to establish “special relations” with the Commission, but no formal cooperation structures (Peschke 2001: 158). Among the actors promoting the creation of the ESF figured, apart from some influential European research organisations, also the Council of Europe. Today, the ESF plays an important role in advising European decision-makers, but it also duplicates some of the activities of the EU by promoting European research cooperation both financially and through coordination activities, especially with regard to basic research.

In this regard, the ESF has always advocated an independent, less state-centred and not governmentally administered system of European research policy functioning according to the principles of scientific self-administration and self-regulation, which contrasts with the basically inter- or transgovernmental structures established under the roof of the EU. Nevertheless, in order to minimise duplications and to allow for synergies, both the European Commission and the ESF have granted each other observer status in relevant areas. In the 1990s, the ESF’s status as the central self-regulation agency of European science has received some competition
from new networks of national research funding organisations, named by the acronyms EUROHORCs and IGLO.

EUROHORCs emerged out of a subgroup of the organisations represented in the ESF in 1993 with the aim to establish a high-ranking, independent advisory body in the area of applied research at the European level. The aim was to create a smaller, more homogeneous “club” of research organisations that, given its smaller size and greater homogeneity, would be more suited to act strategically at the European level. EUROHORCs is a European association of the heads of research funding organisations and public non-university research organisations of the EU member states, and subsequently also Norway and Switzerland. EUROHORCs seek to enhance the role of the national research funding and research performing organisations in Europe through creating a platform for discussion, initiating joint activities and strengthening their influence on European research policy, in particular towards the European Commission. In recent years, EUROHORCs have again sought closer coordination with the ESF in the promotion high scientific standards in the realisation of the ERA.

With its traditional autonomy from political inference and its responsiveness to the strong academic community in Switzerland (Slipersæter, Lepori, and Dinges 2007), the Swiss National Science Foundation has become an influential player in these fora – recently epitomised in the election of Dieter Imboden, president of the SNF’s Scientific Council and professor of environmental physics at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, as head of EUROHORCS. The choice of a non-EU member as president of this influential platform shows not only the strong position of the Swiss research system in Europe, it also underlines the functional rather than political (self-)organisation of the field.

The national scientific organisations and the state offices responsible for research have also established different coordination platforms. The liaison offices of national research funding organisations in Brussels have established an informal network from 1991 onwards, baptised as the “Informal Group of RTD Liaison Offices (IGLO)” in 1996, with the aim to facilitate and enhance the interaction, information exchange and co-operation between the member organisations, their national research systems and the European institutions on issues related to EU RTD, in particular, the Framework Programme. These liaison offices represent the interests of their national organisations in Brussels, they have established close links with the supranational institutions, in particular the Commission, where IGLO has gained a kind of advisory status, but also the European Parlia-
ment. Furthermore, the different member organisations facilitate information and communication domestically. Switzerland’s representation within IGLO is the Contact Office for European Research, Innovation and Education (SwissCore) which represents the Swiss National Science Foundation, the State Secretariat for Education and Research and the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology. The office is also linked to Euresearch, the Swiss Information Network for EU Research programmes.

Apart from these epistemic communities which are to different degrees still linked to governmental funding schemes, a relatively new development is the mobilisation of industry as an actor in EU research policy. This is partly a function of the Commission’s own endeavours to boost private investment in research in line with the goals of the Lisbon Agenda. For this purpose, European Technology Platforms (ETP) have been established from 2003 onwards with help from the Commission to facilitate dialogue in both directions. Intended as bottom-up networks of industrial actors supported to varying degrees by the Commission, these Platforms are meant on the one hand to engage firms (and their money) more strongly into European research projects and, on the other hand, to mobilise their expertise into strategic planning. They have become important advisory bodies for the European Commission, they were used to prepare FP7 and are regularly consulted in the elaboration of Work Programmes for individual thematic areas. ETP members also play an important role in Advisory Groups, which are scientific panels that make recommendations to the European Commission in relation to the thematic areas in the framework programme.

The review of participants in these ETPs shows that Swiss firms are represented in a majority of them. At the same time, the SER has actively promoted participation of Swiss representatives in order to make sure that Swiss industry finds its voice in the strategic planning phase of research programmes.

In sum, a very large variety of governmental and non-governmental, economic and non-profit actors are involved at the various phases of EU research policy-making. The emphasis on process-oriented modes of governance and the reliance on complex webs of consultation make this field particularly open for the involvement of partners from the associated countries, be them ministry officials, independent research funding organisations, or firms.
Conclusion

The coincidence of coordinative modes of network governance in the EU’s research policy with the a close and symmetric constellation of interdependence provides optimal conditions for Switzerland’s flexible integration into the EU research policy. On the one hand, Switzerland’s inclusion requires hardly any regulatory adaptation since EU research policy is based on distributive research programmes that coordinate national research systems rather than harmonising legislation. Although embedded in the first, supranational “pillar” of the European Community, research policy is thus still very much intergovernmental. On the other hand, this coordination occurs primarily in commitology committees composed of national representatives responsible for research, in which Switzerland and the other associated countries enjoy de facto equal rights with their EU colleagues. The inclusive transgovernmental fora are complemented by a parallel transnational network linking national research funding institutions as well as, more recently, advisory groups representing industry. Of course, formally speaking, these fora are limited to the decision-shaping and implementation stages in the policy process, and access to the central decision-making organs, the Council of Ministers and the Parliament, remains an exclusive prerogative of the member states. But apart from the fact that Swiss actors have developed different indirect links with the Council’s members, and that they have also been invited to informal Council meetings, the relevance of these legislative decisions is severely reduced if one considers that their preparatory work and their specification in terms of the detailed Work Programmes, the exact calls and allocated budgets are decided in the Programme Committees with the participation of the associated countries.

To sum up, Switzerland is well represented in both the transgovernmental and the transnational fora, and has been able to play an active part in the development of the EU policies in which it participates. From the Swiss representatives to the experts of the European Commission and of other countries interviewed during our research, all agreed that the formal membership status would hardly make a difference to Switzerland’s opportunities for participation – with one exception, that the association status would not need to be negotiated for each new FP. Switzerland’s capacity to influence EU policy-making is however not a direct function of participation in relevant fora. Whereas the association status has “diversified and also formalised the fora in which Switzerland can express its opinions”, Switzerland is heard not because of its formal rights, but because of
“the quality of its inputs”. This statement underlines on the one hand the apolitical nature of research as “politics of expertise” (Edler 2003: 102; Peterson 2005). On the other hand, it also shows that even if the modes of governance in a particular field of EU policy allow for significant organisational inclusion, a non-member state’s influence will depend not only on its ability to contribute (in this case quite considerable) financial means, but also on immaterial resources, in particular the standing and reputation it possesses in the relevant field.

References


26 Interview Federal Secretariat for Education and Research, 25.06.2007.


La Suisse dans l’espace européen de la recherche : intégration sans législation

La politique de la recherche européenne offre des conditions idéales pour l’intégration des états qui ne sont pas membres de l’UE. Elle est basée sur des processus de coordination transgouvernementale dans différents réseaux politiques plutôt que sur des règles supranationales, elle s’oriente aux priorités scientifiques plutôt que politiques, et la Suisse et l’Union partagent un intérêt prononcé pour la coopération. Cet article analyse la question à quel point ces facteurs facilitent l’intégration de la Suisse dans les aspects régulatifs et organisationnels de la politique européenne de la recherche, et identifie les bénéfices et les limites de ces formes d’intégration transgouvernementale.

Die Schweiz im Europäischen Forschungsraum: Integration ohne Legislation

Betrachtet man die EU Forschungspolitik aus dem Blickwinkel ihrer Steuerungsmodi und der Interdependenzkonstellation, bietet sie ideale Bedingungen für die flexible Integration von Drittstaaten. Sie basiert auf transgouvernementaler Koordination in Politiknetzwerken statt auf supranationalen Regeln, sie richtet sich nach wissenschaftlichen statt nach politischen Zielen, und sowohl die Schweiz als auch die EU hegen ein starkes Interesse an Kooperation. Dieser Artikel untersucht, inwiefern diese Faktoren die Einbindung der Schweiz in die regulativen und organisatorischen Aspekte der EU Forschungspolitik begünstigt haben, und benennt auch die Grenzen solcher Formen flexibler sektorieller Integration.

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