



## **INFORMATION ABOUT NRP FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPATION IN INTERREG VI-B (2021-2027)**

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### **1. Interreg B and the EU Cohesion Policy**

Interreg is a funding instrument of the European Union (EU) within the context of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC). The European Cohesion Policy, to which ETC belongs, targets two objectives: reducing regional disparities and supporting regional economies.

### **2. Participation of Switzerland in Interreg B**

Within the framework of the Confederation's New Regional Policy (NRP), Switzerland is participating in two Interreg B programmes: The Alpine Space Programme (ASP) and the North-West Europe Programme (NWE). The NRP supports initiatives that promote entrepreneurship, enhance SMEs' innovation capacity, and increase regional value creation. Thereby the NRP aims at increasing the competitiveness of specific regions (rural, mountain, and border areas) to create and preserve jobs in those regions. The NRP contributes indirectly to a decentralized spatial occupation and the reduction of regional disparities. Since the Interreg B programmes contribute to the NRP's objectives, the Confederation has funding available to support the Swiss participation in projects consistent with the NRP, as well as in projects of national strategic importance. In a broader sense, the Interreg B programmes contribute to addressing the major global challenges, such as the consequences of climate change or Covid-19.

The Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) is responsible for implementing the Swiss participation in Interreg B. It represents Switzerland in programme committees, supports and offers advice to Swiss partners, and decides on federal financial assistance within the framework of the NRP. The NRP itself falls under the responsibility of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). The Swiss participation in Interreg B is thus subject to the Federal Law on Regional Policy.

### **3. Financing conditions**

In contrast to the project partners from the EU, Swiss project partners cannot receive financial support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Nevertheless, it is possible to apply for financial support from the Confederation through the Fund for Regional Development of the NRP. The conditions, co-financing rate and control system are different in Switzerland than in the EU. These specific framework conditions are outlined in this document. The budget discussions for the Swiss part of the project take place in parallel with the preparation of the project at European level.

#### **3.1. *Necessary cantonal or communal support***

To obtain funding by the NRP it is required that one or more cantons and/or one or more municipalities finance the project partners, with at least the same amount as the one requested from the NRP. It is recommended to contact the cantons or municipalities concerned at an early stage to ensure that there is an interest in the project.

Cantons cannot use means already received from SECO within the framework of NRP, or any equivalent cantonal NRP-support, for co-financing the Confederation's federal aid to an Interreg B project.

#### **3.2. *Supported Thematic Areas***

In order to receive financial support within the NRP framework, the Swiss part of an Interreg B project must either (A) meet the NRP goal of strengthening the competitiveness of the regions or (B) be considered of national strategic importance.

**A) Projects that meet the NRP goal of strengthening the competitiveness of the regions:**

The project needs to address one of the following objectives:

- Increasing competitiveness as well as economic resilience of Swiss regions through measures in the area of applied research, innovation, entrepreneurship, access to the labour market, and digitalisation.
- Creating value from natural resources and cultural assets and promoting a circular economy and local and regional value chains.
- Supporting measures in the energy sector and other climate change adaptation measures that strengthen competitiveness.

**B) Projects of national strategic importance:**

Projects, which do not comply with the aforementioned «standard» NRP objectives, can still receive financing through the NRP if they are of national strategic importance. The national strategic importance is provided under the following condition:

- The project contributes to the implementation of the objectives of a strategy of a federal office (for example, the Swiss Biodiversity Strategy or the Energy Strategy 2050),
- The project has a national scope.

Projects, which are co-financed by another federal office, will be favoured.

Upon submitting the application form, the project's contribution to a strategy of a federal office and the national scope have to be demonstrated.

### **3.3. Other financing conditions**

In order for project partners to access means from the Regional Development Fund of the NRP, all of the following conditions must be met:

- A project should:
  - Support entrepreneurial thinking and acting in a region;
  - Strengthen the innovation capacity of a region;
  - Take advantage of the regional potential and build or improve value creation systems; or
  - Enhance the cooperation between private and public institutions, as well as between regions and agglomerations.
- Construction projects and measures, as well as purely research-oriented projects will not receive any financial help.
- R&D projects of business companies may get support if they are of a cross-company scope.
- Recipients of financial help from the Confederation should appropriately contribute to the project with their own resources.

## **4. Submitting an application**

### **4.1. Application submission**

The application form for federal funding can be obtained from the ARE. This form must be submitted at least three weeks before the submission of the project at European level. If the call for projects includes two stages (e.g. classic Alpine Space Programme projects), the form must be submitted at least three weeks before the submission of the project at European level in the second stage.

If several Swiss partners participate in the same project, the application has to be submitted in a coordinated manner or, if feasible, collectively. The ARE is to be informed about own contributions and further financial support for the project.

The ARE has not set any upper or lower bound for the amount that can be allotted to a project. The average amount allotted to a project has been around CHF 100'000 over the course of the last few years. This figure, however, may vary substantially between projects, and it is suggested that project partners discuss this matter with the ARE before any detailed planning of the project. Companies wishing to participate in an Interreg B project should contact the ARE as soon as possible, given the special rules in Switzerland. In any case, the ARE welcomes a meeting with project partners before submitting an application to discuss all aspects of the participation in the Interreg B programme.

## 4.2. *Decision*

The decision about a financial contribution will be taken by the ARE. Apart from the aforementioned requirements and the available means within the ongoing programming period, the quality of the project and the partnership are important as well. The financial aid will only be set in place if the project is also approved on the European level by the programme committee of the Interreg B programme.

In case of an NRP co-financing, it is important to know that:

- The cooperation between the ARE and project partners will be determined in a contract. A limit of expenses will be set in there.
- The payment will occur once the spending has been done and justified. In general, invoicing takes place once a year. Invoices are to be submitted at the latest by mid-November to the ARE. The last 20% of the total amount of the NRP contribution will be disbursed after that, the final account, the final report, and the audit report issued by an independent auditing body have been submitted and approved.
- The project executor is obliged to regularly report on the project's progress according to ARE's and SECO's guidelines.
- Audits by the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) and cantonal audit offices are possible.

For questions concerning the eligibility of certain specific expenses, the project partner is asked to contact ARE.

## 5. **Other sources of funding**

Swiss partners can finance their projects independently of the NRP from other sources: private funds, support of other federal offices, etc. In contrast to cantonal and communal support, these other sources will not be eligible for equivalent funding through the NRP.

Swiss projects may thus participate in an Interreg B programme without receiving financial aid from the NRP.

In case a project, which the NRP supports has additional sources of funding, the ARE is to be informed.

Interreg project partners may not receive an assignment for project-related tasks from another project partner. Therefore, a partner who wishes to be paid by a European partner for project-related activities can not be included in the project's consortium.

## 6. **Budget examples**

The following table illustrates four possible examples of the Swiss part of the budget of an Interreg B project (excluding own contributions):

#### Example 1

- Canton X: 40'000 CHF
- Confederation (NRP): 40'000 CHF.

#### Example 2

- Canton X: 60'000 CHF
- Canton Y: 60'000 CHF
- Confederation (NRP): 120'000 CHF

#### Example 3

- Canton X: 70'000 CHF
- Confederation (other): 50'000 CHF
- Confederation (NRP): 70'000 CHF

#### Example 4

- Canton X: 100'000 CHF
- Enterprise Y: 30'000 CHF
- Confederation (NRP): 100'000 CHF

## 7. Legal basis

The legal basis for the Swiss participation in Interreg is the Federal Law on Regional Policy (*Bundesgesetz über Regionalpolitik* (SR 901.0)), as well as the Ordinance on Regional Policy (*Verordnung über Regionalpolitik* (SR 901.021)). Furthermore, the federal decision on the ongoing multiannual programme for the realization of the New Regional Policy applies as well.

On a project level, the Swiss partner is bound to a "Partnership Agreement", which is to be signed together with the other project partners. Swiss Lead Partners (only possible in the Alpine Space Programme) also sign a "Subsidy Contract" with the Managing Authority of the Alpine Space Programme.

## 8. Contact and further information

### *Contact person in Switzerland*

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### *Program-Website*

Alpine Space: [www.alpine-space.eu](http://www.alpine-space.eu)  
North West Europe: [www.nweurope.eu](http://www.nweurope.eu)

### *Information about New Regional Policy (NRP) and Interreg in Switzerland*

regiosuisse: [www.regiosuisse.ch](http://www.regiosuisse.ch)  
Interreg (regiosuisse): <https://regiosuisse.ch/interreg>