

SEED MONEY FOR COOPERATION WITH MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

1. Background

The Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) commissioned the HES-SO as the Leading House (LH) for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The mandate will last from 2017 to 2020 and its overall goal is to develop scientific collaborations between Switzerland and countries of the MENA region.

This call allows funding of approximately 10 seed money grants, subject to the number of applications received as well as compliance with the criteria for evaluation and selection (see section 8 Evaluation and selection in this document for details).

2. Goals and objectives

Seed funding represents an excellent instrument to both explore the research potential of the MENA region and to assess the interest of the Swiss scientific community to work at the regional level and to develop a Mediterranean approach. Seed Money Grants are particularly useful to develop common project proposals to be submitted to funding agencies in the MENA region, Switzerland, and Europe. Proposals linked to larger national and international research programmes are particularly welcome.

The goal of the seed money for cooperation with Mediterranean countries is to initiate larger joint activities or consolidating existing partnerships between Switzerland and Mediterranean countries of the MENA region. The seed money grants shall achieve the following objectives:

1. To intensify interaction and scientific cooperation between Swiss scientists or institutions and those of the partner countries;
2. To establish research partnerships of mutual interest and benefits;
3. To connect existing but separately funded research projects in Switzerland and the partner countries.

The call is open to any research theme that tackles challenges in the Mediterranean region: both monodisciplinary and multidisciplinary proposals are welcome.

The Mediterranean countries of the MENA region are the target of this call, namely **Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia**.

3. Eligibility

The call is open to all scientific disciplines and fields of research.

All scientists of Swiss federal and cantonal universities, universities of applied sciences and universities of teachers' education, as well as public research institutions, are eligible to apply. A Swiss "principal investigator/researcher" holding a faculty or senior scientist position in an eligible Swiss institution must act as the main applicant and is qualified to submit the proposal. Proposals that include bachelor,

master and doctoral students must be submitted by their supervisors. Swiss applicants are eligible for research cost funding as well as, to a limited extent, for salary cost funding.

The principal investigator/researcher in the MENA region must be affiliated to an accredited university or a public research institute and must hold a faculty or senior scientist position in addition to several years of research experience. MENA partner applicants are eligible for research cost funding only (no salary cost funding).

In addition to the MENA and the Swiss investigators/researchers, other collaborating partners (third parties), including researchers affiliated to international organisations and think tanks may also qualify to participate if they have a solid track record of research and publications. Third-party applicants are not eligible for funding.

4. Funding and Budgeting

The maximum amount for a seed money grant is 13'000 CHF. The grant will be disbursed in two instalments: 80% after signing the grant contract and 20% after approval of the final report.

A detailed budget must be provided in the project proposal. Budgeted expenses must be justified and related to the proposed research activities. A financial contribution of each partner is expected and must be made explicit in cash and in-kind.

5. Evaluation and selection

Project proposals will be evaluated by a committee formed by representatives of the Swiss Leading Houses. The evaluation is based on the following criteria (not listed in order of priority):

- a) Scientific, technological and artistic merit;
- b) Originality and feasibility of the proposed activity;
- c) Expertise and complementarities of the partner laboratories/institutes and the applicants;
- d) Contributions by all involved partners, including funding and in-kind contributions;
- e) Potential for long-term collaboration and follow-up activities;
- f) Promotion of young and female researchers in compliance with the principle of equal opportunities.

6. Reporting

The Swiss main applicant is responsible for managing the funds and reporting. He or she must submit a final scientific and financial report one month after the termination of the seed money project. The latest deadline for reporting is end of October 2019.

7. Application

Applications shall be submitted in electronic format only. Please email your full application to the Leading House MENA: lhmena@hes-so.ch

8. Time line

Launch of the call	6 th of March 2018
Deadline for submission	6 th of May 2018
Evaluation and funding decision	May & June 2018
Notification	June 2018
Latest project start date	September 2018
Project duration	Up to 12 months
Reporting due	30 th October 2019