



The Federal Authorities of the Swiss Confederation

Further consolidation of Sino-Swiss research cooperation

Bern, 28.09.2012 - On 27 September 2012, the mixed working group of the Sino Swiss Science and Technology Cooperation (SSSTC) programme met for the sixth time. This year's meeting took place on the campus of the Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETHZ). The working group decided to sponsor 20 joint research projects over the next four years.

The Swiss delegation to the meeting of the mixed working group was headed by the State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER). The delegation was comprised of high-ranking members of the Federal Administration, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and higher education institutions (ETH Zurich, University of Zurich). The meeting allowed participants to discuss the details of cooperation for 2013-2016. Discussions covered funding instruments, calendar for calls for project proposals, priority research areas and funding. In keeping with the rotation principle, the next meeting of the mixed working group will normally be held in Beijing in 2013

In parallel to the meeting of the mixed working group, the SSSTC directors held a Sino-Swiss symposium on the subject of medical technology. Translational biomedicine and medical technology will also be the focus of the upcoming call for project proposals, which is planned for early 2014. Other themes will be identified over the next few months in further discussions with our Chinese partners.

The SSSTC programme is one of seven bilateral research programmes that Switzerland has established with non-European countries that offer considerable scientific and technological potential. Cooperation is based on the principles of scientific excellence and matching funds. The SSSTC programme funds joint research projects (JRPs), institutional partnerships (IPs) as well as faculty and student exchange grants (FEs and SEs). Switzerland's contribution for the period 2008-2012 stood at CHF 12.3 million. Since 2008, nearly 200 JRPs have received funding, primarily in the fields of Life sciences and biotechnology; Medicine; Material sciences and nanotechnology as well as Environment and sustainable urban development. 90% of funded projects relate to new partnerships.

On the Swiss side, the SSSTC programme is coordinated by the Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETHZ), which acts as the Leading House, in cooperation with the University of Zurich, which acts as the Associated Leading House. Starting in 2013, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) will manage all JRPs and the Leading House will remain responsible for conducting pilot initiatives and representing the Swiss higher education sector at the national steering committee and the mixed working group.

In the area of research, Switzerland's main partners in China are the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). In 2008, the SER and MOST established the Sino Swiss Science and Technology Cooperation (SSSTC) programme

On 14 September 2012, Federal Councillor Alain Berset and the Chinese Vice-Minister for Education signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in higher education. Under the terms of this MoU, both countries agree to increase the number of government scholarships. China has been a recipient country of Swiss government scholarships ever since they were introduced. Among non-European countries, China has received the largest number of these scholarships, exactly 280.

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