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Programme Open Science II (2025 – 2028)

Implementation Plan

Legal notice

Commissioned by Delegation Open Science of swissuniversities
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Abbreviations

AKV	Tasks, competencies, and responsibilities of the swissuniversities steering committees PgB 2025-2028 [Aufgaben, Kompetenzen und Verantwortungen der Steuerungsgremien von PgB 2025-2028]
DeIOS	Delegation Open Science
ERI	Education Research and Innovation
GHK	Strategic planning for the Coordination of the entire Swiss Higher Education Sector 2025–2028
HedA	Federal Act on the Funding and the Coordination of the Higher Education Sector
HEI	Higher Education Institution
OA	Open Access
ORD	Open Research Data
PgB	Federal project contributions [Projektgebundene Beiträge]
SERI	State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation
SHK	Swiss Conference of Higher Education Institutions

1. Introduction

1.1. Mandate

The Programme Open Science II is a federal programme designed to support projects of national relevance in the domain of higher education.¹ The Swiss Conference of Higher Education Institutions (SHK) has commissioned the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (swissuniversities) to implement the 2025–2028 Programme Open Science II within the funding framework of federal project contributions (PgB) as defined in the Federal Act on the Funding and the Coordination of the Higher Education Sector (HEdA). Through PgB funding, the SHK supports “tasks that serve national higher education policy interests” (Art. 59 para. 2 HEdA). The SHK’s allocation concept requires that the need for federal funding is clearly demonstrated, thus indicating that the proposed measures could not be implemented by the HEIs without additional funds.

The SHK sets content priorities for the PgB programmes on the basis of proposals submitted by swissuniversities. In May 2021, the SHK commissioned swissuniversities to identify strategic goals and key issues for the Education, Research, and Innovation (ERI) sector for the 2025–2028 federal funding period. One of the priorities the SHK selected for further development and consolidation at the HEIs pertains to measures in the area of digitalisation such as the implementation of the national strategies on Open Access (OA) and Open Research Data (ORD) (c.f. section 1.2).² swissuniversities confirmed Open Science as a strategic objective to be further developed in its Strategic Planning for the Coordination of the entire Swiss Higher Education Sector 2025–2028 (GHK), which is presented to the SHK.³

The SHK commissioned swissuniversities in November 2021 to submit an outline and then a proposal for a PgB Programme in the area of digitalisation with a focus on Open Science. swissuniversities submitted a proposal for the 2025–2028 Programme Open Science II at a total budget of CHF 30 million. The proposal was approved by the SHK Higher Education Council on 16 May 2024.

On 20 September 2024, the Federal Council announced its plans to discontinue project-related contributions (PgB). swissuniversities has been informed that, at present, financial resources for the 2025–2028 programmes may be disbursed only for the year 2025. On 8 November 2024, the Swiss Higher Education Council SHK decided to reserve CHF 6.45 million for the Programme Open Science II for 2025. Regular updates on the situation are published on the swissuniversities website.

The Delegation Open Science (DeIOS) steers the Programme Open Science II on behalf of swissuniversities (see section 5).⁴

1.2. Context

Strategic framework

The implementation of the Open Science II programme must be placed in the context of a broad strategic groundwork. The following foundational documents, which were developed at different points in time, represent the key milestones in, and form a reference framework, for the implementation of the programme:

- Strategic planning: Coordination of the entire Swiss higher education sector 2025–2028 (2025–2028 GHK)⁵

1 SERI. [Projektgebundene Beiträge nach HFKG](#).

2 C.f. [Swiss National Open Access Strategy](#) (revised in 2024) and [Swiss National Open Research Data Strategy](#) (2021).

3 swissuniversities (2022). [Gesamtschweizerische Hochschulpolitische Koordination 2025–2028: Strategische Planung](#).

4 [Delegation Open Science – Mandat 2024-2027](#) (2023).

5 See footnote 3.

- Swiss National Open Access Strategy (OA Strategy)⁶
- Swiss National Open Research Data Strategy (ORD Strategy)⁷
- Action Plan of the Swiss National Strategy Open Research Data (ORD Action Plan)⁸

These documents are concerned with various higher education policy topics at different granularities. They are not necessarily bound to the same timeframe as the 2025–2028 Strategic Planning but form the thematic strategic framework for this period. Because they refer to different governance structures, the individual strategies and action plans serve complementary functions in the implementation of the PgB programme.

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The 2025–2028 Strategic Planning defines the overarching strategic priority areas for universities in Switzerland on the basis of an SHK mandate, including digitalisation and open science. The OA and ORD strategies each define the thematic strategic objectives in collaboration with the relevant ERI partner organisations at the national level.

The OA and ORD Strategies define the main strategic objectives relevant for the PgB programmes in the area of digitalisation and particularly open science. Furthermore, the PgB Proposals also address strategic elements not addressed in national strategies. swissuniversities submitted two programme proposals in the area of digitalisation:

- PgB Proposal Open Science II⁹
- PgB Proposal Open Education and Digital Competencies¹⁰

The PgB proposals represent swissuniversities' instruments to implement the strategic objectives set out in the foundational documents named above. Table 1 provides an overview of swissuniversities' strategic framework for digitalisation for the 2025–2028 period:

Table 1: Strategic framework for the Programme Open Science II

<i>Overarching strategic level</i>	Strategic planning swissuniversities 2025–2028 (GHK)			
	Specifically, its priorities in digitalisation:			
	Dimension Open Access	Dimension Open Research Data	Dimension Innovative areas of open science	Dimension Open Education
<i>Thematic strategic level</i>	OA Strategy	ORD Strategy ORD Action Plan	addressed in PgB proposal	addressed in PgB proposal
<i>Operative level</i>	Programme Open Science II			Programme Open Education and Digital Competencies

The following sections provide an overview of individual elements in the foundational documents that are relevant to the PgB programme Open Science II.

6 See footnote 2.

7 See footnote 2.

8 [Swiss National Strategy Open Research Data: Action Plan](#) (2021).

9 swissuniversities (2023). [Projektantrag Open Science II](#); swissuniversities (2023). [Proposition de projet Open Science II](#).

10 swissuniversities (2023). [Proposition de programme Open Education & Digital Competencies](#); swissuniversities (2023). [Programmantrag Open Education & Digital Competencies](#).

The overarching strategic level: Strategic planning for the coordination of the entire Swiss Higher Education Sector 2025–2028

As stated in the 2025–2028 GHK, “the Swiss higher education institutions describe their strategic vision for continuing to provide excellent and efficient services and making an even greater contribution to society.”¹¹ The GHK identifies digital change as a challenge and an opportunity for HEIs to make their organisations more agile and efficient in research and teaching. Closely linked to digitalisation at higher education institutions (HEIs) is the profound transformation towards Open Science. Swiss HEIs are committed to open science, education, and innovation in order to drive scientific advances, facilitate accessibility to research results, and maximise the transformative power of science. As set out in the GHK, HEIs are to be at the forefront of new developments and capable of reacting appropriately to new challenges in dynamic areas such as artificial intelligence or big data.

Thematic strategic level: The National Open Access and Open Research Data Strategies

Under the umbrella term open science, policymaking at the national level has thus far focused on OA and ORD, as set out in the 2017 Swiss National Strategy on Open Access¹² (revised in 2024)¹³ and the 2021 Swiss National Open Research Data Strategy.¹⁴ Both strategies were formulated on the basis of a SERI mandate commissioning swissuniversities to develop the strategies in collaboration with the corresponding ERI partners.¹⁵

The 2017 OA Strategy was adopted by swissuniversities and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), and revised by both partners in 2024.¹⁶ The revised OA Strategy upholds the vision of making all publicly funded scholarly publications openly accessible. It further envisions that a publication is considered open access if it is made immediately accessible in a machine-readable format at no charge, with no embargo, and with an open licence. The revised Strategy advances the transformation process and underpins the paradigm shift towards open access. It does so by specifying the systemic and cultural framework conditions that are required to address current developments and challenges in the dynamic open access landscape. Moreover, the revised Strategy acknowledges the diversity of models (Diamond, Gold, Green, Hybrid OA) and publication formats (e.g. articles, long-form publications, practice publications, publication in the arts) in the scholarly publishing landscape.

The HEIs, swissuniversities, and the SNSF independently commit to assume responsibility for implementing the Strategy in accordance with their institutional contexts and designated remits. To implement the Strategy, the Delegation Open Science of swissuniversities ensures coordination and collaboration between the Strategy partners, additional partner organisations such as the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences and the ETH Domain, as well as stakeholders.

The ORD Strategy, which is supported by swissuniversities, the SNSF, the ETH Domain, and the Swiss Academies of Arts and Science, aims to promote better, more effective, and more impactful research by facilitating access to, and reuse of, research data. The ORD Strategy established the ORD Strategy Council – a body constituted on the basis of a common will that has no overriding competences – which is responsible in the scope of its assigned tasks to coordinate and steer the development of the Swiss ORD landscape.¹⁷ As part of the ORD Strategy, an Action Plan was drawn up in a collaborative process between

11 swissuniversities (2022). [Gesamtschweizerische Hochschulpolitische Koordination 2025–2028: Strategische Planung](#), p. 9.

12 [Swiss National Strategy on Open Access](#) (2017).

13 See footnote 2.

14 See footnote 2.

15 Letter SERI (2015). Nationale Strategie Open Access»; SERI (2020). [Vereinbarung betreffend die Erarbeitung einer Nationalen Strategie Open Research Data und eines zugehörigen 'Umsetzungsplans'](#).

16 For information on the revision preparations, c.f. Delegation Open Science (2023). [Open Access Strategy Review: Background Report](#).

17 See footnote 8.

the ETH Domain, the SNSF, the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, and swissuniversities. The ORD Action Plan covers two ERI periods, from 2022 to 2028. For each action line, primary ownership and funding responsibilities are assigned; despite these assignments, respecting and safeguarding the autonomy of the involved institutions remains a guiding principle. DelOS steers the activities assigned to swissuniversities within the framework of the National ORD Action Plan.

DelOS continuously observes developments in open science, such as citizen science, open innovation, open education, and open infrastructures, as well as developments in fields connected to open science like artificial intelligence or knowledge security. For this reason, the PgB proposal for the Programme Open Science II also considers additional innovative areas of Open Science at a thematic strategic level, in which open-science compatible technology and knowledge transfer between higher education institutions and societal actors is to be fostered through explorative projects.

Operative level: Programme Open Science II

swissuniversities supports the digitalisation efforts on the part of the HEIs in two separate PgB programmes: Open Education and Digital Competencies¹⁸ and Open Science II.¹⁹ Although the two programmes are thematically related, they are organised separately, as they focus on different aspects of digitalisation and Open Science: the Open Education and Digital Competencies programme aims to foster a digital culture in higher education teaching by strengthening the computational competencies of students and the competencies of lecturers in digital instructional design (including open educational practices), whereas the Programme Open Science II promotes activities in the area of research and infrastructure development.

The Programme Open Science II aims to consolidate and strategically develop Open Science at Swiss HEIs and within research communities. The UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science defines open science “as an inclusive construct that combines various movements and practices aiming to make multilingual scientific knowledge openly available, accessible and reusable for everyone, to increase scientific collaborations and sharing of information for the benefits of science and society, and to open the processes of scientific knowledge creation, evaluation and communication to societal actors beyond the traditional scientific community.”²⁰

Content, goals, organisation, and timing as well as total project costs of the Programme Open Science II were defined by swissuniversities in the PgB proposal approved by the Higher Education Council of the SHK (c.f. section 1.1). The 2025–2028 Programme Open Science II focuses on the sustainable consolidation and strategic development of Open Science at Swiss HEIs and in the scientific community along three dimensions that may at times overlap: Open Access to Scientific Publications (OA), Open Research Data (ORD), and further innovative areas of Open Science. It does so by addressing the overarching and thematic strategic objectives set out in the strategic framework. The PgB programme is thus to be understood as swissuniversities’ main implementation instrument for realising the strategic objectives.

DelOS anticipates and coordinates topics related to Open Science and steers the Programme Open Science II (see chapter 5).

¹⁸ See footnote 10.

¹⁹ See footnote 9.

²⁰ [UNESCO Recommendations on Open Science](#) (2021).

1.3. Scope, purpose, and methods of the Implementation Plan

Scope

The PgB proposal for the 2025–2028 Programme Open Science II determines the scope of the Implementation Plan. The field of Open Science is highly dynamic and must adapt to changes on the national and international level. At the same time, the Swiss higher education landscape and the various research communities therein are heterogeneous, decentralised, and characterised by multilingualism. Consequently, Open Science is evolving at different speeds in the various disciplines and types of higher education institutions. For this reason, flexibility, agility, and reliable planning are all crucial elements in the strategic steering of the PgB Open Science II and necessary for responding to new challenges while also considering the specific needs of Swiss HEIs and ensuring the coordinated underpinning of existing Open Science knowledge, services, and infrastructures.

Purpose

The purpose of the Implementation Plan is twofold. Firstly, it provides the basis for the decisions of DeIOS in its function as the steering committee of the Programme Open Science II (see sections 1.2 and 5). The Implementation Plan also provides the basis for DeIOS to report transparently on its decisions and implementation results vis-à-vis the relevant stakeholders. Secondly, the Implementation Plan serves as guideline and orientation for potential project partners wishing to apply for funding under the Programme Open Science II.

The Implementation Plan is supplemented by other applicable documents such as the PgB information sheet of swissuniversities,²¹ the list of eligible institutions for federal project contributions pursuant to HEdA,²² and the application guidelines and project assignments for each action line, with the latter to be discussed and adopted by DeIOS (see section 4.2.3).

Methods

To achieve the stated purpose, the Implementation Plan is structured according to the measures of the three dimensions of the Programme Open Science II. In terms of content and implementation, DeIOS will specify the measures outlined in the Implementation Plan in the form of action lines at the appropriate time over the course the programme period.²³

Additionally, this document describes model procedures for calls (c.f. section 4.2), and describes the evaluation processes (c.f. section 4.3). These model procedures may apply to all the three dimensions of open science. However, the procedures and evaluation processes are not necessarily associated with specific action lines; the resulting flexibility enables an adequate process to be defined for each action line over the course of the programme period. DeIOS undertakes to select the most appropriate model procedure and evaluation process for each action line, with the aim of achieving the relevant strategic objectives set out in the strategic framework (c.f. chapter 1.2).

The Implementation Plan for the Programme Open Science II is designed to enable both the reliable planning of the activities and the ability to respond to the dynamic landscape in the field of Open Science. It also facilitates the integration and promotion of synergies among the three Open Science dimensions by providing a detailed description of the different model procedures.

21 swissuniversities (2024). [Projektgebundene Beiträge gemäss dem Hochschulförderungs- und -koordinationsgesetz HFKG: Merkblatt zu den von swissuniversities verwalteten PgB-finanzierten Programmen 2025-2028](#). swissuniversities (2024). [Contributions liées à des projets selon la loi sur l'encouragement et la coordination des hautes écoles LEHE : Aide-mémoire sur les programmes 2025-2028 financés par des contributions liées à des projets et gérés par swissuniversities](#).

22 SERI (2023). [Projektgebundene Beiträge nach HFKG: Beitragsberechtigte Hochschulen und andere Institutionen des Hochschulbereichs](#).

23 For the definition of "measures" and "action lines" c.f. section 2.1.

1.4. Document version

The Implementation Plan is available on the swissuniversities public website. If the ongoing evaluation of the programme so requires, DeIOS will amend the implementation plan accordingly and publish an updated version. The HEIs will be informed about news and changes to the programme (such as upcoming calls for proposals) via the swissuniversities website and official communication to the HEI rectors' offices, if applicable.

2. Activities of the Programme Open Science II

The OA Strategy, the ORD Strategy, and the ORD Action Plan describe activities at different levels, labelling them as "action areas", "measures", "action lines", "pathways", and "instruments". These terms are used differently in the various documents named above due to their specific context and when they were drawn up (c.f. section 1.2). For the implementation of the Programme Open Science II the following terms are used:

Dimensions

The Programme Open Science II is structured along three dimensions that are closely connected and may at times overlap: OA, ORD, and further innovative areas of Open Science. Within the OA dimension, the objectives defined in the 2024 revised OA Strategy are pursued. Within the ORD dimension, the objectives named the ORD Strategy and the measures and action lines of the associated ORD Action Plan that are in the remit of swissuniversities are continued and consolidated. The dimension pertaining to the innovative areas of Open Science is dedicated to (1) the promotion of open science-compatible knowledge and technology transfer between HEIs and relevant stakeholders in industry and society, (2) science diplomacy and collaborations with international organisations, and (3) knowledge security.

Measures and action lines

Measures may address an individual action line, or they may cover several action lines. The Appendix provides information on the content, strategic reference, the percentage budget, target group(s) and timing of the measures; it will be modified as necessary by DeIOS.

The action lines are the smallest unit of activity in implementation of the Programme Open Science II. Calls for proposals and project assignments are launched for specific action lines. DeIOS is responsible for defining the action lines over the course of the PgB programme and for initiating calls. For this reason, the activities are not described in the Implementation Plan as individual action lines, but as overarching measures.

The following measures²⁴ are planned for each dimension of the Programme Open Science II:

Open Access	Cost Monitoring
	Negotiations with Publishers
	Long-form and Other Publication Formats
	Green OA
	Diamond OA
Open Research Data	A1: Swiss Open Research Data Grants (CHORD)
	B3.2: ORD Infrastructures
	B5.2: ORD Specialists/Data Stewardship at HEIs
	B5.3: Swiss Research Data Support Network
	ORD Strategy Council Support
Innovative areas of open science	Cooperation with International Organisations
	Knowledge Security

²⁴ The information presented represents the current state of planning, as the financial resources for the 2025-2028 programmes can only be allocated for the year 2025. If the programme is continued, the planning will be updated.

For each measure, DeIOS implements specific strategic objectives set in the strategic framework. By planning measures and action lines, DeIOS steers the implementation of the strategic framework and its strategic objectives. Detailed information (e.g. strategic reference, procedure, target groups, timeframe, budget) about the planning individual measures is found in the Appendix.

3. Financial principles

3.1. General financial principles

The Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities is subject to federal legislation on public procurement (Art. 8, para. 2, HEdA). Within the framework of federal project contributions (Art. 59–61, HEdA), swissuniversities administers public funds on a fiduciary basis, awarding them to the universities and other institutions in the higher education sector that are entitled to federal contributions. swissuniversities is committed to using public contributions in a prudent and effective manner (Art. 41, para. 3, HEdA) and guarantees a transparent awarding procedure for projects.

As a rule, the recipient HEIs are required to match the federal project contributions with an equal or larger amount (matching funds principle). As part of Programme Open Science II, project contributions are awarded as matching funds through calls for proposals or project assignments that are reviewed and evaluated (c.f. section 4). DeIOS guarantees transparency in the announcement and evaluation processes, in compliance with the principle of prudent and effective use of public funding.

The PgB information sheet provides additional information on procedures.²⁵

3.2. Eligibility for funding

Eligibility for Programme Open Science II funding is regulated in accordance with Art. 2, para. 2 and 3 of HEdA. All types of HEIs (cantonal universities, federal institutes of technology, universities of applied sciences, and universities of teacher education²⁶) are entitled to apply for federal project contributions and to act as lead institutions in the case of consortia with multiple partner institutions. In such cases, the lead institution is responsible for coordinating the institutions involved, achieving the project objectives, implementing and monitoring of the project, and submitting the obligatory content-related and financial reports; the lead institution also facilitates contact with the swissuniversities General Secretariat. SERI provides a list of the institutions eligible for federal project contributions pursuant to HEdA.²⁷ External partners may be invited to contribute their own funds to the development of certain action lines of the programme. In particular, the PgB programme is open to research institutions in the ETH Domain that are not eligible for federal project contributions but are entitled to apply to the ETH Board for co-financing of their participation in the programme. Contracts for projects funded via PgB programmes must be signed by the HEIs.

The PgB information sheet provides additional information on procedures. In case of uncertainties regarding the eligibility of specific organisational units affiliated to HEIs, the General Secretariat of swissuniversities controls eligibility on the basis of the legal framework. If

²⁵ See footnote 21.

²⁶ In its award concept dated 1 November 2021, the SHK restated that projects sponsored exclusively by universities of teacher education will receive funding only if the involvement of a university of teacher education is required to achieve the objectives of a SHK higher education policy priority. Due to the central strategic importance of the paradigm shift that Open Science represents for the Swiss higher education landscape as a whole, the prerequisite for funding projects at universities of teacher education in the sense of an overall interest is clearly given. Moreover, the SHK mandate dated 25 November 2021 states that the national higher education policy focus on digitalisation in particular aims to at "implement, consolidate and further develop the national Open Research Data strategy". The universities of teacher education are partners of the national strategies on Open Research Data and Open Access as well as partners of the dimension on the further innovative areas of Open Science, which is why their participation in the implementation of these strategies/dimensions within the framework of this programme is essential for a successful paradigm shift.

²⁷ See footnote 22.

questions about eligibility for federal project contributions arise, potential project partners must contact the General Secretariat of swissuniversities at an early stage in the process.

If applicable, the measures and action lines suggest more specific target groups (e.g. researchers, open science specialists, central university services).

4. Programme workflow

4.1. Overall programme workflow

DeIOS specifies the measures and action lines for the three dimensions of the Programme Open Science II, namely OA, ORD, and innovative areas of Open Science at the appropriate time over the course of the programme period (c.f. section 2 and the Appendix). In principle, the Programme Open Science II utilises the three model funding procedures to implement the measures and action lines for the three dimensions (c.f. Table 2). The different procedures are described in section 4.2, evaluation processes in section 4.3, and decision-making processes in section 4.4.

The decision-making processes of DeIOS and the programme workflow for the different model procedures differ only to a small degree; if necessary, DeIOS will adjust the process described below to better align with the requirements of a specific procedure. The decision-making authority lies with the DeIOS or with the President of the DeIOS, as defined by the DeIOS.

The overall programme workflow is organised as follows:

(1) Definition of the action line and model procedure (c.f. section 4.2)

DeIOS determines on a case-by-case basis which model procedure is appropriate for each action line, under consideration of the relevant strategic objectives, as set out in the strategic framework (c.f. section 1.2). If required, DeIOS gathers information and recommendations from members of the Reviewers' Pool in order to develop the content of the calls and project assignments. DeIOS then approves the funding application guidelines for a call or the project assignment specifications.

(2) Evaluation process (c.f. section 4.3)

After project proposals have been submitted, an evaluation process will be conducted. In principle, either competitive evaluations or suitability and feasibility evaluations are conducted. Depending on the evaluation process, either the Reviewers' Pool or the General Secretariat formulates recommendations to DeIOS.

(3) Funding decision (c.f. section 4.4)

DeIOS decides on funding projects on the basis of the evaluation and recommendation.

(4) Project start and reporting

The project begins once the contracts have been signed by the parties involved. As stated in the application guidelines or project assignment specifications and in the contract, project partners must report on the results of their activities both annually and at the end of the funding period. The project partners' reports form the basis for swissuniversities' yearly report and final reporting on the Programme Open Science II vis-à-vis SERI and the SHK. Upon request, the project partners' reporting may inform DeIOS' interim report (Summarisches Zwischenreporting) to the SHK on the progress made in implementing the measures. The PgB information sheet provides additional information about obligations during the project phase.

4.2. Model procedures for funding

Project funding is awarded via three types of procedure: competitive calls, progression calls, and project assignments. The procedures are categorised according to five different aspects (c.f. Table 2): goals, application basis, funding concept, evaluation process and default funding principle. For all of the three project funding schemes the matching fund principle applies. Mandates differ from these procedures (c.f. section 4.2.4).

4.2.1. Competitive calls

Competitive calls invite project submissions at specific times during the programme period. Competitive calls specify in advance the goals to be met by the project partners within a pre-assigned time period. The application guidelines include information on the call's content in reference to the action line, its goal, the relevant selection procedure for projects, formal and content requirements, regulations for federal project contributions, and information about reporting obligations on the part of project partners.

The purpose is to fund projects at HEIs selected in a competitive evaluation process. In order to assess the excellence, DelOS bases its funding decisions on the evaluation and recommendation of the independent reviewers in the Open Science Reviewers' Pool (c.f. section 4.3.2). DelOS specifies the evaluation criteria for each competitive call according to the specific action line. For example, certain action lines support projects with an exploratory character, while others aim to consolidate best practices in the field of Open Science. The funding concept is divided into two subtypes:

Calls for several projects (Subtype 1)

Funding is allocated to several projects selected in a competitive evaluation process.

Calls for one / the best projects (Subtype 2)

Funding is allocated to one / the best project that succeeds in a competitive evaluation process.

4.2.2. Progression calls

Progression calls are designed to promote and coordinate measures, and/or to further develop existing best practices and projects at Swiss HEIs in a global manner. For this reason, the target groups are generally central services at the overall institutional level. As a rule, the General Secretariat of swissuniversities conducts a suitability and feasibility evaluation of proposals made within progression calls. If required, DelOS gathers recommendations from members of the reviewers' pool with the aim of developing predefined evaluation criteria of progression calls. If appropriate, DelOS may decide to issue the call in a competitive evaluation process. The funding concept is divided into two subtypes:

Calls with a predefined distribution key (Subtype 1)

Funding is allocated according to a distribution key.²⁸ This is the case, for example, when all HEIs are invited to submit proposals for the development of action plans on a specific Open Science topic. Calls with a predefined distribution key are open for project submission at specific points in the programme period and they specify in advance the goals to be met by the project partners within a preassigned time period.

Continuously open calls (Subtype 2)

Funding is allocated on a "first come, first served" basis, and, as long as funding is available, the call for applications is open. This applies to calls for communications measures, because these kinds of activities are implemented continuously over the course of the PgB programme.

²⁸ As a rule, distribution keys within the framework of PgB programmes are calculated according to student numbers.

Table 1: Model procedures

Model procedure	Competitive calls		Progression calls		Project assignments	Mandates
Goal	Funding for projects selected in competitive evaluation procedures.		Funding for HEIs to promote and coordinate measures, and/or to further develop best practices in a comprehensive manner.		Project assignments serve to meet a specific task/objective assumed by the recipient HEIs. They may also serve to enhance synergies, preserve resources or merging projects.	Mandates serve to fulfil a need of the programme for which a bidder is sought and commissioned. A typical example are the expert reports as a basis for further work.
Application basis	Application guidelines published at specific times during the programme period for calls for projects with a predefined duration.		<u>Subtype 1)</u> Application guidelines published at specific times during the programme period for calls for projects with a predefined duration.	<u>Subtype 2)</u> Action lines continuously open for applications according to application guidelines.	Project contracts drawn up at specific points in the programme period for calls for projects with a predefined duration.	Mandates are awarded in accordance with Swiss procurement law.
Funding concept	<u>Subtype 1)</u> Funding for several projects selected in competitive evaluation procedures.	<u>Subtype 2)</u> Funding for one / the best projects that succeed(s) in competitive evaluation procedures.	<u>Subtype 1)</u> Funding according to a distribution key.	<u>Subtype 2)</u> Funding according to the principle "first come, first served".	Funding of a limited set of potential project partners or a predefined project partner (e.g. a consortium). The best project is supported (if applicable).	Mandates are awarded in accordance with Swiss procurement law.
Evaluation process	As a rule, competitive evaluation process by the Reviewers' Pool. Evaluation criteria specified by DeLOS.		As a rule, suitability and feasibility evaluation procedure by the General Secretariat. Evaluation criteria specified by DeLOS.		As a rule, suitability and feasibility evaluation procedure by the General Secretariat. Evaluation criteria specified by DeLOS.	Mandates are awarded in accordance with Swiss procurement law.
Default funding principle	Matching funds		Matching funds		Matching funds	Coordination funds

4.2.3. Project assignments

Project assignments are designed to meet a specific task/objective of the PgB programme taken on by the recipient HEIs. Examples include enhancing synergies, preserving resources, or merging projects, if the concerned HEIs chooses to do so.

The model procedure “project assignments” is chosen for activities that DeLOS assigns to a limited set of potential bidders or a pre-defined project partner/consortium. In principle, the process to define the funding concept for project assignments is as follows:

- DeLOS discusses and proposes potential project partners for project assignments and instructs the General Secretariat to carry out preliminary enquiries with the concerned parties, to consult the community, and to report the results to DeLOS.
- DeLOS then decides on the set of potential project partners.
- If there are several potential project partners, DeLOS or its president decides on which process to implement.

DeLOS draws up a project assignment specification to define the content of the corresponding action line, its objectives and expected deliverables from the project partner, responsibilities of the parties involved, financing, communication, and reporting.

After identifying potential project partners and completing the project assignment specification, DeLOS may require a project proposal from partners. If a project proposal is submitted, an evaluation process is conducted (in principle, a suitability and feasibility evaluation).

4.2.4. Mandates

Mandates are financed through coordination funds and serve to fulfil tasks for the programme coordination for which a bidder is sought and commissioned. Typical examples are expert reports as a basis for further work. Mandates are awarded in accordance with the legal requirements of public procurement law.

4.3. Evaluation process

For each model procedure, DeLOS conducts different evaluation processes and defines the evaluation process for each action line individually.

This section describes the possible evaluation processes for project proposals submitted in the following model procedures: competitive call, progression call, and project assignment. There are two general types of evaluation processes: a competitive evaluation or a suitability and feasibility evaluation process.

Mandates are assigned according to the relevant procurement procedure, which is why they are not covered in this section.

4.3.1. Responsibilities and competencies

DeLOS is the body responsible for final funding decisions (c.f. section 4.4). In taking its decisions on funding, DeLOS consults the evaluation and recommendation submitted by the Open Science Reviewers’ Pool or the General Secretariat of swissuniversities.

DeLOS is responsible for defining the appropriate evaluation process for each action line. The Open Science Reviewers’ Pool is responsible for evaluating and recommending project proposals submitted in a competitive evaluation process (with the support of the General Secretariat). The General Secretariat is responsible for evaluating and recommending project proposals submitted in a suitability and feasibility evaluation process.

4.3.2. Reviewers' Pool

The swissuniversities Reviewers' Pool consists of reviewers with expertise in Open Science in general, and with Open Access, Open Research Data and innovative areas of Open Science in particular. For the review process, the UNESCO Recommendations on Open Science with regard to open peer review are of relevance.²⁹ DeIOS follows the UNESCO recommendation that reviewers are identified by name, and therefore publishes a list of the members of the Reviewers' Pool on the swissuniversities website.

swissuniversities respects the following diversity criteria in the composition of the Reviewers' Pool in order to contribute to a fair evaluation of project proposals:

- Gender (at least 40% each)
- Internationality (at least 25% from abroad)
- Thematic expertise (good coverage of the areas of activity)
- Researchers (at least 50%)

The programme coordination assigns evaluation to the reviewers on the basis of their area of expertise and skills. Reviewers' Pool members must declare potential conflicts of interest to the programme coordination and sign their contracts with swissuniversities before starting their work as reviewers.

DeIOS chooses the members of the reviewers' pool and the president of the Reviewers' Pool *ad personam*. The president of the Reviewers' Pool represents the pool at DeIOS meetings (no voting right) and presents the results and recommendations of the reviewers to DeIOS for approval.

4.3.3. Evaluation criteria

Projects funded under the Programme Open Science II must be a) relevant, b) have an impact on the further transformation and underpinning of Open Science in the Swiss research system and c) be feasible. On the basis of these requirements³⁰ and the objectives of each action line, the DeIOS decides on the appropriate evaluation criteria for each call for proposals and project assignment. Depending on the goals set for each action line, specific questions are formulated to evaluate the quality of a proposed project.

In its evaluation, DeIOS considers the legal and formal requirements for PgB programmes as they are defined (1) in HEdA, (2) in the SHK's allocation concept for PgB programmes, (3) in the sheet for the 2025–2028 PgB programmes managed by swissuniversities, and (4) in the Checklist Diversity Mainstreaming of swissuniversities.³¹ Potential project partners are informed about the evaluation criteria via the application guidelines or the project assignment specifications. The General Secretariat of swissuniversities is responsible for assessing formal criteria such as the completeness of proposals and compliance with the information sheet for the 2025–2028 PgB programme. Particularly in case of competitive calls for proposals, DeIOS charges the Reviewers' Pool with conducting a competitive evaluation process.

Financial sustainability

In general, financial sustainability is understood as practising fiduciary responsibility for public funds. Moreover, the use of public funds for measures within the three dimensions OA, ORD and further innovative areas of Open Science must be cost-efficient, sustainable, and transparent. Financial sustainability is a mandatory requirement in the overall Programme Open Science II (Art. 60, para. 1, HEdA). Because project contributions are provided for a

²⁹ See footnote 20.

³⁰ These premises are inspired by the OECD Evaluation Framework and were further developed in the context of Open Science I programme to meet its specific needs. [OECD, Evaluation Criteria](#).

³¹ [swissuniversities, Checklist Diversity Mainstreaming \(2023\); swissuniversities, Checklist Diversity Mainstreaming \(2023\) - FR](#).

limited period of time (Art. 60, para. 2, HEdA), they are to be understood as seed funding (Anschubfinanzierung). swissuniversities has a fiduciary duty in the disbursement of project funds in the form of federal project contributions to the HEIs and therefore adheres to this duty when funding projects at HEIs. Depending on the context and the specific requirements, DeIOS will assess the criterion of financial sustainability in an appropriate manner.

4.3.4. Competitive evaluation process

The following section describes the evaluation process for competitive calls for proposals managed by the General Secretariat of swissuniversities. The process consists of four phases. If necessary, DeIOS will modify the process to better meet the requirements of specific action lines.

1. Formal review

The General Secretariat of swissuniversities first conducts a formal review of each proposal to ensure that the proposals are complete, that they were submitted by eligible institutions, comply with PgB rules as defined in HEdA, and meet the formal requirements set out in the relevant application guidelines. If the requirements are not met, the General Secretariat requests improvements or dismisses the application on a case-by-case basis.

2. Individual review of the proposal

Following the formal review, each proposal is sent to two external experts from the Reviewers' Pool. These reviewers are selected on the basis of their expertise and backgrounds. At this stage, any potential conflict of interest is carefully considered; if a conflict of interest is present, the reviewer concerned is excluded from the review process. Each reviewer then independently assesses the proposed project and sends their individual evaluation to the General Secretariat of swissuniversities. The evaluation criteria for each call are provided in the application guidelines.

3. Consolidated evaluation of the proposal

After receiving each individual review, the General Secretariat of swissuniversities brings together the two reviewers responsible for assessing a particular proposal. At this stage, the two reviewers are invited to discuss the proposed project and exchange views on the project's eligibility and its suitability for funding. The reviewers then submit their consolidated evaluation to the General Secretariat of swissuniversities.

4. Evaluation workshop

As a fourth step in the evaluation process, the General Secretariat of swissuniversities organises an evaluation workshop that is led by the President of the Reviewers' Pool and attended by all reviewers involved in the call for proposals. The President of the Reviewers' Pool ensures the coherence and stringency of the decisions and the quality of the process. Prior to the workshop, all participating reviewers receive all proposals and associated reviews from the call. During the evaluation workshop, the reviewers present their consolidated evaluations and all reviewers are invited to discuss the recommendations they submitted. In this phase, all reviewers review each proposal and formulate a joint recommendation to DeIOS.

4.3.5. Suitability and feasibility evaluation process

This section describes the process for the suitability and feasibility evaluation conducted by the General Secretariat. This type of evaluation is usually chosen for progression calls and project assignments. For project assignments, DeIOS makes preliminary enquiries about potential project partners with the support of the General Secretariat of swissuniversities. In case of several potential project partners, DeIOS decides on the appropriate evaluation process (c.f. section 4.2.3).

The suitability and feasibility evaluation process is composed of three steps:

1. Formal review

The General Secretariat of swissuniversities first formally reviews each proposal to ensure that the proposals are complete, that they were submitted by eligible institutions, comply with PgB rules as defined in HEdA, and meet the formal requirements set out in the relevant application guidelines. If the requirements are not met, the General Secretariat requests improvements or dismisses the application on a case-by-case basis.

2. Suitability and feasibility evaluation

In a second step the General Secretariat evaluates the suitability and feasibility of the project proposals according to the evaluation criteria set by DeIOS for the specific call. If necessary, the General Secretariat requests more information about an application and asks for clarifications with experts or decision-makers involved.

3. Recommendation to DeIOS

In a final step, the General Secretariat formulates recommendations vis-à-vis DeIOS for each call, including conditions or advice if applicable.

4.4. Funding decision

The final decision on each proposal is made by DeIOS based on recommendations submitted by the experts from the Reviewers' Pool or by the General Secretariat. There are four possible decisions: a project is funded without conditions; project is funded with conditions that must be met before the project start or over the course of the project; project is funded and advice is offered on project implementation; a project is not approved for funding. Decisions are communicated to the applicants in a timely manner.

The following information of approved projects is made public on swissuniversities' website:

- Project title
- Leading and partner institutions
- Project manager
- Total costs and funds requested
- Number of total submissions and funding rate

5. Governance

5.1. Delegation Open Science

DeIOS steers the Programme Open Science II and is supported in its tasks by the General Secretariat of swissuniversities.

The Programme Open Science II is organised on the basis of the document "Tasks, competencies and responsibilities of the swissuniversities steering committees (AKV)", which describes the governance structures for all PgB programmes of swissuniversities.³² Embedding the programme in the established decision-making and coordination competencies of swissuniversities is an important factor in the successful implementation of the PgB programme. The Programme Open Science II is managed according to the following core responsibilities.

DeIOS members are appointed by the Board of swissuniversities; as a body, it acts as the steering committee for the Programme Open Science II as defined in its mandate for the 2024–2027 period.³³ DeIOS is responsible for the strategic steering and management of the programme, which includes anticipating and coordinating topics related to Open Science

³² The explanations in the document "Tasks, competencies, and responsibilities of the swissuniversities steering committees" apply to the programme unless other provisions are set out in the mandate of DeIOS.

³³ See footnote 3.

and its individual components (in particular national IT infrastructures), as well as controlling, reporting, and decision-making on all activities. As the steering committee, DeIOS is also responsible for ensuring the programme's coherence: DeIOS monitors the different activities of the programme on an ongoing basis and adjusts the programme's priorities as needed. This reflection on the programme is conducted in particular in the context of the interim reporting (Summarisches Zwischenreporting) vis-à-vis the SHK.

Because DeIOS comprises representatives from all types of higher education institutions, including the two HEIs in the ETH Domain, as well as one representative each from the SNSF and from the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, the coordination between ERI partners is ensured.

5.2. Coordination of the Delegation Open Science with other bodies

Expert evaluation: Reviewers' Pool

The independent experts of the Reviewers' Pool are appointed by DeIOS. If DeIOS assigns the evaluation of project submissions to the Reviewers Pool, the experts are responsible for evaluating the according project proposals. DeIOS takes the final decision on funding projects (c.f. section 4.3.2).

swissuniversities internal committees

DeIOS coordinates its work with internal bodies of swissuniversities. In particular, DeIOS is in regular communication with the Teaching Delegation, which is responsible for implementing the 2025–2028 Programme Open Education and Digital Competencies. In light of intersections between Open Science with the broader topic of research assessment, the General Secretariat coordinates its work with the Research Delegation. For questions on knowledge security, DeIOS consults with the International Relations Delegation.

Sounding Board on Open Access: Open Access Alliance

The Open Access Alliance ensures national exchanges on topics related to Open Access and acts as a sounding board for DeIOS concerning this dimension. The Open Access Alliance unites stakeholders from the open access transformation and project leaders responsible for projects funded by the Programme Open Science II. Other interested persons from the Open Access community may participate in the meetings of the Open Access Alliance in an advisory capacity. The role of the Open Access Alliance is purely advisory, i.e. it does not have a steering function.

Coordination and steering of the national development on ORD: ORD Strategy Council

The common will to coordinate and thus foster a collaborative approach to promoting Open Research Data is a central characteristic of the national ORD Strategy. For this reason, the ORD Strategy established the ORD Strategy Council – a body constituted on the basis of a common will that has no overriding competences – which is responsible within the scope of its assigned tasks to coordinate and steer the development of the Swiss ORD landscape.³⁴ As one of the primary owners of the ORD Action Plan, the Strategy Council is responsible for implementing specific measures of the Action Plan and for updating the Action Plan.

swissuniversities has been appointed as primary owner of specific measures of the Action Plan and has the authority to decide on their implementation. The Programme Open Science II therefore also represents swissuniversities' contribution to the implementation of the ORD Action Plan for the 2025–2028 period. In its role as the steering committee of the Open Science II programme, DeIOS coordinates its ORD activities with the Strategy Council.³⁵

³⁴ See footnote 8.

³⁵ swissuniversities mandates its representatives in the StraCo and defines their 'tasks, competencies and responsibilities' in the corresponding mandate.

Appendix: Planning for the measures of the Programme Open Science II

The planning for the measures of the Open Science II programme is outlined in the following section. The planning sets the general course of the programme and may need to be amended by DelOS. If amendments are made, the appendix will be updated.

Open Access to Scientific Publications

Cost Monitoring	
Strategic reference	Swiss National Open Access Strategy, Pathway F
Content description	The cost monitoring of scholarly publications is essential to steer the OA transformation. Based on the existing OA Monitoring, an automated cost monitoring at the national level is to be developed.
Framework conditions	Project assignment to one consortial project partner with expertise in library services.
Budget	250'000 CHF (20.8% of overall OA budget)
Project start	Q1 2025
Negotiations with Publishers	
Strategic reference	Swiss National Open Access Strategy, Pathway B
Content description	Negotiations with large international publishers are essential to support a stable and sustainable transition of scholarly publishing towards OA. A common approach by all HEIs is fostered through this measure.
Framework conditions	Project assignment to one consortial project partner with expertise in publisher negotiations.
Budget	150'000 CHF (12.5% of overall OA budget)
Project start	Q1 2025
Long-form and Other Publication Formats	
Strategic reference	Swiss National Open Access Strategy, Pathway D
Content description	This measure focuses on expanding OA initiatives in order to support Open Access also for long-form publications and other publication formats (monographs and edited volumes, practice publications, 'livres d'art', reference works, etc.). Specifically, situation analyses and conceptual work is to be funded regarding existing challenges in and possible solutions for non-article OA publishing in one academic field each (e.g. humanities, STEM, social sciences, etc.).
Framework conditions	Competitive call targeted in principle at consortia consisting of central and library services of HEIs, researchers, and other stakeholders (e.g. publishers).
Budget	200'000 CHF (16.7% of overall OA budget)
Call opens	Q4 2024
Green Open Access	
Strategic reference	Swiss National Open Access Strategy, Pathway A
Content description	This measure is intended to fund (in particular consortial) projects that pursue the establishment of common standards and practices as well as the federalisation of existing solutions to improve discoverability, visibility and interoperability. Furthermore, projects are to be funded that aim to increase awareness and knowledge of researchers' copyright and usage rights in general

	and the rights retention strategy in particular, as well as to support researchers in protecting their rights.
Framework conditions	Competitive call targeted in principle at central and library services of HEI.
Budget	350'000 CHF (29.2% of overall OA budget)
Call opens	Q4 2024

Diamond Open Access

Strategic reference	Swiss National Open Access Strategy, Pathway A
Content description	The measure primarily aims at developing long-term sustainable funding for Diamond journals. During the project, a broad consortium comprising HEI and other stakeholders is to be formed, which will jointly commit to promoting Diamond OA publications.
Framework conditions	Competitive call targeted in principle at consortia consisting of central and library services of HEI and other stakeholders (e.g. publishers, journals).
Budget	250'000 CHF (20.8% of overall OA budget)
Call opens	Q4 2024

Open Research Data

A1: Swiss Open Research Data Grants (CHORD)

Strategic reference	Swiss National ORD Strategy: Action Plan, Measure A1
Content description	The measure enables coherent and broad bottom-up support for ORD practices in research communities across disciplines and HEIs in Switzerland, thereby facilitating the creation of synergies and complementarities.
Framework conditions	Competitive call targeted at research communities across disciplines and HEIs.
Budget	800'000 CHF (28.1% of overall ORD budget)
Call opens	Q4 2024

B3.2: ORD Infrastructures

Strategic reference	Swiss National ORD Strategy: Action Plan, Measure B3
Content description	The measure targets the consolidation and strategic development of the Swiss ORD landscape with regard to ORD elements of existing infrastructures and services of foremost national relevance.
Framework conditions	Competitive call targeted at existing research infrastructures.
Budget	750'000 CHF (26.3% of overall ORD Budget)
Call opens	Q4 2024

B5.2: ORD Specialists/Data Stewardship at HEIs

Strategic reference	Swiss National ORD Strategy: Action Plan, Measure B5
Content description	This measure promotes and incentivises data stewardship as well as ORD specialists at all institutions in Switzerland; incentivise the hiring of Open Science experts, data stewards, and other experts to build competence centres at HEIs and promote cooperation between HEIs by providing start-up funding.
Framework conditions	Progression call targeted primarily at central and library services of HEIs.
Budget	1'000'000 CHF (35.1% of overall ORD budget)
Call opens	Q4 2024

B5.3: Swiss Research Data Support Network	
Strategic reference	Swiss National ORD Strategy: Action Plan, Measure B5
Content description	This measure promotes to establish a network/networks for ORD experts.
Framework conditions	Project assignment targeted to the existing network.
Budget	50'000 CHF (1.8% of overall ORD budget)
Project start	Q2 2025

ORD Strategy Council Support	
Strategic reference	Swiss National ORD Strategy: Action Plan
Content description	This measure promotes to support the Higher Education Institutions for their project related work for the ORD Strategy Council.
Framework conditions	To be determined.
Budget	250'000 CHF (8.8% of overall ORD budget)
Project start	Q1 2025

Innovative Areas of Open Science

Cooperation with International organisations	
Strategic reference	PgB Proposal Open Science II, measure 2 of the dimension Innovative Areas of Open Science
Content description	This measure focuses on collaboration between HEI and international organisations. It specifically aims to determine whether and how cooperation between research and international organisations can be promoted using Open Science principles and practices.
Framework conditions	Competitive call targeted at research communities across disciplines and HEIs. (implemented jointly with measure A1: Swiss Open Research Data Grants CHORD)
Budget	200'000 CHF (57.1% of overall budget for innovative areas)
Call opens	Q4 2024

Knowledge Security	
Strategic reference	PgB Proposal Open Science II, measure 3 of the dimension Innovative Areas of Open Science
Content description	This measure focuses on the compatibility of Open Science practices with the need for knowledge security and issues relating to dual use research. To that end, a (legal) report developed by a consortium of lawyers and other experts from Swiss HEI will be funded to present the regulatory requirements for HEI and researchers, to outline current (international) trends and existing good practices, and develop a toolbox of possible measures addressing the challenges and requirements relating to the compatibility of knowledge security and open science practices.
Framework conditions	Project assignment targeted at legal and subject-specific experts.
Budget	150'000 CHF (42.9% of overall budget for innovative areas)
Call opens	Q4 2024