



FAIRSFair

Fostering Fair Data Practices in Europe

Good Practices

Open Science programme

Swissuniversities developed the Open Science programme to support the implementation of national action plans on Open Access and Open Research Data. The programme encourages Swiss higher education institutions to collaborate with each other and submit project proposals addressing the objectives and action lines set by the national strategies.

The case study shows the role National Rectors' Conference can play in promoting collaboration among their members to advance the uptake of skills and practices in the fields of Open Science. Funding schemes like the Open Science programme are key to provide universities with resources, both in terms of staff and financial support. They also create an overarching policy framework to help universities further develop their own initiatives and ensure their sustainability. Fostering the collaboration among higher education institutions that have different levels of experience with RDM practices, training and infrastructures is also a good strategy to fill potential implementation and knowledge gaps across regions.

swissuniversities

[swissuniversities.ch](https://www.swissuniversities.ch)

Use case: promoting collaboration among higher education institutions in the field of research data through a national funded programme offered by a national rectors' conference

Type of initiative: national funding scheme

Organiser of the initiative: swissuniversities

Scope and objectives

The Open Science programme is a national funding scheme for the period 2021-2024 developed by swissuniversities, the Swiss National Rectors' Conference, with the support of the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI).

The programme aims to support the implementation of the national Strategy and Action Plan Open Access (2018-2024) and the national Strategy and Action Plan Open Research Data (2022-2024). To achieve this objective, the programme promotes the cooperation among Swiss higher education institutions, which are invited to submit project proposals that address the topics and action lines of the policy documents. These are identified in two calls for projects of the programme: Open Access (2021-2024) and Open Research Data (2022-2024).

The Open Science programme builds on a previous funding scheme developed by swissuniversities on Scientific Information, which was instrumental in supporting the emergence of new infrastructures, new publications and new training activities to facilitate the transition to Open Science at the institutional level. However, interviewees from swissuniversities highlighted how new actions needed to be taken in order to optimize the results achieved by different Swiss higher education institutions. **The Open Science programme aims at promoting and supporting this coordination process, creating bridges and synergies nationally to optimize resources.** One of the key objectives of this programme is to encourage universities to collaborate with each other, acting on their different strengths and complementary skills and resources to bring forward the objectives of the new national policies.

Interviewees underlined the crucial role of higher education institutions in achieving the objectives of the Open Science programme and the policies it supports. Both the Open Access and Open Research Data calls aim at coordinating and providing support to initiatives that are developed by universities. As such, **institutional autonomy plays a key role in the design of this initiative.** Universities are in charge of formulating their strategies, using the guidelines of the calls and the objectives of the national policies as a framework to support their implementation. While the Open Science programme aims to drive the cultural change towards Open Science at the institutional level, bottom-up and top-down dynamics based on specific action lines are at the core of this process.

Implementation

In January 2020, swissuniversities received the mandate from the SERI to develop the National Open Research Data Strategy and its Action plan, which would be supported by a new call for projects for the period 2022-2024. While the national strategy was published in June 2021, the Action Plan and the call for projects on Open Research Data are currently being discussed and will be launched in late 2021 and early 2022. They will complement the Open Access Strategy and Action Plan and its relative call for Open Access projects, which was already launched in late 2020 following the decision, taken in close consultation with members of swissuniversities, to prioritise the Open Access pillar.

Interviewees from swissuniversities highlighted how the implementation of the Open Science programme benefited from the support of an advisory ecosystem operating at the national level. This included the SERI and swissuniversities' Open Science Delegation, whose members represent different Swiss higher education institutions. New Focus Groups on Open Research Data were also created to contribute to the development of the national strategy and action plan related to research data.





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Capacity provided to member institutions

The Open Science programme receives funding from the State Secretariat for Training, Research and Innovation (SERI) of the Swiss Confederation. In terms of budget, the funding for the Open Access and Open Research Data calls amounts, respectively, to 11,8 million CHF and 32.48 million CHF.

The funding provided by the programme is an important support mechanism for Swiss higher education institutions to develop new initiatives in support of Open Access and FAIR data-sharing practices and exemplifies the strategic role that National Rectors' Conferences, such as swissuniversities, have in amplifying the capacity of their members to practice Open Science.

The proposed programme is based on the Open Research Data (ORD) Strategy and action plan, which is the result of collaboration between Swiss higher education institutions and national actors in this field including the Swiss National Science Foundation, the ETH Domain and the Swiss Academy of Sciences. The collaboration with these key stakeholders is essential because of the very important role that each stakeholder plays in the development and promotion of research nationally.

To this end, the national ORD strategy foresees the creation of a Strategy Council, which will be responsible for developing a common vision for the future ORD landscape in Switzerland to ensure both the coherence and interoperability of all infrastructure and services, while supporting interfaces with other research areas. This new body will assume responsibility for initiating the development and communication of Swiss positions in international debates, while guaranteeing the autonomy of the higher education institutions it represents.

Impact

While the Open Science programme is in its early stages and has not been formally evaluated, interviewees shared reflections on the experience of swissuniversities in evaluating the impact of previous funding schemes in order to provide examples of how a national programme of this kind can be evaluated going beyond traditional indicators, such as the number of projects funded. In particular, they highlighted the **importance of conducting a qualitative evaluation process, examining which projects became established services for the university community and how their activities are progressing after the end of the programme**. This is instrumental not only in evaluating the impact of a programme, but also in setting new objectives and identifying further needs to address with future activities, as well as opportunities to enhance the long-term sustainability of the projects.

Different lessons learned were also identified by swissuniversities, corresponding to key aspects that contributed to the smooth development of the Open Science programme. The collaboration between European, national and institutional stakeholders showed the important role of establishing good communication among different actors and across different levels. This was crucial in terms of engaging all the partners who were involved in the process and ensuring the consensus needed to bring forward the implementation of the activities. The presence of a motivated team of experts within the staff of swissuniversities and reviewers within the reviewers' pool outside of swissuniversities were also key to find solutions and ideas to develop the programme. In particular, interviewees highlighted how experts with a diverse set of skills and backgrounds were needed to provide valuable expertise on complex challenges experienced by their member institutions with respect to the different action areas of the Open Access and Open Research Data calls. In addition, the Swiss Open Science programme follows an open review process, as defined in the **UNESCO Open Science Recommendation**. This translates itself by the ability to access freely and openly the detailed evaluation of all projects received by the Open Science programme.



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About this use case

This use case is part of a collection describing how FAIR education is being embedded in educational programmes and presented in the "**Good Practices in FAIR Competence Education**" report.

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