



Task force Swiss EEN 2

Swiss Enterprise Europe Network

Detailed concept for the implementation of a new network organization for the period 2016-2020

Reference : EEN 2 concept-v validée MoCo



Management summary¹

Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) is a business support network, initiated in 2008 by the European Commission, promoting competitiveness and innovation at the local level and bringing together 600 member organisations present in over 50 countries. Since 2008, Euresearch and Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE) have constituted the Swiss EEN consortium.

In 2014 it was decided that, starting in 2016, the leadership for the Swiss EEN activities will be assumed by the Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI). Together with the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) and the State Secretariat for Economy (SECO), the CTI has set the following objectives for the period 2016-2020 for the Swiss participation in EEN:

- Focus on the specific needs of innovative Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- Involvement of regional structures responsible for the general support of SMEs
- Implementation of the “case management” concept
- Development of business cooperation activities.

To supervise the implementation of EEN in Switzerland, an **EEN monitoring committee**, responsible for strategic coordination and for monitoring activities, will be created.

The level of human and financial resources presently allocated to the implementation of EEN in Switzerland will be maintained. However, the change in leadership will result in the transfer to the CTI of the resources currently attributed by the SERI to Euresearch for its EEN activities. This is expected to take place in 2017, when the CTI will operate on a new legal basis (public law institution). In 2016, the CTI will become one of the **EEN consortium members**, beside Euresearch and S-GE, and lead the **EEN steering group** which will ensure the implementation of EEN in Switzerland. From 2017 onward, the CTI will also be responsible for delivering services to the EEN clients (SMEs and the scientific community), for coordinating the members of the EEN network in Switzerland, and for maintaining the relationships with the EU and the EEN partner states.

In 2015, the impact of the participation of Switzerland in EEN to date will be evaluated. This will allow quantitative goals to be set for the period 2016-2020. Based on this analysis, the terms of the mandates given to Euresearch and to S-GE for their activities in the EEN consortium over the next few years will be specified accordingly.

In addition to the existing partners, it is planned to integrate new **local cooperation partners** in the EEN network, such as Regional Innovation System (RIS) actors, CTI Innovation mentors (specialists for knowledge and technology transfer), as well as other regional or national players active in technology transfer or the support of SMEs. Their specific role will be to deliver targeted information to the SMEs and, where appropriate, refer their clients to the consortium member most suited to deliver the required service. Strong, mutually beneficial collaborative links will be established between EEN consortium members and local cooperation partners.

¹ The report was written with the contribution of R. Bühler SERI; F. Dubas CTI ; R. Egli SECO ; D. Egloff SERI ; G. Gass Euresearch ; S. Talovic S-GE.

1 Present situation

Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) is a business support network, initiated in 2008 by the European Commission, to bring together 600 member organisations present in over 50 countries for the promotion of competitiveness and innovation at the local level. It offers professional support services to bridge the gap between research and the market by facilitating transnational business-to-business and business-to-academia innovation partnerships across Europe and beyond. The goals set for EEN are to help companies, especially Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), access EU funding and find international business partners, new technologies or a business application for a technology. EEN is part of the Program for Competitiveness of Enterprises and SME (COSME) and is managed by the Executive Agency for SME (EASME).

1.1 The Swiss EEN consortium

Since 2008, Euresearch and Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE) have constituted the **Swiss EEN** consortium as complementary partners. In the context of Swiss EEN, they have been active on the national level to assist Swiss SMEs to establish cross-border partnerships in the EU and in third countries and to foster business, technology transfer, and research collaborations.

Euresearch

The Euresearch Head Office in Bern hosts the **Swiss EEN advisors**, among them the **Swiss EEN project manager** acting as main contact person for the EU and for EEN partner countries. The present mandate of Euresearch for EEN activities is approximately CHF 850'000 per year, including 5.2 full time equivalents (FTE) spread over 8 persons. The focus of the activities of the Euresearch EEN advisors is to establish technology transfer and research collaborations as well as to organize partnering events. Generally, the services delivered by Euresearch are free of charge.

The Euresearch Head Office also hosts the Swiss National Contact Points (NCP) in charge of personalised support for research, development and innovation (R&D&I) in the context of Horizon 2020. This situation allows a strong and successful collaboration between the NCP and the EEN advisors to be maintained, thus fulfilling EC standards² and recommendations³. Euresearch has 10 regional offices hosting specialised R&D&I advisors located in Basel, Bern, Fribourg, Geneva, Lausanne, Lucerne, Lugano, Neuchâtel, St. Gallen and Zurich. Furthermore, Contact Points in Universities of Applied Sciences (CP UAS) and Contact Points for SMEs (CP SME) were created in 2014.

An advanced Client Relationship Management system (CRM) supports the collaboration between EEN and Horizon 2020 activities. The websites "www.euresearch.ch" and "www.enterprise-europe-network.ch" offer all relevant information (H2020, EEN, COST etc.). An alerting system based on a client's profile ensures the rapid and efficient dissemination of information. The Content Management System (CMS) is based on the open source software Typo3. The web-based system ensures the dissemination of the Technology Offers and Requests as well as Partner Searches. In addition, the CRM simplifies tracking and managing the activities with the clients. The CRM and the Alert system complement the EASME Web Services (Merlin) in Brussels.

Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE)

S-GE has its headquarter in Zürich and branch offices in Lausanne and Lugano, with Lausanne being the host of the two **Swiss EEN advisors**. The budget dedicated to EEN activities amounts to approximately CHF 70'000 per year, not including the salaries for 1.6 FTE. The main focus of the S-GE EEN advisors is to provide information and support on EU regulations and on European markets, to estab-

² Minimum standards and guiding principles for setting up systems of National Contact Points (NCP systems) under Horizon 2020 (2013)

³ Recommendations for the cooperation between the Enterprise Europe Network and the NCP networks (2010)

lish business collaborations, to organise partnering events and company missions, and to respond to enquiries coming from EEN partners on the Swiss market. The services delivered by S-GE follow a mixed approach, offering services both free of charge as well as paid services.

S-GE consultants based in Zürich provide useful contributions to brokerage events, company missions and business cooperation. Additionally, the market studies on European countries regularly issued by S-GE provide a valuable background contribution to EEN activities. S-GE also has a number of Swiss Business Hubs in several European countries to provide first-hand insights on European markets to Swiss companies. On the regional level, S-GE has been building a network of local partners over the last five years. Included are chambers of commerce, regional clusters and economic development agencies of the different cantons. None of the EEN services is offered without the involvement of one of the mentioned regional partners.

1.2 Impact of EEN participation

Activities carried out by the two members of the EEN consortium in 2013 are shown in Figure 1 below. These statistics were established according to the rules set by DG Enterprise and by EASME for all EEN consortia and do not necessarily reflect the full scope of services provided or contacts established. Even so, the number of clients reached and the high participation in brokerage event/company missions is impressive. Furthermore, it can be seen that, on average, each participant to a brokerage event took part to more than 3 meetings per event. The 33 innovative profiles published received 102 international expressions of interest, a very good achievement considering that some of the profiles were highly specific.

Consortium partner	Clients participating in brokerage events & company missions	Meetings in which Swiss clients took part	Innovative profiles published	Expressions of interest received	Long-term partnerships documented
Euresearch	76	264	29	101	12
S-GE	13	31	4	1	?
Total	89	295	33	102	

Fig. 1: Output and outcome of EEN consortium activities in 2013

1.3 Governance

The current (2015) Swiss EEN consortium is funded by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) which funds Euresearch, and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) which funds S-GE. At the strategic level, the activities of Euresearch are discussed in the steering committee of Euresearch, where the SERI and the Euresearch board are represented, while a member of the S-GE board meets with his SECO counterpart twice a year. A support group which includes representatives of the SERI, the SECO, Euresearch, and S-GE is designed to insure political coordination, although it has not been convened for the last few years.

At the operational level, EEN advisors at Euresearch and S-GE have frequent contacts via mail or telephone exchanges. Furthermore, regular coordination meetings with all involved collaborators take place between Euresearch and S-GE.

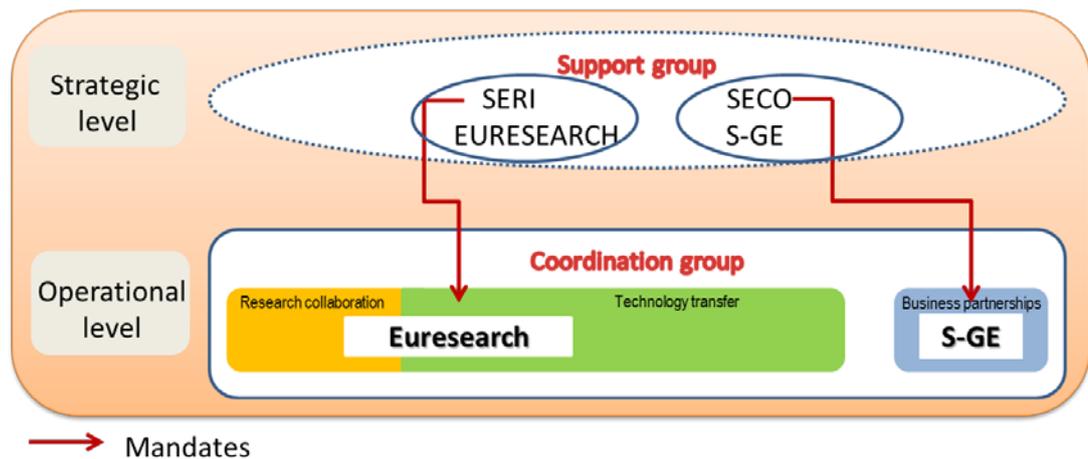


Fig. 2: Present governance structures responsible for the implementation of Swiss EEN

2 Future improvements for Swiss EEN in 2016-2020

An assessment of the present situation carried out by the SERI showed that the expected services are delivered quickly, competently and effectively to the scientific community as well as to the SMEs. However, a potential for improvement has been identified to

- Enhance the visibility of Swiss EEN and the access of SMEs to its services
- Link more effectively the EEN program to other support measures provided by national or regional actors to nationally or internationally active innovative SMEs
- Implement EEN more effectively with a concept of “no wrong door”
- Improve the coordination and governance of the Swiss EEN network.

In 2014, it was decided that the leadership for the Swiss EEN activities should be transferred from the SERI to the Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI), the Swiss Confederation’s innovation promotion agency. Swiss EEN will greatly benefit from the CTI’s experience and network. It has a unique position of operating precisely at the interface between research and enterprises. It has an extensive and proven experience in fulfilling the needs of innovative companies, in particular SMEs, in the context of technology transfer partnerships and more generally of innovative development. Finally, through its many instruments and services it is in contact with a large network of partners in the scientific and economic communities at the national and regional levels.

2.1 The Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI)

The CTI promotes science-based innovation in Switzerland by providing financial resources, professional advice, and networks. Its mission is to bridge the gap between scientific research and industry by bringing together research institutions and companies in order to accelerate and strengthen innovation. Its goal is to help improve the competitiveness of Swiss companies, especially SMEs.

Since 2011, the CTI has operated as an independent extra-parliamentary commission with a budget of approximately CHF 150 million per year provided by the Federal administration. It is affiliated with the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education, and Research (EAER).

At present, the CTI includes three funding areas and a thematic program (with approximate yearly budgets):

- R&D funding (CHF 111 mio): funding of research and development projects involving entitled research institutions collaborating with industrial, public, or non-profit partners. Projects in any research discipline can be submitted. The CTI funds up to 50% of the costs of the project, with the industrial partner(s) covering the rest.

- KTT support (CHF 4 mio): promotion of knowledge and technology transfer (KTT) between universities and industry to boost innovative projects and start-up ideas by means of three different instruments:
 - Innovation mentors provide information on funding opportunities and support in drawing up project applications
 - National thematic networks help establish links between companies and public research institutions in thematic areas with particular interests to Swiss industries
 - Interactive and physical KTT platforms provide an opportunity to form contacts and share experiences.
- Start-up and entrepreneurship (CHF 11 mio): promotion of entrepreneurial thinking among young scientists and business people, training and coaching programs providing professional support for start-ups and young entrepreneurs to develop their business idea up to market launch. The focus is on knowledge-intensive and technology based companies with significant market potential.
- Swiss Competence Centers for Energy Research Program (CHF 24 mio): promotion and capacity building in energy research designed to develop more sustainable energy sources and phase out nuclear power by 2035.

2.2 Transformation of the institutional positioning of the CTI

In 2014, the Swiss Federal administration carried out an in-depth analysis of the structure and organization of the CTI with a view to strengthen what the Swiss government considers to be a central element in its innovation promotion strategy. This analysis showed that the current status of the commission, which is independent but administratively embedded in the Federal administration, is an obstacle to a clear separation of political, administrative, and controlling functions. This status thus impairs its efficient functioning. Concluding that only an in-depth institutional transformation of the CTI could improve the situation in the long term, the Federal Council decided in 2014 that the CTI is to become an independent agency under public law in 2017. This reform will allow the CTI to play a broader and more significant role among the Swiss institutions promoting research and innovation.

2.3 Consequences of the CTI reform for the Swiss EEN consortium

The CTI is eager to take on rapidly the responsibility for the Swiss EEN consortium, but it requires additional financial and human resources to do so. However, the budget line currently used by the SERI to finance Euresearch for its activities in EEN cannot be transferred to the CTI before 2020. Furthermore, the mandate currently attributed by the SERI to Euresearch cannot be transferred to the CTI before its new status has been finalized.

As a consequence, a two-stage approach to the reorganization of the Swiss EEN consortium during the period 2016-2020 will be adopted:

- Until the completion of the reform at the end of 2016, the CTI will use its own resources to lead the Swiss EEN activities and ensure the coordination between all partners, including the local cooperation partners (point 4.3 below). It will not, however, deliver services to SMEs and other “clients”. This will be done by Euresearch and by S-GE advisors, as is the case in 2015
- When the new status of the CTI has been implemented, a mandate will be given by SERI to the new institution for the leadership of EEN activities in Switzerland and the full membership in the consortium. EEN advisors currently at Euresearch will be transferred to the CTI or replaced by CTI staff. Services to “clients” (research, technology transfer and business collaborations) will be delivered by the CTI and by S-GE while the precise role of Euresearch will be determined at a later time by the CTI. The present mandate given to Euresearch by SERI for services related to EEN will expire.

For the period 2020 – 2024, the funds to finance the activities and services of CTI in the scope of EEN can be placed in the budgetary dispatch (BFI Botschaft) by CTI .

Consortium organization and respective tasks during these stages are described in more detail below (point 4.2).

3 Focus and structure of the Swiss EEN network for the period 2016-2020

To prepare the reorganization of the EEN activities in Switzerland, the CTI has set up a specific task force composed of representatives of the SERI, the SECO, and the present members of the Swiss EEN consortium Euresearch and S-GE. Discussions with the involved stakeholders responsible for the promotion of both research and business activities as well as the responsible parties for the promotion of regional economic growth have also taken place to integrate their input into the planning process.

3.1 Specific goals for the period 2016-2020

Based on the results of its assessment of the present situation, and on the views expressed by different stakeholders, the task force has determined that the following **key objectives** will be prioritized for the 2016-2020 period:

- The focus of the Swiss EEN network will be on the needs of SMEs, including start-ups, active nationally or internationally
- The Swiss EEN network will be enriched and widened through the involvement of
 - regional structures responsible for the general support of SMEs
 - KTT specialists, in particular those mandated by the CTI (CTI Innovation mentors)
 - national thematic networks and platforms such as those financed by the CTI
- The implementation of the “key account management” concept⁴ will be insured by
 - involving structures responsible for the support of SMEs at the regional level
 - addressing the various needs of the SMEs: research & innovation partnerships, outreach to international markets, and access to information
- The business cooperation activities will be developed.

3.2 Future structure of the Swiss EEN network

In partnership with the Swiss cantons, the SECO has recently developed a **new multi-annual regional policy program for the period 2016-2023** focusing on innovation and entrepreneurship in the Swiss regions. Central to this program is the establishment of six to seven Regional Innovation Systems (RIS) which will cater to the specific needs of local SMEs.

To optimize the impact of this regional development measure, as well as to raise the visibility of EEN in the regions, the task force has decided to implement the new EEN network on a two-tier structure:

- At the national level, a group of advisors, specialized in partnering, will offer this type of services directly to the SMEs and the scientific community. They will form the EEN consortium
- At the regional level, a network of regional coaches, SME support generalists and KTT specialists will be in direct contact with the SMEs, being well aware of their particular needs.

⁴ In order to identify its precise needs, the situation of each SME must be analyzed individually and the type of support required must be customized. This is the task of the Key Account Manager (KAM). He can then suggest various coaching or specialist services.

The network of local cooperation partners will work closely with the EEN consortium members to deliver optimal service to the clients. It is the efficient interaction between these two levels and between generalists and specialist in the network that will allow to implement the “key account manager” concept.

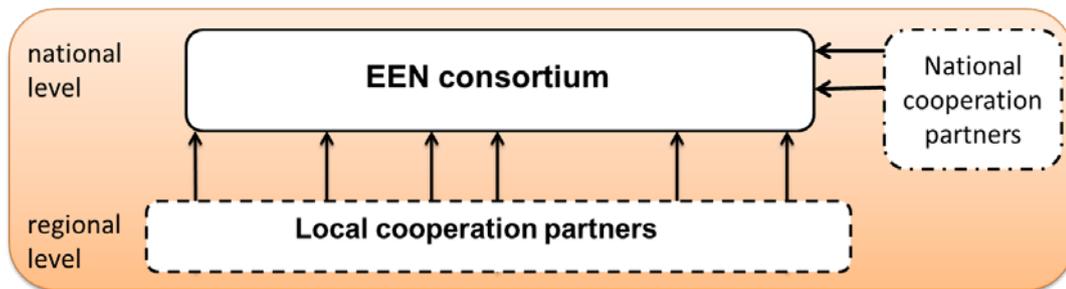


Fig. 3: Future two-tier structure of the Swiss EEN network

4 Organization and responsibilities during 2016-2020

4.1 Governance

New governance structures will be set up during the year 2015 and will be fully operational in 2016.

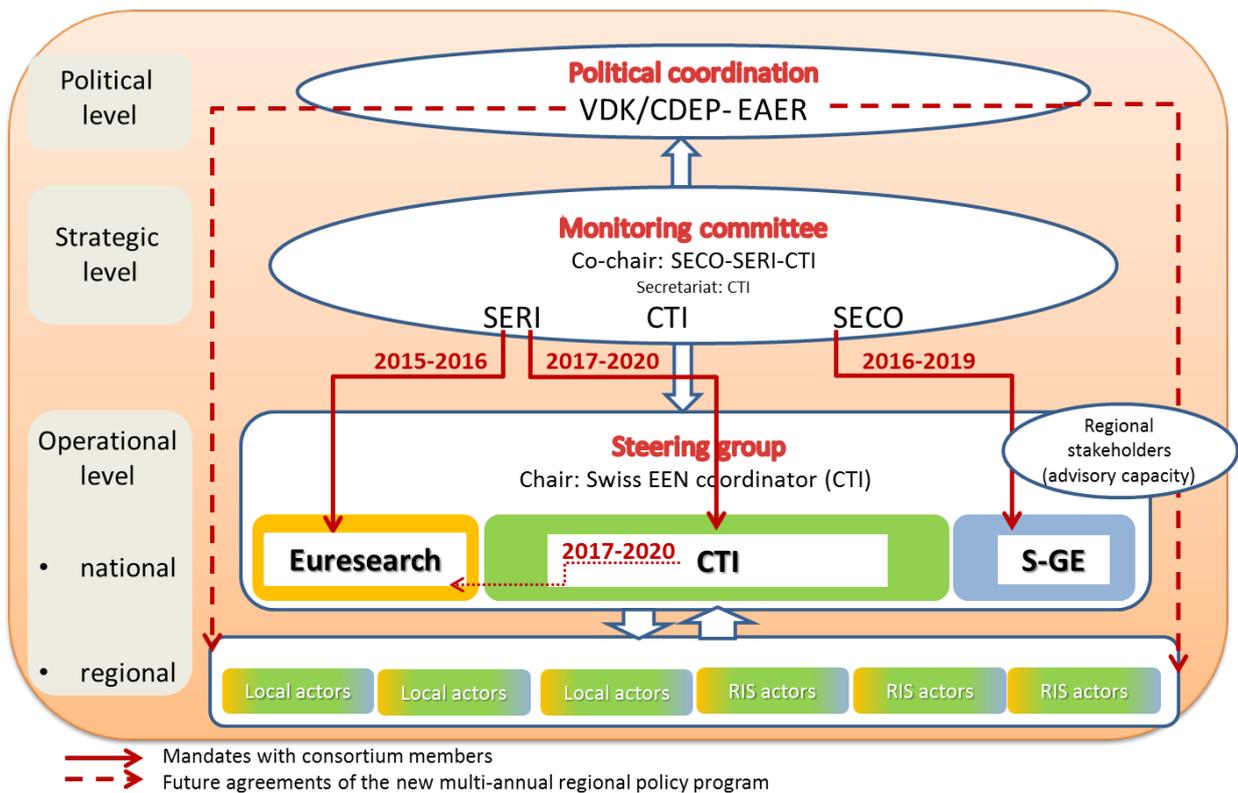


Fig. 4: Future governance structures responsible for the implementation of Swiss EEN

Political coordination and cooperation with regional authorities: the VDK/CDEP

In the future, regional and local stakeholders under the authority of the cantonal governments will play a substantial role in the implementation of EEN activities, in particular at the interface with SMEs. Thus, the coordination between federal and cantonal authorities will take on an increasing importance. Consequently, the integration of Swiss EEN within regional development policies and the coordination of federal and cantonal activities in that matter will be discussed by the **Conference of Cantonal Pub-**

lic Economy Directors (Konferenz Kantonaler Volkswirtschaftsdirektoren: VDK) where both cantonal and federal governments are represented.

Strategic level: the monitoring committee

In 2015, an **EEN monitoring committee** will be created, consisting of high-level representatives of the SERI and the SECO, and placed under the alternating co-chairmanship of the SECO, the SERI and the CTI. This monitoring committee will meet at least once a year to prepare and monitor the implementation of EEN in Switzerland and take corrective measures when needed. Representatives of member organizations of the Swiss EEN consortium and local cooperation partners will be invited to attend these meetings depending on the agenda.

The roles and responsibilities of the EEN monitoring committee will be to

- Monitor and review regularly the operational implementation and evaluate whether the performance target indicators set for each organization have been met
- Set strategic objectives for the implementation of EEN and coordinate the mandates given to insure the operational implementation
- Ensure adequate financing for the operational implementation
- Coordinate the EEN activities with political initiatives promoting innovation and economic development at the national or regional level, especially with those aimed at supporting innovative SMEs active internationally.

Operational level: the steering group

It will be the task of a **steering group** to ensure that the implementation of the EEN is in line with the objectives set for the implementation of EEN in Switzerland and to coordinate actions and exchanges of information. Starting in 2016, it will be chaired by a representative of the CTI (the Swiss EEN coordinator) and will include representatives of each member organization of the Swiss EEN consortium.

The role and tasks of the steering group will be to

- Regularly monitor activities to insure that the EEN consortium members fulfill the strategic goals established by the CTI, the monitoring committee, or by the agreements with EASME
- Insure optimal coordination of the activities of the consortium members and coordinate their activities with those of the local cooperation partners
- Plan and organize common activities (e.g., brokerage events, company missions, events)
- Plan communication strategies and activities
- Prepare the regular applications to EASME
- Evaluate the training needs of the consortium, regional stakeholders, and other partners, and organize and provide training sessions as appropriate
- Exchange information with partner institutions, especially the local cooperation partners
- Evaluate needs and offer proposals to the CTI and the monitoring committee
- Prepare reports to the CTI, the monitoring committee and to EASME
- Organize and prepare monitoring committee meetings.

The steering group will normally meet every two months. Depending on the agenda, representatives of the local cooperation partners will be invited to these meetings. Additional exchanges of information will take place regularly between members of the EEN consortium via mail or telephone contacts. At least once a year, the Swiss EEN coordinator will organize a meeting between the steering group and the various regional and local stakeholders to ensure coordination at the national and regional level.

4.2 EEN Consortium

According to the “implementation strategy” (2016-2020) and the “work program” (2016), EEN consortium partners deliver together the services required by the primary target groups (principally SMEs or the scientific community). For a country with the size of Switzerland, the number of partners in the

EEN consortium should not exceed three. Members of the EEN consortium sign a Cooperation agreement with EASME.

Tasks of the EEN consortium as a whole

At the start of 2016, the CTI, Euresearch and S-GE will constitute the Swiss EEN consortium. To establish quantitative goals for the activities of the consortium members, an impact assessment of the participation of Switzerland in EEN will be launched in 2015. Based on the results of this analysis, the mandates assigned to Euresearch and S-GE will be reviewed for the years 2016-2020. Performance target indicators will be set for the services delivered by the EEN consortium members.

Generally, the tasks and responsibilities of the Swiss EEN consortium as a whole will be those already presented as the Swiss EEN core activities in the work program 2015 and in the implementation strategy. They are organized in the following seven work packages (WP):

- Cross-border partnering activities for business cooperation, technology transfer, innovation and research
 - WP 1: (Co-) organization of brokerage events & company missions
 - WP 2: Generation and dissemination of partnership proposals
- Support and information activities
 - WP 3: Answering network enquiries related to partnership processes
- Promotion of network services and communication activities
 - WP 4: Internal and external communication strategies
 - WP 5: Websites and social media
 - WP 6: Network building and reinforcement
 - WP 7: Project coordination and consortium management

In addition to these tasks, the Swiss EEN consortium members will also be responsible to:

- Execute all necessary activities of the steering group
- Insure training and provide the necessary information to the local cooperation partners, in particular the regional stakeholders (see 5.3 below).

Distribution of responsibilities within the consortium partners

To take into account the status reform in which the CTI is presently engaged, and the fact that the financial and human resources presently allocated by the SERI to Euresearch for its activities in the Swiss EEN consortium cannot be made immediately available to the CTI, the distribution of the responsibilities of the consortium partners will evolve during the period 2016-2020.

Year 2016:

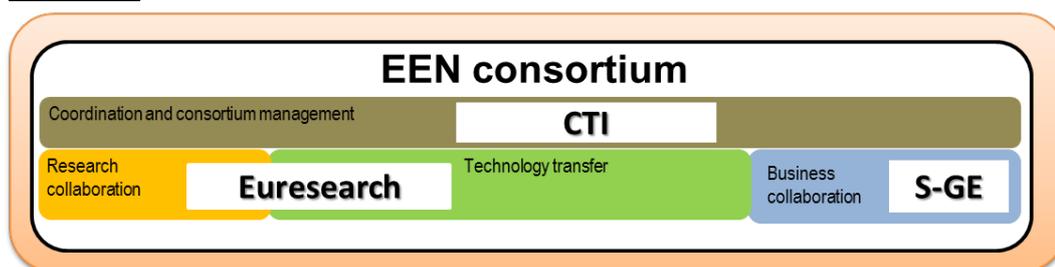


Fig 5: Responsibilities of the members of the Swiss EEN consortium for the year 2016

A “**Swiss EEN coordinator**” will be appointed as early as 2015 within the present staff of the scientific secretariat of CTI with a workload of approximately 30 % dedicated to EEN activities. This person will assume the following responsibilities:

- Ensure coordination within the consortium, including chairmanship of the steering group (WP 7)
- Set up and manage the network of regional stakeholders (WP 7)
- Prepare the transfer of the financial and human resources dedicated to EEN activities from Euresearch to the CTI.

To complement and extend the information activities of Euresearch and S-GE targeting their own “client” groups, the CTI will promote EEN in Switzerland, with an emphasis on the specific partners and target groups of the CTI (WP 4 and 6). During that year, however, the CTI will not yet take an active part in delivering services to the target groups due to the limitations of its resources.

Euresearch will continue to assume the “**Swiss EEN project manager**” function as the main contact organization in Switzerland for EASME and for the EEN partner states. A close collaboration between the Euresearch EEN project manager and the CTI EEN coordinator will be established to insure optimal delivery of services to clients and good collaboration within the consortium.

Euresearch will also continue to deliver services to the scientific community and to Swiss companies, focusing primarily on technology transfer partnering and events. In view of the closer ties to be established with regional stakeholders during 2016-2020 (see 5.3, below), **EEN advisors** at Euresearch will slightly reorganize their activities so that they will have not only specific scientific specialization (as is the case at present in participation in thematic “EEN sector groups”) but will also become “**preferred contact points**” for regional stakeholders. Through the implementation of this measure, an efficient interface will be created between the EEN advisors at Euresearch and the regional partners established within the Swiss regions. Finally, Euresearch will also continue to maintain a strong connection between delivering EEN service activities to the scientific community and supporting Swiss participants in Horizon 2020 (which is Euresearch’s core business).

As already indicated, the EEN activities of S-GE (business cooperation services to SMEs) will be evaluated. If appropriate, S-GE’s mandate for its participation in the Swiss EEN consortium will be modified for the period 2016-2019. The focus of S-GE activities will, however, remain business collaborations.

Period 2017-2020

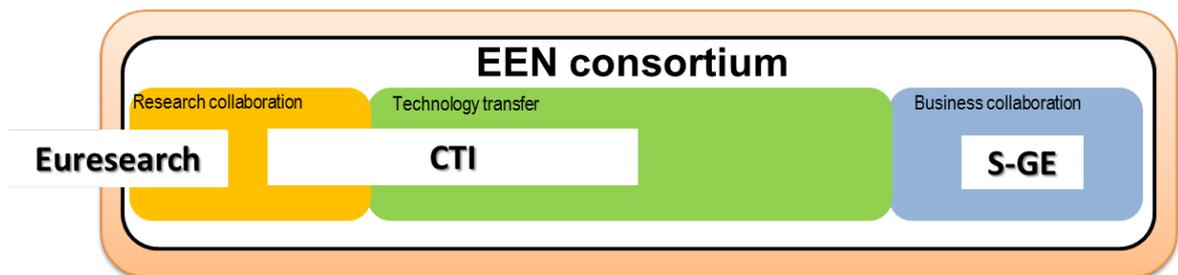


Fig 6: Responsibilities of the members of the Swiss EEN consortium after the CTI has achieved its new status

After adequate financial and human resources have been made available to the CTI, the staff of the CTI will be able to carry out the full range of EEN tasks presently assumed by Euresearch staff, including EEN project management and the provision of an interface with EASME and EEN partner states.

Starting in 2015, the EEN monitoring committee will conduct an impact evaluation to be used to define what role Euresearch will play within the EEN consortium after 2016. In addition, Euresearch will undergo an assessment regarding its role and its mandate regarding its core business (providing information on Horizon 2020 to Swiss researchers as National Contact Point). It is likely, however, that Euresearch will remain a partner in the consortium, and continue to deliver EEN services to clients with a primary focus on the scientific community involved in Horizon 2020 projects.

4.3 Local cooperation partners

Local cooperation partners are important actors in optimizing the delivery of EEN services to SMEs throughout the country. There is no limitation to their number and they have no direct or contractual relationships with EASME. However, authorities in their own country may conclude formal cooperation agreements with them to mandate them to deliver targeted information and promote EEN services to specific client groups.

For the future Swiss EEN network, local cooperation partners will play an important role. This role will be assumed in particular by stakeholders involved in the newly established **Regional Innovation Systems**. In addition, the **CTI Innovation Mentors** will become increasingly important in boosting EEN visibility and improving the accessibility to SMEs to EEN services.

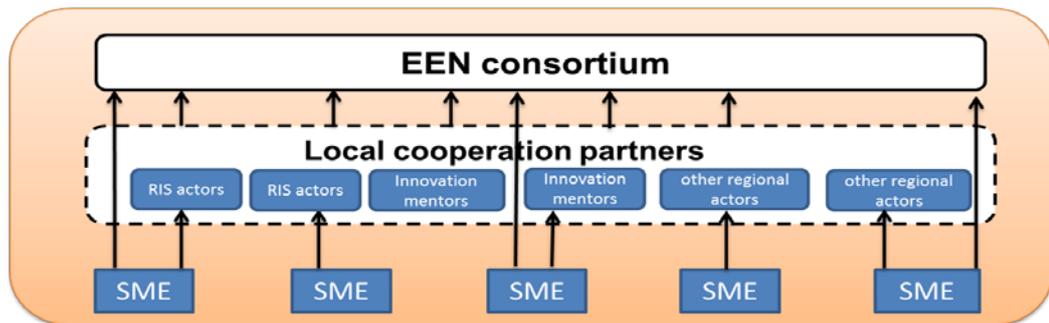


Fig 7: Network of local cooperation partners to be set up during the period 2016-2020

Regional Innovation Systems (RIS)

In collaboration with cantonal governments, the SECO is presently setting up six to seven **Regional Innovation Systems (RIS)**, each involving several cantons and being responsible for fostering innovation in their region⁵.

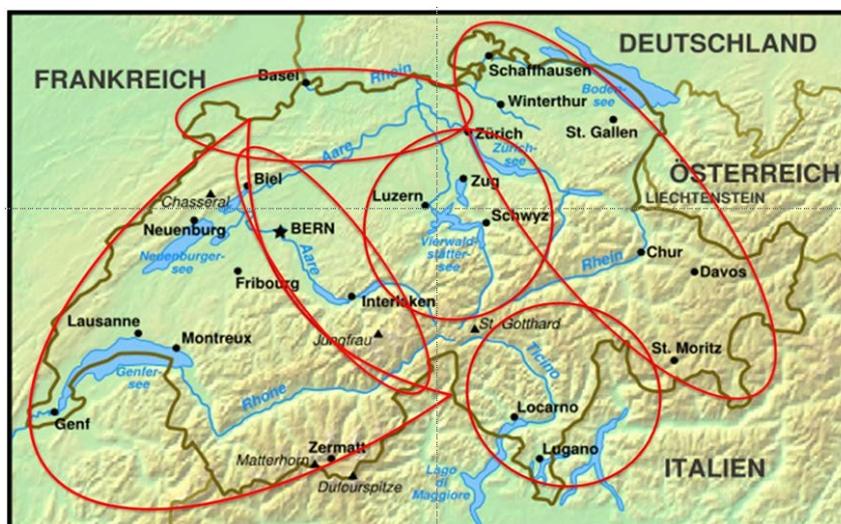


Fig. 8: Probable future Regional Innovation Systems (RIS) landscape

According to the RIS-strategy, cantons included in a single RIS must define a common regional innovation strategy and a governance structure responsible for the coordination of the local actors (regional platforms specialized in fostering innovation in SMEs, clusters, Universities of Applied Sciences, ...)

⁵ The RIS-strategy was defined in 2012 and is now included in the new multi-annual regional policy program for the period 2016-2023 that constitutes its legal basis. The preparation of the new phase of Swiss EEN is an element of this policy program (see 3.2 above)

and for the strategic steering of the RIS. A single “regional innovation representative”, or **RIS coordinator**, will organize the activities and players (**RIS actors**) included in each RIS and represent their specific requirements and interests. Each RIS also has a “contact person for EEN”.

Innovative SMEs form the target group of the RIS networks: their function is to address the particular needs and demands of local SMEs through customized innovation support services, for example by coaching them in different stages of their development, helping them to find suitable business or innovation partners, fostering their innovation management, assisting them to gain broader access to markets, and finally by providing detailed information on the possibilities offered by Switzerland through its participation in various national or international programs and initiatives, for example EEN.

The integration of RIS actors in the Swiss EEN network will be of mutual benefit to both sides: EEN services become more visible and accessible to the SMEs, and the impact of the RIS actors is increased by the additional services they can provide to their clients. Being in close contact with the local SMEs, RIS actors can also provide efficiently “key account management” services.

As local cooperation partners in the Swiss EEN network, the RIS actors will assume the following functions:

- Inform interested SMEs about the possibilities offered by EEN services and activities
- Encourage suitable SMEs to explore the advantages that can be derived from the possibilities offered by EEN technology transfer, research and business partnering
- Refer SMEs to Swiss EEN consortium members and provide support for the drafting of partnership profiles or for the participation in brokerage events and company missions
- Provide “key account management” services
- Take part in specific training and information sessions organized by the Swiss EEN consortium and contribute to the formation of the consortium members.

RIS actors will not be responsible for the entry of partnership profiles in the database nor will they normally be in direct contact with EEN advisors of EU or EEN partner states.

CTI Innovation mentors

Innovation mentors are mandated by the CTI to inform SMEs about funding opportunities and provide support during the starting phase of partnerships between companies and public research institutions, in particular to develop science-based innovation projects of national and international importance. They too are in contact with innovative SMEs and help them find suitable partners and funding. However, their role does not include long-term coaching but rather consists of targeted, timely, and specific support whenever and wherever needed. The network of CTI Innovation mentors is organized according to the linguistic regions although the network, as a whole, functions across language and institutional barriers.

As with the RIS actors, the integration of the CTI Innovation mentors within the Swiss EEN network is beneficial to each side: the CTI Innovation mentors will provide a broader range of services than at present, and the visibility and accessibility of the Swiss EEN will profit from this increased coordination. During the period 2016-2020, CTI Innovation mentors will be trained to provide information on the services and resources offered by the EEN consortium members, and a close working relationship will be established with the Swiss EEN advisors.

Other regional actors

Other institutions active in technology transfer or the support of SMEs at the regional level will also be welcome to participate in the Swiss EEN network as local cooperation partners, with their primary role being to provide information on the network and its available services to interested SMEs and, when appropriate, to address specific inquiries to EEN consortium members.

4.4 Other cooperation partners

At the moment, S-GE and Euresearch already have privileged access to the cantonal chambers of commerce and with every Swiss university, technical university and university of applied sciences.

The CTI closely collaborates with a number of innovation platforms, associations, and networks that it has helped set up or presently funds. These actors bring together representatives from business and science to help them to establish contacts.

Examples of these structures are

- The eight **national thematic networks**: Carbon Composites Schweiz; Inartis (Life sciences); Innovative Surfaces; Swiss Biotech; Swiss Food Research; Swiss Innovation Network; Swiss Photonics; Verein Netzwerk Logistik
- Different **national associations, clusters and networks** supporting innovation in Switzerland: Cleantech Switzerland; Medical Cluster; Swissmem; TVS Terxtilverband Schweiz; CleantechAlps; ...

The integration of all these structures in the Swiss EEN network will greatly benefit EEN visibility and accessibility.