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# Switzerland and India agree closer scientific cooperation

**Bern, 01.05.2019 - The fifth meeting of the Switzerland-India Joint Science Committee, held on 30 April 2019, set the course for closer bilateral cooperation in the field of research. The Swiss delegation included representatives of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI, the Zurich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW as Leading House for research cooperation with India, the Swiss National Science Foundation SNSF and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC. State Secretary Martina Hirayama led the delegation.**

One purpose of the meeting in Bern was to evaluate recent cooperation and processes. The call for projects launched jointly by the SNSF and the Indian Department for Biotechnology in 2018 was deemed particularly successful; a total of 87 eligible project proposals were submitted, and the best eleven were selected to receive funding. The next phase of the bilateral programme was also defined at the meeting. One of the items decided was the launch of a joint call for projects between the Indian Department for Science and Technology, together with the Indian Department for Biotechnology, and the SNSF in 2020.

The Academia Industry Training Programme, organised by the Leading House ZHAW, the fifth cycle of which concluded with an intensive week in Switzerland in April 2019, also received approbation. This programme, which promotes young researchers from both India and Switzerland looking to commercialise their research results, involves a competitive procedure to select the most promising projects – ten from each country. The programme has so far helped 44 Swiss start-ups to gain a foothold in the Indian market. At its meeting, the Joint Science Committee decided to continue with this programme. swissnex India, based in Bangalore, is responsible for conducting the

programme and to promote young researchers looking to commercialise their results on international markets. The programme is commissioned by the innovation promotion agency Innosuisse to help young Swiss businesses gain access to the Indian market.

Switzerland and India signed a bilateral framework agreement on scientific and technological cooperation in 2003. Sixty joint research projects have already been carried out under this agreement. Altogether, researchers and students from 20 Swiss and around 70 Indian higher education institutions have benefited from the bilateral agreement. The research areas covered include biosciences and material sciences, nanotechnologies, health and medical sciences, humanities and social sciences, urban development, linguistics, design, climate change and sustainable energy.

India is one of the emerging global players in research and innovation, thanks to its excellent research centres and a considerable talent pool. In addition to the bilateral research programme, there are more than 90 cooperation agreements between Swiss and Indian higher education and research institutions. Researchers from India are involved in around 100 SNSF projects. The rapidly growing number of Indian students in Switzerland further reflects this intensive exchange: while there were fewer than 300 Indian students studying in Switzerland in 2005, by 2018 more than 1100 Indians were enrolled at a public higher education institution in Switzerland.

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