



SystemsX.ch
The Swiss Initiative in Systems Biology



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Media Release

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SystemsX.ch sets off into the second half with 15 projects

Switzerland on the way to the top in systems biology

SystemsX.ch, the Swiss initiative in systems biology, sets off into the second half in 2013. Emphasis this time around is on the quantitative modeling of biological processes and medical questions. To instigate this second half, SystemsX.ch has approved yesterday 15 new, interdisciplinary research projects, which have a total budget of CHF 60 million at their disposal up until 2016.

More than 200 research groups from Swiss universities and research institutions submitted a total of 40 project applications to the sixth SystemsX.ch tender. The relevant expert groups from SystemsX.ch and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) were able to approve the best 15 applications. Overall, CHF 60 million are available for these projects, CHF 29.2 million of which will be financed by SystemsX.ch. The remaining funds come from the budgets of the institutions and companies involved.

The interdisciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration among researchers working in the life sciences is boosted with these projects. Switzerland is thus reaffirming its pioneering role in the field of systems biology, which builds on the success of the mapping of the human genome, and evolutions in molecular biology and various technological developments. Extensive research into biological processes and the understanding derived allow, among other things, new approaches in medicine.

In the second phase of SystemsX.ch, emphasis is on the development of new theories and models of biological processes and the application of systems biology to medical problems. For the chairman of SystemsX.ch's Scientific Executive Board, Prof. Dr. Ruedi Aebersold, it is clear: «The close collaboration between disciplines and institutions in specific projects in systems biology means we have the chance to keep Switzerland among the very best in the world in this discipline. The results of the last five years and the commitment of researchers shows that we are on the right track». The universities demonstrate their commitment to systems biology by guaranteeing, among other things, project resources at the same level as



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the approved SystemsX.ch funding. The project managers of the newly approved projects are located in the following partner institutions: ETH Zurich (4), the University of Basel (3), the University of Zurich (3), the University of Geneva (2), EPF Lausanne, the University of Bern and the University of Freiburg (1 each). Research groups from at least two different institutions will be working on each project.

In addition to the academic research groups, in five of the approved projects private companies are also involved: Novartis, Roche, IBM, Basilea and Femto Tools. The companies are contributing with their own resources. The applications of the projects in question were evaluated under the requirement that public and private partners complement, exchange, and support one another under clear rules and contribute equal amounts of resources. Aebersold says, «Collaborative work with the private sector can only succeed if both partners are interested in the research content. In the approved SystemsX.ch projects, the two partners see eye to eye». Any eventual exploitation or commercialization of jointly developed results must be agreed before the project begins.

The SystemsX.ch consortium was founded in 2007 and now comprises 12 Swiss universities and research institutions. In the initial phase 2008-2012, the federal government granted CHF120 million for the promotion of systems biology research. Over 120 interdisciplinary projects have been approved by the relevant bodies of SystemsX.ch and the SNSF. In the 250 research groups that have been supported, more than 1,000 scientists (around half of which at graduate or postgraduate level) worked on different systems biology questions. This means that the next generation of researchers in this pioneering subject area have had early interdisciplinary training. For 2013-2016 the federal government approved a further CHF 100 million for SystemsX.ch. Federal funding after 2017 is not currently planned.

For more information: www.systemsx.ch

Contact:

Dr. Daniel Vonder Mühl
Managing Director SystemsX.ch
Tel: +41 44 632 78 88
Mobile: +41 79 263 65 74
daniel.vondermuehl@systemsx.ch