

Tenure-Track Pilot Program between Croatia, EPFL and the Swiss Government

Promoting research careers through brain circulation

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To offer talented early-career researchers career prospects as a tenure-track assistant professor at a Croatian university or research center. ■ To offer competitive working conditions enabling early-career researchers to form their own research groups. ■ To offer contracts comparable to ERC Starting Grants. ■ To transfer EPFL's expertise in running a successful tenure-track model, gained over the course of 18 years, to Croatian institutions. ■ To share best practice with the Croatian government in implementing programs of this type. ■ To use the pilot program as a test bed and proof of concept for a potential new pan-European funding instrument to fight brain drain and help Europe overcome the science divide.
Funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation: four million Swiss francs from the Swiss Enlargement Contribution to Croatia. ■ Croatian government: 15% top-up contribution.
Programme duration	6 years, 2019 - 2024
Stakeholders	<p>EPFL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Designing the program ■ Approaching the Swiss and Croatian authorities about running the program ■ Helping the Croatian Science Foundation to implement the program ■ Appointing EPFL professors as mentors for principal investigators (PIs) <p>Croatian Science Foundation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implementing the program <p>Croatian Ministry of Science and Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Acting as joint program owner <p>Croatian Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Acting as joint program owner (15% top-up funding) <p>Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Funding the program (four million Swiss francs from the Swiss Enlargement Contribution)

Program features and criteria

- Top scientists recruited via a competitive call, up to seven years after completing their PhD.
- Five-year contracts as an assistant professor; up to 1.1 million Swiss francs per contract to cover salaries, equipment, research funds, travel and overheads.
- Thematic fields: engineering, computer science, basic natural sciences.
- Mid-term and final evaluation, with permanent contract offered to successful PIs.

Selected principal investigators (PIs) and mentors

- **Helena Bilandžija**. Nationality: Croatian. Project in the life sciences: “Evolution in the Dark.” Host institution: Ruđer Bošković Institute, Zagreb. Mentors: Aleksandra Radenovic (EPFL), Đurđica Ugarković (host institution).
- **Kosuke Nomura**. Nationality: Japanese. Project in theoretical physics: “Exotic Nuclear Structure and Dynamics.” Host institution: Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb. Mentors: Paolo Ricci (EPFL), Tamara Nikšić (host institution).
- **Lovro Palaversa**. Nationality: Croatian. Project in astrophysics: “Mining the Variable Sky.” Host institution: Ruđer Bošković Institute, Zagreb. Mentors: Jean-Paul Kneib (EPFL), Vibor Jelić (host institution).

Statistics

- 20 proposals received, six rated excellent, three contracts signed.