Swiss support will increase the applied research capacity in Latvia

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On Wednesday, 13 November, the Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to Latvia Mr Martin Michelet, and the Deputy State Secretary for European Union (EU) Funds at the Ministry of Finance, Mr Armands Eberhards, signed the agreement on the programme "Partnership in Applied Research", which aims to develop applied research capacity and promote cooperation between Latvia and Switzerland in the fields of innovative materials, information and communication technologies (ICT) and smart energy.

The programme funding is €12.3 million (85% Swiss funding and 15% Latvian state budget funding) and implementation period is from January 2025 to September 2029. The programme will strengthen the research and innovation knowledge base in Latvia, contributing to economic transformation and sustainable growth. Latvian research institutions will be able to collaborate with Swiss institutions on joint projects, improving the quality of research and increasing the number of highly qualified staff with advanced technological knowledge. The programme also includes activities to promote interest and understanding of advanced technologies among young people, especially girls.

Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation Martin Michelet: *"The Applied Research Programme we are signing today responds to today's needs of cooperation: through the partnerships we advance economic transformation and sustainable growth and bring academic insights into practical applications that will benefit both businesses and society. This Programme will create opportunities for young researchers, especially young women and those from the regions outside the capital. By fostering STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) awareness, we are nurturing the next generation of innovators who will drive Latvia's growth in the future."*

Armands Eberhard, Deputy State Secretary for EU Funds at the Ministry of Finance: *"Cooperation within the first Swiss Contribution in higher education and research brought new experiences, rising internal academic and research quality standards and providing new opportunities for collaboration among institutions and researchers established. This served as a good step-up*

for the next stage in Swiss - Latvian scientific collaboration. It will provide promising future partnerships, in particular in the field of advanced materials such as concrete and asphalt, thanks to the long-standing cooperation with the Swiss partner Laboratory for Materials Science and Technology, which provides extensive research expertise. We also look forward to forging new partnerships in the areas of ICT and smart energy research."

Silvija Amatniece, Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Education and Science, said: *"I am pleased that, thanks to the Swiss Confederation's investment, we will be able to implement the applied research programme, which is so important for Latvia's growth. Cooperation with Switzerland - one of the world's innovation leaders - provides Latvia with a unique opportunity to increase our involvement in global science and innovation. A sustainable future for the country is unthinkable without the transformation of the green and digital economy, the quality of research and international cooperation."*

The "Applied Research" programme consists of two pre-defined projects. The first will be carried out by Riga Technical University (RTU) in cooperation with the Concrete and Asphalt Laboratory of the Swiss Institute of Materials and Technology (Empa). The project will promote research and innovation in the field of materials, increasing the life cycle of asphalt pavements and developing new pavement materials such as 3D printed concrete with local minerals.

The second project aims to improve smart grids and energy storage by using an artificial intelligence (AI) tool to assess and ensure the real-time stability of the Baltic electricity grid, as well as by developing materials for catalysts for hydrogen production and energy storage in batteries. This will reduce the Baltic countries' dependence on foreign fossil fuels and open up opportunities for cleaner energy. The project will be implemented by the Institute of Solid State Physics at the University of Latvia in partnership with the Institute of Electronics and Computer Science and RTU, while Switzerland will be represented by the Paul Scherrer Institute, the Zurich University of Applied Sciences and the Swiss Center for Electronics and Microtechnology.

More information: About programme - Swiss-Latvian