

NCCR Automation Phase II Industry Call:

Social and economic impact

In this call the NCCR Automation is looking **to fund up to seven industry collaboration and technology transfer projects that have a very concrete impact** on Swiss industry and society. Interested parties can apply in one of the following **four categories**:

1. **Deepen**: Intensification and concretisation of research conducted together with existing industrial partners.
 - Goal: implementation of research results on real systems, increasing technology readiness levels (TRLs) as much as possible.
 - Requirements for applying in this category: research proposal by at least one NCCR Automation PI and one industrial partner, including a description of the implementation and a plan on how intellectual property (IP) is going to be handled¹.
2. **New**: Establishing collaborations with new industrial partners that have interesting research questions with very concrete goals but do not have the necessary expertise in-house.
 - Goal: making new technologies accessible and implementable, ideally for small to medium-sized companies.
 - Requirements for applying in this category: research proposal by at least one NCCR Automation PI and one industrial partner, including a knowledge transfer and IP-handling¹ plan.
3. **Start-up**: Translation of research results into a new product or business venture.
 - Goal: technological readiness and market validation of a new product derived from research results.
 - Requirements for applying in this category: project proposal² by at least 1 NCCR researcher (postdoc or PhD student close to graduation), a letter of support from an NCCR Automation PI (that they will host the applicant in their lab etc.), and a plan about how IP will be handled.
4. **Society**: Establishing collaborations to explore issues related to the social, ethical, legal, and political implications of automation.
 - Goal: Investigate and raise awareness for issues at the interface between engineering automation and social sciences.
 - Requirements for applying in this category: Research proposal and IP-handling¹ plan by at least one NCCR Automation PI and one relevant partner institution, such as an agency (United Nations, International Red Cross/Crescent, Federal Office, etc.), non-governmental organisation, municipality, or academic entity in the social sciences.

For categories 1, 2, and 4, the **main applicant** must be an NCCR Automation PI. For category 3, the main applicant must be employed for the duration of the project at a Swiss research institution affiliated with the NCCR Automation and must fulfil the requirements of the SNSF for receiving

¹ Research funded in this category must be published. A joint plan on how this will be achieved without violating confidentiality must be presented.

² The project proposal should include the motivation for starting a company, a plan on how they intend to turn the idea into a good product or service, and how and from whom they are going to continuously collect feedback on their ideas (e.g. a letter from a company that states they would buy the product and be willing to provide feedback and participate in co-creation workshops).

project funding (see Chapter 2 of the [Regulations on project funding](#)). The **industrial partner** is preferably Swiss, but this is not a hard requirement.

The **maximum funding** is for the salary of one postdoc for up to two years (max. CHF 116'000 per year) or one SNSF-rate PhD student³ till maximum 31st July 2028, plus a supplement for travel and other expenses (max. CHF 5'000 per year). For categories 1, 2 and 4, please note that the principal investigator's salary is not covered by this funding.

For expenses, duration, intellectual property, publication fees, etc. the **standard SNSF rules apply**.

Application process

Applicants can submit their proposal according to the requirements of the chosen category and addressing its specific goals using the [application template](#).

By submitting their proposal(s), applicants with successful proposals agree to participate in annual NCCR workshops on sharing best practices and to be available for producing communication material such as researcher blogs or research explanation videos.

The submission deadline is 30th September 2024. All applications are to be sent to cfisch@ethz.ch by email.

The proposals will be reviewed by the Executive Committee under the following aspects:

1. Concrete, tangible impact in industry or society
2. Scientific quality (Categories 1, 2, and 4)
3. Commitment of the external partner (Categories 1, 2, and 4)
4. Suitability of the external partner to achieve the specified goals (Categories 1, 2, and 4)
5. Business plan and commitment (Category 3)
6. Adequacy of the requested funding

Results of the review process will be communicated by 31st October 2024.

The available SNSF funding allows for support of a maximum of seven projects; however, there is no expectation that the final distribution will be equal among PIs, themes, or categories. Once doctoral students graduate, postdoctoral researcher leave, or additional funds become available (e.g. by releasing reserves) the process can be repeated. Additional funds may also be kept in reserve so that the process can be repeated in following years, as research ideas mature, more collaborations are established, PIs join and leave the NCCR, etc.

³ No ETH top-up available for ETH principal investigators.