

SPI Flagship Initiatives

Background

In order to complement existing funding schemes and to facilitate higher and lasting impact of the Swiss research community in international polar research, the SPI is announcing the launch of **mid-term bottom-up** coordinated research programmes, the **SPI Flagship Initiatives (SPI-FI)**. The first call for proposals is planned for Jan/Feb 2021.

The SPI-FI were designed to provide **targeted coordination and support of multi-disciplinary field campaigns** in polar or remote high latitude regions, and open new avenues for collaboration between research groups, which would lack necessary resources and critical skill sets to undertake or support fieldwork in polar regions on their own.

Key characteristics of SPI Flagship Initiatives

The SPI Flagship Initiatives will:

- enable **innovative, high-quality research programmes** that require field work in polar regions;
- enable the establishment of **Swiss** coordinated science programmes in polar regions;
- generate **synergies** (science, logistics, data) between Swiss groups of different disciplines;
- enable a mid-term science programs by providing **sustainable funding** (3 – 5 years horizon);
- be defined following a **bottom-up** approach;
- foster **multi-disciplinary** research;
- enable links with **international** initiatives and other national polar programmes;
- be **complementary** to project funding by e.g. SNSF or EU by concentrating SPI funding on logistics, access and other enabling measures;
- enable **high common standards** of data management, open science approaches, safety and public outreach.

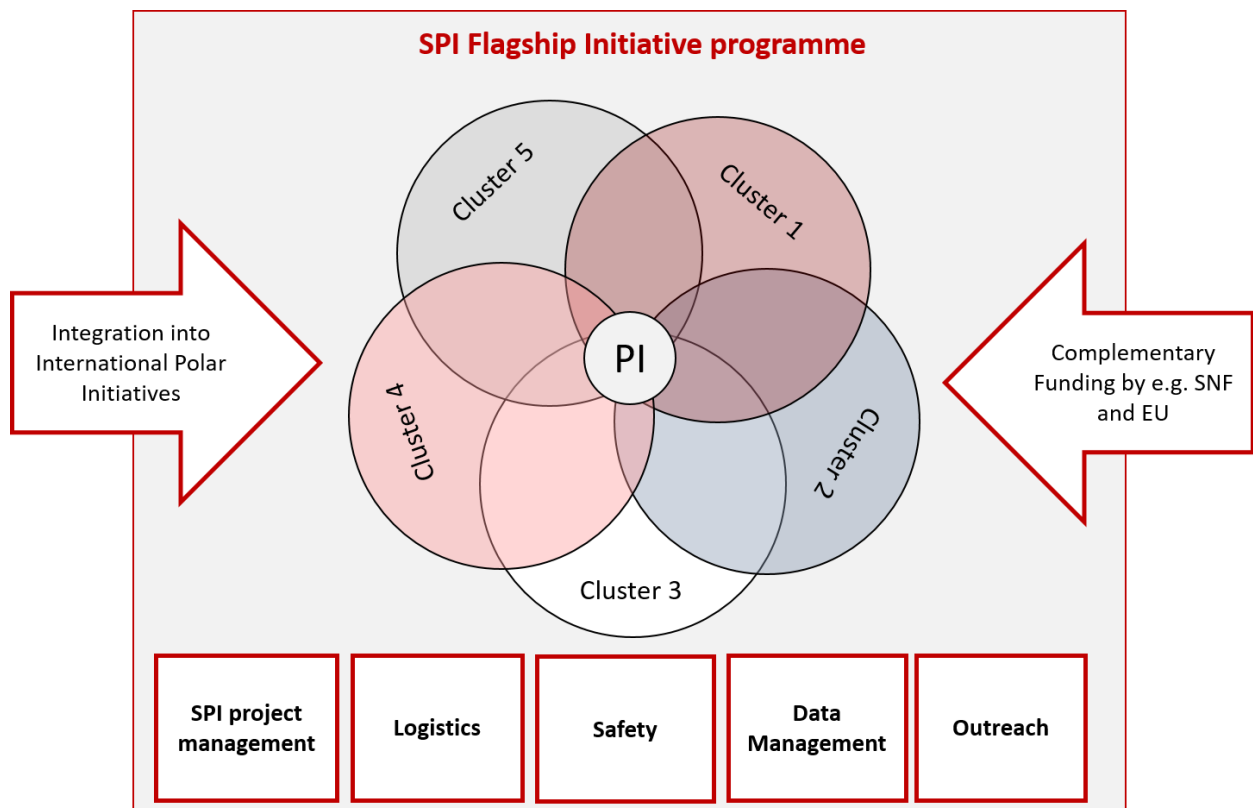


Figure 1: Conceptual diagram for each SPI Flagship Initiative. Clusters represent different research discipline/topics and consist of one or possibly several research groups.

Geographic focus

SPI-FI are expected to be organised around a strong regional focus in order to maximise scientific (multi-disciplinary) synergies and optimise logistics as well as international collaboration.

The call for proposals will be open to research in **any polar or remote high-altitude region**.

Involvement of Swiss researchers

All researchers affiliated to a Swiss public research institution with an interest in polar or remote high-altitude regions will be invited to prepare and submit proposals. **Multi-disciplinary collaboration** will be a central element of each programme. Researchers from all fields are encouraged to participate in proposals, including from fields considered as “non-typical” for polar sciences and fields which do not themselves require fieldwork but are essential in reaching the overall aim of the proposed research.

Flagships should not be approached as single research projects but as **programmes bringing together and coordinating different groups and research questions with a similar regional focus**. Therefore, an inclusive approach by the PI of a proposal will be a crucial success factor. Similarly, synergies and exchange with international initiatives and international research infrastructure operators in the region will be an imperative selection criterion.

International collaboration

International collaboration is fundamental to polar research and encouraged within the Flagship Initiatives. Direct funding (e.g. transport to field sites) will be reserved for scientists employed by a Swiss

research institution, and it is expected that all research clusters will be Swiss led. However, as the majority of funding for each programme is envisioned to go towards logistics, international partners can 'pay their own way' and benefit from logistical and safety infrastructure provided by each programme.

Budget

The budget available for the SPI Flagship programme will be announced at the launch for the call for proposals in January 2021.

Budgetary structure

As much as possible, the Flagships should be developed and defined in a bottom-up approach, thereby providing the Swiss polar science community with funding and support where they need it. The budgetary structure given below is therefore a guideline, and the exact spread of funding will be discussed and defined on a case-by-case basis during the multi-stage proposal process.

Provisional budgetary structure for each SPI Flagships Initiative	
Logistics (<i>access, transport, etc.</i>)	Around 65% of the overall costs
Safety (<i>courses, field support, etc.</i>)	Around 5% of the overall costs
Programme coordination (<i>incl. meetings</i>)	Around 20% of the overall costs
Outreach & open access publication fees	Around 5% of the overall costs
Opportunity fund	Around 5% of the overall costs
Analysis, Equipment	If necessary for the success of the flagship, such costs could be charged to the budget with a certain cap and on the condition that a clear justification is provided.

Complementary funding

The scientific work of the Flagship components should be supported by funding instruments such as Sinergia, other SNF grants, EU or third-party funding (such as private foundations or funds from own research institutions).

Definition process

Flagships will be tailored to the specific research needs of the Swiss polar science community and the process of their definition is designed to be **bottom-up, driven by scientists and supported by the SPI**. In order to enable such a process and in parallel provide a framework that allows for continuous exchange (in terms of feasibility, scope, etc.) the **call for proposals** consisting of several stages.

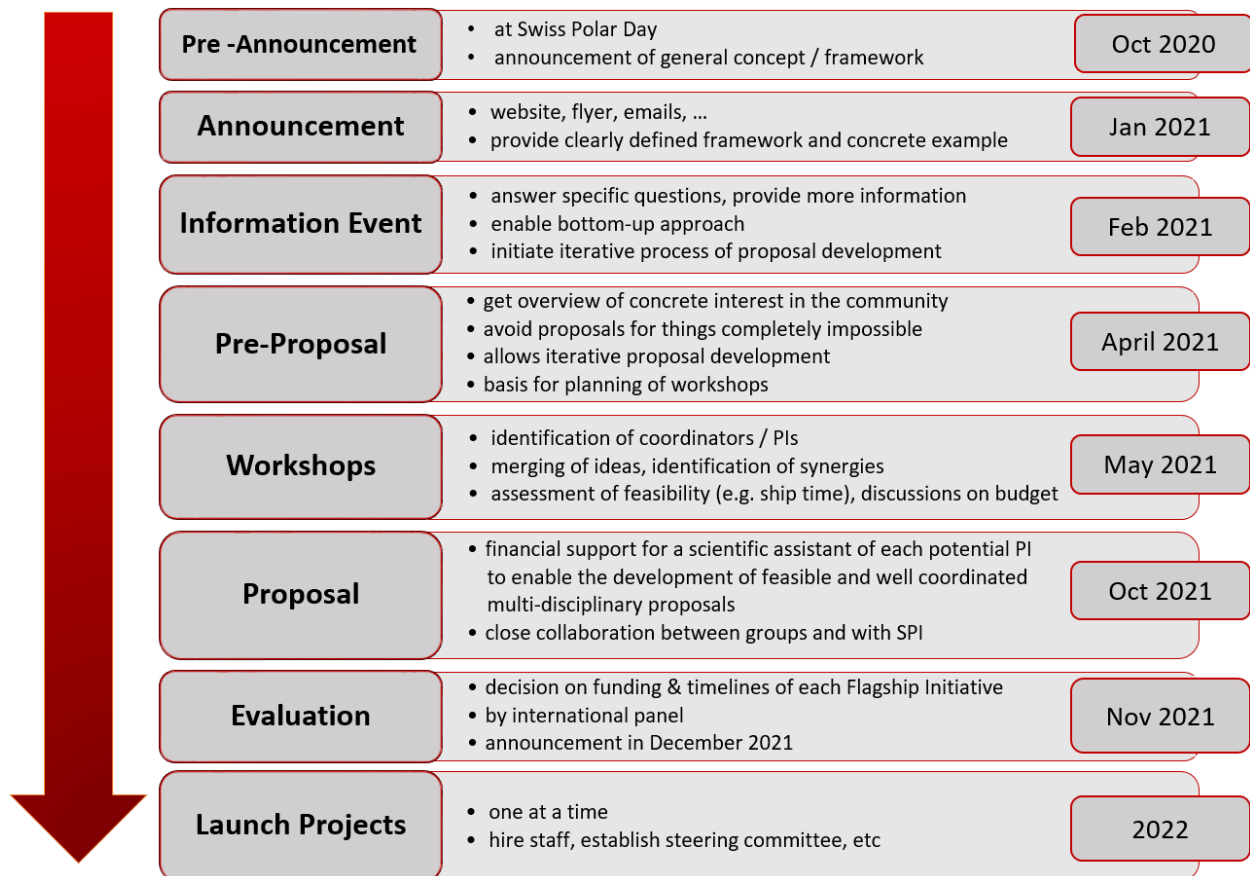


Figure 1: The proposed timeframe of the Flagship Initiatives definition process. If two SPI-FI can be funded (Plan A), their start date will be several month apart.

The concept of the SPI Flagship initiatives will be announced to the Swiss polar science community during the Swiss Polar Day in October 2020. The official announcement and call for proposals will be in January/February 2021. This will be followed (a few weeks later) by an **information event**, where scientists can ask specific questions and the SPI can provide additional information. The event will furthermore allow scientists from different research fields but with interest in the same region to come together and discuss the possibility of collaboration. It will therefore be important in maximizing the bottom-up development of these programmes.

Following the information event, the SPI will ask interested scientists to submit a **pre-proposal**. This step will allow the final proposal to be developed together with the SPI. For example, the SPI will be able to help assess what is possible in terms of access requirements to regions / specific research stations / berth on research vessels. It will also be possible for the SPI to suggest the incorporation of another research field in a proposed Flagship Initiative, or the merging of two pre-proposals.

Based on the outcome of the pre-proposals, **workshops will be organised, most likely grouping pre-proposals with a similar regional focus** in order to encourage collaboration and synergies.

Proposals will be evaluated by an **international review panel**.

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