

Swiss Natural History Collections Network

Rules of procedure

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Preamble

The Swiss Natural History Collections Network (SwissCollNet) is a national initiative for the preparation, digitisation and provision of access to natural science collections in Switzerland. On the basis of the federal decree on credits for research funding institutions for the years 2021–2024 (article 2 paragraph 1 letter d), SCNAT is tasked with conducting this initiative.

In particular, the SwissCollNet initiative aims at making data on specimens from the Swiss natural history collections available for research, education and society. SwissCollNet will mobilise and provide open-access to specimen data through nationwide data harmonisation and interoperability among all relevant stakeholders and data providers, such as natural history museums, botanical gardens and institutions of higher education. The foremost and overall goal of this four-year period is to digitize as many collections as possible and to build an online portal, the Swiss Virtual Natural History Collection (hereafter SVNHC), which will provide open-access to harmonized specimen data from the Swiss collections.

A total amount of 12.37 MCHF of federal funds has been allocated to SwissCollNet in the period 2021–2024.ⁱ This sum shall be met by an equivalent amount of matching funds.

Article 1 Purpose

- ¹ To digitise and publish information on specimens relevant for research as part of a decentralised research infrastructure for Swiss natural science collections, which will lead to the creation of a Swiss Virtual Natural History Collection (SVNHC) and to prove funding scenarios of the supporting institutions for the maintenance and further development of the SVNHC as of 2025.
- ² To reach sustainability of the SVNHC in the long-term.
- ³ To promote the scientific and educational use of the Swiss natural science collections both nationally and internationally, and encourage training for scientific and technical careers related to natural science collections.
- ⁴ To involve the Swiss natural science collections in international efforts to coordinate the mobilisation of biodiversity and geodiversity data for the benefit of research by creating a decentralised national research infrastructure for scientific collections.
- ⁵ To develop a long-term strategy for managing Swiss natural science collections, using them for scientific purposes and obtaining funding for their maintenance and further development.

ⁱ The annual budget decisions of the parliament remain reserved.

Article 2 Governing bodies and integration in the SCNAT structure

- ¹ The bodies that make up SwissCollNet are the “Steering Board” (hereinafter SB) and the “Board of Experts” (hereinafter BoE).
- ² Overall responsibility for SwissCollNet is assigned to the SB by the SCNAT Executive Board, and the SB is authorised to represent SwissCollNet externally.
- ³ The BoE advises the SB on compliance with technical requirements by the projects supported by SwissCollNet.
- ⁴ The SCNAT Executive Board ratifies strategic and financial decisions taken by the SB.
- ⁵ The Scientific Unit (hereinafter SU) is the administrative office of SwissCollNet. It is run by SCNAT and is responsible for coordinating the initiative and supporting the governing bodies.

Article 3 Composition, election, term of office and compensation of the boards

- ¹ The SB, including the President, consists of 9 to a maximum of 11 persons with knowledge of the Swiss and European collections landscape, the Swiss natural science research landscape, digital data collections and Swiss politics. The election of the SB members and President, and the term of office to be served, are based on the rules of procedure of SCNAT (article 2.7). The Chair of the BoE takes part in Steering Board meetings ex officio in an advisory capacity. A delegate of the SCNAT Executive Board attends the meetings of the Steering Board in an advisory capacity.
- ² The BoE consists of up to 9 persons with sound knowledge of the requirements for collections and their digitisation, including in the context of comparable international initiatives, plus extensive practical experience in relation to collections. They are appointed by the SB, with no limit to the term of office. The SB appoints a Chair of the BoE. The BoE may call upon individuals or groups of individuals with the relevant specialist qualifications for support in dealing with specific issues in its work at any time.
- ³ SB and BoE constitute themselves internally (e.g., nomination of deputies and specific responsibilities).
- ⁴ Members of these boards do not receive a salary from SCNAT. Expenses incurred in the execution of their duties as members of these boards may be reimbursed.

Article 4 Tasks of the SB and the BoE

- ¹ The Steering Board performs the following tasks:
 - Within the framework of the mandate given by the political authorities it determines SwissCollNet’s strategic focus.
 - Drawing up an implementation plan (2021-2024) of the SwissCollNet initiative.
 - Drawing up Rules of Procedures for SwissCollNet.
 - Drawing up Funding Regulations for SwissCollNet.
 - Drawing up the calls for proposals. In doing so, the SB observes the standards and requirements set by the BoE for operating the infrastructures and connecting them to international infrastructures.
 - Managing the call procedure.
 - Managing the review process for submitted project applications.
 - Deciding on the allocation of funds in accordance with the Funding Regulations.
 - Taking steering decisions on current projects on the basis of the respective progress reports and technical accompanying reports of the BoE.
 - Producing consolidated annual reports and the final report for the attention of the SCNAT Executive Board.

- Producing an annual business plan and budget for SwissCollNet.
- Appointing members of the BoE.
- Supervising the activities of the BoE.
- Informing stakeholders, in particular institutions with collections, about the project.
- Organising workshops on the coordinated development of SwissCollNet.
- Bearing responsibility for strategic and organisational aspects of connecting SwissCollNet to international initiatives.
- Actively engaging in a dialogue with the political and administrative bodies responsible for collections at the national and cantonal levels.
- Preparing the SVNHC for handover to an organisation suited to running normal operations and further developing the infrastructure.

² The Board of Experts performs the following tasks:

- Bearing responsibility for technical aspects of connecting SwissCollNet to international initiatives.
 - Defining the required standards for a national research infrastructure with international connectivity.
 - Monitoring developments at the international level and adjusting the standards that apply to SwissCollNet to ensure its connectivity.
- Preparing the elements in calls for proposals or regulatory papers that relate to compliance with technical standards and requirements.
- Producing reports to accompany the progress reports on current projects, covering aspects relating to compliance with technical standards and requirements.
- Supporting the SB in their tasks (communication, organisation of workshops, national and international networking, preparation of regulatory and strategic documents etc.).
- Actualising and maintaining the webpage of SwissCollNet.
- Supervising supporting individuals or groups of individuals dealing with specific issues.

Article 5 Tasks of the SU

¹ The SU of the Steering Board SwissCollNet is run by SCNAT in accordance with its regulations and with the support of the Service units (IT, Finances, Human Resources, Communication etc.).

² The SU assists all the SwissCollNet bodies in the performance of their tasks:

- The SU is responsible for the daily operations of SwissCollNet.
- The SU provides administrative support to both SwissCollNet bodies and punctual working groups.
- The SU coordinates activities and information flow between the two boards of SwissCollNet and the Executive Board of SCNAT.
- The SU coordinates internal and external communication.
- The SU prepares the agenda and meeting documents of the two boards of SwissCollNet together with their chairpersons and records the minutes of the meeting.
- The SU is preparing, reporting and controlling the budget of SwissCollNet.

Article 6 Financial sources and contracts

¹ SwissCollNet is financed on the basis of the federal decree on credits for research funding institutions for the years 2021-2024 (Article 2 paragraph 1 letter d) and the procedures regulated in the "Zusatzprotokoll" to the Service Agreement between SERI and the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences (ZP).

- ² The financing of projects by SwissCollNet from federal funds requires an own contribution of 50 percent from the implementing institutions. The details are set out in the federal decree and the ZP.
- ³ The financial management (accounting, reporting, etc.) is carried out in accordance with the regulations of SCNAT.
- ⁴ Contracts in the name of SwissCollNet are concluded in the name of SCNAT and in accordance with the provisions of the SCNAT Financial and Signature Regulations.

Article 7 Entry into force and validity of the rules of procedure

- ¹ The rules of procedure come into force on 30.08.2021.
- ² Any amendments to or revocation of the SwissCollNet rules of procedure require a decision by the SCNAT Executive Board.