



Research funds and scholarship programme in Bulgaria and Romania

## GREATER IMPORTANCE FOR RESEARCH CENTRES IN BULGARIA AND ROMANIA



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**Dr Ivanka Dimova carried out research at the University of Bern for one year as part of the scholarship programme. Here in the laboratory the Bulgarian doctor studies embryonic cells under the microscope.**

**With the aim of strengthening research in Bulgaria and Romania, Switzerland funds a research and scholarship programme in the two countries. Currently 39 research projects are under way. The programme of scholarships enables over 100 graduates from Bulgaria and Romania to complete a fixed-term research residency in Switzerland.**

Bulgaria and Romania are undertaking major efforts to strengthen their potential in the area of research and development. They are encountering, however, a number of obstacles on the way to a knowledge-based economy. Often infrastructure and equipment are lacking. Institutional structures and international networks show room for improvement. The latter have had negative consequences for young academics in particular: many academics in Bulgaria and Romania are unable to undertake or complete research abroad because the costs are prohibitively high.

The Sciex scholarship programme enables young Bulgarian and Romanian graduates to undertake research at a Swiss research institution for a limited period.

Switzerland also promotes Bulgaria and Romania as research locations through funding 39 research projects as part of its EU enlargement contribution. In these projects, Swiss research institutes work together with Bulgarian and Romanian partners. The results from these research projects strengthen the position of the research centres concerned and boost cooperation with Switzerland.

### SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME: TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE RATHER THAN BRAIN DRAIN

Camelia Stefanache is one of over 80 Romanian graduates who were able to work with a research team in Switzerland thanks to a Sciex scholarship. From 2012 to 2013 she carried out research on cell cultures at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) in Wädenswil (ZH). Something she particularly appreciated with the Sciex programme was the central focus placed on knowledge transfer between the home and host universities, and that the programme does not lead to the brain drain phenomenon, whereby scientists abandon their home countries.



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*My participation in the scientific exchange programme gave me the opportunity to experiment with various approaches to understand how plants produce healing compounds.*

**Pavlina Sasheva, PhD student (33)**

Thanks to the scholarship programme, long-term partnerships have developed between the universities and research institutes involved, institutionalising the exchange of knowledge and cooperation in research. So for example there now exists a close partnership between the ZHAW and Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Romania, thanks to the research posting undertaken by Camelia Stefanache. The professor who supervised Camelia's research at the ZHAW is regularly invited by the university to come to Romania to give lectures to doctoral students there.

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## JOINT RESEARCH PROJECTS IN BULGARIA AND ROMANIA

The project themes are divided into different, predefined areas which were agreed with each country based on criteria for the best possible way of promoting the research centre. In Bulgaria a total of 13 research projects are being implemented in the three areas of ecological forestry, farming and waste management; social inequalities and regional differences; and development of new medicines. The 26 projects in Romania concern diseases of modern society, the effects of waste and pollutants on the environment and the climate, sustainable energy, economic growth and social inequalities.

The SDC has entrusted the implementation of the joint research projects to the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). Most of the projects have a duration of three years.

### Swiss research funds and scholarship programme in the EU-12

In addition to Bulgaria and Romania, Switzerland provides financial support for research funds in Hungary, Lithuania and Poland. In all, Switzerland supports about 120 research projects in the five countries, for a total amount of CHF 58.8 million. The Sciex programme accounts for CHF 47 million. It is open to researchers from the new EU member states, except Cyprus and Malta. In total, over 460 academics from those countries are undertaking research at a Swiss university.

## THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

### OBJECTIVE

Promoting economic growth and improving work conditions

### THEME

Research and development

### COUNTRY

Bulgaria and Romania

### PARTNERS

Swiss research institutes (universities and others)

### STARTING POINT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the research sector in Bulgaria and Romania, infrastructure and equipment are still lacking. International networks need to be improved, which puts young researchers in these countries in particular at a disadvantage.

### PURPOSE

Bulgaria and Romania are to be promoted as research locations through the research funds and the scholarship programme.

### ACTIVITIES

- Organisation of over 100 research placements at Swiss universities
- Establishing networks between Swiss and Bulgarian and Romanian universities
- Funding of 39 research projects in Bulgaria and Romania
- Establishing and strengthening international relations in the respective research disciplines

### TARGET GROUPS

- Young Bulgarian and Romanian graduates
- Bulgarian, Romanian and Swiss research institutes and teams

### COSTS

- Sciex:  
Bulgaria: CHF 2 million, Romania: CHF 8 million
- Research funds:  
Bulgaria: CHF 4 million, Romania: CHF 9.75 million

### RESPONSIBLE FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Sciex:

- Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS)
- Respective mentors of the collaborating universities

Research funds:

- Research institutes in the new member states and their Swiss partner institutions

### DURATION

2011–2016

SWISS ENLARGEMENT CONTRIBUTION

December 2014

[www.swiss-contribution.admin.ch](http://www.swiss-contribution.admin.ch)