

SSPH+ Strategy 2023-2027

Moving Health Forward

Approved by the SSPH+ Foundation Board on 6 May 2022 - The SSPH+ Financial Concept 2023-2027 is an inherent element of this Strategy

Preamble

Public Health is the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, organizations, public and private, communities and individuals¹. Thus, research and training in public health sciences are inherently multidisciplinary in nature, as progress relies on the interdisciplinary co-creation across health, medical, social, political and life sciences. In contrast to other scientifically strong nations, none of the Swiss universities has established a public health science faculty or school of public health. Instead, the Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+) – founded in 2005 – with currently twelve Swiss universities in the Foundation, assembles >240 professors from >70 institutes representing >40 scientific disciplines relevant to public health. This Swiss model of bundling the public health sciences community in one single inter-university academic network is internationally unique. The current strategy period and financing model will end in December 2022. The present Strategy 2023-2027 and the related Financial Concept 2023-2027 form the basis for the future work and development of SSPH+.

Background

This Strategy 2023-2027 is the outcome of an 18-month participatory and interactive process of the SSPH+ Faculty members, Fellows and PhD students coordinated by the Directorate and steered by the SSPH+ Foundation Board. The process included workshops, online surveys and consultations, SWOT and stakeholder analyses and an assessment of the SSPH+ environment. Since the launch of the Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+) in 2005 and its organizational structure as an academic non-profit foundation in 2008, SSPH+ has evolved significantly, growing from the original six to the current twelve partner universities. SSPH+ envisions to gather and foster academic forces from all public health oriented academic positions at Swiss universities – i.e., all academic institutions represented in the plenary assembly of swissuniversities – into a “virtual” national faculty of public health sciences. In line with the multidisciplinary orientation of public health sciences and the goals of strengthening and empowering the entire field, the SSPH+ faculty is not bordered by structural bodies such as a university, faculty, department, institute or scientific discipline. The expansion strategy (adopted by the Foundation Board in 2018) is still ongoing given that a few Swiss universities with clusters of public health oriented academic leaders are not yet partners of the SSPH+ Foundation.

The strategic period 2018-2022 has also been accompanied by a successful financing concept developed in response to the ending of the first 12-year phase characterized by a federal funding, based on a SUC agreement. As originally requested by SERI, the Funding Concept 2018-2022 moved the core funding responsibility from SERI to the SSPH+ Foundation universities. Since then, these have covered a reduced but stable annual core budget to ensure core functions, whereas all additional activities had to be funded through a project-based acquisition of resources to support the SSPH+ network.

Given the ongoing developments and the timing of the Funding Concept 2018-2022, the Foundation Board decided in 2019 to re-discuss the SSPH+ strategy to, thus, approve for the next five years the SSPH+ Strategy 2023-2027 and a Financial Concept 2023-2027. The 15th anniversary year in 2020 was supposed to focus on the strategic discussions. However, the year started with the pandemic. With all its challenges and opportunities, it has shaped not only the activities of SSPH+, but also the development of this strategy, enthused by the SSPH+ network willing to participate and contribute to this process.

¹ See definition by Winslow at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_health#Definition

Understanding the past to shape the future

SSPH+ experienced an increasing participation and collaboration of the SSPH+ faculty with its meanwhile >240 faculty members affiliated with >70 institutes from 12 universities. Though the core missions of SSPH+ have not changed over the years, SSPH+ has seen some major developments including a major increase in the acquisition of funds SSPH+ channeled to its partners. Also, we experienced shifts in emphasis across the three strategic pillars defined in the SSPH+ strategic goals approved by the Foundation Board in 2015, namely the fostering of inter-university research, the promotion of training and education, and the linking of public health sciences to policy and practice. Annex 1 provides insights into the main developments and successes of the current funding period. These provide the basis and opportunities for the future as well. The pandemic has vividly demonstrated the need, advantages and added value of a nationally unified academic inter-university network structure for public health.

Where do we start

SSPH+ has become a successfully and efficiently operating virtual faculty of public health sciences. It assembles an exceptionally broad range of competencies and expertise in research, teaching, training and services covering most of the relevant domains of public health sciences in Switzerland. Its globally unique virtual structure brings organizational challenges but also strong advantages when compared to traditional schools of public health rooted in single universities. The focus on facilitating and supporting national collaborations in research and training across the SSPH+ partner institutions is a successful model also for the future, thus, SSPH+ can continue to build on and optimize what already exists.

Experiences from the current pandemic as well as major upcoming public health challenges call for a continued development of SSPH+ in a timely manner. The current unprecedented high recognition of public health in politics, the media and in the public has opened a “window of opportunity” which further consolidated SSPH+. The pandemic has made clear that Switzerland needs stronger collaboration to link science with policy and that the national academic network of SSPH+ assembles a wide range of multidisciplinary competences and inter-professional expertise necessary to play a leading role in linking public health sciences with the needs of authorities and decision makers beyond the pandemic.

Where do we want to go – Vision, Mission, Motivation and Values

Our **Vision** is to promote equitable health through higher education, research and knowledge transfer.

We focus our **Mission** on three strategic pillars:

- **Teaching & Education:** SSPH+ fosters high-quality higher education and training collaborations to enable a skilled public health workforce locally, nationally and internationally.
- **Inter-university Research:** SSPH+ facilitates and promotes interdisciplinary, trans-institutional research to strengthen public health nationally and internationally.
- **Science to Policy & Practice:** SSPH+ supports the translation and dissemination of public health science to policy, practice and the public.

Our core **Motivation** is to foster higher education and research. We empower our public health community and our faculty of dedicated public health experts and scientists to become stronger and broader in Switzerland and abroad. We facilitate inter-university collaborations which provide us an added value in terms of scientific exchange and lifelong learning. We contribute to the health of the population and improve general knowledge about health through our extended network, thus

interacting as an intermediary between science and the public. We share our knowledge of public health with students, practitioners, politicians, the media, the economy and the public.

The following **Values** guide our actions:

Community of Will and Collaboration

What unifies and holds us together is the will and the goal to improve the health of the population based on science, evidence and communication. We feel part of a larger whole and are eagerly committed to public health, working together to address the challenges of the twenty-first century and to give public health a strong voice in Switzerland. We collaborate across universities and learn from each other.

Diversity, Transdisciplinarity, Respect, Responsibility

We value and promote diversity, inclusiveness, transdisciplinarity, and the collective in our education, research, and service. We maintain fair, respectful interactions and a positive work atmosphere both in collaborations and academic competitions. We communicate transparently and support each other.

Community, Scientific Exchange, Lifelong Learning

We form a community and at the same time a knowledge hub that offers its members added value in the form of scientific exchange in the academic network and lifelong learning in public health. In addition, we coordinate those issues for our network that affect everyone: education, scientific programs, communication, legal, lobbying, fundraising and more.

How do we get to our destination?

As an inter-university faculty and academic network, SSPH+ adheres to the following guiding principles:

- SSPH+ will remain a reliable, agile, lean and mostly virtual network organization, capitalizing on digital approaches.
- The SSPH+ Foundation universities fund the basic core functions through an annual contribution to the core budget based on a transparent and fair financial concept, whereas the SSPH+ Directorate's Office engages in the acquisition of additional funds.
- SSPH+ will engage in transparent communication and lean, reliable and predictable management to fulfil its mission.
- SSPH+ supports partner institutions to facilitate inter-university national and international collaborations beyond the core activities while following the principle of subsidiarity. It does not compete with its partner institutions in actions or in raising funds, but seeks to leverage its national network to implement complementary, synergistic and collaborative strategies.
- SSPH+ faculty and its Directorate's Office set priorities, approved by the Foundation Board, based on agreed upon criteria to adjust the intended outcomes to the available resources.
- The Foundation Board defines and approves the annual activities and budgets and follows-up its execution.

With what organization?

The organigram (see Annex 2) reflects the flexibility and versatility of a virtual inter-university faculty and seconds the needs to remain innovative and functional. The following paragraphs highlight the organizationally relevant features and values that characterize SSPH+.

Structure follows functions: The organization of SSPH+ should at all times be aligned with the SSPH+ statutes, its network function and strategic actions. The successful parts of the current guiding principles of the SSPH+ governance and organization will be kept (see current organigram in the Annex 2). New elements will be added to reflect the growth of the SSPH+ faculty, the still ongoing expansion strategy - adopted by the Foundation Board in 2019 – and the further prioritization of the training support of a meanwhile much larger community of PhD students. Lessons learned from the pandemic and the high public health science relevance of major strategic

pillars now emerging at the federal level call for flexible developments of the organization. Such adaptations shall accommodate a leading role of SSPH+ in the Citizen Cohort and strong ties with the complementary SPHN on personalized health and the Clinical Research Coordination platform. The SSPH+ umbrella may provide a hub for health system research and the SLHS.

Efficient added value: The organization shall remain lean, agile and supportive of the network structure with its faculty members spread all across Switzerland. SSPH+ shall keep its character as a reliable network of a virtual inter-university faculty of public health sciences rather than become an independent “institution”. Thus, SSPH+ does not compete with the SSPH+ partner institutions, but continues to support and facilitate inter-university collaborations and interactions to strengthen the field of public health sciences under the leadership of the SSPH+ faculty and their institutions.

Foundation Board: As the strategic body of the SSPH+ Foundation, it approves, oversees and controls the SSPH+ strategies, activities, developments and finances.

Directorate’s Office: To keep and strengthen its role, SSPH+ needs a well-organized Directorate’s Office which must function as a coordination platform and entry door for any academic public health issues where collaborative inter-university solutions are an added value and win-win beyond the capabilities of single institutions. The Directorate’s Office will not implement the SSPH+ projects on its own, but facilitates and mandates the implementation under the leadership of the SSPH+ Faculty members, their teams and PhD students.

SSPH+ Faculty: It guarantees the democratic academic life. In line with its nature as a “virtual faculty”, the Directorate’s Office fosters democratic engagement of faculty members and its constituencies. This shall guarantee that SSPH+ activities mirror the needs, visions, and priorities of its network. Ad hoc inter-university working groups may be initiated to advance the shared mission.

Advisory Board: To strengthen the focusing on public health issues of societal relevance and to critically mirror its success, SSPH+ can add an “Advisory Board” (AB) to its current governance structure. In contrast to the Foundation Board with its regulatory role and decision authority for all financial and strategic matters of SSPH+, the AB will give advice, feedback or input in support of the SSPH+ operations. It is composed of stakeholders from public health relevant systems at the macro, meso and micro levels.

Core activities and externally funded projects: The SSPH+ Directorate’s office will continue on one side to shape and coordinate the core activities (funded by the annual core budget of the universities) while on the other side use and offer SSPH+ as a legal umbrella structure for the anchoring of inter-university collaborations. SSPH+ can provide an administrative umbrella for the effective placement of inter-university projects, programs or initiatives funded by various constituencies. SSPH+ network partners are mandated to lead and run these projects in line with its academic and organizational needs. SSPH+ projects may be of short-term or long-term duration and may define needs-based governance structures, external funding mechanisms, or terms of reference. Projects not validated by the Foundation Board as SSPH+ core activities must be fully funded by other sources (see example of organigram in the Annex 2).

Lean employments, transparent mandates: SSPH+ will keep its current organization paradigm to keep the employment of SSPH+ Directors and staff on the minimal essential level while funding SSPH+ mandates led by partners at SSPH+ partner universities.

Acquisition of subsidiary resources in support of activities of the SSPH+ constituencies will remain a relevant activity of the SSPH+ Directorate’s Office to foster inter-university actions. The pandemic provided clarity in the strength and weaknesses of the past fundraising approach which culminated in SSPH+ channeling four times higher funds to its partner institutions than what the twelve universities had to provide to SSPH+ (core budget; 2020/2021). The prime link between fundraising and communication of public health sciences and its role and outcomes has become

evident in the pandemic and must be taken into account in the reorganization of the SSPH+ fundraising activities.

International dimension of SSPH+: Schools of public health in the world have various modes in their international involvement. Some have signed agreements or conventions for collaborating in education and research, establishing dual or joint training programs, or organizing international conferences, others have even setup campuses or facilities abroad, facilitating their faculties, fellows and students to live and work abroad with the highest research standards. SSPH+ through its original virtual network organization is a mix of all of these modalities. Many SSPH+ partners have set up strong and sustained collaborations with other schools of public health or universities in the world. In line with its overall mission and values, SSPH+ will not compete with these existing successes nor duplicate activities. Instead, the added value of SSPH+ is its ability to act on behalf of its network in settings where the status of a “school of public health” is required or of benefit. SSPH+ represents its academic network within ASPHER (the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region). Similarly, SSPH+ can work on fostering stronger collaborations with the International Geneva since it has a large network of agencies, international organizations, NGOs and scientific societies, which work in the field of public and global health. This can bring visibility, mandates, but also internships and a network of academic competencies in the training programs led by SSPH+ partners. SSPH+ can also reinforce its link and influence with the European Regional Office of WHO (based in Copenhagen).

Strategic actions and outcomes 2023-2027

The strategic actions of the next funding period are first outlined for the general affairs, including governance and development, and then followed by activities related to each of the three strategic pillars pursued also in the past period and in the structuring of annual plans and budgets. The last set lists the actions needed to implement the newly adopted, transversal strategic domain, namely the communication of public health sciences to the public. In our actions, SSPH+ is proudly dedicated to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) set out in the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda, given its wide relevance for public health issues.

Nr	Action	Outcome
	A) General affairs of SSPH+ developments and governance	
A1	EQUITY, TRANSPARENCY: SSPH+ is dedicated to offer equal opportunities for all SSPH+ Faculty members, irrespective of gender, scientific discipline, faculty position in the primary affiliation, religion, region or language. Related indicators are transparently reported and evaluated.	List of equity indicators defined (Q3 2023); annual reporting
A2	EXPANSION STRATEGY: SSPH+ pursues and finalizes its expansion strategy, adopted by the Foundation Board in 2019, to include in the Foundation all <i>swissuniversities’</i> members which have a critical mass of at least five scientists dedicated to public health relevant disciplines and willing to belong to and actively engage in SSPH+.	Up to 4 other universities joined SSPH+ Foundation by 31.12.2025, the latest.
A3	GOVERNANCE: The growth of the network and the emerging opportunities for public health sciences call for a reflection on the roles, duties, rights and opportunities of the SSPH+ constituencies to guarantee a governance that keeps the ability to support the coherence and leadership of the network, build trust and strengthen democratic participatory action.	Guiding principles of the governance and organization adopted by faculty and the Board (Q2 2023)
A4	FUNDRAISING: SSPH+ transitions its current fundraising model into an innovative alternative approach. Methods, governance and strategy shall be lined up with the new developments and opportunities in public health sciences, the needs of the SSPH+ partners, and the new communication strategy (see E1). The future strategy commits to the current principle to not compete with the partner institutions’ search for funds but to rather add to their own funds through synergistic and complementary efforts.	New Fundraising Concept developed and approved (2023)
A5	PRIORITIES OF ACTION: The SSPH+ Directorate’s Office lines up its action plan according to the priorities set by the SSPH+ constituencies. Monitoring and evaluations of the adopted actions are made transparent. In setting priorities of SSPH+ actions, SSPH+ respects the specific needs emerging from the heterogeneity across the primary affiliations of SSPH+ partners (in terms of linguistic regions; universities; universities of applied sciences; associated institutions, etc.).	Priority assessment conducted (2023). Monitoring with annual reporting.

A6	SSPH+ ADVISORY BOARD: A concept for the constitution, operation and governance of an SSPH+ Advisory Board (AB) will be developed and approved by the Foundation Board ensuring that synergies will be used to their full potential and avoiding duplication of engagements and structures also needed within activities, programs or projects running under the SSPH+ umbrella (see A7).	Concept developed Q1 2023; constitution Q3 2023; at least 1 AB meeting per year
A7	UMBRELLA FOR PROJECTS OR DOMAINS: With the increasing demand of SSPH+ Faculty members, authorities and funders to anchor inter-university projects in the SSPH+ Foundation, guiding principles for project placements under the umbrella of SSPH+ need to be defined to foster, facilitate and harmonize related operations, governance, responsibilities and terms. Corona Immunitas, the FOPH SSPH+ COVID-19 Platform, the GlobalP3HS Fellowship Program, the Inter-university Graduate Campus provide excellent points of SSPH+ reference for the diverse needs of the placements of SSPH+ projects or domains, which are of potential relevance for collaborating constituencies such as the Swiss Learning Health System, Health Systems Research, and others.	Guiding principles formulated and approved by Board (Q2 2023)
A8	INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE: To properly monitor, evaluate and communicate the performance of SSPH+, a set of indicators are defined and annually reported by the Directorate. Indicators include at least the number of Faculty members and of other continuously served SSPH+ constituencies, the acquisition of funds and the allocation of those acquisitions and mandates to the SSPH+ partner institutions.	Set of indicators defined (Q2 2023) and annually reported (end of year)
A9	UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES: SSPH+ further strengthens the unique opportunities, broader expertise and expanded disciplinary backgrounds assembled in a network where universities and universities of applied sciences SSPH+ partners share the same vision and mission. SSPH+ adopts an action plan to explicitly and fully capitalize on this unique partnership, based on the Swiss Dual System for higher education.	Win-win action plan adopted (including measurable indicators of success) Q1 2023
A10	BEYOND STATUS QUO: SSPH+ faculty develops and agrees on the further development of its mission, identity, modus operandi and strategic actions to shape the future beyond the 2023-2027 period. SSPH+ is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the UN's 2030 Agenda, particularly in relation to public health issues.	A "Beyond the strategy" white paper is approved 2025
A11	INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS: SSPH+ faculty agrees on the role, modalities and functions SSPH+ should provide to its constituencies on the international level (also see A10).	Concept note and actions "International Partnerships" approved 2023
	B) Fostering research	
B1	CITIZEN COHORT: SSPH+ assembles all prime experts in the field of population-based research. As demonstrated with Corona Immunitas, the network is highly efficient and dedicated in collaborative efforts to lead national multi-centre research projects under a shared methodological vision and rigor. Thus, SSPH+ is uniquely positioned to take the leadership in the planned national Citizen Cohort. The SSPH+ joins all forces to collaborate in developing and leading this research infrastructure of utmost relevance for the future of public health sciences in Switzerland.	Leadership role of SSPH+ network defined and approved by federal authorities (2024)
B2	SMARTER HEALTH CARE – THE FUTURE HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH: SSPH+ collaborates with the NRP74 team, SLHS, FOPH and SPHN in securing a sustainable organization in the field of health services research. Smarter Health Care could come under the umbrella of SSPH+. Its services (research funding, teaching and training, dialogue research and policy, international collaboration, data optimization and coordination) are to be secured and fostered under such a model. Similarly, the Swiss Implementation Science Network may clarify how to benefit from an SSPH+ umbrella.	Presentation of a concept for future HSR in Switzerland 2023/24; strategic discussion with IMPACT
B3	PHD FELLOWSHIPS: To support capacity building and the research skills of its network, SSPH+ builds on its excellent record of the GlobalP3HS Fellowship Program. It reaches out to funding sources for other competitive SSPH+ PhD fellowship programs.	Acquisition of at least another 10 PhD fellowships starting before 2024
B4	SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS: Scientific publishing remains a landmark of research. With its two "sister journals" IJPH and PHR, SSPH+ fosters the open access high quality publishing of public health sciences. The SSPH+ faculty actively contributes to IJPH and PHR where they have the privilege to propose and guest edit calls ("special issues"). Editorial Boards of both journals have at least one Co-Editor in Chief from the SSPH+ network. The fully funded Editorial Office is mandated to an SSPH+ partner institution. The development of the journals and SSPH+ itself profit from the revenues of the journals.	SSPH+ represented in Editorial Boards; Editorial Office mandate functional; net revenues toward SSPH+ core budget pass CHF 100'000 (in 2024)
B5	BIBLIOMETRY: Bibliometric measures continue to be seen as benchmarks for the research performance. However, in the absence of local Faculties of Public Health, SSPH+ Faculty members are usually spread across many faculties in which they usually belong to a minority. Bibliometric indices are rarely communicated nor standardized for the multi-disciplinary community of public health scientists, thus lacking visibility. SSPH+ develops a method and tool to assess the bibliometric record of the SSPH+ faculty. Updates of assessments provide insights in trends and international comparisons.	Bibliometric study design defined (Q1 2023); at least two implementations (2023; 2026)

	C) Promoting education and training	
C1	INTER-UNIVERSITY GRADUATE CAMPUS (IGC): SSPH+ secures its Inter-university Graduate Campus (IGC) flagship in support of PhD training, education and networking provided to all PhD students supervised by SSPH+ Faculty members. Its Academic Board leads the development and quality control of the offers. Performance indicators are reported annually. The fully SSPH+ funded Coordination Office is mandated to an SSPH+ partner institution. SSPH+ IGC courses are developed to fill identified gaps in training needs that are not addressed by its partner universities.	IGC offers at least 15 course-ECTS per year
C2	CONTINUED AND POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION: SSPH+ strengthens continued and postgraduate public health education through cooperation and exchange between coordinators of the various programs led by SSPH+ partners. SSPH+ reaches out to donors of fellowships to subscribe to those courses or programs.	At least one coordinators' workshop per year; Course database regularly updated online
C3	SSPH+ LUGANO SUMMER SCHOOL (LSS): SSPH+ provides the administrative and governing structure to let the inter-university steering board lead this model of capacity building. It acquires funders for fellowships to keep its character as an interprofessional multinational training hub of participants from high and low/middle income countries. Each partner institution is represented in the steering board.	LSS continues with annual editions; fully self-funded; LMIC oriented fellowship grants secured (at least 30 per year)
C4	TRAININGS REQUESTED BY FOPH: The SSPH+ network provides concerted support in training tools or modules requested by FOPH. SSPH+ leads in particular the development of teaching modules on vaccination (EduVac-CH) targeting health professions.	Mandates to develop EduVac-CH successfully implemented
C5	OPEN TO PROVIDE UMBRELLA: In case SSPH+ can provide win-wins for its partners, it is open for umbrella solutions or the scaling up for innovative public health-oriented training models led by its partners such as the accommodation of NFP74 EHCL programs, Swiss Learning Health System (SLHS) courses or the needs of Swiss Public Health Doctors.	Discussions, conceptual development and implementation
	D) Linking public health sciences to policy and practice	
D1	SWISS PUBLIC HEALTH CONFERENCE (SPHC): The Swiss Public Health Conference, jointly led by SSPH+ and Public Health Schweiz, has become a highly successful model to foster the exchange between public health science and practice as well as the policy world. SSPH+ remains the co-leader of SPHC and the SSPH+ partners remain prime candidates to host this annual event.	SPHC runs successfully 1x/yr in collaboration with PHCH; SSPH+ benefits of shared revenues
D2	CONSULTATIONS: SSPH+ participates in public consultations for policy making. To do so, SSPH+ mandates SSPH+ Faculty members for drafting responses. Coordination with Public Health Schweiz remains a default.	At least 1 successful consultation per year
D3	PUBLIC HEALTH RESOURCES: Building on the success of the SSPH+ COVID-19 Platform, SSPH+ and FOPH agree on procedures to guarantee the fast and competitive access of FOPH to the multidisciplinary expertise of the SSPH+ network. SSPH+ shall be a public health resource for FOPH and other (federal and cantonal) authorities on public health science issues far beyond COVID-19 and including essential domains of law and social sciences.	SSPH+ is used by FOPH as a public health resource
D4	DIALOGUE: In collaboration with SLHS, a+ and other constituencies, SSPH+ will continue to strengthen the dialogue between research, policy and practice. Besides capacity building efforts, SLHS and SSPH+ will promote the development of policy briefs and the conduct of stakeholder dialogues within SSPH+ to increase knowledge translation activities that foster exchange between research, policy and practice.	Outcomes: Mode of collaboration agreed and approved by Q1 2023
	E) Communication of public health sciences to the public	
E1	Communication: To successfully implement "public health sciences communication" as a new transversal strategic domain in support of the three pillars, SSPH+ needs a concept defining the specific goals, the methodology, direction and stakeholders (target audience), governance, and a specific budgeting, funding, monitoring and evaluation concept. The concept needs to integrate communication lessons learned from Corona Immunitas as well as the SSPH+@Expo project, support the three pillars, in particular the linking of science to policy and practice, and clarify the role in lobbying.	Approval of Concept by Foundation Board: Q2 2023 Implementation of concept thereafter

ANNEX 1: Details about the past

As mentioned in “Understanding the past to shape the future”, the past developments and successes build the solid base and inspiration for the years to come. This Annex provides examples of the most important developments and outcomes led by SSPH+. The many achievements of the SSPH+ network partners *per se* are not mentioned below.

Fostering research

- The federal funding scheme allowed focusing broadly on filling the most important gaps in public health research by funding 14 SSPH+ Assistant Professorships at 9 institutes. Those sustainably empowered public health sciences in Switzerland as the majority of them reached leading academic positions at SSPH+ partner universities. Since the new university-based funding scheme, support for research conducted at SSPH+ partner institutions can only be fostered by SSPH+ with the acquisition of funds from external constituencies. Thus, while SSPH+ used to support research with about CHF 1 million per year from federal funds, this support now depends on competitive grants such as the E.U. COFUND GlobalP3HS Fellowship Program or Corona Immunitas. The external acquisition of research funds has been particularly successful in the last years, showing how strong the Swiss academic public health community has become when acting together in close coordination. In 2020 and 2021 alone, SSPH+ channeled about CHF 11 million of external funds to the SSPH+ partner institutions for these two projects alone – or nearly 6 times the core budget provided by the universities.
- The SSPH+ faculty has selected the promotion of a large citizen cohort, an initiative started and led by Swiss TPH since 2011, as a top research priority for the national public health sciences of the future. Major progress has been made towards this goal, including initiatives from FOPH and invitations for the SSPH+ to be represented in the strategic boards of large national research infrastructure initiatives (namely the personalized health network and the coordination platform for clinical research). Corona Immunitas proved the ability and power of this national public health sciences network to jointly conduct population-oriented multidisciplinary research on a national level.
- Already in the very first weeks of the pandemic, the advantage of a nationally organized inter-university and multidisciplinary academic network became clearer than ever. In addition to the active voluntary participation of many of its Faculty members in the Swiss National COVID-19 Science Task Force, SSPH+ was able to set up, plan, launch and implement the national Corona Immunitas program with its 40 collaborating projects to understand the development of SARS-CoV-2 immunity across Switzerland as early as in April 2020. The first and strongest demand for this program came from FOPH, which is also the first and major funder of the private-public partnership research program Corona Immunitas.
- Scientific publishing is a prominent research related activity of many prestigious schools of public health. Indeed, top ranking journals such as the Annual Reviews of Public Health or the American Journal of Epidemiology are owned by prestigious schools of public health. Since 2012, SSPH+ owns the International Journal of Public Health (IJPH) and in 2020 SSPH+ took over the Public Health Reviews (PHR) as a second society journal previously owned by the French School of Public Health, and after by the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER). Since 2021, these complementary SSPH+ journals are published open access by the Swiss based publisher Frontiers. IJPH has seen a strong increase of its impact factor (IF) to meanwhile rank in the Q1 of all journals in the field. PHR is expected to receive its IF in 2022; it will rank even higher than IJPH. Until 2012, many public health institutes and constituencies had to fund the IJPH editorial office. Since 2012, IJPH has been running under a fully self-funded business model based on revenues from the publisher rather than on SSPH+ funding. With its most recent profit it was also possible to purchase PHR without any contributions from the SSPH+ core budget. The same business model applies to PHR. The SSPH+ journals continue to cover all costs and are expected to generate profits for SSPH+ in the near future.

Promoting training and education

- From 2010, the use of the core budget has entirely shifted from post-graduate programs (like e.g., MPH or MASHEM) – not eligible for direct funding by Swiss universities - to support teaching and training on the PhD level. In the early years of SSPH+ only 38% of the freely available SSPH+ funds were dedicated to training programs at SSPH+ institutions, with an almost entire focus on the post-graduate level. Instead, in the last year almost 60% of the core budget was assigned to training and education with an almost unique focus on the PhD level. Beneficiaries of this comprehensive engagement are all PhD students enrolled in programs in public and global health at SSPH+ partner institutions (see next point).
- The Inter-university Graduate Campus (IGC) has become an innovative flagship in PhD training, education and networking of a national inter-university community of >300 PhD students supervised by SSPH+ Faculty members. IGC was launched in response to the decision of swissuniversities to stop funding inter-university PhD programs and leave the regulation and funding of structured PhD programs and graduate schools in the sole responsibility of single universities. The launch of IGC fostered training and networking among a much larger multidisciplinary community of PhD students from around the world.
- Meanwhile FOPH has also expressed great interest in mandating SSPH+ to provide training modules for health professions curricula, so that the training pillar of SSPH+ will soon be strengthened with external funding.

Linking public health sciences to policy and practice

- The third strategic pillar which links the SSPH+ network with policy and practice, remained the smallest of the core funded activities (approximately 6% of the total 2020 and 2021 budget). Primary attention was given to influencing the new tobacco product law and reversing the Federal authorities' decision to accept Philip Morris as prime sponsor of the Swiss Pavilion at the World Expo Dubai (Oct 2021-Apr 2022). The latter initiative resulted in SSPH+ being invited as an academic guest of the Swiss Pavilion to feature health in all sustainable development goals (Jan/Feb 2022).
- In 2020, the pandemic triggered commitments in this area as well. The FOPH funded SSPH+ Covid-19 Platform is an unprecedented example in how the expertise of the SSPH+ community can support the FOPH needs in dealing with the pandemic. The platform guarantees FOPH a low-threshold and demand-driven access to the national public health science community thanks to the SSPH+ network. Under this FOPH mandate, the SSPH+ partners provide reviews of the emerging scientific literature on specific Covid-related questions. FOPH uses these reviews to guide their decisions.
- The collaboration and coordination with Public Health Schweiz, which assembles the Swiss public health professionals to reach out to policy makers, has been strengthened in recent years and the new concept of the joint annual Swiss Public Health Conference has become a great success for both partners. One of the Swiss academic institutions regularly hosts this event, linking public health sciences with the public health workforce.

Other general developments

- Weaknesses in the communication of public health sciences to the public and policy makers became very evident in the pandemic. SSPH+ resources are not meant to address this challenge; thus, related activities remained the subject of targeted strategies such as those carried out under Corona Immunitas. This weakness became also evident in response to the FDFA's invitation to be a main academic guest of the Swiss Pavilion at the World Expo in Dubai to feature health in all sustainable development goals. Thus, instead of shaping this presence primarily toward communication alone, SSPH+ uses its presence as a further tool to train the community of students of SSPH+ partner institutions in the communication of public health sciences, and to showcase the SSPH+ faculty's core competencies as leaders in this field. The 2020 decision of the Foundation Board to complement the strategic pillars with transversal activities to communicate public health sciences with the public requires the development of an in-depth concept, possibly in collaboration with external constituencies, complemented with further fundraising.

- The SSPH+ Foundation Board adopted a fundraising concept to strengthen SSPH+ activities not funded by the core budget. Despite some successful developments and increases in funding provided to the SSPH+ network, the experience of the pandemic made it clear that fundraising and communication require joint efforts and integrated approaches which will be developed in the next strategic period (2023-27).
- Membership of three universities of applied sciences (UAS) strengthened and broadened the multidisciplinary expertise of the SSPH+ faculty. It opens unprecedented opportunities to integrate strategic issues also identified by swissuniversities, such as fostering collaboration between universities and UAS, developing the interprofessional dimension of public health sciences and creating models to pursue effective inter-university collaboration at the PhD level.

ANNEX 2: Organigram of SSPH+ as of Feb 2022 (will be replaced in Nov 2022 by the final partner universities in 2023).

The organization facilitates the addition of new affairs, programs or projects with their own needs-based governance and organizational structure, assembled under the SSPH+ umbrella, such as e.g. Corona Immunitas with its own organizational governance, advisory board and a range of program partners.

