

At the helm for the SNSF in 2019



From left:

Felicitas Pauss, President ad interim of the Foundation Council of the SNSF
Matthias Egger, President of the National Research Council of the SNSF
Angelika Kalt, Director of the Administrative Offices of the SNSF

Many thanks to Felicitas Pauss

From April 2018 to December 2019, Felicitas Pauss led the Foundation Council and its Executive Committee ad interim with great commitment. Milestones during this phase included the important planning document “Multi-year programme 2021–2024”, which was approved and forwarded to the government on completion. Felicitas Pauss represented the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences on the Foundation Council and was its Vice President as of 2014. The SNSF would like to thank her for her tireless work on behalf of Swiss research.

“A Swiss success story”

In January 2020, the Foundation Council of the SNSF elected Jürg Stahl as its President. The former president of the National Council replaces Felicitas Pauss, who led the Foundation Council ad interim.

After a successful career in politics, you have now been elected President of the SNSF Foundation Council.

What fascinates you about research?

I'm fascinated by its open-mindedness and foresight. Exploring new topics with passion, precision and creativity, and thereby benefiting society, is an enormously important task! I am happy to bring my wide experience to the SNSF to lead this smoothly running organisation into the new decade – hand in hand with the Foundation Council, the National Research Council and the Administrative Offices.

How important is the SNSF for our country?

The SNSF is unique and its research funding is a Swiss success story that deserves to be continued with the necessary farsightedness and flair. In a rapidly changing society, established organisations should not rest on their laurels but keep on developing. The SNSF is a case in point.

Do you think that international scientific cooperation is threatened by the current political situation?

No, as a neutral country Switzerland has a longstanding history as a global player and the ability to engage with different partners, both in Europe and around the world. Research will continue to champion internationality and find suitable partners. But arguments in favour of international cooperation need to be put forward in a way that is both understandable and plausible in the political arena.

New leadership



The Foundation Council has constituted itself for the 2020–2023 period of office and elected its President and Executive Committee. The new President, Jürg Stahl, is one of the seven members appointed by the Federal Council. Maria Schönbachler from the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences is the Vice President.

From 2011 to 2015, Jürg Stahl was a member of the Commission for Science, Education and Culture of the National Council and presided over the Council in 2017. For the past three years, he has been the President of Swiss Olympic.

How do you interpret your role as President of the Foundation Council?

I am a team player and will take on this role with passion and commitment, just as I have done – or indeed am still doing – in other bodies. My role is clearly defined and doesn't need re-inventing. But it isn't the roles and the individuals filling them who are at the heart of all of this, but rather the SNSF community as a whole! Nevertheless, it is important that everyone knows their role and respects those of the others.

How will you leverage the fact that you are very well connected?

As a conduit between the SNSF and the political realm, I will of course bring my network of contacts into play.

Where I can support the SNSF and open doors on its behalf, I will do so. As a former President of the National Council, in particular, I can facilitate access to a whole host of actors.

Your election also raised a few eyebrows.

I'm used to that, and in no way does it diminish my passion for the job. Quite on the contrary, I prefer to be underrated or criticised to start with, and then deliver a good performance that convinces the doubters.