



Akademien der Wissenschaften Schweiz
Académies suisses des sciences
Accademie svizzere delle scienze
Academias svizas da las ciencias
Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences

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Introduction

The [Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences](#) are an umbrella organisation, associating the Swiss Academy of Sciences, the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences and the Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences as well as the Centre for Technology Assessment and Science et Cité. As institutions for the promotion of research, the Swiss Academies are publicly funded under the terms of the Swiss Federal Law on Research.

The four academies stand in the tradition of learned societies, with the aim of contributing scientific knowledge to help resolve societal challenges and to contribute to human and environmental well-being. They do so by accessing the scientific expertise available to them, namely their members who are individual scholars or scholars belonging to scientific unions in the different disciplines. This core business of the four academies is complemented by activities of the two centres of competence: the Centre for Technology Assessment provides assessment studies to assist political decision-making on new technologies, and Science et Cité is involved in projects to foster the dialogue between science and society.

History and Structure

The four academies were founded at different points in time: the [Swiss Academy of Sciences \(SCNAT\)](#) in 1815, the [Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences \(SAMS\)](#) in 1943, the [Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences \(SAHS\)](#) in 1946 and the [Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences \(SATW\)](#) in 1981. They currently have their offices in Berne (SCNAT, SAHS), Basel (SAMS) and Zurich (SATW). The SCNAT and SAHS are composed of scientific unions, SAMS members are individual scientists as well as the Swiss medical and veterinary faculties and the Swiss Medical Association, while the SATW has a mixed membership of individual scientists as well as institutions and organisations. The two centres of competence were founded more recently: the [Centre for Technology Assessment \(TA-SWISS\)](#) was founded in 1992 and [Science et Cité](#) in 1998, both in Berne.

The academies were instrumental in shaping the country's research policy and its research promotion system, namely through establishing the Swiss National Science Foundation in 1952. Starting in the 1990s, the high number of institutions involved in research and scientific policy in a relatively small country prompted calls to simplify structures. Moreover, the increasing importance of inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to research was highlighting the need for closer collaboration. Additionally, a growing societal scepticism towards science called for the reshaping of the relationship between sciences and society, and a central function in this endeavour was assigned to the academies. In response to the national and international demand for a representation of the sciences in their entity, the Council of Swiss Scientific Academies (CASS) was created in 1981 and was replaced by the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences in June 2006.

A Board of Directors and Delegates, consisting of representatives from all member organisations, governs the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences. A Management Board with the Secretaries General of the four academies and the Executive Secretaries of the two centres of competence is responsible for operational implementation. The Assembly of Delegates, consisting of three representatives from each member organisation and members of their supervisory bodies, oversees the work.

Mission

The Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences act as a national interface between science and society by addressing emerging challenges. Its member organisations continue to operate as legally

autonomous entities and remain responsible for all activities related to the organisation and networking of their respective scientific communities, to conduct studies and to promote the exchange of ideas and opinions. Certain coordinating activities and interdisciplinary projects are assigned to the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences to integrate these activities. At the operational level, all project mandates are implemented by one academy on behalf of all academies, or jointly by two or more academies, and the tasks of foresight, ethics and dialogue are addressed by all four academies in the name of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences. The two centres of competence support these endeavours with their particular briefs.

The overarching topics agreed upon between the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences and the Federal Government for the period 2012-2016 are: health care in transformation, sustainable use of limited resources, impact of new technologies on society and promotion of young scientists and education.

International Activities

The Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences are a member of the All European Academies (ALLEA), the European Academies of Science Advisory Council (EASAC) and the global network of science academies (IAP), with delegates serving on governing bodies, various committees and working groups in these organisations. The Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, through their Delegate for Human Rights, are also engaged in the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies. Further, an agreement is in place with the International Balzan Foundation. In addition, the members of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences maintain their individual memberships in international organisations specific to their scientific domain.

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