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Archaeology in Switzerland: Research from Under Water to High-altitude Mountains

NEENAWA is the acronym for Network in Eastern European Neolithic and Wetland Archaeology for the improvement of field techniques and dating methods, an Institutional Partnerships project (2015-2018) within the Scientific co-operation between Eastern Europe and Switzerland (SCOPEs) program of the Swiss National Science Foundation SNSF. The SCOPEs programme was launched in 1990 and ends in 2018 after more than 25 years of scientific collaboration with Eastern Europe. NEENAWA was the only SCOPEs Institutional Partnerships project ever funded by SNSF in an archaeological discipline.

Switzerland is a country with highly diversified landscapes: the central part of the country between the Lake of Constance in the north-east and the Lake Geneva in the south-west is formed by slightly hilly lowlands. All major urban agglomerations originated in the Swiss Plateau. To the north-west arise the medium altitude Jurassic mountains (up to 1600 m a.s.l.) and in the south-east the Alps form an impressive mountain range culminating at more than 4000 m a.s.l. Archaeology in Switzerland has a long tradition, starting in the mid of the 19th century with two prehistoric topics. Research in Neolithic and Bronze Age lake-dwellings started simultaneously at the Lakes of Zurich and Biel. After more than 150 years of research, the "Prehistoric Pile-dwellings around the Alps" were labelled as UNESCO World Heritage in 2011. Six countries had joined forces to bring this serial nomination forward. By searching for new lake dwellings, the eponymous site of La Tène was discovered, a term used today for the younger Iron Age of Middle Europe. Prehistoric sites from alpine valleys like the megalithic necropolis of Sion, Petit Chasseur or the high-alpine zone like Schnidejoch form another chapter of modern archaeology in Switzerland.