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Regulations on the awarding of mobility fellowships to post-docs ("Postdoc.Mobility fellowships")

of 1 July 2020

The National Research Council,
based on Articles 4 and 48 of the Funding Regulations¹,
issues the following Regulations:

1. General

Article 1 Objectives and principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) awards fellowships for scientific continuing education abroad (hereinafter "Postdoc.Mobility fellowships") to postdoctoral researchers who intend to pursue a scientific or an academic career in Switzerland. The research stay abroad aims to help the fellowship holders achieve the following:

- a. acquire more in-depth knowledge;
- b. extend their scientific network and make them scientifically more independent; and
- c. enhance their scientific profile.

² The Postdoc.Mobility fellowships include grants to cover subsistence and travel costs as well as return grants. The return grants enable fellowship holders to finance their first period of research immediately after they return to their research institution in Switzerland (the so-called return phase). Recipients of a Postdoc.Mobility fellowship or a return grant must in principle devote their entire work time (100% work time percentage) to the research project funded by the SNSF.

¹ http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_reglement_16_e.pdf

Article 2 Applicable law

Subject to any specific provisions in these Regulations, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations² as well as the provisions set out in the call document apply in particular.

Article 3 Duration and start of the fellowship

¹ Postdoc.Mobility fellowships are awarded in principle for two years. The minimum duration is twelve months.

² The earliest possible start of the fellowship is announced in the relevant call for proposals. The fellowships generally start approximately six months after the submission deadline at the earliest.

³ The Postdoc.Mobility fellowship must be started no later than twelve months after the date of the ruling. If it is started at a later date, Article 33 paragraph 3 of the Funding Regulations applies.

⁴ The first day of the month in which the research stay funded by the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship starts is regarded as the first day of the mobility fellowship.

⁵ Postdoc.Mobility fellowships may be extended if one or more of the reasons set out in Clause 5.4 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply. The length of the extension is governed by Article 10.

Article 4 Return grants

¹ Applications for return grants may only be submitted in compliance with the official submission deadlines during an ongoing Postdoc.Mobility fellowship.

² The research period immediately after the return from abroad must be spent at a Swiss research institution in the higher education sector. It enables the fellowship holder to complete the project conducted abroad or to launch a new project in Switzerland.

³ A return grant is awarded for a minimum of three and a maximum of twelve months.

⁴ The research period financed by a return grant generally represents a seamless continuation of the completed Postdoc.Mobility fellowship, starting immediately upon the fellowship holder's return from abroad, but no later than twelve months after completion of the fellowship. If the return period does not start immediately upon the end of the fellowship, an updated project plan must be submitted on request.

⁵ In principle, the return phase cannot be extended. However, the SNSF reserves the right to permit extensions for the reasons set out in Clause 5.4 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

Article 5 Host institution, intersectoral mobility

¹ The research stay funded under the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship must be conducted at a non-commercial research institution (host institution) abroad, intersectoral mobility shall remain reserved pursuant to paragraph 4.

² <http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/snsf-general-implementation-regulations-for-the-funding-regulations-e.pdf>

² The place of research must not be the same as the place of education³ or dissertation and must not be located in the applicant's home country; in exceptional cases a research stay in the applicant's home country may be approved for scientific reasons.

³ In principle, the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship is awarded for a continuous stay. However, the fellowship may be split into stays of at least four months each. Moreover, it is permissible to conduct the stay at different host institutions or to conduct part of it in Switzerland. The stay in Switzerland may not exceed one third of the total duration of the fellowship.

⁴ It is permissible to spend parts of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship at institutions operating in the practical field (industry, administration, etc; intersectoral mobility) abroad or in Switzerland. The total duration of such stays may not exceed one quarter of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship.

2. Personal and formal requirements

Article 6 Personal requirements

¹ Applications for Postdoc.Mobility fellowships may be submitted by researchers from all disciplines who meet the following requirements:

- a. At the time of the submission deadline, they hold a doctorate (PhD, MD-PhD) or have completed their studies in human, dental, veterinary, social or preventive medicine with a doctorate (MD) or will complete their doctorate within the next nine months. The examination or thesis defence must have been completed by the time the fellowship is started. Applicants without a doctorate (PhD or MD) are also eligible if they have conducted research work for at least three years after their higher education degree, which may be deemed to be equivalent to a doctorate. Doctoral studies for attainment of an MD-PhD degree cannot be funded under a Postdoc.Mobility fellowship pursuant to these Regulations.
- b. Applicants with a doctorate (PhD, MD-PhD) must have obtained the same a maximum of three years prior to the submission deadline. The relevant date is that of the examination or thesis defence.
- c. Applicants who have finished their medical training but do not have an MD-PhD must have passed the state examination (or an equivalent examination) no more than eight years before the submission deadline. Furthermore, at the time of the submission deadline medical researchers without an MD-PhD must show that they have been engaged in clinical activities for at least three years since passing the state examination.
- d. They are Swiss nationals, hold a valid Swiss permanent residence, residence or cross-border commuter permit, are married to a Swiss national or co-habit with a Swiss national in a registered partnership. Candidates who are not Swiss nationals must at the time of the submission deadline additionally provide evidence of at least two years of activity at a research institution in Switzerland.
- e. Applicants who are able to show that they meet the following requirements may request a work-time percentage below 100%, but at least 80%:
 1. Care duties or
 2. Fulfilment of activities that qualify them for a scientific or academic career (e.g. lecturing assignment, training and continuing education in their field).

³ Higher education institution where an academic degree was awarded.

- f. Clinical researchers must devote at least 80% (of their work time pursuant to letter e to the project.
- g. The time windows pursuant to letters b and c may be extended if one or more of the reasons set out in Clause 1.11 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply. The reasons for extending the time window must be outlined in the application.

² In their career plan, applicants must declare and justify their intention to pursue a scientific or academic career in Switzerland after completing their Postdoc.Mobility fellowship.

Article 7 Formal requirements

¹ Applications for Postdoc.Mobility fellowships and return grants must be submitted electronically to the SNSF.

² The SNSF periodically launches calls for proposals for Postdoc.Mobility fellowships. The call may include additional provisions that supplement these Regulations. The submission deadlines are published on the SNSF website.

³ In all other respects, the further formal requirements for the submission of applications apply pursuant to the Funding Regulations and its Implementation regulations.

3. Applications

Article 8 Applications

¹ Applications for Postdoc.Mobility fellowships and return grants must be submitted in accordance with the requirements issued by the SNSF and must contain all the necessary information and documents.

² Applicants or grantees must register a Swiss delivery address with the SNSF, even if the place of research and/or of residency is located abroad. If it is not possible to provide a Swiss delivery address, the SNSF will be entitled to send its messages via e-mail, which communication shall be binding, and to demand confirmation of receipt. In the context of an appeal procedure, however, it is compulsory to provide a Swiss delivery address.

4. Eligible costs - fellowship

Article 9 Grant for subsistence costs

¹ With the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship, the SNSF awards grantees a grant towards subsistence costs during the stay abroad. The grant is defined according to the SNSF rates applicable in the year the award is issued.

² Grantees with children whom they are obliged to support receive a child allowance defined by the SNSF in addition to the subsistence costs. Child allowances contributed by third parties are deducted.

³ If the requirements for a grant pursuant to paragraph 2 are only met in the course of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship, grantees may apply for payment of the said grant as a supplementary grant while the fellowship is ongoing.

Article 10 Duration of funded extensions

¹ During funded extensions pursuant to Article 3 paragraph 5, the grant pursuant to Article 9 will continue to be paid during the effective interruption of research activities, but up to a maximum duration of:

- a. four months in the event of maternity of the grantee;
- b. one month in the event of paternity of the grantee;⁴
- c. four months in the event of paternity of the grantee if he is demonstrably responsible for providing care;
- d. two months should the grantee assume responsibility for fostering and bringing up small children with a view to adoption by the grantee at a later stage.

² In the event of an interruption of research activities because of work incapacity due to illness or accident, continuous delays of at least one month are considered.

Article 11 Supplementary funding due to maternity

¹ Grantees who give birth in the first nine months after the end of their fellowship may apply for supplementary funding due to maternity.

² The SNSF grants them supplementary funding corresponding to the monthly fellowship amount pursuant to Article 9 for a maximum of four months.

³ Supplementary funding is conditional on the fellowship holders providing proof that they are interrupting their research activities due to maternity and are not entitled to any remuneration or any insurance benefits during the four months after the birth. In the event that the total amount of such entitlements is lower than the supplementary funding pursuant to paragraph 2, the SNSF shall pay the difference between the two. Any entitlement to such supplementary funding is forfeited with the resumption of work.

Article 12 Travel allowance

¹ In addition to the grant towards subsistence costs, grantees and their spouses/partners and children pursuant to Article 9 paragraph 2 are granted a travel allowance by the SNSF.

² If the requirements for a grant pursuant to paragraph 1 are only met in the course of the fellowship, grantees may apply for payment of the said grant as a supplementary grant while the fellowship is ongoing.

³ The SNSF defines the amounts awarded as travel allowances and adjusts them periodically.

Article 13 Other eligible costs

¹ The SNSF awards grants to cover the following costs:

- a. costs for participating in scientific conferences that are relevant to the grantee's research;
- b. grants for research costs that are directly linked to the implementation of the project.

² Grants pursuant to paragraph 1 must be requested in the application for a Postdoc.Mobility fellowship.

⁴ Only eligible if the paternity leave is taken within six months after the child's birth.

³ For the grants pursuant to paragraph 1, the SNSF defines maximum rates.

Article 14 Offsetting of third-party funding

¹ Grantees must inform the SNSF without delay should they be awarded or receive any financial resources from other organisations or institutions (third-party funds) in connection with the research stay covered by the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship from the SNSF.

² The amount of third-party funding that exceeds the amount defined by the SNSF in its guidelines will be deducted when the grants are calculated pursuant to Article 9 paragraph 13.

5. Eligible costs - return grants

Article 15 Salary and research costs

¹ The following costs are covered in the case of return grants:

- a. grantee's salary, incl. social security contributions. The amount is calculated on the basis of the usual SNSF salaries for postdocs at the relevant host institution in Switzerland;
- b. grants for research costs that are directly linked to the implementation of the project. Maximum amounts are defined by the SNSF;
- c. costs pursuant to Clause 2.18 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

² Duration and costs of an extension of the return grant are defined in accordance with the provisions set out in Article 10 and in Clause 5.4 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

6. Submission of applications and other SNSF grants: restrictions

Article 16 Postdoc.Mobility in relation to other funding options offered by the SNSF

¹ Postdoc.Mobility fellowships may only be requested for a duration of support for which

- a. no other financing has been obtained for the planned project from the SNSF or third parties;
- b. no other career grants of the SNSF have been applied for.

² Parallel submissions for Ambizione, PRIMA or Eccellenza grants are permissible while the evaluation procedure for a return grant is still in progress.

³ In the event of an unpermissible parallel submission of a proposal, the SNSF will not consider the Postdoc.Mobility application.

⁴ The submission of applications in career and project funding or within the scope of programmes of the SNSF is only possible for a duration of support beyond the expiry of the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship or the return grant.

Article 17 Repeated submissions: restriction

¹ Applicants whose application was rejected may apply at the most once more for a Postdoc.Mobility fellowship regardless of the subject matter of the project, provided the personal and formal requirements are met.

² Application procedures terminated because the applicant has breached scientific integrity rules are regarded as rejections in accordance with this provision.

7. Assessment criteria and procedure

Article 18 Assessment criteria

¹ Applications that meet the personal and formal requirements are evaluated scientifically.

² The following assessment criteria are applied:

- a. the applicant's scientific research output to date;
 - scientific quality of the achievements;
 - achievements relative to the applicant's net⁵ academic age;
 - ability, based on achievements to date, to conduct the project and contribute to it personally.
- b. the applicant's career development and mobility based on the statement to be submitted according to the SNSF guidelines; in particular, the applicant's overall mobility by the end of the project is assessed in view of the goals of the scheme and the applicant's career goals;
- c. ⁶
- d. scientific relevance, quality, originality and topicality of the research project to be carried out during the research stay;
- e. approach and methodology of the research project as well as its feasibility;
- f. suitability and added value of the research institution in supporting the research project scientifically and ensuring and promoting the independence of the applicant, as well as facilitating his/her continual intellectual development and continuing education.
- g. the coherence of mobility measures in the case of fellowship stays split into two parts or more;
- h. additionally, for the approval of a return grant: value added by the research period immediately after the applicant's return from abroad to a scientific or academic career in Switzerland.
- i. in the case of proposals for use-inspired basic research, the project's broader impact outside science is considered in the evaluation.

⁵ The net academic age comprises the time span starting with the date of the thesis defence or equivalent qualification, or with the medical degree, and ending with the submission deadline, minus all non-academic activities (including any interruptions for the reasons stated in Clause 1.11 paragraph 2 letters a-e of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations), calculated in full-time equivalents.

⁶ Repealed based on the decision of the Presiding Board of the National Research Council of 5.5.2021, in force as of 1.8.2021.

Article 19 Evaluation and decision

¹ The National Research Council of the SNSF and the evaluation bodies it appoints are responsible for the scientific evaluation and for taking the relevant funding decisions.

² The SNSF communicates the decision taken with respect to each application in the form of a ruling.

Article 20 Legal consequences of the award

¹ Applicants who are awarded a Postdoc.Mobility fellowship become grantees of the SNSF.

² They are obliged to use the Postdoc.Mobility fellowship in accordance with the provisions governing the award and, in particular, to pursue the goal of continuing education, which is the purpose of the fellowship.

8. Awards and administration of awards

Article 21 Grants, start of grants and changes

¹ Postdoc.Mobility fellowships and return grants are awarded, transferred and managed according to the rules issued by the SNSF, in particular the provisions of the Funding Regulations and its Implementation regulations.

² The grant is paid in Swiss francs, generally to a bank or postal account in Switzerland, one month before the fellowship starts at the earliest.

³ If grantees do not commence their Postdoc.Mobility fellowship on time pursuant to the provisions stipulated in Article 3, the grants will be deemed to be forfeited.

⁴ The forfeiture of return grants is regulated in Article 34 of the Funding Regulations.

⁵ Any changes to the research project or the conditions for conducting it must be submitted to the SNSF in advance for approval.

Article 22 Tax and insurance matters during the stay abroad

¹ The Postdoc.Mobility fellowships of the SNSF are intended to be used for the continuing education of young researchers based in Switzerland. They promote the necessary scientific mobility for young researchers by making a contribution towards the costs of a stay abroad, but the SNSF does not pay any salaries. The research is not conducted on behalf of the SNSF. Grantees are not required to give the SNSF anything in return. Federal law only requires application and reporting documents, which do not constitute services. The research results shall not be the property of the SNSF under any circumstances.

² All forms of insurance, including accident insurance, are the responsibility of the grantees.⁷

³ Information on tax and insurance matters is made available by the SNSF.

⁷ Amended based on the decision of the Presiding Board of the National Research Council of 5.5.2021, in force as of 1.1.2022.

Article 23 Non-acceptance or premature termination

¹ In the event that grantees decide not to pursue the Postdoc.Mobility fellowships or the return grant or have to terminate their research prematurely, they must notify the SNSF immediately of the fact in writing, stating their reasons for doing so.

² They must reimburse the SNSF pro rata temporis for any grant already paid towards subsistence costs pursuant to Article 9 or for the salary paid under the return grant pursuant to Article 15. The other grants, if already paid, must be refunded insofar as the grantees have not incurred any provable expenses.

Article 24 Administration of return grants

Return grants are administered by the responsible grant administration office recognised by the SNSF.

Article 25 Reporting

¹ Grantees are obliged to send the SNSF reports in accordance with the requirements defined by the SNSF, notably a final scientific report and financial reports.

² The duty to provide output data will remain in place after submission of the final report and end three years after expiry of the grant.

9. Entry into force and repeal of existing regulations

Article 26 Entry into force

These Regulations enter into force on 1 November 2020.

Article 27 Repeal of existing regulations

These Regulations replace the Regulations on the awarding of mobility fellowships to postdocs (Postdoc.Mobility fellowships) of 1 November 2016.

Article 28 Transitional provision

¹ The provision within the rescinded Regulations on mobility fellowships for postdocs (Postdoc.Mobility fellowships) of 1 November 2016 with regard to applying the higher rate when calculating the grant towards living costs in the event that the fellowship holder is accompanied by his/her spouse/partner, who is not gainfully employed, for at least six months during his/her stay abroad, will continue to apply to the fellowships awarded under the old Regulations and to their extensions.

² In all other respects, the new Regulations of 1 July 2020 will apply to Postdoc.Mobility fellowships awarded under the old Regulations as of 1 November 2020.