



Strengthening Swiss science

Action Plan of the Swiss National Science Foundation 2017–2020

The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) supports scientific research in all academic disciplines. We select the best research projects and the best researchers in nationwide competition and support them financially.

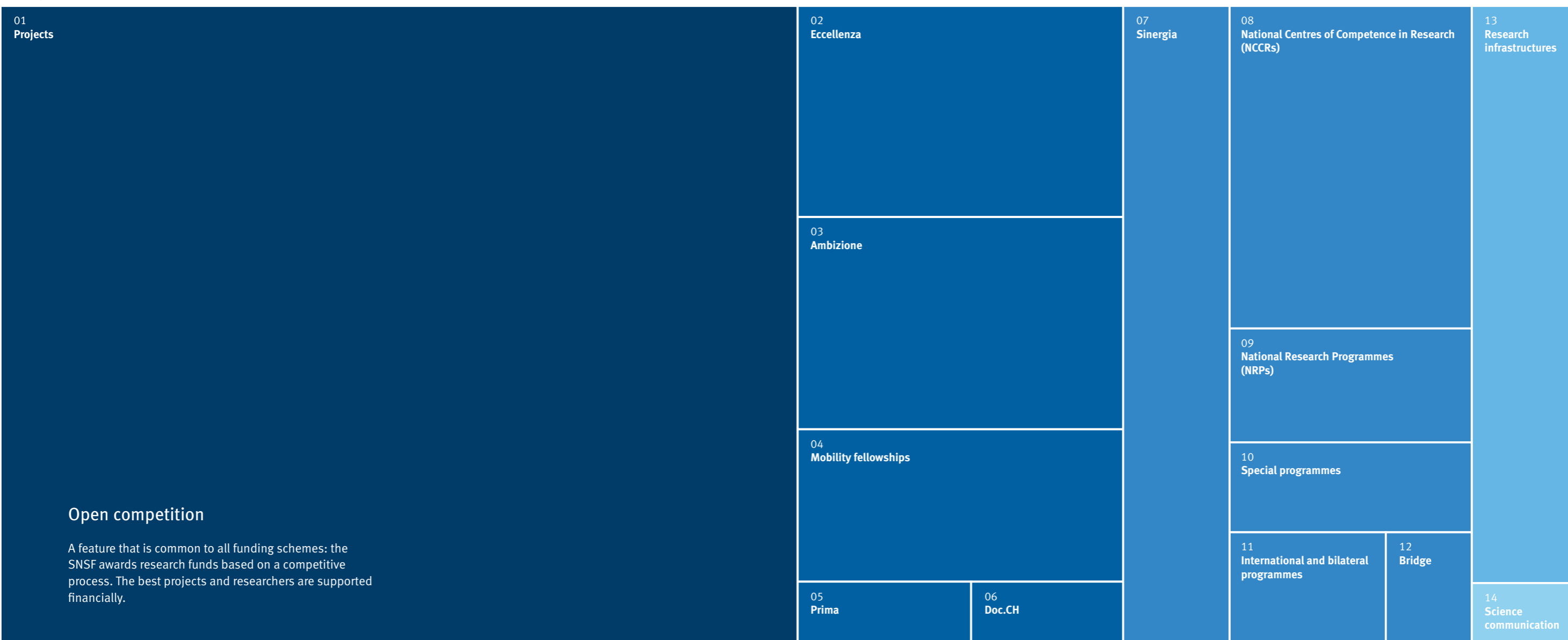
SNSF-funded projects create new knowledge. Such knowledge provides a sound basis for societal and economic progress. And by promoting young researchers, we make a strong contribution towards securing the next generation of highly qualified researchers and professionals.

For the years 2017 to 2020, the Swiss Parliament has approved a budget of 4.1 billion francs, which we will use to implement our multi-year programme. This Action Plan provides an overview of the uses to which these funds are put and the newly implemented measures.

On behalf of the Swiss research community, we would like to thank the Swiss government for their support and for placing their trust in our work.

*Gabriele Gendotti, President of the Foundation Council,
Matthias Egger, President of the National Research Council,
Angelika Kalt, Director of the Administrative Offices*

Project funding



01 Projects

Grants for research projects on topics chosen by the researchers themselves.

Project funding continues to be the SNSF's most important funding scheme. The SNSF now gives the researchers more time (four instead of three years) and more flexibility regarding the use of funds. This reduces their administration workload. The SNSF now also finances ...

- › exchanges with other researchers, e.g. international conferences and workshops.
- › the use of infrastructure, e.g. computers and apparatuses.

02 Eccellenza

New scheme for highly qualified early-career researchers who aspire to a permanent professorship at a university, university of applied sciences or university of teacher education.

03 Ambizione

Allows young researchers to conduct their own project.

New: the scheme is also open to researchers who already have a non-professorial position at a higher education institution. The SNSF has decided to increase the overall budget so that it can approve more applications, and to extend the duration of grants from three to four years.

04 Mobility fellowships

Enable doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers to do research at a higher education institution abroad.

Doc.Mobility, Early Postdoc. Mobility and Postdoc.Mobility will be continued till the end of 2020 and then reorganised.

05 Prima

A new scheme for excellent women researchers. Replaces the Marie-Heim Vögtlin grants.

06 Doc.CH

Fellowships for doctoral students of the humanities and social sciences who wish to independently carry out a research project.

07 Sinergia

Supports collaborative projects involving multiple research groups.

There is a stronger focus on interdisciplinary collaborations proposing breakthrough research.

08 National Centres of Competence in Research

Funding of research on topics of strategic importance. Each NCCR involves two or more higher education institutions. The aim is to create competences and structures for the long term.

In October 2017, the SNSF launched a call for the 5th series of NCCRs. Five to six new NCCRs are expected to start at the beginning of 2020, once the federal government has made a final selection.

09 National Research Programmes (NRPs)

They address pressing issues of national importance.

A programme about digitalisation is currently in preparation.

10 Special programmes

Special focus on funding clinical research in biology and medicine.

11 International and bilateral programmes

They support Swiss scientific cooperation at international level.

12 Bridge

New scheme that simplifies the transition from research to innovation (together with Innosuisse).

13 Research infrastructures

Pays for the specific, targeted and in most cases time-limited use or development of infrastructures, e.g. of database networks.

14 Science communication

Promotes exchanges between scientists as well as dialogue between scientists and the public.

Budget 2017–2020 of the SNSF

in CHF million	2017	2018*	2019	2020	2017–2020
Project funding, careers, programmes, infrastructure, science communication, service provision	817.4	850.6	937.9	987.9	3593.7
Indirect costs of research institutions (overhead) and supplementary tasks	120.0	128.0	131.0	133.0	512.0
Total	937.4	978.6*	1068.9	1120.9	4105.7

* In December 2017 the Swiss Parliament cut the SNSF's funds for 2018 by 15 million francs. This reduction has not been taken into account here.

Priorities 2017–2020

Continuing to promote excellence and internationality in research and evaluation

- › Strengthen the Sinergia programme for projects with “breakthrough potential”
- › Ensure flexible funding conditions also in international cooperation
- › Involve more international experts in the evaluation of projects

Facilitating early independence for young researchers

- › Give funding schemes a clearer profile
- › Improve career prospects for postdoctoral researchers
- › Promote gender equality and international mobility

Contributing to knowledge transfer and innovation

- › Support use-inspired basic research
- › New funding programme BRIDGE with Innosuisse
- › Support science communication as well as open access and open data

Initiatives with respect to specific priorities

- › Promote research on digitalisation
- › Strengthen clinical research

What the SNSF also wanted to finance ...

Federal funds are limited and, as a result, not all measures that are necessary or useful can be implemented during the 2017–2020 period. The SNSF has decided not to implement a number of measures. For example:

- › No fellowships for doctoral students across all disciplines. This scheme (Doc.CH) will continue to be open exclusively to young researchers in the humanities and social sciences.
- › No increase in the funding of infrastructures, which will therefore remain at the 2016 level. As a consequence, the SNSF can not support any new longitudinal studies in medicine.
- › No incentive programme for promoting digital humanities. The SNSF will launch only one call for proposals, on the topic of Digital Lives.

In December 2017, the Swiss Parliament cut the SNSF's funds for 2018 by 15 million francs – as part of general cost-cutting measures. The SNSF will primarily reduce its funding of programmes to ensure that no cuts will be necessary to the promotion of young researchers and project funding.

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