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# Evaluation of the Swiss National Science Foundation's Ambizione Funding Scheme

## Final report

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## Management Summary

Ambizione (including Ambizione-PROSPER and Ambizione-SCORE) is one of the funding schemes of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) supporting young researchers from Switzerland and abroad who plan to conduct, manage and lead an independently planned project at a Swiss university. Ambizione was launched with a first call in November 2007.

After Ambizione had run for six years, the SNSF commissioned *Interface Politikstudien Forschung Beratung* to conduct an evaluation of the funding scheme. The evaluation focused on analysing the impact that Ambizione has on its grantees, particularly regarding their scientific independence and further careers. The concept of the funding scheme, its implementation and reach, its impact on the host institutions, and the attainment of a number of overarching goals were also examined. The evaluation further aimed at collecting ideas for a future monitoring concept for following Ambizione grantees' further careers once their funding period has ended.

The evaluation was based on qualitative and quantitative methods: First, Interface conducted interviews with seven experts and 10 former Ambizione grantees. Then, two online surveys were conducted, one with all grantees since 2008 and one with all Ambizione hosts. The surveys had a quasi-experimental design with two comparison groups. The participants in the surveys were: 215 Ambizione grantees, 153 hosts, 400 researchers with rejected Ambizione applications between 2008 and 2013 (comparison group 1), and 204 researchers who received SNSF project funding between 2008 and 2013 (comparison group 2).

The results of the evaluation of Ambizione were generally positive:

- The funding concept of Ambizione can be considered adequate and coherent. An advantage is the flexibility of its regulations, which allows a case-by-case assessment of grant applications. This is particularly important, considering that Ambizione is aimed at differing target groups and researchers in various disciplines. Some changes to the regulations are indicated – namely, allowing Ambizione research funds to be used to employ scientific personnel (this has already been implemented) and lengthening the funding period to four years (this is under discussion).
- The implementation of Ambizione by the SNSF works very well, and the grantees are highly appreciative of the support they receive from the SNSF. The implementation by the host institutions can also be considered good. There are singular cases where difficulties arise, mostly having to do with the integration of the grantees into the host institution or with the host's false expectations of the grantees.
- Ambizione not only reaches its target groups but also satisfies their specific needs. Ambizione is particularly suited for researchers from Switzerland who have returned after a research stay abroad ("returnees"), who can still be considered the funding scheme's main target group.
- Ambizione is an effective funding instrument that boosts the grantees' scientific independence and has a positive influence on their further careers, whether in Switzerland or abroad. Of the grantees, 90% report that Ambizione has had a (high) impact on their scientific independence and their further career. Ambizione also

works as a label, increasing the grantees' visibility and competitiveness on the job market for scientists.

- Ambizione also has a positive impact on the host institutes and hosts. The institutes benefit mostly through the broadening of their scientific profile and additional research activity, but there is also a financial benefit. Disadvantages were observed in a small number of cases.
- Ambizione reaches its overarching goals. It is suitable to generate knowledge transfer and win-back of knowledge. It is particularly attractive for returnees but also suitable for researchers from abroad. The evaluation could not determine whether Ambizione is suited for researchers with limited international mobility, but the results suggest at least that these researchers are not systematically shut out of Ambizione funding. Female participation has been quite constant over the observed time period, and in average the targeted share of about 35% of women grantees has been reached. Although the number of female grantees dropped in 2013, it remains to be seen whether this is the beginning of a trend or a singular case.

Room for improvement remains regarding the following aspects:

- The potential for improvement that was most frequently mentioned by the grantees was the possibility to use part of the Ambizione grant to employ scientific personnel (doctoral students or postdocs). This change has now already been put into practice by the SNSF. The current regulations allow Ambizione grantees to hire scientific personnel to assist with their research projects.
- The funding period of three years is considered to be too short and should be increased to four years. The SNSF supports this idea, and the implementation of a four-year funding period has been discussed recently.
- The SNSF will have to continuously supervise the equal treatment of Ambizione grantees and the equal implementation of the Ambizione funding scheme by the host institutions. It has been suggested by some of the Ambizione host institutions that the SNSF should work towards establishing an independent office that could be responsible for these tasks.
- Equal female participation is not threatened at the present time, but there was a drop in the success rate of women grantees in 2013. The SNSF should monitor this development closely. Also, the targeted share of women grantees should be regularly discussed, validated and possibly revised.

The idea of monitoring the Ambizione grantees once their grant period has ended is supported by the SNSF, the National Research Council (NRC), and the grantees themselves. We suggest using a cohort design, where former Ambizione grantees are invited to participate in a survey right after their funding period comes to an end and again four years later. This would allow the SNSF to gather short-term and long-term information and trace the former grantees' further scientific careers. A short version of the online questionnaire developed for this evaluation can be used for regular monitoring.

## Zusammenfassung

Ambizione (einschliesslich Ambizione-PROSPER und Ambizione-SCORE) ist ein 2007 lanciertes Karriereförderungsinstrument des Schweizerischen Nationalfonds (SNF), welches sich an junge Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler aus der Schweiz und aus dem Ausland richtet, die ein unabhängiges Forschungsprojekt an einer Schweizer Hochschule durchführen möchten.

Nach einer Laufzeit von sechs Jahren beauftragte der SNF die Firma *Interface Politikstudien Forschung Beratung* mit der Evaluation von Ambizione. Diese Evaluation sollte im Wesentlichen die Wirkungen des Förderungsinstruments bei den Beitragsempfängenden und insbesondere den Einfluss einer Ambizione-Förderung auf deren wissenschaftliche Unabhängigkeit und weiteren Karriereverlauf untersuchen. Daneben wurden das zugrundeliegende Förderkonzept, die Umsetzung von Ambizione durch die verantwortlichen Akteure, die Reichweite des Ambizione-Förderungsinstruments, die Wirkungen von Ambizione auf die Gastinstitutionen und die Erreichung einer Reihe von übergeordneten Zielen evaluiert. Zusätzlich zielte die Evaluation darauf ab, Ideen für ein zukünftiges Monitoring-Konzept zu sammeln, welches es erlauben soll, den Karriereverlauf von Ambizione-Beitragsempfängenden nach Abschluss ihrer Förderperiode weiterzuverfolgen.

Die Evaluation stützte sich auf qualitative und quantitative Methoden: Es wurden zunächst Interviews mit sieben Experten und zehn ehemaligen Ambizione-Beitragsempfängenden durchgeführt. Anschliessend fand eine Online-Befragung bei allen Beitragsempfängenden seit dem Start von Ambizione sowie bei allen Gastinstitutionen der Ambizione-Beitragsempfängenden statt. Für die erste Befragung wurde ein quasi-experimentelles Design mit zwei Vergleichsgruppen gewählt: An den Online-Befragungen nahmen neben 153 Gastgebenden und 215 Beitragsempfängenden auch 400 Forschende mit abgelehnten Ambizione-Gesuchen zwischen 2008 und 2013 (Vergleichsgruppe 1) und 204 Forschende teil, die im gleichen Zeitraum eine SNF-Projektförderung erhalten hatten (Vergleichsgruppe 2).

Die Evaluationsergebnisse sind insgesamt positiv:

- Das Förderkonzept von Ambizione kann als angemessen und kohärent bezeichnet werden. Ein besonderer Vorteil ist die Flexibilität des Reglements, welches bei der Evaluation der Fördergesuche Einzelfallbeurteilungen zulässt. Dies ist insbesondere deshalb wichtig, weil sich das Ambizione-Förderungsinstrument an unterschiedliche Zielgruppen und Forschende aus verschiedenen Disziplinen richtet. Einige Anpassungen am Reglement sind dennoch angezeigt. So soll einerseits die Finanzierung von wissenschaftlichem Personal über den Ambizione-Beitrag ermöglicht werden (dies wurde bereits umgesetzt), andererseits wird eine Verlängerung der Förderperiode auf vier Jahre empfohlen (diese Anpassung wird derzeit diskutiert).
- Die Umsetzung des Förderungsinstruments durch den SNF funktioniert sehr gut und die Beitragsempfängenden schätzen diese Unterstützung enorm. Die Umsetzung von Ambizione durch die Gastinstitutionen kann ebenfalls als gut bezeichnet werden. Fälle, in welchen Integrationsschwierigkeiten auftreten oder die Beitragsempfängenden sich mit falschen Erwartungen vonseiten der Gastgebenden konfrontiert sehen, treten vereinzelt auf.

- Ambizione erreicht seine Zielgruppen nicht nur, sondern ist auch auf deren spezifische Bedürfnisse zugeschnitten. Das Förderungsinstrument eignet sich insbesondere für Forschende aus der Schweiz, welche nach einem Forschungsaufenthalt im Ausland in die Schweiz zurückkehren (sogenannte „Rückkehrende“). Sie können nach wie vor als Hauptzielgruppe von Ambizione bezeichnet werden.
- Ambizione ist ein wirksames Förderungsinstrument, welches die wissenschaftliche Unabhängigkeit der Beitragsempfängenden zu steigern vermag und einen positiven Einfluss auf deren Karriere hat, sei es in der Schweiz oder im Ausland. 90 Prozent der Geförderten sind der Meinung, Ambizione habe einen (grossen) Einfluss auf ihre wissenschaftliche Unabhängigkeit und weiteren Karriereverlauf. Ambizione fungiert auch als Auszeichnung und fördert auf diesem Weg die Sichtbarkeit und Konkurrenzfähigkeit der Geförderten auf dem wissenschaftlichen Arbeitsmarkt.
- Ambizione kann auch ein positiver Einfluss auf die Gastinstitute und GastgeberInnen attestiert werden. Die Gastinstitutionen profitieren insbesondere durch die Ausweitung ihres wissenschaftlichen Profils und der zusätzlichen Forschungsaktivität, daneben gibt es aber auch einen finanziellen Profit. Nachteile, welche den Gastinstitutionen durch die Aufnahme von Ambizione-Beitragsempfängenden entstanden, wurden nur selten beobachtet.
- Ambizione erreicht seine übergeordneten Ziele. Das Förderungsinstrument eignet sich, um Wissenstransfer zu generieren und Wissen in den Schweizer Wissenschaftsbetrieb zurückzuholen. Das Förderungsinstrument ist insbesondere für Rückkehrende, aber auch für Forschende aus dem Ausland attraktiv. Die Evaluation konnte nicht abschliessend beurteilen, ob sich Ambizione auch für Forschende mit eingeschränkter internationaler Mobilität eignet, aber die Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass diese zumindest nicht systematisch von einer Förderung ausgeschlossen werden. Die Teilnahme von weiblichen Forschenden an der Förderung war im untersuchten Zeitraum relativ konstant und der Zielwert von 35% für den Anteil von Frauen wurde im Durchschnitt erreicht. 2013 wurden weniger weibliche Forschende über Ambizione gefördert. Es wird sich zeigen, ob dies eine Ausnahme bleibt oder eine einsetzende sinkende Tendenz für die kommenden Jahre ist.

Verbesserungspotenzial besteht in Bezug auf die folgenden Aspekte:

- Teile des Förderbeitrags sollen zur Finanzierung von wissenschaftlichem Personal genutzt werden können (Doktoranden/-innen oder Postdocs). Dies wurde vom SNF bereits im aktuellen Reglement umgesetzt.
- Die Dauer der Förderperiode von derzeit drei Jahren wird als zu kurz eingeschätzt und es wird eine Verlängerung auf vier Jahre vorgeschlagen. Der SNF unterstützt diese Idee. Die Umsetzung einer vierjährigen Förderperiode wurde in jüngerer Zeit diskutiert.
- Dem SNF wird empfohlen, die Gleichbehandlung der Beitragsempfängenden sowie die einheitliche Umsetzung von Ambizione durch die Gastinstitutionen zu unterstützen. Vertretende von Gastinstitutionen schlugen etwa die Schaffung einer unabhängigen Stelle, welche diese Aufgaben übernehmen könnte, vor.
- Die gleichberechtigte Förderung von Frauen durch Ambizione ist derzeit nicht gefährdet, jedoch wurde 2013 eine tiefere Erfolgsquote bei den Beitragsempfängerinnen festgestellt.

rinnen beobachtet. Der SNF sollte diese Entwicklung weiterhin aufmerksam verfolgen. Der Zielwert für den Anteil weiblicher Beitragsempfängerinnen ist zudem regelmässig zu überprüfen und gegebenenfalls zu adaptieren.

Die Idee, den Karriereverlauf von Ambizione-Beitragsempfangenden nach Abschluss ihrer Förderperiode über ein Monitoring-System weiterzuverfolgen, wird sowohl vom SNF und dem Nationalen Forschungsrat als auch von den Geförderten selbst begrüsst. Wir schlagen dazu ein Kohortendesign vor, welches für jede Beitragsempfängerin und jeden Beitragsempfänger eine Befragung direkt nach Abschluss der Förderperiode und eine zweite Befragung vier Jahre später vorsieht. Dies erlaubt dem SNF, kurzfristige und längerfristige Informationen über die ehemaligen Ambizione-Beitragsempfangenden zu sammeln und deren weiteren Karriereweg zu verfolgen. Für das Monitoring kann eine gekürzte Version des im Zuge der vorliegenden Evaluation erarbeiteten Erhebungsinstruments verwendet werden.

## Résumé

Ambizione (y compris Ambizione-PROSPER et Ambizione-SCORE) est un instrument d'encouragement de carrières du Fonds national suisse (FNS) lancé en 2007 qui s'adresse aux jeunes scientifiques de Suisse et de l'étranger souhaitant réaliser un projet de recherche indépendant au sein d'une haute école suisse.

Après six ans d'existence, le FNS a mandaté la société *Interface Politikstudien Forschung Beratung* pour évaluer Ambizione. Cette évaluation devait examiner, pour l'essentiel, les effets de cet instrument d'encouragement sur les bénéficiaires des subsides et notamment l'influence d'un encouragement Ambizione sur leur indépendance scientifique et l'évolution ultérieure de leur carrière. En outre, le concept, sa mise en œuvre par les acteurs responsables de l'instrument d'encouragement et sa portée, ses effets sur les institutions d'accueil et la réalisation d'une série d'objectifs supérieurs ont été évalués. De plus, l'évaluation avait pour but de collecter des idées pour un futur concept de monitoring qui devra permettre de suivre les bénéficiaires des subsides Ambizione après la fin de leur période d'encouragement.

L'évaluation s'est appuyée sur des méthodes qualitatives et quantitatives : d'abord, sept experts et dix bénéficiaires des subsides Ambizione ont été interviewés. Ensuite, une enquête en ligne a été menée auprès de tous les bénéficiaires des subsides depuis le début d'Ambizione et une auprès de tous les hôtes Ambizione. Pour la première et une enquête, un concept quasi expérimental comprenant deux groupes témoins a été choisi : outre 153 hôtes et 215 bénéficiaires des subsides, 400 chercheurs dont la requête Ambizione a été rejetée entre 2008 et 2013 (groupe témoin 1) et 204 chercheurs qui ont reçu un encouragement de projets du FNS au cours de la même période (groupe témoin 2) ont participé à l'enquête en ligne.

Les résultats de l'évaluation sont globalement positifs :

- Le concept d'encouragement d'Ambizione peut être considéré comme approprié et cohérent. La flexibilité du règlement constitue un avantage particulier, car elle permet un examen individuel lors de l'évaluation des requêtes d'encouragement. Cela est particulièrement important puisque l'instrument d'encouragement Ambizione s'adresse à divers groupes cibles et chercheurs provenant de différentes disciplines. Quelques adaptations du règlement sont toutefois indiquées. D'une part, le financement de personnel scientifique par les subsides Ambizione doit devenir possible (cela a déjà été mis en œuvre) et d'autre part, une prolongation à quatre ans de la période d'encouragement est recommandée (cela est déjà en discussion).
- La mise en œuvre de l'instrument d'encouragement par le FNS fonctionne très bien et les bénéficiaires des subsides apprécient énormément ce soutien. La mise en œuvre d'Ambizione par les institutions d'accueil peut également être qualifiée de bonne. Des cas isolés sont observés dans lesquels des difficultés d'intégration surviennent ou dans lesquels les bénéficiaires des subsides se voient confrontés à de fausses attentes de la part des hôtes.
- Ambizione n'atteint pas seulement ses groupes cibles mais est aussi taillé à la mesure de leurs besoins spécifiques. L'instrument d'encouragement est particulièrement adapté aux chercheurs de Suisse de retour après un séjour de recherche

à l'étranger (chercheurs de retour). Ils peuvent en tout état de cause être désignés comme le groupe cible principal d'Ambizione.

- Ambizione est un instrument d'encouragement efficace qui est à même d'accroître l'indépendance scientifique des bénéficiaires des subsides et qui a une influence positive sur leur carrière, que ce soit en Suisse ou à l'étranger. 90 pour cent des bénéficiaires sont d'avis qu'Ambizione a une (grande) influence sur leur indépendance scientifique et sur l'évolution ultérieure de leur carrière. Ambizione est aussi vu comme une forme de distinction et favorise par ce biais la visibilité et la capacité concurrentielle des bénéficiaires sur le marché du travail scientifique.
- Ambizione peut également se voir attester une influence positive sur les institutions d'accueil et sur les hôtes. Les institutions d'accueil en profitent notamment par l'extension de leur profil scientifique et par l'activité de recherche supplémentaire, sans compter qu'il y a aussi un profit financier. Des inconvénients occasionnés aux institutions d'accueil par l'accueil de bénéficiaires des subsides Ambizione n'ont été observés que rarement.
- Ambizione atteint ses objectifs supérieurs. Il est à même de générer le transfert de connaissances et de ramener le savoir dans le giron scientifique suisse. L'instrument d'encouragement est particulièrement attrayant pour les chercheurs de retour en Suisse et aussi pour les chercheurs de l'étranger. L'évaluation n'a pas permis de trancher la question de savoir si Ambizione est aussi approprié pour les chercheurs à mobilité internationale restreinte, mais les résultats indiquent que leurs requêtes d'encouragement ne sont pas systématiquement exclues. La participation des femmes à l'encouragement a été relativement constante au cours de la période de référence et la valeur cible de 35% de chercheuses a été atteinte en moyenne. En 2013, une part moindre de femmes a été encouragée par Ambizione. L'avenir montrera s'il s'agit là d'une exception ou du début d'une tendance à la baisse se prolongeant ces prochaines années.

Il existe un potentiel d'amélioration en relation avec les aspects suivants :

- Des parts des subsides d'encouragement devraient pouvoir être utilisées pour le financement de personnel scientifique (doctorant-e-s ou post-doctorant-e-s). Cela a déjà été mis en œuvre dans l'actuel règlement du FNS.
- La durée actuelle de trois ans de la période d'encouragement est jugée trop courte et une extension à quatre ans a été proposée. Le FNS soutient cette idée. La mise en œuvre d'une période d'encouragement de quatre ans a fait l'objet de discussions récemment.
- Le FNS se voit recommander de soutenir l'égalité de traitement des bénéficiaires des subsides et la mise en œuvre uniforme d'Ambizione par les institutions d'accueil. Une proposition a été formulée par des représentants des institutions d'accueil en vue de la création d'un bureau indépendant qui serait chargé de cette tâche.
- L'encouragement paritaire des femmes par Ambizione n'est pas en péril pour l'heure ; cependant une baisse du taux de réussite de bénéficiaires féminines a été observée en 2013. Le FNS devrait continuer de surveiller attentivement cette évolution. La valeur cible pour la part de bénéficiaires féminines de subsides doit être contrôlée régulièrement et adaptée le cas échéant.

L'idée de continuer à suivre les bénéficiaires des subsides Ambizione après la fin de leur période d'encouragement par un système de monitoring est bien accueillie par le

FNS, par le Conseil national de la recherche et par les bénéficiaires eux-mêmes. Nous proposons à cette fin un concept de cohorte qui prévoit pour chaque bénéficiaire de subsides une enquête directement à la fin de la période d'encouragement et une deuxième enquête quatre ans plus tard. Cela permettra au FNS de collecter des informations à court et à long terme sur les ancien-ne-s bénéficiaires des subsides Ambizione et de suivre le parcours ultérieur de leur carrière. Une version abrégée de l'instrument d'évaluation élaboré au cours de la présente évaluation peut être utilisée pour le monitoring.

## Riassunto

Ambizione (compresi Ambizione-PROSPER e Ambizione-SCORE) è uno strumento per la promozione della carriera lanciato dal Fondo nazionale svizzero (FNS), concepito per giovani ricercatrici e ricercatori provenienti dalla Svizzera e dall'estero, che desiderano realizzare un progetto di ricerca indipendente in una scuola universitaria svizzera.

A sei anni dal lancio dello strumento, il FNS ha incaricato la società *Interface Politikstudien Forschung Beratung* di valutare Ambizione. Obiettivo principale di tale valutazione era analizzare gli effetti dello strumento di promozione per i beneficiari dei contributi e in particolare l'impatto di una promozione Ambizione sulla loro indipendenza scientifica e sull'ulteriore andamento della loro carriera. Sono inoltre stati valutati l'idea alla base dello strumento di promozione, l'applicazione di Ambizione da parte dei responsabili, la portata dello strumento promozionale Ambizione, gli effetti di Ambizione sulle istituzioni ospitanti e il conseguimento di tutta una serie di obiettivi di ordine superiore. Inoltre la valutazione mirava a raccogliere idee per un futuro programma di monitoraggio, che dovrebbe permettere di seguire ulteriormente i beneficiari di contributi Ambizione anche dopo il periodo di promozione.

La valutazione si è basata su metodi qualitativi e quantitativi: dapprima sono stati intervistati sette esperti e dieci ex beneficiari di contributi Ambizione. Successivamente è stato organizzato un sondaggio online per tutti i beneficiari di contributi dal lancio di Ambizione nonché per tutti i relativi istituti ospitanti. Per il primo sondaggio si è scelto un design quasi-sperimentale con due gruppi di confronto: ai sondaggi online hanno partecipato, oltre a 153 ospitanti e 215 beneficiari di contributi, anche 400 ricercatrici e ricercatori, le cui domande di contributi Ambizione erano state respinte fra il 2008 e il 2013 (gruppo di confronto 1) e 204 ricercatori che nel medesimo periodo avevano ottenuto un contributo per la promozione di un loro progetto dal FNS (gruppo di confronto 2).

Nel complesso i risultati della valutazione sono positivi:

- Il programma promozionale di Ambizione può essere considerato adeguato e coerente. Un vantaggio particolare è la flessibilità del regolamento, che nell'esame delle domande di contributi consente anche valutazioni individuali. Questo è particolarmente importante, perché lo strumento Ambizione è concepito per gruppi target differenti e ricercatori di varie discipline. Comunque appare opportuno adeguare qualche punto del regolamento. Per esempio dovrebbe essere possibile finanziare personale scientifico tramite il contributo Ambizione (questo è già stato messo in atto), inoltre si raccomanda un prolungamento a quattro anni del periodo di promozione (di questo si sta già discutendo).
- L'applicazione dello strumento di promozione da parte del FNS funziona benissimo e i beneficiari di contributi apprezzano enormemente questo sostegno. Anche l'applicazione di Ambizione da parte delle istituzioni ospitanti può essere considerata buona. I casi, nei quali si sono manifestate difficoltà di integrazione o i beneficiari dei contributi si sono visti confrontati con aspettative erranee da parte degli ospitanti, sono oggetto di un'osservazione individuale.
- Ambizione non si limita a raggiungere i propri gruppi target, ma è pure tagliato a misura dei loro bisogni specifici. Lo strumento di promozione è particolarmente

adatto alle ricercatrici e ai ricercatori provenienti dalla Svizzera, che dopo un soggiorno di ricerca all'estero tornano in Svizzera (cosiddetti ricercatori di ritorno). Possono essere considerati ancora adesso il gruppo target principale di Ambizione.

- Ambizione è uno strumento di promozione efficace, in grado di aumentare l'indipendenza scientifica dei beneficiari dei contributi e influire positivamente sulla loro carriera sia in Svizzera che all'estero. Il 90% dei beneficiari ritengono che Ambizione abbia un (forte) influsso sulla loro indipendenza scientifica e sull'ulteriore andamento della loro carriera. Ambizione costituisce pure un riconoscimento e in tal modo promuove la visibilità e la competitività dei beneficiari sul mercato del personale scientifico.
- Ad Ambizione si può attestare pure un influsso positivo sulle istituzioni ospitanti e sui loro responsabili. Le istituzioni ospitanti traggono vantaggio in particolare dall'ampliamento del loro profilo scientifico e dall'attività supplementare di ricerca, inoltre ottengono un profitto finanziario. Solo raramente sono stati riscontrati svantaggi derivanti alle istituzioni ospitanti dall'accettazione di beneficiari di contributi Ambizione.
- Ambizione raggiunge i suoi obiettivi di ordine superiore. È uno strumento adatto per generare un trasferimento di conoscenze e reinserire tali conoscenze nel mondo scientifico svizzero. Lo strumento di promozione è interessante per le ricercatrici e i ricercatori di ritorno, ma anche per le ricercatrici e i ricercatori dall'estero. La valutazione non ha potuto accertare definitivamente se Ambizione sia adatto anche ai ricercatori con una mobilità internazionale limitata, ma i risultati indicano che tale categoria non viene esclusa sistematicamente da una promozione. Nel periodo esaminato la partecipazione di ricercatrici alla promozione è stata relativamente costante e nella media si è raggiunto l'obiettivo di una quota femminile del 35%. Nel 2013 le ricercatrici che hanno ottenuto una promozione Ambizione sono state in numero minore. Si dovrà attendere per vedere se si è trattato di un valore aberrante o dell'inizio di una flessione per gli anni a venire.

Miglioramenti sono possibili per gli aspetti seguenti:

- Si deve poter utilizzare parte del contributo di promozione per finanziare personale scientifico (dottorandi o postdoc). Questa misura è già stata introdotta nell'attuale regolamento del FNS.
- La durata del periodo di promozione di tre anni viene ritenuta troppo breve e si propone di aumentarla a quattro anni. Il FNS è a favore di questa idea. Recentemente si è discussa l'introduzione di un periodo di promozione quadriennale.
- Si raccomanda al FNS di sostenere la parità di trattamento dei beneficiari di contributi e l'attuazione uniforme di Ambizione da parte delle istituzioni ospitanti. È stata proposta per esempio da parte di alcuni rappresentanti delle istituzioni ospitanti la creazione di un servizio indipendente che potrebbe assumersi tale compito.
- Attualmente con Ambizione la parità di trattamento delle donne non è a rischio, però nel 2013 è stata osservata una diminuzione della percentuale di successo femminile. Il FNS dovrebbe seguire attentamente questo sviluppo. Inoltre l'obiettivo della quota di beneficiarie dei contributi va controllato periodicamente e, se necessario, adattato.

L'idea di un sistema di monitoraggio per seguire i beneficiari di contributi Ambizione anche dopo il loro periodo di promozione viene vista di buon occhio sia dal FNS e dal Consiglio nazionale della ricerca sia dagli stessi beneficiari dei contributi. Al riguardo

proponiamo un design a coorte, che preveda per ogni beneficiario di contributi un'intervista subito dopo la conclusione del periodo di promozione e una seconda intervista quattro anni più tardi. Questo permetterebbe al FNS di raccogliere informazioni a breve e lungo termine sugli ex beneficiari di contributi Ambizione e di seguire la loro ulteriore carriera. Per il monitoraggio si può utilizzare una versione ridotta dello strumento di rilevamento elaborata nel quadro della presente valutazione.

# 1. Introduction

Ambizione<sup>1</sup> is one of the career funding schemes of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). It aims to support young researchers who plan to conduct, manage and lead an independently planned project at a Swiss university. It was launched in 2007 with the first submission deadline in 2008. In 2011, the funding agency's PROSPER (Program for Social Medicine, Preventive and Epidemiological Research) and SCORE (Swiss Clinicians Opting for Research) grants were integrated into Ambizione. With Ambizione, the SNSF seeks to support young researchers from Switzerland or abroad. The funding scheme is particularly aimed at boosting the grantees' scientific independence and improving their scientific profile and competitiveness. From 2008 to 2013, 1,247 applications for an Ambizione grant were submitted (figures for 2014 not included because the evaluation of the call was still ongoing at the time of the online surveys). Of these applicants, 308 received funding. Around 40% of the grantees had completed their period of Ambizione funding by the end of 2013.

The Careers Division of the SNSF recently decided to evaluate its Ambizione funding scheme and commissioned *Interface Politikstudien Forschung Beratung* to conduct the evaluation. The evaluation examined the funding period 2008–2013. The primary objective of this evaluation was threefold:

- First, the evaluation aimed to examine the impact of funding through Ambizione on the grantees. The most important question regarding the impact of Ambizione is whether it increases the grantees' scientific independence.
- Second, the evaluation was to give the SNSF a basis for future development and shaping of the funding scheme and its implementation.
- Third, the evaluation was to present ideas for a possible future monitoring concept for Ambizione. This concept should allow the SNSF to continuously monitor the Ambizione grantees' career development after their funding period has ended.

## 1.1 Ambizione

Ambizione is aimed at qualified researchers from Switzerland who are currently completing a stay abroad or have returned after a stay abroad. Moreover, Ambizione seeks to attract the best next-generation foreign talents to carry out research work in Switzerland. The targeted share of female grantees is 35%. Ambizione grantees are supported with a budget of up to CHF 600,000 for a salary (research associate level) and research funds for a maximum period of three years. Research funds may also be used to employ personnel.

Ambizione grant applications must include a letter from the host institution, confirming that it will provide the applicant adequate support in covering research expenses. The letter should also include a statement on the independence and the scientific autonomy of the applicant.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, the term Ambizione will be used for the three original funding schemes Ambizione, Ambizione-PROSPER and Ambizione-SCORE.

Grant applicants must meet a number of personal requirements to be eligible for funding through Ambizione<sup>2</sup>:

- Applicants must hold a doctorate (PhD) obtained generally up to five years prior to submission of the grant application;
- Applicants holding a doctor of medicine (MD) must have completed at least three years of post-graduate clinical/practical work at the time of the submission deadline; the application may generally be submitted up to nine years after obtaining the medical licence (state examination).
- Applicants must furnish proof of high-level publications;
- Applicants must have completed postdoctoral research activities lasting at least 12 months at a university other than the university that conferred the doctorate.

The evaluation procedure of the Ambizione applications is organised in two phases. In the first phase, the National Research Council (NRC)<sup>3</sup> of the SNSF makes an initial selection based on the documents submitted. In the second phase, the applications are peer-reviewed and candidates are invited to an interview to present their research project and career plan.

## 1.2 Evaluation objectives and evaluation questions

Six topics were evaluated in total: (1) the concept of the Ambizione funding scheme, (2) the implementation of Ambizione by the SNSF and the host institutions, (3) Ambizione's reach, (4) Ambizione's impact on grantees, (5) Ambizione's impact on host institutions, and (6) Ambizione's overarching goals. The following section lists each evaluation objective and the evaluation questions asked.

### **Concept of the Ambizione funding scheme**

- Are the goals, the design (extent of the grant, funding criteria and requirements, additional support, etc.) and the target groups of Ambizione suitable?
- Is Ambizione harmonised with other (similar) funding instruments of the SNSF?

### **Implementation of Ambizione by the SNSF and the host institutions**

- Is the support that the SNSF offers Ambizione grantees sufficient?
- Are grantees supported adequately by the host institutions?
- How are the collaboration between hosts and grantees and the integration of the grantees into the host institutions evaluated?

### **Reach of the Ambizione funding scheme**

- Are the target groups defined in the Ambizione funding scheme concept reached?
- Does Ambizione satisfy the needs and requirements of the target groups?

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<sup>2</sup> A more detailed description of personal requirements can be found in "Regulations concerning Ambizione, Ambizione-PROSPER and Ambizione-SCORE grants", National Research Council, version of 13.08.2013, accessible online at:  
[http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/ambizione\\_reglement\\_e.pdf](http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/ambizione_reglement_e.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The SNSF's National Research Council is composed of distinguished researchers who mostly work at Swiss institutions of higher education. A list of the current members can be found online at: <http://www.snf.ch/en/theSNSF/organisation/research-council/searching-members-research-council/Pages/default.aspx>

### **Impact of Ambizione funding on grantees**

- Have Ambizione grantees been able to carry out their research projects (more) independently? Were their research projects successfully completed?
- Has the Ambizione grant enhanced the scientific profile of the grantees (e.g. through publications, awards, conference participation, or further research endeavours, etc.)?
- Have Ambizione grantees successfully carried on with their scientific careers? Has there been a career step (e.g. tenure track position, professorship, group leader position, etc.), and if so, to what extent has Ambizione contributed to this career step?
- Are Ambizione grantees more successful than researchers without funding through Ambizione with regard to their scientific profiles and careers?

### **Impact of Ambizione on host institutions**

- In what ways do the host institutions benefit from hiring Ambizione grantees (e.g. in terms of scientific exchange or a boost to the scientific performance of the institution, etc.)?
- Did the host institutions encounter difficulties integrating Ambizione grantees into the institute's ongoing research and teaching activities?

### **Overarching goals of Ambizione**

- Has Ambizione generated knowledge transfer into Switzerland?
- Has Ambizione helped researchers from Switzerland doing research abroad return to the Swiss scientific community?
- Is Ambizione an attractive funding scheme for young talents from abroad?
- Has Ambizione had specific effects in terms of gender?

## **1.3 Methodology**

The evaluation consisted of three methodological pillars: expert interviews, case studies and online surveys. These are presented hereafter.

### **1.3.1 Expert interviews**

Expert interviews were used to obtain a general idea of the Ambizione funding scheme, to identify research fields and to derive further research questions. These interviews were also conducted to class Ambizione among similar funding schemes in Switzerland and abroad. Seven expert interviews were conducted in total. The experts were chosen from three groups: (1) experts from within the SNSF and the NRC, (2) experts from Swiss universities related to researcher and project funding, and (3) experts from abroad. The expert interviews were conducted either face-to-face or by telephone, using an "interview guide". A list of all expert interview partners can be found in the annex (5.1) of this report.

### **1.3.2 Case studies**

Case studies were used to obtain a qualitative evaluation of Ambizione by its main target group, young researchers who are former Ambizione grantees. A total of 10 interviews were conducted with selected researchers who have successfully completed

their Ambizione funding period and have since then successfully continued their (scientific) careers. The interview partners were chosen to match the distribution of field of support (discipline), gender, and category (incoming/returning) of the complete sample of all Ambizione grantees. The following table gives an overview of some characteristics of the 10 case studies:

**Table 1: Case Studies Overview**

Case	Gender	Field of support I, II or III	Host institution	Nationality	Applicant applied from
1	f	I	UNIZH	Foreign	Abroad
2	f	I	UNIZH	Swiss	Switzerland
3	m	I	UNIGE	Swiss	Abroad
4	m	II	EPFL	Foreign	Switzerland
5	m	II	PSI	Swiss	Switzerland
6	m	II	UNINE	Swiss	Abroad
7	f	III	UNIBE	Swiss	Abroad
8	m	III	ETHZ	Swiss	Abroad
9	m	III	UNIZH	Foreign	Switzerland
10	m	III	UNILA	Swiss	Abroad

*Note.* I = humanities and social sciences; II = mathematics, natural and engineering sciences; III = biology and medicine; UNIZH = University of Zurich; UNIGE = University of Geneva; EPFL = Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne; PSI = Paul Scherrer Institute; UNINE = University of Neuchâtel; UNIBE = University of Bern; UNILA = University of Lausanne.

These interviews were used to create short case study portraits that reflect the interviewees' personal and scientific backgrounds in a more detailed manner. The 10 portraits can be found in the annex (5.2).

### 1.3.3 Online surveys

Two online surveys were conducted to gain quantitative results for the views of the funding scheme's target groups.

- The first online survey addressed all Ambizione grantees between 2008 and 2013 having started or completed their grant period (complete sample). We used an experimental design with two comparison groups: (1) persons with rejected applications for Ambizione grants between 2008 and 2013, and (2) persons with SNSF project funding as responsible applicant between 2008 and 2013. This second comparison group was constructed to match the experimental group as well as possible. Therefore, the group included only researchers who received SNSF project funding for the first time, were not older than 35 (for fields of support II and III) or 40 (for field of support I) and had never applied for an Ambizione grant before. Approximately 1,450 persons were contacted in total.
- The second online survey was addressed to the contact persons at all Ambizione host institutions; 257 hosts were contacted.

The surveys were launched between 11 and 18 March 2014 and were left open for participation for two weeks each. After one week, a reminder was sent to all invitees who had not yet completed the online questionnaire. The questionnaires used for the online surveys can be found in the annex 5.3.

## Key variables

The following tables show the survey samples and overall response rates as well as the sampling distribution of a number of key variables.

**Table 2: Key Figures of the Online Surveys**

Study group	Sample	Valid responses	Response rate
Ambizione grantees*	262	214	82%
Ambizione applicants, rejected**	811	400	49%
SNSF project funding***	372	204	55%
Ambizione hosts****	257	153	60%

Source: Interface, online surveys grantees, comparison groups, hosts. \* Researchers who have started or finished their grant period. \*\* Applicants between 2008 and 2013. \*\*\* First-time beneficiaries between 2008 and 2013, not older than 35 (fields of support II and III) or 40 (field of support I). \*\*\*\* Hosts between 2008 and 2013.

**Table 3: Distribution of Key Variables of Ambizione grantees**

Variable		Population (n = 308*)	Sample (n = 214)
Nationality	Swiss	42% (129)	44% (94)
	Foreign	58% (179)	56% (119)
Applicant applied from...	...Switzerland	60% (184)	60% (127)
	...abroad	40% (124)	40% (86)
Target group**	Incoming	43% (132)	40% (85)
	Returning	53% (163)	57% (123)
	Limited mobility	4% (13)	3% (6)
	Female grantees	34% (104)	35% (74)
Field of support***	I	28% (87)	28% (59)
	II	38% (117)	38% (79)
	III	34% (104)	31% (65)
	Other	0% (0)	2% (5)
Type of host institution	University/university hospital	65% (200)	67% (140)
	ETH/EPF	31% (97)	30% (62)
	University of applied sciences	1% (3)	2% (5)
	Other institution	3% (8)	1% (3)

Source: SNSF application database; Interface online survey grantees. Missing values were excluded. \* Including persons with accepted Ambizione applications who have not yet started their funding period. \*\* Incoming = Researchers not holding a Swiss passport who obtained their doctorate abroad; Returning = Researchers from Switzerland who obtained their doctorate abroad or completed a postdoctoral stay abroad; Limited Mobility = Researchers from Switzerland who obtained their doctorate in Switzerland and have not been abroad for a postdoctoral stay. A detailed description of the different target groups can be found in the annex 5.3. \*\*\* Fields of support: I = humanities and social sciences; II = mathematics, natural and engineering sciences; III = biology and medicine; other = online survey only, survey participants who did not classify their main discipline as belonging to either of the fields of support.

Tables 2 and 3 show that the survey sample represents the complete population of the Ambizione grantees very well. It is therefore permissible to use the results calculated based on the sample as predictors for the whole population of grantees. Minor differences can be observed with target groups, but we do not expect results to be biased.

## **1.4 Structure of this report**

The evaluation results for the six evaluation objectives are presented in chapter 2. Summaries of the evaluation results and concluding remarks are in chapter 3. Reflections on the future monitoring of the Ambizione grantees, finally, are in chapter 4.

## **1.5 Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank everyone who assisted us with the evaluation of the Ambizione funding scheme. The responsible staff at the SNSF Careers Division actively supported us with organising the interviews, commenting on interview guides, questionnaires and the report, and helping with translations. The National Research Council and in particular the Specialised Committee Careers gave us useful feedback and helped optimise the instruments that we used for data collection. Last but not least, we thank our interview partners at the SNSF, the NRC, the external experts, and the former Ambizione grantees interviewed who agreed to share their thoughts and experiences with us so openly. Without them, the evaluation of the funding scheme could not have been achieved.

## 2. Evaluation results

The evaluation results for the six evaluation objectives are presented in the following. For each objective, the results of the expert interviews, the case study interviews, and the online surveys are presented. In some cases, the results are complemented by evaluations of data from the SNSF applications database.

### 2.1 Concept of the Ambizione funding scheme

As the first objective, the evaluation focused on the Ambizione funding scheme's underlying concept. The coherence and adequacy of the funding concept were evaluated. Since the launch of Ambizione in 2007 there have been a number of adaptations to the funding scheme regulations. The adequacy of the funding scheme's concept is challenged by the fact that the funding is directed at researchers in all fields of support (disciplines) and with highly differing needs. The evaluation examined mainly two questions: (1) Are the goals, the design (extent of the grant, funding criteria and requirements, additional support, etc.) and the target groups of Ambizione suitable and well-composed?, and (2) Is Ambizione harmonised with other (similar) funding instruments of the SNSF? The following sections show the results of the interviews and the online survey.

#### **Results of the expert interviews**

The experts were of the opinion that the funding concept Ambizione is based on is generally coherent and suitable to attain the goals of the funding scheme. According to the experts, Ambizione has a specific function within the range of the SNSF funding measures. Its "raison d'être" lies mainly in its unique impact on the grantees' scientific independence. Focusing on facilitating scientific independence and aiming at a specific target group, Ambizione has become – according to the experts – one of the most important career funding schemes of the SNSF. With its particular function, Ambizione could not be replaced by any other of the SNSF's funding instruments without loss. Also, the experts said, there is no overlap with existing funding instruments in the area of career funding.

The personal and formal requirements for an Ambizione grant were regarded as appropriate – with the exception of the international mobility requirement, which is criticised by some of the experts (see below). The two-stage evaluation process has proven functional not only for the SNSF but also for many funding agencies in other countries. According to the experts, an important advantage of the funding concept and funding scheme regulations, respectively, is that it allows for assessment on a case-by-case basis, so that the individual situation and background of each applicant can be taken into account adequately. The people involved in the evaluation of Ambizione applications affirm that such an individual case assessment is indeed carried out during the application process. The regulations are – to a certain extent – subject to interpretation. For example, researchers who are affected by limited international mobility due to family commitments will still receive Ambizione funding as long as they comply with the other funding requirements.

The following aspects of the funding scheme's concept drew criticism from the experts:

- All of the experts agreed that the funding period of three years is too short, especially when the grantees are allowed to supervise doctoral students. With a funding period of three years, doctoral students can hardly finish their PhD in time with the grantee. One expert pointed out that the funding period could indeed be longer but should not be too long, bearing in mind that many universities have age limits for professorships. The SNSF has already reacted to this problem. A lengthening of the funding period to four years is being discussed and is likely to be implemented in the near future. The question as to whether this prolongation should be linked to a proportional enhancement of the granted amount remains. If more time and money is given to each Ambizione grantee, the number of grantees and thus the share of successful applications and possibly the funding scheme's success rate, i.e. the ratio between successful applications and all applications, will drop, if we assume constant or increasing demand. The experts agreed that whether the grant sum is increased or not, the success rate should not drop below 20%, which corresponds with the actual average success rate of Ambizione.
- Four of the experts argued that either mobility should not play a role in the evaluation process at all or the definition of mobility should be changed. Two experts suggested a holistic concept that takes more than just physical mobility into account. Another suggestion was to consider the researcher's whole scientific career or at least the PhD time period as part of the researchers' mobility. This would also allow researchers to apply for the Ambizione grant at a younger age and thus alleviate the problem of age limits for professorships at certain universities.
- Two experts were of the opinion that parallel funding through Ambizione and other SNSF funding schemes should be allowed.
- One of the experts argued that the grant sum is not high enough. The expert suggested that the amount be doubled and include the grantees' own salary, the salaries of one full postdoc and one full PhD student as well as CHF 100,000 for equipment and consumables.

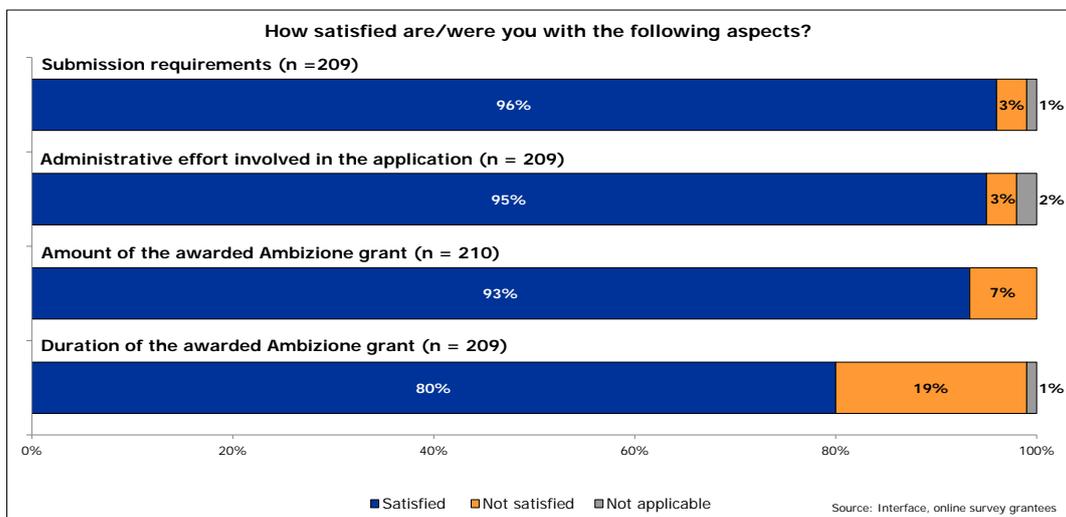
Some of these criticised aspects – namely, mobility requirements and the length of the funding period, are seen as factors that particularly put female scientists at a disadvantage.

### **Results of the case study interviews**

The interviewees considered the funding scheme's concept coherent and adequate. They agreed that mobility requirements can be problematic but think that international mobility is a prerequisite for a scientific career and thus justified as a requirement for funding. They argued that since Ambizione was mainly constructed as an instrument to bring back researchers from Switzerland to the Swiss science community, researchers are already abroad in most cases and therefore automatically comply with the funding scheme's mobility requirement. The funding period and amount granted did not draw any criticisms from the interviewees. One third of the grantees would have preferred being assisted by a doctoral student or postdoc and would have been in favour of the idea of a longer funding period, ideally four years, in this case. One interviewee criticised the fact that Ambizione grantees are not allowed parallel funding through other SNSF funding schemes.

## Results of the online survey

In the online survey, the grantees were asked about their satisfaction with a number of aspects of the funding scheme's concept – namely, the administrative effort involved in the application, the submission requirements (deadlines, two-stage evaluation procedure, etc.) and the grant sum and the duration of the awarded grant. Figure 1 shows the survey results.



**Figure 1. Satisfaction with aspects of the application process and the grant**

The results confirm the feedback from the interviews with experts and grantees. The grantees were generally highly satisfied with all of the examined aspects of the funding scheme's concept. In agreement with the interviewed experts, the duration of Ambizione funding shows the highest percentage of grantees who are dissatisfied.

## 2.2 Implementation of Ambizione by the SNSF and the host institutions

The following sections deal with the implementation of the Ambizione funding scheme by the responsible executive bodies: the SNSF, and the host institutions/hosts.

### 2.2.1 Implementation by the SNSF

The SNSF plays an important role as a mediator between the Ambizione grantees and the host institutions. Even though the SNSF does not offer support in an institution-alised way, the staff members responsible for the funding scheme at the Administrative Offices of the SNSF are regularly contacted for advice.

### Results of the expert interviews

The experts involved in supporting grantees at the SNSF stated that they provide support and advice by telephone or e-mail on a regular basis. They are mostly asked technical questions regarding the application process and the evaluation phase or during the funding period. There are also special cases where specific difficulties arise regarding collaboration with the host institution, but severe problems are rare.

### Results of the case study interviews

The grantees interviewed were highly satisfied with the support that they were given by the SNSF. They reported receiving quick and straightforward help from the responsible staff at the SNSF Careers Division.

### Results of the online survey

The results of the online survey of the Ambizione grantees confirmed the observations from the case study interviews. Figure 2 shows the satisfaction of the respondents with the information and advice provided by the SNSF during the application process as well as with the funding agency's support and advice during the funding period.

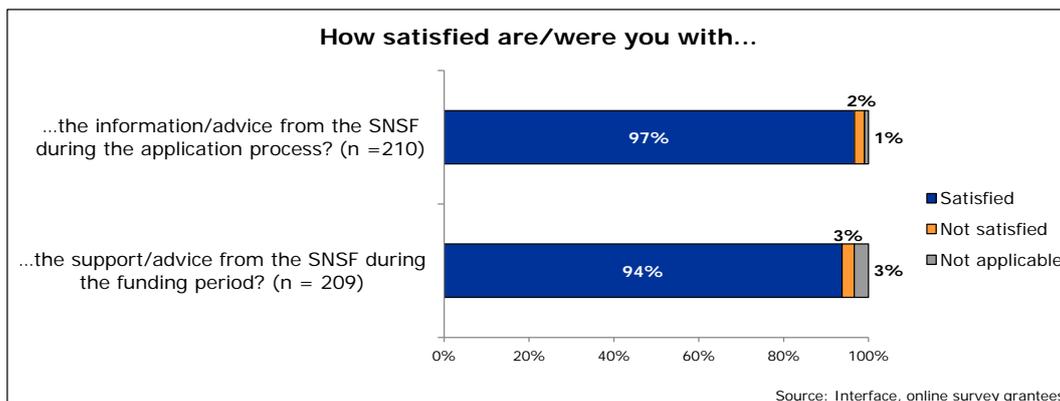


Figure 2. Satisfaction with the information and support provided by the SNSF

The survey results confirm that the grantees were highly satisfied with the support and advice they received from the SNSF. This is the case for the application process as well as for the funding period itself; 96% of the survey respondents were very (72%) or rather (24%) satisfied with the support provided by the SNSF during the application process. Satisfaction during the funding period was almost equally high: 65% were very satisfied and 29% rather satisfied.

### 2.2.2 Implementation by the host institutions

The implementation of Ambizione by the host institutions was also evaluated. The interviews and survey focused on the degree of integration of the grantees into the host institutions, the support that grantees received from their hosts in terms of additional finance, infrastructure, personnel, etc., and the quality of the collaboration between grantees and host institutions. The evaluation results are as follows.

### Results of the expert interviews

The expert interviewed who is in charge of the Ambizione grantees at the SNSF said that the integration generally works well, but that difficulties have occurred in individual cases. These are often caused by false expectations concerning the grantees. The grantees are sometimes seen as regular postdocs and are therefore not granted enough scientific independence, or they are urged to do more teaching than they should according to the funding scheme regulations. In such cases, the SNSF tries to intervene, but its options are limited. The interviewed experts from the host institutions confirmed this observation. One expert stated that the integration is often carried out in terms of short-time scientific collaboration but not on a structural level. Ambizione grantees are rarely offered permanent positions at their former host institution, once their funding period has ended. This assumption can be validated by the

results of the online survey. Of the former grantees with completed Ambizione funding periods (70 survey respondents) currently employed (60) and working in Switzerland (50), 70% are still employed at their former host institute.

### **Results of the case study interviews**

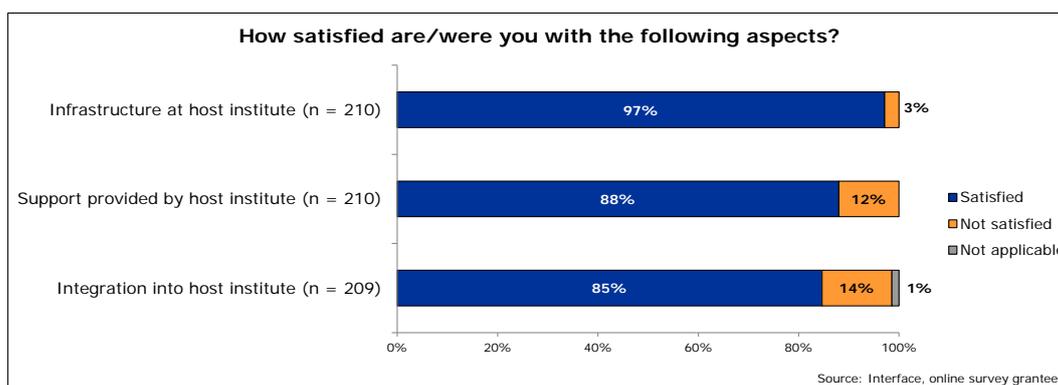
The grantees interviewed were all very happy with the level of integration and the support by their former Ambizione host institutions. The support ranged from co-financing new measuring instruments to financing the employment of doctoral students and other personnel or providing further financial support. Use of infrastructure was implicit in all cases. Of course, the extent of the support needed depends highly on the grantee's discipline. In the humanities, social sciences or other theoretical disciplines, little infrastructure is needed. Other disciplines call for greater investments in infrastructure, mostly measuring instruments, equipment, lab space, etc. One of the interviewees was able to afford an expensive measuring instrument because his host agreed to co-fund it with a generous amount. Once the grantee's funding period had ended, the host allowed the grantee to buy the funding instrument and take it to his new work place. This helped the grantee a great deal and was also beneficial to the institute he went to after his Ambizione grant period had ended because he brought his own measuring instrument and could continue with his research work right away. This same grantee got his own junior group to lead during the time of the Ambizione project, which was very important for his scientific independence and had a positive effect on his further career.

Most of the interviewees were involved in teaching, but they reported that they were not obliged to teach and had rather small workloads. One grantee told us that he did not have the opportunity to teach at his host institution, which later kept him from obtaining a position as an assistant professor where teaching experience was required. He later applied successfully for an SNSF professorship. Even now, he still feels the consequences of the absence of teaching activities during his time as an Ambizione grantee. Now that he has just started out as an SNSF professor and is hiring personnel for his own research group, finding such personnel is sometimes difficult because eligible people do not yet know him. This would be different had he been involved in teaching activities earlier on.

All of the grantees interviewed are still in touch with their former host institutions, labs, groups, etc. Many have ongoing collaborations. Four interviewees are still employed at their former host institution.

### **Results of the online survey**

Three aspects of implementation were taken into account in the online survey: the support provided by the host institutions, the infrastructure at the host institution, and the integration of the grantees into the host institution. Figure 3 shows the results of the online survey of the Ambizione grantees.



**Figure 3. Satisfaction of grantees with the host institution**

The figure shows that almost all of the grantees were satisfied with the infrastructure that they encountered at their host institutes, labs, etc. The support provided by the host institution was also evaluated positively; almost 90% of the survey respondents were satisfied. The share of the grantees who were satisfied with the integration into their host institution was slightly smaller, but nearly 85% still considered it satisfactory. This result supports the findings of the interviews, according to which integration works well in most cases but is seen as unsatisfactory by a minority of the researchers. Most of the 29 researchers (14%) who said they were not satisfied with the integration into their host institute received Ambizione in 2010 and 2011. From those starting their grants after 2011, only 6 people were not satisfied in total. All of those who were *not at all* satisfied received their Ambizione grants in 2011 or before. Most of those unsatisfied have or had their host institute at a university or university hospital (21 respondents) and name mathematics, natural or engineering sciences (13 respondents) or biology or medicine (11 respondents) as their main discipline. If the proportion of type of institution is taken into account, the share of unsatisfied grantees is the highest with Ambizione grantees at a university of applied sciences (40%). The total number of survey participants from this group however is very small (n = 5).

The quality of the integration of grantees into their host institutions was also evaluated by the hosts. We asked the hosts if they thought, or think, that the integration of their (last) Ambizione grantee was good. This survey yielded an even better result than the one with the grantees: 94% of the hosts rated the integration *good*.

The support of Ambizione grantees by their host institutions was examined in more detail in the course of the online survey. The grantees were asked by what specific means they were supported by their host institute, what kind of personnel they were supported by, how this was financed, what the extent of their teaching activities was, and how teaching activities were financed. The following tables show the results for the different aspects of support.

**Table 4: Support by the Host Institution (n = 214)**

By what specific means did/does your host institute support you?	%* (n)
I was able to use existing infrastructures (rooms, IT, instruments, etc.)	96% (205)
I received additional financial support for my own research work	34% (73)
The host institution financially supported the acquisition of new infrastructure	28% (59)
Further/other support	18% (39)
I received additional financial support for activities at the host institution (e.g. teaching)	15% (33)
The host institution acquired new infrastructure	0% (0)

Source: Interface, online survey grantees. \* Multiple responses were possible.

Almost all of the participating grantees were allowed to use existing infrastructure at their host institutions. More than one third received additional funding for their project, and nearly 30% were financially supported through the acquisition of new infrastructure. This explains the very positive evaluation of the support and infrastructure at the host institutions (see Figure 3).

**Table 5: Support by Scientific and Other Personnel (n = 128)**

What type of personnel was/is available to provide support?	%* (n)
Doctoral students	58% (75)
Postdocs**	21% (27)
Other personnel (e.g. assistants, technicians, etc.)	53% (68)

Source: Interface, online survey grantees. \* Multiple responses were possible. \*\* Postdocs must be funded to at least 50% by the host institute.

Of the grantees who participated in the survey, 60% were supported by doctoral students; 20% even stated they had postdocs to support them. This is a rather high percentage given that the lack of support by doctoral students or postdocs was mentioned as one of the main points for improvement in the online survey. The 75 grantees stating that they had help from doctoral students had access to one (71%), two (23%), or even three (6%) doctoral students. One did not answer this question. The 27 grantees stating that they were supported by postdocs had help from one (89%) or two (11%) postdocs. The 68 grantees stating that they had support from other personnel had between one (64%) and five (3%) people helping them. Two persons did not answer this question. Table 6 shows how this support was funded.

**Table 6: Funding of Scientific and Other Personnel**

	Fully through Ambizione	Partially by Ambizione, partially by the host institution	Fully through the host institution	Other financing	Don't know
Doctoral students (n = 74)	24% (18)	22% (16)	27% (20)	27% (20)	0% (0)
Postdocs (n = 27)	26%* (7)	11%** (3)	18% (5)	41% (11)	4% (1)
Other personnel (n = 67)	49% (33)	19% (13)	18% (12)	12% (8)	2% (1)

Source: Interface, online survey grantees. \* 50% by the Ambizione grant, 50% by the host institution; \*\* More than 50% but not entirely by the host institution.

The table shows that almost 30% of the doctoral students were financed fully through the host institutions, and in over 20% of the cases funding was shared between the Ambizione grant and the host institution. When hiring postdocs, the host institute is obliged to finance at least 50% of the postdoc's salary. In 11% of the cases where postdocs were hired to support the Ambizione grantee, the host institute agreed to finance more than 50% and fully financed almost 20% of the postdocs hired. With other personnel, 18% were financed fully by the host institution. Almost 50% of the other personnel were funded fully through the Ambizione grants.

### Teaching activities at host institutions

All in all 66% of the survey respondents engaged in teaching activities during their time as Ambizione grantees. Most of these grantees taught one (24%), two (17%), or four (15%) hours per week per semester (including preparation time).<sup>4</sup> Tables 7 and 8 show the course level (Bachelor's, Master's, doctoral, other) and how the teaching activities were funded.

**Table 7: Teaching Level (n = 139)**

At which level did/do you teach?	% * (n)
Bachelor's	61% (85)
Master's	71% (99)
Doctoral	28% (39)
Other	4% (5)

Source: Interface, online survey grantees. \* Multiple responses were possible.

**Table 8: Funding of Ambizione Grantees' Teaching Activities (n = 137)**

How were/are these teaching activities financed?	% (n)
Fully funded through the Ambizione grant	47% (64)
Partially by the Ambizione grant, partially by the host institution	11% (15)
Fully financed through funds from the host institution	19% (26)
Other financing	6% (8)
Don't know	18% (24)

Source: Interface, online survey grantees.

Teaching was fully financed through the Ambizione grant in almost half of the cases and fully funded by the host institution for 20% of the grantees.

## 2.3 Reach of the Ambizione funding scheme

The reach of the Ambizione funding scheme was evaluated with regard to two aspects: The evaluation examined whether the different target groups of Ambizione are reached and whether Ambizione satisfies the needs and requirements of these target groups.

To find out whether Ambizione reaches the target groups defined in its concept, data from the SNSF applications database were evaluated. There, all applicants for an Ambizione grant since 2008 are classified with regard to belonging to one of the target

<sup>4</sup> A large number of outliers suggest that the question ("hours per week per semester") was not properly understood by some of the participants. The results can therefore not be evaluated completely. Also, there is no conceivable correlation between number of hours taught and financing model.

groups.<sup>5</sup> Table 9 shows how the target groups are distributed among all grantees since 2008:

**Table 9: Distribution of Target Groups among Ambizione Grantees 2008–2013**

Target group	Number	%
Returning	163	53%
Incoming	132*	43%
Limited mobility	13	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>100%</b>
Female grantees	104	34%

Source: SNSF application database (population). \* 29 of the incoming grantees had no preliminary connection to the Swiss science community.

Viewed over the full time span since the launch of Ambizione, the funding scheme has reached all of its target groups. The largest share of the grantees can be classified as returnees. The incoming group is also strongly represented, and Ambizione is becoming increasingly popular among foreign researchers. For 10% of all grantees or 22% of the incoming grantees, no preliminary connection to Switzerland whatsoever can be detected. The group of grantees with limited international mobility is very small. In the survey sample of comparison group 1 (researchers with rejected Ambizione applications), which could be used to verify whether the share of researchers with limited mobility is higher, 2% can be classified as researchers with limited mobility. This is even fewer than in the survey of the Ambizione grantees (3%). The number of applications submitted by applicants with limited mobility is generally small (4–6%).

In the interviews, experts and grantees were asked if they believe Ambizione satisfies the needs and requirements of the target groups. The results are presented in the following sections.

### **Results of the expert interviews**

The experts were of the opinion that Ambizione is particularly suited to researchers from Switzerland seeking to return to the Swiss science community after a stay abroad and that Ambizione can indeed facilitate reintegration into the Swiss science scene to a great extent. The funding scheme thus satisfies the needs of this target group, in particular. One of the experts argued that in Switzerland, Ambizione is often mistakenly thought of as a prerequisite for an SNSF professorship. Thus, many researchers pass through a three-year period of Ambizione funding before applying for an SNSF professorship of another four years. Once their time as an SNSF professor ends, these researchers are sometimes already too old to obtain good and permanent positions in the academic world.

Ambizione was also seen as a funding instrument that can withstand international competition and therefore be attractive for talents from abroad. However, once the Ambizione funding period is over, the experts stated, these grantees are often forced to look for positions outside Switzerland since the number of (tenure track) positions in Switzerland is limited. However, the experts said, this is not a problem caused by

<sup>5</sup> As this classification is done manually using a number of (self-reported) indicators, it is possibly biased to some degree. The SNSF definition of the target groups was used. A detailed description of the categories can be found in the annex (5.34).

or to be solved by the SNSF but rather one that is inherent in the Swiss job market for scientists, which also affects researchers from Switzerland.

### Results of the case study interviews

The former Ambizione grantees interviewed were all highly satisfied with the funding scheme. Interviewees who used Ambizione to return to Switzerland after a stay abroad thought that Ambizione helped them reintegrate. They also managed to find positions in Switzerland after their funding had ended.<sup>6</sup> The grantees from abroad were not any less satisfied with the grant, particularly with regard to the grant sum. However, they faced greater difficulties finding an adequate position in Switzerland or found more attractive opportunities outside Switzerland. One of the three interviewees from abroad is still in Switzerland, holding a SNSF professorship.

### Results of the online survey

The data from the SNSF application database was used to estimate whether Ambizione reaches its target groups (see Table 9). Since this database is complete, it can be interpreted more unreservedly than the results of the online survey.

An aspect concerning the reach of a funding measure that can be examined using the survey results is whether it is well-known among the eligible target groups. We asked the survey participants in the comparison group with SNSF project funding (comparison group 2) if they had heard of Ambizione and, if so, why they had never applied for it.<sup>7</sup> The survey yielded the following results: 83% of this group had heard of the Ambizione funding scheme. Of the group of researchers who obtained their doctorate at Swiss universities, only 10% were not familiar with Ambizione. Table 10 shows the respondents' agreement with possible reasons why the persons in comparison group 2 who knew about Ambizione had never applied for it.

**Table 10: Why Have You Never Applied for an Ambizione Grant? (n = 158)**

Reason	%*
I did not meet the participation requirements (personal requirements)	38% (60)
The Ambizione grant was not appealing enough for me	10% (16)
I could not find a host institution	1% (1)
I did not feel scientifically independent enough	1% (2)
SNSF project funding was better suited to my research project	30% (47)
Other reasons	34% (53)

Source: Interface, online survey comparison group 2. \* Multiple responses were possible.

The table shows that most of the survey respondents in comparison group 2 (researchers with SNSF project funding) felt they did not comply with the funding requirements of Ambizione or that SNSF project funding was more suitable for their purposes. Ten per cent of the respondents stated that the Ambizione funding scheme did not have enough appeal for them. A high share of the survey respondents mentioned other reasons. A majority of them stated that they had already been employed in other, more stable, positions when they learned about the Ambizione funding scheme and did not

<sup>6</sup> Two of the six interviewees who can be classified as returnees currently hold SNSF professorships.

<sup>7</sup> The second comparison group was constructed to match the experimental group as well as possible. The group included researchers who received SNSF project funding for the first time, were not older than 35 (for fields of support II and III) or 40 (for field of support I) and had never applied for an Ambizione grant before. Members of this comparison group can thus be assumed to be eligible for Ambizione funding.

want to put that stability at risk by applying for an Ambizione grant. Some of them were already in (assistant) professor positions and applying for Ambizione did not make sense anymore. Others successfully applied for a SNSF professorship directly, skipping funding through Ambizione. Some survey respondents did not know about the funding scheme when they were actually eligible or the funding scheme did not exist yet.

## **2.4 Impact of Ambizione funding on grantees**

This section presents the evaluation results concerning the impact of funding through Ambizione. The evaluation focused mainly on the effects of Ambizione funding on the development of the grantees' careers and their scientific independence.

### **Results of the expert interviews**

The experts generally saw Ambizione as an effective measure to boost the grantees' scientific independence. This was also seen as a specific strength of the Ambizione funding scheme compared to similar SNSF funding schemes. One of the experts argued that Ambizione has two main functions: outside the institution, it works as a label, boosting competitiveness on the job market for scientists. Inside the institution, Ambizione protects grantees from teaching obligations, thus allowing them to focus fully on their research project. The expert saw this as the main difference between Ambizione grantees and "regular" postdocs.

The experts also mentioned some limitations to the funding scheme's power to increase scientific independence: supervision of PhD students or other personnel is seen as a crucial factor in becoming scientifically independent. Ambizione allows researchers to apply for a PhD position or a postdoctoral position (for the latter at least half of the salary must be covered by the host institution). However, the status of the Ambizione grantees at their host institutions does not formally allow them to act as PhD supervisors or advisors. Also, the duration of the funding is usually too short for PhD students to finish in time with the Ambizione grantee. Two of the experts further argued that the SNSF should allow Ambizione grantees to apply for parallel funding through SNSF project funding to make real scientific independence possible.

### **Results of the case study interviews**

All the grantees that were interviewed have been continuously employed since the end of their Ambizione grant. In addition, all the interviewees claimed to have taken the next step in their careers. Of the 10 grantees interviewed, there is one full professor, one associate professor, four assistant professors, three SNSF professors, and one group leader. Even more importantly, the interviewees were of the opinion that the Ambizione grant has greatly influenced their further career in general and their reported career step in particular. One of the grantees said that there were over 100 applicants for the position that he is now holding and that his Ambizione grant put him in a stand-alone position ahead of the other applicants. This is all the more interesting given that this position is at a university outside Switzerland, where the Ambizione funding scheme presumably is not (yet) widely known. In this case, Ambizione hence worked as a label that confirmed the grantees' scientific competitiveness on an international level. Other grantees confirmed that receiving an Ambizione grant means that an important funding agency considers them worthy of funding. This boosts the grantees' self-esteem, for one, and can signal scientific competence, for

another. Ambizione is seen as a stepping stone: the grantee interviewed, who is now working as a full professor, said that the main impact of his Ambizione funding was that it enabled him to obtain this position. A former Ambizione grantee who is now working as an associate professor stated that whereas such positions are very rare in Switzerland and the number of applicants is usually very high, her Ambizione grant enabled her to attain the position that she holds today. One of the grantees stated that Ambizione not only helped him to return and reintegrate in Switzerland but also to build a reputation for himself in the Swiss science community. One of the interviewees said that he could publish a paper as lead author thanks to Ambizione. Ambizione also seems to have a positive effect on the chances to receive further funding from the SNSF or other funding agencies: the grantees that were later granted SNSF professorships were of the opinion that their Ambizione grant was conducive to their obtaining of further funding from the SNSF. Another former Ambizione grantee said that Ambizione helped him receive an ERC grant.

Regarding scientific independence, the interviewed grantees agreed that funding through Ambizione clearly had a positive effect. Also, they did not think that a regular postdoc position would have led to the same degree of independence.

As further important effects of Ambizione, some of the interviewees reported leadership experience (e.g. leading their own group, supervising personnel), reintegration into Switzerland and the Swiss science community, increased networking, and managing a budget.

### Results of the online surveys

In the survey, we asked (former) Ambizione grantees what impact Ambizione had had on them and their careers and tried to find out if a career step can indeed be observed with grantees whose Ambizione funding period was over. In addition, we asked if the grantees thought Ambizione had or would have an impact on their scientific independence. Figure 4 shows the survey respondents' assessments of a number of possible effects of Ambizione funding.

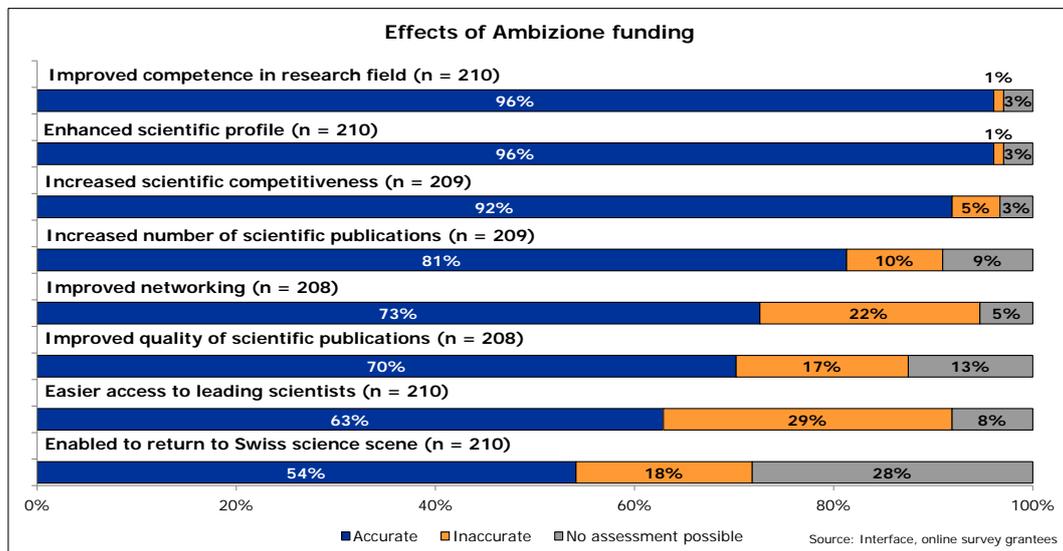
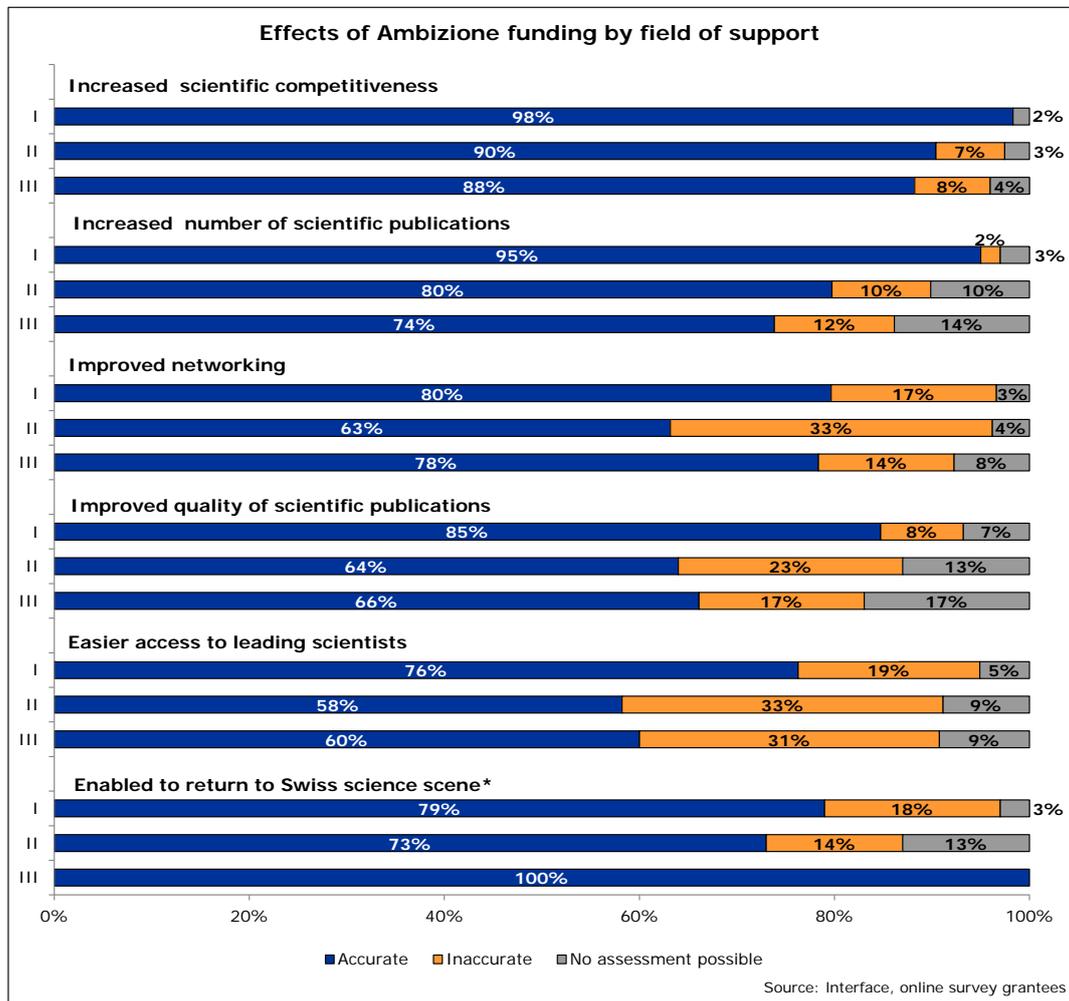


Figure 4. Effects of Ambizione funding on the grantees

The figure shows that more than 50% of the grantees responding agreed that Ambizione grants had all of the suggested effects. Ambizione seems to have had a particularly high impact by increasing the grantees' competence in their research

fields, enhancing their scientific profile, and increasing their scientific competitiveness. Competitiveness is particularly important because it shows that Ambizione can actually be used as a label. Agreement with the statement that Ambizione enabled researchers to return to the Swiss science scene, which was the lowest, cannot be interpreted as such because the sample included a large share of grantees from outside Switzerland. Taking only the group of those returnees who submitted their applications from abroad into account, almost 90% reported that Ambizione enabled them to return to the Swiss science community.

Female and male survey respondents did not differ in their assessment of these effects, with the exception of the effects of improved networking and easier access to leading scientists, which a larger share (by about 15%) of female respondents found to be accurate. More differences can be found if we look at the different disciplines. Figure 5 shows these differences for six possible effects of Ambizione. The other two effects (enhanced scientific profile, improved competence) did not differ between disciplines.



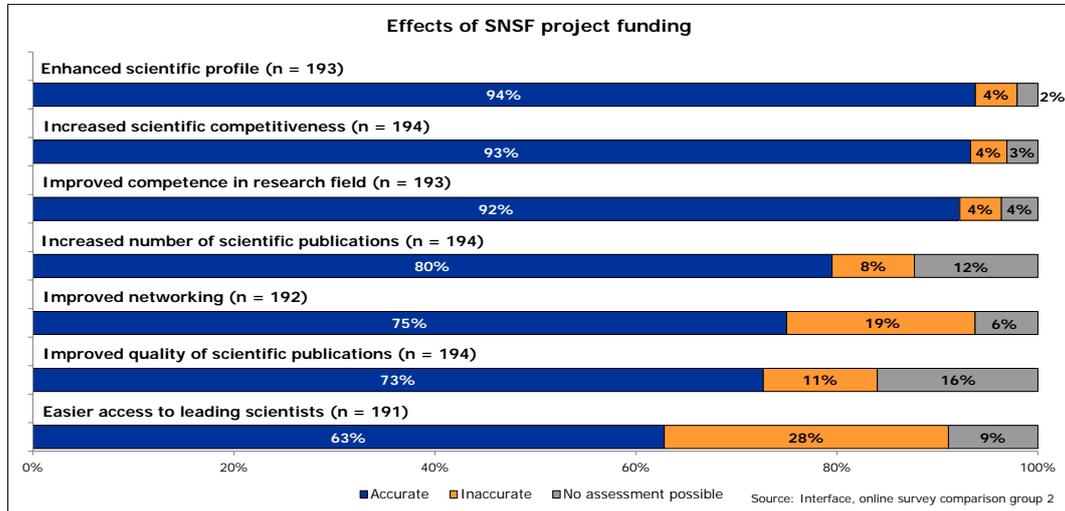
**Figure 5. Effects of Ambizione by field of support**

*Note.* I = humanities and social sciences, n = 59; II = mathematics, natural and engineering sciences, n = 79; III = biology and medicine, n = 65. Survey respondents with “other” main discipline (n = 5) were excluded. \* Only returnees applying from abroad (n = 64).

Interestingly enough, the figure shows that Ambizione funding seems to have – according to the grantees themselves – the strongest impact on researchers in the humanities and social sciences. Agreement with the evaluated effects is similar between

grantees in the other disciplines. The assessment differed only for the effect of improved networking, where grantees with mathematics, natural or engineering sciences as their main discipline show the lowest agreement.

The second comparison group (researchers with SNSF project funding) was asked to evaluate exactly the same statements regarding possible effects of their project funding, with the exception that they were not asked if project funding helped them reintegrate into the Swiss science community (in project funding the responsible applicant is generally affiliated to an institution in Switzerland). The results were as follows.



**Figure 6. Effects of SNSF project funding on the beneficiaries**

The results show an assessment that is very similar to the Ambizione grantees’ assessment. The suggested effects thus do not seem to be particularly attributable to the Ambizione funding scheme, but exist equally for project funding.

**Assessment of deadweight effect**

We asked Ambizione grantees if they would have been able to conduct their research project without the grant (e.g. by finding alternative funding, pursuing the project as part of traditional assistant positions, etc.). The self-declared “deadweight” effect for the Ambizione grantees can be validated by taking the results of comparison group 1, i.e. researchers whose applications for Ambizione grants were rejected, into account. This group is likely to answer truthfully, whereas the grantees’ response can be biased. Table 11 shows the responses of the two groups.

**Table 11: Deadweight Effect with Ambizione Grantees and Rejected Applicants**

Ambizione grantees	Could your research project have been carried out without the Ambizione grant? (n = 208)	
	Yes	36% (74)
	No	64% (134)
Rejected Ambizione applicants (comparison group 1)	Were you still able to conduct the research project for which you submitted the application? (n = 372)	
	Yes	17% (64)
	Yes, but to a smaller extent	34% (127)
	No	49% (181)

Source: Interface, online survey grantees and comparison group 1.

If we look at the group of people with Ambizione grants, we assume a deadweight effect for 36% of the grantees: this means that 36% of the grantees could have proceeded with their projects even without Ambizione grants. Compared to similar funding measures, this is a good-to-average deadweight effect. Looking at the group of people who did not receive Ambizione grants, who are likely to give more trustworthy answers, we can assume a deadweight effect of 51% (17% plus 34%) if we include people who say they could realise their project but to a smaller extent. This latter group is affected by a partial deadweight effect, where the incentive power of the grant is not completely lost but is reduced. A deadweight effect of 51% is still acceptable but could be improved. If we apply a very narrow understanding of the deadweight effect and consider only persons who are affected by a complete deadweight effect, only 17% can be classified as people who would have been able to conduct their projects even without the Ambizione grant. This is a very good result. 46% of the rejected Ambizione applicants said that they were employed at their envisaged host institutions after their application was rejected thanks to funding from other sources. This means that although not receiving Ambizione funding leads to the (partial) death of a project in most cases, it does not necessarily have to be the end of a scientific career at the desired institute, lab, group, etc. But it has to be noted that almost 70% of those saying they were employed at their envisaged host institute after their rejection were already employed at the same institute when they submitted their application for Ambizione.

### **Impact on further career**

An important question in the context of the impact of Ambizione is whether the funding has a substantial influence on the grantees' further careers. Grantees that had not yet finished their Ambizione funding period were asked to estimate the impact of the Ambizione grant on their future career. Comparison group 2 (researchers with SNSF project funding) was asked the same question but with reference to SNSF project funding. Table 12 shows the results for the two groups:

**Table 12: Influence of Ambizione and SNSF project funding on further career**

Did Ambizione/SNSF project funding have an impact on your further career?		
	Yes	No
Ambizione grantees (n = 208)	89% (186)	11% (22)
Researchers with project funding (comparison group 2) (n = 190)	81% (154)	19% (36)

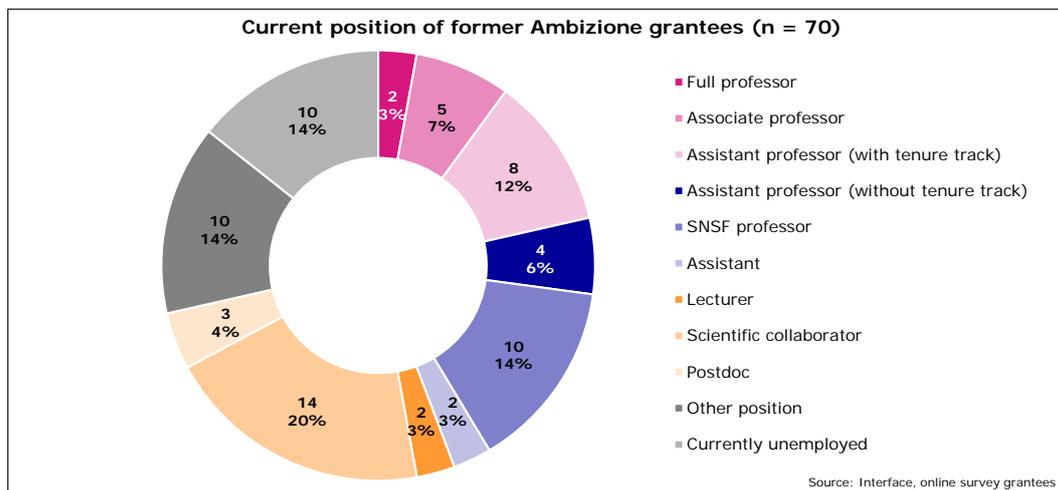
Source: Interface, online survey grantees and comparison group 2.

The share of grantees who stated that Ambizione had or presumably would have an impact on their career was very high. The beneficiaries of SNSF project funding also reported a high impact of the awarded funding on their further career, but the share was somewhat lower than with the Ambizione grantees.

The share of female grantees who thought that Ambizione had influenced or would influence their careers was somewhat higher than among male respondents, but the difference adds up to only 5%. Among the different disciplines, the share of grantees who stated that Ambizione had or would have an impact on their career was highest for grantees in biology or medicine (94%), followed by humanities and social sciences (91%), and mathematics, natural and engineering sciences (88%). The numbers of grantees from the main disciplines within those three fields of support were unfortunately too small to allow a deeper look into the disciplinary differences.

### Influence on career steps

First, let us look at the current positions of Ambizione grantees who participated in the online survey. Of course, this is only possible for survey respondents whose funding period (and thus whose employment as an Ambizione grantee) has already ended. This was the case for a total of 70 persons.



**Figure 7. Current positions of former Ambizione grantees**

*Note.* Other positions are: CEO; director; group head (permanent contract); invited researcher; maître assistant; Ambizione SNSF (follow up grant); maître assistant suppléant; management consultant; permanent INSERM researcher in France; scientist.

As Figure 7 shows, 86% of the 70 survey respondents whose Ambizione funding period had ended are currently employed. A vast majority of these (97%) are still employed in science. More than 40% are employed as assistant professors, associate professors, SNSF professors, or full professors. For 30%, their positions are comparable to the status they had as Ambizione grantees. Only two former grantees who are employed reported that they work in the private sector, public administration or a non-profit organisation. A total of 10 former grant holders (14%) are currently unemployed. The table below shows the same distribution of current positions by gender and field of support.

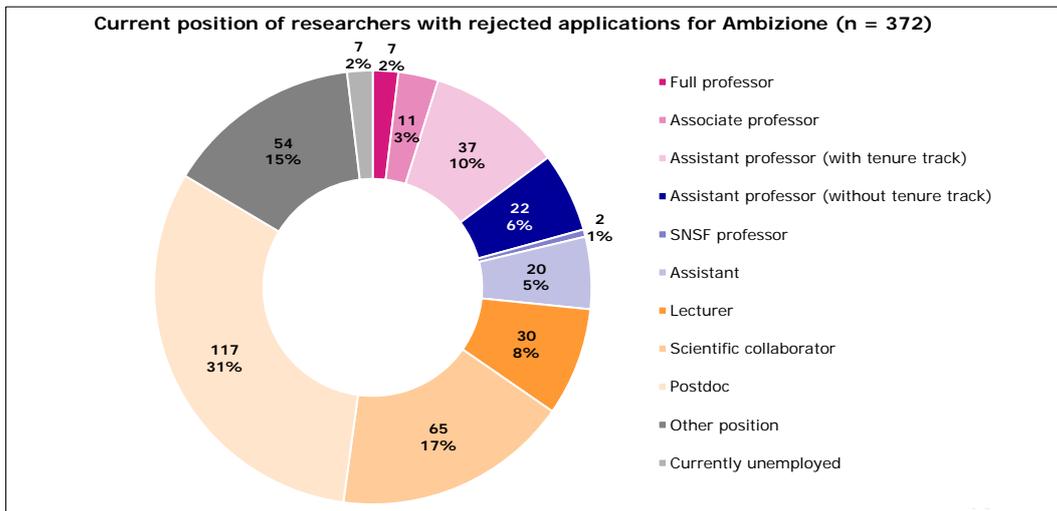
**Table 13: Current positions of former Ambizione grantees by gender and field of support**

Position	Sum	Gender		Field of support		
		Female (n = 22)	Male (n = 46)	I (n = 14)	II (n = 28)	III (n = 25)
Postdoc	3	0 (0%)	3 (100%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)
Scientific collaborator	14	5 (36%)	9 (64%)	3 (21%)	7 (50%)	4 (29%)
Lecturer	2	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	1 (50%)	0	1 (50%)
Assistant	2	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
<b>Total (postdoc or equal)</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
SNSF professor	10	2 (20%)	8 (80%)	1 (10%)	4 (40%)	5 (50%)
Assistant professor (without tenure track)	4	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	0 (0%)	2 (50%)
Assistant professor (with tenure track)	8	4 (50%)	4 (50%)	0 (0%)	5 (62.5%)	3 (37.5%)
Associate professor	5	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)
Full professor	2	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)
<b>Total (professors)</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
Other position	8*	3 (37.5%)	5 (62.5%)	0 (0%)	5 (62.5%)	3 (37.5%)
Currently unemployed	10 (9) **	4 (40%)	6 (60%)	3 (33%)	4 (44%)	2 (22%)

Source: Interface, online survey grantees. \* Gender and field of support missing for two respondents. \*\* Field of support missing for one respondent. Fields of support: I = humanities and social sciences; II = mathematics, natural and engineering sciences; III = biology and medicine.

Of the 22 women whose Ambizione grant period has ended, 23% are still in positions equivalent to a postdoc. 45% currently hold professorships. Four former grantees (18%) are unemployed. Of the 46 male grantees with completed Ambizione funding, 35% are still postdocs or in equivalent positions, while 41% are in professorial positions. 13% are currently unemployed. The results show that among the group of male grantees, the distribution of positions is more even than in the female group. A slightly larger share of women than men is currently employed in professorial positions. On the other hand, the share of former grantees currently unemployed is slightly higher in this group. Of the 10 former Ambizione grantees holding an SNSF professorship, 8 are men. Within the groups of grantees from different fields of support, the share of persons who are in postdoc or equivalent positions today is the highest in field of support I (35%), followed by field of support II (32%) and III (29%). Accordingly, the share of professors is the highest with former grantees from field of support III (43%), followed by field of support I (43%) and II (39%). Of those currently unemployed, 4 persons (44%) are from field of support II, 3 (33%) from field of support I and 2 (22%) from field of support III.

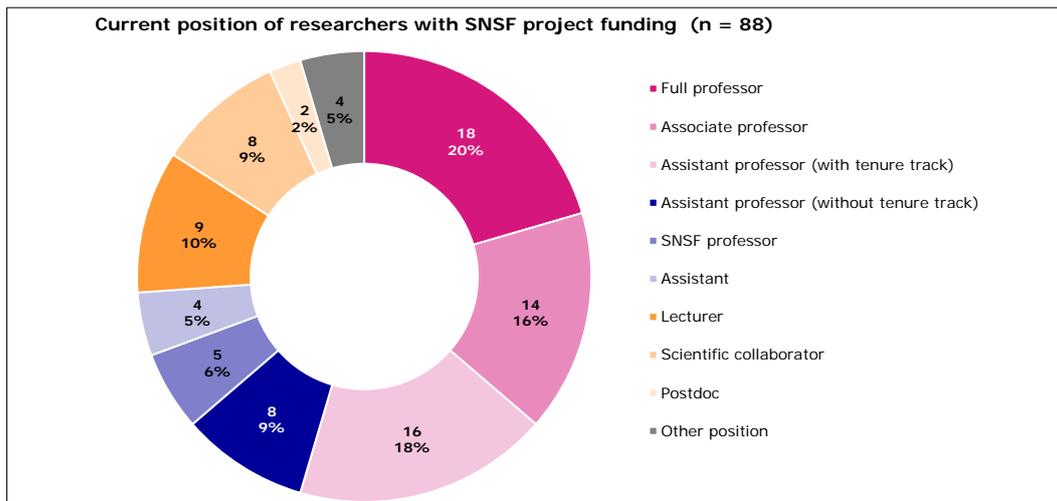
Figures 8 and 9 show the distribution of current positions for the two comparison groups (all respondents from comparison group 1, respondents with terminated SNSF project funding from comparison group 2).



**Figure 8. Current position of respondents from comparison group 1**

Source: Interface, online survey comparison group 1.

*Note.* Other positions are: associated researcher with no salary, i.e. free hang-around; attending physician; chargée de cours suppléante (non-permanent lecturer); diplomat; director, research and development; independent research fellow, group leader; Oberarzt; Oberassistent; permanent researcher; project manager; research associate; research fellow; research scientist; research team leader; researcher (without tenure track); scientific group leader; senior researcher - excellence grant holder; staff researcher; teacher; tenured research scientist.



**Figure 9. Current position of former beneficiaries of SNSF project funding**

Source: Interface, online survey comparison group 2.

*Note.* Other positions are: senior lecturer; senior researcher; senior researcher/lecturer maître d'enseignement et de recherche; tenured research scientist.

The self-reported impact that Ambizione has on the grantees' further careers can be validated by examining the positions that grantees were in before and after the Ambizione funding. We assumed that Ambizione grantees and Ambizione applicants are usually in postdoc or equivalent positions when they submit their applications. We can thus compare their current positions to their postdoc positions before they were funded or applied for funding. These results can be further compared to comparison group 2 (researchers with SNSF project funding). From this group, we included only survey respondents who said that they were postdocs when they started their grant, since they usually started their project funding at a higher level: a total of 42 respond-

ents, or 51%, started their SNSF project funding as professors. Only 17 survey respondents (20%) said that they were postdocs at the time they received project funding.

Table 14 shows a comparison between those 17 researchers, the survey respondents with rejected Ambizione applications, and Ambizione grantees after the end of their funding period.

**Table 14: Positions of Ambizione Grantees and Project Funding Grantees after Grant Period, Current Positions of Rejected Ambizione Applicants**

Position	Ambizione (n = 50)	Rejected Ambizione (n = 311)	SNSF project funding (n = 17)
Postdoc	3 (6%)	117 (38%)	2 (12%)
Scientific collaborator	14 (28%)	65 (21%)	2 (12%)
Lecturer	2 (4%)	30 (10%)	2 (12%)
Assistant	2 (4%)	20 (6%)	3 (18%)
<b>Total (postdoc or equal)</b>	<b>21 (42%)</b>	<b>232 (75%)</b>	<b>9 (53%)</b>
SNSF professor	10 (20%)	2 (0.5%)	1 (6%)
Assistant professor (without tenure track)	4 (8%)	22 (7%)	3 (18%)
Assistant professor (with tenure track)	8 (16%)	37 (12%)	0 (0%)
Associate professor	5 (10%)	11 (3.5%)	0 (0%)
Full professor	2 (4%)	7 (2%)	4 (24%)
<b>Total (professors)</b>	<b>29 (58%)</b>	<b>79 (25%)</b>	<b>8 (47%)</b>

Source: Interface, online survey grantees, comparison groups 1 and 2. Survey participants who were unemployed or in “other” positions were excluded.

The table shows that the share of postdocs who worked as professors after their funding had ended is 58% for Ambizione grantees and 48% for beneficiaries of SNSF project funding, whereas it is only 25% in the group of researchers with rejected applications for Ambizione grants. 75% of the survey respondents in this first comparison group are still employed in postdoc or equal positions. This can be seen as a confirmation of the positive impact that Ambizione funding (as well as SNSF project funding) has on the grantees’ career development, especially taking into consideration that 44% of the survey respondents in comparison group 1 (researchers with rejected Ambizione applications) who remained in postdoc positions received other funding after their grant application was rejected. The presumed age bias in this group was also tested for: the global distribution of positions among researchers with rejected applications for Ambizione stays almost the same if we apply the same age limits as with comparison group 2 (not older than 35 for respondents from field of support II and III or not older than 40 for respondents from field of support I).

An interesting observation is the small number of SNSF professors in comparison group 1, whereas it is much higher for the former Ambizione grantees. This indicates that Ambizione funding is at least conducive to obtaining an SNSF professorship. Although this shows that Ambizione can help grantees receive further funding, which can be seen as a positive effect, we must not forget that SNSF professorships cannot be considered permanent positions. Researchers with SNSF professorships are funded for four years (with the option of a two-year follow-up), but their long-term perspective remains uncertain. The same can of course be said for assistant professorships without tenure track.

If we look only at the positions with a long-term perspective, the share is the highest in the group of former Ambizione grantees (30%), followed by the group of former beneficiaries of SNSF project funding (24%) and applicants for Ambizione (17.5%).

It should be kept in mind that the small number of cases of Ambizione grantees and researchers with project funding under evaluation and the differing group sizes are a clear limitation to the validity of these findings.

### **Impact on scientific independence**

One of the main goals of Ambizione is to boost grantees' scientific independence. In the survey, we asked grantees if they thought that Ambizione had influenced or would influence their scientific independence. Since scientific independence is a concept with very different meanings among the disciplines, the survey respondents were also asked what scientific independence entails in their particular discipline. The responses to this open-ended question can be evaluated qualitatively. Table 15 shows the most frequent answers by Ambizione grantees according to the three SNSF fields of support, listed by order of frequency (all aspects mentioned by more than one person). A complete list of all responses can be found in the data annex.

**Table 15: Definition of Scientific Independence by Research Field**

<b>Humanities and social sciences (n = 50)</b>
Ability to conduct your own research project, choose your own research questions, topics and methodology
Freedom to publish your own papers as sole, first or last author; freedom of choosing journals, books, etc.; increased publication output
Ability to raise your own funds and manage your own budget
Establishing relationships and networks in and outside the research institution
Supervising scientific personnel, leading your own research laboratory
<b>Mathematics, natural and engineering sciences (n = 75)</b>
Freedom to choose and pursue your own research focuses, ideas, methods, etc.
Publishing independently, as corresponding, lead, first, or last author; choosing publications
Ability to acquire your own funding independent of the institution
Supervising PhD students and postdocs; responsibility for your own group
Initiating collaborations in and outside the institution according to your own interests
Developing original ideas and achieving breakthroughs in research field
Being invited to conferences and choosing the conferences to go to
<b>Biology and medicine (n = 59)</b>
Publishing papers as senior/last author
Developing your own research questions; conducting your own research independently
Leading a research group, supervising personnel and theses; choosing the personnel to hire
Having sufficient financial means to conduct your own research; ability to apply for funding independently
Establishing connections with the scientific community; collaborating independently
Being invited to conferences and seminars

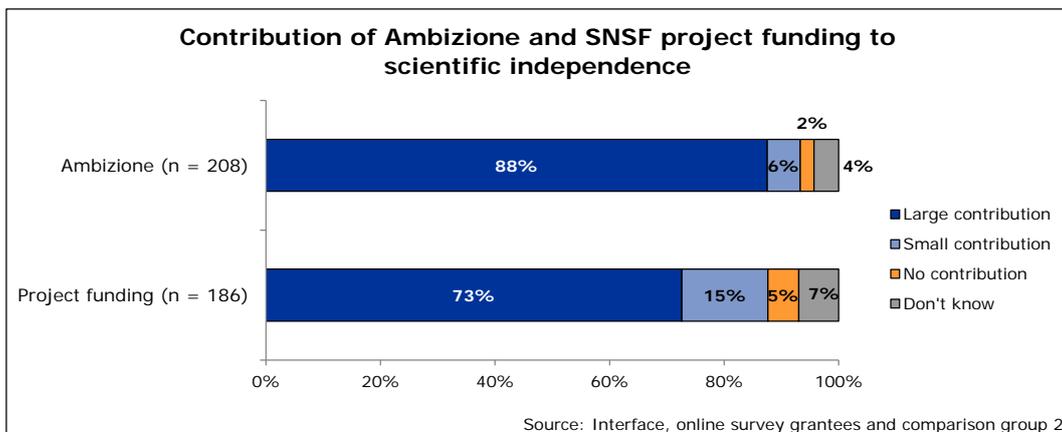
Source: based on the answers to the corresponding open-ended question from the online survey of Ambizione grantees.

Interestingly, the meaning of scientific independence is quite similar in the different research disciplines. All three groups named the same aspects of scientific independence and stated that scientific independence consists mainly in the ability to choose their research focus, the research questions and the methodology independently of the general research direction of their institution, and in publishing papers as lead, first, or last author (depending on discipline). According to the survey respondents, scientific independence means, as one grantee put it, "to develop and explore my research

hypotheses, financial independence, supervision of PhD/master thesis, scientific publications as senior author and national/international collaborations”. In biology and medicine, being able to publish independently of seniors seems to be the most important element of scientific independence. In addition, leading research groups and supervising personnel were mentioned more often than the ability to acquire funding, which was prioritised by the grantees from the other research fields.

Even though facilitating scientific independence is a specific goal of the Ambizione funding scheme, we also asked the comparison group who received SNSF project funding (comparison group 2) if they thought that their funding had had an effect on their scientific independence. This was done to establish if boosting scientific independence can indeed be seen as an impact that distinguishes Ambizione from SNSF project funding.

The survey results for the two groups are shown in Figure 10.



**Figure 10. Impact of Ambizione grants and SNSF project funding on scientific independence**

The figure shows clearly that almost all of the survey respondents thought that Ambizione contributed to their scientific independence. Nearly 90% even stated that this contribution is a large one. Surprisingly, even though boosting scientific independence is not an explicit aim of SNSF project funding, a large share (88%) of the survey respondents in comparison group 2 reported that this type of funding influenced their scientific independence. Comparing the share of survey respondents who thought that this contribution was a large one, we observed a clear difference from the Ambizione grantees. The share of Ambizione grantees who thought that Ambizione contributed in a large way to their scientific independence is 15% higher than the share of SNSF project funding beneficiaries who thought the same about their funding. Also, the share of persons who thought that their funding had not contributed to their scientific independence was twice as high in the comparison group.

The share of survey respondents who thought that Ambizione contributed to their scientific independence was slightly higher (by 4%) in the group of male grantees. The grantees with biology and medicine as their main discipline reported a larger contribution (98%) than grantees in mathematics, natural or engineering sciences (94%) and humanities or social sciences (86%). The small numbers of grantees in the disciplines within the three fields of support do not allow for further distinctions to be made.

The assessment by the Ambizione grantees was complemented by a valid external opinion: we asked Ambizione hosts to compare the Ambizione grantees to their regular postdocs. A very high 97% of the 124 hosts stated that their Ambizione grantees were scientifically more independent. This is an impressive confirmation of the self-reported impact that Ambizione funding has on the grantees' scientific independence.

## **2.5 Impact of Ambizione on hosts**

Not only the impact of Ambizione on its grantees but also the impact of hosting an Ambizione grantee on the hosts who agreed to employ an Ambizione grantee at their institute or in their lab or group was analysed in the evaluation. The evaluation focused on the question as to how host institutions benefit from employing Ambizione grantees and whether they face difficulties integrating Ambizione grantees into the institutions' ongoing activities. The following section summarises the results of the interviews and the online survey.

### **Results of the expert interviews**

The experts saw different ways in which the hosts benefit from employing Ambizione grantees. Besides the ideal case in which the benefits are mainly scientific, the hosts can also benefit financially or enhance the prestige of their institute, lab, or group by hosting promising young researchers (from abroad) who bring their own money with them. One expert stated that hosting Ambizione grantees is particularly beneficial to small institutions, given the increase in research activity and scientific input from outside the country. Another expert said that her/his university has made employment of (third-party financed) grantees, fellows, etc. one of the institution's key strategic goals. One of the prerequisites for hosting an Ambizione grantee is that the hosts confirm their interest in written form. Based on these confirmation letters, one of the experts said, the genuineness of the hosts' interest and their motives can be easily estimated.

### **Results of the case study interviews**

The grantees interviewed also named a number of ways in which their host institute, lab, or group, etc. was able to benefit from their presence. Three of the interviewees said that they benefited the host institute by taking on teaching assignments and supervision of PhD students or other personnel. Three former grantees argued that the host institution profited by being able to employ highly qualified researchers without having to make big investments. For institutions with severe financial restrictions, they said, this aspect is even more important, since it is the third-party financing that allows them to hire postdocs and other scientific personnel in the first place. They also mentioned the hosts' share in funding for overhead expenses as a monetary profit. Two of the interviewees thought that they had broadened the institute's scientific profile and increased its output in terms of publications. Another two grantees thought that the main benefit for the institute is prestige, since the institutes can advertise the employment of Ambizione grantees and holders of other funding scheme grants. One person mentioned that his contacts to his former university abroad helped the host institution in Switzerland establish a collaboration agreement.

### Results of the online survey

In the online survey, we asked the hosts what motivated them to host an Ambizione grantee and to give their opinion regarding a number of possible ways in which they benefited from employing an Ambizione grantee. They were further asked to assess the quality of the Ambizione grantee's research project and the quality of the collaboration with the grantee. We also asked if hosting an Ambizione grantee gave rise to any disadvantages and if the institute faced difficulties providing the grantee with infrastructure, personnel, etc. The results of the survey are presented below.

Table 16 shows the survey respondents' agreement with a number of possible motivations for hosting an Ambizione grantee.

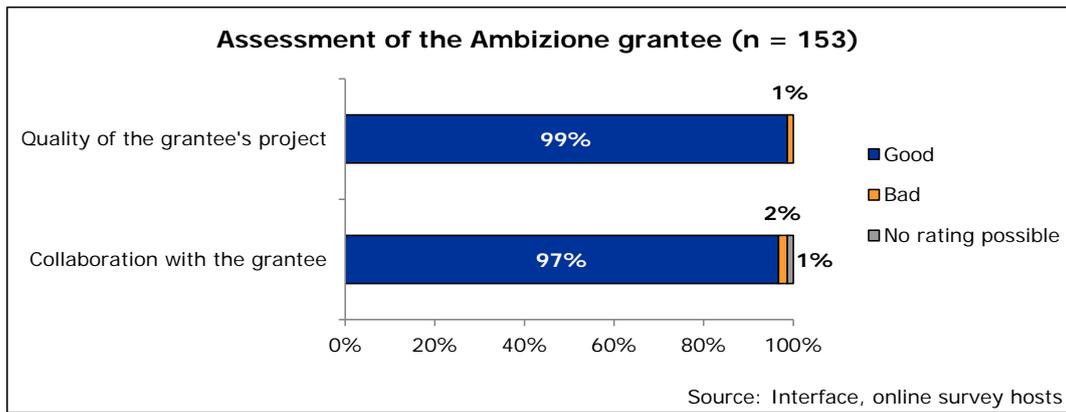
**Table 16: Motivation to Host an Ambizione Grantee (n = 153)**

Motivation	%* (n)
Reputation of the researcher	82% (126)
Research project complements/complemented the main research topics of the institute particularly well (complementarity)	57% (87)
Personal contact with the researcher	54% (83)
Reputation of Ambizione	46% (71)
Earlier cooperation with the researcher	40% (61)
Research project is/was closely in line with the main research topics of the institute (symmetry)	35% (54)
Earlier employment of the researcher with different financing	29% (45)
Expansion of the human or financial resources of the institute	27% (41)
Knowledge transfer	22% (33)
Reputation of the researcher's workplace at the time	14% (22)
Possibility of contacting researchers based abroad	5% (8)
Other reasons	3% (4)

Source: Interface, online survey hosts. \* Multiple responses were possible.

A majority of the hosts participating in the survey named the researchers' reputations as one of the motivations to host them. The Ambizione grantees' research projects, which can broaden the scientific spectrum of the host institute, and previous personal contact with the researchers were also named by more than half of the hosts.

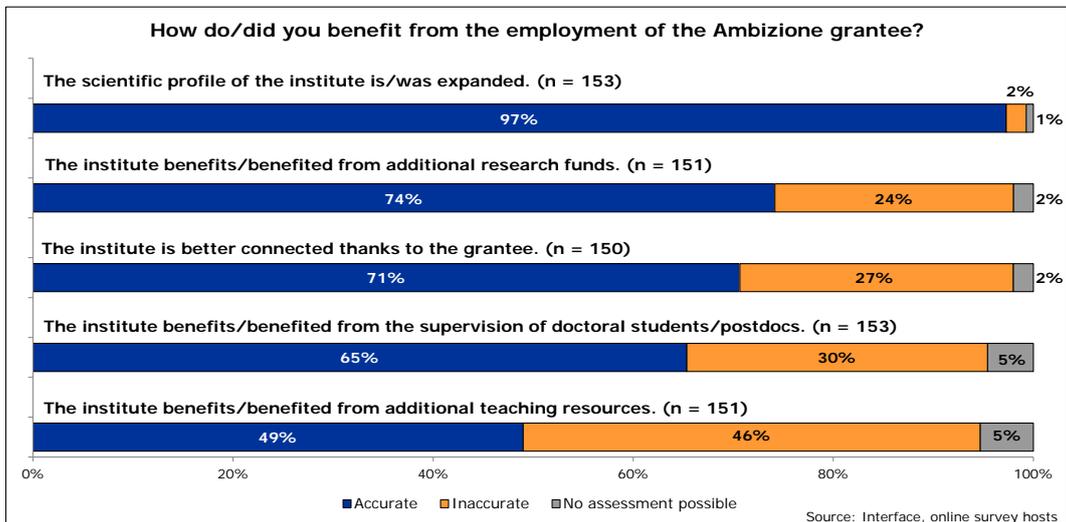
How did the hosts evaluate the quality of the Ambizione research projects and their collaborations with the Ambizione grantees? Figure 11 shows the answers from the survey.



**Figure 11. Hosts' assessments of the quality of the grantee's project and collaboration**

The figure shows that the hosts were highly satisfied with the Ambizione grantees that they hosted at their institutes. Both the quality of the grantees' projects and collaboration with the grantees were rated as good by almost all of the hosts.

Figure 12 shows how the survey respondents rated a number of statements concerning the benefits of hosting an Ambizione grantee.



**Figure 12. Benefits of hosting an Ambizione grantee, according to hosts**

Nearly all of the hosts stated that they benefited through the expansion of their institutes' scientific profile. (Over) two thirds of the survey respondents also agreed that the Ambizione grantees brought additional research funds to their institutes, helped improve the institutes' connections and benefited from the supervision of other scientific personnel by the grantees. A little less than 50% of the hosts confirmed that the institute benefited from additional teaching resources. Presumably, this last observation is caused by the fact that Ambizione host institutes cannot oblige Ambizione grantees to teach during their funding period. The results of the survey with Ambizione grantees showed that 66% (140) of the grantees were actually involved in teaching activities during their funding period. Of those grantees, 62% were of the opinion that their teaching experience significantly influenced their scientific independence. The grantees interviewed in the course of the case studies confirmed this statement, saying that the teaching experience during their Ambizione funding period was important to them and benefited their further career. The grantees interviewed were not compelled

to teach, but agreed to accept small teaching assignments suggested by the hosts or even suggested the idea themselves.

## 2.6 Overarching goals of Ambizione

The evaluation also aimed to examine the attainment of the overarching goals that the SNSF is pursuing with its Ambizione funding scheme. In the surveys and the interviews with experts and grantees, these overarching goals were defined as follows: (1) boosting the grantees' scientific independence, (2) facilitating knowledge transfer to Switzerland, (3) helping researchers from Switzerland who are currently staying abroad reintegrate into the Swiss science community, (4) attracting young talents from outside Switzerland, and (5) offering adequate funding to female scientists and researchers with limited mobility. The evaluation results concerning this subject are presented in the following.

### Results of the expert interviews

The experts were of the opinion that Ambizione is in general a suitable funding scheme for reaching the overarching goals set out above. They gave the following feedback regarding the five overarching goals:

- As stated in section 2.4, the experts strongly believed that Ambizione has a positive influence on the grantees' scientific independence and that this is what mainly distinguishes Ambizione from regular project funding.
- They argued that it can potentially lead to knowledge transfer into Switzerland. One of the experts was of the opinion that the funding scheme does not yet attract enough researchers from outside of the Swiss science system to really generate knowledge transfer. According to this expert, this is mainly because Switzerland offers a very limited number of positions in science, in particular tenure track and permanent positions.
- The experts saw Ambizione as a particularly attractive funding scheme for researchers from Switzerland who are doing research abroad and want to return to the Swiss science community. The experts also said that Ambizione is about to establish itself as a label and is thus helping to improve the competitiveness of its grantees in the global job market. The experts observed a stable balance between the different target groups of Ambizione. There are grantees without any preliminary connection to Switzerland, but the focus is still on researchers returning to the Swiss science community, as was the main intention when the funding scheme was launched. The number of applicants and grantees with limited international mobility is very small. As the funding instrument becomes better known internationally, one of the experts argued, questions about the funding scheme's focus will arise. The SNSF will have to decide if Ambizione should mainly be a funding scheme for young Swiss talents or should be aimed at boosting Switzerland as a location for science. If the number of applications continues to rise, the SNSF will also have to deal with the problem of lower success rates, which can make the funding scheme unattractive. This is also linked to the question as to whether Ambizione should be more of a broad funding instrument, where a wide range of persons are granted limited funding, or more of a narrow instrument focusing entirely on scientific excellence and a smaller number of highly qualified persons who are awarded larger grants.

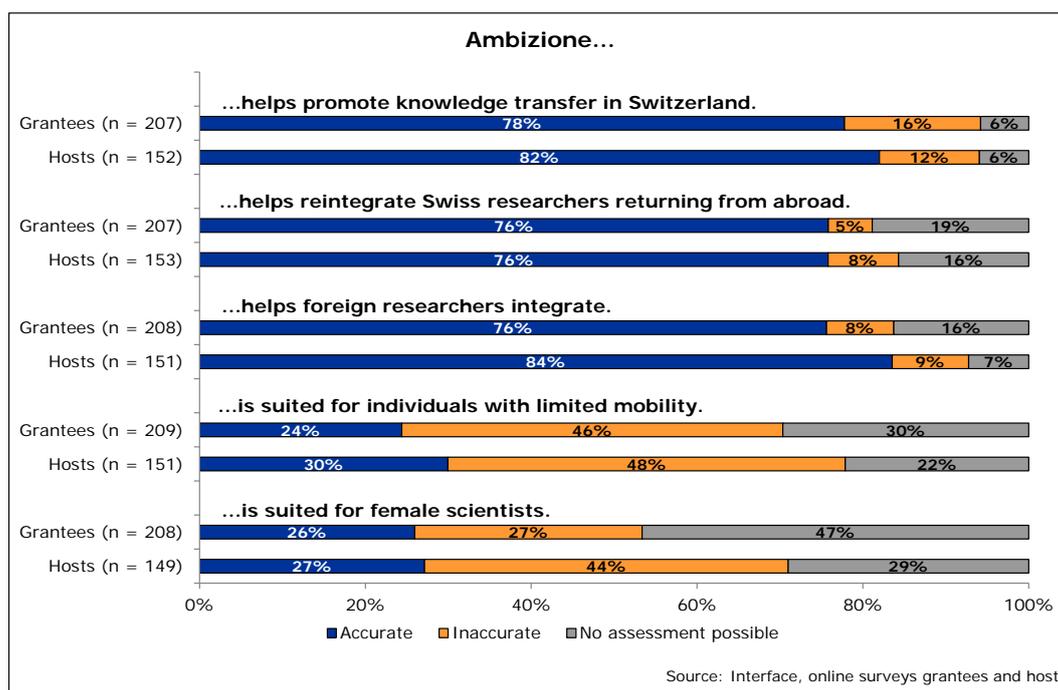
- According to the experts, room for improvement remains in terms of gender equality. The rate of female grantees has fluctuated in the past years and hence needs to be closely observed. The discussion among the experts revolved around the question as to whether the SNSF should control women's participation, for example by using a temporary quota system, or if Ambizione should be a gender neutral funding scheme, which rewards only scientific excellence. It was also argued that, already now, female applicants are given preference in the case of equal qualifications. At the same time, gender equality was said to be threatened by the funding scheme's mobility requirements. Five of the experts pointed out that if Ambizione is a funding scheme directed equally at female and male researchers, the board of experts evaluating the Ambizione applications should include more women.

### Results of the case study interviews

Like the experts, the Ambizione grantees interviewed regarded the funding scheme as suitable for transferring knowledge to the Swiss science community. According to some of the interviewees, Ambizione can even increase Switzerland's reputation as a science location. They also thought that Ambizione is a good funding instrument for researchers from Switzerland who are currently abroad and looking to return to Switzerland. Some grantees stated that equal funding for researchers with limited international mobility, especially women, can be threatened by the funding scheme's mobility requirements.

### Results of the online surveys

Ambizione grantees and hosts were asked for their opinion regarding the attainment of the overarching goals of Ambizione. Figure 13 shows the results in summary.



**Figure 13.** Grantees' and hosts' assessments of statements regarding overarching goals

The statements were generally assessed quite similarly by grantees and hosts and did not differ greatly between the genders or disciplines. Regarding the overarching goals individually, the surveys yielded the following results:

Knowledge transfer: both grantees and hosts agreed that Ambizione helps generate knowledge transfer to Switzerland. The online survey can be used to verify if Ambizione can actually facilitate knowledge transfer. If researchers are merely brought (back) to the Swiss science community for a limited period of time and leave after they complete their Ambizione funding, there is no long-term knowledge transfer into Switzerland. Table 17 shows if and where former grantees who have finished their Ambizione funding period in the different target groups are employed today.

**Table 17: Current Employment of Former Ambizione Grantees**

Target group*	Employed in Switzerland	Employed outside Switzerland	Unemployed	Σ	Working in science** (%)
Incoming	13 (48%)	10 (37%)	4 (15%)	<b>27</b>	22 (96%)
Returning	36 (88%)	-	5 (12%)	<b>41</b>	36 (100%)
Limited Mobility	1 (50%)	-	1 (50%)	<b>2</b>	1 (100%)

Source: online survey grantees. \* Incoming = Researchers not holding a Swiss passport who obtained their doctorate abroad; Returning = Researchers from Switzerland who obtained their doctorate abroad or completed a postdoctoral stay abroad; Limited Mobility = Researchers from Switzerland who obtained their doctorate in Switzerland and have not been abroad for a postdoctoral stay. A detailed description of the different target groups can be found in the annex 5.34. \*\* Share of persons who are not unemployed. Science means universities, university hospitals, universities of applied sciences, or research facilities outside academia.

- All of the 36 returnees in the survey sample who have finished their Ambizione funding and are currently employed are still working in Switzerland and are still working in science. They have thus been successfully brought back to the Swiss science community on a long-term basis.
- More than half of the incoming grantees who are currently employed could be retained in the Swiss science community. The integration into the Swiss science community can be deemed successful.
- Due to small numbers, no conclusion can be drawn regarding grantees affected by limited mobility.

Facilitating reintegration for returning scientists: a large share of both grantees and hosts stated that Ambizione helps researchers from Switzerland reintegrate; 81% of the grantees classified as returnees were of the opinion that Ambizione helps researchers from Switzerland who are abroad to reintegrate into the Swiss science community. This is above the average of all grantees. In addition, 71% of the returnees said that the possibility of returning to the Swiss science community was a significant reason why they applied for Ambizione funding.

Helping researchers from abroad integrate into the Swiss science community: a large number of survey respondents in both groups found that Ambizione is suitable for helping researchers from abroad integrate into the Swiss science community. Looking only at the responding grantees classified as incoming, we see that a well-above-average 90% of these grantees agreed that Ambizione is suitable for foreign researchers to integrate.

Suitability for researchers with limited mobility: the statement according to which Ambizione is suitable for researchers with limited international mobility was not supported as strongly by the responding grantees and hosts. More than 45% in both groups thought that this is not the case.

Suitability for women: a third of the hosts and almost half of the grantees who participated in the survey were not able to evaluate the statement that Ambizione is suitable for women. Two-thirds of the grantees and more than 50% of the hosts who gave an answer did not think that Ambizione is particularly suitable for female researchers. Evaluating the assessments by gender (only those answering this item), 47% of the female survey respondents were of the opinion that Ambizione is particularly suitable for women. Again, this is well above the average of all grantees surveyed. Interestingly, the share of women who thought that Ambizione is suitable for female researchers is higher than the share of the male survey respondents who answered this item by 20%.

### 3. Synthesis and concluding remarks

This chapter presents a synthesis of the results of the Ambizione evaluation according to the six evaluation objectives that were examined. Based on this, we will then draw conclusions regarding the Ambizione funding scheme as a whole.

#### 3.1 Synthesis

##### **Funding concept of Ambizione**

The Ambizione funding scheme is based on a concept that can be generally considered sensible and adequate. The concept seems coherent, which means the funding measure is suited to the attainment of the funding scheme's goals. The distribution of the funds also seems sensible and accords with the SNSF's intention for Ambizione: Ambizione is neither generous funding for a small circle of selected researchers with a very low success rate, nor is it an overly broad funding scheme that is easy to attain. A clear advantage of the Ambizione funding concept is that it is flexible enough to allow for the individual evaluation of applications. This is particularly important in the case of Ambizione, since the funding scheme is directed at different target groups with differing needs and at researchers in different disciplines. Furthermore, Ambizione is the most eligible as a funding option at a time in a young researcher's career when plans to start a family can restrict international mobility, so the regulations have to allow for funding of these researchers, too, if knowledge transfer and knowledge building are understood as overarching, long-term goals of Ambizione. The flexibility of the concept depends highly on how the SNSF and the National Research Council handle the evaluation procedure. The evaluation at hand showed that, right now, the aspired case-by-case evaluation is indeed being put into practice. The duration of Ambizione funding is criticised, but an appropriate change is foreseeable in the near future.

##### **Implementation of Ambizione**

The support provided by the SNSF can be considered to work very well. Help is quick and low-threshold. The support by the host institutions is also appreciated by a majority of the Ambizione grantees. Good infrastructures are available to the Ambizione grantees at the host institutes, and a rather high share of grantees is actually supported by scientific personnel, who are quite often funded or at least co-funded by the host institute itself. Integration into the host institutes can be considered to function well in most cases. There have been individual cases of failed integration, however. In these cases, the SNSF's options for responding to the situation seem rather limited.

##### **Reach of the Ambizione funding scheme**

Ambizione has reached all of its target groups so far. The largest share of the grantees is returnees, which matches the original idea behind the funding scheme. Ambizione is also becoming increasingly popular among foreign researchers, and incoming grantees are the second largest target group. The number of grantees affected by limited international mobility is very small, but the evaluation does not allow us to conclude whether this means that Ambizione does not reach this target group adequately or that the researchers eligible for Ambizione funding have no difficulties complying with the mobility requirements.

The evaluation results show that Ambizione not only reaches its target groups but also satisfies the target groups' specific needs. This is particularly the case for searchers

from Switzerland using Ambizione to return to the Swiss science community after a stay abroad, which is the funding scheme's main target group. Ambizione can be considered to be widely known, not only among researchers from the Swiss science community itself but also among researchers from abroad. This is a prerequisite for building up Ambizione as an internationally known and respected label, which can then boost the former grantees' competitiveness and prospects on the job market for scientists. Researchers with project funding who are familiar with the Ambizione funding scheme but never applied for it thought that they did not comply with the funding requirements or thought that SNSF project funding was more suitable for their purposes. This is also a positive result, confirming that Ambizione has its specific target groups.

### **Impact of Ambizione on grantees**

The evaluation showed that Ambizione is an effective funding measure with manifold impacts on its grantees and that it is subject to a low deadweight effect that only seems to affect 17% of the grantees. Most importantly, Ambizione boosts the scientific independence of the grantees, which is in accordance with its main goal: 90% of the grantees think that Ambizione contributes substantially to their scientific independence. Ambizione grantees further show more scientific independence than postdocs without Ambizione funding. The question as to whether Ambizione has a greater impact on scientific independence than other funding measures, e.g. SNSF project funding, remains open. Our survey suggests that SNSF project funding has an almost equally high impact on scientific independence as Ambizione, but this finding is based on self-reports of the survey respondents.

The Ambizione grantees are also convinced that Ambizione has had or will have a positive effect on their further career. The survey results show that 86% of the grantees who have finished their Ambizione funding are currently employed, nearly all of them in science. Over 40% (29) of all former Ambizione grant holders managed to attain positions as professors. A third (10) of these professorships are funded by the SNSF, which means they cannot be considered permanent. Adding those who are in non-tenure-track positions (4), half of the former Ambizione grantees with professorships are still in uncertain long-term situations. Unfortunately, the number of grantees who have finished their Ambizione funding period is still rather small and data interpretation thus subject to uncertainty.

### **Impact of Ambizione on hosts**

Ambizione has many positive effects on the host institutions and hosts. The institutes benefit mostly from the broadening of their scientific profile and additional research activity. This finding is supported by the fact that most of the hosts state that they were motivated to host their last Ambizione grantee by the researcher's reputation and the researcher's project. Along with these scientific benefits, there is also a financial benefit that is not to be underestimated. The host institutes are entitled to share in the overhead, grantees bring their own money, and they are considered more independent than regular postdocs. This means low support intensity for the host institutes. Factoring in the high quality of the Ambizione grantees' projects, the benefits of hosting Ambizione grantees for the hosts are considerable. Disadvantages were observed in a rather small number of cases and were caused by the need to acquire additional infrastructure in most cases. Of the hosts surveyed, 13% (17) said they encountered difficulties providing support due to a lack of financial resources.

### **Overarching goals of Ambizione**

The evaluation yielded positive results with regard to the overarching goals of Ambizione:

- Knowledge transfer or at least win-back of knowledge is attained. Large shares of returnees and former grantees classified as incoming remain in the Swiss science system once their Ambizione funding has ended.
- Ambizione is a funding scheme that is particularly interesting for returnees but is attractive for researchers from abroad as well. The funding scheme's suitability for researchers with limited mobility cannot be evaluated with certainty, but we did not find any evidence that this group is marginalised or excluded from Ambizione funding.
- The evaluation of women's participation in the funding scheme depends on the figures used. The shares of female grantees over the observed time period have been above the target value of 35% in all years except 2013, when it was slightly lower. If we look at the success rate by gender, we observe that it has been lower with female than with male applicants, but it remained (well) above 20%, again with the exception of 2013. Women's participation cannot be seen as a problem at the present time, but the further development of share and success rate will have to be closely monitored.

### **3.2 Concluding remarks**

After six years running time, Ambizione has become a relevant, effective, and highly appreciated SNSF funding scheme for researchers inside and outside the Swiss science community. Based on the evaluation, Ambizione does indeed show the desired effects on the grantees. Most importantly, funding through Ambizione positively influences the grantees' scientific independence – whatever the definition of scientific independence might be according to the grantees in the different disciplines. Ambizione is a funding scheme for young researchers in all fields. Ambizione also has a significant impact on the further career of the grantees, whether in Switzerland or abroad. Receiving an Ambizione grant also signals worthiness of support and thereby helps researchers to attract further funding from the SNSF or other funding agencies.

Satisfaction with the Ambizione funding scheme can be considered very high with almost all of the grantees. The grantees and the hosts, as well as the persons responsible for the implementation of the funding scheme at the SNSF are generally happy with Ambizione in its current form. Some potential for optimisation remains and can be exploited by making minor adjustments to the Ambizione regulations, which have proven flexible enough in the past:

- The grantees have a strong demand for scientific personnel to support them with their Ambizione project. They criticised that Ambizione did not allow them to hire such personnel using the grant. This has already been changed and implemented by the SNSF in its current funding regulations.
- The wish to extend the funding period from three to four years was expressed by the responsible people at the host institutes as well as by the grantees. The SNSF supports this idea, and the implementation of a four-year funding period is currently being discussed.

- The unequal treatment of Ambizione grantees at the different host institutions is mentioned by some of the grantees and the experts from the host institutions. Difficulties seem to lie in the formal definition of the position of the Ambizione grantees at the institution and in the requirements that are presented to the grantees by their host institutes, labs, groups, etc. The SNSF works as the one mediating body between the grantees and the host institutes and tries to intervene in severe cases, but the grantees are asking for even greater support from the SNSF with regard to their interaction with the host institutes, their position at the host institutes, compliance with the Ambizione regulations by the host institutes, etc. The SNSF will thus have to further develop this function in the future or consider creating an independent office that could be responsible for coordination, moderation, and – if necessary – troubleshooting concerning the interaction between host institutions, grantees and the SNSF.
- Equal funding of female and male researchers is not threatened at the present time, and the SNSF's target value for the participation of women has been achieved in the past six years. However, this issue calls for closer attention. Compliance with the target value for the funding of women should be closely observed, and the target value itself should be regularly reviewed and changed if appropriate. Time will tell if the drop in the success rate of female applicants in 2013 is a trend or an outlier. In addition, the share of female members in some evaluation committees, namely the evaluation committee in mathematics, natural and engineering sciences, is quite low. The NRC should work towards nominating more female scientists as members of the council's evaluation committee.

The SNSF has reached most of the overarching goals set for the Ambizione funding scheme. Ambizione is suitable for generating knowledge transfer to Switzerland and thus benefits not only the funded researchers but also the Swiss science location as a whole. Young, promising researchers are not only brought (back) into the Swiss science system, but a lot of them – returnees in particular – are also retained there. Ambizione reaches its target groups and, at the present time, the balance between researchers from Switzerland using Ambizione to return and foreign researchers with or without preliminary connections to Switzerland can be considered good.

The evaluation results do not call for immediate action in any particular area of Ambizione. Over the next five years, some minor adjustments to the Ambizione regulations can be considered in order to further improve the already well-functioning funding scheme. If this development is accompanied by regular monitoring of former Ambizione grantees, the SNSF will be able to draw a continuous picture of the Ambizione grantee population and trace its scientific onward journey. This will help the funding agency to further improve its Ambizione funding scheme and to further adapt it to the needs of the different target groups and disciplines. Ideas for a monitoring system of this kind for Ambizione are outlined in the following chapter.

## 4. Thoughts on a monitoring system for Ambizione

Monitoring is the systematic recording or surveying of a process or course of events. Monitoring is typically organised periodically, so that data collected at individual points in time can be compared. The SNSF seeks to implement a monitoring system to keep track of its grant holders and has decided to use the evaluation of the Ambizione funding scheme to develop an exemplary monitoring system for Ambizione grantees.

The main objective of the monitoring system is the possibility of tracing the grantees' further career development by the time SNSF support has ended or – in the cases where Ambizione grants are followed by SNSF professorships – another period of SNSF funding has started. Since Ambizione aims to boost its grantees' scientific independence and thereby seeks to increase their competitiveness on the job market for scientists and to positively influence their (scientific) career, the benefit of monitoring Ambizione grantees' is particularly promising.

We discussed possible ways to monitor Ambizione grantees or SNSF alumni in general in the course of the interviews with experts and grantees, and at a session with the Specialised Committee Careers. Although all of the interviewees and the SNSF agree that the monitoring of beneficiaries of research funding agencies is a fruitful undertaking and would make sense for Ambizione, two different approaches to organising such a monitoring concept have been discussed:

- The first approach suggests a holistic monitoring concept that includes the SNSF as a whole and draws on the SNSF's general funding policy. In this concept, the monitoring of the SNSF grantees is embedded in an alumni system and this system can be used to gather and disseminate information, enable networking, and – as a long-term objective – support the process of identity forming. The SNSF initiated an alumni platform only recently that could be used for installing a monitoring system of this type.
- The second approach consists of a narrower, more focused concept where monitoring is geared to the specific characteristics of the Ambizione grantees. An advantage of this second approach is that the survey instruments developed for this evaluation can also be used for the monitoring, and the monitoring can be specifically catered to the Ambizione funding scheme. This also means that the evaluation at hand would already be the first survey wave of a future monitoring.

The second approach above is in accordance with the opinion of the SNSF and will therefore be elaborated here. We will not go further into the idea of organising monitoring via an alumni system. If a monitoring system is developed specifically for Ambizione, questions arise regarding the adequate monitoring method and design. We present our ideas regarding these aspects in the following.

### **Monitoring method**

We suggest using online surveys to monitor the Ambizione grantees. In any case, monitoring requires the possibility to link the subjects throughout the different waves of the survey if grantees are surveyed more than once. Otherwise, tracing individual

careers of former grantees and detecting shifts in the evaluation of the Ambizione funding scheme over time will not be possible. This can be achieved by attributing a personal identification number to each Ambizione grantee to which answers can be related while preserving the survey participants' anonymity.

### Survey design

The monitoring of the Ambizione grantees could be organised as a cross-section or longitudinal survey. A cross-section survey would mean that each grantee is invited to participate in one survey, for example at the end of his/her Ambizione funding period. Participation in the survey could be made compulsory, tying it to acceptance of the grantees' final reports. A longitudinal, or cohort<sup>8</sup> study, design contains more than one survey at multiple points in time. Since the monitoring of Ambizione grantees is particularly aimed at tracing the former grantees' further career development, and since grantees might not find a position or be able to evaluate the impact of their Ambizione funding right after their funding period has ended, we suggest using a longitudinal design with two survey waves for each grantee. This allows for measurement of the short- and long-term impact of the funding on both individual and aggregate levels. Table 18 shows an example of a monitoring design with two survey waves for each finishing grantee, one after the end of the funding period and one four years later.

**Table 18: Cohort Study Design with Two Survey Waves**

Year Ambizione funding ends (cohorts)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	...
2010	X									
2011	X		X							
2012	X			X						
2013	X				X					
2014		X				X				
2015			X				X			
2016				X				X		
2017					X				X	
...						X				X

Source: own figure. x = surveys. Years with extensive data evaluation and reporting are shaded grey.

The first Ambizione cohort is the group of grantees that finished their funding period in 2010, since the first Ambizione grants were awarded only in 2008 and the SNSF database shows that no grantees finished in 2008 or 2009. Since all of the grantees whose funding periods ended in 2011, 2012, and 2013 were included in the sample of the evaluation survey, it can be considered the first survey wave of the monitoring cycle for these cohorts. Since the 2010 cohort finished their funding period four years prior to our evaluation, the survey for the evaluation can be considered the first and second survey wave for this cohort. The first regular wave of first surveys will be launched in 2015 and will include the 2014 cohort. The first regular wave of second surveys will be set in 2016 with the 2011 cohort. We suggest that the SNSF define a specific point in time to conduct the survey each year. Since the number of grantees who finish their funding period each year is usually rather small (7 grantees in 2010, 30 grantees in 2011, 45 grantees in 2012, 46 grantees in 2013 and 12 grantees so far in 2014), extensive data evaluation and detailed reporting need not be done every year

<sup>8</sup> Cohorts are groups of subjects with a common defining characteristic. In this case, we compose cohorts according to the year in which Ambizione funding ends.

but at regular intervals. We suggest conducting descriptive data evaluation every year and more detailed data evaluation and reporting every four years. The data evaluation can be done by either the Administrative Offices of the SNSF or an external firm. To ensure compatibility, it is important to conduct and evaluate all the surveys in an identical manner.

The questionnaire developed for the survey with Ambizione grantees in the course of the evaluation at hand can also be used for monitoring purposes, but we suggest reducing it to a small number of key questions relevant for career monitoring. The number of questions and topics examined will differ between the first and second survey waves. The first questionnaire, which will be used for the survey right after the end of the funding period, could focus on experiences as an Ambizione grantee, the quality of the integration into the host institute and collaboration with the host institute, the support by scientific personnel and teaching activities during the funding period, the grantees' plans for the future, and their future position or further funding. The questionnaire for the second survey should focus more on the career development of the grantees after the end of the Ambizione funding period and will include questions about their positions after the end of their Ambizione funding period.

A list of questions suitable for the two survey waves can be found in the annex (5.5).

# Annex

## 4.1 Expert interview partners

Name	Function	Expert group
Prof. Lukas Baumgartner	President of the Ambizione evaluation committee in field of support II, member of the Specialised Committee Careers and the NRC	1
Antonio Currao	SNSF Careers Division, Responsible for the Ambizione funding scheme	1
Matthias Hirt	Research Promotion and Assessment, University of Bern	2
Maryline Maillard	Head Research Promotion Service, University of Fribourg	2
Prof. Katia Saporiti	President of the Specialised Committee Careers and member of the NRC	1
Beate Scholz	Scholz Consulting Training Coaching	3
Prof. Ernst-Ludwig Winnacker	Secretary General of the Human Frontier Science Program (HFSP)	3

*Note.* Group 1 = experts from within the SNSF/the NRC; Group 2 = experts from universities; Group 3 = experts from abroad.

## 4.2 Case study portraits

### 4.2.1 Case study 1

Our first case study portrays a female Swiss scientist in health science. She studied at the University of Bern, where she obtained her master's degree in clinical psychology, social psychology and philosophy in 1999. She completed her PhD in clinical psychology with a focus on health psychology at the University of Fribourg in 2004. She spent one year as a visiting scholar in the social psychology program at New York University during her time as a PhD student, funded by the SNSF fellowship for prospective researchers (today called Early Postdoc.Mobility fellowship). After completing her PhD, she went to the University of Bern, where she worked as a postdoctoral research fellow at the Swiss Childhood Cancer Registry at the Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine for three years. She then used an SNSF fellowship for advanced researchers (today called Advanced Postdoc.Mobility fellowship) to continue her postdoctoral studies as a visiting postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Sheffield in the UK. After having spent one year at the University of Sheffield, she applied for an Ambizione grant in order to transfer back to the University of Bern. She was granted funding in the second half of 2008 and started working as a senior research fellow at the University of Bern's Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine in August 2009 until 2013. In 2012, she received a follow-up Ambizione grant lasting for 24 months. She also applied for an SNSF professorship, but was appointed associate professor in health and social behaviour in the Health Sciences & Health Policy Department at the University of Lucerne shortly after submission of the application. She completed her habilitation (postdoctoral teaching qualification) in social and preventive medicine at the University of Bern in 2013.

She discovered the SNSF's Ambizione funding scheme in 2008, shortly after she had started working as a postdoc at the University of Sheffield. She heard about the funding scheme through the SNSF newsletter. She was immediately intrigued by the new

funding scheme and started working on her application shortly after the funding scheme had been launched. After the project was approved by the Swiss Paediatric Oncology Group for using data from the Swiss Childhood Cancer Registry, she submitted her application for Ambizione. Since she had not yet completed her stay at the University of Sheffield, her Ambizione funding period did not start until more than a year after the application was submitted. She had not decided where she would go after her stay in the UK, but she was hoping there would be a possibility of returning to Switzerland eventually. Once she knew about the Ambizione funding scheme she was sure she would go back. She says that for her, Ambizione seemed to be the perfect funding scheme to be able to return to Switzerland at that time.

The former Ambizione grantee portrayed had no difficulties whatsoever complying with the funding requirements. She supports the idea of tying funding to mobility requirements, saying that mobility is crucial for being competitive on today's science job market anyway. She also argued that with a regular funding period of three years and a follow-up of two years, her Ambizione funding period had an ideal duration. The funding amount was also appropriate. Whenever she needed assistance, she was helped quickly and straightforwardly by the staff at the SNSF. The second evaluation round of her application collided with her due date for the birth of her first child, but she was allowed to postpone the interview without any problems. She also had her second child during her time as an Ambizione grantee; her Ambizione period thus included one maternity leave, and she worked 80% from the beginning of her funding period in 2009. This has never been a problem for her or for the SNSF, she says.

As she had been in a postdoc position at the University of Bern before and initiated a research project there, the University of Bern seemed to be the natural choice for her Ambizione host institution. Sure enough, she could use the Ambizione grant to continue her research at the university's Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine. During her time as an Ambizione grantee she was supported by two student assistants. At that time, it was not permitted to use Ambizione grant funds to employ doctoral students or postdocs. She says that even though she had assistance to some extent, she would have preferred to hire a doctoral student to support her with her research project. Other than that, she was sufficiently supported in terms of infrastructure and assistance by the host institute. The collaboration with the host institute, she says, worked very well. It helped that she had been at the same institute before and already knew the people working there. There was a good balance between integration into the host institute and scientific independence at all times. Besides working on her Ambizione project, she was also able to advance the studies that she had been involved in as a regular postdoc. This collaboration is still ongoing today.

The researcher portrayed is convinced that she would not have been able to conduct her research project in the same manner without Ambizione funding. She would have had to rely on an alternative job offer, or – in the case of SNSF project funding – she would not have been able to apply as lead applicant and, again, would have had to depend on somebody else.

During her time as an Ambizione grantee at the University of Bern, she applied for an assistant professorship in psychology at the University of Bern without success. Shortly after, she came across a job advertisement for the associate professorship at the University of Lucerne that she holds today. Since the funding period of her follow-

up Ambizione grant had not ended when she took up her position as an associate professor at the University of Lucerne's Health Sciences & Health Policy Department, she was allowed to take the remaining parts of her Ambizione follow-up grant to the University of Lucerne. She could also hire a postdoc to support her with her research project for a period of 10 months.

The associate professorship was a clear career step for this former Ambizione grantee. In Switzerland, positions like that are very rare, she says, and there are usually a lot of applicants. She was even a little surprised that she was chosen for this position. She is sure that Ambizione helped her get the professorship, since it showed that she is capable of acquiring her own funds. She sees Ambizione mainly as a "review" or label with which the grantees can show that they merit funding.

Ambizione, she concludes, was a great funding scheme for her if not the best funding she has had so far. Apart from the possibility of hiring doctoral students or postdocs with the Ambizione grant, which has been implemented in the meantime, she sees no room for improvement.

#### 4.2.2 Case study 2

Our second case study portrays a male Swiss scientist in ecology. He studied at the University of Neuchâtel, where he specialised in ecology and systematics and obtained his diploma in 2002. He stayed at the University of Neuchâtel and completed a PhD in 2006. He then spent five years as a postdoctoral research associate at the New York-based Agrawal Lab at Cornell University, funded by an SNSF fellowship for prospective researchers (today called Early Postdoc.Mobility fellowship) and an SNSF fellowship for advanced researchers (today called Advanced Postdoc.Mobility fellowship). In 2010 he applied for an Ambizione grant in order to return to Switzerland. He was granted funding and started working at the Department of Ecology & Evolution at the University of Lausanne in 2011. During his time as an Ambizione grantee, he successfully applied for a number of positions in Switzerland and abroad. He was appointed assistant professor in ecology at the University of California, Irvine, in 2013 and finished his Ambizione funding period six months early. He is bound to return to Switzerland, where he will start working as an assistant professor at the University of Neuchâtel in early 2015.

The former Ambizione grantee says that the funding requirements are adequate and that he had no difficulties complying with them. The funding amount was sufficient, and he did not use up the grant completely. The duration of the funding was appropriate for his own project but kept him from hiring a doctoral student. He did not need a lot of advice or support from the SNSF during his time as an Ambizione grantee, he says, but he was helped whenever he had questions.

He chose the University of Lausanne as his host institution because of the good reputation of the university as a whole and the prominence of his host institute in his research discipline, in particular. He says that the collaboration with his host institute worked very well. He was highly independent and could pursue his own research and set his own research focuses but at the same time never felt excluded. He took on small teaching assignments voluntarily. During his time as an Ambizione grantee, he was allowed to use the institute's infrastructure and was given additional financial support. He was supported by a technician whom he hired using parts of the

Ambizione grant. He was further supported by student assistants. He would have liked to hire a doctoral student, but the duration of the funding made this impossible. The doctoral student would not have been able to finish his or her PhD in time within the Ambizione grantee's funding period. The researcher portrayed says that the start-up time usually involved in taking up new projects should not be underestimated, and it shortens the time available to actually work on the project even more. He is convinced that he benefited the host institute through his teaching activities and supervision of students. The collaboration with his former host institute is still ongoing today. Since his former Ambizione project is still running, he visits the institute on a regular basis.

The former Ambizione grantee believes that he would not have been able to conduct his research project without Ambizione. He says that he has clearly made a career step and that Ambizione helped him achieve this step. He is now in a tenure track assistant professor position and supervises his own team. For him, the most important impact of Ambizione was that he was able to advance his scientific independence a great deal and establish himself in the scientific community.

The young researcher thinks that Ambizione is a very good funding scheme and hopes that it will be continued to the same extent. But he also sees room for improvement: in his view, the duration of the funding scheme is too short to hire doctoral students or postdocs and should therefore be prolonged. Further, he observes that Ambizione is becoming increasingly popular with researchers from outside Switzerland. As the number of adequate positions in Switzerland is severely limited, researchers from Switzerland are forced to either continue their careers in funded positions or leave the country. This problem could become even more severe as Ambizione becomes better known internationally. In his opinion, the SNSF should observe and possibly control the number of grants awarded to researchers from outside of Switzerland. He also thinks that access to SNSF professorships should be generally facilitated for former Ambizione grantees.

### 4.2.3 Case study 3

Our third case study portrays a male scientist from outside of Switzerland specialising in neurophysiology and brain research. He completed a Bachelor of Science degree with a focus on neuroscience at Brown University in Rhode Island in 1999. He then transferred to the University of Washington, where he completed a PhD in neurobiology and behaviour in 2007. He subsequently started work as a postdoc at the University of Zurich Brain Research Institute. After having worked there for one year, he applied for an Ambizione grant in early 2009. His funding period began later that year. With his Ambizione grant, he stayed at the same institute and continued his work in the same group. He later received a follow-up grant for the duration of 18 months. During his time as an Ambizione grantee, he applied for around 40 assistant professor positions in the United States. He was invited to about 5 interviews and was offered two positions. In 2013, he was appointed assistant professor in cell biology and neuroscience at Rutgers University in New Jersey. He is currently in a tenure track position, leading his own research group.

He had already been in Switzerland for a year when he applied for Ambizione funding, and he had learned about the funding scheme from colleagues and the SNSF website. He says that the funding instrument is widely known in Switzerland but also attracts

interest abroad. He applied because he wanted to stay at the institute and intensify his ongoing research.

The former Ambizione grantee says that he had no difficulties complying with the funding requirements for Ambizione. The duration was sufficient because he received a follow-up grant. Without this time extension, the funding period would have been too short because his research project contained time-consuming experiments. Some of the work that he did in the Ambizione grant period could be published only after the regular funding period had ended and he had been granted a follow-up. He thought that the granted amount was very generous. He mentions especially the high salary, which of course also makes up a large part of the grant. It would possibly be necessary, he argues, to be granted more money for material and infrastructure. He was able to use the grant to finance half of a measuring instrument, and this convinced the institute to fund the other half. He later bought the instrument from the institute and took it to his new place of work, which was very helpful. He had quite a lot of contact with the SNSF and says the responsible staff at the SNSF Careers Division were very responsive and helpful.

As the former Ambizione grantee had been at the Brain Research Institute when he applied, he also chose this institute as his host institute. He had originally moved from the University of Washington to this institute particularly because of the research work of his group leader. He had also wanted to go to Europe and gain international experience. He did not plan to leave Switzerland again when he started working at the University of Zurich, but he decided later to go back to the United States for family reasons and also because he missed the American science scene. Furthermore, he says, he found it very difficult to find a suitable position in Switzerland. The situation at his host institute was very comfortable. He was encouraged to take responsibility for his own junior group, and the support he received from the institute was very broad. In addition, he was not too isolated from the rest of the group. It was not possible to hire doctoral students or postdocs at the time, which he would have preferred. He was able to hire a technician, who is still working at the institute today. He also chose to take on a small teaching assignment at the host institute. The researcher has an ongoing collaboration with his former host institute, and a first author publication with former colleagues in Zurich was issued earlier this year. The institute benefited from hiring the Ambizione grantee, mainly because he had raised his own funding; his former postdoc position could thus be filled with a new employee.

The former Ambizione grantee says that the position that he is in now is a clear career step. It is a tenure track position, meaning that in five years he will be eligible for a full professorship. In addition, he is no longer part of a larger lab but instead leads his own lab. He says that the most important impact that Ambizione had on him and his career was that he could “officially” work independently and pursue his own research. He managed to publish a paper as first author, which in his view would not have been possible without Ambizione. Being able to lead his own junior group and mentoring students were also important to him. He is convinced that he would not have had these experiences in a regular postdoc position. He thinks that he would not have been able to conduct his project to the same extent without the Ambizione grant. He could not have afforded the measuring instrument, for example. In his opinion, Ambizione maximised his likelihood of succeeding with the project. He has benefited from his

Ambizione grant in many ways and rates the funding scheme very highly. He hopes that the SNSF will continue the funding scheme.

The former Ambizione grantee is convinced that the funding scheme helps to position Switzerland as an attractive science location. Ambizione is conceived as a stepping stone. He is also of the opinion that it is a competitive funding scheme, and he assumes that many researchers are interested in Ambizione grants. Even if Ambizione cannot attract more promising researchers to Switzerland, it can make researchers stay in the Swiss scientific community longer. He also sees room for improvement: three years, he argues, can be too short for PhD students to finish their project in time with the Ambizione grantee. In addition, he would have preferred to have a little more flexibility in allocating the budget. Another problematic aspect is the low number of (permanent) positions for researchers in Switzerland and the uncertainty this causes. However, as the former grantee admits, this is not a problem caused by or to be solved by the SNSF.

#### 4.2.4 Case study 4

The fourth former Ambizione grantee portrayed is a male Swiss scientist in physics, currently focusing on research in environmental science. He studied physics at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) and graduated with a diploma in environmental physics in 2000. He immediately started working as a PhD student at the Paul Scherrer Institute Switzerland (PSI) and completed a PhD in natural science in 2003. He was then granted a fellowship for prospective researchers (today called Early Postdoc.Mobility fellowship), which he used to go to the University of Manchester in England. There, he worked as a postdoctoral research fellow and research associate for a year and a half. When he started working in the UK he already knew that he would return to the PSI and never planned to leave Switzerland permanently. Indeed, he subsequently returned to the PSI to work as a research scientist. After two years in this position, he applied for an Ambizione grant in 2008 and started his Ambizione funding period in the same PSI group in early 2009. He did not apply for any other positions during his Ambizione time, since he had a tenure track position at the PSI early on and is still working in the same group at the PSI today. In 2012, he was given a permanent position, and since the beginning of 2014, he has been head of the Aerosol Physics Group. He was further chosen for an ERC grant that has started this year.

He knew about Ambizione from colleagues at the PSI. There is ongoing discussion about funding possibilities there, and Ambizione is well known. As it was foreseeable that the project that he was planning at the time could not be financed through the institute itself, he had started looking for alternative funding. He had been back at the PSI for two years and wanted to stay there.

The funding requirements were always clear, the former Ambizione grantee says. He does not think that they are too challenging. Mobility can be a problem, but it is a prerequisite for a successful career in science. He noticed that the evaluation of applications is not based exclusively on the funding requirements but also on the actual proposal. He did not need support from the SNSF before or during his Ambizione funding period. As he had been in the same PSI research group before and was already working there when he submitted his application, he knew his future host institute and the people working there very well. The host institute supported him by financing

part of a measuring instrument and also a doctoral student to help him with his project. The grant sum sufficed for his project but only because the institute co-funded the measuring instrument needed. He thinks that the extent of the grant is, in general, adequate, especially if the not overly strict funding requirements are taken into account.

There has been a career step for this researcher, as he was nominated group leader in 2014. The position opened up because the earlier group leader quit. The former Ambizione grantee is convinced that Ambizione was one of the reasons why he had been given a permanent position earlier and why he was later chosen to fill the head of group position. He says that the most important impact of Ambizione in his case was scientific independence. Ambizione made it possible for him to make a name for himself. The grant allowed him to acquire the measuring instrument, and the employment of a doctoral student gave him the opportunity to gain leadership experience. The researcher believes that Ambizione also helped him to be chosen for an ERC grant by boosting his independence and therefore making him more attractive for further funding. He would have been able to conduct his project without Ambizione, he says, but not to the same extent and not as fast. He thinks that Ambizione is an attractive funding scheme, particularly for young scientists returning to Switzerland after a stay abroad.

#### 4.2.5 Case study 5

The fifth case study portrays a Swiss male historian with a focus on comparative social policy development and transnational history. He studied at the University of Lausanne and completed a PhD at the same university in 2005. During his time as a PhD student he spent one year at Columbia University in New York as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar. After finishing his PhD, he was awarded an SNSF fellowship for advanced researchers (today called Advanced Postdoc.Mobility fellowship) and went to work from 2005 to 2008 as a postdoctoral fellow at Columbia University, at the University of London and at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam. He learned about the new Ambizione funding scheme during a follow up interview at SNSF headquarters in 2007. As he was deemed "just too inexperienced" to apply for an SNSF professorship, the SNSF recommended that he applied instead for Ambizione funding. He submitted his application from the Netherlands and returned to Switzerland in 2008, where he first worked a semester as a substitute professor in the History Department at the University of Geneva. In 2009, he then moved to the Paul Bairoch Institute of Economic History at the same university and started his three-year Ambizione grant. Between 2009 and 2011, he also worked as a substitute professor at the Lausanne Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL). In 2011 he applied for an SNSF professorship. He was granted funding and started working as an SNSF professor at the University of Geneva in 2012, a few months after his Ambizione funding period ended. His regular funding period as an SNSF professor will last until 2016. In July 2014, he was awarded a position as an associate professor at the University of Zurich, starting in September 2015.

The former Ambizione grantee had no difficulties whatsoever complying with the funding requirements. He says that he had the right profile and that the timing of the first Ambizione call was perfect for him. He thinks that since Ambizione was created to attract Swiss researchers abroad back to Switzerland, the mobility requirements are not too challenging. He was highly satisfied with the duration and the amount of the

Ambizione grant and says that he had not received any funding of equally high quality before. As a particular benefit of the Ambizione funding scheme, he names the opportunity to develop its own scientific projects. He first came into direct contact with the SNSF during his 2007 follow up interview and says this was an “extremely enlightening” moment for him, as he realised how helpful, quick, competent and close to the grantees the SNSF staff was. As he was one of the first Ambizione grantees, the regulations were not yet fully elaborated and thus open to some contradictory interpretation, but this was not a major hindrance.

The researcher portrayed had originally intended to move to the University of Bern, since he had initial contacts there. But as teaching in German seemed at the time a major challenge, he subsequently chose the University of Geneva as his host institution. Due to lack of office space at the foreseen Department of History, he finally opted to be hosted by the Paul Bairoch Institute of Economic History, where he is still working today. He is highly satisfied with his host institute. Since this is a small institute, he says, everybody is granted the opportunity to voice its proposals, including himself as an Ambizione grantee. He was very well integrated and participated actively in institute, faculty and university life, while being able to work completely independently. The former Ambizione grantee thinks that the funding scheme has many advantages in terms of scientific independence. According to him, grantees are in a good position to negotiate favourable conditions, and they have a lot of freedom and enough money to travel. There were also some minor difficulties: since he was the first Ambizione grantee at the University of Geneva, the human resource department at first erroneously assigned him to the technical and administrative staff instead of considering him as a research collaborator. In the meantime, he says, the SNSF has started advertising Ambizione more actively, and the funding scheme has become better known. The SNSF professorship is an important career step for the former Ambizione grantee. He thinks that the most important impact of Ambizione on him and his career was that he was able to re-establish and reinforce his position in the Swiss academic scene and that he could make a name for himself at a new institution.

#### 4.2.6 Case study 6

Case number six is a female researcher from abroad specialising in health law. She studied law at the University of Poitiers in France and at the University of Marburg in Germany, successfully completing a double degree in 1993. In 1994, she completed a Diplôme d'études approfondies (DEA) at the University of Poitiers and passed the Examination in Law for European Students at the University of Cambridge in the UK. After she completed a program in European law at the University of Saarbrücken, she worked as a lecturer at the University of Strasbourg and at the University of Heidelberg. In 2004, she completed her PhD from the Universities of Poitiers and Saarbrücken and continued her work at the University of Heidelberg and at the Max-Planck-Institute for International and Comparative law in Heidelberg for four years. She then applied for Ambizione funding in 2008, before transferring to the German University of Administrative Sciences for another year, using a post doc stipend from a French institution. In late 2009, she came to Switzerland and started her Ambizione grant period in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Zurich. During her Ambizione grant period, she applied for an assistant professorship at the University of Zurich which was unsuccessful. After the regular Ambizione funding period of three years, she applied for an extension and was granted another 12 months of fund-

ing. At the same time, she successfully applied for a Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) professorship at the University of Zurich, Law Faculty starting in September 2013. She currently holds the same position, and is at the same time working on her habilitation (postdoctoral teaching qualification) project (which was also her Ambizione project), and on her new research project attached to the SNSF professorship as well as teaching and supervising doctoral students.

She discovered Ambizione on the Internet while searching for possible research project funding. Switzerland was an option for her, since she had spent a lot of time in Germany and spoke French and German. She received positive answers from the SNSF and a French agency and chose Ambizione because the funding conditions were much better. The funding requirements did not cause her any difficulties. International mobility, building networks and learning to use the “language of science” are prerequisites for any career in science, she says. The amount granted was appropriate for her project. The regular duration of three years and the extension did not suffice for her to finish her project and she is still working on it until today. She mentioned that particularly at the end of the grant period pressure became more severe, as she was involved in time-consuming application processes for other positions. Nevertheless, she is fully satisfied with the support that she received from the SNSF, saying that she received great help and proper feedbacks whenever she had questions regarding the funding scheme.

The former Ambizione grantee chose her host institute based on a personal contact from an earlier collaboration. The situation at the host institute was quite unique, since the institute was a part of the Faculty of Medicine, and she was most of the time the only researcher with a law background. She says that her relations with the institute were good and she received the necessary scientific and financial support. With the help of the funds of the institute, she was able to organise an international conference in her research field. Moreover, she had the possibility to teach in one of the PhD programs supervised by the host institute and at the medical faculty. She is still teaching in these programs today. She however mentions that she was not supported by any scientific or other personnel during her Ambizione grant period. She is convinced that the institute also gained benefits from her by bringing in and sharing her legal expertise, by participating in internal activities and by taking teaching assignments.

The SNSF professorship has been an important career move for her. She says that without Ambizione, she would have probably taken a grant from a French institution and the conditions would not have been as favourable. Also, she would not have had the chance to come to Switzerland and thus would not have been eligible for an SNSF professorship. The most important impact of Ambizione was that she learned how to plan, organise and conduct her own research project. She draws very positive conclusions looking back at her Ambizione time. She says that with regard to support by the SNSF staff there is still room for improvement. As an example, she mentions that she would have appreciated coaching of some kind in applying for jobs. As she underestimated the complexity, time and effort involved in the job application process, any support from the SNSF staff would have helped her a lot. Moreover, she thought that the requirements regarding the annual reports were not completely clear. She suggests that the SNSF should provide further assistance in this matter.

#### 4.2.7 Case study 7

The seventh case study portrays a male Swiss scientist in biology. He studied at the University of Lausanne, where he earned a master's degree in 2001. He stayed on at the University of Lausanne for his PhD, which he completed at the Department of Ecology and Evolution in 2005. He continued to work there for some more months as a research associate before leaving for Canada, where he worked as a postdoctoral fellow in the Zoology Department at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver for three years and a half. For this, he first used an SNSF fellowship for prospective researchers (today called Early Postdoc.Mobility fellowship) and later an SNSF fellowship for advanced researchers (today called Advanced Postdoc.Mobility fellowship). He applied for Ambizione and was granted funding in 2008 but only started his grant period at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH) a year later, in 2009. In 2012, shortly before the end of the regular Ambizione funding period, he was given an Ambizione extension and granted funding for another 24 months, of which he used 17 months to finish his ongoing work and start a new project. During his time as an Ambizione grantee, he applied for various assistant professorships in Switzerland and abroad and applied for an SNSF professorship at the University of Zurich twice. The second application was successful, and starting 2014 he took up work as an SNSF professor at the Institute of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies at the University of Zurich.

When he left for Vancouver to work as a postdoctoral research fellow, Ambizione did not yet exist. He heard about the new funding scheme through the SNSF newsletter and was immediately intrigued. It was an ideal funding possibility for him, he says, since he wanted to return to Switzerland anyway. He did not have any difficulties complying with the Ambizione funding requirements. He is convinced that international mobility is very important for any scientist, especially in a small country like Switzerland. According to him, the basic idea behind Ambizione was to bring researchers back to the Swiss science location after a stay abroad. This means that the vast majority of researchers eligible for Ambizione funding have completed a postdoctoral stay abroad and thus comply with the SNSF mobility regulations in any case. He was satisfied with the granted amount but says that he did not need much money because his research focus is theoretical. The duration of the Ambizione grant was also sufficient, but when his first application for an SNSF professorship was rejected, he was glad that he received an extension to his Ambizione grant. This allowed him to start a new, empirical research project that later helped him with his second application for an SNSF professorship. He was satisfied with the support that he received from the SNSF, saying he could call the responsible staff anytime.

He was always sure that he would choose the ETH as his host institution because of its outstanding infrastructure, but he did not want to go back to Lausanne. He thus ended up in Zurich. The collaboration with his host institute worked well, although his research focus was quite different from that of the hosting lab. He did not teach during his time as an Ambizione grantee, which later kept him from obtaining a position as an assistant professor where teaching experience was required. Even now that he is at the beginning of his time as an SNSF professor and is hiring personnel for his own research group, finding such personnel is sometimes difficult because eligible people (e.g. master students) do not yet know him. This would be different if he had been involved in teaching activities earlier. His standalone position also made it more

difficult to build up networks, but he collaborated on a publication with another postdoc at his host institute. He was able to use the infrastructure at the ETH, and was supported by a doctoral student financed by the ETH. He says that the host institute mainly benefited from his publication activities and the additional supervision of students.

The SNSF professorship that he now has is a clear career step for the researcher portrayed. He says that Ambizione is responsible for this career step to a large extent. Most importantly, Ambizione helped him return to Switzerland and build not only a research group but also his reputation as a scientist. Without Ambizione, he would not have been able to work as independently. The former Ambizione grantee thinks that Ambizione is a good funding scheme and hopes that it will be continued. He also makes some suggestions as to how Ambizione could be improved: he thinks that a funding period of three years is too short. At the same time, it should not be overly long. In his view, four years would be an adequate duration. Further, he thinks that it should be possible for grantees to hire doctoral students or postdocs using the Ambizione grant. He also criticises that Ambizione grantees cannot apply for project funding at the same time. He would have appreciated that possibility.

#### 4.2.8 Case study 8

Our eighth case study is about a male Swiss scientist specialising in hydrogeology. He studied at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) as an undergraduate and graduate student. After completing his PhD in 2005, he stayed on at the ETH for another year, working as a postdoc at the Institute of Hydromechanics and Water Resources Management. In 2007, he went to Australia to work as a postdoc on a project at Flinders University in Adelaide in cooperation with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). For this project, he received funding from the Australian Research Council. At the beginning of 2009, he submitted his Ambizione application to the SNSF, and he became chief investigator on a grant from the Australian Water Commission shortly after, which allowed him to work on a new project at the same institution for another six months. In early 2010, he returned to Switzerland to start working as an Ambizione grantee at the University of Neuchâtel. During that time, he applied unsuccessfully for an SNSF professorship. He then successfully applied for two professorship positions in Switzerland and Germany, decided to stay in Switzerland and was eventually appointed full professor at the Centre for Hydrogeology and Geothermics (CHYN) at the University of Neuchâtel in 2012, finishing his Ambizione funding period six months early.

The young researcher came across Ambizione online while he was searching for funding options for a project. He saw Ambizione as a great way to return to Switzerland and the Swiss science scene. He thinks that the underlying concept of Ambizione is well designed and its requirements adequate. The duration of the funding period and the amount granted were sufficient, but he also says that he did not need a lot of money for his research. As his time as an Ambizione grantee went very smoothly, he did not need any help or support from the SNSF staff.

The former Ambizione grantee chose his host institute based on earlier contacts, but he was also attracted by the research focuses of his future host institute and the researchers working there. He had a great deal of freedom to pursue his own project, and at the same time he was well-integrated, partly because he participated actively

in institute life and actively built up networks. He could use the institute's infrastructure, the quality of which he evaluated as good. One disadvantage was that he was not allowed to hire a doctoral student using his Ambizione grant. Fortunately, his host institute stepped in and financed a doctoral student to help him with his Ambizione project. The host institute benefited from his research and publication activities. Furthermore, he helped establish a Memorandum of Understanding between the Australian National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training and the University of Neuchâtel, a collaboration that is still ongoing today.

The researcher portrayed sees his professorship as a significant career step and is convinced that he would not be in this position today if he had not received the Ambizione grant. Ambizione has been a very important stepping stone for him. Without it, he believes, he would have stayed in Australia and would not have been able to conduct his research project to the same extent. Apart from the possibility of hiring doctoral students using the Ambizione grant, which has now already been implemented by the SNSF, he sees no further need for improvement.

#### 4.2.9 Case study 9

Our ninth case study portrait is about a Swiss female researcher in social sciences who studied at a Swiss university. In 2003, she started work as a doctoral student at the same university and stayed there until 2009, interrupted by a research stay in Germany, where she worked from 2004 to 2007 and also after her PhD, which she completed at her Swiss university in 2007. She applied for an Ambizione grant in early 2009 and started her Ambizione funding period at the same university later that year. Including a four-month break for maternity leave, she finished her Ambizione funding period in 2013. During her time as an Ambizione grantee, she applied for professorships at two different universities of applied sciences but received negative replies. She then successfully applied for an SNSF professorship at another university in Switzerland, which she started a few months later. The duration of her SNSF professorship is until 2017.

The former Ambizione grantee's supervisor recommended the funding scheme to her. She thinks that international mobility is very important in science but that it could be understood as mobility throughout a scientific career and does not have to be restricted to the time after the PhD. Still, she says, the mobility requirement can be an impediment, especially when equal funding of researchers with family duties is targeted. The duration and the amount of the Ambizione grant were appropriate and sufficient for her work. She was highly satisfied with the support from the SNSF and says that whenever she called, she was helped quickly and in an uncomplicated way. She thinks that networking and the exchange of information between Ambizione grantees and/or researchers interested in Ambizione funding is very important. She has been contacted for advice by a number of Ambizione applicants and researchers planning to apply for an SNSF professorship, and she participates in the SNSF alumni network.

As she knew her home department and the people working there well, she chose it as her host institute. The institute also has the specific infrastructure needed for her research project. And indeed, the collaboration with the institute worked very well. She felt well-integrated but also free to pursue her own research focuses. She also did some teaching during her Ambizione grant period. She could continue using the institute's infrastructure even after her grant period. She could also rely on the institute

secretary for any administrative work, which she says was a relief. She was not supported by any doctoral students but had student assistants to help her with her project. She would have preferred to stay at this university also for her SNSF professorship, but the SNSF's regulations demanded a change of institutions. She is still in contact with her former host institute and still uses its infrastructure, but as she is getting more and more involved in her new position at her new university, that contact is phasing out. She also still has a close and important relationship with her former institute in Germany. She benefited her Ambizione host institute by taking on teaching assignments, by supervising doctoral students and by participating in conferences. She argues that there is also a financial benefit involved in employing an Ambizione grantee and that a high number of employees with third-party financing can also improve an institute's reputation.

The young researcher says that the SNSF professorship is a career step for her. She is sure that, without Ambizione, she would not have been able to conduct an equally large project in a regular postdoc position. The most important impact, she says, was that she had her own money for the first time in her career and was free to use it as she saw fit. She found Ambizione to be a very open and flexible funding scheme. The funding also helped her to expand her network.

She also sees some room for improvement regarding the following aspects: (1) the budget has to be planned at a point in time when grantees often do not know how to do this and cannot yet estimate their actual expenses. The regulations should allow for more flexibility in this matter, and it should be possible to change the allocation of budget items when the funding period is already running. (2) She doubts that the mobility within Switzerland requested by the SNSF makes sense, given the smallness of the country's science scene. She is convinced that it can make sense to stay at one institution, so that infrastructure can be established permanently. Also, some research focuses are so specific that there is only one specialised institution in Switzerland. (3) The former Ambizione grantee thinks that the SNSF could try to establish an independent office that could be responsible for troubleshooting concerning the interaction between host institutions and grantees in difficult cases. She says that she never had such problems herself, but knows of cases where the idea of what an Ambizione grantee's rights and duties are (e.g. concerning teaching obligations) differed between the SNSF's regulations and the host institute. (4) She thinks that equal funding of women is generally not achieved. To really create equal funding opportunities for all, she suggests implementing a model of shared funding. Similar to the idea of job sharing, two researchers could share their Ambizione budget and time.

#### 4.2.10 Case study 10

Case study 10 portrays a male researcher from outside of Switzerland specialising in geochemistry. He obtained a master's degree in geosciences at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2006. He then transferred to the University of Notre Dame in Indiana to do his PhD at the Department of Civil Engineering and Geological Sciences, which he completed in 2009. He always wanted to go to Europe and had job offers in Lausanne and Edinburgh. Of the two, the position at the *Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* (EPFL) seemed more attractive, so he came to Switzerland to work as a postdoctoral researcher at the EPFL Environmental Microbiology Laboratory. This postdoctoral research activity was funded first by the U.S. Department of Energy and then by a two-year Marie Curie International Incoming Fellowship that he received

from the European Commission in 2010. He applied for Ambizione funding in 2011 and started his time as an Ambizione grantee at the same institute and in the same group about one year later. After only a year and a half as an Ambizione grantee, he was appointed assistant professor and Encana Chair in Water Resources at the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Alberta in Canada and left Switzerland in 2013. His Ambizione funding continued for another 4 months after he had left, and he continued to work on his project. He says that he always expected to have to leave Switzerland eventually and was open to go anywhere but would have stayed if there had been a suitable position. When the position at the University of Alberta opened up, he made sure to apply and gladly accepted the appointment.

The researcher portrayed first discovered Ambizione through his supervisor at the EPFL, and he saw immediately that it was a perfect funding scheme for his situation. He found the funding requirements to be adequate and thinks that Ambizione really fills the gap between a postdoc position and an assistant professorship. The duration of three years was ideal for him. He thinks that the amount granted is adequate and sufficient for one project because the researcher's own salary already uses up a large part of the grant. The former Ambizione grantee says that the support that he received from the SNSF was outstanding.

As he was already in a postdoc position and liked working at his institute at the EPFL, he chose the same institute as his Ambizione host institute and continued his work as part of the same research group. The collaboration with the group worked very well, and since he already knew the group members, he always felt integrated. Nevertheless, he could now work more independently than during his time as a regular postdoc. He received additional funds from the institute and was able to hire a technician and a postdoc using his Ambizione grant. He benefited the institute through his publication activity and by supervising personnel. His research activities also helped expand the scientific profile of the institute. He still keeps in touch with his former group at the EPFL. In addition, the technician that he hired is still working there today.

His current assistant professorship is a step up the career ladder. The Ambizione grant was very important for this career step, he says, since it put him in a standalone position in front of over one hundred researchers who applied for the assistant professorship at the University of Alberta. It was clear that he would bring his own research project and his own money with him, which made him an attractive candidate. Other important impacts of his Ambizione grant were that he learned how to draw up and to administer a budget and that he could supervise and guide his own personnel. He is convinced that he would not have been able to conduct his project without an Ambizione grant. Ambizione was also much better than a regular assistant position, because it allowed him to work independently, gave him a slightly higher salary and allowed for a lot of publication activity. All of this enabled him to compete on the science job market.

The young researcher thinks that Ambizione is a good funding scheme, and he hopes that it will be continued and will inspire other countries to implement similar funding options. He sees potential for improvement with regard to the budget plan that has to be presented at the very outset: the SNSF should make it easier to reallocate funding to budget items once the project is underway.

## 4.3 Survey questionnaires

### 4.3.1 Survey with Ambizione grantees



SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION



Dear participant

We highly appreciate your willingness to participate in our survey concerning the Swiss National Science Foundation's Ambizione funding scheme. You have been asked to participate because you were awarded an Ambizione grant between 2008 and 2013. The SNSF recently decided to examine its Ambizione funding scheme and commissioned INTERFACE Politikstudien Forschung Beratung, run by Prof. Andreas Balthasar, for its evaluation.

It should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Please select the answers that best reflect your personal opinion. Some open-ended questions have been included to allow you to provide a more detailed answer. You can browse backward and forward through the questionnaire by clicking on the "Previous" and "Next" buttons at the bottom of each page. If you can't answer a question, please select "Don't know" or "No assessment possible". Please finish the survey by clicking "Submit" at the end of the questionnaire.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and your name will not be attached to any of the survey results.

If you have questions concerning the survey, or if you experience technical problems, please email or call Milena Iselin at Interface (iselin@interface-politikstudien.ch; +41 41 226 04 10).

Thank you very much for your valued collaboration.

#### Background information

In which year did you receive an Ambizione grant?

I have not received any funding through Ambizione

What funding amount (in CHF) were you awarded?

Has your Ambizione-funded research project been completed?

Yes  No

Was any Ambizione proposal submitted by you rejected?

Yes  No

Why was your proposal rejected?

#### Background information on the application for an Ambizione grant

Which statements apply to you?

- I own a Swiss passport.
- I do not own a Swiss passport.
  
- I obtained my doctorate in Switzerland.
- I obtained my doctorate abroad.
  
- I have submitted my Ambizione application from Switzerland.
- I have submitted my Ambizione application from another country.

**Where were you working when you submitted the application?**

- At a university/university hospital
- At a university of applied sciences
- At a research facility outside academia
- Private sector/administration/NPO
- Other work
- I was not working

**How can your position at the time you submitted your application be best described?**

- Postdoc
- Scientific collaborator
- Lecturer
- Assistant
- Other position, namely:

**Had you already received any other type of funding before submitting your application?**

- No
- Yes, namely:

Funding from another Swiss institution/agency (not the SNSF), namely:

Funding from a foreign institution/agency, namely:

- SNSF funding, namely:
- SNSF fellowship for prospective researchers
- SNSF fellowship for advanced researchers
- Other SNSF funding

**How satisfied were you with the following aspects of the application procedure? Please tick what is applicable to you.**

	Very satisfied	Rather satisfied	Rather unsatisfied	Not at all satisfied	Not applicable
The information/advice from the SNSF?	<input type="radio"/>				
The administrative effort involved in the application?	<input type="radio"/>				
The submission requirements (deadlines, two-stage evaluation procedure, etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>				
The time it took before you received the decision?	<input type="radio"/>				

We would like to ask you a few questions on your choice of the Ambizione funding scheme and the host institute.

**How significant were the following motives for your Ambizione application? Please tick what is applicable to you.**

	Very significant	Rather significant	Rather insignificant	Completely insignificant	Not applicable
Option of returning or coming to the Swiss science community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Option of developing one's own research focuses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Option of studying new research questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reputation of the Ambizione funding scheme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attractiveness of the Ambizione funding scheme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Option of going to another Swiss research institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Are there other significant reasons why you chose to apply for an Ambizione grant?

- No
- Yes, namely:

At what type of institution was/is your Ambizione host institute based?

- University/university hospital
- ETH/EPF
- University of applied sciences
- Other institution

How did you find your Ambizione host institute (or your department, lab, team etc.)?  
(multiple answers possible)

- I knew my host institute thanks to personal contacts.
- I knew my host institute due to earlier stays.
- I was already employed at my host institute before I received funding.
- My host institute was recommended to me by scientific mentors or colleagues.
- I found my host institute by other means.

Why did you choose your host institute (or your department, lab, team, etc.)?  
(multiple answers possible)

- Reputation of the host institute
- Reputation of scientists at the host institute
- Importance of the host institute in my research field
- Existing links to the host institute
- Infrastructure of the host institute
- Employment conditions at the host institute
- Family/personal reasons
- Other reason, namely:

**Research within the scope of Ambizione**

The following questions concern different aspects of your research activities within the scope of Ambizione.

How satisfied were/are you with...

	Very satisfied	Rather satisfied	Rather unsatisfied	Not at all satisfied	Not applicable
...the support/advice from the SNSF?	<input type="radio"/>				
...the amount of the awarded Ambizione grant?	<input type="radio"/>				
...the duration of the awarded Ambizione grant?	<input type="radio"/>				
...the support received from the host institute?	<input type="radio"/>				
...the infrastructure at the host institute?	<input type="radio"/>				
...the integration into the host institute?	<input type="radio"/>				

Why were/are you not satisfied with the support/advice from the SNSF?

Why were/are you not satisfied with the amount of the awarded Ambizione grant?

Why were/are you not satisfied with the duration of the awarded Ambizione grant?

Why were/are you not satisfied with the support received from the host institute?

Why were/are you not satisfied with the infrastructure at the host institute?

Why were/are you not satisfied with the integration into the host institute?

By what specific means did/does your host institute support you?  
(multiple answers possible)

- I was able to use existing infrastructures (rooms, IT, instruments, etc.).
- The host institute financially supported the acquisition of new infrastructure.
- The host institute acquired new infrastructure.
- I received additional financial support for activities at the host institute (e.g. teaching).
- I received additional financial support for my own research work.
- Further support, namely:

How would you describe your status as Ambizione grantee at the host institute as compared to postdocs at the institute who received funding from other sources?

- There were no other postdocs at the institute

Were/are you supported by doctoral students, postdocs and/or other personnel in your research work conducted within the scope of Ambizione?

- No
- Yes

What type of personnel were/are available to provide support?

- Doctoral students
- Postdocs
- Other personnel (e.g. assistants, technicians, etc.)

**How many doctoral students?**

**How were/are these doctoral students funded?**

- Fully funded through the Ambizione grant
- Partially by the Ambizione grant, partially by the host institute
- Fully financed through funds from the host institute
- Other financing
- Don't know

**How many postdocs?**

**How were/are these postdocs funded?**

- 50% by the Ambizione grant, 50% by the host institute
- To more than 50%, but not entirely with funds from the host institute
- Fully financed through funds from the host institute
- Other financing
- Don't know

**How many other personnel?**

**How were/are this other personnel funded?**

- Fully funded through the Ambizione grant
- Partially by the Ambizione grant, partially by the host institute
- Fully financed through funds from the host institute
- Other financing
- Don't know

**What significance did/does the supervision of doctoral students/postdocs/other personnel have for your scientific independence?**

- Very high significance
- Considerable significance
- Low significance
- No significance
- Don't know

Were/are you involved in teaching activities at the host institute during your time as an Ambizione grantee?

- Yes
- No

What was/is the scope (hours per week per semester, incl. time for preparation) of these teaching commitments across the entire Ambizione grant period?

- Don't know.

At which level did/do you teach?  
(multiple answers possible)

- Bachelor level
- Master level
- Doctoral level
- Other level

How were/are these teaching activities financed?

- Fully funded through the Ambizione grant
- Partially by the Ambizione grant, partially by the host institute
- Fully financed through funds from the host institute
- Other financing
- Don't know

What significance did/does the involvement in teaching have for your scientific independence?

- Very high significance
- Considerable significance
- Low significance
- No significance
- Don't know

We would now like to ask you some questions about the effects of your Ambizione grant.

The Ambizione grant has...

	Very accurate	Rather accurate	Rather inaccurate	Completely inaccurate	No assessment possible
...improved my competence in my research field.	<input type="radio"/>				
...enhanced my scientific profile.	<input type="radio"/>				
...increased my scientific competitiveness.	<input type="radio"/>				
...improved my (international) networking.	<input type="radio"/>				
...given me easier access to leading scientists in my research field.	<input type="radio"/>				
...increased the number of my scientific publications.	<input type="radio"/>				
...improved the quality of my scientific publications.	<input type="radio"/>				
...enabled me to gain a foothold in the Swiss science scene after a stay abroad.	<input type="radio"/>				

**Did/does your Ambizione grant have any other impacts?**

- No
- Yes, namely:

The concept of scientific independence is interpreted and implemented differently in different disciplines.

**What are the criteria for scientific independence in your discipline?**

**What kind of contribution has the Ambizione grant made to your scientific independence in this sense?**

- A very large contribution
- A rather large contribution
- A rather small contribution
- No contribution
- Don't know

**Did/does the Ambizione grant have a substantial influence on your further career?**

- Yes
- No

**How?**

**Why not?**

**Could your research project have been carried out/have been started without the Ambizione grant?**

- Yes
- No

**How?**

**Why not?**

**At what kind of institutions and where have you worked from the end of your Ambizione grant up to now? (multiple answers possible)**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> At universities/university hospitals:      | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At universities of applied sciences:       | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At research institutions outside academia: | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private sector/administration/NPO:         | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other work:                                | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have not worked since then               |   |   |

**Have you received further funding after your Ambizione grant?**

- No
- Yes, namely:
- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Further SNSF funding, namely: | <input type="checkbox"/> Funding from another Swiss institution/agency, namely: | <input type="checkbox"/> Funding from a foreign institution/agency, namely: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marie Heim-Vögtlin grants     |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SNSF professorship            | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other SNSF funding            |   |   |

**Were other applications of yours for further funding rejected after the end of the Ambizione grant?**

- No
- Yes, namely for:
- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Further SNSF funding, namely: | <input type="checkbox"/> Funding from another Swiss institution/agency, namely: | <input type="checkbox"/> Funding from a foreign institution/agency, namely: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marie Heim-Vögtlin grants     |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SNSF professorship            | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other SNSF funding            |   |   |

**Your career situation today**

The following questions concern your current career situation.

**Where is your current main job?**

- In Switzerland
- In another country
- I am not currently working

**In what kind of institution is your main job?**

- At a university/university hospital
- At a university of applied sciences
- At a research facility outside academia
- Private sector/administration/NPO
- Other work

**Are you still working at your Ambizione host institution?**

- Yes
- No

**How can your current position be best described?**

- Full professor
- Associate professor
- Assistant professor (with tenure track)
- Assistant professor (without tenure track)
- SNSF professor
- Scientific collaborator
- Lecturer
- Assistant
- Postdoc
- Other position, namely:

**Attainment of goals and potential for improvement**

With the Ambizione funding scheme, the SNSF aims to achieve various overarching goals. We would like to know your views with regard to the attainment of these goals.

How do you rate the following statements with regard to the goals attained through the Ambizione scheme?

	Very accurate	Rather accurate	Rather inaccurate	Completely inaccurate	No assessment possible
Ambizione helps promote knowledge transfer in Switzerland.	<input type="radio"/>				
With an Ambizione grant, Swiss researchers returning from abroad can be reintegrated into the Swiss research community.	<input type="radio"/>				
With an Ambizione grant, foreign researchers coming to Switzerland are integrated into the Swiss science community.	<input type="radio"/>				
Ambizione is particularly suited to funding individuals with limited international mobility.	<input type="radio"/>				
Ambizione is particularly suited to funding women scientists.	<input type="radio"/>				

Do you see any potential for improvement with regard to the Ambizione funding scheme?

- No
- Yes, namely:

**Personal data**

We would like to conclude this questionnaire by asking you some questions about yourself.

In which year did you obtain your doctorate?

In which country did you receive your doctorate?

**In which main discipline did you complete your doctorate?**

- Humanities and social sciences
- Mathematics, natural and engineering sciences
- Biology and medicine
- Other main discipline

**In which main discipline of the humanities or social sciences did you complete your doctorate?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Philosophy                        | <input type="radio"/> History in general, Swiss history                         |
| <input type="radio"/> Theology, religious studies       | <input type="radio"/> Ancient history and classical studies                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Educational sciences and pedagogy | <input type="radio"/> Prehistory  |
| <input type="radio"/> Psychology                        | <input type="radio"/> Archaeology   |
| <input type="radio"/> Sociology                         | <input type="radio"/> Ethnology   |
| <input type="radio"/> Political science                 | <input type="radio"/> Art studies (art history, musicology, theater and cinema) |
| <input type="radio"/> Economics                         | <input type="radio"/> Architecture, social urban sciences                       |
| <input type="radio"/> Legal sciences                    | <input type="radio"/> Literature  |
| <input type="radio"/> Communication sciences            | <input type="radio"/> Linguistics   |

**In which main discipline of mathematics, natural or engineering sciences did you complete your doctorate?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Mathematics                                | <input type="radio"/> Material sciences     |
| <input type="radio"/> Astronomy, astrophysics and space research | <input type="radio"/> Information sciences  |
| <input type="radio"/> Chemistry                                  | <input type="radio"/> Environmental studies |
| <input type="radio"/> Physics                                    | <input type="radio"/> Geosciences           |
| <input type="radio"/> Engineering sciences                       |   |

**In which main discipline of biology or medicine did you complete your doctorate?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Biology as a basic science | <input type="radio"/> Clinical medicine   |
| <input type="radio"/> General biology            | <input type="radio"/> Preventive medicine (epidemiology/early diagnosis/prevention) |
| <input type="radio"/> Basic medical sciences     | <input type="radio"/> Social medicine   |
| <input type="radio"/> Experimental medicine      |   |

**In which other main discipline did you complete your doctorate?**

**In which year were you born?**

**Your sex?**

- Female
- Male

**Do you have children?**

- Yes
- No

**How many?**

**How heavy a burden was childcare during your time as an Ambizione grantee?**

- Very heavy
- Rather heavy
- Rather light
- Very light

You have reached the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your participation.

### 4.3.2 Survey with rejected Ambizione applicants (comparison group 1)



SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION



Dear participant

We highly appreciate your willingness to participate in our survey concerning the Swiss National Science Foundation's Ambizione funding scheme. The SNSF recently decided to examine its Ambizione funding scheme and has commissioned INTERFACE Politikstudien Forschung Beratung, run by Prof. Andreas Balthasar, for this purpose. You have been asked to participate because you applied for an Ambizione grant between 2008 and 2013.

It should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Please select the answers that best reflect your personal opinion. Some open-ended questions have been included to allow you to provide a more detailed answer. You can browse backward and forward through the questionnaire by clicking on the "Previous" and "Next" buttons at the bottom of each page. Please finish the survey by clicking "Submit" at the end of the questionnaire.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and your name will not be attached to any of the survey results. If you have questions concerning the survey, or if you experience technical problems, please email or call Milena Iselin at Interface (iselin@interface-politikstudien.ch; +41 41 226 04 10).

Thank you very much for your valued collaboration.

#### Background information

The following questions concern your application for an Ambizione grant. If you have submitted several applications for an Ambizione grant, please refer to the application you submitted last.

In which year did you submit your last application for a SNSF Ambizione grant?

I have never submitted an application for an Ambizione grant

How significant were the following motives for your (last) Ambizione application? Please tick what is applicable for you.

	Very significant	Rather significant	Rather insignificant	Completely insignificant	Not applicable
Option of returning or coming to the Swiss science community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Option of developing one's own research focuses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Option of studying new research questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reputation of the Ambizione funding scheme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attractiveness of the Ambizione funding scheme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Option of going to another Swiss research institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Are there other significant reasons for your (last) Ambizione application?

- No  
 Yes, namely:

**How did you find your envisaged Ambizione host institute (or your department, lab, team etc.)?  
(multiple answers possible)**

- I knew the host institute thanks to personal contacts.
- I knew the host institute due to earlier stays.
- I was already employed at the host institute.
- The host institute was recommended to me by scientific mentors or colleagues.
- I found the host institute by other means.

**Why did you choose your envisaged host institute (or your department, lab, team, etc.)?  
(multiple answers possible)**

- Reputation of the host institute
- Reputation of scientists at the host institute
- Importance of the host institute in my research field
- Existing links to the host institute
- Infrastructure of the host institute
- Employment conditions at the host institute
- Family/personal reasons
- Other reason, namely:

**In which phase was your (last) Ambizione application rejected?**

- Phase 1 (i.e. before the interview)
- Phase 2 (i.e. after the interview)

**Why was your proposal rejected?**

**Were the comments made by the SNSF useful to you?**

- Yes
- No

**Would you like to elaborate on your answer?**

**Were you still able to conduct the research project for which you submitted the (last) Ambizione application?**

- Yes, to the same extent
- Yes, but to a smaller extent
- No

**How did you secure funding?**

**Did you receive any other grant after your (last) Ambizione application was rejected?**

- No
- Yes, namely (multiple answers possible):

Funding from another Swiss institution/agency (not the SNSF), namely:

Funding from a foreign institution/agency, namely:

- SNSF funding, namely:
  - SNSF fellowship for prospective researchers
  - SNSF fellowship for advanced researchers
  - Marie Heim-Vögtlin grants
  - SNSF professorship
  - Other SNSF funding

**After your (last) Ambizione application was rejected, were you employed at your envisaged Ambizione host institute thanks to funding from other sources?**

- Yes
- No

**Which statements apply to you?**

- I own a Swiss passport.
- I do not own a Swiss passport.
  
- I obtained my doctorate in Switzerland.
- I obtained my doctorate abroad.
  
- I have submitted my Ambizione application from Switzerland.
- I have submitted my Ambizione application from another country.

**Where were you working when you submitted your (last) Ambizione application?**

- At a university/university hospital
- At a university of applied sciences
- At a research facility outside academia
- Private sector/administration/NPO
- Other work
- I was not working

**How can your position be best described at the time you submitted your (last) Ambizione application?**

- Postdoc
- Scientific collaborator
- Lecturer
- Assistant
- Other position, namely:

**Had you already received any other type of funding before submitting your (last) Ambizione application?**

- No
- Yes, namely (multiple answers possible):

SNSF funding, namely:

- SNSF fellowship for prospective researchers
- SNSF fellowship for advanced researchers

- Marie Heim-Vögtlin grants
- Other SNSF funding

Funding from another Swiss institution/agency, namely:

Funding from a foreign institution/agency, namely:

**At what kind of institutions and where have you been working after your (last) application for an Ambizione grant up to the present day? (multiple answers possible)**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> At universities/university hospitals:      | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At universities of applied sciences:       | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At research institutions outside academia: | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private sector/administration/NPO:         | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other work:                                | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have not worked since then               |   |   |

### Your career situation today

**Where is your current main job?**

- In Switzerland  
 In another country  
 I am not currently working

**In what kind of institution is your current main job?**

- At a university/university hospital  
 At a university of applied sciences  
 At a research facility outside academia  
 Private sector/administration/NPO  
 Other work

**How can your current position be best described?**

- Full professor  
 Associate professor  
 Assistant professor (with tenure track)  
 Assistant professor (without tenure track)  
 SNSF professor  
 Scientific collaborator  
 Lecturer  
 Assistant  
 Postdoc  
 Other position, namely:

### Personal data

We would like to conclude this questionnaire by asking you some questions about yourself.

**In which year did you obtain your doctorate?**

**In which country did you receive your doctorate?**

**In which main discipline did you complete your doctorate?**

- Humanities and social sciences  
 Mathematics, natural and engineering sciences  
 Biology and medicine  
 Other main discipline

**In which main discipline of the humanities or social sciences did you complete your doctorate?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Philosophy                        | <input type="radio"/> History in general, Swiss history                         |
| <input type="radio"/> Theology, religious studies       | <input type="radio"/> Ancient history and classical studies                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Educational sciences and pedagogy | <input type="radio"/> Prehistory  |
| <input type="radio"/> Psychology                        | <input type="radio"/> Archaeology   |
| <input type="radio"/> Sociology                         | <input type="radio"/> Ethnology   |
| <input type="radio"/> Political science                 | <input type="radio"/> Art studies (art history, musicology, theater and cinema) |
| <input type="radio"/> Economics                         | <input type="radio"/> Architecture, social urban sciences                       |
| <input type="radio"/> Legal sciences                    | <input type="radio"/> Literature  |
| <input type="radio"/> Communication sciences            | <input type="radio"/> Linguistics   |

**In which main discipline of mathematics, natural or engineering sciences did you complete your doctorate?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Mathematics                                | <input type="radio"/> Material sciences     |
| <input type="radio"/> Astronomy, astrophysics and space research | <input type="radio"/> Information sciences  |
| <input type="radio"/> Chemistry                                  | <input type="radio"/> Environmental studies |
| <input type="radio"/> Physics                                    | <input type="radio"/> Geosciences           |
| <input type="radio"/> Engineering sciences                       |   |

**In which main discipline of biology or medicine did you complete your doctorate?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Biology as a basic science | <input type="radio"/> Clinical medicine   |
| <input type="radio"/> General biology            | <input type="radio"/> Preventive medicine (epidemiology/early diagnosis/prevention) |
| <input type="radio"/> Basic medical sciences     | <input type="radio"/> Social medicine   |
| <input type="radio"/> Experimental medicine      |   |

**In which other main discipline did you complete your doctorate?**

**In which year were you born?**

**Your sex?**

- Female  
 Male

**Do you have children?**

- Yes  
 No

**How many?**

You have reached the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your participation.

### 4.3.3 Survey with beneficiaries of SNSF project funding (comparison group 2)



SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION



Dear participant

We highly appreciate your willingness to participate in our survey concerning the Swiss National Science Foundation's Ambizione funding scheme. The SNSF recently decided to examine its Ambizione funding scheme and to compare its impact on the career development of young researchers in Switzerland with the impact of similar funding measures. INTERFACE Politikstudien Forschung Beratung, run by Prof. Andreas Balthasar, was commissioned for this evaluation. You have been asked to participate in this survey because you received a SNSF grant for project funding between 2008 and 2013.

It should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Please select the answers that best reflect your personal opinion. Some open-ended questions have been included to allow you to provide a more detailed answer. You can browse backward and forward through the questionnaire by clicking on the "Previous" and "Next" buttons at the bottom of each page. If you can't answer a question, please select "Don't know" or "No assessment possible". Please finish the survey by clicking "Submit" at the end of the questionnaire.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and your name will not be attached to any of the survey results.

If you have questions concerning the survey, or if you experience technical problems, please email or call Milena Iselin at Interface (iselin@interface-politikstudien.ch; +41 41 226 04 10).

Thank you very much for your valued collaboration.

#### Background information

If you have already received more than one SNSF project grant, please refer to your first SNSF project grant when answering the questions.

In which year did you receive a SNSF project grant for the first time?

I have not received any SNSF project grant

What funding amount (in CHF) were you awarded?

For which duration (in months) were you awarded the project grant?

Has the funded research project been completed?

- Yes  
 No, not yet

#### Background information about your submission

Which statements apply to you?

- I own a Swiss passport.  
 I do not own a Swiss passport.  
 I obtained my doctorate in Switzerland.  
 I obtained my doctorate abroad.

The following questions concern your situation at the time you submitted your application for a SNSF project grant.  
Please refer to the application that led to your (first) project grant from the SNSF.

**Where were you working when you submitted your application for a project grant?**

- At a university/university hospital
- At a university of applied sciences
- At a research facility outside academia
- Private sector/administration/NPO
- Other work
- I was not working

**How can your position be best described at the time you submitted your application?**

- Full professor
- Associate professor
- Assistant professor (with tenure track)
- Assistant professor (without tenure track)
- SNSF professor
- Scientific collaborator
- Lecturer
- Assistant
- Postdoc
- Other position, namely:

**Had you already received any other type of funding at the time you submitted your application for a project grant?**

- No
- Yes, namely (multiple answers possible):

Funding from another Swiss institution/agency (not the SNSF), namely:

Funding from a foreign institution/agency, namely:

- SNSF funding, namely:
  - SNSF fellowship for prospective researchers
  - SNSF fellowship for advanced researchers
  - Marie Heim-Vögtlin grants
  - SNSF Professorship
  - Other SNSF funding

**Research within the scope of the (first) project funding grant at the SNSF**

The following questions concern different aspects of your research activities within the scope of your (first) SNSF project grant.

**Were/are you supported by doctoral students, postdocs and/or other personnel in your research work conducted within the scope of your (first) project grant?**

- No
- Yes

**What type of personnel were/are available to provide support?**

- Doctoral students
- Postdocs
- Other personnel (e.g. assistants, technicians, etc.)

**How many doctoral students?**

**How many postdocs?**

**How many other personnel?**

We would like to know how you estimate the impacts of your (first) SNSF project grant. Please tick what is applicable to you with regard to the following statements.

**My (first) SNSF project grant has...**

	Very accurate	Rather accurate	Rather inaccurate	Completely inaccurate	No assessment possible
...improved my competence in my research field.	<input type="radio"/>				
...enhanced my scientific profile.	<input type="radio"/>				
...increased my scientific competitiveness.	<input type="radio"/>				
...improved my (international) networking.	<input type="radio"/>				
...given me easier access to leading scientists in my research field.	<input type="radio"/>				
...increased the number of my scientific publications.	<input type="radio"/>				
...improved the quality of my scientific publications.	<input type="radio"/>				

The concept of scientific independence is interpreted and implemented differently in different disciplines.

**What are the criteria for scientific independence in your discipline?**

**What kind of contribution has the (first) SNSF project grant made to your scientific independence in this sense?**

- A very large contribution
- A rather large contribution
- A rather small contribution
- No contribution
- Don't know

**At what kind of institutions and where have you worked from the end of your (first) project grant up to now? (multiple answers possible)**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> At universities/university hospitals:      | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At universities of applied sciences:       | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At research institutions outside academia: | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private sector/administration/NPO:         | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other work:                                | <input type="checkbox"/> In Switzerland | <input type="checkbox"/> In another country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have not worked since then               |   |   |

**Have you received further funding after your (first) project grant?**

- No
- Yes, namely (multiple answers possible):

<input type="checkbox"/> Further SNSF funding, namely:	<input type="checkbox"/> Funding from another Swiss institution/agency, namely:	<input type="checkbox"/> Funding from a foreign institution/agency, namely:
<input type="checkbox"/> Marie Heim-Vögtlin grants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> SNSF professorship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other SNSF funding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Other funding schemes**

The following questions concern other career funding schemes of the SNSF.

**Have you heard of the SNSF funding scheme Ambizione?**

- Yes
- No

**Why have you never applied for an Ambizione grant? (multiple answers possible)**

- I did not meet the participation requirements (personal requirements)
- The Ambizione grant was not appealing enough for me
- I could not find a host institute
- I did not feel scientifically independent enough
- Project funding was better suited to my research project
- Other reasons, namely:

**Have you heard of SNSF professorships?**

- Yes
- No

**Have you ever applied or considered applying for a SNSF professorship?**

- Yes
- No

**Why not?**

**Your career situation today**

The following questions concern your current career situation.

**Where is your current main job?**

- In Switzerland
- In another country
- I am not currently working

**In what kind of institution is your main job?**

- At a university/university hospital
- At a university of applied sciences
- At a research facility outside academia
- Private sector/administration/NPO
- Other work

**How can your current position be best described?**

- Full professor
- Associate professor
- Assistant professor (with tenure track)
- Assistant professor (without tenure track)
- SNSF professor
- Scientific collaborator
- Lecturer
- Assistant
- Postdoc
- Other position, namely:

**Personal data**

We would like to conclude this questionnaire by asking you some questions about yourself.

**In which year did you obtain your doctorate?**

**In which country did you receive your doctorate?**

**In which main discipline did you complete your doctorate?**

- Humanities and social sciences
- Mathematics, natural and engineering sciences
- Biology and medicine
- Other main discipline

**In which main discipline of the humanities or social sciences did you complete your doctorate?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Philosophy                        | <input type="radio"/> History in general, Swiss history                         |
| <input type="radio"/> Theology, religious studies       | <input type="radio"/> Ancient history and classical studies                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Educational sciences and pedagogy | <input type="radio"/> Prehistory  |
| <input type="radio"/> Psychology                        | <input type="radio"/> Archaeology   |
| <input type="radio"/> Sociology                         | <input type="radio"/> Ethnology   |
| <input type="radio"/> Political science                 | <input type="radio"/> Art studies (art history, musicology, theater and cinema) |
| <input type="radio"/> Economics                         | <input type="radio"/> Architecture, social urban sciences                       |
| <input type="radio"/> Legal sciences                    | <input type="radio"/> Literature  |
| <input type="radio"/> Communication sciences            | <input type="radio"/> Linguistics   |

**In which main discipline of mathematics, natural or engineering sciences did you complete your doctorate?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Mathematics                                | <input type="radio"/> Material sciences     |
| <input type="radio"/> Astronomy, astrophysics and space research | <input type="radio"/> Information sciences  |
| <input type="radio"/> Chemistry                                  | <input type="radio"/> Environmental studies |
| <input type="radio"/> Physics                                    | <input type="radio"/> Geosciences           |
| <input type="radio"/> Engineering sciences                       |   |

**In which main discipline of biology or medicine did you complete your doctorate?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Biology as a basic science | <input type="radio"/> Clinical medicine   |
| <input type="radio"/> General biology            | <input type="radio"/> Preventive medicine (epidemiology/early diagnosis/prevention) |
| <input type="radio"/> Basic medical sciences     | <input type="radio"/> Social medicine   |
| <input type="radio"/> Experimental medicine      |   |

**In which other main discipline did you complete your doctorate?**

**In which year were you born?**

**Your sex?**

- Female  
 Male

**Do you have children?**

- Yes  
 No

**How many?**

You have reached the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your participation.

### 4.3.4 Survey with Ambizione hosts



SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION



Dear participant

We highly appreciate your willingness to participate in our survey concerning the Swiss National Science Foundation's Ambizione funding scheme. You have been asked to participate because you hosted at least one Ambizione grantee between 2008 and 2013. The SNSF recently decided to examine its Ambizione funding scheme and has commissioned INTERFACE Politikstudien Forschung Beratung, run by Prof. Andreas Balthasar, for this purpose.

It should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Please select the answers that best reflect your personal opinion. Some open-ended questions have been included to allow you to provide a more detailed answer. You can browse backward and forward through the questionnaire by clicking on the "Previous" and "Next" buttons at the bottom of each page. If you can't answer a question, please select "Don't know" or "No rating/assessment possible". Please finish the survey by clicking "Submit" at the end of the questionnaire.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and your name will not be attached to any of the survey results. If you have questions concerning the survey, or if you experience technical problems, please email or call Milena Iselin at Interface (iselin@interface-politikstudien.ch; +41 41 226 04 10).

Thank you very much for your valued collaboration.

#### Background

##### At what type of institution is your institute based?

- University/university hospital
- ETH/EPF
- University of applied sciences
- Other institution

##### In which discipline are you mainly doing research or did you last do research?

- Humanities and social sciences
- Mathematics, natural and Engineering sciences
- Biology and medicine
- Other discipline

##### In which main discipline of the humanities or social sciences are you mainly doing research or did you last do research?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Philosophy                        | <input type="radio"/> History in general, Swiss history                         |
| <input type="radio"/> Theology, religious studies       | <input type="radio"/> Ancient history and classical studies                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Educational sciences and pedagogy | <input type="radio"/> Prehistory  |
| <input type="radio"/> Psychology                        | <input type="radio"/> Archaeology   |
| <input type="radio"/> Sociology                         | <input type="radio"/> Ethnology   |
| <input type="radio"/> Political science                 | <input type="radio"/> Art studies (art history, musicology, theater and cinema) |
| <input type="radio"/> Economics                         | <input type="radio"/> Architecture, social urban sciences                       |
| <input type="radio"/> Legal sciences                    | <input type="radio"/> Literature  |
| <input type="radio"/> Communication sciences            | <input type="radio"/> Linguistics   |

**In which main discipline of mathematics, natural or engineering sciences are you mainly doing research or did you last do research?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Mathematics                                | <input type="radio"/> Material sciences     |
| <input type="radio"/> Astronomy, astrophysics and space research | <input type="radio"/> Information sciences  |
| <input type="radio"/> Chemistry                                  | <input type="radio"/> Environmental studies |
| <input type="radio"/> Physics                                    | <input type="radio"/> Geosciences           |
| <input type="radio"/> Engineering sciences                       |   |

**In which main discipline of biology or medicine are you mainly doing research or did you last do research?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Biology as a basic science | <input type="radio"/> Clinical medicine   |
| <input type="radio"/> General biology            | <input type="radio"/> Preventive medicine (epidemiology/early diagnosis/prevention) |
| <input type="radio"/> Basic medical sciences     | <input type="radio"/> Social medicine   |
| <input type="radio"/> Experimental medicine      |   |

**In which other main discipline are you mainly doing research or did you last do research?**

**Importance of Ambizione for the host institutes**

The following questions concern the employment of Ambizione grantees at your institute or in your lab/group etc. If you have already employed several Ambizione grantees, please refer to the Ambizione grantee employed last at your institute (even if the funding is still ongoing).

**What motivated you to accept the Ambizione grantee? (multiple answers possible)**

- Reputation of the researcher
- Reputation of Ambizione
- Reputation of the researcher's workplace at the time
- Knowledge Transfer
- Possibility of contacting researchers based abroad
- Earlier cooperation with the researcher
- Earlier employment of the researcher with different financing
- Personal contact with the researcher
- Research project is/was closely in line with the main research topics of the institute (symmetry)
- Research project complements/complemented the main research topics of the institute particularly well (complementarity)
- Expansion of the human or financial resources of the institute
- Other reasons, namely:

We would like to know how you are/were able to benefit from the employment of the Ambizione grantee.

Please give your assessment of the following statements concerning the benefits of employing the Ambizione grantee at your institute.

	Very accurate	Rather accurate	Rather inaccurate	Completely inaccurate	No assessment possible
The scientific profile of the institute is/was expanded (e.g. increased publishing activity, new research focuses etc.).	<input type="radio"/>				
The institute benefits/benefited from additional teaching resources.	<input type="radio"/>				
The institute benefits/benefited from additional research funds.	<input type="radio"/>				
The institute benefits/benefited from the supervision of doctoral students/Postdocs.	<input type="radio"/>				
The institute is better connected thanks to the grantee.	<input type="radio"/>				

Does/did the institute benefit in other ways from the employment of the Ambizione grantee?

- No
- Yes, namely:

Does/did the employment of the Ambizione grantee create any disadvantages for the institute?

- No
- Yes, namely:

How do you rate the collaboration with the Ambizione grantee?

- Very good
- Good
- Rather bad
- Very bad
- No rating possible

Would you like to elaborate on your answer?

How do you rate the integration of the Ambizione grantee at your institute?

- Very good
- Good
- Rather bad
- Very bad
- No rating possible

Would you like to elaborate on your answer?

**How do you rate the quality of the Ambizione grantee's research project at your institute?**

- Very good
- Good
- Rather bad
- Very bad
- No rating possible

**Would you like to elaborate on your answer?**

**To what extent was it possible to guarantee the independence of the Ambizione grantee?**

- To a very large extent
- To a large extent
- To a small extent
- To a very small extent
- No rating possible

**Would you like to elaborate on your answer?**

**Is/was the Ambizione grantee different from the other postdocs at your institute?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- There are/were no other postdocs at my institute.

**Is/was the Ambizione grantee scientifically more independent?**

- No
- Yes

**Are/were there other/further differences?**

- No
- Yes, namely:

**What specific support does/did your institute provide to the Ambizione grantee? (multiple answers possible)**

- Additional scientific personnel
- Additional financial support
- Acquisition of specific equipment (e.g. measuring instruments)
- Other support, namely:
- No additional support

**Does/did the institute have any difficulty in providing this support?**

- Yes
- No

**Why?**

Did the Ambizione grantee continue to be employed at the institute once the funding had ended?

- Yes
- No
- The Ambizione funding period for the last Ambizione grantee at my institute has not yet ended.

In what position?

How was this employment financed?

**Effects of Ambizione on the grantee(s)**

We would like to know how you rate the possible effects of Ambizione on the grantee(s).

Ambizione...

	Very accurate	Rather accurate	Rather inaccurate	Completely inaccurate	Don't know
...increases the grantees' competence in their field.	<input type="radio"/>				
...improves the quality of the grantees' scientific publications.	<input type="radio"/>				
...increases the scientific independence of the grantees.	<input type="radio"/>				
...enhances the scientific profile of the grantees.	<input type="radio"/>				
...increases the scientific competitiveness of the grantees.	<input type="radio"/>				
...improves the (international) networking of the grantees.	<input type="radio"/>				

In your opinion, does Ambizione have a significant impact on the careers of grantees?

- Yes
- No

How?

Why not?

What in your opinion are the strengths of the Ambizione funding scheme?

What in your opinion are the weaknesses of the Ambizione funding scheme?

**Contacts with the SNSF**

How well do you feel you have been informed about the objectives of Ambizione?

- Very well informed
- Well informed
- Rather badly informed
- Very badly informed
- No rating possible

How could the SNSF improve the information it provides about Ambizione?

**Attainment of goals and potential for improvement**

With the Ambizione funding scheme, the SNSF aims to achieve various overarching goals. We would like to know your views with regard to the attainment of these goals.

How do you rate the following statements with regard to the goals attained through the Ambizione scheme?

	Very accurate	Rather accurate	Rather inaccurate	Completely inaccurate	No assessment possible
Ambizione helps to promote knowledge transfer in Switzerland.	<input type="radio"/>				
Ambizione helps to reintegrate researchers returning from abroad into the Swiss science community.	<input type="radio"/>				
With an Ambizione grant, researchers coming to Switzerland are integrated into the Swiss science community.	<input type="radio"/>				
Ambizione helps to fund persons with restricted international mobility.	<input type="radio"/>				
Ambizione is particularly suited to funding female scientists.	<input type="radio"/>				

Do you see any potential for optimising Ambizione?

- No
- Yes, namely:

You have reached the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your participation.

#### 4.4 Definition of target groups

<b>Incoming</b>	
Inc_A	Doesn't hold a Swiss passport, obtained PhD abroad and applied from abroad. No postdoctoral stay in or other preliminary connection to Switzerland.
Inc_CH	Doesn't hold a Swiss passport, obtained PhD abroad and applied from Switzerland.
<b>Returning</b>	
Ret_Pass_A	Holds a Swiss passport, obtained PhD abroad and applied from abroad.
Ret_Pass_CH	Holds a Swiss passport, obtained PhD abroad and applied from Switzerland.
Ret_lauf_PB	Currently funded by an Early Postdoc.Mobility fellowship (before: SNSF fellowship for prospective researchers) and therefore applied from abroad.
Ret_lauf_PA	Currently funded by an Advanced Postdoc.Mobility fellowship (before: SNSF fellowship for advanced researchers) and therefore applied from abroad.
Ret_arch_PB_CH	Was funded by an SNSF fellowship for prospective researchers (since 2013: Early Postdoc.Mobility fellowship) and applied from Switzerland.
Ret_arch_PA_CH	Was funded by an SNSF fellowship for advanced researchers (since 2013: Advanced Postdoc.Mobility) fellowship and applied from Switzerland.
Ret_arch_PB_A	Was funded by an SNSF fellowship for prospective researchers (since 2013: Early Postdoc.Mobility) fellowship and applied from abroad.
Ret_arch_PA_A	Was funded by an SNSF fellowship for advanced researchers (since 2013: Advanced Postdoc.Mobility) fellowship and applied from abroad.
Ret_ohne_A	Obtained PhD in Switzerland, currently on a postdoctoral stay abroad, but without SNSF funding.
Ret_ohne_CH	Obtained PhD in Switzerland, has been on a postdoctoral stay abroad, but without SNSF funding, applied from Switzerland.
<b>Limited mobility</b>	
Aus_CH	Obtained PhD in Switzerland, no postdoctoral stays abroad.

## 4.5 Monitoring of Ambizione grantees

### List of questions for the monitoring surveys

<b>Background (only first survey wave)</b>		
In which year did your Ambizione funding end (including prolongations or follow-up grants)?	<i>Open answer</i>	
Which statements are applicable to you?	I own a Swiss passport.	
	I do not own a Swiss passport.	
	I obtained my doctorate abroad.	
	I obtained my doctorate in Switzerland.	
	I have submitted my Ambizione application from Switzerland.	
	I have submitted my Ambizione application from another country.	
How can your position be best described at the time you submitted your application for Ambizione?	Postdoc	
	Scientific collaborator	
	Lecturer	
	Assistant	
	Other position	
Had you already received any other type of funding before submitting your application?	No	
	SNSF funding, namely:	SNSF fellowship for prospective re-searchers / Early Postdoc.Mobility fellowship
		SNSF fellowship for advanced re-searchers / Advanced Postdoc.Mobility fellowship
		Other SNSF funding
	Funding from another Swiss institution/agency, namely: ...	<i>Open answer</i>
	Funding from a foreign institution/agency, namely: ...	<i>Open answer</i>
At what type of institution was your Ambizione host institute based?	University / university hospital	
	ETH / EPF	
	University of applied sciences	
	Other institution	
<b>Impact of Ambizione funding</b>		
The Ambizione grant has...  <i>5: Very accurate; 4: Rather accurate; 3: Rather inaccurate; 2: Completely inaccurate; 1: No assessment possible</i>	...improved my competence in my research field	5
		4
		3
		2
		1
	...enhanced my scientific profile	5
		4
		3
		2
		1

	...increased my scientific competitiveness	5	
		4	
		3	
		2	
		1	
	...improved my (international) networking	5	
		4	
		3	
		2	
		1	
	...given me easier access to leading scientists in my research field	5	
		4	
		3	
		2	
		1	
	...increased the number of my scientific publications	5	
		4	
		3	
		2	
		1	
	...improved the quality of my scientific publications	5	
		4	
		3	
		2	
		1	
	...enabled me to gain a foothold in the Swiss science scene after a stay abroad	5	
		4	
		3	
		2	
		1	
		5	
Did your Ambizione grant have any other impacts?	<i>Open answer</i>		
Please think about what scientific independence means in your discipline. What kind of contribution has the Ambizione grant made to your scientific independence in this sense?	A very large contribution		
	A rather large contribution		
	A rather small contribution		
	No contribution		
	Don't know		
Did/does the Ambizione grant have a substantial influence on your further career?	Yes		
	No		
<b>Career development</b>			
Could your research project have been carried out without the Ambizione grant?	Yes		
	No		
Have you received further funding after your Ambizione grant? (only second survey wave)	No		
	Further SNSF funding, namely:	Marie Heim-Vögtlin grants	
		SNSF professorship	
		Other SNSF funding	
	Funding from another Swiss institution/agency, namely: ...	<i>Open answer</i>	
Funding from a foreign institution/agency, namely: ...	<i>Open answer</i>		

Where have you worked from the end of your Ambizione grant up to now? (only second survey wave)	At universities / university hospitals	In Switzerland
		In another country
	At universities of applied sciences	In Switzerland
		In another country
	At research institutions outside academia	In Switzerland
		In another country
Private sector / administration / NPO	In Switzerland	
	In another country	
Other work	In Switzerland	
	In another country	
I have not worked since then.		
<b>Current situation</b>		
Where is your main job?	In Switzerland	
	In another country	
	I am not currently working.	
In what kind of institution is your main job?	At a university / university hospital	
	At a university of applied sciences	
	At a research facility outside academia	
	Private sector / administration / NPO	
	Other work	
Are you still working at your Ambizione host institution?	Yes	
	No	
How can your current position be best described?	Full professor	
	Associate professor	
	Assistant professor (with tenure track)	
	Assistant professor (without tenure track)	
	SNSF professor	
	Scientific collaborator	
	Lecturer	
	Assistant	
	Postdoc	
Other position, namely:...	<i>Open answer</i>	
<b>Personal data (only first survey wave)</b>		
In which main discipline did you complete your doctorate?	<i>List of disciplines</i>	
	Other main discipline, namely:...	<i>Open answer</i>
In which year were you born?	<i>Open answer</i>	
Your sex?	Female	
	Male	
End (both survey waves)		
Would you like to give additional comments?	<i>Open answer</i>	

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