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Regulations on Ambizione grants (Ambizione Regulations)

14 June 2016

The National Research Council,
based on Articles 4 and 48 of the Funding Regulations of 27 February 2015¹,
issues the following Regulations:

1. General

Article 1 Objectives and principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (hereinafter: the SNSF) awards Ambizione grants to outstanding postdoctoral researchers who intend to pursue an academic career at a Swiss research institution within the higher education sector or at a non-commercial research institution outside the higher education sector.

² The purpose of the Ambizione grant is to enhance researchers' scientific profile and to help them to become scientifically independent at an early stage in their career by conducting their own research project.

³ Ambizione grants are open to researchers from all disciplines.

⁴ Researchers holding Ambizione grants must devote their entire work-time to the planned research work funded by the SNSF. The work-time percentage of Ambizione grantees is generally 100%. A lower work-time percentage of at least 80% is permissible pursuant to Article 6 paragraph 2 and the cases described therein.

⁵ A research stay of no more than 12 months at an academic host institution or an institution of the practical realm (intersectoral mobility) may be envisaged as part of the Ambizione grant pursuant to the provisions of Article 9.

⁶ Specific conditions may be set to promote candidatures in individual research fields.

¹ Funding Regulations of 27 February 2015: www.snf.ch > Funding > Documents & downloads

Article 2 Types of grant and grant duration

¹ The SNSF awards the following kinds of Ambizione grants:

- a. "Ambizione grant with salary" for the grantee and project funds;
- b. "Ambizione project grant" (project funds only).

² Ambizione grants are awarded for a maximum of four years.

³ The minimum duration of funding is two years.

⁴ The provisions of these Regulations apply to both types of Ambizione grants. Should a provision apply only to one type of Ambizione grant, this will be indicated by "Ambizione grant with salary" or "Ambizione project grant".

Article 3 Ambizione for researchers who do clinical work²

¹ The following special provisions apply to researchers doing clinical work:

- a. They must devote at least 80% of the funded work-time percentage to the project and training related to the project;
- b. on average, a minimum of 10% must be devoted to clinical work during the entire funding period.

² In exceptional cases, for disciplines where manual skills are of primary importance, a larger percentage share may be granted for clinical work pursuant to paragraph 1.

Article 4 Extensions

Ambizione grants cannot be extended. However, the funding period may be extended in cases governed by the Funding Regulations and their Implementation Regulations³ (delays of not more than one year for reasons acknowledged in the Regulations pursuant to Clause 7.3 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations).

2. Personal and formal requirements

Article 5 General personal requirements

¹ Researchers from all academic disciplines who meet the general requirements for applicants pursuant to the Funding Regulations and the Implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations are eligible to submit applications for Ambizione grants.

² Professors in permanent or temporary employment with or without tenure track are not eligible to submit applications for Ambizione grants.

³ Only applicants who, on the submission date, hold or have been promised a non-professorial teaching position with prospects of an academic career are eligible to apply for an Ambizione project grant.

⁴ Applicants must hold a doctorate (PhD) or have completed their studies in human, dental, veterinary, social or preventive medicine (Staatsexamen or equivalent exam, hereinafter "medical

² Ambizione-SCORE: Swiss clinicians opting for research; Ambizione-PROSPER: Programme for social and preventive medicine, epidemiological, bioethics and nursing research

³ General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations of 9 December 2015: www.snsf.ch > Funding > Documents & downloads

exam"). Also admitted are applicants without a doctorate (PhD) or a medical exam who can demonstrate the completion of a minimum of three years of a primary research activity since obtaining their higher education degree. Such research activity will be regarded as an equivalent qualification to a doctorate.

⁵ Applicants must provide proof of mobility that meets the following requirements:

- a. Their research activities after the doctorate, respectively after the medical exam or an equivalent qualification were undertaken at an institution different from the one where they obtained their doctorate, respectively received their medical exam, or from the one where they completed a primary research activity pursuant to paragraph 4;
- b. the research activities pursuant to letter a lasted at least 12 months. The determining date for the beginning of this period is the date of the examination/defence of the doctoral thesis, respectively the completion of the medical exam or the equivalent primary research activity pursuant to paragraph 4.

⁶ Applications may be submitted by researchers no later than four years after completing their doctorate or an equivalent qualification. The date of the examination, respectively the defence of the doctoral thesis, or the completion of the equivalent primary research activity pursuant to paragraph 4 is the relevant date. This time window may be extended if one or more of the reasons specified in Clause 1.11 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply. The reasons for extending the time window must be explained in the application.⁴

⁷ Applicants who have completed their medical exam and have done clinical work for at least three years after completing their studies (specialist certification by the FMH is an advantage) may submit an application no later than 9 years after completion of the medical exam. It is permissible to exceed this time window if one or more of the reasons set out in Clause 1.11 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply. The reasons for extending the time window must be explained in the application.

⁸ The precise periods are calculated on the basis of the relevant submission deadline.

Article 6 Other personal requirements

¹ Applicants must have an excellent track record in their research field and provide evidence of their ability to independently conduct the proposed research project.

² Applicants who are able to show that they meet the following requirements may request a work-time percentage of at least 80%:

- a. Family care duties or
- b. fulfilment of activities that qualify them for an academic career (e.g. lecturing assignment, training and continuing education in their field).

Article 7 Formal requirements

¹ Applications for Ambizione grants must be submitted to the SNSF electronically in line with the relevant rules.

² In particular, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply.

³ The submission deadlines are published on the SNSF website.

⁴ Changed based on the Research Council decision of 11 July 2018, in force as of 1 August 2018.

3. Applications and eligible costs

Article 8 Applications

¹ Applications for Ambizione grants must be submitted in accordance with the guidelines issued by the SNSF and must contain all the necessary data and documents.

² The mandatory documents include, in particular, the written confirmations according to SNSF requirements signed by the contact person listed in the application, the head of the institute/department as well as the competent hierarchical authority for research at the research institution (Vice Rector for research or similar) stating⁵:

- a. to integrate the grantee at the research institution;
- b. to provide him/her a workplace and access to the infrastructure required to successfully complete research work during the approved funding period;
- c. to assume a commensurate share of the applicant's research expenses (e.g. for material, equipment, personnel, travel, etc.).

³ The research institution also gives its opinion on the project, its independence and the scientific autonomy of the grantee.

⁴ For researchers doing clinical work, the research institution must confirm in writing that the grantee can generally devote at least 80% of the funded work-time percentage to the project and to his/her own further training and a minimum of 10% (on average during the entire funding period) to clinical work.

⁵ In the case of applications for an Ambizione project grant, the research institution must confirm in writing the grantee's period of employment as well as the envisaged proportion between research work and other activities/duties. In addition, a statement regarding planned career measures and career prospects linked to the position should be submitted.

Article 9 Stays at host institutions

¹ If the Ambizione grant includes stays at a Swiss or foreign academic host institution or at an institution of the practical realm (industry, administration, etc.; intersectoral mobility), a request to this effect, including full supporting reasons, must be included in the application for an Ambizione grant.

² All in all, the stays with a host institution may not exceed 12 months, spent at one or more institutions. If the duration of the Ambizione grant is less than four years, the maximum duration of stays at host institutions will be proportionately shorter.

³ Each request for a stay at a host institution must be accompanied by a letter of invitation from the relevant host institution that confirms fulfilment of the requirements set out in Article 8 paragraph 2 letters a and b for the duration of the stay.⁵

Article 10 Eligible costs: Ambizione grant with salary

¹ Ambizione grants with salary include the grantees' own salary. The SNSF determines the amount of the salary by agreement with the research institution.

² The SNSF may set an upper limit for the salary.

⁵ Changed based on the Research Council decision of 11 July 2018, in force as of 1 August 2018.

³In addition, project funds pursuant to Article 11 paragraph 1 letters a – h are covered. Such funds may not exceed CHF 400,000 for the four-year grant. If the duration of the Ambizione grant with salary is less than four years, the maximum amount will be proportionately smaller.

Article 11 Eligible costs: Ambizione project grant

¹ The following project funds are covered by an Ambizione project grant:⁶

- a. salaries of employees whose posts have been approved by the SNSF;
- b. material costs directly related to the approved project, in particular material of enduring value, expendable items, field expenses, travel expenses, third-party charges, cost of computing time and data as well as of providing open access to research data;
- c. direct costs of the use of infrastructure for conducting the research project;
- d. costs of organising conferences and workshops associated with the funded research;
- e. costs for national and international cooperation and networking activities carried out in connection with the funded research;
- f. costs for career measures;
- g. costs for gender equality measures;

² Project funds must not exceed CHF 400,000 for the four-year grant pursuant to paragraph 1 letters a – h. If the duration of the Ambizione project grant is less than four years, the maximum amount will be proportionately smaller.

Article 12 Employment of staff

¹ The SNSF may approve the employment and financing of employees if the applicant includes a request to this effect in the application and provides reasons (pursuant to Clause 7.2 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations).

² Applicants may request a salary for a doctoral student. In such cases, the research institution must confirm the supervisor of the doctoral thesis in writing.

³ If a salary for a doctoral student is approved with Ambizione grants, the position must be filled at the latest six months after the start of the grant.

⁴ In the confirmation, the supervisor of the doctoral thesis and the research institution must guarantee the due completion of the doctoral thesis on expiry of the grant or in the event of the project being abandoned prematurely.

⁵ If engagement of a postdoctoral researcher is envisaged for the project, the confirmation must include a commitment by the research institution to contribute to at least half of the said researcher's salary.

4. Submission and other grants of the SNSF: restrictions

Article 13 Ambizione grants in relation to other forms of funding offered by the SNSF⁶

¹ Proposals may only be submitted for a duration of support for which no other

- a. project grants under the project funding scheme, Sinergia grants or programmes of the SNSF have been requested, approved or are ongoing;

⁶ Changed based on the Research Council decision of 11 July 2018, in force as of 1 August 2018.

b. career grants of the SNSF have been applied for.

The restrictions apply during the entire evaluation process.⁷

² Parallel applications may be submitted for Postdoc.Mobility if the parallel application is for a return grant.

³ In the event of parallel submission of a proposal, the proposal will not be considered by the SNSF.

⁴ As of the approval date and for the entire duration of Ambizione grants, the grantee may not submit any applications under the project funding scheme, Sinergia grants or programmes of the SNSF. It is possible to apply for funding beyond the expiry date of Ambizione grants.

⁵ Grantees may not apply for any further career grants of the SNSF. As an exception, grantees may apply for PRIMA and Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships 18 months after starting their Ambizione grant at the earliest.

Article 14 Repeated submissions: limitation

Applicants whose application was rejected may apply at the most a second time for an Ambizione grant regardless of the subject matter of the project.

5. Assessment criteria and procedure

Article 15 Assessment criteria

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

² The following assessment criteria are applied:

- a. the applicant's scientific track record;
- b. the applicant's aptitude for an academic or academic-clinical career;
- c. applicant's career progression and retrospective and prospective mobility; the SNSF may consider longer research stays abroad prior to completion of the doctorate from a mobility angle;
- d. scientific independence of the applicant at the chosen research institution and of the research project;
- e. scientific relevance, originality and topicality of the research project;
- f. approach and methodology of the research project as well as its feasibility and chances of success;
- g. suitability of the research institution as a place to conduct the research project as well as to strengthen and promote the applicant's scientific independence;
- h. if applicable, value that the requested stays at host institutions pursuant to Article 1 paragraph 5 would add to the applicant's career and to the research project.

Article 16 Assessment procedure

¹ The assessment procedure comprises two phases. Phase 1 consists of a preselection of applicants admitted to phase 2. Applicants who do not qualify for phase 2 are informed about their rejection and the reasons for it in writing.

⁷ Editorial amendment of 1 September 2018, in force with immediate effect.

² In phase 2, the applicants are invited for an interview. In certain circumstances (e.g. long travelling distance), the interview may be held as a video conference.

³ At the interview, the applicants must present their research project and career plans verbally and answer the questions of the panel members.

⁴ The decisions made in phase 2 are communicated to the applicants in writing together with the grounds on which they are based.

6. Grants and grant administration

Article 17 Grants and start of grants

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

² Ambizione grants may generally be started approximately nine months after the submission deadline. The earliest possible commencement of funding is announced in the relevant call.

³ Any changes intended to be made to the described research work and conditions, particularly with regard to the research institution, must be reported to the SNSF in advance. The SNSF may approve a request for changes to a grant if it cites valid reasons.

Article 18 Non-acceptance or premature termination

¹ If grantees forego Ambizione grants or have to terminate their research work prematurely, they must notify the SNSF without delay in writing, stating their reasons for doing so.

² In such cases, the SNSF terminates the grant. The remaining amount of the grant must be refunded to the SNSF.

Article 19 Reporting

¹ Grantees are obliged to send the SNSF periodic reports in accordance with the requirements defined by the SNSF.

² In particular, scientific and financial reports as well as output data should be submitted annually after the start of the project.

³ The duty to provide output data will remain in place after submission of the final report and end three years after the expiry of the grant.

7. Applicable law and entry into force

Article 20 Applicable law

Subject to any specific provisions in these Regulations, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply.

Article 21 Entry into force and repeal of existing regulations

¹ These Regulations enter into force on 2 October 2016.

² These Regulations replace the regulations concerning Ambizione, Ambizione-PROSPER and Ambizione-SCORE grants of 15 August 2012. The transitional provisions set out in Article 22 of these Regulations remain reserved.

³ The Implementation regulations for the awarding of Ambizione Energy Grants of 13 August 2013 are repealed as of 30 November 2016. The transitional provisions set out in Article 22 of these Regulations remain reserved.

Article 22 Transitional provisions

¹ These Regulations apply to the funding arrangements initiated prior to their entry into force. However, if rights assigned to grantees on approval of funding are not in accordance with the new Regulations, such rights will nonetheless remain in force.

² Ambizione, Ambizione-PROSPER and Ambizione-SCORE grants or Ambizione Energy Grants that have been approved or are ongoing on the entry into force of these Regulations may be extended by the SNSF, generally by a maximum of 12 months, in the following exceptional cases in response to a request backed up by full supporting reasons:

- a. in the event of clinical activities (Ambizione PROSPER/SCORE);
- b. in the case of an interruption or reduction of the employment level due to maternity or family care duties during the grant period;
- c. Ambizione Energy grants are only extended if the grantee has demonstrably been presented with the prospect of a professorship at a Swiss research institution within the higher education sector.

³ Applications for Ambizione Energy Grants pursuant to the Implementation regulations for the awarding of Ambizione Energy Grants of 13 August 2013 may be submitted for the last time by the 18 November 2016 deadline. The personal requirements pursuant to Article 3 and the assessment criteria pursuant to Article 7 of the Regulations concerning Ambizione, Ambizione-PROSPER and Ambizione-SCORE grants of 15 August 2012, in conjunction with the Implementation Regulations of 13 August 2013, will continue to apply to these applications. Ambizione Energy Grants include the applicants' salaries and may not be awarded as project grants. The provision regarding extensions pursuant to paragraph 2 letter c also applies to grants awarded in the context of the final call for Ambizione Energy Grants. In all other cases the provisions of these Ambizione Regulations apply.