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Regulations concerning Ambizione, Ambizione-PROSPER and Ambizione-SCORE grants

15 August 2012

The National Research Council,
based on article 4 and 48¹ of the Funding Regulations²,
has issued the following regulations:

1. Preamble

Article 1 Principle

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) awards Ambizione, Ambizione-PROSPER³ and Ambizione-SCORE⁴ grants (hereinafter "Ambizione grants") to female and male researchers who wish to conduct individual research at a Swiss university.

² These grants are to benefit persons who aim to distinguish themselves scientifically through independent research at Swiss universities, university hospitals or universities of applied sciences.

³ The employment level is generally 100 %. A lesser degree of employment may be granted if valid reasons are given or, in particular, in the case of persons with family care duties.

⁴ Subject to paragraph 5, the activities funded by the SNSF are to be devoted in their entirety to the planned research work.

⁵ Medical researchers doing clinical work must as a rule devote 80 – 90 % of the financed level of employment to the project and training related to the project. On average, a minimum of 10 % must be devoted to clinical work during the entire funding period (see article 4 paragraph 4).

⁶ Special conditions may be set to promote candidatures in specific research fields.⁵

⁷ During the whole term of the Ambizione grant, no other SNSF project grants may be obtained. The submission of proposals for funding after the Ambizione grant is possible.

¹ Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016.

² www.snsf.ch > About us > Statutes & legal framework

³ PROSPER: Programme for social and preventive medicine, epidemiological, bioethics and nursing research

⁴ SCORE: Swiss clinicians opting for research

⁵ Added based on the decision of 13 August 2013, in force since 1 September 2013.

Article 2 Duration and commencement of funding

¹ Ambizione grants are awarded for a maximum of three years.

² Ambizione grants shall commence approximately seven months after the submission deadline. The earliest possible commencement of funding is announced in the relevant call.

³ Follow-up grants are generally not approved. In exceptional cases, the SNSF may approve a follow-up in response to a request giving reasons, in particular, for grantees doing clinical work (Ambizione-PROSPER/SCORE) or in the event of an interruption or a reduction of the employment level due to maternity or family care duties during the grant period.

2. Formal requirements

Article 3 Personal requirements

¹ Proposals for Ambizione grants can be submitted by researchers from all disciplines who meet the following requirements:

- a. They hold a doctorate (PhD) or have completed their studies in human, dental, veterinary, social or preventive medicine with a doctorate (MD). In exceptional cases, several years of research documented by high-level publications equivalent to a doctoral thesis may release the applicant from this requirement.
- b. Applicants with a doctorate (PhD) must generally have obtained the same a maximum of five years prior to the submission deadline. The date of the examination or viva voce is the decisive date. The period of five years after the doctorate serves as a benchmark. Applicants who exceed this benchmark, e.g. due to family care duties, may be accepted. A detailed rationale for exceeding the benchmark must be submitted in writing.
- c. Applicants who have completed their medical training with a doctorate (MD) and have done clinical work for at least three years after completing their studies (a certificate as a specialist FMH is an advantage) may generally submit a proposal no later than nine years after obtaining their medical licence (Staatsexamen or equivalent exam). This period is calculated on the basis of the submission deadline. The period of nine years after the medical licence serves as a benchmark. Applicants who exceed this benchmark, e.g. due to family care duties, further clinical training or an extended research stay abroad, may be accepted. A detailed rationale for exceeding the benchmark must be submitted in writing.
- d. They must furnish proof of their scientific track record, in particular with regard to high-level publications in their research field.

² At the time of the submission deadline, applicants must have completed postdoctoral research activities lasting at least 12 months at a different university from that of their doctoral thesis (proof of mobility). The status postdoctoral researcher begins with the date of the doctoral examination or viva voce.⁶

³ Proposals may only be submitted for a duration of support for which no other SNSF project grants have been requested or granted. If there is a parallel submission of a proposal, the proposal will not be considered by the SNSF.

⁶ Amendment/clarification of 1 July 2014, in force with immediate effect.

Article 4 Objective requirements

¹ Applicants must submit their proposals for Ambizione grants in accordance with the relevant requirements using the official SNSF forms. The proposals must comprise all details and documents specified as compulsory.

² Compulsory documents include, in particular, a written confirmation by the responsible office at the host institute to integrate the grantee in the research institute and assure him/her of a workplace and access to the infrastructure required to successfully complete research work during the approved funding period.

³ Ambizione grants are designated for funding independent research projects. In its letter of confirmation, the host institute gives its opinion on the project, its independence and the scientific autonomy of the applicant. It states its willingness to assume a commensurate share of the applicant's research expenses (e.g. for material, equipment, personnel, travel, etc.) for the completion of his/her project.

⁴ For medical researchers doing clinical work, the host institute must confirm in writing that the grantee can generally devote 80 – 90 % of the financed level of employment to the project and to his/her own further training and a minimum of 10 % (on average during the entire grant period) to clinical work at the institute. In exceptional cases, for disciplines where manual skills are of primary importance, a larger percentage share may be granted for clinical work.

⁵ Proposals may be submitted either in a valid official language of Switzerland or in English. The National Research Council can issue additional instructions regarding proposal submission for selected disciplines.

Article 5 Submission procedure

¹ The SNSF announces submission periods by means of a call for proposals. The call may contain additional provisions that complement these regulations.

² The completed proposals must be submitted to the SNSF's Administrative Offices by the relevant date specified in the call. The punctuality of proposals is regulated in Article 14⁷ of the Funding Regulations.

3. Application procedure

Article 6 Responsibility

The SNSF Research Council is responsible for the scientific assessment of proposals and decisions with regard to Ambizione grants. The Research Council can delegate this task to specialised review panels.

Article 7 Assessment criteria

¹ Proposals that meet the formal requirements are forwarded for scientific assessment.

² The following assessment criteria are applied:

- a. Quality, originality, relevance and independence of the research project for which the Ambizione grant is envisaged;

⁷ Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016.

- b. Scientific autonomy of the applicant at the host institute;
- c. Applicant's scientific track record, in particular research work and resultant publications;
- d. Personal suitability of the applicant for a high-level career in academic/clinical research;
- e. Proof of mobility of the applicant prior to the submission of the proposal and with regard to the choice of workplace. The SNSF may consider extensive research stays abroad as a doctoral student under the aspect of mobility, in particular if the postdoctoral research stay according to Article 3 paragraph 2 was not carried out abroad, e.g. due to family care duties;
- f. Potential for integration in the Swiss scientific community.

Article 8 Assessment procedure

¹ The assessment procedure comprises two phases. The review panels select the best proposals for the second assessment phase. The other applicants are sent a written notification of rejection, for which reasons are given.

² Those persons whose proposals have been selected in the first assessment phase are invited to attend a personal interview in the second phase. In special cases (e.g. long travelling distance), the meeting can be held as a video conference.

³ In the second phase, applicants must present their research project and career plans orally and answer the questions of the panel members.

Article 9 Proposals for follow-up grants

¹ Follow-up proposals pursuant to Article 2 paragraph 3 must be submitted to the Administrative Offices of the SNSF at least six months prior to expiry of the grant.

² Follow-up proposals must include a rationale and documents justifying the need for a follow-up.

³ Follow-up proposals are assessed in a single phase.

Article 10 Legal consequences of the award

Upon being awarded an Ambizione grant, applicants become grantees of the SNSF.

4. Eligible costs

Article 11 Amount and composition of the grant

¹ The maximum amount of the grant is CHF 600'000 for three years.⁸

² The Ambizione grant comprises the grantee's own salary. The SNSF determines remuneration by agreement with the host institutes.

³ The SNSF reserves the right to set an upper limit for the salary.

⁸ Added based on the decision of 13 August 2013, in force since 1 September 2013.

Article 12 Further costs

¹ The grant covers costs directly related to project implementation (material of enduring value, consumable material, travel and conference expenses, sundry expenses). Applicants must duly explain and give reasons if they wish to employ staff for the project.

² Sufficiently qualified applicants may request a salary for a doctoral student should there be valid reasons for doing so. In such cases, the host institute must confirm the supervisor of the doctoral thesis in writing.

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

⁴ In the confirmation, the supervisor of the dissertation and the host institute must guarantee the due completion of the doctoral thesis upon expiry of the grant or in the event of the project being prematurely abandoned.

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

5. Rights and obligations of grantees

Article 13 Grant release and expiry

Release and expiry of grants are governed by the provisions of the Funding Regulations.

Article 14 Administration of Ambizione grants

¹ Pursuant to the General Implementation Rules for the Funding Regulations, beneficiaries of Ambizione grants shall have the latter administered by a grant administration office recognised by the SNSF.

² Following the award of the Ambizione grant, changes to the described research work and research conditions, in particular of the host institute, may only be effected if a request explaining why the changes are necessary is placed with and expressly approved by the SNSF in advance.

Article 15 Renunciation or premature termination

In the event of grantees renouncing Ambizione grants or having to terminate their research prematurely, they must notify the SNSF immediately of the fact in writing, stating their reasons for doing so. The remaining amount of the grant must be returned to the SNSF.

Article 16 Reporting

Grantees report to the SNSF pursuant to Article 41⁹ of the Funding Regulations.

⁹ Amendment; funding regulations of 27.2.2015, in force since 1 January 2016.

6. Transitional and closing provisions

Article 17 Further provisions

Insofar as these regulations do not contain any special provisions, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and General Implementation Rules for the Funding Regulations apply.

Article 18 Legal validity

¹ These regulations were approved by the National Research Council on 15 August 2012 and entered into force on 1 November 2012.

² These regulations replace the regulations concerning Ambizione, Ambizione-PROSPER and Ambizione-SCORE grants of 31 August 2010.