



SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

www.snsf.ch

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Switzerland



Sino-Swiss Science and Technology Cooperation (SSSTC 2016)

Joint Research Projects: Call for Proposals 2015-2016

Opening date, SNSF: 14 December 2015

Opening date, NSFC: 4 January 2016

Closing date, both: 25 March 2016

1. Introduction

The Sino-Swiss Science and Technology Cooperation (SSSTC) was initiated by the Chinese and Swiss governments in 2003 in order to further step-up the bilateral cooperation in scientific and technological areas of strategic relevance to both countries. The cooperation is based on the principles of shared interests, scientific excellence and bilateral funding (matching funds).

The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) are determined to strengthen and develop a mutually beneficial research cooperation between Switzerland and China and have therefore agreed on launching a joint call for proposals to fund Joint Research Projects (JRPs).

2. Joint Research Projects

Grants for JRPs are meant to promote collaborative projects with clearly defined goals involving at least one partner based in Switzerland and one based in China. Applications should describe ambitious research and propose innovative approaches. The research is to be carried out at the research facilities involved; reciprocal visits and short stays in Switzerland for researchers from China and vice versa are also possible within a JRP.

Project duration: the JRPs can last up to 4 years.

3. Research fields

In order to make targeted use of the financial resources available, the following thematic areas have been chosen for this call:

- **Environmental sciences and engineering**
- **Material sciences**

Proposals outside the thematic areas defined above will not be accepted.

4. Eligibility

Each proposal for a JRP must have at least one main applicant based in Switzerland and one main applicant based in China; they are the lead scientists (also referred to as the principal investigators, “PIs”) on the Swiss and the Chinese side respectively. They bear the main responsibility for the project, including its technical and administrative coordination as well as timely delivery of scientific and financial reports. Further applicants based in Switzerland and/or in China may also participate in the consortia. Applicants are allowed to collaborate with other partners such as NGOs or companies, provided these partners do not receive any part of the funding awarded to the JRP. Former PIs are welcome to participate in the call; however, the project should be more than just a continuation of the current project.

Eligibility criteria in Switzerland

Researchers who apply for funding must meet the eligibility requirements of the SNSF. The SNSF Funding Regulations (in effect from 1 January 2016) apply or apply mutatis mutandis where not

stated otherwise. Each applicant/co-applicant may only apply for one project. Project partners are not eligible.

Eligibility criteria in China

Please refer to the NSFC call for specific rules and regulations.

5. Funding

JRP proposals contain two separate budgets: one budget in CHF for the Swiss part (paid by the SNSF according to the SNSF's rules) and one budget in CNY for the Chinese applicant(s) (paid by NSFC according to the NSFC's rules). Both countries have agreed to fund up to eleven projects if a sufficient number of high-quality proposals are submitted. Typically, the funding per project is sufficient for each side to cover the salary of a PhD student for four years OR the salary of a postdoc for three years as well as consumables, some minor equipment and the mobility costs related to the project.

Eligible costs in Switzerland

The maximum permissible budget for a project is CHF 350,000 (for four years). Please note that the SNSF reserves the right to limit the available funds for projects of a duration of less than four years.

The funding categories are:

- Equipment:** costs of material of enduring value (indicate manufacturer, type and distributor). Quotations – if possible from different competitors – must be enclosed for items whose purchase price exceeds CHF 20,000.
- Research funds:** funds needed to cover the costs incurred in the project, e.g. travel costs, room and board costs, field expenses, expendable items and unavoidable sundry expenses. The SNSF does not finance the acquisition or maintenance of expendable items that are part of the infrastructure of an institution (books, PCs, rental costs, etc.).
- Salaries:** the funding is sufficient to cover the salary of a PhD student for four years or the salary of a postdoc for three years (the salaries of main or co-applicants are not eligible).
- Social security contributions:** employers' contributions according to Annex 1 of the general implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.
- Visiting costs:** when budgeting visits, all expenses (international travel-related expenses, living expenses, health/medical overseas insurance) are to be charged to the budget of the visiting side.
 - Airline tickets must be economy class;
 - The actual costs of overnight stays at hotels with up to three stars may be claimed. The SNSF may not cover the full cost of stays at hotels with more than three stars;
 - Alternatively, grantees may claim the following flat rate instead of the actual room and board expenses:

Short-term visits (up to two weeks)

CHF 160 per day

Long-term visits

CHF 3,600 per month

The SNSF regulations apply to the Swiss budget. Overhead costs are not included, however.

Eligible costs in China

Please refer to the NSFC call for relevant information.

6. Submission

Proposals are to be jointly prepared by Swiss and Chinese applicants. They must be submitted by the Swiss main applicant to the SNSF via its electronic submission system (*mySNF*, www.mysnf.ch). Chinese partners can have access to the electronic submission system through their Swiss partner.

Chinese researchers are requested to note that all applications must be submitted via the SNSF online system, as indicated above. Applications submitted only in China and not via the SNSF online system in Switzerland will not be processed.

Swiss researchers are asked to note that their submission falls under the new SNSF Funding Regulations, which came into effect on 1 January 2016. For the submission as well as for the life time management of the project the SNSF Funding Regulations apply or apply *mutatis mutandis* where not stated otherwise.

No hard copies will be accepted. The call process is highly competitive, therefore submitting an application does not guarantee funding. Only positively rated applications will be considered for funding. Neither the SNSF nor the NSFC will be held responsible for non-submission of the application.

After login into *mySNF*, the correct funding scheme must be chosen (Programmes > Bilateral Co-operation (Initiatives of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation) > Sino-Swiss Science and Technology Cooperation (SSSTC) 2016).

The application on *mySNF* consists of two parts:

The administrative part, which must be completed online

- Personal data of the Swiss main applicant
- Personal data of the Chinese main applicant
- Personal data of the co-applicant(s) from Switzerland and China
- Basic data of the project (e.g. title, field of research, starting date, duration, summary)
- Declaration stating whether the application is use-inspired
- Funding requested from the SNSF and from the NSFC

- Information on authorisations required in Switzerland and in China
- Other information (e.g. whether the project is related to other SNSF and/or NSFC projects, names of the universities/research institutions in Switzerland and China where the planned project will be implemented, prospects for national and international collaborations, indication of already available funds or funds requested elsewhere)

PDF documents that are to be uploaded to *mySNF*

- The research plan (must have the structure indicated in Annex 1)
- The CVs and publication lists of all applicants and other researchers involved
- If applicable, equipment quotes
- Other documents

For specific questions related to www.mysnf.ch, please contact the support team by e-mail (mysnf.support@snf.ch) or telephone (+41 31 308 22 00). Please note that you need a user account in order to submit proposals via *mySNF*. To open an account, please register with the SNSF as a user. Applicants with existing user accounts need not apply for new ones.

Deadline for submission of applications: 25 March 2016 (midnight CEST). Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

Language: all information provided in the administrative part and all uploaded documents must be in English.

7. Evaluation

Peer review: proposals for JRPs will be reviewed according to standard international peer-review procedures jointly organised by the SNSF and the NSFC. The peer-review experts are designated by the members of the evaluation panel. These external experts do a peer review of the applications using a score system to verify the scientific quality of the proposed JRPs.

Evaluation panel: an evaluation panel will be set up; it will be composed of international experts proposed by the SNSF and the NSFC. Based on the peer reviews, the evaluation panel will assign each project to one of six evaluation categories. Recommendations will include rationale. Proposals assigned to the category in which the funding line lies will be re-discussed and ranked. Priority will be given to applications in the highest categories regardless of the research area.

Decision: at the SNSF, the rating effected by the evaluation panel will need to be approved by the Specialised Committee for International Co-operation and the Presiding Board of the SNSF Research Council. In addition, a formal approval of the NSFC Committee is required. Finally, the SNSF and the NSFC will present a consolidated recommendation to the Joint Committee. This body will take the final decision.

Evaluation criteria: (not listed in the order of priority)

- Scientific relevance and interest
- Originality of the aims and objectives
- Appropriateness of the methodology
- Experience and past performance of applicants

- Competence of research partners with respect to the project
- Complementary qualities of research partners
- Feasibility of the project

The evaluation results will be communicated as soon as the final decision is taken and also approved by all parties involved. The Swiss main applicant will receive a standard decision letter from the SNSF. In case of rejection, the main reasons leading to the decision will be given. In case of approval, the Swiss budget and the conditions will be listed. If applicable, the Swiss main applicant will be responsible for transmitting the decision to the other Swiss applicants. The main applicant from China will be informed by the NSFC.

Starting date for the JRP in China: 1 January 2017

Starting date for the JRP in Switzerland: between 1 January 2017 and 1 August 2017.

It is advisable that the JRPs in Switzerland also start on 1 January 2017.

8. Reporting

Swiss and Chinese project partners will report separately to the SNSF and the NSFC respectively. Scientific reports are to be submitted **yearly**. The SNSF and the NSFC will prepare a common template for the scientific report, so that the consortia will only need to prepare one report for submission to both organisations.

In Switzerland:

The Swiss main applicant will be responsible for reporting to the SNSF. Both for the financial and the scientific report, the standard SNSF regulations will apply. However, scientific as well as financial reports are to be submitted yearly. They include a qualitative (template provided) and a quantitative part (output data).

In China

The standard NSFC rules apply.

9. Payments

In Switzerland (SNSF funding):

The standard SNSF rules apply. In principle, the budgets for JRPs are transferred in annual instalments to the Swiss PI at the beginning of a project year.

In China (NSFC funding):

The standard NSFC rules apply.

10. Publications and intellectual property

The PIs are obliged to publish research findings resulting from the JRPs in appropriate form and according to SNSF and NSFC standards.

Intellectual property rights belong to the researcher and/or his/her employing institution. It is the responsibility of each research partner to ensure the efficient protection and proper distribution of any intellectual property arising from the accomplishments of the Joint Research Projects.

11. Further information and contacts

In Switzerland

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In China

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Website: www.nsfc.gov.cn

Annex 1: Guidelines for writing the research plan (scientific part of the proposal)

The research plan should be organised in 5 sections (2.1.–2.5.), preceded by a summary (1.). We kindly ask you to use the section headings indicated below. The proposals will be sent out for external review. In order to ensure that the scientific content of your proposal can be adequately assessed, please provide a detailed research plan which sets out clearly the aims, objects and methods of the project you are planning.

1. Summary of the research plan (max. 8,000 characters)

This summary should be an exact copy of the one you have written in the *mySNF* data container “Basic data II”. It should include the most important features of your research plan and place your project in a broader scientific context.

2. Research plan

The research plan must not exceed 20 pages and 80,000 characters including blank space, figures, tables, formulae and references. The font size should be 10 pt with a line spacing of 1.5. In general, appendices are to be avoided.

2.1 Current state of research in the field

By citing the most important publications in the relevant field, please set out the scientific background and basis of the project, explain the need to perform research on the topic you propose and briefly describe important research currently being conducted internationally.

2.2 Current state of applicants’ own research and partnership aspects

- Please describe briefly the work done by the different applicants in the relevant research field or in related fields and indicate the relevant publications.
- Explain how the different applicants complement each other for the proposed research project.
- Describe past collaborations that involved the Swiss and Chinese partners (if applicable).

2.3 Detailed research plan

Information on aims, rationale, methods and data

Against the background described in sections 2.1. and 2.2., please state the aims that you plan to achieve during the lifetime of the project. Please consider the following points:

- Which investigations and/or experiments do you plan to carry out / are necessary to achieve the stated aims?
- What is the rationale for getting the project started and how will the work most likely develop later on?

Information concerning the methods necessary to achieve the aims:

- Which methods are available to you?
- To which other methods do you have access and how?
- Which methods need to be developed?

Data and data collection:

- Which data are available to you and from where?
- Which data need to be collected?

2.4 Work division, schedule and milestones

- Please indicate how you plan to divide the work among the different partners.
- As far as possible, please give an approximate schedule for the work to be carried out within the project and indicate the most important milestones. In particular, please describe the major tasks of the project staff to be employed by the different partners.
- List the planned visits between the Swiss and Chinese research groups (visiting scientist, hosting scientist, purpose of visit, date and duration of visit).

2.5 Importance, impact and results

Scientific importance and impact

Please describe briefly the importance of your research for the scientific community and the impact you expect from the project on research and training/teaching in your field/discipline.

Please indicate how you will publish/communicate your results.

Expected results and dissemination plan

Describe in detail the project outcomes you envisage. Explain how you will share these findings with stakeholders and the community. Address the potential for knowledge transfer to industry (if applicable).

Broader impact

If you have indicated (on *mySNF*) that your application involves use-inspired research, please state whether and to what extent the proposed project will have a broader impact and what this impact will be. The following points should be addressed:

- Need for research as perceived by practitioners/industry: are there any knowledge gaps? Are innovations and improvements expected?
- Transferability of results: to what degree can research results be put into practice?
- Other potential impacts: in which spheres outside science could the implementation of the research results entail changes and what is the nature of these changes?

3. Ethical, safety and regulatory issues

Does your proposed work raise ethical, safety or regulatory issues? If yes, how will you deal with them?

4. Research requiring authorisations or notifications on the Chinese side

For the Swiss side, please see the corresponding data container on *mySNF*. For the Chinese side, indicate whether the proposed research includes:

	YES	NO
Humans, human tissue samples or individual medical data		
Vertebrates, decapods or cephalopods		
Pathogens or genetically modified organisms		
Human embryonic stem cells		

5. List of ongoing and/or recent research projects between the Chinese and Swiss applicants

Project title	Research area	Project duration (xx/yy/zz - xx/yy/zz)	Amount of funds & funding source

Insert additional rows in the table if required.

6. Planned visits

6.1 China to Switzerland

	Visiting scientist(s)	Period & duration of visit	Purpose of visit
1st year			
2nd year			
3rd year			
4th year			

6.2 Switzerland to China

	Visiting scientist(s)	Period & duration of visit	Purpose of visit
1st year			
2nd year			
3rd year			
4th year			

7. Requested funds

For the Swiss side, please see corresponding data container on *mySNF*.

Chinese applicant (in CNY)

	Equipment	Research funds	Salaries	Social security contributions	Total
1st Year					
2nd year					
3rd year					
4th year					
Total					