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Regulations on project funding

of 4 November 2014

The Research Council

based on Articles 3 and 48 of the Regulations on research grants (hereinafter "Funding Regulations")

issues the following Regulations:

Chapter 1 Project funding

Article 1 Objectives and principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (hereinafter "the SNSF") provides project funding to enable qualified researchers to conduct research projects on self-chosen topics and with self-chosen goals independently and under their own responsibility.

² The SNSF awards grants for research projects. Through project funding, it aims to award researchers a basic grant that is appropriate for the planned research. In particular, researchers can apply for coverage of research costs and staff salaries as well as for the funding of scientific cooperation, networking and communication; however, they may not apply for their own salaries.

³ Grants are awarded based on the scientific appraisal of the submitted proposals.

⁴ The authors of research ideas and plans must submit the relevant applications under their own name.

⁵ Project funding grants are governed by these Regulations as well as the other applicable rules of the SNSF. The Funding Regulations of the SNSF¹ apply, in particular.

Article 2 Duration of funding, minimum grants

¹ The grants are awarded for a maximum of four years. Project funding is intended to encourage researchers to focus on one project and plan it for a four-year period.

² It is possible to apply for a shorter funding period if the research project, by its very nature, can only be planned for less than four years.

³ The minimum duration of projects is 12 months. The SNSF does not consider applications for shorter periods of research.

¹ [Funding Regulations of the SNSF](#)

⁴ The minimum amount that may be requested in research applications is CHF 50,000. The SNSF does not consider applications for lower amounts.

Article 3 Excellence grants

¹ Excellence grants are special grants for researchers seeking to develop the topics of their ongoing project in a follow-up project; they are awarded through a simplified procedure.

² Excellence grants may be awarded to grantees whose applications were awarded the two highest grades and approved for a period of at least three years. When communicating positive decisions to applicants, the SNSF informs them of the conditions under which an excellence grant may be awarded as a follow-up to the grant already approved.

³ It is not possible to apply for an excellence grant and there is no legal entitlement to receive such a grant. Only one excellence grant may be awarded per approved grant.

⁴ The SNSF makes a definitive offer of an excellence grant approximately one year before expiry of the grant. The requested details must be submitted to the SNSF, in particular a short description of the project goals that constitute a thematic follow-up to the ongoing project. In all other respects, the provisions governing applications and application submission also apply to excellence grants.

⁵ The SNSF awards excellence grants for no longer than the duration of the preceding grant and, in principle, for a comparable amount.

⁶ Excellence grants may be awarded to two or more grantees if the same constellation is maintained as in the preceding grant. Exceptions are possible in justified cases.

⁷ The SNSF generally does not have the documents of an excellence grant application reviewed by external experts.

Chapter 2 Personal and formal requirements for the submission of proposals

Article 4 Personal requirements, general

¹ Natural persons are eligible to submit applications if they meet the general eligibility requirements for the submission of applications pursuant to Article 10 of the Funding Regulations of the SNSF. The requirements set out in Article 13 of the Funding Regulations with regard to the proposed research must also be met.

² Applicants with a doctorate must have obtained the latter four years before the submission date of the application. Applicants without a doctorate must generally have completed three years of research work as their main source of income since obtaining their higher education degree. Such research work will be regarded as equivalent to a doctorate.

³ Researchers who assume an independent research post less than four years after obtaining the doctorate may submit project funding applications as soon as they assume the said position.

⁴ Applicants must be in a position to carry out research projects under their own responsibility and to lead project staff both scientifically and as personnel.

⁵ Applicants must make a substantial contribution to the proposed research and their work must not be directed by instructions from third parties.

⁶ In addition, the provisions of Chapter 4 of these Regulations must be met.

Article 5 Other personal requirements

¹ Applicants must be able to show that

- a. they are conducting their research activities along with any scientific teaching activities to an extent equivalent to at least 50% FTE. Researchers devoting less than 50% of their time to scientific activities are eligible if their scientific research and teaching activities are usually carried out in the context of another professional activity;
- b. they are employed at least for the duration of the project at a research institution eligible for research funding from the SNSF or have been given assurance of such employment in writing;
- c. the necessary research infrastructure is at their disposal.

² If the proposed project is not to be conducted in the context of a position, applicants must show that they are independently conducting scientific research in Switzerland as their main source of income. The SNSF may demand further information on the research conditions.

Article 6 Formal requirements

¹ Grant applications must be submitted electronically to the SNSF.

² The submission dates are 1 April and 1 October.

³ In all other respects, any further formal requirements for the submission of applications apply, in particular the Funding Regulations of the SNSF and its Implementation Regulations.

Chapter 3 Applications and eligible costs

Article 7 Applications

¹ Project funding applications must be submitted in accordance with the requirements issued by the SNSF for such grants and must contain all the necessary data and documents.

² The applicants must describe the proposed research project in the research plan. As for excellence grants, Article 3 applies.

³ Applicants may only submit one application per submission date.

⁴ Applicants submitting a project funding application may not at the same time submit an application for an Ambizione grant or have an Ambizione application pending at the SNSF.

Article 8 Eligible research costs

¹ Project funding grants, incl. excellence grants, may be used to cover the following costs:

- a. the salaries of scientific and technical staff in research projects within the scope of the salary ranges and rates prescribed by the SNSF;
- b. material costs that are directly related to the research work, namely material of enduring value, expendable items, field expenses, travel expenses, third-party charges, cost of computing time and data² as well as of providing open access to research data³;
- c. direct costs incurred through the use of research infrastructure linked to the research work;

² Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 9 December 2015, in force since 1 January 2016.

³ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 21 March 2017, in force since 1 April 2017

- d. costs and fees of scientific open access e-publications produced within the scope of the funded research;
- e. costs for the organisation of conferences and workshops in connection with the funded research;
- f. costs for national and international cooperation and networking activities carried out in connection with the funded research.

²The costs must be applied for and quantified in the proposal.

³The requirements for assumption of the costs are set out in separate provisions issued by the SNSF. In particular, the SNSF may set upper limits for individual cost categories as well as binding rates for salaries and minimum requirements for employment positions.

⁴The SNSF may award global budgets and approve transfers between the individual cost categories during the funding period. The details are set out in separate provisions of the SNSF.

⁵Grants to cover costs incurred through exemption from teaching duties may be applied for and awarded in accordance with separate provisions stipulated by the SNSF within the limited period defined by the SNSF, provided that the exemption from teaching duties has a direct positive effect on the funded research. This provision applies only to projects in the humanities and social sciences.

Article 9 Eligible costs for career measures

¹ The following costs for career measures are covered:

- a. Flexibility grants⁴ of the SNSF for employees with care responsibilities;
- b. Mobility grants;
- c. Gender equality grant.

²The requirements for the assumption of costs and the ceilings set by the SNSF are laid down in the separate provisions issued by the SNSF for these grants.

³ The grants must be requested in the applications or during the running time of the grant. The SNSF may stipulate that the costs of some of these measures be debited to the grant without any corresponding request having been made. In such cases, the SNSF pays an additional amount (deficit guarantee) if the project funds prove to be insufficient.

⁴The SNSF awards grants to cover the costs of salaries for the period during which researchers are relieved of their clinical activities and can focus on their research projects. These grants aimed at protecting the research time of clinical researchers may be applied for and awarded in accordance with separate provisions stipulated by the SNSF within the limited period defined by the SNSF. This provision applies only to clinical research projects.

Article 10 Grants for collaborative projects

Grants for collaborative projects pursuant to Article 12 paragraph 2 may be increased to take account of the participation of two or more applicants, compared to project grants that are awarded to only one applicant.

⁴ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 15 August 2017, in force since 1 January 2018.

Article 11 Grants for project completion

If, for unforeseeable reasons, additional funds are needed for the successful completion of a project, an application for a project completion grant pursuant to Article 36 of the Funding Regulations may be submitted.

Chapter 4 Applicants and submission of applications

Article 12 Applicants, two or more applicants and project partners

¹ Applications for project funding grants are generally submitted by individuals (applicants).

² Two or more applicants are eligible if they are needed to achieve the targets set for the planned project. In the case of two or more applicants, one person must be designated as the applicant engaging in correspondence with the SNSF.

³ Each applicant must meet the eligibility requirements for the submission of applications pursuant to these Regulations and the Funding Regulations, and each is personally responsible for the project.

⁴ Project partners are researchers who contribute to a research project through cooperation without being responsible for the project. They must be designated as such in the application. Within the scope of their contributions such as analyses etc., project partners benefit from the SNSF grant. However, they do not count as (remunerated) employees of the project and are not among those responsible for the project as a whole. They may not refer to the support received from the SNSF as a grant they have acquired themselves.

⁵ The relationship between the applicants and, after approval of the grant, between the grantees is governed by the Funding Regulations of the SNSF.

Article 13 Project grants in relation to other forms of funding awarded by the SNSF; two or more project grants

¹ During the running time of a project grant, grantees may receive grants under all SNSF funding schemes with the exception of Ambizione and PRIMA. SNSF professors and Eccellenza grantees may submit a project funding application two years after starting their grant at the earliest.⁵

² Within the scope of project funding, researchers may in principle hold only one grant during the same funding period. However, the SNSF may award a second grant if the overlapping research project is thematically clearly different from the ongoing project and if the applicant can show that he/she will make a substantial contribution to this second project as well.

³ In order to make a thematic distinction pursuant to paragraph 2, it is necessary to show that the second project is clearly different from the first in terms of topic, aim, object of study and research question.

⁴ It is possible to apply for a project grant for the period after expiry of a support measure by the SNSF that was subject to the restrictions applicable to project funding. Overlaps of a few months are permissible.

⁵ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 19 September 2017, in force since 1 November 2017.

Article 14 Re-submission

The SNSF only considers a re-submitted application if it is a significantly modified version of the rejected application.

Chapter 5 Assessment criteria and grants

Article 15 Assessment criteria, scientific evaluation

¹ The relevant criteria for the award of project funding grants are the scientific quality of the research projects and the scientific qualifications of the applicant.

² Scientific evaluation is conducted in accordance with the criteria set out in Article 24 paragraph 2 of the Funding Regulations:

- a. scientific quality of the proposed research project: scientific relevance, topicality and originality, suitable methods, and feasibility;
- b. scientific qualifications of the researchers: scientific track record and ability to carry out the research project.

³ For applications in use-inspired basic⁶ research, the project's broader impact is considered in the evaluation.

Article 16 Grants

Project funding grants are awarded and managed according to the applicable rules of the SNSF, in particular according to the Funding Regulations of the SNSF and its Implementation Regulations.

Article 17 Reporting

¹ Holders of project funding grants are obliged to submit to the SNSF reports in accordance with the requirements stipulated by the SNSF.

² In particular, output data must be provided 18 months after the start of the project at the latest and a final report upon conclusion of a project.

Chapter 6 Applicable law, transitional provisions and entry into force

Article 18 Applicable law

Unless these Regulations provide otherwise, the provisions of the Funding Regulations of the SNSF and its Implementation Regulations apply.

Article 19 Transitional provisions

¹ These Regulations are applicable 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 Transitional provisions for excellence grants: excellence grants may also be awarded to grantees who had obtained a grant before the present regulations entered into force and whose applications

⁶ Amendment of 27.10.2017, in force with immediate effect.

had been assigned the two highest grades and approved for a period of at least three years. The SNSF informs such grantees of the conditions under which an excellence grant may be awarded as a follow-up to the grant already approved.

³Transitional provisions on Ambizione:

- a. Researchers whose Ambizione grant was awarded before the amended provisions for Ambizione entered into force may, irrespective of the four-year rule stipulated in Article 4, submit a project funding application for the period after expiry of the Ambizione grant.
- b. Researchers wishing to submit an application excluding salary costs before expiry of the four-year period pursuant to Article 4, and prior to the entry into force of the amended Ambizione provisions, are eligible for project funding until the amended Ambizione provisions enter into force, provided they can show that they have successfully worked as researchers for a number of years.

Article 20 Entry into force

The first submission deadline to which these Regulations will apply is that of 1 October 2016.