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## Promotion of upcoming women researchers by the SNSF: new funding scheme PRIMA will replace MHV grants

### 25 years ago the SNSF started offering MHV grants to improve the career prospects of women researchers

Balancing an academic career with family life can be a major challenge for women researchers in particular. The SNSF therefore introduced the Marie Heim-Vögtlin (MHV) scheme in 1991 to support female researchers who had interrupted their research work for family reasons. The grants are awarded for a maximum of two years to women with excellent qualifications at doctoral or postdoctoral level. Thanks to the grant, they can make up for career gaps caused by their family situation and improve their career prospects.

### Other measures to keep women in academia

A lot has changed since MHV was introduced 25 years ago. To help women scientists stay in academia, **the SNSF has launched a range of measures and options aimed at making its funding schemes more flexible:**

- **academic instead of biological age limits** for career funding schemes
- the **120% support grant** aimed at achieving a better balance between career and family: it allows **postdocs with children** to temporarily reduce their work-time percentage and engage a support person for the same period, and/or to obtain a grant towards child care costs.
- more flexible and family-friendly **mobility funding schemes starting at doctoral level** (fellowships, mobility grants in the scope of projects).
- greater **consideration of applicant's family situation** during evaluation: focus on quality rather than on the number of publications; assessment of mobility relative to the family situation.
- **Gender equality grants** for upcoming women researchers supported by the SNSF, providing them with more personalised and flexible funding options for their careers.

Apart from the gender equality grant, all of these measures **address both men and women:** they enable excellent researchers to pursue an academic career and meet their family commitments at the same time.

## **Starting 2017: PRIMA - attractive grants for upcoming women researchers who show great promise**

MHV grants have significantly improved the career prospects of over 570 researchers since 1991. With the implementation of the new measures mentioned above, the SNSF has been able to **integrate many aspects of the MHV scheme into its standard funding schemes**, including academic instead of biological age limits, the possibility of working part time, child care allowances or consideration of the applicant's personal background during the evaluation. **Some characteristics of MHV grants have therefore become redundant.** In addition, these grants are only awarded for a maximum of two years and are therefore too short for doctoral students to complete their dissertation or for postdocs to carry out a project from beginning to end. Furthermore, they only include comparatively modest funds for research.

However, the SNSF will continue to support upcoming women scientists. As one of its planned innovations, the SNSF will launch in 2017 an attractive and flexible new scheme for women at postdoc level that focuses more strongly on their academic career potential. **PRIMA (Promoting Women in Academia)** is intended to support excellent women scientists and enable them to prepare the ground for an independent academic post. The new funding scheme affords talented women scientists flexible conditions that can help them overcome the institutional barriers still in place. PRIMA aims to help increase the **low share of female professors at Swiss higher education institutions** as compared to other European countries.

The characteristics of the PRIMA funding scheme will be finalised by 2017. Subsequently, the SNSF will be able to provide more detailed information about the new scheme.