

Multi-Year Programme 2012-2016

Executive Summary

The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) promotes research in Switzerland on behalf of the government. Its present strategic plan for 2012-2016 focuses on the aim of strengthening research and to contribute to Switzerland's top position in research.

With its research policy the SNSF intends to optimise the framework conditions for researchers in Switzerland. To this end, it is forging close ties of co-operation and co-ordination with all partner organisations and political authorities. By having an efficient national funding strategy it intends to strengthen the competitiveness of Swiss researchers; through in-depth international cooperation it hopes to secure Switzerland's position in shaping international research activities.

This involves the following challenges:

- Increasing demand from researchers for support funds
- Dwindling attractiveness of academic careers for young scientists in Switzerland
- Increasingly multi-faceted needs in research, in particular application-oriented basic research
- Increasing demands by society and politics for tangible scientific results, recording their benefits and communicating them.

In the following **multi-year programme for 2012-2016** the SNSF presents its **strategic guidelines and plans** to meet these challenges:

- The current significant dynamic of Switzerland as a research site is demonstrated in the **increased demand for support funds** from the SNSF and thereby a decrease in the rate of success. According to prognoses, the numbers of applications and required contributions in project support will increase further. Therefore the SNSF is putting **emphasis on project support** and envisages an annual growth of 6 % in new grants.
- In order to increase the **attractiveness of scientific careers** in Switzerland, in agreement with the universities and Rector's Conference of Swiss Universities (CRUS), the SNSF would like to improve **researchers' employment conditions which are financed by research projects**. The SNSF envisages an increase in the numbers of doctoral students, support of mobility at doctoral level, measures to help young researchers with children and a flexible equality grant for research projects. In medical research, the support includes the partial release of researchers active in clinical work, and in humanities and social sciences funds to relieve excellent university teachers.
- To increase the attractiveness of scientific careers, the SNSF plans **optimisation measures for the funding of individual scientists**, such as, for example, supplementing grants with social benefits and supporting the scientific reintegration following stays abroad with grants for returnees.

- In order to meet the *increasing multi-faceted needs of researchers* appropriately, the SNSF particularly wishes to offer support opportunities suitable for **application-oriented basic research** and is therefore integrating its DORE programme and other areas of application-oriented basic research into general project support. It is developing new assessment criteria and is strengthening its cooperation with the Innovation Promotion Agency CTI. Ensuring appropriate evaluation of projects in the arts and health sciences, it aims to strengthen the competitiveness of research in these areas.

The financial support required for 2012-2016 for the above-listed measures comprises CHF 2,508 million in project support and CHF 877 million in funding for individual scientists. In addition there will be CHF 20 million for publications and conferences.

- With increased support of translational medicine and investigator-driven clinical research, the support of longitudinal studies and incentives for the networking of biobanks, the SNSF is putting further emphasis on the area of **biomedical research** with a total of 204 million Swiss francs.
- On the **international level** the SNSF is striving to simplify cross boarder research projects and wishes to support Swiss researchers in such a way that they perform successfully in international programmes and tenders. To achieve this, the SNSF requires funds in the region of 64 million Swiss francs.
- In accordance with its success to date, the SNSF would like to make an appropriate financial increase in the funding of the **National Centres of Competence in Research**. The National Research Programmes are to be financed at their current level; decision-making processes are to be agreed with the European “Joint Programming” initiative to link national programmes. In total, this requires funds of 564 million Swiss francs. The increasing requirements by researchers for **research infrastructure** are accounted for with 241 million Swiss francs.
- In line with the **demands of politics and the public**, the SNSF intends to gauge the possibilities and limits in recording the *output, benefits and effects of research* as well as to support the open access publication of research results. The **SNSF’s science communication** aims to achieve a better understanding of research, its significance and its effects. These initiatives incorporate costs of 46 million Swiss francs.

In addition to new measures, the SNSF is aiming to **reduce the complexity of its funding tools**. This will be achieved primarily by integrating DORE into project support and by suspending the ProDoc doctoral programme. With CHF 254 million (a good five per cent of the grant sum) for the service provision, there will be an **overall financial requirement of approximately CHF 4,780 million**. In addition to this there will be CHF 704 million for the overhead, expansion of which the SNSF approves if it does not detract from the growth of the direct research funding.

This present planning shows the required growth of funds from the SNSF’s point of view. This must however be in the correct ratio to the overall growth in funding for education, research and innovation, in particular funding for the ETH Domain and the basic contributions made to universities. According to the financial framework approved by parliament, the SNSF will set the necessary priorities in agreement with its partners.