Swiss National Science Foundation

Horizon Europe Transitional Measures: Call document for SNSF Advanced Grants 2022

Switzerland is currently considered a non-associated third country for participation in Horizon Europe and other related programmes and calls under Work Programme 2022. For mono-beneficary schemes such as most ERC grants, researchers at Swiss research institutions are not eligible to apply. To remedy this situation, the SNSF is offering an alternative, comparable call for proposals as part of its broader transitional measures in 2022. The aim is to maintain Switzerland's strong position as a centre of research. International applicants who intended to apply for an ERC Advanced Grant to work in Switzerland and applicants based in Switzerland can submit their proposals to the SNSF. This document describes the rules and procedures for submitting a proposal to the transitional **SNSF Advanced Grants Call 2022**. Key features of the funding instrument are summarised in **Box 1**.

Box 1. Key features of the SNSF Advanced Grants Call 2022

- The scheme is **open to all** research disciplines and topics.
- **Applicants must** have a track record of outstanding research over the past ten years and **must be recognised as leaders in their field**. They want to pursue ground-breaking, high-gain/high-risk research in Switzerland.
- Swiss host institutions must ensure conditions that allow applicants to direct the research and manage their funding.
- The **budget can be up to CHF 2.175 million** for a period of up to **five years**. Additional funding of up to CHF 870'000 may be requested for a) costs in connection with the move to Switzerland; b) the acquisition or use of scientific infrastructure/major equipment; c) other major experimental and field work costs, excluding personnel costs.
- The **scientific quality of the research project** and the applicants' **track record** are the only evaluation criteria. The entire application needs to be submitted as a whole and must include the extended synopsis, the CV, the 10-year track record, the research plan, the resources requested and the host institution confirmation letter.
- The **evaluation by international panels will be in two steps**. In Step 1, panel members will evaluate the extended synopsis, the CV and track record and rate applications on this basis. Top-rated applicants will be evaluated further in Step 2, which includes the evaluation of the research plan, international peer review and interviews.

- The call will open on **1 August 2022** and closes on **2 November 2022**. Applicants must **pre-register by 1 October 2022** and provide the following information via mySNF (www.mysnf.ch): Summary of the application, host institution, disciplines and keywords.
- The outcome of Step 1 will be communicated to applicants in **March 2023**. The applicants proceeding to Step 2 will be informed of the final decisions in **July 2023**. The projects can start at the earliest, **in August 2023**.
  - The funding of the projects is expressly **subject** to the approval of Parliament within the Confederations' credit and budget process.

Contents

1 Eligibility criteria

1.1 Applicant

1.1.1 Track record

Applicants have a track record of outstanding research over the past ten years and are recognised leaders in their field. These benchmarks should be matched by at least one of the following indicators:

- Several significant peer-reviewed publications in a responsible role that had a major impact in the research field(s).
- Major research monographs (for research fields where monographs are the norm).
- A substantial record of invited presentation in well-established international conferences, organization of international conferences, granted patents, outreach activities[1], general contributions to science[2], other artefacts with documented use[3].

Any documented career break during the last ten years should be clearly explained in the CV.

1.1.2 Multiple applications and duplicate funding

- The applicant may submit an application under the call identifier ERC-2022-AdG. However, the applicant is not allowed to participate as principal investigator in any ERC frontier research grant project *and* an SNSF Advanced Grant in parallel.
    - Funding for research projects already being funded by the SNSF or third parties is excluded
    - Researchers who receive an SNSF Advanced Grant must inform the SNSF about any existing ERC Grants and parallel applications in ERC schemes.
    - Applicants will have to provide information in mySNF on available and requested funding for their research projects (for details, see section 3.1).
- A researcher participating as principal investigator in an ongoing ERC frontier research grant project may not submit a proposal to the present SNSF Advanced Grants Call 2022 unless the existing project ends before the end of July 2024. An SNSF Advanced grant can only start once the previous ERC frontier research grant agreement has ended.

1.1.3 Further submission restrictions

Applicants whose proposal was rejected in Step 1 of the SNSF Advanced Grants 2021 may not submit an SNSF Advanced Grants 2022 application.

1.2 Host institutions

The host institution must be established in Switzerland as a legal entity (public or private). Higher education institutions or non-commercial research institutions outside the higher education sector who are domiciled in Switzerland and whose basic financing is predominantly Swiss according to Swiss law[4] are eligible. Applicants do not need to be employed by the host institution when they submit the proposal; however, the host institution must commit to employ the applicant for at least the duration of the project. The percentage of employment at a Swiss research institution must be at least 50%. Should Switzerland obtain the status of an

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[1] e.g. public engagement in science, technology and knowledge transfer activities, scientific art performances
[2] e.g. spokesperson for international experiments, leader of international expeditions, founder of international networks and training programmes
[3] e.g. maps, methods, prototype demos, software, databases, design, arXiv-articles, contributions to big data collaborations
[4] Pursuant to Article 5 RIPA includes only non-commercial research institutions outside the university sector

associated country and participate in Horizon Europe after the deadline of this call, this constraint would be changed to '50% of his/her total working time in an EU Member State or associated country'. Finally, the host institution will be the only participating legal entity. Well justified exceptions to this may be considered.

Applicants are expected to dedicate a minimum of 30% of their working time to the SNSF Advanced Grant project.

Before applying, please discuss the conditions and procedure for conducting the project with the host institution. The latter must provide a commitment letter (please use the template provided in **mySNF**, see www.mysnf.ch).

2 Formal requirements, ethical issues and research integrity

2.1 Legal basis
The general provisions of the SNSF (Funding Regulations[5] and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations[6]) apply to the SNSF Advanced Grants Call 2022 and the corresponding funding procedures. This call document is issued by the Presiding Board of the National Research Council under a mandate from the SERI to set up a transitional measure for the ERC Advanced Grants Call 2022 (ERC-2022-AdG).

2.2 User account in mySNF
Applicants without an existing mySNF user account must open a new account. New user accounts must be registered **no later than two working days before the pre-registration deadline** (see Section 4 below). The mySNF account will remain in place for future submissions or the lifetime management of approved projects.

2.3 Ethics and integrity
Research activities and methods that have ethical implications or may raise questions requiring sound ethical assessment must be declared in mySNF. Hence, please take note of the Swiss laws and ethical standards[7]. Furthermore, the rules of scientific integrity must be respected[8].

2.4 Open access
Under the SNSF Advanced Grants Call 2022, beneficiaries must ensure open access to all peer-reviewed scientific publications of their results as set out in the SNSF Funding Regulations[5] and the Implementation Regulations[6].

3 Budget

SNSF Advanced Grants are awarded up to a maximum of CHF 2.175 million for a period of up to 5 years (overhead is calculated automatically and paid directly to the host institution).

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[5] https://media.snf.ch/UBa5QinDpnNjssV/snsf-funding_relations_2015_e.pdf
[6] https://www.snf.ch/media/en/B0SWnPsrDCRTaiCx/snsf-general-implementation-regulations-for-the-funding-regulations-e.pdf
[7] https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/786/de
[8] http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/ueb_org_fehlverh_gesuchstellende_e.pdf

Applicants may request additional funding of up to CHF 870'000 for a) eligible installation costs in connection with the move to Switzerland due to the SNSF Advanced Grant, b) for the acquisition or utilisation of scientific infrastructure/major equipment, c) other major experimental and field work costs, excluding personnel costs (overhead is calculated automatically and paid directly to the host institution). The maximum award is reduced *pro rata temporis* for projects of a shorter duration. Please use whole CHF integers only when indicating requested costs. All costs must be indicated in annual allotments.

3.1   Requested funding

Requested funding must be linked to the aims of the project for its entire duration. Resources should be requested in line with the requirements for the project and fully justified. The project cost estimation should be as accurate as possible. The evaluation panels assess the estimated costs in Step 2 carefully and are entitled to reduce unjustified budgets.

The requested funding must be displayed in the data containers containing requested funding on mySNF:

1. **Salary of applicant:** Applicants should indicate if they request a salary and social security and if so, should specify the amount.

2. **Requested positions:** Applicants should indicate the salaries and social security contributions for scientific and technical staff. When requesting positions for doctoral students, postdoctoral or technical posts, they should refer to the host institution's salary rates (i.e., "local rates") and social contributions[9]
   o The size and composition of the research team must be indicated, mentioning the key team members and their roles. If team members employed by another host institution participate in the project, this should be justified concerning the additional financial costs for the project.

3. **Requested funding for the project**: Costs have to be subdivided in equipment (including, if applicable, costs for installation/purchase of major equipment/access to infrastructure) and research funds (consumables, field expenses, travel costs, conference costs, other direct costs and any envisaged sub-contracting costs). For the list of eligible costs, see the Annex, section 8.1.
   o All available resources for the realisation of the project and the required infrastructure and equipment have to be declared. Please include a short technical description of the equipment needed, together with a justification of its necessity.
   o A sub-contractor is a third party who carries out part of the project based on an agreement on business conditions. Costs generated by the third parties mandated by the research project (outsourcing through subcontracting) may be charged to the grant in exceptional cases pursuant to Clause 2.11 of the Implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations and must be fully justified in the "resources" section of the research plan. Sub-contractors and costs for installation/purchase of major equipment/access to infrastructure must be

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[9] https://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_doktorierende_e.pdf

clearly specified in the data container "Requested funding". **To do so, please use the drop-down list and select the corresponding category.**

Please note: Applicants are requested to indicate which available and additional funding they have requested at the SNSF or other funding institutions.

4   Pre-registration

Applicants have to pre-register by 1 October, 2022, 17:00 Swiss local time, by providing the following information via mySNF: a one-page summary of their research project, information about their host institution, an indication about the disciplines and at least three keywords of the planned project. The sections to be completed in mySNF are given in Box 2. Following the pre-registration, applicants have to send an e-mail to adg@snf.ch. The SNSF uses this information exclusively to prepare the evaluation process, for example to determine the composition of evaluation panels. The information will not be used for evaluating the proposals.

> **Box 2. Mandatory pre-registration until 1 October 2022:**
> Please complete the following three sections in mySNF:
> 1) Designated host lab/institution
> 2) Basic data I (incl. project title, disciplines)
> 3) Basic data II (incl. summary, at least 3 keywords)
> **Important:** you will have to send an e-mail to adg@snf.ch confirming the completion of your pre-registration.

5   Creating the documents for upload

All documents must be in English. The font must be Times New Roman, Arial or similar with a size of at least 11, single line spacing and margins of 2 cm on the side and 1.5 cm at the bottom. The documents must be submitted in PDF format. Please note that Step 1 of the scientific evaluation of the project only considers the extended synopsis, the CV and the track record.

5.1   Extended synopsis
The extended synopsis will be considered for the Step 1 of the evaluation process. The document must not exceed 5 pages (excluding references) and must be uploaded to the mySNF data container "Extended Synopsis". Please note that the evaluators will assess your proposal based on this information. They will not have access to the full research plan during Step 1.

The extended synopsis should provide a concise presentation of the scientific proposal, and describe that the outlined scientific approach is feasible, taking into account the high-risk/high-gain nature of the project.

Describe the proposed work in the context of the state-of-the-art in the field. References to the relevant literature should be included. Please use a reference style that is commonly used in your discipline such as American Chemical Society (ACS) style, American Medical Association (AMA) style, Modern Language Association (MLA) style, etc., and that allows the evaluators to easily retrieve references.

5.2   Research plan

The research plan will only be evaluated during Step 2 of the evaluation process; however, it has to be submitted by 2 November 2022. The document must not exceed 14 pages (excluding references) and be uploaded in the mySNF data container "Research Plan". The research plan must be divided into two sections:

Section a: State-of-the-art and objectives. Specify the proposal objectives in the context of the state-of-the-art in the research field. It should be clear how and why the proposed work is important and what impact it will have if successful, such as how it may open up new directions or opportunities for science, technology or scholarship. Highlight any particularly challenging or unconventional aspects of the proposal, including multi- or inter-disciplinary aspects.

Section b: Methodology. Describe the proposed methodology in detail, including any key intermediate goals. Explain and justify the methods in relation to the state-of-the-art, and particularly novel or unconventional aspects addressing the 'high-risk/high-gain balance. Highlight any intermediate stages where results may require adjustments to the project planning.

5.3   Resources

The resources will only be considered during Step 2 of the evaluation process. The document must not exceed three pages and must be uploaded to the mySNF data container "Resources". Further details on eligible and non-eligible costs are provided in the Annex (Section 8.1) below.

1. State the amount of funding considered necessary to meet the research objectives. The estimation of project costs should be as accurate as possible. The requested budget should be fully justified and in line with actual needs. Describe all the cost categories considered necessary for the project.
2. Specify your commitment in terms of the percentage of working time you are willing to devote to the proposed project (the minimum requirement is 30% of the applicant's work time) and, if applicable, the percentage of salary claimed under the grant.
3. Describe the size and nature of the team, indicating, where appropriate, the key team members and their roles. In case one or more team members are engaged by another host institution, their participation must be fully justified with respect to the scientific added value they bring to the project.
4. Include a short technical description of any requested equipment, why it is needed and the planned usage for the project.
5. Describe any additional funding requested for the project (max CHF 870'000). It needs to be indicated in the budget data container in mySNF (requested funding for project) and well justified for the successful implementation of the project.
6. Describe any existing resources not requiring SNSF funding that will be used for the project, such as infrastructure and equipment.

5.4 CV of the applicant

The CV will be considered during the Step 1 and Step 2 of the evaluation process. The document must not exceed two pages and must be uploaded in the mySNF data container "CV and Track Record".

The CV must include the standard academic and research record. Please use the template provided in mySNF. Any breaks in the scientific career and/or unusual academic paths that might have influenced the ten-year track record should be clearly described so that they can be appropriately taken into account by the evaluation panels.

5.5 Ten-year track record

The track record will already be considered duringStep 1 of the evaluation process. The document must not exceed two pages and must be uploaded in the mySNF data container "CV and Track Record".

The track record must list important achievements and emphasize the applicant's scientific contributions. It can include several significant peer-reviewed publications that had a major impact in the applicant's research field. The publications should be properly referenced, including all authors in the published order. Field relevant bibliometric indicators as well as research monographs and any translations may also be included. The following should be added, if applicable: granted patent(s); organization of international conferences, outreach activities, general contributions to science, other artefacts with documented use (see also 1.1.1). The track-record can be extended beyond ten years in case of career breaks. A short narrative describing the scientific importance of the research outputs and the role played by the Principal Investigator may be included.

5.6 Commitment of the host institution

Applicants must provide a written and binding commitment letter from the host institution confirming its willingness to host the proposed research. Applications that do not include such institutional statements at the submission deadline will not be evaluated. Please use the template provided by the ERC or the SNSF. The SNSF template can be found on the mySNF platform. It must be uploaded to the mySNF data container "Confirmation host institute".

6 Uploading the application

To create a new application, please select the option "Create new application" on the mySNF homepage by navigating to the relevant funding scheme under **Programmes > EU Transitional Measures > SNSF Advanced grants 2022**. The data on applicant and research proposal are entered in the mySNF entry mask. The application data include the title, the discipline(s), keywords, any relation to other running projects and current applications, the host institution, and the budget.

6.1 Receipt and verification at the SNSF

6.1.1 Verification of formal requirements and eligibility

Pre-registration: After receiving the applicant's e-mail that pre-registration is complete, the Administrative Offices of the SNSF will send a confirmation.

Online application: The Administrative Offices of the SNSF check whether the submitted applications meet the formal requirements and whether the applicant and the host institution are eligible. Proposals by eligible applicants are forwarded to the corresponding evaluation panel. If there is any doubt regarding eligibility that needs clarification, the proposal may be rejected on formal grounds even after the evaluation process has started.

6.1.2   Scientific integrity
The Administrative Offices of the SNSF may check whether the application respects the rules of scientific integrity (see 'Regulations of the National Research Council on the treatment of scientific misconduct by applicants and grantees'[10]).

6.1.3   Contacts between applicants and the SNSF
Queries can be addressed to the Administrative Offices of the SNSF by phone (+41 31 308 22 22 or e-mail to adg@snf.ch). When checking submitted applications, the office may contact applicants to clarify issues related to the application. Before, during and after the evaluation, the applicants are obliged to:
- provide any information requested by the SNSF
- cooperate in clarifying issues

The SNSF cannot give applicants any information on the evaluation of their proposals while the evaluation is in progress and until the decision is communicated in writing.

7   Evaluation and communication

A scientific steering committee, set up by the Presiding Board of the National Research Council, oversees the evaluation and funding activities related to the SNSF Advanced Grants call. It also ensures application of SNSF's best practices and compliance regarding conflicts of interest[11]. It is chaired by the president of the National Research Council. The evaluation of the submitted proposals is based on the principle of competition. Discipline-specific panels will evaluate the proposals using a two-step procedure. The applications are assessed and rated based on expert reviews and interviews and ranked comparatively to the other applications.

7.1   Evaluation panels
The SNSF Advanced Grants Steering Committee will establish the panels based on the one-page summaries, the disciplines and the keywords provided by the applicants. The panel chairpersons decide jointly with the SNSF Administrative Offices to which panel an individual proposal will be assigned. Applicants may list up to three persons who should not act as external reviewers in evaluating their proposal. Such requests must be well justified.

7.2   Evaluation procedure
The evaluation procedure follows the principles that guide the SNSF's evaluation practices:
- Individual voting: Every panel member casts a vote (independent, using the entire scale).
- Random selection: Funding decisions on proposals of similar scientific quality around the funding line may be reached by drawing lots.

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[10] http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/ueb_org_fehlverh_gesuchstellende_e.pdf
[11] https://www.snf.ch/en/WJbZZ2p1vS1ZNnwI/page/theSNSF/evaluation-procedures/conflicts-interests-bias-and-withdrawal

- Preselection for rejection: May be applied if a discussion of every proposal is not possible due to time constraints (high number of proposals).
- Clear separation between scientific evaluation and funding decision.

A two-step approach is applied as follows:

7.2.1   Step 1:

At least three panel members acting as referees independently evaluate and rate the research project's general scientific merit (based on the extended synopsis) and the applicant's CV and track record. All members of the panel then discuss the proposal. Following the discussion, every panel member submits a score on a rating scale. A ranking list is compiled based on these individual ratings of panel members. Based on the panel's ranking list and the available budget, the SNSF Advanced Grants Steering Committee determines the number of proposals that advance to the next selection step (Step 2). The proposals that do not advance to Step 2 are rejected.

7.2.2   Step 2:

Proposals advancing to Step 2 will be assessed in detail by at least three panel members and external reviewers (based on the full proposal and the applicant's CV and track record). The external reviewers are scientists and scholars who do not participate in the panel meetings and who deliver their structured assessments before the Step 2 panel meeting. Based on the written assessments of the external reviewers and panel members, the interviews with the applicant, and the discussions at the panel meeting, the evaluation panel generates a ranking list of the Step 2 proposals.

The panel submits the final ranking of the Step 2 proposals to the SNSF Advanced Grants Steering Committee, which formulates a funding proposal based on the ranking list and the available budget for approval by the SNSF Presiding Board.

7.3   Evaluation criteria

The following criteria will be considered during the evaluation procedure. They will be applied during both steps with the documents available (Step 1: extended synopsis, CV, track record; Step 2: all documents):

7.3.1   Scientific quality of the research project

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project:
- The extent to which the proposed research addresses important unsolved scientific questions and technical challenges
- The extent to which the objectives are ambitious, moving the field beyond the current state of the art (e.g., novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)
- The extent to which the proposed research is high-risk/high-gain.

Scientific Approach
- The extent to which the outlined scientific approach is feasible, taking into account the high-risk/high-gain nature of the project
- The extent to which the proposed research methodology is appropriate to achieving the goals of the project (only to be assessed in Step 2)

- The extent to which the proposal involves the development of novel methodology (only to be assessed in Step 2)
- The extent to which the proposed timescales, resources and PI commitment adequate and properly justified (only to be assessed in Step 2)

7.3.2 *Qualification of the applicant*
Applicant - capacity and creativity
- The extent to which the applicant has demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research
- The extent to which the applicant has the required scientific expertise and capacity to execute projects successfully
- The extent to which the applicant has demonstrated sound leadership in the training and advancement of young scientists

7.4 Outcome and communication of decisions
After Step 1, all applicants will be informed about the outcome, i.e the rating of their proposal.

Applicants not progressing to Step 2 will receive a ruling together with the main reasons of rejection and the position in the overall ranking of their proposal.

Applicants who advanced to Step 2 will receive the same items after completion of the evaluation as well as the individual comments made by each reviewer.

Proposals will be funded in order of priority based on their rank and the available funding. The funding of the projects **is expressly subject** to the financing decisions of the Parliament.

The ruling may be appealed against before the Federal Administrative Court.

8 Annex

8.1 Eligible costs

These costs support the research, management, training and dissemination activities necessary for the realisation of the project:

- **Personnel costs** cover the salary and social security contributions for the PI and salaries and social security contributions for scientific and technical staff (for PhD students' salaries, please refer to SNSF rates; for other collaborators, please refer to the SNSF salary rates of the host institution);

- **Material costs** that are directly related to the realization of the project, namely material of enduring value, expendable items, field expenses, travel costs or third-party charges; material, IPR costs;

- Costs for project-related **use of infrastructures** at institutions or laboratories;

- Costs for **sub-contracting;**

- Further costs provided for by the regulations and the terms of the call (see chapter 3).

Indirect costs are not included in the proposal form. The SNSF pays the host institution an overhead of 15% of the total direct eligible costs (excluding sub-contracting).

8.2 Summary of deadlines

Opening of the call	1 August 2022
Pre-registration deadline	1 October 2022
Submission deadline	2 November 2022
Step 1 results	March 2023
Interviews	End of May 2023
Communication of Step 2 results	July 2023
Earliest project start	1 August 2023