

Guidelines for the Scientific Exchanges grants

February 2024

Based on the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges

of 14 February 2017 (updated version of 14 June 2021)

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1 Definitions

1.1 Scientific events

(Art.4 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

Scientific events

- are defined as scientific conferences, workshops, or similar; however, they cannot be dedicated predominantly to knowledge transfer activities such as teaching or training;
- are (co-)organized by the applicants;
- may last from 1 to 5 days;
- may take place online in their entirety or partly (i.e. they may be hybrid events).

Scientific events supported by this funding scheme generally take place in (or, in the case of an online or hybrid event, are organized and run from) Switzerland, but **may in exceptional cases be held abroad. Please contact the SNSF before submitting a proposal if you wish to apply for such an exception.** Exceptions must be justified and the events in question must be demonstrably linked to Switzerland or to Swiss institutions. Exceptions will not be granted solely for budgetary reasons.

1.2 Research visits

(Art.5 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

Research visits

- are visits by the Swiss applicant to a host at an institution abroad, or visits by a guest from abroad to the Swiss applicant's institution;
- have as their purpose a research project conducted in collaboration with the host or the host's team, with clearly defined objectives and outputs;
- involve regular formal exchange with the host or the host's team on the project topic;
- may last from 1 to 6 months.

2 Requirements for applicants and funded participants

2.1 Personal eligibility

(Art. 6 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

2.1.1 For the applicants for a scientific event

The following eligibility criteria apply:

- Eligibility criteria listed in the Funding Regulations of the SNSF, unless specified otherwise;
- Minimum employment of 20% at an eligible institution in Switzerland;
- Active in a research domain related to the topic of the event;
- PhD students are eligible;

- Researchers employed on an SNSF-funded project are eligible, though the event in question must not be directly linked to that project;
- Applicants who are abroad on an SNSF grant at the time of the planned event are not eligible.
- Multiple applicants are allowed, but each applicant must fulfil the criteria set out in the regulations and guidelines.

2.1.2 For the invited participants of a scientific event to be funded

The following eligibility criteria apply:

- Invitees must be from abroad and either affiliated with an academic institution or practitioners in a relevant field (if an event supported by the funding scheme is exceptionally held abroad, it is possible for participants from Switzerland to be supported, including the applicant(s));
- Invitees must contribute to the scientific content of the event;
- PhD students can be funded participants;
- Participants to be supported via the grant do not have to be defined at the time of submission (see 4.2.1), but in such cases, the selection process for these invitees must be explained in the application. Once the selection process is complete, the CVs of the selected participants must be submitted as soon as possible.

Please note that the Scientific Exchanges are committed to supporting equal opportunities and balanced representation as well as promoting young researchers. These aspects should be considered and addressed in the selection of invited participants.

2.1.3 For the guest and host of the research visit (including Swiss applicant)

The following eligibility criteria apply:

- The applicant must always be the Swiss partner (for research visits, only one applicant is permitted);
- Eligibility criteria listed in the Funding Regulations of the SNSF, unless specified otherwise;
- Minimum employment of 20% at an eligible institution (for the applicant this must be in Switzerland);
- Position guaranteed for at least 6 months after the end of the research visit;
- PhD or comparable (PhD students are not eligible, neither as guest nor as host);
- Researchers employed on an SNSF-funded project are generally not eligible; however, Principal Investigators of an SNSF grant that covers the grantee's salary are eligible as long as the Scientific Exchanges is not directly linked to their project;
- Applicants who are abroad on an SNSF grant at the time of the visit are not eligible.

3 Duration of the exchange

3.1 Scientific event

(Art.5 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

The possible duration of a scientific event is between 1 and 5 days.

Please note that for administrative reasons, the requested starting date (to be entered on *mySNF* under “Basic data I”) must be given as **the first day of the month preceding the month of the event, and the overall duration (also under “Basic data I”) must cover a period extending to the month after the event.** (I.e. if a scientific event is proposed for 15-17 June, the requested starting date must be given as 1 May and the duration must be given as three months.) Please note that while you must submit your proposal at least four months before the event in question (see 6.1), it is the actual first day of the event, as entered under “Timeframe of the scientific exchange”, that is the relevant date in this respect and not the requested starting date given under “Basic data I”.

3.2 Research visit

(Art.5 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

The possible duration of a research visit is between one month and six months. The exact duration must be entered in *mySNF* in the container “Timeframe of the scientific exchange”. However, for administrative reasons, the requested starting date (to be entered on *mySNF* under “Basic data I”) must be given as the first day of a month, and the duration (also under “Basic data I”) must cover all months affected, i.e. if a visit is requested from 15 May to 15 June, the duration must be given as two months (May and June). While this may result in the overall duration under “Basic data I” exceeding six months, this is not an issue, as the maximum duration applies to the actual dates of the visit.

4 Eligible costs

An overview for budget calculation is available [here](#).

All applicants should take note that their institutions may have additional rules regarding eligible costs and cost ranges (e.g. for meals) that may be stricter than the SNSF. Please make sure to check with your institution.

4.1 Total grant

(Art.3 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

The requested grant must be between CHF2'500 and CHF25'000 (excluding costs for accompanying children). It contributes towards travel expenses as well as room and board costs incurred by either the invited participants from abroad (scientific event), or by the visiting guest (research visit). If a supported event is online or hybrid, the grant may contribute towards the equipment and support required for the online/hybrid event.

Please note that once a grant is approved, the granted amount cannot be increased even if there are changes to the Scientific Exchange. However, applicants may be required to reimburse the SNSF in certain circumstances.

4.2 Eligible costs for scientific events

(Art.9 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

Please note that **travel and accommodation for Swiss participants and for the Swiss applicants cannot be covered by a Scientific Exchanges grant**, unless an event taking place abroad is exceptionally supported (see 1.1 and 2.1.2).

Eligible costs for scientific events include:

- **A maximum of CHF2'500 per half-day of the event**, i.e. an event of 5 days allows for a maximum budget of CHF25'000. (Please note that event days on which the academic activities are less than five hours in length must be counted as half-days.)
- **Travel costs for a return trip to Switzerland for each of the invited participants** can be covered (entirely or in part) by the grant. This includes train travel (in any class), flights (in Economy class), transfers to and from the airports or train stations, transportation in Switzerland, and visa costs, up to the maximum travel costs covered by the SNSF as defined by region (see the [travel costs list](#)). Unless there are valid reasons to do otherwise, travel within Europe should be conducted by train. **Please do not list costs for flights or train travel, local public transport and visa costs as separate budget items.**
- **Accommodation and subsistence costs for the invited participants** based on a flat rate of up to CHF200 per overnight stay. The number of overnight stays requested may exceed the number of days the event is scheduled for by up to two; e.g. for an event of three days, funds can be requested for up to five overnight stays. **Please do not list accommodation and subsistence separately; for each invitee, use the number of overnight stays and the flat rate, e.g. 4 x CHF200 = CHF800.**
- Additionally, **for participants with childcare duties the application may include travel costs for each accompanying child** according to the travel costs list above, **as well as a childcare allowance** of CHF200 per overnight stay.
- **Online/hybrid events:** The additional eligible costs for online and hybrid events are as follows:
 - o Rental costs for equipment and venues
 - o Services provided by externals
 - o License costs for software and services required to run the online part of an event (excluding standard licences that should be covered by the applicants' institution)
 - o Fees for additional staff such as student assistants providing technical assistance to organisers and participants during the event; these are based on a flat rate per person of up to CHF25/hour, up to a maximum of CHF200 per day.
 - o **Quotes for rental costs and services by externals must be submitted with the proposal.**
- Please note that **speaker fees, conference fees and other costs related to the organisation of a physical event** (e.g. rental of venues, conference materials, deficit guarantee) **are not eligible**. Likewise, it is not possible to use the Scientific Exchanges grant to cover travel,

accommodation and subsistence costs indirectly by reducing registration or participation fees for supported participants. Applications requesting funding for such costs will not be considered.

4.2.1 Non-named participants

Funding can be requested for non-named participants in accordance with the following requirements:

- 1) The application documents must describe the selection process and criteria (which must ensure that the selected participants fulfil the regular eligibility criteria) and include the CVs of the individuals responsible for the selection;
- 2) The requested travel funds for each individual non-named participant must not exceed CHF1000.

If a proposal is approved, the CVs of non-named participants to be supported by the grant must be submitted to the SNSF once these participants have been identified. Also, please note that while travel funds of up to CHF1000 can be requested for a non-named participant, the maximum travel costs defined by region nonetheless apply for regions where the maximum is set below that sum, e.g. Europe and the Middle East.

4.3 Eligible costs for research visits

(Art.10 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

Eligible costs for research visits include:

- Travel costs for one round trip for the guest, including train travel or flights in Economy class, transportation from and to the airport, and visa costs. Unless there are valid reasons to do otherwise, travel within Europe should be conducted by train. The maximum travel costs covered by the SNSF are defined by region and can be found in the [travel costs list](#). **Please do not list costs for flights or train travel, local public transport and visa costs as separate budget items.**
- A monthly flat rate for living expenses (including accommodation and subsistence costs as well as local transportation) is eligible for the guest, with a maximum of CHF3'000 (per month of the visit). For guests coming from Least Developed Countries, Other Low Income Countries and Lower Middle Income Countries and Territories (as defined by the [OECD DAC List of ODA Recipients](#)), this maximum can be increased to CHF3'500 per month. In your proposal, provide the number of months and the flat rate used, e.g. 5 x CHF3'000 = CHF15'000. (For partial months, applicants should calculate a rate of CHF100 per day, though the minimum length for a research visit is one month.)
- Additionally, applicants with childcare duties may request travel costs for each accompanying child according to the travel costs list above, as well as a childcare allowance of maximum CHF1000 per month, independent of the number of accompanying children.
- Please note that when partners/spouses apply for parallel research visits (i.e. visits to the same location at the same time), they can request the costs for accompanying children in both applications. However, if both applications are approved, the costs for accompanying children can only be claimed for one of the two grants, and the respective amount will be cut from the budget of the other grant. In such situations, each applicant must make a note of this in their application.

5 Requested documents

5.1 Scientific event

5.1.1 *Template for scientific events*

Each proposal for a scientific event must include a document outlining the event's topics, objectives, format, participants and audience. The template for this document can be downloaded on *mySNF* or on the Scientific Exchanges webpage.

5.1.2 *Event programme*

A draft of the event programme **indicating the roles of the participants to be supported by the grant** must be uploaded as part of the proposal.

5.1.3 *CVs of applicants and relevant participants*

Each applicant must submit a CV [in line with the SNSF's current specifications](#), provided they have a PhD. Applicants without a PhD may use the SNSF format, but they can also submit a CV in any format, indicating research interests and relevant experience.

A CV (of any format, though no longer than 5 pages) is also required for each invited participant whose expenses are supported by the grant. Short CVs for all invited participants can be combined in a single PDF document. If, as outlined in section 4.2, any funded participants are not specified at the time of submission, CVs must be submitted as soon as these participants have been identified.

Please note that while there is no defined minimal length for invitee CVs, the SNSF needs to be able to assess their qualifications and suitability from the submitted materials. A proposal may be rejected if the submitted CVs are too insubstantial to allow for a reasonable assessment.

5.1.4 *Self-declaration*

The applicant and any co-applicants must each submit a self-declaration certifying that the Scientific Exchange submitted is not directly connected to any other activity financed within another SNSF funding instrument in the same timeframe. A template for this is provided on *mySNF* and on the Scientific Exchanges webpage.

5.1.5 *Other documents*

Please also submit any other documents that you consider relevant to assessing the content, format and organisation of the event. Such documents may include e.g. information on the selection process or the CVs of participants relevant to assessing the proposal that are funded by other means, e.g. keynote speakers, panel members or workshop facilitators.

5.2 Research visit

5.2.1 CV of host and guest

The applicant must submit a CV [in line with the SNSF's current specifications](#). A CV (max. 5 pages) including a list of recent publications (last five years; the publications are not counted towards the two pages) is required for the partner abroad.

5.2.2 Research plan

A short research plan including the rationale for the visit must be uploaded as part of the application. The research plan must be written according to the template provided on the Scientific Exchanges webpage. The required sections are: 1) Aims and relevance; 2) Methods; 3) Schedule; 4) Expected outcomes; 5) Partnership; and 6) References. **The research plan must not exceed five pages in length, excluding 6) References.**

5.2.3 Letter of confirmation

For visits where the Swiss applicant travels abroad, **an invitation letter from the partner or host institution is required.**

5.2.4 Self-declaration

The applicant and any co-applicants must each submit a self-declaration certifying that the Scientific Exchange submitted is not directly connected to any other activity financed within another SNSF funding instrument in the same timeframe. A template for this is provided on the SNSF website.

6 Submission of application

6.1 Deadlines

(Art.7 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

Applications must be submitted at least 4 months, but no more than 18 months, before the first day of the Scientific Exchange (in the case of an event, this is the actual first day and not the requested starting date (see 3.1)). Applications outside of this timeframe will not be considered. In general, no more than one application of the same type (i.e. event or visit) can be funded per individual per year, and there must be at least 12 months between the end of one exchange and the start of a new one of the same type.

6.2 Parallel submission of applications

(Art.11 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

Two exchanges can be submitted in parallel, provided that one is a visit and the other is an event. Please note that in such cases, two individual applications must be submitted, one for the visit and another for the event.

7 Evaluation

7.1 Evaluation procedure

(Art.13 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

The evaluation procedure includes:

- The formal eligibility check by the Administrative Offices, including personal and formal requirements (e.g. budget);
- The scientific assessment of the application by referees from the Administrative Offices, according to the assessment criteria listed in Article 12 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges (see 7.2);
- The communication of the decision to the applicants in a decision letter. This does not include an evaluation report; only the reasons for rejection, if applicable, will be communicated to the applicants.

When preparing your application, please take into consideration that the referees are generalists rather than experts in the field of the application. The entire evaluation procedure described above may take up to three months.

7.2 Evaluation criteria

(Art.12 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

The assessment criteria are as follows:

- Expertise and scientific qualifications of the applicant(s), partners and participants
- Relevance and originality of the scientific exchange
- Mutual scientific benefit for the applicant, partners and participants
- Feasibility of the exchange

8 Grant administration and monitoring (approved grants)

8.1 Release of funds

(Art.14 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

Once a proposal is granted, the main applicant can submit the request for the release of funds via *mySNF* up to one year after the date stated in the decision letter.

Please note the following:

- Grants cannot be administered by the applicants themselves. **If no official financial administration is listed on *mySNF* (under “Basic data II”), the option that must be selected is “Another office (not recognised by the SNSF)”.**

- If the grant is administered by an official grant administration office, the main applicant must indicate the internal account number, which they receive from the corresponding office.
- The responsible applicant receives the entire approved grant amount and must reimburse whatever amount has not been used at the end of the grant (after submission of the financial report; see 8.2).
- Should there be any change in the dates initially indicated in the application, the main applicant should make a note of this, as well as of the new start and end dates, on *mySNF* under *Release of funds* → *Administrative data* → *Comments*.

8.2 Replacement of participants

8.2.1 Scientific events

In order to replace participants who cannot attend an event, applicants are required to submit the CVs of the replacement participants as well as a brief description of their roles in the event. This can be done directly via *mySNF* at the same time as requesting the release of funds (see 8.1), or after the release of funds, under “Messages/Requests” on *mySNF*. However, please note that **the SNSF should be informed of participants identified via selection process as well as of any participant changes at the latest with the financial report, which must include any outstanding CVs**. If any participant CVs are outstanding by the submission of the financial report, the respective participants may not be entitled to financial support from the grant and the according sums may have to be reimbursed. Also, any costs incurred due to replacing participants that exceed the sum originally granted will not be covered by the SNSF.

8.2.2 Research visits

It is not generally possible to change the guest or host of a research visit after a proposal has been submitted. If the originally planned guest or host is no longer available for some reason, please contact the SNSF immediately.

8.3 Financial report

(Art.15 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

A financial report must be submitted no later than six weeks after the end of the grant, and must include:

8.3.1 For a scientific event

- Receipts for plane/train tickets, with mention of the price, travel dates and name of the person traveling for each SNSF funded participant
- Receipts for accommodation costs of the SNSF funded participants, with mention of the price, dates and the name of the persons for whom the room was booked
- Receipts for meals for SNSF-funded participants;
- Receipts for the expenses for online/hybrid events (rental costs, external services)
- Overview of the number of hours for assistance during online/hybrid events.

If accommodation and living costs are paid directly by the participant, the SNSF requires a form, duly filled out and signed, that confirms the participant received the respective sum from the organisers ([link to form \(event\)](#)).

If the actual travel costs are lower than the allocated funds, the SNSF has the right to request a partial reimbursement. Also, please note that if any of the speakers are replaced and the permitted travel costs for the replacements are lower, this may add to the sum that needs to be reimbursed.

If any funded participants were unable to participate and were not replaced, the total amount allotted for them has to be reimbursed to the SNSF.

If any participant CVs are still outstanding when the financial report is submitted, costs for the respective participants may not be covered. At the latest, the CVs have to be submitted together with the financial report so they can be checked.

If any funds remain at the end of the event, they may in some cases be used to cover other event costs; this is assessed on a case-by-case basis. Please use this [Excel document](#) to request such use of remaining funds.

8.3.2 For a research visit

- Receipts for plane/train tickets, with mention of the price, travel dates and name of the person traveling;
- A completed confirmation of receipt form for the lump sum received, duly filled out and signed ([link to form \(visit\)](#)). **Applicants do not have to provide the SNSF with detailed receipts for accommodation and living costs.**

If the visit is shorter than originally planned, the SNSF has the right to request a partial reimbursement of the budgeted lump sum. A partial reimbursement may also be requested if the actual travel costs are lower than the allocated funds.

8.3.3 For both events and visits

The template for the financial report is available under the following link: [Template for the financial report](#). Please note that any positive balance above CHF50 must be reimbursed to the SNSF (account details below).

Please note that the reimbursement should not be done before the main applicant and grant office have received a confirmation by e-mail that the submitted financial report is accepted.

- **Account owner:** Schweiz. Nationalfonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung, 3001 Bern
- **Account number:** 30-3767-5
- **IBAN number:** CH14 0900 0000 3000 3767 5
- **SWIFT:** POFICHBEXXX
- **Remark:** "IZSEZ0_xxxxxx"

8.4 Scientific report

(Art. 15 of the Regulations on Scientific Exchanges)

A short scientific report (max. 5 pages) must be submitted no later than six weeks after the exchange: the template can be downloaded [here](#). This report must include:

- The timeframe of the exchange;
- The names of the funded researchers;
- A brief summary of the event or research activity that was conducted during the visit, including specific outcome (e.g. joint publications);
- Partnership aspects, including added value of the collaboration and further planned collaborations.

Please note that the output data, which need to be entered on *mySNF*, are also considered part of the scientific report. It is essential that any relevant collaborators outside Switzerland are listed in the output data. For visits, this refers either to the host abroad or the guest visiting from abroad; for events, this entails all invitees supported by the SNSF grant.

Other relevant output data, such as resulting publications, should also be entered on *mySNF*. Please note that SNSF grantees are in principle required to publish the results of their research in Open Access publications (according to art. 47 of the [Funding Regulations](#)).