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# Regulations on the awarding of Agora grants

of 20 June 2017

The National Research Council

based on Articles 7 and 48 of the Regulations of the Swiss National Science Foundation on research grants of 27 February 2015<sup>1</sup> (hereinafter “Funding Regulations”),

hereby issues the following Regulations:

## 1 General provisions

### Article 1 Objectives and principles

<sup>1</sup> The Swiss National Science Foundation (hereinafter “the SNSF”) awards grants for projects in science communication and public dialogue (hereinafter “Agora grants”).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> By awarding Agora grants, the SNSF aims to promote knowledge on the current state of scientific research and to foster dialogue between scientists and society.

<sup>3</sup> Funding is provided for communication projects devised and implemented by the researchers themselves, in collaboration with specialists in communication, knowledge transfer or culture (Agora specialists).<sup>3</sup> Responsibility for communicating directly with the public lies primarily with the researchers themselves.

<sup>4</sup> An Agora grant may be awarded for research topics from all areas of science. The SNSF is entitled, however, to limit the thematic range in its calls for proposals.

<sup>5</sup> The projects may focus on the results, the challenges or the functioning of research. They may communicate basic scientific knowledge, provided that it concerns current research and stimulates dialogue with the public on the topic in question.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Agora projects are regarded as research output pursuant to the principles of DORA<sup>5</sup> and accepted by the SNSF as part of an applicant’s track record.

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<sup>1</sup> [Funding Regulations SNSF](#)

<sup>2</sup> Amended pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>3</sup> Amended pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>4</sup> Amended pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>5</sup> [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#)

**Article 2      Applicable law**

Subject to any specific provisions in these Regulations, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply<sup>6</sup>.

**Article 3      Agora projects**

<sup>1</sup> The Agora project must cumulatively meet the following requirements: the project

- a. makes the target group familiar with the current scientific research conducted by the applicants;
- b. is aimed at target groups that are freely defined, but do not consist of the professional addressees within the scope of academic teaching and research or members of the applicant's research institution. The primary target groups are located in Switzerland; secondary target groups may be located abroad;
- c. is suitable for achieving a considerable impact in terms of raising the target group's awareness of, engagement with and participation<sup>7</sup> in scientific topics;
- d. has links to research that is or was awarded funding by the SNSF or another qualified institution under a competitive procedure and/or is the subject of a recognised (peer-reviewed) scientific publication.

<sup>2</sup> The following are not eligible: projects

- a. conducted within the scope of implementation and technology transfer partnerships;
- b. involving marketing campaigns or institutional communication measures and media relations;
- c. whose purpose is research into science communication;
- d. with links to ongoing National Research Programmes (NRPs) or National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCRs); or
- e. directly aimed at achieving commercial goals.<sup>8</sup>

**Article 4      Amount and duration of the grant**

<sup>1</sup> Amounts between CHF 5,000 and CHF 200,000 are awarded under the Agora grant for a maximum of three years.

<sup>2</sup> The SNSF may approve the extension of a grant in response to a justified request, in particular if the extension facilitates the financing of additional communication events or channels closely linked to the approved project.<sup>9</sup>

## **2      Personal and formal requirements**

**Article 5      Applicants, Agora specialists, project partners, co-financing and employees<sup>10</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Only researchers whose research is the subject of a project in collaboration with one or more Agora specialists are eligible to submit an application for an Agora grant.

<sup>2</sup> The applications are submitted by the researchers. The applicant, or one of the applicants, becomes the applicant to whom all communication is addressed. The Agora specialists are co-applicants. The Agora specialists may not submit applications on their own.

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<sup>6</sup> [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#)

<sup>7</sup> Amended pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>8</sup> Inserted pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>9</sup> Inserted pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 20 August 2019, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>10</sup> Amended pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>3</sup> The applicant researchers must meet the requirements set out in Article 10 of the Funding Regulations. Their work-time percentage may be lower than 50%, but not lower than 20%.

<sup>4</sup> Agora specialists are employed or self-employed natural persons who

- a. are experts in the areas of communication, media, science explaining, education or art and make a conceptual contribution to the project, or persons otherwise demonstrably qualified to engage in knowledge transfer or public dialogue;
- b. support the content-related, operational or technical execution or implementation of the project.

<sup>5</sup> Agora projects may be conducted without an Agora specialist. Valid reasons must be given for not including an Agora specialist in the application. In particular, it is necessary to demonstrate that there is no need for such a specialist.

<sup>6</sup> The projects may be financially supported by third parties (financing partners). The sources and the extent of any co-financing must be documented in the application. The contributions of the financing partners and their nature and purpose as institutions must comply with the goals and principles of the SNSF funding policy. The SNSF decides whether they are eligible when checking the eligibility criteria.

<sup>7</sup> The financing partners may refer to their contribution to the communication activities as a “financing partnership” but may not claim to have received an SNSF grant themselves.

<sup>8</sup> Project partners and persons employed in the project may also contribute to it. Their participation is governed by the SNSF’s general rules, in particular Clause 1.12, 2 and 7 of the Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations.

## **Article 6      Formal requirements**

<sup>1</sup> Applications for Agora grants must be submitted to the SNSF electronically in line with the relevant rules and must contain all of the required documents.

<sup>2</sup> Subject to paragraph 3, the SNSF will generally publish a call for Agora projects once a year on its website (Agora Call).

<sup>3</sup> Applications for grants of up to CHF 50,000 may be submitted all year round, regardless of the submission deadline pursuant to paragraph 2 (Rolling Call). <sup>11</sup> A rejected Rolling Call proposal may be re-submitted only once. The resubmitted proposal will only be considered if it is a significantly changed version of the rejected proposal. <sup>12</sup>

## **Article 6<sup>bis</sup>      Simultaneity<sup>13</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> During the Agora funding period, Agora grant recipients may also receive grants from other SNSF funding schemes.

<sup>2</sup> The applicant researchers and the Agora specialists may only hold one Agora grant at any given time.

<sup>3</sup> In principle, applicant researchers who become grantee researchers may be simultaneously engaged as employees in another SNSF-funded project, unless the project in question is another Agora project.

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<sup>11</sup> Amended pursuant to the decision by the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>12</sup> Inserted pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 13 February 2018, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>13</sup> Inserted pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

### 3 Applications and eligible costs

#### **Article 7 Applications**

<sup>1</sup> Applications for Agora grants must contain all the necessary data and documents and must be submitted in accordance with the requirements issued by the SNSF and the conditions set out in the call.

<sup>2</sup> The applications must be written in English.

<sup>3</sup> In response to a written, well-founded request, the SNSF may accept submissions in German, French or Italian should this prove necessary in view of the nature of the project.

#### **Article 8 Eligible costs**

<sup>1</sup> The following costs are covered by Agora grants:

- a. costs of Agora specialists;<sup>14</sup>
- b. costs of project partners;
- c. costs of employees whose positions are approved by the SNSF;
- d. subcontracting costs;
- e. expenses that are directly linked to the project's execution, such as production costs and the cost of materials;
- f. costs for the publication and communication of the product resulting from the project in Switzerland and abroad;

<sup>2</sup> The applicant must provide the SNSF with a detailed breakdown of the fees to be paid to the persons involved in the project.

<sup>3</sup> The following costs are covered:

- a. fees charged by Agora specialists calculated according to the applicable rates. The SNSF may reduce the fees if they exceed the customary rates. This applies, in particular, to rates that are higher than the Swiss average for comparable salaries and fees.<sup>15</sup>
- b. fees based on the usual rates for project partners. The SNSF may reduce the fees if they exceed the customary rates. This applies, in particular, to rates that are higher than the Swiss average for comparable salaries and fees;
- c. salaries of employees in positions approved by the SNSF, according to the rates defined by the SNSF (salary scales).

<sup>4</sup> 16

<sup>5</sup> Overhead costs in relation to research projects that are the subject of communication projects may not be charged to the grant.

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<sup>14</sup> Inserted pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>15</sup> Inserted pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>16</sup> Repealed pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

## 4 Assessment criteria and procedure

### Article 9 Assessment criteria

<sup>1</sup> The submitted applications are assessed by the SNSF, unless they do not meet the personal or formal requirements or are manifestly inadequate in terms of quality.

<sup>2</sup> The evaluation will examine the following criteria:

- a. expertise of the project applicants and co-applicants. The expertise of the Agora specialists is assessed in a manner comparable to the one used for the applicant researchers<sup>17</sup>, but with the necessary adaptations;
- b. quality of the content to be communicated;
- c. suitability of the methods or the communication design in view of the defined target group;
- d. feasibility of the project;
- e. expected impact in terms of quality and quantity; and
- f. contribution to the promotion of diversity and equal opportunities.<sup>18</sup>

### Article 10 Evaluation procedure and decision

<sup>1</sup> During the evaluation procedure, the SNSF may enlist the help of international experts in communication or in related fields relevant to the projects to be evaluated, or of researchers with experience in science communication.

<sup>2</sup> If the requested grant does not exceed CHF 50,000, the SNSF may waive the use of external reviews. The final decision on applications pursuant to Article 6 paragraphs 2 (Agora Call) and 3 (Agora Rolling Call) is delegated to the Program Committee Thematic and Solution-oriented Research.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The decisions are communicated to the applicants by means of a written ruling in which the reasons for the decision are explained.

<sup>4</sup> Grantees must inform the persons responsible for communication at their institution about the approved Agora project before the funds are disbursed.

## 5 Optimus Agora prize

### Article 11 Optimus Agora prize

<sup>1</sup> Once a year, the SNSF may award the “Optimus Agora” prize to one Agora project. The Agora Evaluation Panel selects the winning project.<sup>20</sup> It must be excellent in quality and/or particularly suited to achieving the goals set for Agora.

<sup>2</sup> The “Optimus Agora” prize enables the recipient researcher to consolidate and extend their communication skills by financing suitable activities.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>3</sup> It is not possible to apply for the “Optimus Agora” prize and no one is entitled to receive it. The SNSF is not obliged to award the prize annually.

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<sup>17</sup> Amended pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>18</sup> Inserted pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>19</sup> Inserted pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 13 February 2018, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>20</sup> Amended pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

<sup>21</sup> Amended pursuant to the decision of the Presiding Board of the Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

## **6 Grants and grant administration**

### **Article 12 Grants**

Agora grants are awarded, disbursed and managed according to the rules issued by the SNSF, in particular the provisions of the Funding Regulations and its Implementation Regulations.

### **Article 13 Information and reporting**

<sup>1</sup> Grantees are obliged to let the SNSF know in advance when and where they will be presenting or explaining their Agora project to the public and must also provide the SNSF with details of the content of their presentations.

<sup>2</sup> Financial reports must be submitted annually after the start of the project.

## **7 Final provisions**

### **Article 14 Repeal of existing regulations, and entry into force**

These Regulations enter into force on 1 July 2017. They replace the Regulations on the awarding of Agora grants of 13 October 2010.