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Regulations on the Swiss Programme for International Research Projects by Scientific Investigation Teams (SPIRIT)

(SPIRIT¹ Regulations)

of 14 August 2018

The National Research Council,

based on Article 9, paragraph 2, letter a, and Article 48 of the Funding Regulations of 27 February 2015²,

issues the following Regulations:

1 General provisions

Article 1 Objectives and principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) awards grants for international research projects by scientific investigation teams comprising researchers in Switzerland and in partner countries (SPIRIT grants).

² SPIRIT grants aim to:

- a. lower barriers to international cooperation and enable cross-border collaboration;
- b. enable researchers from all disciplines to conduct collaborative scientific projects with clearly defined goals in international research teams;
- c. foster cross-border institutional cooperation and increase scientific capacities in research communities in countries receiving development assistance;
- d. promote gender awareness and equal opportunities.

¹ SPIRIT: **S**wiss **P**rogramme for **I**nternational **R**esearch projects by scientific **I**nvestigation **T**eams

² <https://www.snsf.ch> > Funding > How to > Funding Regulations > Funding Regulations

Article 2 Applicable law

SPIRIT grants are governed by these regulations and the other applicable SNSF regulations; in particular, the Funding Regulations and its implementation regulations apply³.

Article 3 Funding period and amount

¹ The maximum duration of a SPIRIT grant is four years, the minimum duration is two years.

² The maximum SPIRIT grant amount is 500,000 Swiss francs, the minimum amount 50,000 Swiss francs.

³ At least 30% of the approved amount must be spent in Switzerland and at least 30% in the partner country or countries.

Article 4 Partner countries

¹ The SNSF determines the eligible partner countries on the basis of the list of official development assistance recipients established by the OECD Development Assistance Committee⁴.

² The following countries are not eligible as partner countries:

- a. member countries of the European Union;
- b. countries associated to the 8th Research and Innovation Framework Programme of the European Union (2014-2020) "Horizon 2020" and forthcoming framework programmes;
- c. countries participating in a bilateral call with the SNSF.

2 Application requirements

Article 5 Personal requirements

¹ Natural persons are eligible to submit applications if they meet the general eligibility requirements for the submission of applications pursuant to Article 10 of the Funding Regulations of the SNSF; applicants in partner countries must fulfill the requirements *mutatis mutandis*.

² Applicants with a doctorate must have obtained the latter four years before the submission date of the application. Applicants without a doctorate must generally have completed three years of research work as their main source of income since obtaining their higher education degree. Such research work will be regarded as equivalent to a doctorate.

³ Researchers who assume an independent research post less than four years after obtaining the doctorate may submit SPIRIT applications as soon as they assume the said position.

⁴ Applicants must be in a position to carry out research projects under their own responsibility and to lead project staff both scientifically and as personnel.

⁵ Applicants must make a substantial contribution to the proposed research and their work must not be directed by instructions from third parties.

³ <https://www.snsf.ch> > Funding > How to > Funding Regulations > General Implementation Regulations.

⁴ <https://www.oecd.org> > Development > Financing for sustainable development > Development finance standards > DAC List of ODA Recipients.

Article 6 Grants with overlapping funding periods⁵

¹ A SPIRIT grant may not have an overlapping funding period with another SPIRIT grant or an Ambizione grant.

² ...

³ The SNSF will only consider SPIRIT applications that meet the requirements set out in paragraph 1.

Article 7 Scientific investigation teams

¹ A scientific investigation team is composed of at least two and at the most four applicants.

² At least one applicant must conduct research in Switzerland and at least one applicant must conduct research in an eligible partner country.

³ Applicants must conduct research work:

- a. in Switzerland or with close links to Switzerland pursuant to Article 10, paragraph 2 of the Funding Regulations or
- b. in a partner country or with close links to a partner country pursuant to Article 10, paragraph 2 of the Funding Regulations.

⁴ The scientific investigation team is represented by an applicant based in Switzerland (the responsible applicant, who later becomes the corresponding grantee).

3 Proposals, eligible costs and budget

Article 8 Applications⁶

¹ At least one call for SPIRIT applications is launched each year.

² ...

³ All proposals must be submitted to the SNSF electronically in accordance with the general and the specific requirements for such grants.

Article 9 Re-submissions⁷

¹ Applicants whose proposal was rejected may not submit a SPIRIT application for four months following the date of the ruling.

² ...

³ The SNSF only considers a re-submitted application if it is a significantly modified version of the rejected application.

⁵ Amended based on the decision of the Presiding Board of the National Research Council of 22 August 2023, in force with immediate effect.

⁶ Amended based on the decision of the Presiding Board of the National Research Council of 3 November 2020, comes into force as of 1 February 2021.

⁷ Amended based on the decision of the Presiding Board of the National Research Council of 3 November 2020, comes into force as of 1 February 2021.

⁴ An application that has been rejected can be revised and re-submitted at the most twice.

Article 10 Eligible costs

¹ SPIRIT grants may be requested to cover the following costs:

- a. the salaries of scientific and technical staff in the SPIRIT project within the scope of the salary ranges and rates prescribed by the SNSF;
- b. material costs directly linked to the research work, namely material of enduring value, expendable items, field expenses, travel expenses, third-party charges, costs of computing time and data as well as costs of providing open access to research data;
- c. direct costs incurred through the use of research infrastructure linked to the research work;
- d. costs for the organisation of conferences and workshops in connection with the SPIRIT project or linked to project-related gender awareness-raising activities;
- e. costs for national and international cooperation and networking activities carried out in connection with the SPIRIT project.

² The following costs in particular are not covered:

- a. The applicants' own salaries;
- b. Overhead costs.

Article 11 Basis of calculation

¹ Eligible costs for the partner countries' part of the project may be increased by a maximum of 5% to cover general costs in connection with the research project.

² For employees' salaries paid in partner countries, the norms of the respective country will be applied mutatis mutandis, with the SNSF maximum rates generally serving as an upper limit.

³ Requirements for the coverage of costs are based on the provisions on eligible funds issued by the SNSF.

Article 12 Budget

¹ The SNSF awards global budgets.

² Transfers between individual cost categories are permissible subject to Article 3 paragraph 3.

4 Evaluation criteria and selection procedures

Article 13 Evaluation criteria

¹ The relevant criteria for the award of SPIRIT grants are:

- a. the scientific quality of the proposed research project;
- b. the scientific qualifications of the applicants.

² The proposal is evaluated based on the following criteria:

- a. scientific relevance;
- b. originality of the aims and objectives;
- c. suitability of the methodology, feasibility;

- d. track record and expertise of the researchers;
- e. complementarity of the research partners;
- f. contribution to increasing scientific capacities in the relevant research field; and
- g. contribution towards raising gender awareness and promoting equal opportunities.

³ If proposals are scientifically equivalent, proposals by female applicants, or proposals that show better gender awareness, are given priority.

Article 14 Selection procedure⁸

¹ The SNSF does not consider applications that do not meet the formal and personal requirements.

² The SNSF has the research proposals reviewed by external experts based on the detailed research plan. The evaluation commission assesses the applications based on the reviews and written assessments by its members and makes a comparative overall assessment.

³ The decisions are communicated to the applicants by means of a written ruling in which the reasons for the decision are stated.

5 Grants and grant administration

Article 15 Grants and grant administration

¹ SPIRIT grants are paid and administered in accordance with SNSF regulations and guidelines.

² The payments are made to the grant administration office, exclusively for attention of the corresponding grantee.

Article 16 Project implementation and changes to the project

¹ SPIRIT grants must be used according to the conditions set out in the ruling.

² Grantees must report to the SNSF and the grant administration office without delay any substantial changes in circumstances relating to the awarded grant.

³ The SNSF may approve specific changes to the project, provided the grantees can present substantial reasons for the changes.

Article 17 Reporting, reimbursements

¹ The corresponding grantee must submit to the SNSF:

- a. an interim financial report every twelve months and a final financial report at the end of the project;
- b. an interim scientific report at project mid-term and a final scientific report at the end of the project;
- c. output data regularly after 18 months.

² In the scientific reports, the project's contribution to increase scientific capacities must be addressed.

³ At the end of the project, any surplus funds must be reimbursed to the SNSF.

⁸ Amended based on the decision of the Presiding Board of the National Research Council of 3 November 2020, comes into force as of 1 February 2021.

6 Final provisions

Article 18 Entry into force

These Regulations enter into force on 1 January 2019.