

Funding Precompetitive Research (precoR)

Call text

Division II of the SNSF allocates CHF 2 million to realize a second pilot call for the funding initiative precoR. The scheme aims at supporting basic scientific research projects to the point where a commercial application becomes viable but the project is not yet as advanced to be strategically (co)managed by one or more industrial partners.

1. Purpose and scope

1.1 Principle

The transition of a target-oriented project from basic, “non-predictive” research to a stage that allows predictive engineering approaches is a challenging task. The goal of the precoR initiative (funding of Precompetitive Research) is to support the basic scientific research of a project to the point where a commercial application becomes viable. Hence, a defined vision of an original and novel product or application is required. Complementary, such a project is typically characterized by a strong effort to create a network of partners who would engage in the further development of a product, potentially even resulting in the foundation of a start-up company. Innovative solutions as well as high quality scientific publications are expected to yield from the projects. Thereby, the initiative promotes the merging of the cultures of basic scientific research and application-driven engineering.

In the second pilot, the precoR initiative is again limited to proposals in Materials Science or Fabrication Technology.

1.2 Funding

¹ With precoR proposals the funding of salaries, research funds and instruments can be requested. The submitted proposal needs to fulfil the specific requirements of the call (see 2.1). A typical precoR proposal does not exceed the support of one postdoc and two doctoral students.

² The collaboration with industrial partners is encouraged but not mandatory for the submission of a precoR proposal (declared in the proposal form). The participation of the industrial partners requires their commitment to the general rules of open access research funding.*

* see “Regulations on information, valorisation and rights to research results”
(http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_reglement_valorisierung_e.pdf)

2. Application procedure

2.1 Eligibility criteria

¹ Applicants must fulfil the personal requirements according to the SNSF Funding Regulations.

² Eligible projects must fulfil the following characteristics:

- The project is within the research field of Materials Science or Fabrication Technology.
- The project is defined by the vision of an original and novel product or application.

³ All applicants who currently have an accepted or ongoing precoR project can not submit proposals.

2.2 Submission of applications

The deadline for the submission of applications is 17 February 2015.

2.2.1 precoR proposals

¹ A precoR proposal is submitted using the mySNF online grant submission system.

² The maximum funding period is 36 months.

³ The research plan is limited to a 21-page description of the project (including one page summary), structured as follows:

- a) Summary (one page)
- b) Current state of the art and own research
- c) Project description
- d) Description of the envisioned product and/or application and how this project will contribute to the realization.
- e) Schedule and milestones

3. Evaluation and decision

3.1 Consideration of proposals

Only proposals that meet the formal above mentioned requirements and eligibility criteria are considered by the SNSF and evaluated by the precoR panel.

3.2 Proposal evaluation procedure and criteria

¹ The precoR proposals are evaluated by a panel of experts (precoR panel, see paragraph 5.1).

² Unless their content is manifestly inadequate, applications are forwarded to external experts for a detailed review.

³ The following evaluation criteria are applied:

- a) Scientific track record of applicants
- b) Scientific excellence and originality
- c) Originality and possible impact of product and/or application idea
- d) Degree of focus on target-oriented approach
- e) Quality of the proof-of-concept

3.3 Decisions

¹ Division II of the SNSF Research Council decides on the financing of the precoR proposals. The decisions are based on the evaluation results of the precoR panel.

² The Presiding Board of the SNSF endorses the decisions of the Division II of the SNSF Research Council.

³ The SNSF communicates the decision to the applicants in the form of an appealable ruling. When a funding proposal is fully or partially approved, the ruling mentions, in particular, the amount of federal funds to be allocated to the project as well as any conditions or requirements. The rulings may be appealed against before the Federal Administrative Court.

4. Conduct of the approved projects

¹ Successful precoR grants can start at the earliest on August 1 following the submission deadline.

² For ongoing precoR grants, annual financial reports have to be submitted to the SNSF. In order to monitor the progress of a project, mid-term scientific reporting is required. A final scientific report is also required at the end of the project.

5. Organisational provisions

5.1 precoR panel

¹ The precoR panel consists of members of Division II of the SNSF Research Council, experts from CTI (Commission for Technology and Innovation) and members from SwissMEM.

² Panel members suggested by CTI and SwissMEM will be selected by Division II of the SNSF Research Council. They are elected for the duration of the pilot programme.

³ The members of the precoR panel are remunerated in accordance with the usual SNSF rates.

⁴ The panel is chaired by a member of the Research Council of the SNSF. A majority of the members of the panel constitutes a quorum.

⁵ The SNSF members of the precoR panel can nominate ad-hoc replacements if panel members are unable to attend the evaluation meeting.

⁶ The precoR panel takes its decisions in consensus.

⁷ If a consensus is not possible, a decision is taken by majority vote. In the case of equality of votes, the chair of the precoR panel has the casting vote.

6. Final provisions

¹ In the absence of any relevant provisions in these Regulations, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and the directives on the use of grants apply.

² These regulations are issued by the National Research Council on 4 November 2014 and enter into force with immediate effect.