Religions, the State, and Society

Implementation Plan
National Research Programme NRP 58

Contents

What are National Research Programmes (NRPs)?

The research carried out by National Research Programmes is targeted research that contributes to the solution of contemporary problems of national importance. Under the provisions of Article 6, paragraph 2, of the Law on Research of 7 October 1983 the Federal Council selects the topics and foci to be researched in NRPs and mandates full responsibility for implementing the Programmes to the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Article 4 of the Federal Ordinance to the Law on Research of 10 June 1985 (as of 7 December 2004) describes the purpose and contents of the NRP instrument as follows (here translated freely):

"National Research Programmes are a means to direct and support programmes of coordinated research projects that all target a common goal. Where needed, National Research Programmes should foster the strengthening of scientific research potential.

2 Topics of research are appropriate for National Research Programmes if, in the main,
a. *scientific research of the problem is of national importance;*
b. *Swiss research can make a significant contribution to the resolution of the problem;*
c. *problem solutions require research contributions from multiple disciplines;*
d. *the problem cannot be assigned exclusively to pure basic research, to research within a specific Section of the administration, or to industrial applications research;*
e. *research on the problem can be expected to produce research results that have practical applications within a five-year duration.*

3 The following criteria should be taken into consideration in setting forth the topics of National Research Programmes:
a. *the programmes can provide the scientific basis for decision-making by government and the administration;*
b. *the programmes could be conducted in international collaboration and are also of great interest to Switzerland."*

1.   Summary

The religious landscape in Switzerland is undergoing profound changes at all levels of society. Demands by immigrant groups for participation in public life challenge society to reflect on its own religious and cultural identity and national foundations. The newly emerging religious groups do not yet have the necessary infrastructure (communal structures, trained clerics, mosques and temples, educational institutions) that would allow them to conduct their religious life on stable basis, to provide their members with the necessary support, to become reliably integrated in Switzerland, and to be equal to the danger of becoming the instrument of radical movements. The Christian churches are required to engage in dialogue with a society that is largely estranged from religion but also with other Christian groups that do not share their views on modern Christian identity. Individuals have to take self-responsibility in dealing with subject of religion. The state faces the task of examining its relations with the religious groups in Switzerland today and deciding whether and how laws on religion should be adapted to the new multireligious and multicultural environment. Must the state, in the face of the current and to be expected challenges, become more active than up to now on issues concerning religion?

Through conducting scientific research on these processes of change, NRP 58, "Religions, the State, and Society," aims to plumb the depths of the areas of conflict and contribute towards resolving them.

2. Introduction

Traditionally, the religious demography of Switzerland is dominated by the national churches recognized by public law, the Protestant (Evangelical-Reformed) church and the Roman Catholic church as the largest groups, and Judaism and the Christian Catholic (Old Catholic) church as religious minorities. In recent decades, however, the cultural landscape of Switzerland has diversified, which has led to a complex process of simultaneous pluralization and individualization of the religious landscape. As a part of this process, fundamentalist movements have arisen that are attempting to resist the religious multi-culture.

The bonding strengths of the national churches have decreased in modern society due to secularization processes. In public opinion formation today, the voice of the churches is only one among others. At the same time, the topic of religion has taken on new topicality in other areas of society, so that we can speak of a concurrence of secularization and de-secularization.

Immigrants bring their own religions with them to Switzerland or discover them here as an opportunity to gain and publicly define an independent identity within Switzerland. Charismatic movements are experiencing an upward trend, and some former members of mainstream churches are turning to other religions, such as Buddhism. Alternative forms of spirituality and esoteric teachings are no longer confined to subcultural milieus and are gaining considerable importance in some areas of society, such as in healing (alternative health systems).

Changed gender roles and family structures in modern society have also had an impact on the religious landscape. Whereas women still today are considered to be "more religious" and traditionally have been assigned an important role in cultivating and passing on religious heritage in the family, in most religious communities, it is still predominantly men who represent the interests and concerns of their religion in public. This produces tensions, not only in the national churches but also in many immigrant groups where religion is important.

In international comparison Switzerland stands out in many ways: The percentage of immigrants is particularly high, and at the same time, the immigrant groups from different countries are diversified to an unusual degree due to language boundaries. Switzerland has its own tradition of relations between the state, churches, and religious communities and of balancing religious interest groups. Under the conditions of increasing religious pluralization, must the state redefine its relations to the religious communities and develop criteria according to which it must act to protect the religious communities and, if necessary, act to protect individuals and society against excessive demands by the religions? The Constitution takes a reserved position (as compared to Germany, for example) and is based on secular values. As compared to France, Switzerland stands out with strong denominational differences among the cantons. Another unique characteristic stemming from religious history is the almost equal balance between the Roman Catholic and Swiss Protestant churches – but, however, distributed across cantons having differently structured majorities. A specific characteristic is also the tradition of religious tolerance in urban cantons, which goes back, for example in Basel, to the time of the Reformation.

3. Current State of Research

In Switzerland and other countries, the contemporary religious landscape has been studied within various disciplines (religious studies, theology, sociology, anthropology, European ethnology (folklore), Islamic studies, psychology, intercultural education, political science, law, among others), and depending on the discipline, the studies as a rule show clear differences as to research topic, aim, and methodology. For about twenty years now, targeted empirical studies have been conducted on the pluralized religious landscape in Switzerland. In contrast to most other Western European countries, the Federal Population Census of Switzerland captures detailed information on the development of religious denomination affiliation.

In addition to various individual projects supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), such as, for example, a study on Hinduism in Switzerland, some further-reaching interdisciplinary research studies should be mentioned, especially the research activities of the Observatory of Religions in Switzerland (ORS) in Lausanne and the Group of Researchers on Islam in Switzerland (GRIS), and the findings of NRP 21 ("Cultural Diversity and National Identity") and NRP 39 ("Migration and Intercultural Relations").

Largely lacking at the national and international levels are cross-religious studies that examine religions and religious forms of expressions in comparison with regard to a specific topic. Also largely lacking is a set of instruments for adequate investigation of especially non-Christian religions and non-church forms of Christian religiousness. There is also a lack of cross-discipline concepts that would make it possible to bring together the available research. All of these things are needed in order to adequately portray and analyze the religious cultural situation in Switzerland today.

4.   Origins of the NRP

In accordance with the revised federal legislation on research, the State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER), on behalf of the Federal Department of Home Affairs (DHA), mandated the SNSF on 15 December 2004 to develop, based on a previously conducted feasibility study, a Programme Outline for a National Research Programme provisionally titled "Religion, Multicultural Society and the State" The Programme Outline was approved on 24 August 2005 by the Executive Council of the Research Council in agreement with Division IV. On 2 December 2005, the Federal Council mandated the SNSF to launch National Research Programme 58, "Religions, the State, and Society" with appropriated funding to the amount of CHF 10 million. The Research Council of the SNSF mandated a Steering Committee with the task of drawing up the Implementation Plan and taking responsibility for strategic management. The Steering Committee (see committee composition in section 9 below) drew up the present Implementation Plan based on the Programme Outline. The DHA approved the Implementation Plan on 18 May 2006

5.   Programme Goals

NRP 58, "Religions, the State, and Society," has a threefold objective:

The **first** goal, to be achieved mainly by the research groups through scientific study, is to investigate the far-reaching changes in peoples' self-understanding with regard to religion and the diverse change processes in the religious landscape of Switzerland (among society, the state, and the churches as well as within the religious communities themselves). An important part of this objective is the aim to gain empirically-based insights into the sensitive triangle of religious commitment, cultural identity, and societal and political integration and participation.

The **second** goal is to generate knowledge of important consequences of these individual, institutional, and societal changes – knowledge that has the potential to inform practical implementation, in particular knowledge relevant to the issue of the regulation of religious institutions and communities and relevant to education policy and religious socialization.

The **third**, and more normative, goal is to work out the required societal, political, institutional, and individual conditions for mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence of the various religious communities among themselves and with non-religiously oriented people. This goal will have to be realized primarily by the Steering Committee by means of synthesizing and critically recognizing the findings of the individual studies.

All in all, the NRP aims to make a contribution towards greater objectivity in public discussion of religious topics, which has frequently been emotionally charged. To fulfill this task, diverse activities will be undertaken in close collaboration with the media.

As to the content of the research projects, the three goals of the Programme take concrete form as **five main research topics**. These research foci serve to structure the complex subject of religious communities according to certain aspects and issues and make them better understandable. However, applicants can submit proposals cross-cutting the research topics or proposals that overlap two or more of the topics. Multidisciplinary project groups are also strongly encouraged.

6.   Research Topics

6.1   Religious groups in change – Structures, identities, inter-religious relations (funding ca. CHF 2 million)

6.1.1 Non-Christian religious groups

In Switzerland, there is strong pressure on non-Christian religious groups of foreign origin (especially Islamic groups, but also Hindu, Buddhist, and other communities) to adapt, and they are subjected in part to negative perceptions held by a majority of the population. In the interest of integration, they are required to set up forms of organization that allow the establishment of relations between the state and the group. In many cases, these forms of organization are foreign to these groups. At the same time, due to migration, the groups suffer in part from massive structural lacks, such as a lack of communal centers and mosques or temples of sufficient size and representation and/or a lack of well-trained clerics, priests, or community leaders.

The purpose of the research in this area is to examine how non-Christian religious groups deal with this situation. What are their needs, for example, as to ritual practice, professional advising of members, and religious education of children? The assumption here is that in the adaptation or exclusion process, the non-Christian religious groups themselves change (for example, Euro-Islam). Another issue here is the question of economic conditions. Many smaller communities are not in a position to provide their own financing. What resources do the religious communities need, and from where do they obtain their means?

An important topic to be examined here is gender roles. Women are often considered to be responsible to a great degree for cultivating and transmitting religious traditions, but they are as a rule far less represented in mosques and temples than men. How do tradition relations between men and women change under the influence of the integration process, and what consequences result from this for the development of the religious communities?

6.1.2 Christian religious groups

Much of previous research starts out from a paradigm that describes the development of Christianity in modern times as antagonism between church tradition and secularization processes. The research focus on "Christian religious groups" breaks away from that way of looking at things and takes into consideration that through current developments in the subject of religion in other areas of society and the increasing pluralization of religion, churches themselves change, as do also the needs of their members. Here the national churches come under pressure from a number of sides: many of their members, in particular members of the Roman Catholic church, complain of the dogmatic hardening of the church and go their own ways. Others, especially members of Evangelical-Reformed church, see a lack of a "clear profile" and move to small Christian groups. At the same time, it has been found that church members today have far less knowledge of the church and its teachings. How do the Christian churches deal with these challenges – as whole structures and at the local level in pilot projects? In the face of religious pluralism, is the territorial

structure of the national churches and parishes still appropriate? On the other hand, what increasing new tasks do the national churches face in this situation?

The allocation of roles between men and women is also very significant in Christian religious communities: In the Roman Catholic church, great tensions surround the issue of the restriction of the priesthood to men, which many see as "outdated," but others continue to defend. The restriction at the same time excludes women from advancing within the church hierarchy. But the research area "Christian religious groups" also foresees investigation, utilizing appropriate research methods, of gender roles in the Evangelical-Reformed Protestant church, the free (independent) churches, and smaller religious movements.

6.1.3 Relations among religious groups

Here the focus of research is to examine how the different religious communities deal with each other. Where do we find developments towards tolerance and intolerance? What impact does pluralization have on relations between the two large Christian national churches and on their relations with the minority churches? What relations are cultivated among the minority religious groups (for example, between the Muslim and Jewish communities)?

6.2   Religion and individual in a pluralized religious landscape (funding ca. CHF 1.5 million)

In Switzerland, but also in international comparison, there is a lack of specific knowledge of how individuals perceive religiousness, deal with their religions, and are shaped by their religions under the given conditions. What role does the spiritual dimension play? To what extent do religious groups influence the cognitive structures of their members, and what is their impact on members' worldviews and ethical and social attitudes?

Another issue to be examined within this research topic is the relation between religion and identity. What is the relation between religious identification and other identity-providing characteristics such as national, ethnic, language, political, and professional orientation? This can result in complex constellations, for example "liberal' and "conservative-traditional" religious profiles. Some people utilize the range of diverse religions for independent, personal constellations and feel affiliated with several religions at the same time, for example. Other people strictly reject that, seeing it as a decay of religious affiliation. In this connection, the phenomenon of conversion, that is, self-chosen change of religious orientation is another possible topic.

How do people behave towards religion as a public matter? Some people see religion as a private matter entirely; for others, public declaration of belief in religion is an important personal attribute that they express, for example, by wearing and displaying religious symbols. Further, in today's religious culture, great changes in the forms of collectivization can be observed. Frequently, informal forms of membership replace or complement formal church membership. This makes its possible for a person to participate in different religious orientations simultaneously. What effects does this have on the individual?

In almost all religious settings, the disproportionately high participation of women is conspicuous, even if the specific religious community is led mainly or exclusively by men. Why are women more active religiously? Are men in fact less interested in their own religiousness? Are there gender-specific aspects of biographical reconstruction that in the first place give rise to this impression?

6.3 Religion in the public sphere – Religion and society (funding ca. CHF 1.5 million)

The aim in this research topic is to investigate how the public status of religion is changing in society and in the media. How do secular institutions deal with religious or spiritual issues? As a counterpart to the increasing individualization and privatization of religion, it can be observed that religion is playing an increasing role in the health market, psychotherapy, adult education, the environmental movement, and in many leisure time activities. Religion and spirituality have a strong presence in the media.

In transmitting religious ideas, the media do not play only a passive role. The media are also actors that sometimes even intervene vehemently in religious-political debates, exerting influence and triggering new processes. It would be interesting to learn how the wider public in Switzerland assesses religion and its usefulness or its possible threat to civil society. Here it is particularly important to examine language-region differences in Switzerland, but also differences between urban and rural regions and other social structural factors.

Also of interest here is the role of organized religious communities in political decision-making in the direct democratic process. For example, to what extent do the official positions of the national churches and other religious groups on development and humanitarian aid, family planning and abortion, immigrant policy, bioethics, and so on shape public opinion? And at what points in public opinion formation is religion utilized for political purposes?

Another area to be investigated under this topic is public negotiation processes between religious groups and Swiss society. It can be observed that some immigrant religions have an increasing voice in the public sphere and, in part, are articulating loud demands for participation. With this, they often provoke resentment on the part of the majority society, which for its part mobilizes identity patterns with religious connotations (for example, the "Christian West") in order to protect itself from the "threat of infiltration." This resentment corresponds with the fear of loss of identity due to adaptation on the side of the minority religions. Under these conditions, what are the prerequisites for peaceful coexistence of the different religious and non-religious groups in Switzerland?

6.4 State and religion in a pluralized religious landscape (funding ca. CHF 2 million)

Switzerland has a long tradition of religious freedom that has reliably overcome interreligious tensions in the past. Whereas the Swiss Confederation has up to now remained largely neutral on religious questions and supported the religious groups in their strivings for independence from external influence, the cantons have the primary authority to regulate relations between the state and religion. As a result, there are 26 difference systems of regulation. In view of the pluralization of the religious landscape, the question to be examined is how equal treatment of the growing number of religious groups can be assured. Is the current federal system still adequate to deal with current and expected religious challenges? In reverse, research is needed on how different religious communities view the state. To what extent must the state act as a mediator of tensions of religious origin and establish mediation institutions?

It is important to consider that in many areas of law, namely, in constitutional law as well as in labor law, there are regulations that directly or indirectly affect the position of religious groups and the range of their autonomy and their room for maneuver. Going beyond that, there are, in addition to legal guidelines, a number of socially and culturally shaped patterns of behavior that are not formalized institutionally but have strong de facto regulatory effects on the relation between state and religious groups. Particularly in the discussion of legal and institutional regulations of the relation between state and religious groups, an international comparison with approaches in neighboring countries could be of great value. It would also be interesting to discover what influence international law has on the legal regulation of religious groups in Switzerland.

The state guarantees religious groups and individuals the right to maintain their identity and at the same time defines the conditions for this. How can the framework conditions, especially for smaller religious communities, be improved, so that integration is facilitated and at the same time possible abuse of government-guaranteed freedoms can be prevented? Here, the relation between religious freedom and government intervention should also be clarified. Are there cases in which the state "must" protect individuals from certain religious practices, for example, parents' religion-based refusal of medical interventions essential to the lives of their children or "ethically"-based cases of clitoridectomy, child abduction, or even parricide?

Research is also needed on what services the religious communities provide the state and society, such as social, health, and charitable services, and on what is characteristic of these services – this is an important question also in view of the drop in private initiatives, the difficulties of volunteer work, and cutbacks in government solidarity aid. What social functions do religious communities fulfill for their members and their surrounding environments that otherwise, the government and society would have to pay for?

Finally, under this topic of research, the security policy tasks of the state must also be examined. Must the state take on increased preventive and religious policing functions, whether for the protection of religious minorities from resentment of the majority or vice versa?

6.5 Religion and socialization – Education policy challenges (funding ca. CHF 1.5 million)

The fifth research topic deals with the consequences of the multireligious situation for education policy in Switzerland. The research projects in this area should produce knowledge on different education models and their impacts on people – here looking at both religious and non-religious people. Although the primary focus is on children and adolescents, in these times of "lifelong learning" research attention should also be directed to the socialization of adults.

6.5.1 Socialization in religious groups

In the face of the many facets of secularization, all religious groups are confronted with the problem of dwindling religious competencies of their members, which has made the transmission of religious traditions a particularly challenging issue. For immigrant groups especially, but also for established religious communities, the additional problem arises as to interaction between religion and culture. Many religious representatives view too close relations between religion and culture as a problem – there may be theological reasons for this, but it may also result alone from the fact that national, cultural, and religious identity often do not coincide.

With the focus here on socialization in religious groups, it will be important to examine in depth the private schools run by various Christian and non-Christian religious groups, but also their recreational programs, vacation schools and camps, and so on (possibly in comparison with similar offerings in countries neighboring Switzerland). Other topics for investigation under this research focus are: what is being taught in these forms of education, what parts of the religious tradition are considered important for transmission, and how learning contents are adapted to the situation in Switzerland and the multireligious environment. A further topic for investigation here is religious groups' teacher education in religious instruction and teachers' (and teachers' in training) attitudes towards religion and teaching.

6.5.2 Socialization in the family, peer group, and at work

Of primary importance for religious socialization is the family, which under current conditions is undergoing strong processes of change. What impacts do the changed framework conditions (changes in intergenerational relationships, decreasing birth rates, inter-faith marriages, both parents working, increasing number of single parents and "patchwork" families, and so on) have on the transmission of religious traditions? What role does religion play in family identity?

Children's and adolescents' peer groups, but also adults' peer groups, can under some conditions have a strong influence on individuals. This is true of school classmates, peers in recreational groups, and peers at the workplace. What difference does it make for the individual whether the peer group is religiously homogeneous or heterogeneous? What effect does experience of other and foreign religions have? Are there stigmas with regard to minority religions, and what are the consequences of stigmas?

6.5.3 Religious socialization and the state

An important area for research is the question of religious education in the public schools: Should the state provide support to the religious groups for offering their own religious education, or should religious education taught in the schools be changed from the traditional classes in Christian doctrine to non-confessional (neutral worldview) teachings about religions and cultures, as is being planned in the canton of Zurich? Also needed is clarification of the current state of and need for changes in or regulations for religious education in the schools (curricula, teacher education, freedom of speech of teachers). In what areas can potential conflicts in this sensitive area be reduced? What are the potential advantages of a possible re-designing of religious education in the schools?

Proposals are also sought that investigate the religious classes and courses that are offered within adult education, often in connection with the topics of therapies, meditation, and holistic body-mind approaches.

Another important issue to be investigated here is the higher education and training of theologians and other specialists in religion at the state-supported universities. Whereas Christian theology has long been taught at departments at state-supported universities and further developed through state-funded research, the minority religions have received no equivalent state support up to now. What consequences result from the changed religious situation in Switzerland?

7. Target Groups and Practical Application of the Findings

The research results should be of practical usefulness at various levels.

With regard to policy and for the political parties, the research findings on the role of the state vis-à-vis the different religious communities will be of main interest. The state today is confronted with the task of clarifying its relations with the new religious groups in Switzerland. This requires the state at the same time to examine its relations with the long established religious communities. The question is whether and how the state should respond to the newly emerged multireligious and multicultural landscape in the areas of the law, equality policy, the healthcare and education systems, family policy, the world of work, and more. In this connection, the NRP will deliver empirical data that will inform and enrich the discussion on policy matters and demands.

For the federal authorities, the NRP is expected to produce bases for future-oriented formulation of state policy on religion as well as a picture of the existing and, as the case may be, required federal authority and responsibilities. This output can provide a basis for decision-making in the discussion on the addition to the Constitution of an article on religion, which is being demanded by church circles. The NRP is also expected to provide new impetus as to the obligation to protect fundamental rights.

The findings will provide cantonal and communal authorities with bases for policy discussion on the further development of relations between the state and religious communities as well as on public and legal recognition of religious groups. Further, the outputs will make contributions regarding the contemporary understanding of the principle of subsidiarity (division of tasks between state and society) and state reimbursement of the social services provided by religious groups and the churches.

Several times in the past, representatives of religious organizations, both small groups and the large national churches, expressed interest in a NRP on the topic of religious communities. The research program should provide these organizations with ideas and suggestions for new forms of cooperation and partnership in the multireligious environment. Close cooperation during the implementation phase is planned between the NRP and these religious institutions.

The educational institutions (public and private) in particular need information on the new demands on instruction and on the integration of religious subjects and contents in the schools' curricula at the different levels of schooling. The outputs of the NRP will also aid deeper clarification of the relationship between public and private religious education as well as of the handling of religion as a subject in school instruction in general. Further, the NRP may throw light on the dialectic between state-secular and religious education. For example, what is the added value of religiously oriented education as compared to secular-ethical education? On the other hand, where does education with a religious orientation impede the objective of civil society competence that allows people of different religious and non-religious orientations to live together? Are there ways to relate religious and secular bases of ethics meaningfully and appropriately?

The media and the wider public generally are showing increasing interest in topics related to religion. It is important to raise general knowledge in this area and to sensitize the public for developments and issues by means of objective and substantive research studies. Better informed media and a better informed public contribute significantly towards prevention of conflicts and integration of different religious groups and their members.

Also judges and lawyers will find bases for better legal enforcement of fundamental rights claims.

The NRP will ensure that these target groups are reached by working up the findings in the form of audience-appropriate presentations and by holding workshops and public events.

8. Proposal Preparation and Submission Process

As is customary for NRPs, the Steering Committee has decided on a two-stage process of submitting research proposals. This procedure facilitates coordination of the research projects and definition of priorities.

As the first step, interested researchers should submit a Project Outline containing a concise summary of the proposed research project. The Project Outline must have the following format and provide brief information on each of the points:

- Brief summary
- Topic of research, guiding assumptions and hypotheses, description of the content of the study
- Methods
- Data sources, access to data, data (privacy) protection
- Timeframe and milestones
- Expected benefits and potential practical applications to be gained from the study
- Possible collaboration with researchers from other disciplines and/or private and public organizations
- Estimated budget for personnel and materials

Project Outlines must not exceed five pages in length including tables and references (reader-friendly line spacing; Arial 11 or Times New Roman 12 font and font size; 2 cm margins).
In addition to the Project Outline, applicants must fill out and submit the official coversheet for NRP 58. The cover sheet can be downloaded at http://www.snf.ch.

The duration of the research projects must not exceed 36 months. All projects must be completed by the summer of 2010 at the latest. The Steering Committee will evaluate the Project Outlines submitted in consultation with international experts and make selection decisions based on the criteria listed below. The Committee's decisions are final. The Project Outlines may be submitted in a national language or in English.

Collaboration with research groups in other countries is possible. The SNSF is willing to support international collaboration (for example, by co-funding the costs of the groups abroad), if

- it brings added value that would not be possible without international collaboration;
- it enriches Swiss research as to content and methodology.

The Steering Committee is generally of the opinion that international comparisons are of great benefit. International comparisons are conceivable in all of the five research topics. Project partners in other countries can be included in collaboration with Swiss research applicants. Of particular interest are findings relating to similarities and differences between different European countries. However, the research objectives must pertain clearly to Switzerland, for the purpose of the National Re-

search Programmes is to obtain results that have practical relevance for Swiss policy and society. It is also the purpose of NRP 58 to have a lasting sensitizing and stimulating effect on the Swiss research landscape with regard to the topic of religion.

Through the NRP, the Steering Committee also seeks to promote young academics and scientists in Switzerland. The Committee welcomes projects that employ young academics and scientists as investigators and in this way support their professional careers.

In the second stage of the process, the Steering Committee will invite the selected applicants to submit a full Research Proposal to the SNSF. Here the applicants must make any revisions to their research projects that the experts require based on their evaluation of the Project Outlines. According to SNSF guidelines, the Research Proposals must be submitted using the official NRP Research Proposal Application Form, which is available for download at the SNSF Web site www.snf.ch. The Research Proposals will be evaluated by the Steering Committee in consultation with external experts. The Steering Committee then selects the project proposals to be recommended to the Research Council of the SNSF for final approval.

The collection of new data is appropriate only if (as compared to secondary analysis of existing data bases) this can be expected to produce clearly greater knowledge gains. Research groups that wish to conduct their own surveys or collect their own statistics in the framework of their projects must demonstrate that the available government statistics do not provide adequate data for achieving the research objectives. Applicants are welcome to contact Dr. Werner Haug at the Swiss Federal Statistical Office for further information.

8.1 Selection Criteria

The Project Outlines and Research Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Relevance to research priorities**: The research projects must demonstrate clear relevance and responsiveness to the research priorities of NRP 58 as described in the Implementation Plan and fit into the overall framework of the NRP.
- **Scientific Quality**: The projects must demonstrate theoretical frameworks and research methodologies that accord with the current state of knowledge in the field and meet today's international research standards.
- **Originality**: The projects must address new research questions or be innovative by approaching classical research questions in new ways.
- **Feasibility**: This criterion applies especially to projects collecting new data.
- **Practical benefits and knowledge transfer**: The specified purpose of National Research Programmes is to support research that results in knowledge transfer and practical applications. For this reason, high priority will be given to projects that demonstrate high practical relevance.
- **Cost/Benefit**: The cost/benefit of the proposed research project will be considered in the evaluation.
- **Personnel and infrastructure**: The successful conclusion of a research project can depend on the relevant experience of the group of researchers and the adequacy of facilities and infrastructure.

8.2　Schedule

The following deadlines have been set for NRP 58:

Call for Project Outlines: June – September 2006
Deadline for submitting Project Outlines: 11 September 2006
Evaluation of Project Outlines: October / November 2006
Time for writing Research Proposals: December – January 2007
Evaluation of Research Proposals: February – March 2007
Start of research projects: May 2007
Completion of projects: Summer 2010

Project Outlines with cover sheet must be submitted by post and electronically at the latest by 11 September 2006 (postmark) to the following postal address and E-mail address:

Swiss National Science Foundation
Division IV, NFP 58
Wildhainweg 20
CH-3001 Bern
Tel.: 031 308 22 22
E-Mail: cmottas@snf.ch

The Implementation Plan and the official cover sheet for the Project Outlines can be downloaded at http://www.snf.ch. Project Outlines (with cover sheet) must be sent by post to the SNSF as well as sent electronically. For legal reasons, Project Outlines and Research Proposals that are submitted by e-mail only cannot be accepted.

The Secretariat of Division IV checks adherence to formal requirements (completeness of application, submission within the deadline) before the Project Outline or Research Proposal is passed on for evaluation. Submissions that do not meet the formal criteria will not be processed further.

8.3　Value-Added Tax (VAT)

The SNSF funds awarded are exempted from VAT taxation (art. 33, par. 6). The SNSF does not issue contracts under the National Research Programmes, but instead awards grants for the promotion of scientific research in Switzerland.

9. Programme Management

Division IV of the SNF Research Council

The SNF Research Council's Division IV consists of 20 members who represent a wide range of scientific disciplines. It has overall responsibility for NRPs and National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCR). Decisions by Division IV on whether to accept or reject research proposals are submitted to the Presidency of the SNF Research Council for ratification. Division IV delegates one of its members to the steering committee. This delegate submits the steering committee's decisions to Division IV and serves as the main liaison person between the steering committee and the SNF.

Steering Committee

The steering committee has primary responsibility for ascertaining the scientific quality of research carried out in this NRP, and for ascertaining that this research meets the overall objectives of the NRP. It organizes and participates in the review process for pre- and full proposals. It can call upon external experts for this purpose and enlist their support in various formats (e.g., peer reviews by correspondence, review panels). It decides on approval or rejection of pre-proposals, and it decides on whether or not to recommend full proposals for approval by the SNF Division IV. It reviews interim reports from projects and decides on whether to propose acceptance, revise-and-resubmit, or rejection to the SNF Division IV. It monitors, on a continuous basis, progress made in the NRP's research projects and recommends adjustments or improvements if necessary. It organizes and participates in implementation activities with the help of an implementation officer, including scientific workshops, stakeholder dialogues, public lecture series, synthesis reports of the programme, etc.

Programme Coordinator

The programme coordinator is a staff member of the secretariat of Division IV of the SNSF. She/he is responsible for handling day-to-day management tasks and for ascertaining the implementation of decisions taken by the Research Council and the steering committee. She / he coordinates administrative and financial support functions in the NRP and assists the steering committee in project monitoring and coordination.

Implementation Officer

In consultation with the SNF Press and Information Office, the steering committee nominates an implementation officer. The Research Council decides on her / his appointment and mandate. The implementation officer's principal tasks are to organize public outreach and public relations activities of the NRP, facilitate communication between NRP project participants on the one hand and the media, stakeholders and policy-makers on the other hand, and facilitate communication among individual NRP projects and between the steering committee and the projects.

Steering Committee

Steering Committee Members:

Prof. Christoph Bochinger, Lehrstuhl für Religionswissenschaft, Uni Bayreuth (Präsident);

Prof. Maya Burger, Faculté de théologie, Uni Lausanne

Dr. Werner Haug, Bundesamt für Statistik, Neuenburg

Prof. René Pahud de Mortanges, Lehrstuhl für Rechtsgeschichte und Kirchenrecht, Uni Freiburg i.Ü.

Prof. Jean-Paul Willaime, Directeur d'Etudes à l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris

Prof. Hans-Georg Ziebertz, theologische Fakultät, Uni Würzburg

Representative of the Federal Administration
Dr. Marc Schinzel, Bundesamt für Justiz, Bern.

Implementation Officer
N.N.

Delegate of Division IV of the SNF Research Council
Prof. Dr. Christian Suter, soziologisches Institut, Uni Neuenburg

State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER), Berne
Dr. Claudine Dolt

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