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Regulations on SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships and SNSF Eccellenza Grants

19 September 2017

The National Research Council,

based on Articles 4 and 48 of the Funding Regulations of 27 February 2015¹,

hereby issues the following Regulations:

1. General

Article 1 Objectives and principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (hereinafter “the SNSF”) awards SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships and SNSF Eccellenza Grants (hereinafter “SNSF Eccellenza Awards”) to exceptional researchers with an outstanding track record who are pursuing an academic career or a career at a Swiss higher education institution.

² The SNSF Eccellenza Awards are aimed at researchers who wish to conduct a generously funded research project while holding an independent post at a Swiss higher education institution. The objective of this funding scheme is the obtainment of a permanent professorship.

³ Applications for SNSF Eccellenza Awards may be submitted by researchers who do not yet hold a professorship in Switzerland or abroad, or by researchers who have recently been appointed to a tenure-track assistant professorship² in Switzerland.

⁴ SNSF Eccellenza Awards are open to researchers from all disciplines.

⁵ The Awards include either project funds plus salary, or only project funds, and enable the recipient to undertake a research stay at an academic host institution or at an institution in the relevant practical field (intersectoral mobility).

⁶ In principle, SNSF Eccellenza recipients must work full-time (100%). Working part-time is permissible if the recipient has family care duties or is engaged in activities at a higher education institution aimed at achieving higher qualifications to further his/her career, particularly if the funds obtained from the SNSF are complemented by third-party research funds.

⁷ Specific conditions apply to the promotion of candidatures in particular research fields or types of higher education institution.

¹ Funding Regulations of 27 February 2015: www.snsf.ch > Funding > Documents & downloads

² A clearly defined tenure-track procedure pursuant to swissuniversities standards is a requirement.

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 apply³.

Article 3 Types, amount and duration of award

¹ SNSF Eccellenza Awards comprise project funds (SNSF Eccellenza Grants) or project funds and the applicants' salaries (SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships). The provisions of these Regulations apply to both types of SNSF Eccellenza Award, unless reference is made explicitly to one type of award only.

² In the case of SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships, project funds pursuant to Article 10 paragraph 4 letters a - h of a maximum of CHF 1,000,000 are awarded for five years in addition to the applicant's salary.

³ In the case of SNSF Eccellenza Grants, the SNSF awards project funds pursuant to Article 10 paragraph 4 letters a – h of a maximum of CHF 1,500,000 for five years.

⁴ The maximum duration of funding is five years, the minimum duration three years. If the funding period is less than the maximum funding period of five years, the maximum amounts pursuant to paragraphs 2 and 3 will be reduced proportionally.

⁵ SNSF Eccellenza Awards cannot be extended. However, extensions for commonly accepted reasons shall remain reserved pursuant to Clause 7.6⁴ of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

2. Personal and formal requirements

Article 4 Personal requirements; SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships

¹ Researchers who submit applications for SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships must not have held, currently hold, or have been assured of, a temporary or permanent assistant professorship or professorship position, whether in Switzerland or abroad⁵, at the time of the submission deadline or during the evaluation procedure.

² Applicants must have:

- a. a proven record of at least two years' activity (with an average work quota of at least 80%) at a Swiss higher education institution, or they must be Swiss nationals or have a Swiss higher education degree;
- b. a proven record of between three and eight years of scientific activity since completing their doctorate or equivalent qualification (the date of the examination, or of the defence of the doctoral thesis is the relevant date); and
- c. conducted postdoctoral research activities (minimum work quota of 80%) for at least 24 months, 12 months of which abroad, at one or more higher education institutions other than the higher education institution where they did their doctorate (proof of mobility). As regards

³ <http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/snsf-general-implementation-regulations-for-the-funding-regulations-e.pdf>

⁴ Wording based on the Research Council decision of 24 September 2019, in force since 2 October 2019.

⁵ Positions that do not allow submission are characterised as follows: temporary or permanent member of teaching staff with independent position involving independent research and teaching duties/activities not bound by instructions, right to supervise doctoral theses. For applicants from abroad, the title of the position may differ from the titles used in Switzerland (assistant professor, professor). (Footnote inserted according to decision of 11 September 2018.)

the 12 months abroad, exceptions may be granted subject to a well-founded request citing specific reasons. If the doctorate was obtained abroad, a postdoctoral research stay in Switzerland will be regarded as the equivalent of a stay abroad. The determining date for the beginning of the postdoctoral period is the date of the examination/defence of the doctoral thesis.

³ For applicants without a doctorate (PhD or MD-PhD), a minimum of three years of research activity as main source of income after obtaining their higher education degree or their medical licence (Staatsexamen) is regarded as equivalent to a doctorate.

⁴ Applicants who have completed their studies in human, dental, veterinary, social or preventive medicine with a doctorate (MD) may submit a proposal no later than 12 years after obtaining their medical licence (Staatsexamen or equivalent degree), paragraph 2 letter b notwithstanding, provided they have done clinical work for at least three years after completing their studies (a certificate as FMH specialist is an advantage) and gained two years of research experience since passing their exam pursuant to paragraph 2, letter c⁶.

⁵ The qualifications presented pursuant to paragraph 2 letter c⁷ may differ for researchers applying for SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships at universities of applied sciences or universities of teacher education. The following qualifications are required:

- a. a proven record of several years' research experience as well as professional experience in practice and research in a relevant area in accordance with the requirements in place for the relevant discipline or higher education institution; and
- b. international research stays, which may be of short duration, after obtaining a higher education degree.

⁶ The precise periods are calculated on the basis of the relevant submission deadline for SNSF Eccellenza applications. The time windows, cited in paragraph 2, letter b, and paragraph 4, may be extended⁸ if one or more of the reasons set out in Clause 1.11 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply. The reasons for extending the window must be outlined in the application.

Article 5 Personal requirements; SNSF Eccellenza Grants in the case of a tenure-track assistant professorship (TTAP)⁹.

¹ Researchers applying for SNSF Eccellenza Grants must hold a position as tenure-track assistant professor at a Swiss higher education institution or must have been assured of such a position by the start of the project at the latest. The assurance of future employment must not be made conditional on the obtainment of an SNSF Eccellenza Grant. The tenure-track assistant professorship at a university or comparable position at a university of applied sciences or a university of teacher education must have been started no more than 18 months before the submission deadline and no later than the start of the project.

² Scientists who meet the requirements pursuant to paragraph 1 may not submit any applications for SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships.

⁶ Editorial amendment of 1 September 2018.

⁷ Editorial amendment of 7 August 2018.

⁸ Editorial amendment of 11 July 2018.

⁹ A clearly defined tenure-track procedure pursuant to swissuniversities standards is a requirement.

Article 6 Other personal requirements

¹ The general requirements for application submission pursuant to the Funding Regulations and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations additionally apply to all applicants.

² Researchers applying for SNSF Eccellenza Grants must

- a. have an outstanding scientific track record;
- b. be capable of carrying out the proposed research project independently;

³ In principle, all recipients of SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships must work full-time. A part-time work quota corresponding to at least 80% may be applied for if the recipient has family care duties or is pursuing higher qualifications at a higher education institution to further his/her career.

⁴ In the case of SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships, an average of 80% of a full-time work quota must be devoted to research and the remainder of the time primarily to teaching. These benchmarks apply proportionally to part-time work. Further reductions in the work quota or the time reserved for the project are possible if SNSF funding can be successfully complemented by third-party research funds (e.g. ERC).

⁵ Recipients of SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships in the area of clinical research must devote at least 50% of the funded work quota to the project and to personal and professional basic and continuing education and no more than 50% on average to clinical activities and other tasks.

⁶ SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships at universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education must devote at least 70% of their work time to research and continuing scientific education, and the remainder primarily to teaching.

Article 7 Formal requirements

¹ Applications for SNSF Eccellenza Awards must be submitted to the SNSF electronically in line with the relevant rules and must include all of the required documents.

² The submission deadlines are published on the SNSF website.

3. Applications and eligible costs

Article 8 Applications

¹ Applications for SNSF Eccellenza Awards must be submitted in accordance with the requirements issued by the SNSF and must include all the necessary data and documents.

² In particular, the higher education research institution must provide written confirmation, drawn up in accordance with SNSF guidelines, stating that it will fulfil the conditions applicable to SNSF Eccellenza Awards.

³ Specifically, the confirmation shall relate to the support provided for SNSF Eccellenza recipients and to their integration at the higher education institution, the rights and obligations that come with the position, including career funding measures, as well as an assurance that the research conditions and research time for the approved project are in accordance with these Regulations. In addition, it must include a statement by the higher education research institution regarding the applicant's career prospects as well as the scientific independence of the applicant and the proposed project. The employment duration for recipients of SNSF Eccellenza Grants shall also be stated in the confirmation.

⁴ For the entire duration of the award, recipients of SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships must hold the status and title that come with an assistant professorship or equivalent position.

⁵ Recipients of SNSF Eccellenza Awards must have the right to supervise dissertations if they work at a higher education research institution that awards doctoral degrees. The said right must be confirmed by the higher education research institution.

⁶ Positions for doctoral students may be approved for recipients at universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education if there is a well-documented scientific working relationship with a university in Switzerland. If there are no appropriate partners in Switzerland, positions for doctoral students may be approved at higher education institutions abroad that are entitled to award doctorates.

⁷ For SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships in clinical research, the higher education research institution needs to provide an assurance that the clinic will pay the salary for the clinical part, less the 10% covered by the SNSF (see Article 10 paragraph 2 below). In addition, it must guarantee that the recipient of the fellowship will be relieved of administrative duties during the time reserved for research.

Article 9 Stays at host institutions (mobility)

¹ Applicants may request support for stays at a Swiss or foreign academic host institution or at an institution in the practical field (industry, administration, etc.; intersectoral mobility). This request may also be submitted and approved within the scope of the approved budget while the grant is still ongoing.

² All in all, stays at a host institution must not exceed 12 months and may be spent at one or more institutions. If the duration of an SNSF Eccellenza Award is less than five years, the maximum duration of the research stays will be reduced proportionally.

³ Applications for a stay with a host institution must include an invitation letter from the relevant host institution. The host institution must guarantee that the necessary research conditions are in place and that the SNSF Eccellenza recipient will be integrated at the host institution.

Article 10 Eligible costs

¹ In the case of SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships, the recipient's salary is covered by the award at the same rate as a local assistant professorship or equivalent position. The SNSF determines the amount of the salary by agreement with the research institution. The SNSF may set an upper limit for the salary.

² In the case of SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships in clinical research, the share of the salary earmarked for research and teaching activities is covered in full (100%) by the SNSF. The SNSF also assumes an additional 10% of the share paid for clinical activities. The salary level of a local assistant professorship serves as a benchmark. The remainder of the clinical activities is charged to the clinical unit of the higher education institution. Both shares must be accounted for in the application.

³ For each year of the grant, recipients of SNSF Eccellenza Grants can have 20% of their salary covered by the grant as project funds for financing research work. This share of the salary must be charged to the grant annually. If the grantee's work quota is less than 100%, the 20% covered by the SNSF will be reduced proportionally. The SNSF may set an upper limit for the eligible part of the salary.

⁴ The following project costs are covered by both types of awards:

- a. salaries of employees (doctoral students, postdocs, other staff) whose posts are approved by the SNSF;
- b. material costs that are directly linked to the research work, in particular material of enduring value, expendable items, field expenses, travel costs, third-party charges, costs for computing time and data as well as costs for making research data freely available (Open Research Data);
- c. direct costs of the use of infrastructure for conducting the research project;
- d. ^[10]
- e. costs for the organisation of conferences and workshops regarding the funded research;
- f. costs for national and international cooperation and networking activities carried out in connection with the funded research;
- g. costs for career measures;
- h. costs for gender equality measures.

4. Submission of applications and other SNSF grants: restrictions

Article 11 SNSF Eccellenza Awards in relation to other forms of funding offered by the SNSF

¹ Proposals may only be submitted for a duration of support for which no other career, SNSF project funding, Sinergia or SPIRIT¹¹ application has been applied for. The restrictions apply during the entire evaluation process.¹²

² As regards the restrictions pursuant to paragraph 1, the following exception applies: applicants who reach the second phase of the Eccellenza evaluation may submit an application for project funding or for PRIMA as of the next submission deadline after the positive decision of the first phase. On receiving the Eccellenza Award, applicants must withdraw their applications for project funding or for PRIMA. Should they wish to continue the evaluation procedure in these funding schemes, any granting of an Eccellenza Award shall no longer apply.¹³

³ If a parallel submission is ruled impermissible, the proposal will not be considered by the SNSF.

⁴ SNSF Eccellenza recipients may submit a project funding, Sinergia or SPIRIT¹⁰ application two years after starting the SNSF Eccellenza Award at the earliest.

⁵ If an applicant has been awarded or is already receiving¹⁴ project funding, funding under Sinergia or under SPIRIT¹⁰ for an ongoing project when they apply for an SNSF Eccellenza Award, he/she may continue the said project, provided its research topic is clearly different from that of the SNSF Eccellenza application.

⁶ Recipients of SNSF Eccellenza Awards may not apply for any further SNSF career grants.

Article 12 Repeated submissions: limitation

¹ Applicants whose application for an SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship was rejected may apply only once more for an SNSF Eccellenza Award, regardless of the subject matter of the project.

¹⁰ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 21 March 2017, in force since 1 April 2017. Grants for Open Access publications are awarded in accordance with the Regulations on the funding of Open Access publications.

¹¹ Editorial amendment of 1 April 2019, in force with immediate effect.

¹² Editorial amendment of 1 September 2018, in force with immediate effect.

¹³ Inserted based on the decision of the National Research Council of 1 July 2020, in force with immediate effect.

¹⁴ Editorial amendment of 1 September 2018.

² Applicants whose application for an SNSF Eccellenza Grant was rejected may not submit another SNSF Eccellenza application.

5. Assessment criteria and procedure

Article 13 Assessment criteria

¹ Applications that meet the personal and formal requirements are evaluated scientifically.

² The following assessment criteria are applied:

- a. the applicant's scientific track record;
- b. scientific independence of the applicant at the chosen research institution and of the research project;
- c. scientific relevance, originality and topicality of the research project;
- d. approach and methodology of the research project as well as its feasibility and chances of success;
- e. suitability of the research institution as a place to conduct the research project as well as to strengthen and promote the applicant's scientific independence;
- f. if applicable, value that the requested stays at host institutions would add to the applicant's career and to the research project;
- g. Adequacy of the requested research funds.

³ In the case of use-inspired basic research proposals, the project's broader impact is considered in the evaluation.

⁴ The following assessment criteria are additionally applied to SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships:

- a. the applicant's potential for gaining a permanent position in the scope of a professorship at a higher education institution;
- b. the applicant's career progression and retrospective and prospective mobility;

⁵ Paragraph 2 letters a and c as well as paragraph 4 letter b notwithstanding, the following assessment criteria are applied to SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship applications submitted at universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education:

- a. the applicant's scientific track record (research and teaching experience) and, depending on the requirements of the relevant discipline/higher education institution, his/her track record in use-inspired basic research;
- b. Mobility of the applicant prior to submission of the proposal: retrospective mobility experience, particularly changing from higher education to industry and business, or changing from higher education to primary or secondary schools;
- c. Scientific importance, originality and topicality of the planned research project and, if applicable, its relevance for use-inspired basic research.

Article 14 Evaluation procedure and decision

¹ The selection procedure comprises two phases for both types of Award. In phase one, the best applications are selected for the next phase based on the submitted documents (project outline and annexes in accordance with SNSF guidelines). If necessary, proposals can be reviewed externally. The applicants who did not qualify for the second phase are informed about their rejection and the reasons for it in a ruling.

² The SNSF sends the proposals accepted for the second phase for external review based on the detailed research plan and the annexes mentioned in paragraph 1. In phase two, the applicants are invited for an interview during which they present their research project, describe their career plans and answer the questions put to them by the evaluators.

³ The applicants are informed about the decisions made in phase two, and the reasons for these decisions, in the form of a ruling.

6. Awards and administration of awards

Article 15 Awards and start of award period

¹ SNSF Eccellenza Awards are awarded, released and managed according to the rules issued by the SNSF, in particular the provisions of the Funding Regulations and its Implementation Regulations.

² The SNSF Eccellenza Awards may generally be started eleven months after the submission deadline at the earliest. The earliest possible start of funding is announced in the call.

³ Any changes intended to be made to the described research work and conditions, particularly with regard to the research institution, must be reported to the SNSF in advance. The SNSF may approve changes to an award if the request is well-founded.

⁴ If the position of an SNSF Eccellenza Grant recipient becomes permanent, or if a recipient of an SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship is appointed to a professorship, the SNSF must be informed accordingly. If the professorship is in Switzerland, the recipient of the SNSF Eccellenza Fellowship may generally continue to use the project funds. The remaining amount of the recipient's salary must be refunded to the SNSF, however.

⁵ Funds for clinicians are released once the SNSF has approved a timetable detailing the time reserved for research. A contact person at the SNSF keeps track of and supports the implementation of the timetable.

Article 16 Non-acceptance or premature termination

¹ If recipients forego SNSF Eccellenza Awards or have to terminate their research work prematurely, they must notify the SNSF without delay in writing, stating their reasons for doing so.

² In such cases, the SNSF terminates the grant. The remaining amount of the grant must be refunded to the SNSF.

Article 17 Reporting

¹ Grantees are obliged to send the SNSF periodic reports in accordance with the requirements defined by the SNSF.

² In particular, financial reports as well as output data must be submitted annually after the start of the project.

³ In addition, a scientific report must be submitted after the third and the fifth year. If the award lasts for less than five years, the two reporting deadlines will be adjusted accordingly.

⁴ The duty to provide output data will remain in place after submission of the final report and ends three years after expiry of the award.

⁵ Clinicians must account for the time reserved for research in the interim reports. A statement by the contact person (Article 15 paragraph 5) must be enclosed.

7. Entry into force and repeal of existing regulations/transitional provisions

Article 18 Entry into force

These Regulations enter into force on 1 November 2017.

Article 19 Repeal of existing regulations

¹ With the entry into force of these Regulations, the following regulations and provisions will be repealed:

- a. Subject to paragraph 3 below, the Regulations on SNSF professorships of 16 January 2008 and the corresponding guidelines for the submission of proposals via *mySNF*;
- b. Subject to paragraph 3 below, the Implementation regulations for SNSF professorships in clinical research of 20 May 2008; and
- c. the Implementation regulations for SNSF professorships in energy research of 13 August 2013.

² On the date these Regulations enter into force, any SNSF professorship grants that are ongoing or approved in accordance with the regulations repealed in paragraph 1 will remain valid along with the rights granted with the award, even if they are not in accordance with the new Regulations. The conditions stipulated in the award rulings will also remain valid. Based on the regulations repealed in paragraph 1, follow-up applications for a maximum of two years may be submitted in the final year of the grant. They must be entered in *mySNF* in accordance with SNSF guidelines.

³ On the date these Regulations enter into force, any ongoing evaluation processes for SNSF professorship grants will be completed based on the previous regulations. Paragraph 2 also applies to these awards.