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Research Integrity Regulations (RI Regulations)

of 19.03.2025

The Academic Board of the Research Council,

having regard to Article 12 of the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA)¹, Articles 15, 43 and 48 of the Regulations of the Swiss National Science Foundation on Research Grants (Funding Regulations)² and Article 6 paragraph 2 letter k of the Organisational Regulations of the Research Council,

issues the following Regulations:

Chapter 1 Scope of Application and Subject Matter

Article 1 Personal scope of application

¹ These Regulations apply in the event of a breach of good scientific practice (hereinafter 'scientific misconduct') in the context of the SNSF funding mandate³ by any of the following persons (hereinafter 'person concerned'):

- a. an applicant;
- b. a grantee;
- c. a project partner;
- d. a member of the project team.

² The research integrity requirements in these Regulations also apply to external experts and other members of SNSF committees and bodies when performing their mandates. The appointing body or committee shall assess the scientific misconduct and decide on measures and sanctions.

Article 2 Scientific misconduct

¹ Commits scientific misconduct anyone who, wilfully or negligently:

- a. drafts research results and insights gained by third parties under one's own name (plagiarism);
- b. provides false information or manipulates data;
- c. infringes the intellectual property rights of others or otherwise compromises their scientific activity;
- d. breaches the rules of research integrity and good scientific practice.

² Annex I contains a non-exhaustive list of types of scientific misconduct. Account shall also be taken of good scientific practice, in particular as set out in the Code of Scientific Integrity of the Swiss Academies

¹ SR 420.1

² Regulations of the Swiss National Science Foundation on Research Grants of 27 February 2015.

³ Cf. Art. 10 RIPA.

of Arts and Sciences⁴ and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity of the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities (ALLEA)⁵.

³ Scientific misconduct also includes incitement and tolerance of the person concerned, particularly in the case of knowledge that another person has provided false information or has falsified data, co-authoring a publication containing falsified data, concealing scientific misconduct or negligence, or misconduct in carrying out a duty of supervision.

Chapter 2 Principles and relation to other procedures

Article 3 Opening of proceedings

¹ Proceedings may only be opened in accordance with the following provisions if the scope as defined in Chapter 1 is affected.

² The SNSF's responsibilities with regard to proceedings for scientific misconduct are defined in Articles 8 et seq. of these Regulations.

Article 4 Principle of primary responsibility of the research institution

¹ The research institution where the scientific misconduct is alleged to have been committed by the person concerned is primarily responsible for conducting proceedings for scientific misconduct.

² If an institution in terms of paragraph 1 is responsible for initiating proceedings or is already handling proceedings for scientific misconduct, the SNSF may:

- a. postpone the opening of proceedings for scientific misconduct pending the outcome of the proceedings conducted by the institution concerned;
- b. suspend ongoing proceedings for scientific misconduct pending the outcome of the proceedings conducted by the institution concerned;
- c. open or continue its own proceedings, in particular in the event that the SNSF, the person concerned or a third party has an overriding interest in doing so, or in the event of an unjustified refusal or delay on the part of the institution concerned to initiate, conduct or conclude proceedings for scientific misconduct.

³ The SNSF is not bound by the outcome of the proceedings conducted by the institution concerned in accordance with paragraph 1. After taking note of the outcome of the institution's proceedings, the SNSF may:

- a. decide not to initiate its own proceedings;
- b. decide not to continue its own proceedings. The SNSF shall then close its own proceedings and inform the person concerned if necessary;
- c. open or continue its own proceedings, in particular if the SNSF takes the view that the misconduct has not been sufficiently sanctioned.

Article 5 Suspension of the application procedure or of an SNSF grant

¹ If proceedings initiated by the SNSF or a third party against the person concerned under Article 1 letters a-d are still pending, or if any corresponding sanctions have been imposed or are currently in

⁴ Swiss Academies of Science (2021) : Code of Scientific Integrity.

⁵ ALLEA (2023) The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity - Revised Edition 2023. Berlin.

effect because of suspected scientific misconduct, the SNSF may decide to suspend the application procedure or the grant (see Article 15 paragraph 5 Funding Regulations).

² The SNSF may continue to evaluate an application despite suspicions of scientific misconduct if there is a risk that one-time, unrepeatable evaluation phases would otherwise be missed or if suspension would be disproportionate in the given circumstances, in particular if the suspicion proves to be manifestly unfounded.

³ Suspension may last until the proceedings have been concluded and/or sanctions have been lifted.

Article 6 Administrative sanctions related to grants

¹ The SNSF may at any time and independently of the proceedings for scientific misconduct conduct sanction proceedings for misuse of grants and breaches of the Funding Regulations or other provisions of the SNSF and impose sanctions.

² Procedures and sanctions must be coordinated.

Chapter 3 Responsibilities and procedure

Article 7 Principles

¹ The SNSF may open proceedings for scientific misconduct *ex officio* or on the basis of a complaint. Proceedings comprise the following phases:

- a. preliminary examination (see Art. 10);
- b. formal investigation (see Art. 11);
- c. closure of the formal investigation (see Art. 12).

² Proceedings are confidential, subject to any legal provisions⁶ or provisions of these Regulations to the contrary.

³ Proceedings are written, unless the SNSF decides otherwise.

⁴ The presumption of innocence applies.

⁵ The person concerned may be assisted by a legal representative and has the right to be heard. They may, in particular, consult the file, present evidence and give their opinion on the case and the proceedings. The right to be heard may be restricted where there are overriding public or private interests, in particular in order to preserve confidentiality in terms of Article 8 paragraph 2.

⁶ The person concerned shall be informed of the composition of the Commission according to Article 9 paragraph 1 letter b.

Article 8 Opening of proceedings

¹ Proceedings may be opened *ex officio*, in particular when the examination of applications for plagiarism reveals suspicions of scientific misconduct.

⁶ Cf. in particular art. 12 para. 2 RIPA.

² Any person may report scientific misconduct to the SNSF (hereinafter ‘whistleblowers’). Whistleblowers have the right to anonymity, subject to paragraph 4.

³ The whistleblower is not a party to the proceedings and has no right to information about its outcome. The SNSF may provide information to the whistleblower within the limits of these Regulations, in particular concerning the primary responsibility of a research institution in terms of Article 4.

⁴ In the case of a manifestly unjustified report or bad faith on the part of the whistleblower, the SNSF may inform the person concerned of the report and of the identity of the whistleblower. A manifestly unjustified complaint or a complaint made in bad faith may itself constitute scientific misconduct.

Article 9 Committees

¹ The following committees have the following responsibilities in relation to research integrity:

- a. The Research Ethics & Integrity Policy Group (REI), established by the Policy Committee, determines the SNSF's practices and standards with regard to research integrity and may submit to the Academic Board of the Research Council proposals for amendments to these Regulations.
- b. The ad hoc Commission on Research Integrity (hereinafter ‘the Commission’) examines suspicions of scientific misconduct as part of the formal investigation procedure and, if appropriate, submits a sanction request to the Academic Board of the Research Council (see Art. 11 et seq.).
- c. The Research Integrity Investigation Group of the SNSF Administrative Offices (hereinafter ‘the Investigation Group’) deals with matters of scientific integrity and has in particular the following tasks:
 - i. conducting the preliminary examination in accordance with Article 10 below;
 - ii. carrying out checks for plagiarism in applications on a regular and random basis (samples) or in response to complaints from third parties;
 - iii. developing and completing the current standards and procedures for detecting plagiarism together with the REI Policy Group.

² The Commission is made up of the following four members:

- a. the external expert from the REI Policy Group, who shall act as chair and conduct the formal investigation procedure;
- b. a delegate from the REI Policy Group whose profile, particularly from a disciplinary point of view, is the most appropriate for the case in question;
- c. a scientific officer from the Investigation Group, who supports the concerned Programme Committee or whose profile, particularly from a disciplinary point of view, is the most appropriate for the case in question;
- d. the delegate of the Legal Department to the Investigation Group or their deputy.

³ The Investigation Group is made up of between 6 and 15 members and in principle comprises at least:

- a. one scientific officer from the Administrative Offices, who supports one of the five Programme Committees, ensuring adequate disciplinary representation; from among which the Executive Management shall appoint a chair;
- b. the delegate of the Legal Department or their deputy.

Article 10 Preliminary examination

¹ In the event of suspicions of scientific misconduct, the Investigation Group shall be informed and shall conduct a preliminary examination in its reduced composition under the direction of the Legal Department to determine whether:

- a. the conditions set out in Chapter 2 of these Regulations are met, and,
- b. suspicions suggest that scientific misconduct is likely to have been committed.

² The Investigation Group shall gather the relevant evidence. In particular, it may:

- a. request or communicate information from and to institutions, including the institution concerned in terms of Article 4, or individuals, in Switzerland or abroad, subject to Article 7 paragraph 2 and Article 8 paragraph 2;
- b. consult internal or external experts;
- c. request additional information from the whistleblower;
- d. question the person concerned and invite them to comment on the suspicion of scientific misconduct.

³ After the relevant evidence has been gathered, the Investigation Group shall close the preliminary examination and either:

- a. abandon the proceedings if either or both of the conditions set out in paragraph 1 are not met;
- b. issue a warning (not a formal sanction) to the person concerned if the scientific misconduct is not regarded as particularly serious and constitutes a minor case (see in particular Sec.2 para. 4 and Sec.3 para. 2 of Annex I); or
- c. inform the REI Policy Group, which shall convene the Commission with a view to opening a formal investigation if the scientific misconduct is not a minor case and may require the imposition of a formal sanction.

⁴ As part of the preliminary examination, the Investigation Group shall act with a reduced composition of three members, namely its chair, one scientific officer from the field of the programme committee concerned or whose profile is the most appropriate for the case concerned, and the delegate from the Legal Department or their deputy. Other members may be consulted.

Article 11 Formal investigation

¹ On completion of the preliminary examination in accordance with Article 10 paragraph 3 letter c, the REI Policy Group shall convene the Commission.

² When the Commission has been convened, its Chair shall consider whether the conditions have been met and submit a recommendation to the Commission as to whether or not to open a formal investigation, including the course of action in cases covered by Article 4 paragraph 2 letter c or paragraph 3 letter c.

³ If the Commission refuses to open a formal investigation, the Chair may, in particular, refer the case to the Investigation Group for processing or abandon proceedings in accordance with Article 12.

⁴ If the Commission approves the opening of a formal investigation, the proceedings shall be conducted by the Chair with the support of the Legal Department. The Chair has the following powers in particular:

- a. to convene or consult the Commission in writing and to conduct the meetings;

- b. to issue an interim decision pursuant to Article 4 or 5 after consultation of the Commission;
- c. to gather further relevant evidence in terms of Article 10 paragraph 2;
- d. to inform in confidence the chair of the programme committee concerned and the relevant person of the Administrative Offices that a formal investigation has been opened;
- e. to file a complaint with a view to initiating criminal or administrative proceedings, after consultation with the Legal Department and the Commission.

⁵ If no consensus can be reached, the Commission takes its decisions by a simple majority and, in the event of a tie, the Chair has the casting vote.

⁶ Prior to the closure of the formal investigation, the SNSF shall inform the person concerned of the suspicions of scientific misconduct and formally invite them to comment thereon, insofar as this right has not already been granted.

Article 12 Closure of the formal investigation

¹ On completion of the formal investigation, the chair will draw up and submit to the Commission a report containing:

- a. the relevant procedural and material facts;
- b. a finding as to whether or not there has been scientific misconduct; and either:
- c. if no finding is made of scientific misconduct in terms of Article 2, a recommendation that the proceedings be abandoned. If the person concerned so requests, notice of the abandonment of the proceedings is published in an appropriate manner; or
- d. if a finding is made of scientific misconduct in terms of Article 2, a recommendation to submit a sanction request to the Academic Board of the Research Council. The recommendation shall state, in particular, the nature and extent of the proposed sanction, whether the institution employing the person concerned should be informed and/or whether the decision should be made public.

² In the event of a decision in terms of paragraph 1 letter d, the chair shall send the report on the formal investigation and the Commission's request for a sanction to the Academic Board of the Research Council for its decision.

Article 13 Decision of the Academic Board of the Research Council

¹ The Academic Board of the Research Council shall decide on the sanction and the other legal consequences of the proceedings, on the basis of the formal investigation report.

² The Academic Board of the Research Council is bound by the findings with regard to the decisive procedural and material facts and the presence of scientific misconduct. It is not bound by the Commission's recommendation on the sanction.

³ The sanctions imposed must be proportionate and depend in particular on the seriousness of the misconduct and the degree of fault, as well as, where applicable, the extent of the damage.

⁴ The Academic Board of the Research Council may impose the following sanctions, individually or cumulatively (see Art. 43 Funding Regulations):

- a. written reprimand;

- b. written warning;
- c. reduction, suspension or repayment of grants;
- d. exclusion from any further applications for a maximum period of up to 5 years.

⁵ The Academic Board of the Research Council may refer the case back to the Commission for further investigation of the relevant facts.

⁶ The SNSF shall give notice of the sanction imposed by the Academic Board of the Research Council in the form of a ruling.

Article 14 Appeal

Rulings issued in accordance with these Regulations are appealable before the Federal Administrative Court within 30 days of the date of notification.

Chapter 4 Report and Secretariat

Article 15 Report

¹ The Investigation Group shall submit a written and anonymised annual report to the REI Policy Group. In particular, the report shall cover:

- a. the activities relating to all scientific misconduct proceedings;
- b. the main challenges and recommendations for developing the practices and standards concerning research integrity.

² The chair of the Investigation Group shall take part, when possible, in the meeting of the REI Policy Group at which the Investigation Group's annual report is discussed.

Article 16 Secretariat

The Commission shall be supported by an administrative secretariat.

Chapter 5 Final Provisions

Article 17 Repeal of previous regulations

These Regulations replace the Research Council's Research Integrity Regulations (RI Regulations) of 12 July 2016 and the Research Council's Regulations on the Commission on Research Integrity of 12 July 2016.

Article 18 Entry into Force

These Regulations come into force on 1 April 2025.

Article 19 Transitional provisions

¹ Proceedings pending on 31 March 2025 are governed by the Research Council's former Research Integrity Regulations (RI Regulations) of 12 July 2016 until they are concluded. The following new powers apply:

- a. Academic Board of the Research Council instead of Presiding Board of the Research Council;
- b. Commission instead of Commission for Scientific Integrity;
- c. Investigation Group instead of Plagiarism Control Group.

Annex I

1. Forms of scientific misconduct⁷

- a. Assertion of false facts, in particular: assertion of non-existent, erroneous or misleading data or results, false or embellished representations of research results, misquotation of existing or alleged works of others;
- b. falsification of research materials, tools or procedures, data or results, in particular: deliberate omission of data sources, arbitrary weighting of data;
- c. recording in one's own name the results and conclusions of the work of others (plagiarism), see also Section 2 below;
- d. misconduct relating to the naming and sequencing of authors, in particular: claiming authorship of a publication without having made a significant contribution to the work, failing to mention project collaborators who have made significant contributions, deliberately naming a person as a co-author when that person has not made a significant contribution to the project;
- e. misconduct relating to publication lists, see also Section 3 below;
- f. improper handling of data and research materials, in particular: copying data for purposes not related to the project without the permission of the person responsible, disposing of data and materials before the expiry of a mandatory retention period;
- g. misconduct in relation to collaborative projects, in particular: neglecting duties of supervision, damaging or obstructing the scientific work of others, within or outside one's own research group or not, breach of duties of confidentiality;
- h. misconduct with regard to expert reports and peer reviews;
- i. misconduct with regard to procedures concerning research integrity;
- j. other forms of misconduct, in particular where the person concerned must guarantee transparency, traceability and integrity with regard to design, methodology and analysis, and with regard to development, design, implementation, control or evaluation, and reporting or communication.

2. Plagiarism

¹ It is considered plagiarism to use in one's own name, as the result of one's own research, texts or parts of texts, graphic representations, knowledge or other works, originating from others or from one's own previous works, without reference to their source. Plagiarism can take the following forms (non-exhaustive list):

- a. submitting the work of others under one's own name;
- b. translating foreign-language texts without indicating the source;
- c. copying passages from the work of others without citing the source. This includes downloading and using passages from the internet or from previous applications without citing the source;
- d. copying passages from the work(s) of others with minor textual adjustments or changes, but without citing the source;
- e. copying passages from the work(s) of others without directly citing the source in the context of the copied passage(s), but only in particular and the end of the work;
- f. self-plagiarism.

⁷ This list is based on the publication by the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences (2021): Code of scientific integrity.

² Plagiarism is deemed to have occurred regardless of whether it was wilful or due to negligence.

³ Plagiarism is deemed to have occurred regardless of whether the copied research results and findings are protected by copyright.

⁴ A minor case may be deemed to have occurred if:

- a. only a few source citations are missing;
- b. only a small amount of text is uncited compared to the entire text; or
- c. the content of the uncited text is of a general nature or concerns the state of research.

3. False information relating to publications

¹ In particular, the information relating to a publication is false if it:

- a. is incorrect with regard to the publication status of one's own work (e.g. 'publication in press' when the manuscript has not yet been accepted);
- b. contains a list of authors in a different order from that in the publication,
- c. does not mention authors who appear in the publication,
- d. does not mention the equivalent work of other authors, even though they are mentioned in the publication,
- e. mentions publications of which the applicant is neither the author nor co-author.

² A minor case may be deemed to have occurred if only a few insignificant items of information concerning the publications are false.