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Regulations on the awarding of AGORA grants

of 20 June 2017

The National Research Council

based on Articles 7 and 48 of the Regulations of the Swiss National Science Foundation on research grants of 27 February 2015¹ (hereinafter "Funding Regulations"),

hereby issues the following Regulations:

1. General provisions

Article 1 Objectives and principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (hereinafter "the SNSF") awards grants to researchers for public science communication projects (hereinafter "AGORA grants").

² By awarding AGORA grants, the SNSF aims to promote knowledge on the current state of scientific research and to foster dialogue between scientists and society.

³ Funding is provided for communication projects devised and implemented by the researchers themselves, possibly in collaboration with communication or knowledge transfer experts, or artists. Responsibility for communicating directly with the public lies primarily with the researchers themselves.

⁴ An AGORA grant may be awarded for research topics from all areas of science. The SNSF is entitled, however, to limit the thematic range in its calls for proposals.

⁵ The projects may focus on the results, the challenges or the functioning of research. They may communicate basic scientific knowledge, provided that it concerns current research.

⁶ AGORA projects are regarded as research output pursuant to the principles of DORA² and accepted by the SNSF as part of an applicant's track record.

¹ http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_reglement_16_e.pdf

² <http://www.ascb.org/files/SFDeclarationFINAL.pdf>

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 AGORA projects

¹ The AGORA project must cumulatively meet the following requirements: the project

- a. makes the target group familiar with the current scientific research conducted by the applicants;
- b. is aimed at target groups that are freely defined, but do not consist of the professional addressees within the scope of academic teaching and research or of members of the applicant's research institution. The primary target groups are located in Switzerland; secondary target groups may be located abroad;
- c. is suitable for achieving a considerable impact in terms of raising the target group's awareness of scientific topics;
- d. has links to research that is or was awarded funding by the SNSF or another qualified institution under a competitive procedure and/or is the subject of a recognised (peer-reviewed) scientific publication.

²The following are not eligible: projects

- a. conducted within the scope of implementation and technology transfer partnerships;
- b. involving marketing campaigns or institutional communication measures and media relations;
- c. whose purpose is research into science communication;
- d. with links to ongoing National Research Programmes (NRPs) or National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCRs).

Article 4 Amount and duration of the grant

¹ Amounts between CHF 5,000 and CHF 200,000 are awarded under the AGORA grant for a maximum of three years.

²The SNSF may approve the extension of a grant in response to a justified request, in particular if the extension facilitates the financing of additional communication events or channels closely linked to the approved project.⁴

2. Personal and formal requirements

Article 5 Applicants, project partners, co-financing and employees

¹ Only researchers whose project focuses on their own research are eligible to submit an application for an AGORA grant.

² Applicants must meet the requirements set out in Article 10 of the Funding Regulations. Their work-time percentage may be lower than 50%, but not lower than 20%.

³ http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/snf-ausfuhrungsreglement_beitragsreglement_e.pdf

⁴ Inserted pursuant to the Research Council's decision of 20 August 2019, in force with immediate effect.

³ If the intention is to conduct the AGORA project in collaboration with project partners and/or with the aid of co-financing, the said partners must be designated and the nature and scope of their contributions to the project outlined in the application.

⁴ Project partners in AGORA projects are persons who

- a. are experts in the areas of communication, media, scientific mediation, education or art and make a conceptual contribution to the project, or persons otherwise demonstrably qualified to engage in knowledge transfer or public dialogue;
- b. support the content-related, operational or technical execution or implementation of the project.

⁵ The projects may be financially supported by third parties (financing partners). The source of any co-financing must be documented in the application.

⁶ The contributions of the project and financing partners and the nature and purpose of their respective institutions must be compatible with the goals and principles of the SNSF, and the project must not directly serve any commercial purposes. The SNSF makes the final decision on eligibility after verifying that the project or financing partner meets the participation requirements. The project and financing partners may make reference to their contribution as a "partnership", but not as an SNSF funding grant that they themselves have acquired.

⁷ Persons employed in the project may also contribute to it pursuant to paragraph 4. The engagement of employees is governed by the general provisions laid down by the SNSF, in particular Clause 7 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

Article 6 Formal requirements

¹ Applications for AGORA grants must be submitted to the SNSF electronically in line with the relevant rules and must contain all of the required documents.

² Subject to paragraph 3, the SNSF will generally publish a call for AGORA projects once a year on its website.

³ As of 2018, applications for grants of up to CHF 50,000 may be submitted all year round, regardless of the submission deadline pursuant to paragraph 2 (rolling call). A rejected rolling-call proposal may be resubmitted only once. The resubmitted proposal will only be considered if it is a significantly changed version of the rejected proposal.⁵

3. Applications and eligible costs

Article 7 Applications

¹ Applications for AGORA grants must contain all the necessary data and documents and must be submitted in accordance with the requirements issued by the SNSF and the conditions set out in the call.

² The applications must be written in English.

³ In response to a written, well-founded request, the SNSF may accept submissions in German, French or Italian should this prove necessary in view of the nature of the project.

⁵ Inserted pursuant to the Research Council's decision of 13 February 2018, in force with immediate effect.

Article 8 Eligible costs

¹ The following costs are covered by AGORA grants:

- a. costs incurred by project partners;
- b. costs of employees whose positions are approved by the SNSF;
- c. subcontracting costs;
- d. expenses that are directly linked to the project's execution, such as production costs and the cost of materials;
- e. costs for the publication and communication of the product resulting from the project in Switzerland and abroad;

² The applicant must provide the SNSF with a detailed breakdown of the planned scope of contributions by the persons involved for which salaries or fees are to be paid.

³ The following costs may be covered:

- a. fees based on the usual rates for project partners. The SNSF may reduce salary and fee rates that exceed the usual remuneration. This is applicable, in particular, to rates that exceed the average rate of comparable salaries and fees for Switzerland;
- b. for employees in positions approved by the SNSF, salaries according to the rates defined by the SNSF (salary scales).

Regardless of Clause 2.10 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations, project partners collaborating on AGORA projects may

- a. include the salaries of employees who work for the AGORA project in their fee invoice and
- b. generate costs corresponding to more than 20% of the grant.

⁵ Overhead costs in relation to research projects that are the subject of communication projects may not be charged to the grant.

4. Assessment criteria and procedure

Article 9 Assessment criteria

¹ The submitted applications are assessed by the SNSF, unless they do not meet the personal or formal requirements or are manifestly inadequate in terms of quality.

² The evaluation will examine the following criteria:

- a. expertise of the project team (applicants, project partners and employees);
- b. quality of the content to be communicated;
- c. suitability of the methods or the communication design in view of the defined target group;
- d. feasibility of the project; and
- e. expected impact in terms of quality and quantity.

Article 10 Evaluation procedure and decision

¹ During the evaluation procedure, the SNSF may enlist the help of international experts in communication or in related fields relevant to the projects to be evaluated, or of researchers with experience in science communication.

² If the requested grant exceeds CHF 50,000, the SNSF generally makes a decision based on two expert reviews. The final decision on applications pursuant to Article 6 paragraph 3 (rolling call) is delegated to the Commission for Communication Projects (AGORA Commission).⁶

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

⁴ Grantees must inform the persons responsible for communication at their institution about the approved AGORA project before the funds are released.

5. Optimus Agora prize

Article 11 Optimus Agora prize

¹ Once a year, the SNSF may award the Optimus Agora prize to the grantee with the best AGORA project. The AGORA Commission selects the best project. It must be excellent in quality and/or particularly suited to achieving the goals set for AGORA.

² The Optimus Agora prize enables its recipients to consolidate and extend their communication skills. It finances the corresponding activities on behalf of the prizewinner.

³ It is not possible to apply for the Optimus Agora prize and no one is entitled to receive it. The SNSF is not obliged to award the prize annually.

6. Grants and grant administration

Article 12 Grants

AGORA grants are awarded, transferred and managed according to the rules issued by the SNSF, in particular the provisions of the Funding Regulations and its Implementation Regulations.

Article 13 Information and reporting

¹ Grantees are obliged to let the SNSF know in advance when and where they will be presenting or explaining their AGORA project to the public and must also provide details of the content of their presentations.

² Financial reports must be submitted annually after the start of the project.

7. Final provisions

Article 14 Repeal of existing regulations, and entry into force

These Regulations enter into force on 1 July 2017. They replace the Regulations on the awarding of AGORA grants of 13 October 2010.

⁶ Inserted pursuant to the Research Council's decision of 13 February 2018, in force with immediate effect.