"Digital Lives" call for proposals

1.   Subject and purpose of the call for proposals

1.1   Basic subject/focus

Digital technologies are transforming more and more areas of our private and professional lives at an ever faster pace. Fuelled by analyses and debates in the press and media (about uberisation, robotisation, social media, etc.), public opinion shows growing awareness of the depth and speed of these transformations. Research in the humanities and social sciences has much to contribute to understanding these transformations. Indeed, these disciplines are able to shed light on the economic and political mechanisms that shape these digitalisation processes. Thereby, they are able to capture the psychological, social, cultural and political consequences of what is sometimes referred to as the "fourth industrial revolution". Moreover, the analyses that they produce enable informed political choices to be made on policies regulating these transformations. The humanities and social sciences not only carry out research into how digitalisation is dealt with in our society ("downstream"), they also contribute to its future development ("upstream"). After all, digital technologies can only be economically productive if they are designed in a way that takes into account user-related aspects (values, habits, ergonomics, etc.) and the political context in which the innovations are being developed. Here again, this kind of knowledge is primarily produced in the humanities and social sciences.

1.2   Issues addressed

Since there are so many possible issues connected with digitalisation, this call for proposals will prioritise five areas:

1.   How is digitalisation transforming politics?
Digital technologies, such as electronic voting or social media, increasingly mediate the way public opinion is shaped, how we relate to elected representatives and how political fora are constituted. These processes are transforming, redefining, and even eroding democratic processes and citizenship. Therefore, we call for projects that analyse how digitalisation is transforming politics, both now and in the future.

2.   How is digitalisation transforming social ties?
Today, online social ties are merging with and sometimes replacing offline social ties. Types of interaction, people's social networks and the role of geographical distance are all being reconfigured by digitalisation. Social bonds are thus taking new forms which need to be analysed using new scales, new methods and new sources of data.

3. How is digitalisation transforming the economy?

Digital technologies are playing an increasingly important role in the economy. From changes affecting industry (robotisation, 3D printing, etc.) to changes affecting services (tourist accommodation, taxis, fintechs, etc.), digitalisation is radically altering economic models, jobs and potentially also employment regulations. It is necessary to analyse these transformations, both present and future, in the world of economics and work.

4. How is digitalisation transforming our subjective experience?

The need for connection and sharing and, in consequence, self-exposure, is transforming our subjective experience. Our capacities for attention, self-reflection and empathy thus seem to be changing as digital technologies play an increasingly larger role in our daily lives. It is necessary to document and understand this new subjective experience and its possible consequences.

5. How is digitalisation transforming the humanities and social sciences?

Digitalisation is transforming the data sources, methods, relations between the different generations of researchers, teaching methods and outlook of the humanities and social sciences. In particular, it facilitates new research in the humanities, as well as research through large-scale networks, and new ways of involving different audiences in producing and communicating research. It is necessary to analyse how digitalisation is transforming the humanities and social sciences, both now and in the future.

1.3 Types of research supported

To support the role of the humanities and social sciences in understanding and managing the digital transformation, the present call for proposals aims to stimulate innovation and develop a network of researchers (in Switzerland and internationally) in this field of research. Furthermore, the call for proposals is aligned with the National Research Programms on "digital change in the economy and society". The launch of the latter is being assessed until the end of 2018 and is planned for the middle of the year 2019 (cf. further information: SERI). At the same time, researchers may benefit from the call Digital Lives in order to carry out preparatory research for later submissions in other funding schemes (e.g., project funding, Sinergia).

The types of research supported are:

- exploratory studies;
- the development of new research methods related to digitalisation;
- the exploitation of new sources of data.

1.4 Duration, scope, start of project and grant administration

The maximum duration of the projects is **18 months**. The funds will be transferred in annual instalments.

The project funding ranges from a minimum of **CHF 50,000** to a maximum of **CHF 250,000**.

The project must begin between **1 September 2018** and **1 December 2018** at the latest.

The SNSF does not consider funding proposals that fail to meet the requirements set out in section 1.4.

The administration of the grants is subject to the provisions of the Funding Regulations of the SNSF and the General Implementation Regulations.

2. Conditions of participation and requirements for submitting an application

Those eligible to participate are researchers whose current research is in the field of the humanities and social sciences.

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%.

Applicants with a doctorate must have obtained the latter before the submission date of the application. Applicants without a doctorate must generally have completed three years of research work as their main source of income since obtaining their higher education degree. Such research work will be regarded as equivalent to a doctorate.

Applicants may submit **one application only** in relation to this call for proposals.

The restrictions on the number of ongoing projects and project funding applications do **not** apply to the present call for proposals.

If you have any questions, please **contact the SNSF Administrative Offices** (see contact information below).

3. Submission of applications

Applications must be submitted via the mySNF web platform by **1 May 2018, 17:00**. The submission portal on mySNF will be open from **1 March 2018** (Digital Lives funding scheme). It is necessary to register as a user. User accounts set up previously are still valid and allow access to all SNSF funding instruments. It is advisable to request new user accounts as soon as possible; they must be requested via the mySNF portal no later than five working days before the submission deadline.

Applications must contain the following documents:

- The administrative information listed in mySNF.
- CV and list of research outputs as specified in the [SNSF Guidelines](#)
- Research plan (**max. 10 pages**):

  The applicants must describe the proposed project with reference to the issues addressed in the call for proposals. They must explain why research is needed and describe the relevance and innovative aspects of the project. The applicants must state the innovation potential and prospects for subsequent research that are made possible through the requested funding. **Innovation potential** and subsequent **research prospects** are two of the central criteria for the comparative evaluation.

  The research plan consists of a **maximum of 10 pages and 40,000 characters** (including spaces); footnotes, illustrations, formulae and tables, but not the summary and the bibliography, are included in these limits. The minimum font size is 10pt and line spacing must

be set to at least 1.5 lines. The research plan does not as a rule contain any annexes. In psychology, economics and political sciences, applications have to be submitted in English. In all other research areas, applications can be submitted in one of the official Swiss languages. Special rules appply for political sciences (cf. section 1.16 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations).

The research plan must be structured as follows:

1 Summary of the research plan (max. 1 page)

2 Research plan

2.1 Relevance with regard to the issues addressed in the call

2.2 State of research and need for research

2.4 Detailed research plan (including timetable and objectives)

2.3 Innovation potential and subsequent research prospects

3 Bibliography

4.   Procedure and assessment criteria

4.1   Procedure

The SNSF appoints a panel consisting of members of the Research Council as well as national and international experts to conduct the evaluation. The evaluation panel awards a grade (out of a six-point grading system) on the basis of the evaluation criteria and a comparison of all the applications submitted. At the recommendation of the evaluation panel, the Humanities and Social Sciences division of the National Research Council decides on the funding (approval or rejection). The decisions are then endorsed by the Presiding Board of the National Research Council. The funding decisions are communicated to applicants in the form of a ruling **in August 2018** at the latest.

4.2   Non-consideration

The SNSF evaluates applications that are in line with the issues addressed and with the types of research supported. The projects must treat one or several of the five areas addressed and correspond to the types of research supported (cf. section 1.2 and 1.3). The SNSF does not consider funding proposals that fail to meet these requirements.

4.3   Assessment criteria

For the academic assessment, the criteria specified in Art. 24 para. 2 of the Funding Regulations apply:

a. **scientific quality** of the proposed research project: scientific relevance, topicality and originality, suitability of methods, feasibility;

b. **scientific qualifications of the researchers**: scientific track record and ability to carry out the research project;

c. in the case of proposals for use-inspired research, the project's **broader impact outside science** is considered in the evaluation.

In addition, the following specific and important criterion applies in the context of this call:

d. **innovation potential.** Funding priority is given to innovative projects with the prospect of subsequent research and further research approaches.

5. Eligible costs

Digital Lives applications may be used to cover the following costs:

a. the salaries of scientific and technical staff in research projects within the scope of the salary ranges and rates prescribed by the SNSF;
b. material costs that are directly related to the research work – in particular: material of enduring value, expendable items, field expenses, travel costs or third-party charges;
c. direct costs incurred through the use of research infrastructure linked to the research work;
d. costs for the organisation of conferences and workshops in connection with the funded research;
e. costs for national and international cooperation and networking activities carried out in connection with the funded research.

No other costs are eligible.

Doctoral positions may only be financed if follow-up funding is shown to be available.

The budget submitted must comply with the requirements and conditions specified for the individual cost categories. In any event, the costs must be in accordance with the principle of proportionality and economic efficiency. Grants for completing the project as set out in article 36 of the Funding Regulations of the SNSF are excluded.

The grants are eligible for overhead payments.

6. Further provisions

Unless otherwise stated in the call for proposals, the provisions of the SNSF on research funding apply, particularly the Funding Regulations of the SNSF and their Implementation Regulations.

7. Contact

Swiss National Science Foundation
Humanities and Social Sciences division
Wildhainweg 3
P.O. Box 8232
CH-3001 Bern
Phone: +41 31 308 22 22
digitallives@snf.ch | www.snf.ch

8. Entry into force and publication

This call for proposals was approved by the Presiding Board of the National Research Council on 7 November 2017 and entered into force immediately. It is published on the SNSF website (www.snsf.ch).