

Funding Regulations

Regulations of the Swiss National Science Foundation on research grants

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Funding Regulations

Regulations of the Swiss National Science Foundation on research grants

of 27.2.2015

approved by the Federal Council on 27.5.2015

The Executive Committee of the Foundation Council of the Swiss National Science Foundation

based on Article 9 paragraph 3 of the Research and Innovation Promotion Act of 14 December 2012¹ (RIPA)

and on Article 16 paragraph 2 letter j of the Statutes of the Swiss National Science Foundation of 30 March 2007²,

in response to a request made by the National Research Council on 21 January 2015

issues the following Regulations:

Chapter 1 Types of funding and funding schemes

Article 1 Principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (hereinafter "the SNSF") awards funding grants for scientific research, particularly basic research.

² The SNSF is under no obligation to award a grant to any person or entity.

Article 2 Funding schemes

The SNSF distinguishes between the following funding categories:

- a. project funding;
- b. career funding;
- c. funding in the context of programmes;
- d. infrastructure funding;
- e. funding of science communication

Article 3 Project funding

¹ Under the umbrella of project funding, the SNSF awards grants to qualified researchers that enable them to conduct a research project independently and on their own responsibility.

² In so doing, it finances in particular the costs and measures involved in the realisation of the research project.

¹ SR 420.1

² See www.snsf.ch > The SNSF > Profile > Statutes & legal framework

Article 4 Career funding

¹ Under the umbrella of career funding, the SNSF awards grants to promote the research careers of scientists.

² In so doing, it pays in particular for the scientist's salary or makes a contribution towards their living costs.

³ The grants are aimed at promoting young scientists and academics.

Article 5 Funding in the context of programmes

¹ The SNSF awards grants for research projects carried out within the context of programmes that meet specific requirements in terms of topics, concept and organisation.

² Such programmes comprise, in particular:

- a. the SNSF's own programmes;
- b. the programmes and integrated research projects in which the SNSF decides to participate at national and international level;
- c. the national programmes opted for and commissioned by the Federal Council, in particular the National Research Programmes and the National Centres of Competence in Research;
- d. the international programmes in which Switzerland participates as opted for and commissioned by the Federal Council.

Article 6 Infrastructure funding

¹ The SNSF awards infrastructure grants that directly support specific research goals. It awards these grants in particular as initial financing.

² It does not award grants for infrastructures aimed at integrating different research areas.

Article 7 Funding of science communication

¹ The SNSF awards grants to promote science communication. The aim is to foster communication between researchers and between science and society.

² Grants for science communication include, in particular, grants for public science communication projects as well as scientific conferences and publications.

Article 8 Funding schemes for the individual funding categories and principles

¹ The National Research Council (Research Council) defines the funding schemes for the individual funding categories in specific regulations or in the calls for proposals.

² In these documents it sets out the requirements for the awarding of grants as well as the specifics of the application procedure to the extent that these Regulations do not contain any provisions on these issues.

³ In so doing, it observes the following principles:

- a. Grants are awarded for a limited period.
- b. Should the grantees envisage an extension of the funding period, such extensions are granted by the Research Council on request or by invitation in cases of outstanding scientific achievement. They are only awarded conditional on the grant to be extended having received a

positive evaluation, they may be obtained through a simplified application procedure and the Research Council is not obliged to forward the application for external reviewing.

- c. Extensions may be granted twice at the most.
- d. Maximum amounts per application may be defined in the context of the individual funding schemes.
- e. No grants are awarded for research projects that are already being funded by the SNSF or third parties (Article 18).

Article 9 International cooperation

¹ Grants for international cooperation are aimed at promoting international research collaborations and the global integration of research conducted in Switzerland.

² The SNSF funds international cooperation:

- a. in the context of the individual funding categories;
- b. through international activities under the auspices of multilateral organisations;
- c. through specific programmes launched by the SNSF alone or in collaboration with partner organisations.

³ The SNSF may choose to contractually define funding arrangements involving parties from outside Switzerland. The provisions of these Regulations apply *mutatis mutandis*.

Chapter 2 Requirements for applicants and for submitting an application

Article 10 Requirements for applicants

¹ Natural persons carrying out scientific research in Switzerland or with close links to Switzerland are eligible to submit an application.

² Scientific research is deemed to be conducted in Switzerland or to be closely linked to Switzerland if the applicant is employed as a researcher at a higher education institution or at a research institution outside the higher education sector that is domiciled in Switzerland and whose basic financing is predominantly Swiss in accordance with Swiss law, or if the applicant has been given an assurance of such employment in writing. The relevant place of research may be located outside Switzerland.

³ The research activities, along with any scientific teaching activities, must constitute the equivalent of at least 50% FTE. Researchers devoting less than 50% of their time to scientific activities are eligible to submit an application if their scientific research and teaching activities are usually carried out as part of another professional activity. The details are set out in the Implementation Regulations issued by the Research Council.

⁴ Self-employed researchers must meet, *mutatis mutandis*, all the requirements set out under paragraphs 1-3 and must be able to show that they are working as independent researchers in Switzerland.

⁵ The Research Council may stipulate further requirements for individual funding schemes in the Implementation Regulations. In particular, it may:

- a. limit eligibility to specific target groups;
- b. make eligibility conditional on additional support from third parties;

- c. grant eligibility to legal persons;
- d. make eligibility conditional on a minimum degree of employment at a research institution;
- e. grant eligibility as an exception, even though no assurance of continued employment over the entire duration of the research project is given, particularly in the case of tenure track or other comparable positions.

⁶ Applicants must be able to show that they have the scientific qualifications and background required for the relevant funding scheme and must provide proof that they are making a substantial contribution to the proposed research project.

Article 11 Applicants, project partners, employees

¹ The applicants shall bear the main responsibility for the proposed research project.

² Project partners are researchers who make a partial contribution to the research project without being responsible for the project. They must be designated as such in the application. They may not refer to the support received from the SNSF as a grant they have themselves acquired.

³ Employees whose salaries are fully or partially paid by the SNSF through the grant may submit applications for the period after the end of their employment at the earliest.

Article 12 Two or more applicants

¹ Two or more applicants are eligible per application if needed to achieve the targets set for the proposed research.

² For individual funding schemes, the Research Council may limit the number of applicants per application or stipulate that there must be at least two applicants.

³ If two or more applicants jointly submit an application, each of them must meet the eligibility requirements for the submission of applications. Each applicant is personally responsible for the project. If one applicant does not meet the eligibility requirements, the application will generally not be considered for any of the applicants, unless it is easily possible to evaluate the application without considering the ineligible person.

⁴ The applicants must designate one person to represent all applicants vis-à-vis the SNSF (corresponding applicant), which representation shall be legally binding.

⁵ The corresponding applicant is obliged to keep the other applicants, the project partners and the other staff members informed.

Article 13 Requirements for the planned research

¹ Research conducted for directly commercial purposes will not be funded.

² Applicants who wish to conduct the planned research in collaboration with a commercially oriented institution must be able to prove to the SNSF that the principles of research freedom, research independence and freedom to publish will be upheld.

³ Sponsors and owners of non-commercial research institutions outside the higher education sector may not derive any pecuniary benefit from the funded research work.

⁴ The quality of research at non-commercial research institutions outside the higher education sector or in collaborations with commercially oriented institutions must be at the same level as, or higher than, research conducted at research facilities within the higher education sector.

⁵ The SNSF may demand additional information about research conditions from self-employed researchers, particularly as regards the necessary research infrastructure.

Article 14 Formal requirements for the applications

¹ The funding proposals must meet the formal requirements specified by the Research Council in the Implementation Regulations.

² In particular, the Research Council may:

- a. set specific dates and deadlines for the submission of applications;
- b. issue guidelines concerning form, length and content;
- c. issue rules concerning the submission of documents in English;
- d. issue guidelines for the electronic submission of applications via the SNSF's electronic platform;
- e. ask the research institutes to confirm that the requirements for the planned research are met.

Article 15 Research integrity and good scientific practice

¹ The SNSF takes into account whether the rules regarding research integrity and good scientific practice are complied with.

² Proposals that contravene the rules of research integrity or good scientific practice will not be considered by the SNSF.

³ Applicants and grantees are obliged to provide the SNSF with information regarding

- a. any ongoing proceedings against them based on suspicions of non-compliance with research integrity and good scientific practice, or
- b. any corresponding sanctions imposed on them.

⁴ The SNSF may stop the evaluation procedure or ongoing grants should any of the involved researchers be subject to pending proceedings initiated by the SNSF or third parties owing to suspicions of non-compliance with the rules of research integrity or good scientific practice.

⁵ The SNSF may stop the evaluation procedure or ongoing grants should the SNSF itself or a third party have imposed sanctions on any of the involved researchers owing to a breach of research integrity or good scientific practice and any such sanctions are still in force.

⁶ The details are set out in the Implementation Regulations issued by the Research Council.

Article 16 Good practice aimed at preventing conflicts of interests

¹ The SNSF pays attention to compliance with good practice aimed at preventing conflicts of interests in scientific research.

² The SNSF does not consider applications for research projects that involve constellations of persons that do not meet the criteria for good practice with regard to the prevention of conflicts of interests.

³ The details are set out in the Implementation Regulations issued by the Research Council.

Article 17 Grants with overlapping funding periods

¹ SNSF grants with overlapping funding periods are only approved if:

- a. the research projects clearly address separate topics or pursue different project goals in the context of programmes; and
- b. the applicants are in a position to make substantial contributions to each of the research projects.

² The Research Council may exclude or restrict the awarding of grants with overlapping funding periods in the Implementation Regulations.

Article 18 Duty to report other grant applications and ongoing grants

By the submission date and during the evaluation of an application, applicants must inform the SNSF about any other applications currently being evaluated by the SNSF or third parties as well as about ongoing grants from the SNSF or third parties.

Article 19 Re-submission

¹ The SNSF only considers a re-submitted application if it is a significantly modified version of the rejected application.

² The Research Council may stipulate further restrictions with regard to the re-submission of applications in the Implementation Regulations.

Chapter 3 Evaluation procedure

Section 1 General provisions

Article 20 Procedural law

The provisions of this chapter govern the evaluation procedure. The provisions of the Federal Act of 20 December 1968³ on Administrative Procedure (APA), and in particular Articles 10 and 26-38 APA, apply to any matters not regulated in this chapter.

Article 21 Responsibilities

¹ The Research Council is responsible for assessing the proposals.

² For clearly defined areas, the Research Council may delegate this responsibility to other bodies or to a specialised committee appointed by it.

Article 22 Non-consideration

¹ The SNSF does not consider funding proposals that fail to meet the requirements set out in Articles 10-19.

² The SNSF does not consider applications that are clearly inadequate.

³ SR 172.021

Article 23 Relevant facts, applicants' duty to cooperate

¹ The SNSF's funding decisions are based on the documents submitted together with the application (relevant facts). Subject to the rectification of irregularities pursuant to paragraph 4, applicants are not entitled to make any additions to their application at a later stage.

² Applicants are obliged to cooperate at all times during the application procedure. In particular, they must at all times:

- a. respond to queries and provide information;
- b. cooperate in clarifying facts and
- c. inform the SNSF without delay of any circumstances that are relevant to the assessment of the proposal, but were unknown or non-existent when the proposal was submitted.

³ Otherwise, applicants are not heard during the application procedure. In particular, they do not have the right to make any additions to their application at a later stage.

⁴ If the irregularity in the proposal can be easily rectified, the SNSF will set a short deadline for rectification. If the deadline is not met or if the irregularity is not adequately rectified, the SNSF will not consider the proposal.

⁵ In the event of any violation of the duty to cooperate, the SNSF is entitled to stop processing and to dismiss the proposal.

Section 2 Scientific evaluation

Article 24 Criteria

¹ The relevant criteria for the award of research grants are:

- a. the scientific quality of the proposed research project;
- b. the scientific qualifications of the researchers.

² The scientific evaluation is based on the following main criteria:

- 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.

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

⁴ In the Implementation Regulations, the Research Council may stipulate and prioritise further criteria for specific funding schemes.

Article 25 External reviews

¹ The SNSF asks external experts to provide a written scientific assessment of the proposal.

² At least two external reviews must be obtained for each application, unless an insufficient number of responses to requests for review were received.

³ The Research Council may issue specific rules for external reviewing in the Implementation Regulations. In particular, it may stipulate that external reviews need not be obtained in the case of small amounts or extensions of the funding period; likewise it may limit external reviewing to a single phase of a multi-phase evaluation procedure.

⁴ To this end, the Research Council may appoint panels to assess the proposals and issue special rules.

⁵ Applicants are entitled to submit lists with the names and addresses of persons who are not to be asked for an external review (negative lists) together with their applications. The SNSF may abide by these lists if the applicants provide a valid reason for the requested exclusion and if a sufficient number of other experts are available.

Article 26 Scientific evaluation

The SNSF will duly consider reviews by external experts at its discretion.

Article 27 Protection of experts' identity

¹ Neither during the evaluation procedure nor after its conclusion will the SNSF disclose the identities of the referees and external experts who assessed the proposal.

² Exceptions are possible in individual cases subject to the consent of the relevant experts.

Article 28 Eligible costs

¹ The Research Council defines the amount and scope of the eligible costs in the relevant Implementation Regulations.

² It may stipulate the following as eligible costs:

- a. the salaries of employees engaged for the project within the scope of the salary ranges and rates set by the SNSF;
- b. the applicants' own salaries;
- c. costs of materials that are directly related to the research project, namely material of enduring value, expendable items, field expenses, travel costs or third-party charges;
- d. direct costs of the use of infrastructure for conducting the research project;
- e. costs and fees of scientific open access e-publications produced within the scope of the funded research;
- f. costs for the organisation of conferences and workshops in connection with the funded research;
- g. costs for career measures;
- h. costs for gender equality measures;
- i. other costs linked to the research project.

³ The Research Council may define binding rates for individual cost categories.

Chapter 4 Decisions and right of appeal

Article 29 Decisions

¹ The SNSF issues decisions on applications in the form of a ruling sent to the applicants. This also applies to refusals to consider proposals and decisions on the amendment of rights and obligations once a grant has been awarded.

² If there are two or more applicants, the SNSF will send the ruling to the corresponding applicant.

³ It issues the ruling in accordance with Articles 34 und 35 APA⁴.

⁴ Pursuant to Article 58 APA, it may at its own discretion or upon request reconsider rulings at any time prior to the consultation period for an appeal and issue a new ruling.

⁵ In special cases and in particular in the area of international cooperation it may sign a contract with the grantees.

Article 30 Information sent to institutions

¹ The SNSF may provide information on the submitted applications and the SNSF decisions to institutions from whom it receives statements, confirmations or other information and data in the course of the application assessment.

² For data exchange purposes, it may grant the relevant institutions direct access to the SNSF's electronic systems, provided that all data protection and data security requirements are met.

Article 31 Right of appeal

The corresponding applicant may appeal against rulings issued by the SNSF before the Swiss Federal Administrative Court.

Chapter 5 Rights and obligations of grantees, grant administration

Article 32 Legal consequences of the award

¹ On the full or partial approval of a grant application (award), the applicants become grantees of the SNSF.

² Grantees are obliged:

- a. to use the grant in accordance with the conditions set out in the ruling;
- b. to comply with the provisions stipulated in these Regulations and all other rules applicable to the grant and
- c. to carry out the research work with due care, while respecting the rules of good scientific practice and upholding the relevant principles of the discipline in question, in particular its ethical guidelines.

³ The corresponding applicant becomes the corresponding grantee, who legally represents all the grantees vis-à-vis the SNSF.

Article 33 Start of project, release of funds

¹ The grantees are obliged to request the transfer of funds and start their project within a year of the date on which the ruling was issued.

² The SNSF will approve the release of funds if the conditions for release as defined in the ruling are met.

³ In response to a substantiated request, it may approve a postponement of the start of the project for up to two years after the date of ruling.

⁴ SR 172.021

⁴ Research grants payable over several years are paid in annual instalments.

⁵ Payment of the released funds is made in accordance with the implementation rules of the Research Council.

⁶ The Research Council may issue additional rules for individual funding schemes.

Article 34 Forfeiture of grants

¹ If the request for release of funds is not submitted in time or if the relevant deadline is not extended, the grant expires.

² The SNSF will issue a relevant confirmation on request.

Article 35 Amendment and revocation of the award

¹ If the prerequisites for the award are no longer met after approval of the award or if the circumstances on which approval is based change considerably, the SNSF may amend or revoke the approved award and:

- a. if the grant has not yet been transferred, it may amend or withhold it;
- b. if the grant has already been transferred, it may demand partial or full repayment of the grant.

² Prior to taking such measures, the SNSF will hear the parties concerned and communicate the amendment or revocation in the form of a ruling.

Article 36 Grants for completing the project

The SNSF may approve grants in order to enable grantees to complete their projects, subject to a written request providing valid reasons, if:

- a. it can be shown that the grant awarded is not sufficient to complete the funded research work within the funding period; and
- b. the reasons why financing is insufficient were neither foreseeable nor avertable.

Article 37 Grant administration

¹ The grantees are obliged to have the paid grants administered by an office recognised by the SNSF.

² The oversight duties of the grant administration offices and detailed information on grant administration are laid down in the Implementation Regulations issued by the Research Council.

³ In exceptional cases, the Research Council may decide that grants need not be administered by an office recognised by the SNSF, particularly if there is no possibility of liaising with an institution that runs such an office.

⁴ In the course of the grant administration process, the SNSF may allow for the electronic exchange of personal and project-related data that is relevant to grant administration.

Article 38 Employment of staff

¹ Grantees are obliged to sign employment contracts with their employees and to comply with social security provisions if the employees' salaries are partially or entirely financed by a grant from the SNSF.

² The Research Council may stipulate binding minimum requirements in the Implementation Regulations.

Chapter 6 Duty to provide information and to report

Article 39 Obligation to provide and take note of information

¹ Grantees are obliged to inform the SNSF without delay in writing of any circumstances that could change or influence the prerequisites for the grant. These include, in particular, personnel changes, significant amendments to the research plan or changes to the available research infrastructure.

² Grantees must regularly take note of legally binding information issued by the SNSF.

³ The SNSF may send information to grantees in electronic form.

Article 40 Information on funded research work and research results

¹ Information on the research work (personal and project data) and research results funded by the SNSF may be entered in publicly accessible databases by the SNSF or by a third party on behalf of the SNSF.

² Grantees are obliged to provide the information and data requested by the SNSF.

Article 41 Reporting

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

² The Research Council is entitled to request information and documents pertaining to the funded projects and the awarded grants and to conduct on-site checks.

³ The details are set out in the Implementation Regulations issued by the Research Council.

Chapter 7 Monitoring and sanctions

Article 42 Monitoring and duty to cooperate

¹ The SNSF verifies the legitimate use of grants within the scope of its monitoring activities.

² Grantees are obliged to cooperate to the extent required within the scope of monitoring.

Article 43 Misuse, breaches and sanctions

¹ The SNSF penalises any misuse of grants or breaches of these Regulations or other provisions applicable to the submission of proposals or to the grant with the following sanctions:

- a. letter of reprimand;
- b. letter of warning;
- c. reduction, suspension or demand for repayment of grants;
- d. non-consideration of any further proposals for a limited period.

² The SNSF may impose sanctions either individually or cumulatively.

³ The procedure for imposing sanctions is set out in the Implementation Regulations issued by the Research Council.

⁴ The procedure, procurement and provision of information, and sanctions in the event of any breach of scientific integrity or good scientific practice, are set out in separate regulations issued by the Research Council.

³ The competence of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation will take precedence with regard to criminal sanctions pursuant to Article 37 or 38 of the Subsidies Act of 5 October 1990⁵.

Chapter 8 Rights to research results; use, publication and accessibility of research results

Article 44 Rights to research results

¹ The rights to the research results gained in the course of research work funded by the SNSF are owned by the grantees or their employer.

² Grantees are obliged to define such rights together with their employer by no later than the time the funded research work is completed.

³ They grant the project partners and employees authorship rights and a say that is appropriate to their scientific contribution.

⁴ The research results must not create any pecuniary benefits for commercially oriented institutions involved in the research project.

Article 45 Rights to material of enduring value

¹ Material financed by an SNSF grant is owned by the grantees or their employer.

² Grantees are obliged to define the rights to material of enduring value together with their employer by no later than the time the funded research work is completed.

³ After completion of the research work, the SNSF may demand partial or full repayment of its grant for covering the costs of material should the material no longer be needed at the research location or should it be sold to third parties.

⁴ Details of the repayment demand are set out in the Implementation Regulations issued by the Research Council.

Article 46 Analysis and use of research results

¹ Researchers are obliged to analyse and make use of the research results obtained with the aid of SNSF funding.

² The SNSF supports measures to analyse and make use of results obtained through research work funded by the SNSF.

³ During the course of the funded research work and after its completion, the grantees must inform the SNSF without delay in writing about any commercial use or acquisition of patents or similar

⁵ SR 616.1

proprietary rights arising from the funded research work. The SNSF waives any reimbursement of grants or shares in the profits.

⁴ The details are set out in the Implementation Regulations issued by the Research Council.

Article 47 Publication and accessibility of research results

¹ During the course of the research work and after its completion, grantees are obliged to make available to the public in an appropriate manner the research results obtained with the help of SNSF funding, thereby explicitly mentioning the support obtained from the SNSF. In particular:

- a. the requirements of the SNSF with regard to the public accessibility of scientific publications and in particular rules for open access are to be met;
- b. the data collected with the aid of an SNSF grant must also be made available to other researchers for further research and integrated into recognised scientific data pools;
- c. all other provisions issued by the SNSF concerning the publication and communication of the research work and research results funded by the SNSF must be complied with.

² The obligations with regard to publication and accessibility are set out in detail in the Implementation Regulations issued by the Research Council.

³ The SNSF may release grantees from these obligations should publication not be advisable for confidentiality reasons, particularly in relation to the acquisition of patents or due to a contractual commitment to observe confidentiality. Such commitments require the prior approval of the SNSF.

Chapter 9 Closing provisions

Article 48 Implementation Regulations

¹ The Research Council issues the Implementation Regulations, in particular the regulations, calls for proposals and further provisions for individual funding categories and schemes as well as the other provisions set out in these Regulations.

² In the Implementation Regulations, the Research Council stipulates, in particular, the specific requirements, conditions and procedures for the submission of proposals and the awarding of grants under the individual funding schemes.

³ The Research Council may authorise the Administrative Offices or the relevant bodies appointed by the Research Council to issue guidelines concerning its Implementation Regulations.

Article 49 Publication

The Funding Regulations are published on the SNSF website (<http://www.snf.ch/en>) and are referenced in the Official Compilation of Federal Legislation.

Article 50 Repeal of existing regulations

The Funding Regulations of 14 December 2007 are herewith repealed.

Article 51 Transitional provisions

¹ These Regulations are applicable to the proposals under evaluation at the time when they enter into force, unless this results in a disadvantage for applicants.

² They are applicable to the funding arrangements initiated prior to their entry into force. However, if rights assigned to grantees on approval of funding are not in accordance with the new Regulations, such rights will nonetheless remain in force.

³ Until the entry into force of the Project Funding Regulations, the provisions on project funding enshrined in the Funding Regulations of 14 December 2007 will apply.

Article 52 Approval and entry into force

¹ These Regulations were approved by the Federal Council on 27.5.2015.

² The Research Council will set a date for their entry into force.⁶

⁶ Decision of the Research Council of 9 December 2015; entry into force as of 1 January 2016.