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Regulations on SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships

1 July 2020

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 to outstanding researchers who have an excellent track record and are pursuing a career at a higher education research centre in Switzerland.

² These grants are aimed at researchers who wish to conduct a generously funded research project while holding a post that offers research independence at assistant professor level at a Swiss higher education research centre. The objective of this funding scheme is the obtainment of a permanent professorship.

³ Applications for Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships may be submitted by researchers who do not yet hold a professorship in Switzerland or abroad.

⁴ Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships are open to researchers from all disciplines.

⁵ Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships 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, grantees have a work quota of 100%. Working part-time is permissible if the grantee has care duties or is engaged in activities at a higher education institution aimed at achieving higher

qualifications to boost 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 individual research fields or types of higher education institution.

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, in particular, apply².

Article 3 Types, amount and duration of grant

¹ Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships include project funds and the applicant's salary.

² The maximum duration of funding is five years, the minimum duration three years.

³ Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships cannot be extended. However, the SNSF reserves the right to permit extensions for the reasons defined under Clause 5.4 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

2 Personal and formal requirements

Article 4 Personal requirements

¹ Researchers who submit applications for Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships must not have, or have had, a temporary or permanent position as an assistant professor or professor in Switzerland or abroad³ or a legally binding agreement on such a position at the time of the submission deadline or during the evaluation procedure.

² Applicants must have:

- a. a doctoral degree (PhD) or must have completed their studies in human, dental or veterinary medicine (Staatsexamen or equivalent exam, hereinafter "medical degree"). Applicants without a doctorate (PhD) or a medical degree are also eligible if they have done at least three years of research work since their higher education degree, which may be deemed to be equivalent to a doctorate;
- b. a proven record of at least two years' research work (with an average work quota of at least 80%) at a Swiss higher education research centre, or they must be Swiss nationals or have a Swiss higher education degree; and
- c. a proven record of research work lasting at least three years (with an average work quota of at least 80%) since receiving the doctorate (the date of the exam or thesis defence is the relevant date) or equivalent qualification; or as applicants with a medical degree, must have completed at least three years of clinical work and at least two years of research work (with an average work quota of at least 80%) since their medical degree.

² http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/snf-ausfuhrungsreglement_beitragsreglement_e.pdf

³ 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).

³ Applications must be submitted within eight years of the relevant degree pursuant to paragraph 2 letter a. For applicants with a medical degree, the window is 12 years.

⁴ The time windows pursuant to paragraph 3 are calculated based on the relevant submission deadline for Eccellenza applications. They may be extended 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 time window must be explained in the application.

Article 5 Other personal requirements

¹ Applicants must

- a. have an outstanding scientific track record;
- b. be capable of carrying out the proposed research project independently;
- c. be able to conduct their project under an Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship at a Swiss higher education research centre that is accredited in accordance with the HEdA ⁴.
- d. commit themselves as grantees to a work quota of 100%. A part-time work quota corresponding to at least 80% is permissible if the grantee has care duties or is pursuing higher qualifications at a higher education institution to advance his/her career.
- e. have any work quota reduction based on the reasons set out in letter d approved by the SNSF during the lifespan of the fellowship. A further work quota reduction may be approved on request in the event of the successful acquisition of significant third-party funding (e.g. ERC grant);
- f. devote an average of 80% of a full-time work quota to research and the remainder of the time primarily to teaching. These benchmarks apply proportionally to part-time work (letters d and e); or as grantee in the area of clinical research, 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% to clinical work and other tasks; or as grantee at a university of applied sciences or of teacher education, devote at least 70% of their work-time to research and continuing scientific education and the remainder primarily to teaching.

² In addition to the above-mentioned requirements, applicants must meet the general application requirements pursuant to the Funding Regulations and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

Article 6 Formal requirements

¹ Applications for Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships must be submitted to the SNSF electronically.

² The submission deadlines are published on the SNSF website.

3 Applications and eligible costs

Article 7 Applications

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

⁴ Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (SR 414.20) <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/20070429/index.html>; <https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/studying/recognised-or-accredited-swiss-higher-education-institutions>

² The higher education research centre at which the Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship will be conducted must provide written confirmation, drawn up in accordance with SNSF guidelines, stating that it will fulfil the conditions that apply to the fellowship, particularly:

- a. providing an assurance that the grantee will be supported and helped to integrate into the higher education research centre;
- b. respecting the rights and obligations arising from the position, including career funding measures;
- c. guaranteeing the necessary research conditions and research time for the approved project pursuant to the provisions of these Regulations;
- d. providing a statement regarding the applicant's career prospects as well as the scientific independence of the applicant and the proposed project;
- e. bestowing the status and the title of an assistant professorship or an equivalent position for the duration of the grant.
- f. granting the right to supervise dissertations if the higher education research centre offers doctoral degree courses;
- g. for Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships in the area of clinical research, providing an assurance that the salary for the clinical part, minus the 10% funded by the SNSF in accordance with Article 9 paragraph 2, must be financed by the relevant clinic, and that the grantee shall be relieved from all administrative duties during the time reserved for research.

Article 8 Mobility

¹ Mobility is aimed at enhancing the grantee's scientific profile and at creating optimal preconditions for an academic career.

² Mobility is an assessment criterion for Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships, and the applicant must therefore include an explanatory statement on this subject in the application. When assessing the applicant's career so far (retrospective mobility) and the measures planned under the fellowship (prospective mobility), the SNSF takes different types of mobility into account.

³ If the applicant did not conduct a research stay of 24 months after the doctorate at one or more institutions other than the one where he/she did the doctorate, or after the equivalent degree or the medical degree in Switzerland and abroad or at an institution in the practical field, the applicant must explain in the application how he/she plans to achieve equivalent mobility in qualitative terms under the Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship.

⁴ Equivalent mobility under an Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship pursuant to paragraph 3 may be achieved as follows:

- a. stay at a non-commercial research institution (host institution) in Switzerland or abroad;
- b. stay at an institution in the practical realm (industry, administration, etc.; intersectoral mobility);
- c. other types of mobility, particularly short visits or international collaborations.

⁵ Stays at a host institution pursuant to paragraph 4 letters a and b may not exceed 12 months in total; they may be spent at more than one institution and split into a number of shorter periods. If the duration of the Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship is less than five years, the maximum amount of time that may be spent at host institutions will be reduced proportionally.

⁶ The applicant may request a stay at a host institution either when submitting the application or during the grant period, within the scope of the approved budget.

⁷ 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 must strive to integrate the grantee at the host institution.

Article 9 Eligible costs: salary and project funds

¹ The grantee's salary is covered at the same rate as a local assistant professorship or equivalent position. The SNSF determines the amount of the salary by agreement with the higher education research centre. The SNSF may set an upper limit for the salary.

² For Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships in clinical research, the SNSF covers the share of the salary earmarked for research and teaching activities in full (100%) as well as a further 10% of the share of the salary allocated to clinical work. The salary level of a local assistant professorship serves as a benchmark. The remaining salary share for clinical work is the responsibility of clinical unit of the higher education research centre. Both shares must be accounted for in the application.

³ In addition to the grantee's salary, the project costs are covered as set out in paragraph 4. These costs must not exceed 1'000,000 for five years. If the duration of the grant is less than five years, this maximum amount will be reduced proportionally.

⁴ The following costs may be covered:

- a. salaries of employees (doctoral students, postdocs, other employees) whose posts have been approved by the SNSF. The SNSF may approve positions for doctoral students at universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education where there is a well-documented scientific collaboration with a university in Switzerland. If no suitable partner can be found in Switzerland, positions for doctoral students may also be approved at doctorate-awarding higher education institutions abroad
- 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. costs for the organisation of conferences and workshops in connection with the funded research;
- e. costs for national and international cooperation and networking activities regarding the funded research;
- f. costs for career measures;
- g. costs for gender equality measures;
- h. mobility costs incurred by the grantee.

⁵ When awarding an Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship, the SNSF takes into account any significant third-party funding acquired for the same or for a strongly overlapping research project, such as an ERC grant. In such cases, the funding awarded by the SNSF is limited to the salary pursuant to paragraphs 1 and 2.

4 Submission of applications and other SNSF grants: restrictions

Article 10 Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships 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 SNSF grants have been requested. However, applications for NRPs, NCCRs or other one-off funding options are permissible even if they would overlap with Eccellenza funding. The restrictions apply during the entire application process. The SNSF does not consider applications that contradict the restrictions.

² Parallel applications may be submitted for Postdoc.Mobility only if the parallel application is solely for a return grant.

³ 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 a PRIMA grant as of the next submission deadline after the positive decision of the first phase. If and when they are selected for and accept an Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship, they must withdraw their project funding or their PRIMA application. Should they wish to continue the application procedure in these funding schemes, any awarding of an Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship shall be null and void.

⁴ If the applicant already has an approved or ongoing project funding, Sinergia or SPIRIT grant at the time of submitting the application for an Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship, he/she may continue the said grant, provided the research topic is clearly different from that of the Eccellenza application.

⁵ Recipients of an Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship may not apply for any career grants of the SNSF.⁵

Article 11 Repeated submissions: restriction

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

² Application procedures terminated because the applicant has breached scientific integrity rules are regarded as rejections in accordance with this provision.

5 Assessment criteria and procedure

Article 12 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 achievements up to the point of submission:
 - scientific quality and independence of achievements to date and their impact in the research field;

⁵ Amended based on the decision of the Presiding Board of the National Research Council of 5 July 2023, in force with immediate effect.

- achievements to date in relation to the net⁶ academic age;
 - ability, based on achievements to date, to carry out the project.
- b. the applicant's career development as well as retrospective and prospective mobility based on the submitted statement; in particular, the applicant's overall mobility by the end of the project is assessed in view of the goals of the scheme and the applicant's career goal.
 - c. scientific independence of the applicant at the chosen research institution;
 - d. scientific relevance, originality, topicality and independence of the research project;
 - e. approach and methodology of the research project as well as its feasibility;
 - f. suitability and added value of the research institution in supporting the research project scientifically and in ensuring and promoting the independence of the applicant, as well as facilitating their continual intellectual development and continuing higher education.
 - g. adequacy of the requested research funds;
 - h. in the case of proposals for use-inspired basic research, the project's broader impact outside science is considered in the evaluation.

³ Paragraph 2 letters a and b notwithstanding, the following assessment criteria are applied to Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship applications submitted at universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education:

- a. the applicant's scientific track record, particularly in terms of research and teaching experience as well as further discipline-specific achievements in use-inspired basic research;
- b. the applicant's mobility in analogy with paragraph 2 letter b, with special consideration given to a change from a higher education institution to industry/business, or a change from a higher education institution to elementary schools or secondary level 2 schools;
- c. scientific importance, originality and topicality of the planned research project and, if applicable, its relevance for use-inspired basic research.

Article 13 Evaluation procedure and decision

¹ The selection procedure comprises two phases. In the first phase, the best applications are selected for the second phase based on the submitted documents. If necessary, proposals may be reviewed externally. Applicants who are not admitted to the second phase are informed of their rejection in the form of a written ruling in which the reasons for the decision are stated.

² The SNSF arranges for the applications chosen for the second phase to be reviewed by external experts. In the second phase, the SNSF generally asks the applicant to present the research project and career plan in person, as well as answer the questions put to them by the evaluators.

³ Decisions for the second phase are communicated to the applicants in a written ruling.

⁶ The net academic age comprises the time span starting with the date of the thesis defence or equivalent qualification or with the medical degree and ending with the submission deadline, minus all non-academic activities (including any interruptions for the reasons stated in Clause 1.11 paragraph 2 letters a-f of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations), calculated in full-time equivalents.

6 Grants and administration of grants

Article 14 Grants and start of funding period

¹ Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships 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.

² Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships 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 to the research project or the conditions for conducting it must be submitted to the SNSF in advance for approval.

⁴ Should the grantee obtain a professorship, he/she must inform the SNSF accordingly. If the professorship is in Switzerland, the grantee may generally continue to use the project funds. The remaining amount of the grantee's salary, however, must be refunded to the SNSF.

⁵ Funds for researchers doing clinical work 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 15 Non-acceptance or premature termination

¹ Should recipients of an Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship forego the award or should they 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 16 Reporting

¹ Grantees are obliged to send the SNSF periodic reports in accordance with the requirements defined by the SNSF, notably financial and scientific reports.

² The duty to provide output data will remain in place after submission of the final report and end three years after the end of the grant.

³ Researchers doing clinical work must account for the time reserved for research in the interim reports. A statement by the contact person (Article 14 paragraph 5) must be enclosed.

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

Article 17 Entry into force and repeal of existing regulations

These Regulations enter into force on 1 November 2020. They replace the Regulations on SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships and SNSF Eccellenza Grants of 19 September 2017.

Article 18 Transitional provisions

On the date these Regulations enter into force, any approved or ongoing SNSF Eccellenza Professorial Fellowships, SNSF Eccellenza Grants and SNSF professorships, clinical SNSF professorships or SNSF professorships in the area of energy remain valid along as regards the rights granted under the old regulations, even if not enshrined in the new Regulations.