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Regulations on Scientific Exchanges; Grants for scientific exchanges

of 14 June 2021

The National Research Council,

based on Articles 9 and 48 of the Funding Regulations of 27 February 2015,¹

issues the following Regulations:

1. General

Article 1 Objectives and principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) awards grants for international scientific exchanges (SE grants) to researchers in Switzerland.²

² SE grants enable researchers in Switzerland to set up and strengthen international networks. They help to increase the competitiveness of Swiss research and its problem-solving capacities and enable researchers from all disciplines to add to their knowledge and contacts; this is beneficial to young researchers, in particular.

³ The SE grants offered by the SNSF support scientific exchanges within the scope of

- scientific events of a maximum of five days such as meetings/conferences/workshops, including online or hybrid events, or research visits of a maximum of six months in Switzerland or abroad.

⁴ SE grants are intended to cover the travel expenses and room and board costs of participants in events and guests on a research visit as part of a scientific exchange, as well as rental costs for equipment and support required for online/hybrid events.³

⁵ Insofar as the activities comprising the scientific exchanges are related to a research project financed under another SNSF funding scheme, no SE grants may be applied for. This is subject to

¹ http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_reglement_16_d.pdf

² Editorial changes of 8 May 2019, in force as of 1 June 2019.

³ Grants for stays by "Scholars at Risk" at Swiss institutions are governed by the special provisions set out in the Annex.

cases where the SNSF does not, or did not at the time of submission, offer a support option for scientific exchange measures.

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 apply.⁴

Article 3 Types of grant and amount

¹ SE grants can be requested for scientific events and/or research visits in all disciplines in accordance with the following provisions.

² Both types of grant may be applied for in parallel, provided the scientific event and the research visit are related and there is good reason to believe that carrying out both SE measures will add scientific value.⁵

³ The minimum amount that may be requested in an application is CHF 2,500, the maximum CHF 25,000. The SNSF does not consider applications for amounts outside this range.

Article 4 Scientific events

¹ Meetings, conferences, workshops or similar events organised by the applicant are regarded as scientific events if they meet the following requirements:

² The scientific event

- a. takes place in Switzerland, subject to paragraph 5, in a scientific context;
- b. facilitates direct exchanges between qualified scientists from different countries and institutions;
- c. addresses clearly defined scientific questions and goals; and
- d. enhances the integration of researchers from Switzerland into networks.

³ The topic of the event must be related to the research questions the applicant is working on.

⁴ SE grants may not be used to finance working sessions or events taking place in the context of already established collaborative projects.

⁵ Where there is good cause, the event may exceptionally be held abroad, particularly if it is not possible to stage it in Switzerland.

Article 5 Research visits

¹ Research visits are visits by the applicant at an institution abroad or visits by a guest from abroad at the applicant's institution.

² The research visits

- a. must be devoted to scientific cooperation and exchanges in the subject area of the research questions addressed by the applicant and must be deemed likely to add value to their research;
- b. must include a concrete plan for joint scientific/research activities of the applicant and the guest or a responsible person at the host institution;

⁴ http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/snf-ausfuhrungsreglement_beitragsreglement_d.pdf

⁵ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 8 May 2019, in force as of 1 June 2019.

- c. must last between one month and six months;
- d. may take place anywhere in the world.

³ The guest or the responsible partner-person at the host institution must be scientifically qualified to carry out the planned joint activities. At the host institution or the applicant's institution, access to the infrastructure must be guaranteed and other requirements for a promising collaboration must be met.

⁴ The SNSF does not award any SE grants for research visits that comprise part of the applicant's continuing education, or are limited to participation in conferences and events, or take place in the course of an academic sabbatical and do not include any collaborative research with the host or host institution abroad.⁶

2. Personal and formal requirements

Article 6 Personal requirements

¹ Researchers from all academic disciplines who meet the general requirements for applicants pursuant to the Funding Regulations and the Implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations are eligible to submit applications for SE grants.

² In particular, the applicants must be employed in Switzerland according to the provisions issued by the SNSF. Their work-time percentage may lie under 50%, but not below 20%, and the position must last for at least six months after the end of the SE event or visit or at least until the scientific event takes place.⁷

³ Applicants for research visits must hold a doctorate. For applicants without a doctorate, three years of research work as their main source of income since doing their higher education degree will generally be regarded as equivalent to a doctorate. The equivalence requirement also applies to applicants who have completed their studies (state examination or equivalent degree with or without dissertation) in human, dental or veterinary medicine. Applications for scientific events may also be submitted by doctoral students.

⁴ Guests who are invited by the applicant to conduct a research visit or the responsible partner-person at the host institution must also meet *mutatis mutandis* the requirements set out under paragraph 3.

Article 7 Formal requirements

¹ Applications for SE grants must be submitted to the SNSF via *mySNF*.

² There are no set submission deadlines and, subject to the application restrictions stipulated in Article 11, applications may be submitted at any time, but no earlier than 18 months before the start of the event or the research visit.

³ Applications must be submitted to the SNSF no later than four months before the scientific event or before the research visit is expected to take place.

⁴ All formal requirements for the submission of applications also apply, in particular the Funding Regulations of the SNSF and its Implementation Regulations.

⁶ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 8 May 2019, in force as of 1 June 2019.

⁷ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 8 May 2019, in force as of 1 June 2019.

3. Applications and eligible costs

Article 8 Applications

Applications for SE grants must be submitted in accordance with the requirements issued by the SNSF and must contain all the necessary information and documents. They are to be submitted by the person organising the event or, in the case of a research visit, by the guest or the host⁸ in Switzerland; it is not permissible to have more than one applicant per application.

Article 9 Eligible costs: scientific events

¹ Travel expenses and room and board costs incurred by participants from abroad are covered by the grant, provided they make a contribution (talk, poster, moderation, supervision of workshop, etc.) that adds scientific value to the event.

² The applicant may enter in the application the SNSF flat rates, which are graduated by country or travel distance, and flat rates for the stay in Switzerland, with the travel costs being based on the actual costs. In the case of children with care needs who accompany their parents, the defined flat rates may be entered additionally in the application if necessary.

³ Equipment (generally rental; purchase of equipment only in consultation with the SNSF) and support required for online/hybrid events can be covered by the grant up to the maximum budget allowed.

⁴ The maximum budget allowed per half-day is CHF 2,500.

⁵ The total costs must not exceed the maximum grant pursuant to Article 3. Flat rates for children are not included in the total costs.

Article 10 Eligible costs: research visits

¹ The eligible costs are:

- a. travel expenses and room and board costs of the applicant if they have applied for a research visit abroad; or
- b. travel expenses and room and board costs of the guest invited by the applicant.

² The SNSF has defined graduated flat rates by country or travel distance for travel expenses and room and board costs. In the case of children with care needs who accompany their parents, the defined flat rates may be entered additionally in the application if necessary.⁹

³ The total costs must not exceed the maximum grant pursuant to Article 3. Flat rates for children are not included in the total costs.

4. Parallel applications and grants

Article 11 Number of applications and grants: limitation

¹ The SNSF does not finance any new SE activities of the same applicants and of the same type (i.e. event or research visit) for a 12-month period as of the end of the event or research visit supported by an SE grant. For funding in the case of a parallel activity pursuant to Article 3 paragraph 2, the period starts as of the end of the last funded activity of the same type.¹⁰

⁸ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 8 May 2019, in force as of 1 June 2019.

⁹ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 8 May 2019, in force as of 1 June 2019.

¹⁰ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 8 May 2019, in force as of 1 June 2019.

² SE grants are intended to support initial or one-off activities. It is not possible to acquire funding for the same activity, or repeated activity, particularly for follow-up or annual meetings.

³ If an application that is subject to these limitations is submitted, it will not be considered by the SNSF.

5. Assessment criteria and procedure

Article 12 Assessment criteria

¹ Applications that meet the personal and formal requirements are examined and evaluated.

² The following assessment criteria are applied:

- a. expertise and scientific qualifications of the participants for whom grants are being requested and the qualifications of the applicant with regard to organising and staging the event;
- b. relevance and originality of the scientific goals set for the exchange, particularly the scientific quality of the event or the research visit;
- c. mutual scientific benefits for those involved; and
- d. feasibility of the project.

Article 13 Evaluation and decisions¹¹

¹ The Research Council has delegated the evaluation and decision-making with regard to SE grants to an evaluation body at the Administrative Offices of the SNSF.

² The said body generally decides and communicates the decision in the form of a ruling two to four months after submission.

6. Grants and grant administration

Article 14 Grants

¹ SE grants are generally transferred to the grantee via the grant administration office and must be used according to the conditions set out in the ruling.

² Any intended changes to the described scientific activities and requirements for staging the event, particularly with regard to the research institution, must be reported to the SNSF in advance. The SNSF may approve changes to a grant if significant reasons are cited in the change request.

Article 15 Reporting, receipts and reimbursements

¹ Grantees must send the SNSF a short scientific report no later than six weeks¹² after the event or after the end of the research visit (expiry of grant).

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

³ The financial report must be submitted within the period specified in paragraph 1. The corresponding receipts as well as a statement listing the actual costs must be submitted to the SNSF. Any surplus funds must generally be reimbursed to the SNSF.

¹¹ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 8 May 2019, in force as of 1 June 2019.

¹² Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 8 May 2019, in force as of 1 June 2019.

7. Entry into force and repeal of existing regulations

Article 16 Entry into force

These Regulations enter into force on 14 June 2021.

Annex: Grants for stays by "Scholars at Risk" (SAR)¹³

¹ The SNSF may award grants for stays by "Scholars at Risk" in Switzerland (SAR Grants). Scholars at Risk are researchers from abroad for whom the SAR Switzerland Section¹⁴ coordinates and facilitates a research stay at a Swiss research institution.

² To be eligible for a grant from the SNSF, the Scholar at Risk must be supported by the SAR Switzerland Section and must work as a scientist at a Swiss research institution. SAR Grants are only awarded if the budget allocated to the "Scientific Exchanges" scheme is sufficiently high. The SNSF may limit the number of SAR Grants awarded per year. No one is entitled to a SAR Grant, whatever their circumstances. Funding decisions are sent in written form to the SAR Switzerland Section pursuant to paragraph 3.

³ The SAR Switzerland Section acts as coordination office for SAR Grants awarded by the SNSF. It submits applications for SAR Grants to the SNSF. The application must be submitted to the "Scientific Exchanges" scheme by the coordinator responsible for the SAR at the SAR Switzerland Section in accordance with SNSF guidelines and must include:

- a. confirmation that the conditions for receiving support from the SAR Switzerland Section are met;
- b. personal information about the SAR, especially a CV;
- c. the nature and scope of the scientific research activity planned during the SAR's stay;
- d. town/city and duration of the SAR's stay in Switzerland;
- e. confirmation that the host institution will support the SAR in accordance with the SAR guidelines; and
- f. detailed breakdown of travel and living costs.

⁴ Travel and living costs may be charged to the grant up to a maximum of CHF 110,000 for a maximum duration of 12 months. An extension of a maximum of 12 months may be approved based on a reasoned request.

⁵ The SNSF sends written confirmation of the grant to the responsible person at the SAR Switzerland Section and reports it to the SAR Switzerland Section. The grant is credited to the grant administration office at the host institution, which manages the financial resources awarded under the grant.

⁶ The SAR Switzerland Section assists and monitors the funded SAR during the stay; it forwards to the SNSF the relevant reporting documents, which must be drawn up in accordance with SNSF guidelines.

¹³ Inserted pursuant to the Research Council's decision of 1 July 2020, in force as of 1 November 2020.

¹⁴ <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/sections/sar-switzerland/>