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# Organisational Regulations of the Research Council of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) of 24.04.2024

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The Research Council of the Swiss National Science Foundation, based on Article 9 paragraph 2 letter q of the Statutes of 10 May 2023, enacts the following

## **Organisational Regulations of the Research Council**

### **Chapter I. General Provisions**

#### **Article 1 Subject matter and scope**

These Regulations govern the organisation, responsibilities and procedures of the Research Council and its bodies.

#### **Article 2 Relationship to other regulations and rules of procedure**

<sup>1</sup> The provisions of the Foundation Regulations and the regulations approved by the Federal Council, in particular the Funding Regulations, take precedence over these Regulations.

<sup>2</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council and the committees may regulate organisational matters in the rules of procedure for the bodies of the Research Council.

**Article 3      Structure**

<sup>1</sup> The Research Council is the scientific body of the SNSF and is divided into the following ordinary bodies:

- a. the Academic Board of the Research Council, with the Presidents and Vice Presidents of the Research Council;
- b. programme committees for funding activities and evaluation panels for the evaluation of applications and grants;
- c. the Policy Committee for the SNSF's transversal funding policy, which sets up specialist groups to prepare the business.

<sup>2</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council and the presidents of the committees exchange regularly in a coordination conference to coordinate business and foster cooperation.

<sup>3</sup> The members of the Research Council together form the plenary.

<sup>4</sup> The Executive Management and the Administrative Offices shall support the bodies of the Research Council.

**Article 4      Diversity and independence**

<sup>1</sup> Diversity must be ensured as far as possible in the Research Council and its bodies, particularly with regard to the following criteria: knowledge and experience, stage of academic career, gender, different types and fields of research and research organisations. The Research Council shall regulate the details and take the required measures.

<sup>2</sup> The incompatibilities pursuant to Article 28 paragraph 5 of the Foundation Regulations apply to the members of the evaluation panels and the standing bodies of the committees. The president of the body shall take the required measures to avoid conflicts of interest and ensure compliance with the duty of recusal.

<sup>3</sup> The committees shall report annually to the Academic Board of the Research Council on the composition of their bodies. In the case of committees with more than eight members, the Academic Board may also introduce quotas in order to effectively ensure diversity.

**Chapter II.    Organisation and Responsibilities****Section 1      The Academic Board of the Research Council****Article 5      Composition and function**

<sup>1</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council is made up of the President, two Vice-Presidents, two to three other members and the Director of the Executive Management as a member in an advisory capacity without voting rights.

<sup>2</sup> The Academic Board manages, organises and supervises the activities of the Research Council. It determines the funding policy and oversees the organisation and process of research funding.

<sup>3</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council reaches its decisions as a collegial body.

<sup>4</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council shall maintain regular contact and dialogue with the committees.

## **Article 6 Responsibilities**

<sup>1</sup> Unless the Statutes, the Foundation Regulations or these Regulations provide otherwise, the Academic Board of the Research Council shall fulfil the tasks assigned to the Research Council in accordance with Article 9 of the Statutes.

<sup>2</sup> In detail, it has the following tasks:

- a. Defining the funding policy and submitting the multi-year programme to the Foundation Council;
- b. Requesting the Foundation Council to conclude the service level agreement and enter into partnerships and cooperations of overriding strategic importance;
- c. Concluding, monitoring and terminating partnerships and cooperations in research funding and on scientific matters;
- d. Allocating the funds authorised by the Confederation for the funding schemes (funding plan);
- e. Adopting the action plan for implementing the plans approved by the Confederation;
- f. Providing, jointly with the Foundation Council, position statements and consultations with particularly far-reaching implications for research funding and regarding evaluations of the SNSF by third parties;
- g. Organising the funding portfolio, deciding on the funding schemes and conducting their regular evaluation;
- h. Deciding on funding schemes and programmes, for the attention of the Confederation;
- i. Ensuring and monitoring the quality and fairness of the SNSF's funding procedures;
- j. Taking measures for the promotion of research funding;
- k. Issuing the implementing provisions in regulations and calls, usually at the request of the committees;
- l. Requesting the Foundation Council to amend the Funding Regulations and Overhead Regulations;
- m. Submitting a report on the activities of the Research Council to the Foundation Council at least once a year;
- n. Deciding on specific measures in accordance with the Bequests and Donation Regulations;
- o. Determining the profile of the Research Council, the presidents of the committees and submitting the election proposals for the members of the Academic Board;
- p. Consulting the Research Council members serving in the committees on the election procedure of the members of the Academic Board of the Research Council and on defining individual profiles for new members of the Research Council;
- q. Approving the lists of the evaluation panels and the standing working and specialist groups of the committees;
- r. Approving the rules of procedure for the bodies of the Research Council.

<sup>3</sup> In order to fulfil its tasks, the Academic Board of the Research Council may set up working groups and delegate individual tasks to the committees and their bodies or to the Administrative Offices.

<sup>4</sup> The Academic Board shall hold regular meetings. It shall ensure that the Delegates Assembly is consulted in accordance with Article 26 paragraph 4 of the Foundation Regulations. In particular, it shall periodically consult the Delegates Assembly on funding policy, specifically with regard to the comprehensive consideration of interests in important strategic decisions for the scientific community.

#### **Article 7      Supervision and referral**

<sup>1</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council supervises the committees. It must be informed of the decisions and resolutions of the committees on an ongoing basis.

<sup>2</sup> It may only revoke the decisions or resolutions of the committees and their bodies and refer them back to them for reconsideration if they are contrary to the law or its funding policy. If the matter proves to be clear and there is no room for manoeuvre, the Academic Board of the Research Council shall decide on the matter itself without referral.

<sup>3</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council may only revoke funding decisions in the event of a clear violation. It shall refer the matter back for reassessment to the committee responsible. In cases of urgency, it may exceptionally decide on the matter without referring it back.

#### **Article 8      President and Vice President**

<sup>1</sup> The President chairs the Academic Board of the Research Council and represents the Research Council in the other bodies. He or she represents the SNSF in its external dealings.

<sup>2</sup> The Vice-President for Research Funding and the Vice-President for Funding Policy shall support the President in the fulfilment of his or her duties and represent him or her when necessary.

<sup>3</sup> As a rule, the President is employed by the SNSF on a 50 to 80 per cent full-time-equivalent (FTE) basis and the Vice-Presidents on a 30 to 50 per cent FTE basis. The right to additional compensation for being ineligible to submit grant applications is reserved. The details shall be regulated in the Compensation Regulations.

### **Section 2      The Committees**

#### **Article 9      Composition, function and structure in general**

<sup>1</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council determines the composition of the Research Council's committees. They are made up of its members and any additional committee members required in accordance with paragraph 5. Each member of the Research Council shall belong to at least one committee.

<sup>2</sup> The committees are responsible for funding research under the individual funding schemes and shall draw up the basic principles of the SNSF's funding policy.

<sup>3</sup> The committees shall set up evaluation panels for the assessment of applications and grants and working groups and standing specialist groups for overarching funding policy.

<sup>4</sup> The committees are chaired by a member of the Research Council. The president is appointed by the Academic Board of the Research Council at the request of the Committee. At the request of the president, the committee shall elect a deputy from among its members.

<sup>5</sup> In justified cases, in particular if external expertise is required or if there are shortages of personnel, individual members may be elected to the committees who are not members of the Research Council (known as 'additional committee members'). Their term of office shall be one to four years. Re-election is permitted, but the total term of office may not exceed eight years.

<sup>6</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council shall elect the additional committee members at the request of the committee concerned. It shall regulate the details of the election procedure and the profile specifications. It reports annually to the Foundation Council on the composition of the committees and changes to the other committee members.

<sup>7</sup> The Administrative Offices shall support the committees and their bodies. SNSF employees may take part in the meetings in an advisory capacity.

#### **Article 10 Committees for funding schemes (programme committees)**

<sup>1</sup> The programme committees shall comprise five to thirty members. A member of the Research Council shall be president.

<sup>2</sup> The programme committees are as follows:

- a. Projects;
- b. Careers;
- c. Thematic and solution-orientated research;<sup>1</sup>
- d. Long-term research and infrastructures;
- e. International cooperation.

<sup>3</sup> They shall decide how their funding schemes are organised and ensure that funded research is of the highest quality.

<sup>4</sup> They have the following specific tasks:

- a. Determining the funding guidelines in their field;
- b. Taking responsibility for complying with the budget for their funding schemes;
- c. Setting up evaluation panels and electing their presidents;
- d. Developing and monitoring the calls and the scientific evaluation of applications;
- e. Taking funding decisions by determining the funding line, organising procedures for drawing lots or other special measures;
- f. Monitoring and evaluating the success of the funded research;
- g. Reviewing the effectiveness of research funding;
- h. Requesting that the Academic Board of the Research Council approve the evaluation of funding instruments;
- i. Requesting the Academic Board of the Research Council to issue or amend implementing provisions for the funding schemes;
- j. Submitting requests for partnerships and collaborations in research funding to the Academic Board of the Research Council;

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<sup>1</sup> See also the regulations for the National Research Programmes (NRP Regulations) of 

k. Submitting the annual report to the Academic Board of the Research Council on funded research and funding procedures.

<sup>5</sup> The committees shall hold regular meetings.

<sup>6</sup> The organisation of the National Research Programmes (NRP) is governed by the NRP regulations to be issued by the Academic Board of the Research Council.

#### **Article 11 Committees for special funding schemes (special committees)**

<sup>1</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council may, by way of exception, set up special committees which are organised, in derogation from the provisions on the ordinary committees, so as to take account of the particularities of funding or collaboration with third parties. At least one member of the Research Council shall sit on each of the special committees.

<sup>2</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council shall specify the special committees and their mandates in the rules of procedure for bodies of the Research Council.

<sup>3</sup> The special committees shall have specific budgets for the funding schemes for which they are responsible. These must be shown in the annual funding plan.

<sup>4</sup> The special committees shall decide on the structure of their funding schemes and on their funding guidelines and ensure that funded research is of the highest quality.

<sup>5</sup> In all other respects, the provisions on the committees for funding schemes apply by analogy.

#### **Article 12 SNSF Committee for Funding Policy (Policy Committee)**

<sup>1</sup> The Policy Committee shall comprise seven to fifteen members.

<sup>2</sup> On behalf of the Academic Board of the Research Council, it shall analyse, coordinate and develop the overarching funding policy of the SNSF, in particular in the areas of quality assurance and effectiveness of research funding, promotion of early careers, international cooperation, ethics and scientific integrity as well as equal opportunities, diversity and inclusion. The committee shall provide expertise and submit proposals on funding policy to the Academic Board of the Research Council. It shall liaise closely with the Vice President for Funding Policy.

<sup>3</sup> The Policy Committee may set up standing specialist groups for transversal funding policy in individual fields in accordance with paragraph 2.

<sup>4</sup> The specialist groups for transversal funding policy shall comprise five to fifteen members and be made up of Research Council members and external experts.

<sup>5</sup> The term of office of external experts in the standing specialist groups shall be one to four years. Re-election is permitted, but the total term of office may not exceed eight years.

<sup>6</sup> The committee shall draw up a multi-year plan. It shall ensure that the Delegates Assembly, the committees for funding schemes and the Executive Management participate in its elaboration and that the external stakeholders are consulted.

<sup>7</sup> The Committee shall hold at least four meetings per year and the specialist groups shall meet as often as business requires.

### **Section 3      The Evaluation Panels**

#### **Article 13      Composition and function**

<sup>1</sup> The programme and special committees shall normally set up evaluation panels for the scientific assessment of applications and grants. They shall generally comprise 5 to 20 members.

<sup>2</sup> They shall be made up of national and international experts. Members of the Research Council may serve in evaluation panels as experts. They shall recuse themselves from the committee's funding decisions if they directly concern an evaluation panel in whose assessment activities they were previously involved.

<sup>3</sup> The ordinary elections of the permanent members of evaluation panels take place annually. Their term of office is one to four years. Re-election is permitted, but the total term of office may not exceed eight years. The committee concerned may terminate the term of office of members of the evaluation panel prematurely, stating the reasons, and shall as far as possible ensure that termination of the term of office does not affect the evaluation process.

<sup>4</sup> The president of the evaluation panel may appoint ad hoc members as required, provided the president of the committee consents. This applies in particular if special expertise is temporarily required, if members of the evaluation panel are temporarily excluded from the evaluation, or if members are unable to attend the evaluation panel meetings for other reasons. The mandates of the ad hoc members shall be limited in time and their continuation shall be reviewed in the course of the annual elections of the permanent panel members.

<sup>5</sup> The evaluation panels shall normally be chaired by members of the relevant committees (panel chair). They shall not evaluate applications in the evaluation panel that they chair and shall not vote on such applications. The panel chair shall run and monitor the evaluation in the evaluation panels in accordance with the applicable guidelines and standards for the funding procedure.

<sup>6</sup> Employees of the Administrative Offices shall take part in evaluation panel meetings in an advisory capacity. They shall support the chair in ensuring that the meeting runs smoothly (procedural co-chair).

#### **Article 14      Responsibilities**

<sup>1</sup> The evaluation panels shall ensure the expert and fair assessment of applications in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 19.

<sup>2</sup> They shall submit their assessment of the applications to the committee for a decision on funding.

<sup>3</sup> They have no power to authorise funding or expenditure.

### **Section 4      The Plenary**

#### **Article 15      Composition and function**

<sup>1</sup> The Plenary is an assembly of all the members of the Research Council.

<sup>2</sup> It shall express its views on overarching matters of funding strategy and quality assurance, offer a forum for mutual exchange, and enable its members to coordinate their activities.

## **Article 16 Responsibilities**

<sup>1</sup> The plenary has the following tasks:

- a. Providing position statements on significant profile changes in the composition of the Research Council;
- b. Conducting consultations on overarching strategic funding issues, in particular on the focus of the funding portfolio;
- c. Formulating proposals and position statements on matters relating to research funding;
- d. Conducting consultations on the internal organisation of the Research Council.

<sup>2</sup> Standing forums may be formed, in particular those relating to specific scientific disciplines. They shall highlight significant developments and challenges in the plenary session. They shall issue position statements at the request of the bodies.

<sup>3</sup> The plenary shall meet at least twice a year at the invitation of the President of the Research Council.

<sup>4</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council shall regulate the details of the plenary's tasks and its organisation in the rules of procedure for the bodies of the Research Council.

## **Chapter III Responsibilities in the Evaluation and Funding Procedure**

### **Section 1 Applications for grants**

#### **Article 17 Formal examination**

The formal examination of applications for grants in accordance with Articles 10 - 19 of the Funding Regulations and their rejection in the event of deficiencies is the responsibility of the Administrative Offices.

#### **Article 18 Non-consideration of clearly inadequate applications**

<sup>1</sup> The decision in accordance with Article 22 paragraph 2 of the Funding Regulations not to consider grant applications that are clearly inadequate in terms of content shall be made by the Administrative Offices as the final authority with the approval of the referee.

<sup>2</sup> A report shall be submitted each year on the applications rejected in this way.

#### **Article 19 Standard of the evaluation procedure and the funding decision**

<sup>1</sup> The scientific, criteria-based assessment of applications in accordance with Articles 24 ff. of the Funding Regulations shall be carried out by the evaluation panels.

<sup>2</sup> The Administrative Offices shall assign the applications received to referees from the relevant evaluation body for assessment.

<sup>3</sup> The referees shall appoint the experts for the external review in accordance with Article 25 of the Funding Regulations. They may delegate this task to the Administrative Offices.

<sup>4</sup> The evaluation panels may make a pre-selection of applications that they judge to be clearly eligible or ineligible.

<sup>5</sup> The assessment of the applications in the evaluation panel involves:



- a. the discussion of individual applications, based on the independent and substantiated presentations by the referees and taking account of the external assessment;
- b. individual ranking by the panel members according to a standardised scale;
- c. an overall ranking according to a recognised statistical method applied to the ranking by the panel members.

<sup>6</sup> The committees shall decide on the funding of the applications within the limits of the allocated funding in accordance with the overall ranking. They may order lots to be drawn if there is a group of applications are indistinguishable but of which only a limited number can be funded.

<sup>7</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council may provide for exceptions to the above provisions in the regulations and in calls for individual funding schemes.

#### **Article 20      Open access publication grants**

<sup>1</sup> The Administrative Offices shall decide on applications for open access publication grants.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council shall be informed annually about the nature and number of grants in accordance with paragraph 1.

### **Section 2      Further Requests and Reporting**

#### **Article 21      Applications for grants for completing the project**

<sup>1</sup> The committees shall have the final decision on applications for grants for completing the project.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council shall set maximum amounts for grants for completing the project, which are decided by a final decision:

- a. of the president of the committee at the request of the referee;
- b. or of the Administrative Offices.

<sup>3</sup> The committee responsible shall be informed annually about the practical aspects of applications for these grants, of the number of applications processed and of the decisions taken.

#### **Article 22      Applications without financial implications**

<sup>1</sup> The following shall have the power to issue a final decision on the matters specified:

- a. the committees, at the request of the referee, on the amendment or cancellation of a non-financial condition expressly specified in the funding decision and on significant changes to the research plan, in particular due to changes in the research infrastructure available for carrying out the research work;
- b. the referees, on the transfer of the research location to another institution;

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<sup>2</sup> See [Regulations on open access publication funding of 7 November 2017](#).

<sup>3</sup> See Art. 36 [Funding regulations](#) dated 27 February 2015 (Grants for completing the project) and [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#) of 9 Dec. 2015 ([Annex 4](#): Flexibility Grants; [Annex 5](#): Mobility grants for doctoral students; [Annex 6](#): Research time for clinicians; [Annex 7](#): Gender equality grant; [Annex 8](#): Exemption from teaching duties).

- c. the staff of the Administrative Offices, on all other requests from grant recipients that have no financial impact on the current total grant, such as personnel changes, changes in budget items or grant extensions without cost implications.

#### **Article 23 Additional personnel costs and balance transfers**

The Administrative Offices shall have the final decision on the granting of additional personnel costs in accordance with Section 6.4 of the General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations and on authorising balance transfers in response to an application for continuation in accordance with Section 6.5 of the General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations.

#### **Article 24 Requests for reconsideration**

<sup>1</sup> Requests for reconsideration shall be examined by the Administrative Offices.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> If there are no indications of any error in the decision, the Administrative Offices shall not consider the request for reconsideration.

<sup>3</sup> If there are indications of an error in the decision, the matter shall be submitted to the referee with a recommendation to consider the request for reconsideration.

<sup>4</sup> If the referee decides to reconsider the application, he or she shall submit a new decision proposal to the body responsible for assessment.

<sup>5</sup> The president of the relevant body shall review a decision of the referee not to reconsider the application. If there are doubts as to the reasons not to reconsider, the president may order an independent assessment by an expert. If the president decides that the application should be reconsidered, he or she shall submit a new decision proposal to the responsible body.

<sup>6</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council shall be informed each year by the bodies responsible about the practical aspects of requests for reconsideration, the number of requests made and the decisions taken.

#### **Article 25 Reports**

<sup>1</sup> The referees are responsible for reviewing and approving the scientific reports on funded research work. This task may be delegated to the Administrative Offices.

<sup>2</sup> The Administrative Offices is responsible for financial controls and, in particular, for checking and approving the financial reports on the grants awarded. They shall demand the repayment of any unused grants, subject to Articles 28 paragraph 2 and 29 paragraph 2.

#### **Article 26 Applications under the lead agency process**

<sup>1</sup> In the case of applications that are assessed favourably by a foreign lead agency, the SNSF shall decide on the amount of its grant and its conditions.

<sup>2</sup> After consulting the responsible referee for the committee, the Administrative Offices shall submit the decisions for approval.

<sup>3</sup> The Administrative Offices shall check the formal conditions for submitting an application (grant eligibility).

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<sup>4</sup> See also Article 30.

<sup>4</sup> If the SNSF is the lead agency, the responsibilities and procedures of the SNSF's ordinary application procedure apply.

#### **Article 27 Applications for grants for research semesters**

<sup>1</sup> The Administrative Offices shall decide on applications for grants for research semesters.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> They shall obtain a report from a member of the Research Council who is competent in the field of research concerned and, if necessary, an external expert opinion.

<sup>3</sup> The report submitted to the Academic Board of the Research Council is governed by Article 30.

### **Section 3 Funding Terminations and Repayment Claims**

#### **Article 28 Termination of grants**

<sup>1</sup> The Administrative Offices shall decide on the termination of a grant that has to be ordered because of a significant change or because the grant requirements are no longer complied with.

<sup>2</sup> The responsible committee shall decide on the termination of grants in accordance with Article 43 of the Funding Regulations that must be ordered because of misuse or a breach.

#### **Article 29 Repayment claims**

<sup>1</sup> Following the termination of a grant in accordance with Article 28 paragraph 1, the Administrative Offices shall decide on whether to claim the repayment of funds that have been paid out.

<sup>2</sup> Following the termination of a grant in accordance with Article 28 paragraph 2, the competent committee shall decide on whether to claim the repayment of funds that have been paid out.

### **Section 4 Procedures and Reporting by the Administrative Offices**

#### **Article 30 Procedure**

In unclear or complex cases, the Administrative Offices shall consult the referee or the president of the committee in the grant procedure.

#### **Article 31 Reporting**

The Administrative Offices shall report annually to the committee on the practical aspects of applications over which they have authority to take the final decision, the number of decisions taken and the decisions taken.

## **Chapter IV. Final and Transitional Provisions**

#### **Article 32 Repeal of previous law**

The following regulations are repealed:

- a. Organisational Regulations of the National Research Council of 14 November.2007.

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<sup>5</sup> [See regulations on contributions to research semesters for departing members of the Research Council dated 1 November 2011.](#)

- b. Implementing Regulations for the Organisational Regulations of the National Research Council of 13 February.2018.
- c. Organisational Regulations of the Careers Committee of 11 March 2008 with Annex.
- d. Organisational Regulations of the Interdisciplinary Research Committee of 4 May.2016.
- e. Organisational Regulations of the International Cooperation Committee of 11 March 2008.
- f. Regulations for the SNSF Equal Opportunities Commission of 7 May 2014.
- g. Organisational Regulations of the Evaluation Committee of the Swiss Programme for International Research Projects by Scientific Research Teams (SPIRIT) of 14 August.2018.

### **Article 33 Transitional and final provisions**

<sup>1</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council shall commence its activities on 1 January 2025. It shall ensure the proper fulfilment of the tasks and organisation of the Research Council's bodies during the transitional period.

<sup>2</sup> The divisions and specialised committees shall fulfil their duties in accordance with the previous law until 31 March 2025. The committees shall commence their activities on 1 April 2025. They shall set up the evaluation panels and standing specialist and working groups by 31 October 2025 at the latest. Evaluation panels under the new law may be set up before 31 March 2025 with the approval of the responsible section or the responsible specialised committee.

<sup>3</sup> The responsibilities and the procedure for assessing applications and making funding decisions are governed by the old law until 31 March 2025. The Academic Board of the Research Council is responsible for resolutions and decisions that are assigned to the Presiding Board of the Research Council. Evaluation and reconsideration procedures ongoing on 1 April 2025 shall be completed by the evaluation panels in accordance with the old law. Funding decisions shall be made by the new programme committee responsible for the respective scheme.

<sup>4</sup> The governing body of the Research Council shall regulate the details. It may stipulate different transitional provisions for individual funding schemes in the regulations and calls. It may provide for a different regulation:

- a. in accordance with paragraph 3 for the responsibilities and procedures for individual funding schemes, insofar as expressly reserved in regulations or calls;
- b. in the organisation of the sections and specialised committees in office until 31 March 2025, in particular to ensure their chairmanship and necessary elections.

<sup>5</sup> The Academic Board of the Research Council shall ensure an evaluation of the first four-year phase of the new organisation and shall define the criteria to be applied by the end of 2025 at the latest.

### **Article 34 Entry into force**

These Regulations come into force on 1 January 2025.

### **Article 35 Publication**

These Regulations shall be published on the SNSF website.

These Regulations were approved by the Foundation Council on 22 May 2024.