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Regulations on Sinergia grants

of 6 May 2015

The Research Council

based on Articles 3 and 48 of the Regulations on research grants (hereinafter "Funding Regulations")¹

issues the following Regulations:

Chapter 1 Sinergia grants

Article 1 Objectives and principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (hereinafter "the SNSF") awards Sinergia grants to support collaborative, interdisciplinary projects where breakthrough research is expected.

² Collaborative according to these Regulations means that the relevant research goals can only be achieved if two or more applicants combine their complementary expertise and knowledge in a new, joint research approach.

³ Interdisciplinary research according to these Regulations refers to research across disciplinary boundaries. In order to achieve the relevant research objectives, it is necessary to combine elements (theories, methods, concepts, etc.) from two or more disciplines. A similar degree of importance is attached to all the disciplines involved.

⁴ Breakthrough research according to these Regulations is distinguished by a high potential for shifting or invalidating paradigms. This type of research questions or goes beyond existing models, theories, doctrines, research approaches, methods, etc. It opens up new research fields and is often high-risk, high-reward.

¹ The revised Funding Regulations, which will enter into force in 2016, are relevant. All references to the Funding Regulations concern the new Regulations.

Article 2 Applicants for Sinergia grants

¹ At least two and at the most four applicants may submit an application for a Sinergia grant.

² Applicants may be based at two or more higher education institutions or other research institutions outside the higher education sector in Switzerland that are eligible for funding. One applicant may be based outside Switzerland if their expertise is essential and if the overall number of applicants for the relevant proposal is three or four.

³ The applicants requesting a Sinergia grant constitute a Sinergia consortium.

Article 3 Duration of funding, minimum and maximum grants

¹ The SNSF awards grants for at least one year and at the most four years.

² A maximum amount of CHF 3.2 million may be requested in a Sinergia application.

³ The minimum amount that may be requested is CHF 50,000. The SNSF does not consider applications for lower amounts.

Chapter 2 Personal and formal requirements for the submission of proposals

Article 4 Personal requirements, general

¹ Natural persons are eligible to submit applications if they meet the general eligibility requirements for the submission of applications pursuant to Article 10 of the Funding Regulations of the SNSF. The requirements set out in Article 13 of the Funding Regulations with regard to the proposed research must also be met.

² Applicants with a doctorate must have obtained the latter at least four years before submitting the application. Applicants without a doctorate must generally have completed three years of research work as their main source of income since obtaining their higher education degree.

³ Researchers who attain an independent research position less than four years after obtaining the doctorate may submit a Sinergia application as soon as they attain the said position.

⁴ Applicants must be in a position to carry out research projects under their own responsibility and to lead project staff both scientifically and as employees.

⁵ Applicants must make a substantial contribution to the proposed research and must be able to work independently without relying on instructions from third parties.

⁶ In addition, the provisions of Chapter 4 of these Regulations must be met.

Article 5 Other personal requirements

¹ Applicants must be able to show that

- a. they are conducting their research along with any scientific teaching activities to an extent equivalent to at least 50% FTE. Researchers devoting less than 50% of their time to scientific activities are eligible if their scientific research and teaching activities are usually carried out in the context of another professional activity;
- b. they are employed at least for the duration of the project at a research institution eligible to receive research funding from the SNSF or have been given assurance of such employment in writing; and

c. the necessary research infrastructure is at their disposal.

² The Sinergia consortium must have experience of organising and conducting research projects that is appropriate to the size and complexity of the proposed project.

Article 6 Formal requirements

¹ Grant applications must be submitted electronically to the SNSF.

² The SNSF issues a call for Sinergia proposals twice a year and publishes the relevant submission deadlines on its website.

³ In all other respects, any further formal requirements for the submission of applications apply, in particular the Funding Regulations of the SNSF and its Implementation Regulations.

Chapter 3 Applications and eligible costs

Article 7 Applications

¹ Applications for Sinergia grants must be submitted in accordance with the requirements issued by the SNSF for such grants and must contain all the necessary data and documents.

² Applicants must submit a joint research plan and describe the proposed research project, allocation of funding and collaboration between the participants in the Sinergia project.

³ In the application, one applicant must be designated as the representative of all applicants vis-à-vis the SNSF (corresponding applicant), which representation shall be legally binding. If the grant is approved, this applicant becomes the corresponding grantee. This person may not be outside Switzerland.

⁴ The applicants must submit a detailed budget setting out the costs incurred at the various institutions. The adequacy of the budget constitutes one of the assessment criteria.

⁵ The applicants are obliged to inform their employers or institutions about the Sinergia proposal.²

⁶ Applicants may only submit one Sinergia application per submission date.

Article 8 Eligible research costs

¹ The following costs are covered by Sinergia grants:

- a. the salaries of scientific and technical staff in research projects according to the salary ranges and rates prescribed by the SNSF;
- b. material costs that are directly related to the research work, namely material of enduring value, expendable items, field expenses, travel expenses, third-party charges, cost of computing time and data³ as well as of providing open access to research data⁴;
- c. direct costs incurred through the use of research infrastructure linked to the research work;
- d. costs and fees of scientific open access e-publications produced within the scope of the funded research;
- e. costs of organising conferences and workshops associated with the funded research;

² Amended following decision by the Research Council of 7 December 2016, in force with immediate effect.

³ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 9 December 2015, in force since 1 January 2016.

⁴ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 21 March 2017, in force since 1 April 2017.

f. Internal project coordination costs, particularly scientific coordination, workshops and other collaborative and networking activities associated with the funded research.

²The costs must be applied for and quantified in the proposal.

³The requirements for assumption of the costs are set out in separate provisions issued by the SNSF. In particular, the SNSF may set upper limits for individual cost categories as well as binding rates for salaries and minimum requirements in respect of employment positions. For applicants from abroad, the norms of the relevant country will be applied *mutatis mutandis*, with the SNSF maximum rates generally serving as an upper limit.

⁴The SNSF may award global budgets and approve transfers between the individual cost categories during the funding period. The details are set out in separate provisions of the SNSF.

Article 9 Eligible costs for career measures

¹ The following costs for career measures are covered:

- a. Flexibility grants⁵ of the SNSF for employees with care responsibilities;
- b. Mobility grants;
- c. Gender equality grant.

² Requirements for the assumption of costs and the ceilings set by the SNSF are laid down in the separate provisions issued by the SNSF for these grants.⁶

³ The grants must be requested in the applications or during the running time of the underlying grant. The SNSF may stipulate that the costs of some of these measures be debited to the grant without any corresponding request having been made. In such cases, the SNSF pays an additional amount (deficit guarantee) if the project funds prove to be insufficient.

Chapter 4 Applicants and submission of applications

Article 10 Applicants and project partners

¹ Pursuant to the requirements set out in Article 2, Sinergia applications are to be submitted by no fewer than two and no more than four applicants.

² Each applicant must meet the eligibility requirements for the submission of applications pursuant to these Regulations and the Funding Regulations, and each is personally responsible for the project.

³ Project partners are researchers who contribute to a research project by cooperating in it without being responsible for the project. They must be designated as such in the application. Project partners benefit from the SNSF grant in the measure of the services they provide to researchers participating in the project, such as analyses, etc. However, they do not count as (salaried) employees of the project and are not among those responsible for the project as a whole. They may not refer to the support received from the SNSF as a grant they have themselves acquired.

⁴ The relationship between the applicants and, after approval of the grant, between the grantees is governed by the Funding Regulations of the SNSF.

⁵ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 15 August 2017, in force since 1 January 2018.

⁶ General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

Article 11 Sinergia grants in relation to other forms of funding awarded by the SNSF; two or more Sinergia grants⁷

¹ During the running time of a Sinergia grant, grantees may receive grants from all SNSF funding schemes with the exception of Ambizione and PRIMA. Eccellenza grantees and SNSF professors may submit a Sinergia application two years after starting their grant at the earliest.

² Researchers may not be involved as grantees in more than one Sinergia project during the same funding period.

³ It is possible to apply for a Sinergia grant for the period after expiry of a support measure by the SNSF that was subject to the restrictions applicable to Sinergia. Overlaps of a few months are permissible.

⁴ A Sinergia application may only be submitted if, at the time of the submission deadline, no application for SNSF funding is being evaluated that falls under the restrictions on the Sinergia funding scheme. In addition, subject to paragraph 3, applicants must not have an ongoing grant that falls under these restrictions. The restrictions apply during the entire evaluation process. The SNSF does not consider applications that fail to meet these requirements.⁸

Article 12 Re-submission

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

² An application that has been rejected can be revised and re-submitted at the most twice.⁹

Chapter 5 Assessment criteria and grants

Article 13 Assessment criteria, scientific evaluation

¹ The relevant criteria for the award of Sinergia grants are the scientific quality of the research projects and the scientific qualifications of the applicant.

² Scientific evaluation is conducted in accordance with the criteria set out in Article 24 paragraph 2 of the Funding Regulations:

- a. scientific quality of the proposed research project: scientific relevance, topicality and originality, suitable methods, and feasibility;
- b. scientific qualifications of the researchers: scientific track record and ability to carry out the research project.

³ Within the scope of the criteria set out in paragraph 2, the Research Council considers the following points, in particular, when making decisions on Sinergia grants:

- a. whether the project comprises breakthrough research with a high potential for shifting or invalidating existing paradigms;
- b. the ability of the applicants to successfully conduct breakthrough research and whether their expertise and knowledge complement each other;

⁷ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 19 September 2017, in force since 1 November 2017.

⁸ Editorial amendment of 1 September 2018, in force with immediate effect.

⁹ Amended based on the decision of the National Research Council of 19 June 2018, in force as of 1 July 2018.

- c. whether the interdisciplinary collaboration is of high quality and adequately organised in view of the joint research objectives; and
- d. whether the requested budget is appropriate.

⁴ For applications in use-inspired basic¹⁰ research, the project's broader impact is considered in the evaluation.

Article 14 Grants

¹ Sinergia grants are awarded and managed according to the applicable rules of the SNSF, in particular the Funding Regulations of the SNSF and its Implementation Regulations.

² The grants are paid to the institution at which the corresponding grantee is employed. The corresponding grantee is responsible for forwarding the funds.

Article 15 Reporting

¹ Holders of Sinergia grants are obliged to submit reports to the SNSF in accordance with the requirements stipulated by the SNSF.

² In particular, after the start of the project the corresponding grantee must submit:

- a. a financial report every 12 months;
- b. output data regularly after 18 months;
- c. a scientific report after 24 months
- d. a final report upon conclusion of the project.

Chapter 6 Final Provisions

Article 16 Applicable law

Unless these Regulations provide otherwise, the provisions of the Funding Regulations of the SNSF and its Implementation Regulations apply.

Article 17 Transitional provisions

Sinergia grants awarded prior to the entry into force of these Regulations may be conducted according to the rules formerly in place. Follow-up applications according to the old regulations are no longer possible, however. Any rights assigned to grantees on approval of funding that are not in accordance with the new Regulations will nonetheless remain in force.

Article 18 Entry into force and repeal of existing regulations

These Regulations enter into force on 1 January 2016. They replace the Regulations of 20 September 2011.

¹⁰ Amendment of 27.10.2017, in force with immediate effect.