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Regulations on the Swiss Programme for International Research Projects by Scientific Investigation Teams (SPIRIT) (SPIRIT¹ Regulations)

of 14 August 2018

The National Research Council,

based on Article 9, paragraph 2, letter a, and Article 48 of the Funding Regulations of 27 February 2015²,

issues the following Regulations:

1. General provisions

Article 1 Objectives and principles

¹ The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) awards grants for international research projects by scientific investigation teams comprising researchers in Switzerland and in partner countries (SPIRIT grants).

² SPIRIT grants aim to:

- a. lower barriers to international cooperation and enable cross-border collaboration;
- b. enable researchers from all disciplines to conduct collaborative scientific projects with clearly defined goals in international research teams;
- c. foster cross-border institutional cooperation and increase scientific capacities in research communities in countries receiving development assistance;
- d. promote gender awareness and equal opportunities.

Article 2 Applicable law

SPIRIT grants are governed by these regulations and the other applicable SNSF regulations; in particular, the Funding Regulations and its implementation regulations apply³.

¹ SPIRIT: **S**wiss **P**rogramme for **I**nternational **R**esearch projects by scientific **I**nteraction **T**eams

² <http://www.snsf.ch> > Funding > Documents & Downloads > Regulations > Funding Regulations

³ <http://www.snsf.ch> > Funding > Documents & Downloads > Regulations > Implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

Article 3 Funding period and amount

¹ The maximum duration of a SPIRIT grant is four years, the minimum duration is two years.

² The maximum SPIRIT grant amount is 500,000 Swiss francs, the minimum amount 50,000 Swiss francs.

³ At least 30% of the approved amount must be spent in Switzerland and at least 30% in the partner country or countries.

Article 4 Partner countries

¹ The SNSF determines the eligible partner countries on the basis of the list of official development assistance recipients established by the OECD Development Assistance Committee⁴.

² The following countries are not eligible as partner countries:

- a. member countries of the European Union;
- b. countries associated to the 8th Research and Innovation Framework Programme of the European Union (2014–2020) “Horizon 2020” and forthcoming framework programmes;
- c. countries participating in a bilateral call with the SNSF.

2. Application requirements

Article 5 Personal requirements

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; applicants in partner countries must fulfill the requirements *mutatis mutandis*.

² Applicants with a doctorate must have obtained the latter four years before the submission date of 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. Such research work will be regarded as equivalent to a doctorate.

³ Researchers who assume an independent research post less than four years after obtaining the doctorate may submit project funding applications as soon as they assume 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 personnel.

⁵ Applicants must make a substantial contribution to the proposed research and their work must not be directed by instructions from third parties.

Article 6 Grants with overlapping funding periods

¹ A SPIRIT grant may not have an overlapping funding period with another SPIRIT grant, an Ambizione grant or a PRIMA grant.

² Eccellenza grantees and SNSF professors may submit a SPIRIT application at the earliest two years after starting their Eccellenza grant or their SNSF professorship.

³ The SNSF will only consider SPIRIT applications that meet the requirements set out in paragraphs 1 and 2.

⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/> > Departments > Development Cooperation Directorate > DAC List of ODA Recipients.

Article 7 Scientific investigation teams

¹ A scientific investigation team is composed of at least two and at the most four applicants.

² At least one applicant must conduct research in Switzerland and at least one applicant must conduct research in an eligible partner country.

³ Applicants must conduct research work:

- a. in Switzerland or with close links to Switzerland pursuant to Article 10, paragraph 2 of the Funding Regulations or
- b. in a partner country or with close links to a partner country pursuant to Article 10, paragraph 2 of the Funding Regulations.

³ The scientific investigation team is represented by an applicant based in Switzerland (the responsible applicant, who later becomes the corresponding grantee).

3. Proposals, eligible costs and budget

Article 8 Proposals

¹ The application process is divided into two phases: pre-proposal and full proposal.

² Pre-proposals may be submitted at any time. Full proposals may only be submitted upon invitation after approval of the pre-proposal.

³ All pre-proposals and full proposals must be submitted to the SNSF electronically in accordance with the general and the specific requirements for such grants.

Article 9 Temporal restrictions to submission

¹ Applicants whose pre-proposal was rejected may not submit a SPIRIT application for six months following the date of the ruling.

² Applicants whose pre-proposal was rejected after being assigned to one of the three lowest SNSF ranking categories out of six may not submit a SPIRIT application for 18 months following the date of the ruling.

Article 10 Eligible costs

¹ SPIRIT grants may be requested to cover the following costs:

- a. the salaries of scientific and technical staff in the SPIRIT project within the scope of the salary ranges and rates prescribed by the SNSF;
- b. material costs directly linked to the research work, namely material of enduring value, expendable items, field expenses, travel expenses, third-party charges, costs of computing time and data as well as costs of providing open access to research data;
- c. direct costs incurred through the use of research infrastructure linked to the research work;
- d. costs for the organisation of conferences and workshops in connection with the SPIRIT project or linked to project-related gender awareness-raising activities;
- e. costs for national and international cooperation and networking activities carried out in connection with the SPIRIT project.

² The following costs in particular are not covered:

- a. The applicants' own salaries;
- b. Overhead costs.

Article 11 Basis of calculation

¹ Eligible costs for the partner countries' part of the project may be increased by a maximum of 5% to cover general costs in connection with the research project.

² For employees' salaries paid in partner countries, the norms of the respective country will be applied mutatis mutandis, with the SNSF maximum rates generally serving as an upper limit.

³ Requirements for the coverage of costs are based on the provisions on eligible funds issued by the SNSF.

Article 12 Budget

¹ The SNSF awards global budgets.

² Transfers between individual cost categories are permissible subject to Article 3 paragraph 3.

4. Evaluation criteria and selection procedures

Article 13 Evaluation criteria

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

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

² The proposal is evaluated based on the following criteria:

- a. scientific relevance;
- b. originality of the aims and objectives;
- c. suitability of the methodology, feasibility;
- d. track record and expertise of the researchers;
- e. complementarity of the research partners;
- f. contribution to increasing scientific capacities in the relevant research field; and
- g. contribution towards raising gender awareness and promoting equal opportunities.

³ If proposals are scientifically equivalent, proposals by female applicants, or proposals that show better gender awareness, are given priority.

Article 14 Selection procedure

¹ The selection procedure is divided into two phases. In the first phase, applications are selected for the second phase based on the submitted pre-proposals. If necessary, pre-proposals can be sent to external experts for review. 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 set out.

² For the second phase, the SNSF has the research proposals reviewed by external experts based on the detailed research plan. The evaluation commission assesses the applications based on the reviews and written assessments by its members and makes a comparative overall assessment.

³ The decisions made in the second phase are communicated to the applicants in the form of a written ruling in which the reasons for the decision are set out.

5. Grants and grant administration

Article 15 Grants and grant administration

¹ SPIRIT grants are paid and administered in accordance with SNSF regulations and guidelines.

² The payments are made to the grant administration office, exclusively for attention of the corresponding grantee.

Article 16 Project implementation and changes to the project

¹ SPIRIT grants must be used according to the conditions set out in the ruling.

² Grantees must report to the SNSF and the grant administration office without delay any substantial changes in circumstances relating to the awarded grant.

³ The SNSF may approve specific changes to the project, provided the grantees can present substantial reasons for the changes.

Article 17 Reporting, reimbursements

¹ The corresponding grantee must submit to the SNSF:

- a. an interim financial report every twelve months and a final financial report at the end of the project;
- b. an interim scientific report at project mid-term and a final scientific report at the end of the project;
- c. output data regularly after 18 months.

² In the scientific reports, the project's contribution to increase scientific capacities must be addressed.

³ At the end of the project, any surplus funds must be reimbursed to the SNSF.

6. Final provisions

Article 18 Entry into force

These Regulations enter into force on 1 January 2019.