

Horizon Europe Transitional Measures: Call document for SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships 2021

Switzerland is considered a non-associated third country for project proposals in Horizon Europe and other related programmes and calls under Work Programme 2021. For monobeneficiary schemes such as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Postdoctoral Fellowships, therefore, early-career researchers with destination Switzerland are not eligible to apply for European fellowships. For this reason, the SNSF is offering an alternative, comparable call for proposals as part of the transitional measures in 2021. The aim is to maintain Switzerland's strong position as a research hub. Applicants who intended to apply for an MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship to pursue research and training in Switzerland under Horizon Europe can submit their proposal to the SNSF. This document sets out the rules and procedures for submitting a proposal to the transitional **SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships Call 2021**. Key characteristics of the funding scheme are summarised in **Box 1**.

Box 1. Key characteristics of the SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships Call 2021

- The scheme is **open to all** research disciplines and topics.
- **Applicants must** have a **PhD degree** and **not more than eight years** of postdoctoral experience. They want to pursue **further scientific training** at a non-commercial research institution in Switzerland for **12-24 months**.
- The grant includes the **postdoctoral fellow's salary** with social security contributions, financial contributions to research and conference costs.
- The proposal is submitted in one step and must include the **research plan**, the **CV and major scientific achievements**, the **research output list**, the **career plan**, the **host institute's confirmation** and the **supervisor's support letter**.
- The **evaluation** will be carried out remotely based on expert reviews in a single step and without interviews.
- The following **evaluation criteria** apply: '**excellence**', '**impact**', and '**quality and efficiency of the implementation**'.
- Host institutions and supervisors must agree to **ensure suitable conditions** so that the applicants can receive the **appropriate training and support**.
- The call will open on **15 October 2021** and close on **15 December 2021**. Applicants must **pre-register by 15 November 2021** and provide the following information via mySNF (www.mysnf.ch): summary of application, host institution, disciplines and keywords.
- The applicants will be informed of the final decisions in **June 2022**. The projects can start at the earliest **in July 2022**.
- The funding of the projects is expressly **subject** to the financing decision of the Parliament.

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1. Eligibility criteria

1.1 Applicant

Proposals for the SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships Call 2021 may be submitted by researchers of any nationality from all disciplines for a duration of 12-24 months. The following criteria apply:

Degree:

- At the time of submission, applicants must hold a **doctoral degree (PhD)**¹ to be eligible as **postdoctoral researchers**.
- Applicants who have defended their doctoral thesis but not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will also be considered postdoctoral researchers and eligible. An official document confirming that they have successfully passed the doctoral exam is required.

Eligibility window:

- Proposals must be submitted **within 8 years** after the obtainment of the relevant degree, i.e. the doctoral degree (PhD)². The relevant date is that of the examination or thesis defence.
- This time window may be extended if one or more of the reasons set out in Clause 1.11 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations³ are met. The reasons for extending the time window must be outlined in the proposal.

Mobility rule:

- Applicants must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Switzerland for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately prior to the submission deadline.

Work quota:

- Applicants must in general commit themselves as grantees to a work quota of 100% (1.0 FTE). A part-time work quota corresponding to at least 80% (0.8 FTE) is possible if the grantee has clinical, or care duties, or pursues courses at a higher education institution to further his/her career.
- Researchers doing clinical work must devote at least 80% of the funded work quota to the project and training related to the project.

Other forms of funding offered by the SNSF:

- The applicant may also submit a proposal to another SNSF career funding scheme (e.g. Ambizione)⁴, provided the formal requirements of the corresponding scheme are also met. However, double funding for the same research project is explicitly excluded. The

¹ A medical doctor degree will be accepted only if it corresponds to a doctoral degree (PhD, MD-PhD) or if the researcher has been demonstrably appointed to a position that requires doctoral equivalency (e.g. professorship appointment thanks to a Staatsexamen or equivalent exam). Medical doctor degrees corresponding to basic medical training (e.g. MD, see also Annex V of Directive 2005/36/EC) will not be accepted as a doctoral degree.

² Or, for applicants with a medical doctor degree, the relevant degree (MD-PhD) or equivalency pursuant to the previous footnote.

³ <http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/snsf-general-implementation-regulations-for-the-funding-regulations-e.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.snf.ch/en/48YVbNHGCW52J2TW/page/funding/careers>

applicant has to inform the SNSF about any parallel career grants submitted to or received from the SNSF.

1.2 Host institutions

The host institution must be established in Switzerland as a legal entity (public or private). Higher education institutions or non-commercial research institutions outside the higher education sector that are domiciled in Switzerland and whose basic financing is predominantly Swiss according to Swiss law are eligible.

In principle, the SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowship is awarded for a continuous stay in Switzerland of 12-24 months. It is possible, however, to conduct short research stays at different host institutions for the maximum total duration of one third of the SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowship. These additional host institutions can either be higher education institutions or institutions operating in applied fields (industry, administration, etc; intersectoral mobility). During the period spent at another host institution, the grantee remains employed at the host institution in Switzerland.

Before applying, please discuss the conditions of the project and how you intend to carry it out with the supervisor at the host institution. A formal confirmation by the host institution as well as a commitment letter from the supervisor is required.

2. Formal requirements, ethical issues and research integrity

2.1 Legal basis

The general provisions of the SNSF (Funding Regulations⁵ and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations⁶) apply to the SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships Call 2021 and the corresponding funding procedures. This call document is issued by the Presiding Board of the National Research Council under a mandate from the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) to set up a transitional measure for the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2021 (HORIZON-MSCA-2021-PF-01) call.

2.2 User account in mySNF

The applicant must have a mySNF user account. Registration is via www.mysnf.ch. New user accounts must be requested **no later than two working days before the pre-registration deadline** (see Section 4 below). The mySNF access will remain in place for future submissions or the lifetime management of approved projects.

2.3. Ethics and integrity

Applicants need to declare research activities and methods that have ethical implications or that may raise questions requiring sound ethical assessment. Hence, please take note of the Swiss laws and ethical standards. Furthermore, the rules on research integrity and good scientific practice must be strictly respected⁷.

⁵ https://media.snf.ch/UBa5QinDpnNjssV/snsf-funding_relations_2015_e.pdf

⁶ <https://media.snf.ch/u3qMhSLP21vefBd/snsf-general-implementation-regulations-for-the-funding-regulations-e.pdf>

⁷ http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/ueb_org_fehlverh_gesuchstellende_e.pdf

2.4 Open access

Under the SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships Call 2021, grantees must guarantee open access to all peer-reviewed scientific publications of their results as set out in the SNSF Funding Regulations and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations.

3. Budget

SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships cover the **grantee's salary**, including social security contributions⁸. The SNSF determines the salary for postdocs by agreement with the research institution and in accordance with the salary scales applied by the institution to researchers with comparable qualifications. The SNSF may set an upper limit for the salary.

As outlined above (1.1. Work quota), for researchers doing clinical work, the SNSF covers only the share of the salary awarded for the research work (at least 80%). The share allocated for clinical work (up to 20%) must be financed by the research institution.

Project funds, including research costs directly linked to the implementation of the project, training and networking contributions, are also covered. Project funds must not exceed CHF 24'000 for a two-year grant. If the duration of the SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowship is less than 2 years, the maximum amount will be proportionately smaller.

Indirect costs: no input required. The SNSF will calculate an overhead and pay it directly to the host institution.

4. Pre-registration

Applicants have to pre-register by 15 November 2021, 17:00 Swiss local time, by providing the following information via mySNF: a one-page summary of their proposal, host institution, disciplines and keywords for the planned project. The sections to be completed in mySNF are given in Box 2. As the final step of the pre-registration, applicants have to send an e-mail to spf@snf.ch to confirm their registration. The SNSF uses the information exclusively for organisational purposes relating to the evaluation process; it will not be used in the evaluation itself.

Box 2. Mandatory pre-registration until 15 November 2021

Please fill out and confirm the following 3 sections in mySNF:

- 1) Designated host lab/institution
- 2) Basic data I (incl. project title, disciplines)
- 3) Basic data II (incl. draft summary, keywords)

Important: you will have to send an email to spf@snf.ch confirming the completion of your pre-registration.

⁸ For further information about salary ranges for postdocs and social security contributions, please see: https://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_doktorierende_e.pdf

5. Online application process

5.1. Required documents

All documents must be in **English**. The font must be Times New Roman, Arial or similar with a size of at least 11, single line spacing and margins of 2 cm on the side and 1.5 cm at the bottom. The documents must be submitted in PDF format.

The following documents must be included in the application and uploaded to the corresponding data containers. The details and instructions are provided in the "Guidelines for SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships applications via mySNF" (available with the opening of the call). Additional information about each required document can be found directly on mySNF in the corresponding data container.

- Research plan: max. 10 pages, the template in mySNF must be used
- CV and major scientific achievements: max. 4 pages
- Research output list
- Career plan: max. 1 page
- Copy of degree certificates / diplomas
- Confirmation from the host institution
- Support letter from the supervisor

5.2. Creating a new application

To create a new application, please select the option "Create new application" on the mySNF home page by navigating to the relevant funding scheme under **Programmes > EU Transitional Measures > SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships**. The data concerning the applicant and the application must be entered in the mySNF entry mask. The data includes the title, the discipline(s), keywords, any relation to other ongoing projects and current proposals, the host institution and the budget.

5.3. Receipt and verification at the SNSF

Verification of formal requirements and eligibility

- **Pre-registration:** After receiving the applicant's email that pre-registration is complete, the Administrative Offices of the SNSF will send a confirmation.
- **Online application:** The SNSF Administrative Offices check whether all proposals are from eligible applicants and meet the formal requirements. Proposals that do not meet the eligibility or formal criteria are rejected.

Verification of research integrity and good scientific practice

The Administrative Offices of the SNSF may check whether the application respects the rules of scientific integrity (see Regulations of the National Research Council on the treatment of scientific misconduct by applicants and grantees⁹).

Contacts between applicants and the SNSF

Queries can be addressed to the Administrative Offices of the SNSF by phone (+41 31 308 22 22) or email (spf@snf.ch). When checking submitted proposals, the

⁹ http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/ueb_org_fehlverh_gesuchstellende_e.pdf

Administrative Offices may contact applicants to clarify issues related to the application. Before, during and after the evaluation, the applicants are obliged to:

- provide any information requested by the SNSF
- cooperate in clarifying facts

The SNSF cannot give applicants any information on the evaluation of their proposals while the evaluation is in progress and until the decision is communicated in writing.

6. Evaluation procedure and communication of the decision

The National Research Council of the SNSF and the evaluation bodies it appoints are responsible for the scientific evaluation and for making funding decisions.

The evaluation will be conducted in a fully remote setting. Discipline-specific experts will evaluate proposals that meet the formal requirements. Two reviewers per application will independently prepare separate evaluation reports. In special cases, additional experts may be consulted.

The following assessment criteria are applied:

- Excellence
- Impact
- Quality and efficiency of the implementation

Evaluation scores are given for each of these criteria and calculated to a final numerical score. Proposals are ranked based on the final score awarded by the individual reviewers in their evaluations, according to the best practice evaluation principles applied by the SNSF. Funding decisions on proposals of similar scientific quality around the funding line may be reached by drawing lots.

Outcome of the evaluation and communication of decisions

Proposals will be funded in order of priority based on their rank and the available funding. The funding of the projects is expressly subject to the financing decision of the Parliament. The SNSF communicates the decision taken for each application in the form of a ruling (decision letter). The ruling may be appealed against before the Federal Administrative Court.

7. Administration of grants

7.1 Grants, start of grants and changes

SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships are awarded, transferred and managed according to the rules issued by the SNSF, particularly the provisions of the Funding Regulations and its Implementation Regulations.

The payments (in Swiss francs) are made to the grant administration office of the host institution.

Grantees should start their SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowship within 12 months after receiving the ruling (decision letter); otherwise, the grant is forfeited.

In case of any changes to the research project or the conditions for conducting it, the applicant is asked to consult the SNSF in advance for approval.

7.2 Non-acceptance or premature termination

If grantees decide not to pursue the SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowship or have to terminate their research prematurely, they must notify the SNSF immediately in writing, stating their reasons for doing so.

They must reimburse the SNSF the awarded grant for the salary and other eligible costs *pro rata temporis*.

7.3 Reporting

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

8. Annex

Overview of deadlines

Opening of the call	15 October 2021
Pre-registration deadline	15 November 2021
Submission deadline	15 December 2021
Evaluation	April-May 2022
Communication of results	June 2022
Earliest start of grants	July 2022