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Switzerland

Sino-Swiss Science and Technology Cooperation SSSTC 2021

Joint Research Projects: Call for Proposals 2021

Opening date: 24.03.2021

Deadline for voluntary pre-registration: 21.05.2021

Closing date:

18.06.2021 (Switzerland)

21.06.2021 (China)

A maximum of 15 projects can be funded based on the call

1. Introduction

The Sino-Swiss Science and Technology Cooperation (SSSTC) was initiated by the Chinese and Swiss governments in 2003 in order to forge ahead with bilateral cooperation in scientific and technological areas of strategic relevance to both countries. The cooperation is based on the principles of shared interests, scientific excellence and bilateral funding (matching funds).

The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) are determined to strengthen and develop the mutually beneficial research cooperation between Switzerland and China and have therefore agreed on launching a joint call for proposals to fund Joint Research Projects (JRPs).

2. Joint Research Projects

Grants for Joint Research Projects (JRPs) are aimed at promoting collaborative projects with clearly defined goals, involving at least one partner based in Switzerland and one based in China. Applications should describe ambitious research and propose innovative approaches. The research is to be carried out at the research facilities involved; reciprocal visits and short stays in Switzerland for researchers from China and vice versa are also possible within the scope of a JRP.

The project duration is 4 years. Proposals with a shorter duration will not be accepted.

3. Research fields

In order to make targeted use of the financial resources available, the following thematic areas¹ were chosen for this call:

- Chemical Sciences
- Life Sciences
- Management Sciences
- Health Sciences

Proposals outside the thematic areas defined above will not be accepted. Please note that the evaluation panel is responsible for deciding whether a proposal meets the thematic criteria for the present call.

Please note that an additional call for proposals dedicated to the Mathematical and Physical Science, Earth Sciences, Engineering and Material Sciences and Information Science is planned to be launched within the next two years (schedule still needs to be defined).

4. Eligibility

Each proposal for a JRP must have at least one main applicant based in Switzerland and one main applicant based in China; they are the lead scientists on the Swiss and the Chinese side respectively. They bear the main responsibility for the project, including its technical and administrative coordination as well as the timely delivery of scientific and financial reports. Further applicants based in Switzerland and/or in China may also participate in the consortia.

¹ Further information regarding the research domains to be included in the present call can be found in annex 2.

Eligibility criteria in Switzerland

Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements of the SNSF. The SNSF [Funding Regulations](#), the [General implementation regulations](#) and the [Regulations on Project Funding](#) are applicable, or applicable mutatis mutandis, where not stated otherwise. If two or more applicants from Switzerland plan to jointly submit an application, each of them must meet the eligibility requirements for the submission of applications. Each applicant (main or further) may only apply for one project.

Applicants can submit a proposal to the joint bilateral call even when they hold another SNSF grant or have applied for one. Moreover, grantees may submit proposals to all SNSF funding schemes during the funding period of a JRP, provided that there is no substantial thematic overlap. This provision also applies to the career funding schemes Eccellenza, SNSF Professorships, Ambizione and PRIMA. Please note that the present call is not in conflict with the restrictions applicable to the SNSF's national project funding in accordance with Article 13 of the Regulations on Project Funding.

Project partners as described in Article 11.2 of the SNSF Funding Regulations are not entitled to receive funds from the SNSF if their affiliated institution is located in China.

Eligibility criteria in China

Please refer to the NSFC call for specific rules and regulations.

5. Funding

JRP proposals include two separate budgets: one budget in CHF for the Swiss applicant or applicants (paid by the SNSF according to the SNSF's rules) and one budget in RMB for the Chinese applicant or applicants (paid by the NSFC according to the NSFC's rules). The two countries have agreed to fund up to 15 projects if a sufficient number of proposals of high quality are submitted.

- The total budget available in **Switzerland** is CHF 5,250,000. The maximum budget available for the Swiss side of a project is **CHF 350,000** for a 4-year project.
- The total budget available in **China** is **RMB 45,000,000**. The maximum budget available for the Chinese side of a project is **RMB 3,000,000** for a 4-year project.

Eligible costs in Switzerland

- Personnel costs (salaries and social security contributions of scientific and technical employees); please note that the salaries of applicants are not covered;
- Material costs, if they are directly linked to the research project, in particular material of enduring value, the cost of expendable items, field expenses, travel costs or expenses of third parties;
- The costs associated with the use of infrastructure directly linked to the implementation of the research;
- Costs for granting access to research data (Open Research Data, max. CHF 10,000 per project);
- Costs of organising conferences and workshops in the context of the funded research;
- Costs of national and international cooperation and networking activities directly associated with the funded research.

The SNSF regulations apply to the Swiss budget. However, overhead costs are not admissible. Please note that coverage of costs for Open Access publications can be requested via the OA platform of the SNSF.

Eligible costs in China

Please refer to the NSFC call for the relevant information.

Visiting costs between Switzerland and China

When budgeting visits between the Swiss and Chinese partners, both the expenses related to international travel and the living expenses (local accommodation etc.) must be charged to the budget of the visiting side. Overseas health/medical insurance must be included in the budget of the visiting side. Research visits between Switzerland and China must be balanced in number and duration. The following flat rates must be used:

For researchers based in Switzerland who visit China (covered by Swiss budget):

- Living expenses:
 - Short-term visits (up to two weeks): CHF 160 per day
- Long-term visits: CHF 3,000 per month
- Travel expenses:
 - Costs of up to CHF 1,600 per person (airfare tickets must be economy class)

For researchers based in China who visit Switzerland:

Please refer to the NSFC call for the relevant information.

6. Submission

Submission to the SNSF:

Proposals must be jointly prepared by Swiss and Chinese applicants. They must be submitted by the Swiss main applicant to the SNSF via its electronic submission system (*mySNF*, www.mysnf.ch). Chinese partners can have access to the electronic submission system through their Swiss partner. Please note that the Chinese applicant must upload the joint proposal into the NSFC system as well. A PDF document containing all information from *mySNF* can be generated right before the application is submitted.

Pre-registration: In order to facilitate the composition of the evaluation panel, main applicants are strongly encouraged to create an application in *mySNF* as early as possible and fill in the data containers “Basic data I” and “Basic Data II” to indicate the disciplines and provide an outline of the planned research. The deadline for pre-registration is 21 May 2021. Only the data containers corresponding to the information mentioned above need to be filled out in *mySNF* by this pre-registration deadline and they can also be re-edited after the pre-registration and until the final submission deadline.

Submission to the NSFC:

Chinese applicants shall submit the proposals to the ISISN platform according to procedures detailed in the corresponding NSFC call for proposals (<https://isisn.nsfc.gov.cn/egrantweb/>).

Researchers are requested to note that all applications must be submitted via the SNSF online system *mySNF* **as well as** the NSFC ISISN platform, as indicated above. Applications submitted

only in China and not via the SNSF online system in Switzerland (or vice versa) will not be evaluated.

No hard copies will be accepted on the Swiss side. The evaluation process is very competitive and only highly rated applications will be considered for funding. Neither the SNSF nor the NSFC will be held responsible for non-submission of an application.

Submission on mySNF: After logging into *mySNF*, first select the correct funding scheme as follows: *Programmes (national and international) > Bilateral Cooperation (Initiatives of the State Secretary for Education, Research and Innovation) > Sino-Swiss Science and Technology Cooperation 2021 (SSSTC)*.

The application consists of two parts:

- The *administrative part*, which must be completed online
 - Personal data of the main applicant based in Switzerland
 - Personal data of the main applicant based in China
 - Personal data of any further applicants from Switzerland and/or China
 - Information on the employments
 - Basic data on the project (e.g. title, research field, starting date, duration, summary)
 - Funding requested from the SNSF (funding requested from NSFC has to be added in the research plan)
 - Information on authorisations required in Switzerland
 - Data Management Plan (DMP)
 - Other information (e.g. whether the project is related to other SNSF projects, the name of the Swiss university/research institution at which the planned project will be implemented, statement concerning already available funds or funds requested elsewhere)
- *Project documentation* (in PDF format), which is to be uploaded to *mySNF*
 - Research plan (must have the structure indicated in Annex 1)
 - CVs and research output lists of all applicants (see [Guidelines](#))
 - Equipment quotes (if applicable)
 - Other documents

All the information provided in the administrative part and all uploaded documents must be in English.

For specific questions related to www.mysnf.ch, please contact the support team by e-mail (mysnf.support@snf.ch) or telephone (+41 31 308 22 00). Please note that you need a user account in order to submit proposals via *mySNF*. To open an account on *mySNF*, please register with the SNSF as a user. Applicants with existing user accounts need not apply for new ones.

The proposal must include a Data Management Plan (DMP) set up according to the requirements issued by the SNSF. The proposal can only be submitted once the DMP has been completed. Applicants must enter a DMP that is understandable, suits their project and meets the standards set by their research community. **At this stage, the DMP is considered a draft. It is excluded from the evaluation process and will not be shared with external reviewers.** The definitive DMP must be provided by the end of the project at the latest. Please note that researchers are requested to share at least the data underlying their publications, but only to the extent to make

the published results reproducible. This data should be shared as soon as possible, but at the latest together with the relevant scientific publication.

The content of the DMP is entered directly in the *mySNF* submission form. It is not possible to upload a DMP as a separate PDF file. Please remember to reserve enough time for completing the DMP during the submission process.

All submitted documents must comply with the principles of scientific integrity. All applicants take responsibility for the correctness of their contributions. If the project plan is not written in accordance with the rules of good scientific practice all applicants are accountable and may be asked to provide a statement; ultimately the project may not be considered. Reference is made to internationally recognised standards on good scientific practice as well as to the SNSF's Research [Integrity Regulations](#).

Deadline for voluntary pre-registration: 21 May 2021

Deadline for submission of applications

Switzerland: 18 June 2021, 5 pm local time

China: 21 June 2021, 4 pm local time

Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

7. Evaluation

Peer review: Proposals for JRPs will be reviewed according to standard international procedures for peer reviews, based on best efforts and jointly organised by the SNSF and the NSFC. The external experts will review the applications according to a score system to guarantee the scientific quality of JRPs.

Evaluation panel: An evaluation panel will be appointed, composed of experts proposed by the SNSF and the NSFC. Based on the peer reviews, the evaluation panel will assign each project to one out of six evaluation categories. Recommendations will include rationale. Priority will be given to applications in the highest categories, regardless of the research area.

Decision: The joint evaluation panel will select the proposals to be funded. At the SNSF, the funding recommendation will need to be approved by the Specialised Committee for International Co-operation and the Presiding Board. In addition, formal approval by the NSFC Committee is required. Only those projects will be considered for funding that are jointly approved by the decision-making bodies of both funding organisations.

Evaluation criteria: (not listed in order of priority)

- Scientific relevance
- Originality of the aims and objectives
- Appropriateness of the methodology and feasibility
- Track record and expertise of the researchers
- Complementarity of the research partners

The evaluation results will be communicated to the applicants in December 2021.

The Swiss main applicant will receive a letter from the SNSF notifying them of the funding decision. In case of rejection, the main reasons will be shared with the applicants. In case of approval, the Swiss budget and the conditions will be listed. The main applicant in Switzerland will be responsible for forwarding the letter to any other Swiss co-applicants. The rejection is not subject to appeal.

Starting date for the JRP in China: 1 January 2022

Starting date for the JRP in Switzerland: between 1 January and 30 June 2022

It is recommended that both research groups start their projects at the same time.

8. Reporting

Researchers based in Switzerland and China must report separately to the SNSF and the NSFC respectively.

In Switzerland:

The Swiss main applicant will be responsible for reporting to the SNSF. Both for the financial and the scientific report, the standard SNSF regulations will apply. Financial and scientific reports must be submitted annually. They must include a qualitative and a quantitative part (output data).

In China:

The standard NSFC rules apply.

9. Payments

In Switzerland (SNSF funding)

Standard SNSF rules apply. In principle, the budgets for JRPs are transferred in annual instalments to the Swiss principle investigator (PI) at the beginning of each project year.

In China:

The standard NSFC rules apply.

10. VAT

In Switzerland (SNSF funding)

The JRP grants are not subject to VAT or other taxes and charges. However, research expenses are not excluded from VAT. Therefore, all costs budgeted in a JRP (e.g. equipment, consumables, etc.) can be charged to the programme, VAT included, unless the research institution (e.g. universities, public research organisations, etc.) is able to recover the VAT.

11. Publications and intellectual property

The PIs are obliged to publish research results generated by the JRPs in appropriate form and according to SNSF and NSFC standards.

In accordance with article 44 of the [SNSF Funding Regulations](#), the rights to the research results gained in the course of a project funded by the SNSF and the intellectual property rights are owned

by the grantees and/or their employer. It is the responsibility of each grantee to ensure the efficient protection and correct distribution of any intellectual property arising from the accomplishments of the joint research projects.

12. Further information and contacts

In Switzerland

Swiss National Science Foundation
Timothy Ryan
Interdisciplinary and International Co-operation division
Wildhainweg 3, P.O. Box 8232 CH-3001
Bern
Phone: +41 31 308 23 95
E-mail: international@snf.ch
Website: www.snf.ch

In China

National Natural Science Foundation of China
Xu Jin
Programme Manager
Tel: 0086 010 62325351
E-mail: xujin@nsfc.gov.cn
Website: www.nsfc.gov.cn

Annex 1: Guidelines for writing the research plan (scientific part of the proposal)

The research plan must **not exceed 20 pages and 80,000 characters (with spaces)**; this includes title or front page, summary, footnotes, illustrations, formulae, tables (and, if applicable, the table of contents), but not the bibliography. A minimum of **point 10 font size and 1.5 line spacing** must be used.

The SNSF and the NSFC will not consider applications that do not meet the formal requirements and/or are manifestly inadequate.

The research plan needs to be structured as follows:

1. Summary of the research plan

Should include the most important features of your research plan and place your project in a broader scientific context (max. 8,000 characters).

2. Research plan

2.1 Current state of research in the field

By citing the most important publications in the relevant field, please set out the scientific background and basis of the project, explain the need to perform research on the topic you propose and briefly describe important research currently being conducted internationally.

2.2 Current state of own research and partnership aspect

- Please describe briefly the work done by the different applicants in the relevant research field or in related fields and indicate the relevant publications.
- Explain how the different applicants complement each other for the proposed research project.
- Describe past collaborations that involved the Swiss and Chinese partners (if applicable).

2.3 Detailed research plan

Against the background described in sections 2.1 and 2.2, state the aims that you plan to achieve during the lifetime of the project. Please consider the following points:

- Which investigations and/or experiments do you plan to carry out/are necessary to achieve the stated aims?
- What is the rationale for getting the project started and how do you intend to develop the work later on?
- What is the expected added value (synergistic benefit) of the collaboration?

Information concerning the methods necessary to achieve the aims:

- Which methods do you intend to use?
- Which of these methods still need to be developed?

Data and data collection:

- Which data are available to you, and from where?
- Which data still need to be collected?

2.4 Work division, schedule and milestones

- Please indicate how you plan to divide the work among the different partners.
- As far as possible, please give an approximate schedule for the work to be carried out within the project and indicate the most important milestones. In particular, please describe the major tasks of the staff to be employed within the project by the different partners.
- List the planned visits between the Swiss and Chinese research groups (visiting scientist, hosting scientist, purpose of visit, date and duration of visit).

2.5 Importance, impact and results

Scientific importance and impact

Please describe briefly the importance of your research for the scientific community and the impact you expect from the project on research, training and teaching in your field/discipline. Please indicate how you will publish/communicate your results.

Expected results and dissemination plan

Describe in detail the project outcomes you envisage. Explain how you will share these findings with stakeholders and the community. Address the potential for knowledge transfer to industry (if applicable).

Broader impact

If your application concerns use-inspired research, please indicate whether and to what extent the proposed project will have a broader impact and what this impact will be. The following points should be addressed:

- Need for research as perceived by practitioners/industry: are there any knowledge gaps? Are innovations and improvements expected?
- Transferability of results: to what degree can research results be put into practice?
- Other potential impacts: in which spheres outside science could the implementation of the research results entail changes and what is the nature of these changes?

3. Bibliography (does not count to the 20 pages)

4. Ethical, safety and regulatory issues (does not count to the 20 pages)

Does your proposed work raise ethical, safety or regulatory issues? If yes, how will you deal with them?

Please indicate whether the proposed research includes:

| | Switzerland (yes/no) | China (yes/no) |
|--|----------------------|----------------|
| Research on humans | | |
| Research on human embryonic stem cells | | |
| Research on animals | | |
| Research on GMO or pathogens | | |

5. Requested funds (does not count to the 20 pages)

| Year | Total budget requested | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| | China | Switzerland |
| 1yr | (RMB) | (CHF) |
| 2yr | | |
| 3yr | | |
| 4yr | | |
| TOTAL | | |

Swiss applicants additionally need to fill in the detailed budget in *mySNF*.

Annex 2: Eligible Disciplines for the first call, launched in 2021

Chemical Sciences:

- Synthetic Chemistry
- Catalysis and Surface/Interface Chemistry
- Chemical Theory and Mechanism
- Materials Chemistry and Energy Chemistry
- Chemical Metrology
- Environmental Chemistry
- Chemical Biology
- Chemical Engineering and Industrial Chemistry

Life Sciences:

- Microbiology
- Botany
- Zoology
- Genetics and Bioinformatics
- Cell Biology
- Developmental Biology and Reproductive Biology
- Immunology
- Neurosciences and Psychology
- Physiology and Integrative Biology
- Biophysics and Biochemistry
- Biomaterials, Imaging and Tissue Engineering
- Molecular Biology and Biotechnology
- Ecology
- Forestry and Grassland Sciences
- Basic Agriculture and Crop Sciences
- Food Sciences
- Plant Protection
- Horticulture and Plant Nutrition
- Animal Husbandry
- Veterinary Sciences
- Aquatic Sciences

Management Sciences:

- Management Science and Engineering
- Business Management
- Macro Administration and Policy
- Economic Science

Health Sciences:

- Breath, Cycling, Blood
- Digestive, Urinary, Endocrine, Eye, ENT, Oral Sciences
- Neurological, Psychiatric, Geriatric Medicine
- Reproductive, Perinatal, Neonatal, Medical Immunology
- Medical Imaging, Biomedical Engineering, Special Medicine, Forensic Medicine
- Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases

- Movement Disorders, Trauma
- Burns, Surgery, Severe Acute Medicine
- Laboratory Medicine, Rehabilitation Medicine
- Oncology
- Skin, Preventive Medicine, Science Endemic
- Occupational Medicine
- Radiology
- Pharmacology
- Traditional Chinese Medicine
- Chinese Materia Medica
- Integration of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Western Medicine

Eligible Disciplines for the second call, launched in 2023

Mathematical and Physical Sciences:

- Mathematical Sciences
- Mechanics
- Astronomy
- Physical Sciences

Earth Sciences:

- Geographical Sciences
- Geology
- Geochemistry
- Environmental Geosciences
- Geophysics and Space Physics
- Marine Sciences
- Atmospheric Sciences

Engineering and Material Sciences:

- Metallic Materials
- Organic Polymer Materials
- Inorganic Non-Metallic Materials
- Metallurgy and Mining
- Mechanical Sciences and Manufacturing
- Engineering Thermal Physics and Energy Utilization
- Architectural Engineering
- Environmental Engineering and Civil Engineering
- Electrical Sciences and Engineering
- Hydro Science and Marine Engineering

Information Sciences:

- Electronics and Information Systems
- Computer Sciences
- Automation Sciences
- Information Devices and Optics