

# Statement by the Assistants' Association of the University of Basel on the SNSF Multi-Year Program 2017–2020

## Summary

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### Doctoral student's and postdoctoral researcher's perspective (relating to the document "Multi-Year Program 2017–2020")

#### 2.2 Aims of the SNSF (page 8 et seq.)

- Internationality: The largest proportion of funding is to be awarded with a purely competitive focus and without any thematic, strategic, or structural conditions. Above all, the internationality of research is to be promoted.
  - It is to be assumed that faculties with fewer opportunities for international networking (e.g. the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Law) will receive less financial support.
  - Internationality moves the emphasis away from interdisciplinary and interuniversity core research areas.

#### Part 1: Priorities 2017–2020 (page 12 et seq.)

- Excellence: Funding is to be awarded to large and collaborative projects to support (1) interdisciplinarity and (2) "breakthrough research".
  - No reasons or experiences are cited to explain how this strategy sets a particular academic standard.
  - The term "breakthrough research" is imprecisely defined. It is not clear how this is to be made an equal quality criterion for different subject cultures.
  - The intended practical approach contradicts the Dora Declaration signed by the SNSF.
- Evaluation: The SNSF has identified the practice of evaluating research as a "challenge". It also makes reference to the great burden placed on the Research Council and external experts.
  - Criteria relating to the planned "formalized equal treatment" are not defined – according to the Dora Declaration, these must be "explicitly" stated.
  - With regard to the great burden on the Research Council and external experts, it is unclear why plans are underway to centralize evaluations.

#### Part 2: Funding portfolio 2017–2020 (page 22 et seq.)

- Project funding: Unless topics are clearly distinct, researchers can submit applications for more than one ongoing project in the same funding period. The SNSF awards funding for a maximum of four years.
  - The one-project rule is difficult for small subject areas and research projects with only a few doctoral positions.
  - Project funding, which focuses more strongly on the interests of the doctoral student, will be made more difficult.
  - It is impractical for the research period to cover the same timeframe as the matriculation period.

- Doc.Grants: Doc.Grants replaces Doc.CH and Doc.Mobility. Submissions will be evaluated at a national level.
  - The withdrawal of Doc.Mobility means that university-funded doctoral students will be excluded from the mobility program. This goes against the principle of equal treatment and equal opportunities.
  - Due to the restrictive SNSF project funding for humanities and social sciences, there is a danger that most opportunities will be granted to doctoral students from natural sciences subject areas.
  - There is still no evidence that the principles of equal opportunities and diversity can be maintained despite central and formalized evaluation.

## **Conclusion**

Contrary to Switzerland's political conventions, the SNSF has not carried out a consultation or drawn up an implementation plan or schedule for its concept to allow the many people affected by the reform to participate in the process. Instead, the SNSF is now informing them of measures already agreed and published.

avuba criticizes the waiving of both academic discourse and academically based processes as the foundation for important decisions.

avuba fears that this will damage Switzerland as a research location, the cantonal universities, and Swiss early career researchers. For this reason, avuba calls on the National Research Council of the SNSF to return to the points mentioned and, in particular, to critically examine the many suggestions raised for discussion by various parties over the last few months.