

New open access policy

It has never been easier

As of 2020, the SNSF will expect all publications (100%) related to SNSF-funded research to be available free of charge in digital format. For this reason, the SNSF has been offering additional funding for open access publications since April 2018. It has for the time being lifted the cap of 3,000 francs for journal articles. In addition to digital books, it now also funds the publication of book chapters. With only a few mouse clicks, researchers can request funding before and after the end of the project.

"It has never been easier to publish research findings in ways that make them freely accessible," says Tobias Philipp, coordinator of the open access policy of the SNSF. "As a result, they will have more visibility and broader impact." On a dedicated website, the SNSF explains its support for open access publications and presents national and international developments.



National Research Programme NRP 68

Sustainable use of soil

Soil is formed over the course of millennia. Once destroyed, it takes a long time to recover. This makes it all the more important to use soil sustainably. At the end of five years of research, the National Research Programme "Soil as a resource" (NRP 68) has published a number of recommendations. "Sustainable use is possible if spatial planning, agriculture and forestry take into account all the functions of soil," says Emmanuel Frossard, president of the Steering Committee of NRP 68. "These include food production, water filtration and carbon storage." Nationwide mapping of soil is necessary to achieve this goal. "Each soil function contributes to people's well-being," emphasises Emmanuel Frossard. "We need to take concrete measures to protect the soil, otherwise we will be paying a high price in the future."

The results of NRP 68 have been published in 6 reports and have led to over 130 publications.



The members of the SNSF Gender Equality Commission (from left to right): Thomas Hinz, University of Constance; Nicky Le Feuvre, University of Lausanne; Anna Wahl, KTH Stockholm; Susan Gasser (president), Friedrich Miescher Institute/University of Basel; Michelle Cottier, University of Geneva; Simona Isler, SNSF; Gary Loke, Advance HE, London.

Women in research

Untapped potential

Gender equality in research? A clear goal of the SNSF. Since 2014, a specialised commission composed of national and international experts has been working towards this goal. Its members were reelected for another four years in 2018. "We have achieved quite a few things," says president Susan Gasser. "Among them, the introduction of the new SNSF funding scheme PRIMA. It supports women researchers whose aim it is to obtain a professorship."

But there is plenty of work left to do. "Around 50% of doctoral students are women, but only 17% of all professorships are held by women. Switzerland does not make the most of the potential of its women researchers. This hampers innovation," says Gasser. The SNSF will intensify its equal opportunity efforts in the future.

International advisory board

A fresh view from the outside

At the end of 2018, the new international advisory board of the SNSF started its work. The board consists of five experienced scientists who have proven themselves as influential thinkers. "The advisory board offers us a fresh view from the outside," says SNSF Director Angelika Kalt. "It is able to highlight strengths, weaknesses or gaps, and it identifies challenges that lie ahead."

At their first meeting, the members of the advisory board stressed the importance of seeing science as a network in which researchers, their institutions, funding organisations and the general public are all interconnected. They recommended that the SNSF continue to promote a completely open science system which ensures free access to data and results.



Members of the SNSF Advisory Board (from left to right): Willi Paul, Consenec; Caroline Bassett, University of Sussex; Agneta Bladh, Swedish Research Council; Frank Miedema, University of Utrecht. Not in the picture: Pearl Dykstra, University of Rotterdam.



BRIDGE – joint programme of SNSF and Innosuisse

Start-up instead of valley of death

BRIDGE offers researchers the opportunity to turn their results into marketable products. The programme was launched in 2017 and already has a number of success stories to its name. "Without BRIDGE my discovery would have ended up in the valley of death," says Olga Dubey. During her doctorate, the biologist discovered a natural substance to fight fungi on fruit and vegetables. "It makes it possible to reduce crop losses without using chemicals." In September 2017, Olga Dubey received a BRIDGE grant. In 2018, she set up her own business and applied for a patent. This year, she intends to present her product to agribusinesses.

"That's exactly what we are hoping to achieve: promising discoveries should not disappear into thin air but contribute to innovation," says Chris Boesch, member of the BRIDGE Steering Committee. Since 2017, over 60 projects featuring such discoveries have been awarded funding. Until 2020, a programme budget of 70 million francs is at the disposal of the SNSF and Innosuisse.

Study on changes in publishing

Open access makes books more visible

Free access to scientific books brings clear advantages. This is shown by a study compiled between 2014 and 2017: working closely with publishers, libraries and researchers, the SNSF analysed the distribution of books, whether they were available for a fee (printed) or free of charge (digital). The final report published in April 2018 draws some very encouraging conclusions: visibility, outreach and use are increasing. And publishers did not sell fewer printed books if a digital version was also available.

These results have been integrated into the SNSF's open access policy (see page 10), which covers the costs of digital books as well as digital book chapters.