PhD Parent Network:
Make research funding work for you

Kristen Irwin
Research Office
Introducing the Research Office
Our aim and objectives

- **Inform** the EPFL research community on funding opportunities
- Provides **support** for
  - application processes & contracting of public and not-for-profit funding
  - ethical issues in research projects and ethical approval processes
  - management of large research and mobility projects
Some key figures
## Research Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>25 FTE</th>
<th>1400 grant submissions</th>
<th>Euresearch member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>850 signatures</td>
<td>120 events</td>
<td>NCURA member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>560 grants</td>
<td>1 contact point (<a href="mailto:research@epfl.ch">research@epfl.ch</a>)</td>
<td>EARMA member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 research and fellowship programmes</td>
<td>100 HREC applications</td>
<td>248 MCHF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 awards</td>
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Funding 2022

- **Federal Contribution**: 751 MCHF (66%) in 2022
- **3rd Party Funds**: 391 MCHF (34%) in 2022

**Yearly Contributions**:
- 2012: 71 MCHF (74%)
- 2013: 79 MCHF (74%)
- 2014: 87 MCHF (74%)
- 2015: 95 MCHF (74%)
- 2016: 103 MCHF (74%)
- 2017: 111 MCHF (74%)
- 2018: 119 MCHF (74%)
- 2019: 127 MCHF (74%)
- 2020: 135 MCHF (74%)
- 2021: 143 MCHF (74%)
- 2022: 151 MCHF (74%)
Our Portfolio...
## Research Office (ReO) Organizational Chart

### Research & Mobility Funding Teams
- **International - Kristen Irwin**
  - US Federal agencies
  - International Governmental agencies
  - International Foundations

- **European - Pascale Menu**
  - Horizon Europe
  - EU Partnerships
  - ESA

- **National - Mariachiara Verde**
  - SNSF, Innosuisse, Federal Offices
  - Swiss Foundations
  - EPFL Research Awards

### Service Teams
- **Ethics Affairs - Esther van der Velde**
  - Ethics assessment and compliance
  - Institutional Review Boards

- **Grant Writing services - Nele Gheldof**
  - Personalized grant writing services
  - Grant writing trainings

- **Program Management services - Esther van der Velde**
  - Management of internal and international funding programmes

- **Administration & IT Systems - Carine Beltrami**
  - Grant & Contract management
  - Institutional signatures
PhD + Parenting

Considerations in/around Research funding
Importance of SNSF

Funding source, EPFL PhD students

SNSF
Other

Doctoral candidates
Academic year 2023-2024

2412

Country of origin

Switzerland 13%
Europe 48%
World 39%

Degrees
Delivered in 2022-2023

458

Career

Academia 33%
Industry 67%
SNSF funding
Special conditions for researchers with families

- **Project evaluation**: Academic age and eligibility windows in career funding
- **PRIMA**: Funding scheme dedicated to women
- **Evaluation panels**: Allotments for childcare for panel members
- **Maternity/paternity leave**: Afforded according to institution rules (info)
- **Work Time Reduction**: Possibility to have reduced working time*
  - *at EPFL, this is difficult but not impossible
SNSF funding
Flexibility Grant

- **To find the right balance between academic career and family commitments**
  - For doctoral and postdoctoral researchers with childcare duties who need more flexibility
  - Enables temporary part-time employment and hiring of a support person, and/or grantees can use grant to cover childcare costs

- **Success rate**
  - In 2020, 109 applications were submitted and 104 approved, for a total of 2.2M CHF
  - Most requested grant type: Childcare support

- **Eligibility**
  - Employed as a doctoral student or postdoc in a research project funded by the SNSF, or a grantee under Ambizione, PRIMA, Postdoc.Mobility return grant or Doc.CH
Postdoc + Parenting

Thinking about what lies next
Postdoc fellowships

Some considerations in choosing which fellowship programs to apply to:

- Stipend bonus for family size
- Allowances for maternity/paternity leave
- Ability to reduce working time
- Childcare fee supplement
- Child travel/accompaniment costs
Postdoc fellowships
Example: HFSP

Some considerations in choosing which fellowship programs to apply to:

- **Stipend bonus for family size**
  - Yearly child allowance, country dependent. Example, USA: $6K/year/child

- **Allowances for maternity/paternity leave**
  - Up to 3 months paid paternity leave for each child born or adopted. Fellowship extended according to actual duration of paternity leave.

- **Ability to reduce working time**
  - Not explicitly given

- **Childcare fee supplement**
  - Not available

- **Child travel/accompaniment costs**
  - **Relocation**: Fellows, their spouses/partners and their children are all eligible to receive the relocation allowance according to the following calculation: Spouse/partner: same allowance, Child 2-12 years: 50% of allowance, Child under 2 years: 10% of allowance

Source: 2025 LTF Guidelines
Postdoc fellowships
Example: MSCA PF

Some considerations in choosing which fellowship programs to apply to:

- **Stipend bonus for family size**
  - Supplement: Family allowance of EUR 660/month, lump sum

- **Allowances for maternity/paternity leave**
  - Fellowship extended according to actual duration of paternity leave. No pay from fellowship during leave, but possibility to be paid by institution or natural insurance.

- **Ability to reduce working time**
  - Can reduce down to 50%, for a number of reasons (medical, personal, entrepreneurial)

- **Childcare fee supplement**
  - Not available

- **Child travel/accompaniment costs**
  - Not available

Source: 2024 Call document
Postdoc fellowships
Special considerations for Postdoc.mobility

- **Maternity/paternity leave**
  - Obligations: Inform SNSF, Inform host professor
  - Paid leave: Mothers are entitled to 4 months, Fathers to 1 month
  - Supplemental funding: If birth happens within 9m of fellowship end, supplemental funding possible if research work is interrupted
  - See “Steps for Fellowship holders” here

- **Child allowance**
  - Fellows with dependent children receive a stipend supplement
Postdoc fellowships

Proposal tip

Don’t shy away from mentioning your maternity/paternity leave and reduced working capacity during early childhood!

→ Best done in the CV but can also fit into other narrative parts of the proposal that describe the applicant.
Grant writing services
Prepare your proposal
…Grant Coaches at your disposal

Personalized Service
• (Extensive) Proposal review
• Constructive feedback
  • Clarity
  • Impact
  • Strength
• Mock interview feedback
• Collaborative proposals:
  • Coordination
  • Project management plan, communication plan

Trainings
• “How to prepare successful grant proposals” (+ interactive peer-review trainings)
  • Senior PhD Students (ENG-601)
  • Postdocs (Hosted in conjunction with the EPFL postdoc association - EPDA)
• “Persuasive grant writing” online course
  • Faculty/ all EPFL researchers
• “Collaborative proposal writing” workshops
• On-demand lectures/workshops

Increase your chances of getting funded!
Other Resources from the Research Office

- ReO Funding Opportunity [page] for PhD students
  - “Biggest hits” collection
- Personalized funding search
  - Write to ReO with your inquiry
- ResearchConnect search tool
  - Important: contact the ReO so we can create an account for you!
Your feedback:
Is your work too driven by funding?

- From the Doctoral Student Survey, 2019:
  - Some students also question the capacity of the supervisor to oversee certain topics, suggesting that the work is often driven by funding opportunities, fashion or perceived impact rather than expertise.

  - [https://www.epfl.ch/education/phd/edoc-doctoral-surveys/](https://www.epfl.ch/education/phd/edoc-doctoral-surveys/)
Thank you!

ReO
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