

# PhD Parent Network: Make research funding work for you

Kristen Irwin  
Research Office

2024

# 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

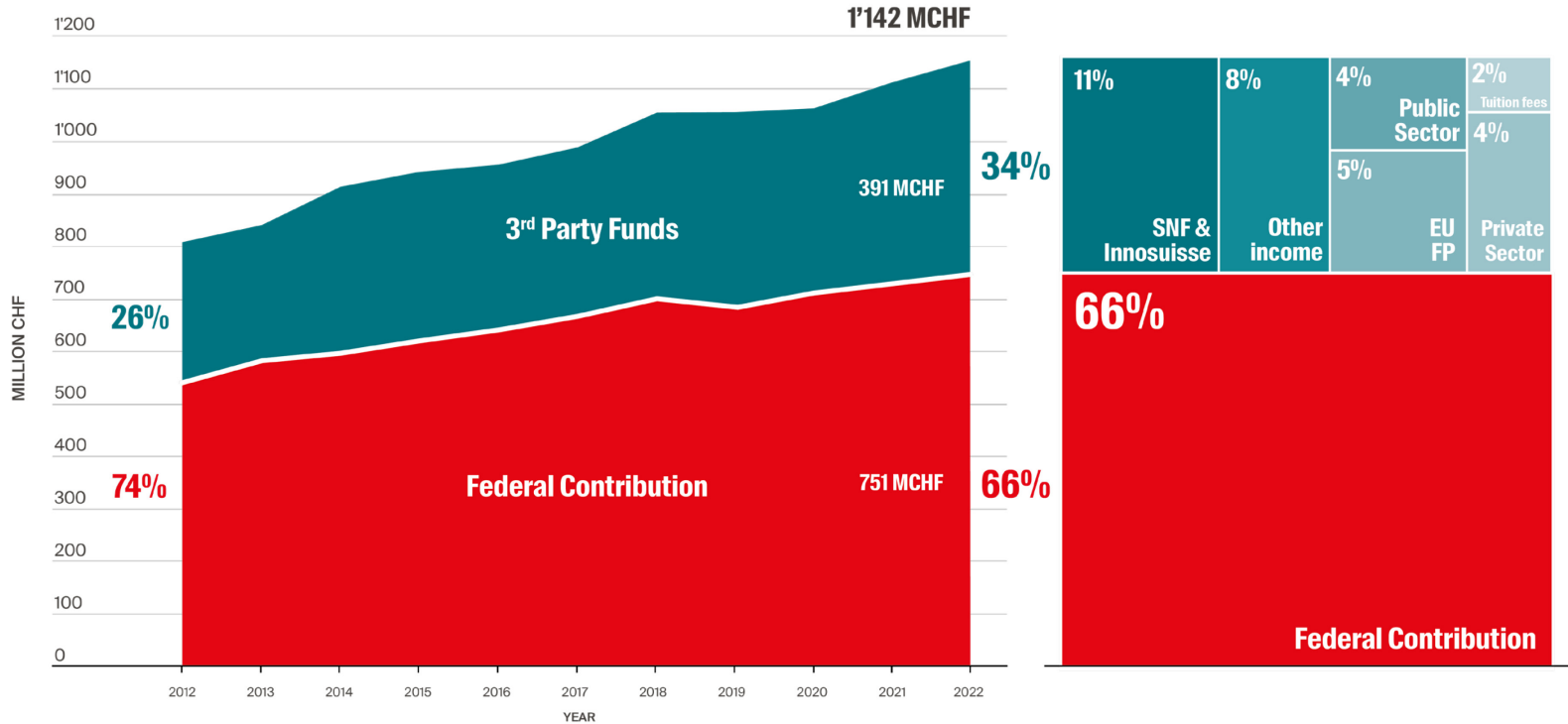




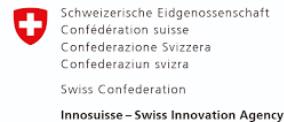
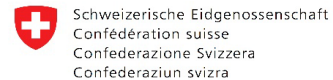
Some key figures



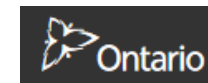
# Funding 2022



# Our Portfolio...



Through Inspiration, Discovery  
King Abdullah University of Science and Technology





# 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



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

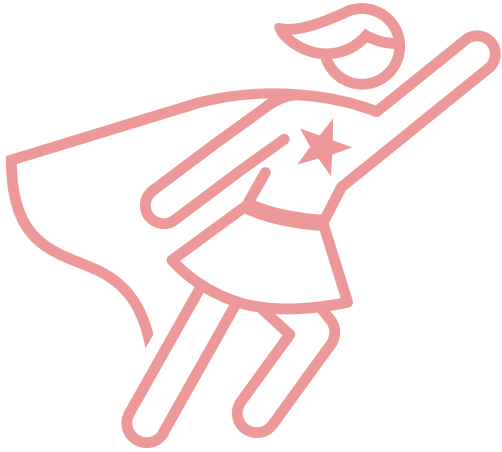
## Special conditions for researchers with families

- **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



# 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

# 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

Sweden	58'000
USA in general	55'000
Boulder, Chicago (incl. Evanston), New Haven, Providence, Seattle	58'000
Boston (incl. Cambridge), California, Hawaii, New York (incl. Princeton), Washington D.C. (incl. Bethesda and College Park)	62'000

**Child allowances:** per child CHF 12'000.-/year

**Research funds (research costs and conference costs):** max. CHF 5'000.-/year

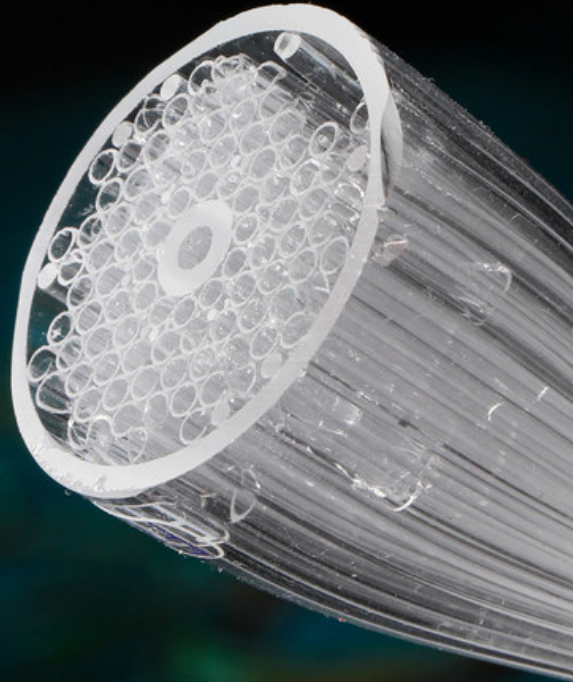
**Travel allowance:** according to the travel allowances defined by the SNSF (see below)

# 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.



A close-up photograph of a quill pen resting in a small, dark glass inkwell. The inkwell is placed on a dark, possibly wooden, desk surface. In the background, there are blurred papers and a quill holder. A teal-colored rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text 'Grant writing services' in white. The overall lighting is soft and focused on the quill and inkwell.

# 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/>



**Thank  
you!**

ReO

[Research@epfl.ch](mailto:Research@epfl.ch)