

Call for proposals

National Research Programme 85 'Mental Health of Adolescents' (NRP 85)

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What are National Research Programmes (NRPs)?

Research carried out under National Research Programmes consists of research projects that contribute towards addressing societal challenges of national relevance.

Under the provisions of Article 10, paragraph 2 letter c of the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation of 14 December 2012 (RIPA), the Federal Council selects the topics and focus areas to be researched in NRPs and mandates full responsibility for implementing the programmes to the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). The Ordinance to the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation of 29 November 2013 (RIPO), [Article 3-9](#), describes NRPs and their launch. According to this legal basis two different processes can lead to the launch of an NRP:

1. Open rounds
2. Thematically defined rounds

The topic addressed in this NRP results from the second type of process and corresponds to current federal strategies and the priorities of the federal administration. In comparison to the open rounds process, this NRP aims at a shorter duration, a reduced budget and a strengthened link between researchers and the federal administration. Scientific evaluation and funding decisions are carried out independently of political authorities and in accordance with the principles of scientific excellence and academic freedom.

On 1 July 2025, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) mandated the SNSF to assess the feasibility of conducting an NRP on 'Mental Health of Adolescents' and to develop a programme concept that would define the aims and the key research issues to be addressed. Based on this programme concept, the Federal Council decided on 20 March 2026 to launch the NRP 'Mental Health of Adolescents'. The members of its Steering Committee were elected by the National Research Council of the SNSF on 24 March 2026. The Steering Committee formulated this call for proposals and oversees the strategic management of the programme.

1 Summary

Proposals are invited for research projects to be conducted within the National Research Programme 'Mental Health of Adolescents' (NRP 85). The programme was mandated by the Swiss Federal Council on 20 March 2026 to strengthen mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention for adolescents in Switzerland. It will fund research that improves the evidence base on effective and scalable approaches, advances understanding of systemic risk and protective factors, and supports the development of policy-relevant and practice-oriented solutions.

NRP 85 consists of two research areas:

- The 'Prevention and early intervention approaches' research area will examine how evidence-based interventions can be adapted, developed and evaluated in Swiss contexts, with a particular focus on innovative, low-threshold and scalable approaches that extend beyond the traditional healthcare system and meet the needs of diverse and vulnerable adolescent populations.
- The 'Systemic risk and protective factors' research area will investigate how structural conditions in formally organised environments – such as education, vocational training and mandatory military and civil service – influence adolescent mental health, with the goal of identifying systemic characteristics that support or hinder positive developmental trajectories.

NRP 85 will fund inter- and transdisciplinary research with strong practical relevance for adolescents and their families, practitioners in education, vocational training and healthcare, as well as policymakers at cantonal and federal levels. Projects are expected to engage with non-academic partners, where appropriate, involve adolescents, and contribute to programme-level knowledge exchange. They should produce outputs that can inform policy development, system design and the implementation of prevention and early intervention strategies.

The programme has a total budget of CHF 7 million. It is expected to fund a limited number of projects across the two research areas. Project budgets are recommended to range between CHF 250,000 and CHF 900,000, and research projects may run between 36 and 48 months. Co-financing with other funding sources is encouraged.

The call for proposals is scheduled for publication on 22 September 2026. Expressions of interest must be submitted by 24 November 2026, 5 pm Swiss local time, and full proposals by 19 January 2027, 5 pm Swiss local time. Final funding decisions by the SNSF Research Council are expected by August 2027 at the latest. Research on funded projects should start by 1 November 2027.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background and problem framing

The WHO defines mental health as a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to their community. Adolescent mental health is a critical determinant of lifelong health, educational attainment, social participation and economic productivity.

Definitions of adolescence have expanded as newer cohorts attain markers of adulthood later than previous generations did. This NRP defines adolescence as spanning the ages of 10 to 24 years, a period that encompasses a series of developmental transitions for most young people. Some of these are formally structured (e.g. education, mandatory military or civil service, entry into the workforce), whereas others are more informal (e.g. leaving the parental home, forming intimate partnerships, sexuality and the transition to parenthood), though still shaped by social norms.

Mental health problems, including internalising and externalising problems, often emerge by adolescence and pose a risk to long-term mental health. Many adult mental disorders have their onset during adolescence. Thus, adolescence is an important developmental period for prevention and early intervention. A major aim of this NRP is to produce actionable, scalable knowledge on how to prevent or intervene *before* adolescent mental health declines to the level of diagnosable disorders.

Rates of adolescent mental health problems in Switzerland have increased over the past decade. Both well-established risk factors (e.g. sociodemographic disadvantage, parental mental health problems, harsh family or peer dynamics, poor self-regulation and social skills), and newer ones (e.g. problematic digital media use and adverse online experiences, rising academic pressure, physical inactivity and adolescents' concerns about climate change, recent wars, future employability in the context of artificial intelligence and broader uncertainty about the future) contribute to this trend. Mental health inequities often accumulate across development and may persist into adulthood if not addressed.

In the context of mental health issues in adolescence, the WHO defines vulnerable groups as adolescents exposed to violence, abuse or neglect, socio-economic disadvantage, chronic illness or disability, marginalisation and discrimination, and institutionalisation. These vulnerabilities can amplify the risk of mental health problems. Sex and gender differences in mental health problems are well documented, with women typically showing higher rates of internalising symptoms and men showing higher rates of externalising problems.

2.2 The need to translate current knowledge into effective prevention and early intervention

Recent developments highlight that adolescent mental health must be addressed not only through crisis response, but also through strengthened prevention and early intervention efforts. Primary prevention, such as preventive and mental-health promoting approaches, could equip adolescents with critical life skills (e.g. social competence, self-regulation and strategies for managing conflict and coping with stress), enabling them to cope with challenges before mental health problems emerge or increase to sub-clinical or clinical, diagnosable levels. Secondary prevention, such as selective and indicated intervention strategies that target vulnerable sub-groups or individuals with pre-clinical symptoms ([McGovern, 2024](#)), could provide timely support for adolescents, potentially reducing the need for more extensive clinical care while yielding long-term social benefits and easing the burden on the healthcare system.

Switzerland's existing adolescent prevention and early intervention landscape is still insufficiently coordinated among stakeholders and regions. Many approaches used in schools and other settings (are not evidence-based and lack rigorous evaluation. Factors that facilitate or hinder sustainable implementation and rollout in Swiss contexts are not well understood. Although effective adolescent prevention and early intervention approaches exist at the individual, family and broader levels (in schools as well as

extracurricular activities such as organised sports or youth work) both nationally and internationally, they have not been consistently evaluated in or adapted to diverse settings in Switzerland. Evidence-based tailoring of preventions and early interventions to specific target groups would advance the field. In addition, greater flexibility in delivery formats, settings and levels of intensity might better meet varying needs. Research should focus on approaches that are accessible, scalable and sustainable, extend beyond the traditional healthcare system and are tailored to the Swiss situation.

2.3 Gaps in knowledge about the role of systemic factors in adolescent mental health

Many risk and protective factors (e.g. at an individual, family and peer level) have been well established and are ready to be targeted with prevention and early intervention (e.g. interpersonal skills and emotional regulation). Yet many systemic risk factors remain understudied and warrant further research. These include characteristics of formally structured environments that adolescents are embedded in during key developmental transitions, such as the educational and vocational training systems (e.g. the timing and design of high-stakes examinations, application processes and probation periods), as well as aspects of mandatory military or civil service. Transitions that are poorly supported by society's institutions may lead to cumulative disadvantages, with potential negative long-term consequences for mental health. In contrast, systems that effectively support adolescents' developmental transitions can foster resilience, social participation and positive developmental trajectories. A deeper understanding of how characteristics of formally structured systems (schools and vocational training systems, military or civil service) affect adolescent mental health is essential for creating developmentally supportive environments.

The structure of Switzerland's educational and vocational systems varies considerably across regions, particularly regarding pathways (e.g. tracking and vocational routes). Certain design features of these systems are likely to align more closely with adolescents' developmental needs, while others (e.g. early high-stakes testing, probationary periods, high failure rates) may compound stress for some adolescents.

2.4 National and international research environment

The WHO Regional Office for Europe and the European Commission have launched several initiatives and policy frameworks aimed at strengthening research and evidence-based interventions to promote mental health and well-being among children and adolescents. At the European level, adolescent mental health has gained increasing attention within Horizon Europe, particularly within the Health Cluster. Recent and upcoming calls explicitly address youth mental health, prevention, well-being and the impact of digital technologies on children's and adolescents' mental health. Example initiatives from the United Kingdom include a research programme on ['Adolescence, mental health and the developing mind'](#) with a budget of £35 million. Furthermore, the Wellcome Trust launched the [Mental Health Award](#), which aims to robustly test and implement strategies of scalable, transformative early intervention strategies for adolescent anxiety, depression and psychosis. In Germany, adolescent mental health has become an increasingly important research priority within the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), and nationally coordinated interdisciplinary research infrastructures and centres have been launched to support interdisciplinary research on child and adolescent development, mental health, prevention and early intervention.

Nationally, the NRP 85 can build on and connect to a diverse research community in the field of adolescent mental health. Research is conducted at the cantonal and federal universities (ETH/EPFL), at universities of applied science, as well as at federal and cantonal institutions. The Federal Office of Public Health (BAG/FOPH) engages in relevant studies and monitoring efforts, and Swiss researchers participate actively in large international consortia, such as the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study. Beyond universities and government bodies, a wide range of professional societies, research institutes and networks conduct or support research on adolescent mental health.

While the field of adolescent mental health research is diverse and spans a variety of disciplines, institutions and societies, it remains insufficiently coordinated. Research activities tend to be localised, with limited national coordination or overarching strategy. This has become an increasingly prominent issue in Swiss policy-making efforts, as is highlighted by the Federal National Council's recent approval of a motion requesting that the Federal Council develop a national strategy for children and youth policy. This topic will remain a priority of the federal offices in years to come.

2.5 The need for national monitoring of adolescent mental health

Effective mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention require reliable and timely data. The further development of national routine and systematic monitoring of adolescent mental health, along with its associated risk and protective factors, is therefore an important contributor towards the advancement of mental health problem prevention in Switzerland. Such a system would enable reliable data collection (including for younger adolescents), better needs assessment and resource allocation, and early identification of emerging risks. While the development of such a system is beyond the scope of NRP 85 and not one of its direct objectives, the programme represents a valuable opportunity to facilitate progress towards routine national monitoring by generating new results, fostering reflection on methods, coordinating with ongoing efforts such as the KidsHealthCH report by the FOPH, and establishing cooperation among researchers and stakeholders, thereby helping to advance a future national framework for routine monitoring.

3 Goals of National Research Programme 85

NRP 85 aims to:

1. Establish a robust, practice-oriented and policy-relevant knowledge base to support the evidence-based development, adaptation, implementation, evaluation and sustainable uptake of prevention and early intervention approaches for adolescents in Switzerland. These approaches should build capacity, strengthen mental health and prevent mental disorders. Given the currently high prevalence of adolescent mental health symptoms, a particular focus will be on selective and indicated preventions.
2. Understand the impact of structural conditions on adolescent mental health, particularly within systems that are formally organised, such as the educational, vocational and mandatory military and civil service systems, and advise how these systems could be improved to constitute developmentally supportive environments for adolescents.
3. Generate actionable knowledge that can be translated into recommendations for policymakers and practitioners, supporting concrete strategies for the sustainable implementation and large-scale rollout of effective adolescent mental health prevention and early intervention approaches.
4. Leverage the inter- and transdisciplinary network created by this NRP to facilitate progress towards a routine national monitoring system for adolescent mental health in Switzerland.

Through coordinated research projects, NRP 85 will generate socially relevant evidence on which approaches are effective, for which groups of adolescents, under what conditions, and how. By fostering transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration and advancing the evidence base for adolescent mental health prevention and early intervention, the NRP will provide a foundation for actionable recommendations for preventions and interventions at local, regional and national levels, and contribute towards improving the transfer of research findings into practice and policy.

4 Main research areas

Research Area 1 (RA1) focuses primarily on approaches to prevention and early intervention. Research Area 2 (RA2) examines systemic risk and protective factors in formally structured environments in which adolescents are embedded (e.g. education, vocational training and entry into the workforce, and mandatory military or civil service).

Research Area 1 (RA1): Prevention and early intervention approaches

To improve mental health promotion and prevent mental disorders, evidence-based prevention and early intervention approaches from national and international contexts could be adapted and evaluated to meet the needs of adolescents in various Swiss settings. Alternatively, new preventions and early interventions could be developed and evaluated where necessary. Research is particularly needed on innovative, low-threshold, low-intensity strategies that extend beyond the existing healthcare system. New formats should complement existing solutions and be tailored to the diverse needs of adolescents, with particular attention to vulnerable groups. Projects should be grounded in the lived realities of adolescents and, where possible, co-developed with adolescents while accounting for their time constraints, specific vulnerabilities and digital-native lifestyles to ensure effectiveness, engagement and sustained adherence.

Interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged, reflecting the multifactorial aetiology of mental health problems, the diversity of known risk and protective factors, and the diversity of effective intervention modalities. In addition, projects in RA1 are required to demonstrate the explicit pursuit of transdisciplinary elements in their research design and must involve a non-academic partner from the proposal drafting stage with a view to achieving desired implementation outcomes.

A key goal is to understand for whom, under what conditions and contexts, and how a prevention or early intervention approach is effective and to be able to take action based on the research conducted in RA1.

Projects are encouraged that:

- foster skills and build capacities that help adolescents cope with both well-established and emerging stressors while promoting mental health, including resilience, social connectedness, self-efficacy, emotional competence and opportunities for meaningful participation.
- detect and respond to early and subclinical mental health symptoms before clinical treatment becomes necessary – in ways that are accessible and acceptable to adolescents across diverse settings, and that reduce barriers related to stigma and help-seeking.
- evaluate the accessibility, acceptance, feasibility, effectiveness (short- and longer-term), sustainability, cost-effectiveness and scalability of these approaches; identify the mechanisms through which they achieve their effects; and examine barriers and facilitators of effective implementation and future rollout, including across cantonal and regional contexts.

Projects should provide a theoretical and/or empirical rationale for the target group selected, and the risk and protective factors, outcomes and mechanisms of change that will be addressed. Projects must demonstrate methodological rigour. They should be well designed, with relevant and validated outcome measures; pre-, post- and follow-up assessments; and random assignment (where possible) to intervention and control groups. Measures must be taken to address and minimise potential biases towards specific approaches (e.g. allegiance effects).

The two types of projects in this research area include:

1. **Adaptation and rigorous evaluation** of existing evidence-based, low-threshold, low-intensity mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention approaches in Swiss contexts.

2. **Development and rigorous testing** of novel, innovative prevention and early intervention approaches to reduce gaps in adolescent psychosocial and mental health care, particularly for underserved or hard-to-reach groups.

Research Area 2 (RA2): Systemic risk and protective factors for adolescent mental health

The role of systemic risk and protective factors in adolescent mental health is a key gap in previous research. During the different developmental transitions of adolescence, stressors can be compounded by the design of formally structured settings (e.g. educational and vocational systems, mandatory military or civil service). Certain system characteristics may align more closely with adolescents' developmental needs than others. Identifying these differences is essential for designing systems that meet adolescents' developmental needs.

The inter-cantonal variation in these systems presents a valuable opportunity to identify effective 'best' practices, as well as systemic features that adversely affect adolescent mental health. Projects in this research area are particularly well suited to quantitative and mixed-methods secondary data analysis. Where possible, they should aim not only to identify associations but also to examine the mechanisms through which systemic factors influence mental health. Projects in RA2 are required to integrate elements of interdisciplinarity into their research design, and they may also work with transdisciplinary elements where appropriate.

Projects are encouraged that:

- leverage variation in Switzerland to identify which elements of educational and vocational systems (e.g. timing of examinations and probationary periods, design of educational and vocational pathways) and military or civil service promote mental health and which are linked with mental health problems, and to examine whether these effects differ for vulnerable subgroups.
- adopt an inclusive focus, covering diverse segments of society, including adolescents with sociodemographic disadvantages, chronic illness or disability, those from marginalised or discriminated groups, and those who experience failure or disengagement from educational, vocational, military or career pathways – with a clear mental health focus.

Example projects may include:

1. Analysis of broader systemic factors (e.g. general characteristics of educational and vocational pathways, such as tracking or timing of transitions) and their associations with mechanisms associated with adolescent mental health, preferably using existing data sources (e.g. monitoring of basic competencies of Swiss pupils conducted by the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education, longitudinal datasets, administrative datasets), with analysis stratified by vulnerability status where data permit.
2. Studies assessing the mental health impact of different designs relating to specific characteristics of formal settings in which adolescents are embedded (e.g. types of high-stakes testing, probationary periods, vocational training transitions). Studies examining associations between disengagement or dropout from educational or vocational pathways – or adolescent unemployment – and adolescent mental health are also welcome.

Cross-cutting elements across Research Areas 1 and 2

The following cross-cutting elements should be considered and addressed in each proposal:

- **Inter-cantonal or regional differences and Swiss-specific contexts:** The NRP recognises that structural variation within Switzerland can influence both the mental health of adolescents and the effectiveness of prevention and early intervention approaches. Projects should not only

be evidence-based but also context-sensitive, and should consider the diversity of Switzerland's regional structures, languages and cultural contexts.

- **Building on existing knowledge and data:** RA1 encourages the use of established, evidence-based preventions and early interventions where possible, and their adaptation to Swiss contexts when necessary. RA2 encourages the use of existing data to help ensure the timely delivery of actionable results. Proposals should critically assess the added value of developing entirely new preventions or interventions or collecting new data relative to the benefits of using existing resources.
- **Intersectionality:** Projects should consider how adolescent populations might be affected by factors that increase vulnerability, and how these factors intersect and interact to shape experiences. These factors do not need to constitute the primary focus of all projects, but their relevance should be considered and reflected in the study design.
- **Developmental stage and age range:** Projects should specify which developmental sub-phase(s) or transition(s) they are interested in (e.g. early adolescence, emerging adulthood, transition from primary to secondary school) and explain why their approach is appropriate for that age range or transition, including how the relevant developmental context shapes the proposed methods, measures and interpretation of findings.
- **Ethical considerations:** Research with adolescents raises specific ethical and consent issues, which should be discussed in the proposals. Projects involving groups of adolescents, including in schools, can have unintended iatrogenic or social contagion effects. Proposals must include a careful discussion of these potential effects and strategies to mitigate them.
- **Policy translation and societal relevance:** Projects should be designed with implementation, scalability and policy uptake in mind and thus identify concrete implications for stakeholders. Findings should be communicated in forms that are accessible to non-academic audiences, in line with the NRP's goal of translating research evidence into actionable recommendations.

5 Expected outcomes and implementation strategies

5.1 Practical significance and target audience

NRP 85 responds to the currently high rates of adolescent mental health problems and aims to produce actionable, scalable knowledge of high scientific quality on how to prevent or intervene *before* adolescent mental health declines to the level of diagnosable disorders. RA1 is focused on identifying mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention strategies that have the potential to alleviate the current situation. RA2 aims to identify structural risk and protective factors in systems in which adolescents are formally embedded. Stakeholders include adolescents and families, practitioners working with adolescents in educational, vocational and health settings; cantonal and federal policymakers; communities, schools, educational systems and organisations involved in non-compulsory education and youth services. By connecting scientific evidence to the needs and realities of the stakeholders, the NRP aims to reduce fragmentation in the Swiss prevention and intervention landscape and support sustainable, evidence-based improvements at local, regional and national levels.

5.2 Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of NRP 85 are as follows:

Scientific outcomes

- **Generating high-quality evidence:** Producing robust scientific evidence on the feasibility, effectiveness, equity, cost-effectiveness and scalability of existing, adapted and newly developed prevention and intervention strategies tailored to Swiss contexts. This includes evidence on barriers and enablers for implementation (e.g. acceptability, reach, access) and evaluating innovative formats adapted to the various needs and lifestyles of adolescents.
- **Understanding systemic risk and protective factors:** Advancing knowledge of structural risk and protective factors and how they influence adolescent mental health in Switzerland.
- **Collaborative research culture:** Fostering interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and inter-cantonal collaboration among research disciplines and key stakeholders to enhance the coherence, relevance and impact of adolescent mental health initiatives and reduce fragmentation of these efforts.

Practical and systemic outcomes

- **Scalable solutions:** Developing evidence-based, scalable and adaptable mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention approaches that can be implemented and adapted to diverse cantonal contexts, including pathways for integration into existing systems and services.
- **Policy-focused, societally relevant recommendations:** Delivering actionable recommendations for improving mental health promotion, prevention and services at local, regional and national levels.
- **Evidence for adapting policy, systems, institutions and organisations working with adolescents:** Generating high-quality scientific evidence to inform changes in educational systems and other organisations working with adolescents aimed at proactively fostering adolescent mental well-being.
- **Working towards national monitoring frameworks:** Fostering reflection on methods around future long-term monitoring of adolescent mental health and related risk and protective factors in Switzerland. Establishing frameworks for such routine monitoring, enabling policymakers to respond effectively *before* and during crises and to inform needs assessment and planning in healthcare.

5.3 Strategies for implementation

The NRP 85 pursues a two-pronged strategy for the implementation of its research findings, while acknowledging that some implementation goals may only be achieved after the end of the programme funding period. The implementation strategy will unfold at the level of both the individual projects and the programme (for the latter see 7.1, ‘Coordinated research and programme activities’).

At the project level:

- All projects in RA1 must have a non-academic project partner to support their transdisciplinary approach (see also evaluation criteria).
- All projects should present structured reflections on their stakeholders and target groups. They should aim to engage crucial stakeholder groups as early as possible during the project and throughout their research phase.
- Adolescent involvement throughout the research process is desired (see Section 6.2, ‘Adolescent involvement’).
- All projects should describe the outputs and activities that they aim for and provide reflections on how these might be linked to desired implementation outcomes in a causal chain.

6 Characteristics of NRP 85

6.1 Inter- and transdisciplinary research approaches

Researchers working on projects within NRP 85 will be expected to engage with interdisciplinary approaches (collaboration across disciplinary boundaries) and, if applicable, transdisciplinary approaches (collaboration with non-academic actors). This is essential to the success of this NRP and will lend visibility to the diversity of actors across the Swiss adolescent mental health landscape and help to create new points of connection between them. Projects in RA1 are required to demonstrate the explicit pursuit of transdisciplinary elements in their research design and must involve a non-academic partner from the proposal drafting stage with a view to achieving desired implementation outcomes. Projects in RA2 are required to integrate elements of interdisciplinarity into their research design, and may also work with transdisciplinary elements where appropriate.

6.2 Adolescent involvement

In this NRP, it will be important to involve adolescents in the following ways:

- 1) *Projects with adolescent involvement:* Projects that work directly with adolescents (e.g. in prevention and intervention) should outline concrete plans for how to ensure adolescent involvement throughout the research process, for example via a youth advisory board. When recruiting adolescents to youth advisory boards, the projects must comply with applicable ethical, legal and data protection requirements that apply to working with minors. Adolescents with clear conflicts of interest (e.g. family members of PIs) should not serve on project advisory boards.
- 2) *NRP 85 Youth Advisory Board (YAB):* Projects will refer one to two adolescent representatives from their youth advisory board to the NRP Steering Committee for inclusion in the general YAB, which will be in regular exchange with the Steering Committee and also have active involvement in the programme conferences. The NRP 85 Youth Advisory Board (YAB) does not have voting rights in decision-making processes.

6.3 National and international cooperation

Cooperation will be especially encouraged at a national level, particularly across cantons. Given that much of the existing evidence on effective adolescent mental health preventions and interventions originates from other countries, international collaboration should be strengthened and adaptations for Switzerland developed.

6.4 Open research data, data management and open access publications

- Data management within the NRP will adhere to the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable). While access to data may be restricted due to the sensitive and confidential nature of mental health research, the creation of datasets that can benefit the broader research community and non-academic stakeholders is strongly encouraged wherever possible.
- Project teams should consider the potential for using existing datasets when designing their proposals. Data collection and management standards are a key concern for this NRP, as their coordination within the research field could contribute toward the efforts of long-term monitoring of adolescent mental health.
- Finally, research funded by the SNSF generates knowledge that serves the public good. To ensure broad accessibility, results must be made freely available through open access

publication. Applicants will be required to follow the [SNSF guidelines](#) and requirements on open access publications.

7 Submission and evaluation procedure

7.1 General conditions and requirements

Legal basis: Proposals must be in line with the regulations outlined in this call document. In addition, and if no specific provision is formulated in this call, the [SNSF Funding Regulations](#) and the [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#) apply. Only one call for proposals is currently envisaged.

Coordinated research and programme activities: NRPs aim to contribute towards solving pressing challenges of national significance. To this end, the selection of projects, the research carried out and other activities, such as annual programme meetings or exchange with stakeholders, are coordinated and managed by the Steering Committee. The aim is to ensure the quality of the research, enable the identification and pursuit of synergies across projects, and facilitate connections with non-academic partners. The Steering Committee will remain in continuous exchange with key stakeholders throughout the programme and ensure their participation in programme-level activities. By submitting a project proposal to this NRP, applicants agree to participate in the NRP's activities, cooperate with the Steering Committee and the programme management, and contribute to the collective results of the programme.

Project start: The approved research projects must begin no later than 1 November 2027.

Project budget and duration: Project budgets between **CHF 250,000** and **CHF 900,000** are recommended. Given that the two research areas differ considerably in scope, project budgets are expected to vary accordingly. Co-financing of projects with other funding sources is welcomed (Article 18 of the [SNSF Funding Regulations](#) and Chapter I, paragraph 1.20 of the [General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations](#)).

Projects should have a minimum duration of **36** months and a maximum duration of **48** months.

Salaries: The salaries of applicants will not be funded by NRP 85. Applicants intending to hire PhD students with NRP 85 funding, must guarantee financing for the entirety of the PhD studies, including any additional timeframe after the financed NRP 85 project has concluded (e.g. a project with a duration of 36 months must present plans for the financing of any doctoral students for an additional 12 months). Additionally, projects lasting less than 48 months must present a viable plan showing how the dissertation results will be included in the programme's final report.

Language of proposals: Expressions of interest and full proposals must be submitted in English.

7.2 Eligibility criteria for applicants and project partners

Applicants: Applicants are required to fulfil the requirements of Art. 10 of the [SNSF Funding Regulations](#). Applicants with a doctorate must have obtained it at least four years before the submission date of the application. Applicants without a doctorate should be able to demonstrate at least three years of full-time research activity. This also applies to medical doctors without a PhD.

Applicants should be in a position to be fully responsible for carrying out a research project and managing the staff involved. Conflicts of interest and incompatibilities are assessed in accordance with the SNSF

regulations on recusal and conflicts of interest. Family members, applicants in a personal relationship with each other or who may otherwise be perceived as lacking independence cannot collaborate scientifically on the same project, particularly in the event of hierarchical issues.

Number of projects: Each applicant can submit only one full proposal for this NRP. An applicant can be a project partner in one additional project of this NRP. Non-academic project partners may participate in more than one proposal. A proposal may be submitted regardless of the number of other SNSF grants held or applied for, provided that the regulations of the relevant funding instruments are complied with.

During the evaluation process, applicants may not have identical or substantially similar proposals under evaluation in another SNSF funding scheme with overlapping funding periods (cf. Art. 17 Funding Regulations).

Eligibility of project partners: Project partners are researchers and/or non-academic actors who make a partial contribution to the research project without being responsible for the project. They are eligible according to the [SNSF Funding Regulations](#) and the [General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations](#). As with the applicants, project partners' own salaries will not be funded by NRP 85, and the share of the total budget allocated to project partners should generally not exceed 20%. Project partners must not refer to the support received from the SNSF as a grant they have themselves acquired.

Cross-border research projects: Collaboration with research groups in other countries is allowed, provided that such cooperation either generates significant added value that could not be achieved without cross-border cooperation or substantially enhances the proposed research with respect to content or methodology, or if the competencies of researchers from abroad are essential for the successful completion of the project. As a rule, the funding share requested for co-applicant researchers abroad may amount to 30% of the requested research budget. For co-applicants from abroad, the norms and salary rates of the relevant country will be applied *mutatis mutandis*, with the SNSF maximum rates as the upper limit. Due to the complexity of such projects, please contact the programme manager for NRP 85 before submitting a proposal with a cross-border component.

7.3 Submission procedure

The application procedure for this NRP consists of a two-step process, with an initial submission of an expression of interest (not reviewed) and subsequent submission of a full proposal, which will undergo review. Please note that all applicants and project partners must enter their personal data, including CV, in the portal themselves. Only then can you submit your expression of interest. Invite all applicants and project partners as contributors to the expression of interest early on, so that they have enough time to create a user account if necessary and to enter their data in the SNSF Portal. **Once the expression of interest submission deadline has passed, it will no longer be possible to apply to this NRP.**

7.3.1 Online submission via the SNSF Portal

To submit a proposal via the SNSF Portal, applicants and project partners need to log in with a SWITCH edu-ID. Step-by-step instructions are provided for the initial login ([Create an SNSF Portal user account](#)).

CV: Applicants must compile their CV according to the template on the SNSF Portal. Information can be found on the [CV website](#) and on the [SNSF Portal](#).

7.3.2 Expression of interest

The template for full proposals is provided on the SNSF portal and on the website nfp85.ch at the expression of interest stage.

Applicants must submit an expression of interest, including personal data, team composition and an abstract of the proposed project (4,000 characters max.) via the SNSF Portal by **24 November 2026**, 5 pm Swiss local time. Project partners confirm their participation by entering their administrative data on the SNSF Portal. The expression of interest and provided information allows the SNSF to organise the upcoming evaluation process. There will be no evaluation or pre-selection at this stage.

The expression of interest will be accepted on 25 November, and applicants will then be able to complete the full proposal on the portal.

7.3.3 Full proposals

The deadline for submitting full proposals is **19 January 2027**, 5 pm Swiss local time.

Full proposals must be submitted online via the [SNSF Portal](#). In addition to the administrative data to be entered directly in the SNSF Portal, the following documents need to be uploaded:

- **Project plan and bibliography** (in PDF format): Applicants must use the template provided in the SNSF Portal. The project plan must not exceed 15 pages (excluding bibliography).

Please note that letters of commitment from non-academic project partners will be required at a later stage.

7.4 Project selection procedure

The SNSF Office checks whether the personal and formal requirements are met before forwarding the proposal for scientific review. The SNSF will not consider proposals that do not meet these requirements. The applicants will be notified of such a decision by means of a formally appealable ruling.

The Steering Committee may carry out a preliminary evaluation of proposals and exclude from further consideration those that do not meet criteria 'Compliance with the aims of NRP 85' and 'Potential practical relevance and sustainability'. The SNSF shall notify the applicants of such a decision in the form of an appealable ruling.

The full proposals selected to proceed to the next stage are evaluated by national and international experts. Based on these external reviews and the evaluation criteria set out below, the Steering Committee assesses the full proposals and formulates a funding recommendation. During the evaluation phase only, ad hoc experts may be appointed to provide specific expertise and complement the evaluation panel alongside the Steering Committee. In formulating its recommendation, the Steering Committee takes into account the overall coherence of the selected projects with the programme's objectives, as well as the transparent and consistent application of the evaluation criteria. Final funding decisions are taken independently by the National Research Council.

7.5 Evaluation criteria

Eligible full proposals are evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Compliance with the aims of NRP 85:** Proposals must correspond to the NRP's goals specified in this call for proposals and offer a clear vision of how they relate to the overall framework of the programme.
- **Scientific quality:** Scientific relevance, topicality and originality, suitability of methods and feasibility. Projects must present feasible workplans detailing appropriate budgets and timelines.
- **Scientific qualifications of the applicant(s) and suitable infrastructure:** Scientific track record in the field of the proposal and ability to carry out the research project. Adequate personnel resources and a suitable infrastructure must be secured.
- **Inter- and transdisciplinarity:** Projects must provide a clear work plan relating to the inter- and transdisciplinarity of the project, including a rationale for project-specific collaboration, timelines and milestones. Projects in RA1 are required to show transdisciplinarity (and interdisciplinarity where appropriate) with a view to achieving the desired implementation outcomes, while projects in RA2 are required to show interdisciplinarity (and transdisciplinarity where appropriate) with a view to creating practice-oriented knowledge. (See also Section 6.1.)
- **Potential practical relevance and sustainability:** The potential for practical application and strategies for implementing the results must be convincing. Elements to be taken into consideration here can include effectiveness, accessibility, scalability and end-user orientation. The ultimate aim is the long-term relevance and thus the sustainability of research results.

8 Programme budget and schedule

8.1 Programme budget

Projects	Research Areas 1 and 2	CHF 6,250,000
Knowledge exchange and synthesis		CHF 300,000
Cross-project and programme-level coordination		CHF 150,000
Scientific evaluation, support, and steering		CHF 300,000
Total budget		CHF 7 million

8.2 Schedule

The individual projects of NRP 85 can have a maximum duration of 48 months.

Publication of the call for proposals	22 September 2026
Deadline for submission of expression of interest	24 November 2026
Deadline for submission of full proposals	19 January 2027
Final decision on full proposals by SNSF Research Council	No later than August 2027
Start of research	No later than 1 November 2027
End of research	November 2031
Publication of the programme synthesis	Mid 2032

9 Organisation and actors

Steering Committee of NRP 85

Professor Lilly Shanahan, Professor of Clinical Developmental Psychology, Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development and Department of Psychology, University of Zurich (President)

Professor Claudine Burton-Jeangros, Professor of Sociology, University of Geneva

Professor Christoph Müller, Professor of Special Education, University of Fribourg (Switzerland)

Professor Ulrike Ravens-Sieberer, Research Director of the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Medical Centre Hamburg-Eppendorf, University of Hamburg

Representative of the Swiss Federal Administration

Dr Annette Fahr, Head of Scientific Research (wissenschaftliche Grundlagen), Federal Office of Public Health

Representative of the Conference of Cantonal Health Directors (GDK)

Dr Nadja Weir, Cantonal Psychiatrist of Zurich

Delegate of the Research Council Thematic and Solution-oriented Research (TSOR)

Professor Birgit Watzke, Professor for Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy Research, Department of Psychology, University of Zurich

Programme Manager

Dr Regine Maritz, Swiss National Science Foundation, Berne

Programme Assistant

Barbara Blatter, Swiss National Science Foundation, Berne

10 Contacts

For questions regarding the submission of expressions of interest and full proposals, please contact Regine Maritz, Programme Manager: nrp85@snf.ch or +41 31 308 22 22.

For questions concerning salaries and eligible costs, please contact Roman Sollberger, Head of Finance: roman.sollberger@snf.ch or +41 31 308 22 22.

For technical help with the SNSF portal and electronic submissions, please access the SNSF Support Portal: <https://snf-ch.atlassian.net/servicedesk>

Hotline: tel. +41 31 308 22 00 (Deutsch/Français/English)