



NATIONAL SCIENCE CENTRE
POLAND

PROPOSAL EVALUATION GUIDELINES OF THE NATIONAL SCIENCE CENTRE

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1. General Information

- The selection of research proposals for the evaluation by specific review panels is comprised of 25 subject areas (within a given scientific discipline or a group of disciplines), grouped into the following three units:
 - HS – The Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (6 subject areas, HS1–HS6);
 - ST – Physical Sciences and Engineering (10 subject areas, ST1–ST10);
 - NZ – Life Sciences (9 subject areas, NZ1–NZ9).
- Proposals submitted in response for the calls for proposals announced within OPUS, PRELUDIUM and SONATA funding schemes are subject to evaluation by Expert Review Panels appointed for each call by the Council of the National Science Centre individually for each of 25 subject areas. Within each subject area, Experts have at their disposal a fixed funding budget.
- Proposals submitted in response for the calls for proposals announced within SONATA BIS and MAESTRO funding schemes are subject to evaluation by Expert Review Panels appointed for each call by the Council of the National Science Centre individually for each of the units (HS, ST and NZ, respectively) without further subdivision into subject areas.
- All calls for proposals announced by the National Science Centre on the same specific date will be hereinafter referred to as edition.
- National Science Centre has adopted a two-stage evaluation process.
 - In the first stage of the evaluation process the proposals are evaluated by Experts grouped in Expert Review Panels appointed for each call by the Council of the National Science Centre. During a panel meeting each proposal undergoes preliminary evaluation and is either rejected or accepted for the second stage of evaluation, based on the results of peer review performed earlier by two members of the expert panel.
 - During the second stage of evaluation the qualified projects are sent to External Reviewers for evaluation.
- The identities of Experts and External Reviewers are not disclosed to the Applicants.
- The reviews are sent to the Applicants in an unchanged form, identical to the original review prepared by the experts. Hence, the final review has to meet high standards in terms of the merit, completeness, clarity, unambiguity and the form.

1.1. Funding schemes

- OPUS is a general grant scheme. Research proposals submitted under this scheme may include the purchase or construction of research equipment.
- PRELUDIUM is a funding scheme intended for young researchers who, by the proposal submission deadline, have not obtained a doctoral degree.



- SONATA is a funding scheme addressed to researchers with a doctoral degree obtained within 2-7 years prior to the submission of the proposal. Projects submitted under this funding scheme are expected to create a novel scientific or academic approach, methodology or research equipment.
- SONATA BIS is a funding scheme addressed to researchers with a doctoral degree obtained within within 5-12 years prior to the submission of the proposal. This funding scheme is designed to support researchers aiming to establish a new research team and become independent research leaders conducting novel basic research.
- MAESTRO is a funding scheme addressed to experienced researchers to conduct pioneering research within individual disciplines as well as across different disciplines. Projects submitted under this funding scheme are expected to create ground breaking results, possibly leading to discoveries. The proposed research projects are expected to stimulate further developments within and across the disciplines.

Each funding scheme is subject to specific evaluation criteria and has to be evaluated according to different rules.

2. Review Code of Ethics

- By agreeing to review a research proposal submitted within a call for proposals announced by the National Science Centre the External Reviewer undertakes to maintain full confidentiality and no to disclose any part of the information contained in the proposal under review, including the names of the Applicants. The full confidentiality of the information implies that any content of the research proposal cannot be used for any purposes other than the review process. Withdrawal from the review process does not release the External Reviewer from the duty to maintain the full confidentiality with respect to the information contained in the reviewed proposal.
- The External Reviewer undertakes to review the research proposal within the specified deadline in order to maintain the objectivity and equality of the proposal evaluation process within a given call for proposals. The External Reviewer shall notify the National Science Centre at the earliest convenience about the inability to meet the specified deadline for the submission of the review report.
- The External Reviewer should be sensitive to the appearance of a conflict of interest with respect to the Applicant of the research proposal under review.
- The External Reviewer is not eligible for the review of a proposal in case of the Reviewer's individual involvement in the proposal.
- In case of the External Reviewer being a Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator, or a Supervisor in a research proposal submitted within the same call for proposals, under the same funding scheme, and the same subject area as the proposal under review the External Reviewer is not allowed to review the proposal.
- The conflict of interest disclosed by the External Reviewer may not, in general, lead to the rejection of the report of the External Reviewer. If in doubt, the External Reviewer should contact a relevant Scientific Coordinator, advising of the conflict of interest or bias. However,



if the External Reviewer is of the opinion that the existing conflict of interest would lead to a biased report, the External Reviewer should withdraw his report unconditionally..

2.1. Typical cases of conflict of interest or bias

- Personal relations of the External Reviewer with any Applicant:
 - The External Reviewer is married to, or shares a kinship to the second degree with any Applicant;
 - The External Reviewer shares some legal ties with the Applicant, i.e. has legal custody or power of attorney of any Applicant;
 - The Reviewer has a personal conflict of interest with any Applicant.
- Professional relations of the External Reviewer with any Applicant:
 - The External Reviewer has worked in the Applicant's institution in the period of three years prior to the deadline for the submission of the proposal;
 - The External Reviewer has acted as a line manager of the Applicant in the period of three years prior to the deadline for the submission of the proposal.
- Scientific relations of the External Reviewer with any Applicant:
 - The External Reviewer is a supervisor/mentor of the Applicant;
 - The External Reviewer has co-authored scientific work with the Applicant in the period of three years prior to the deadline for the submission of the proposal;
 - The External Reviewer has entered direct research competition with the Applicant.
- Economic relations of the External Reviewer with the Applicant:
 - The External Reviewer is capable of directly profiting from the reviewed proposal (either through entering the competition or through shared profit from the proposal).

The above cases do not exhaust all possibilities of the conflict of interest.

3. Principles of proposal evaluation

3.1. Evaluation of the publication record

- In the section of the proposal describing the research and publication record the Applicant should list 10 most important publications published in recent years. During the evaluation of this section only the published work should be taken into account (e. g. oral presentations or work under review cannot be taken into account).
- The failure of the Applicant to list any publications is deemed as the lack of relevant publication record.

3.2. Evaluation of the research project record with the Project Leader acting as Principal Investigator

- The evaluation of the track record of research projects with the Project Leader acting as Principal Investigator is not to be performed for proposals submitted within the PRELUDIUM funding scheme.



- The evaluation of the track record of research projects with the Project Leader acting as Principal Investigator should be performed only for the project leader of the proposal under review. Evaluation of completed research projects should include only projects in which the Project Leader of the proposal under review was a Principal Investigator. The projects in which the Project Leader of the proposal under review was an Investigator, or a Co-Investigator should not be evaluated.
- Evaluation of completed research projects should include only projects granted funding as a result of an open competition at the national or international level.
- The failure of the Project Leader of the proposal under review to list any completed research projects with the Project Leader acting as Principal Investigator or publications resulting from such projects is deemed as lack of relevant projects and project related publications, respectively.

4. Guidelines for evaluation of proposals submitted under the OPUS funding scheme

- The Project Leader (Principal Investigator) can be a researcher at any stage of his/her research career.
- There are no personal details of other investigators.
- In case of the Project Leader with no proven track record of previously led projects the scoring resulting from the evaluation of the proposal section describing research track record of the Project Leader should be applied.

5. Guidelines for evaluation of proposals submitted under the PRELUDIUM funding scheme

- Project Leader (Principal Investigator) can be any researcher without the PhD title.
- The number of team members cannot exceed 3 Applicants, including on researcher with a of habilitation or a professor title acting as the supervisor/mentor of the Project Leader. The additional team member acts as Co-Investigator.
- Neither the review and acceptance of proposed doctoral thesis of the Project Leader nor the enrolment for doctoral program do not constitute a mandatory condition for the proposal eligibility. The research subject of the proposal different from the subject of the doctoral thesis is allowed.
- Only two forms can be submitted in proposal section describing the research track record of the Applicants: one of the Project Leader and one for the Supervisor/Mentor of the Project Leader.

6. Guidelines for evaluation of proposals submitted under the SONATA funding scheme

- An eligible Project Leader (Principal Investigator) is a researcher starting his/her personal career who has obtained a PhD title within 2-7 years prior to the deadline for the submission of proposals (the current calendar year plus 7 previous full calendar years).
- In addition to the Project Leader, no more than one Applicant holding a habilitation degree or the title of professor is allowed from an institution other than the host institution (a different faculty in case of a university hosting the project, and a different institute in case of the project hosted by the Polish Academy of Sciences).
- In proposal section describing the research track record of the Applicants only one form can be submitted describing the research track record of the Project Leader.
- In case of the Project Leader with no proven track record of previously led projects the scoring from the proposal section describing research track record of the Project Leader should be applied.

7. Guidelines for evaluation of proposals submitted under the SONATA BIS funding scheme

- An eligible Project Leader (Principal Investigator) is a person starting his/her research career with a doctoral degree obtained from 5 to 12 years prior to the submission of the proposal.
- In addition to the Project Leader, the team cannot consist of researchers holding a habilitation degree or the title of professor.
- In proposal section describing the research track record of the Applicants only one form can be submitted describing the research track record of the Project Leader.
- In case of the Project Leader with no proven track record of previously led projects the scoring from the proposal section describing research track record of the Project Leader should be applied.

8. Guidelines for evaluation of proposals submitted under the MAESTRO funding scheme

- The Project Leader (Principal Investigator) is a person fulfilling the legal definition of an experienced researcher.
- In case of proposals submitted within disciplines grouped in the Science and Technology and Life Sciences Unit, the experienced researcher is deemed a person who, within the last 10 years prior to the submission of the proposal (the current calendar year plus 10 previous full calendar years):
 - published at least five publications in renowned Polish and/or International scientific journals;
 - led at least two research projects granted funding as result of national or international competition;
 - fulfilled at least one of the following criteria:



- was a member of a scientific committee of at least one renowned international conference;
 - published at least one research monograph;
 - presented unique research work at renowned international conferences;
 - was awarded an international research prize or award;
 - has been a member of renowned research societies;
 - published an important novel high impact research result.
- In case of proposals submitted within disciplines grouped in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences unit, the experienced researcher is deemed a person who authored genuine artistic internationally renowned work or artistic work with high impact on Polish culture. The experienced researcher is expected to have taken active part in the organization of international exhibitions, festivals, artistic events including fine arts, music, theatre and film.
 - In proposal section describing the research track record of the Applicants only one form can be submitted describing the research track record of the Project Leader.