

**THE NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL  
MECHANISM**

**THE POLISH BASIC RESEARCH  
PROGRAMME**

**A GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS**

**THE GRIEG CALL**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The terms and conditions of the Guide for Applicants have been developed on the basis of the Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021. The Guide for Applicants specifies in detail the responsibilities of the participants in the GRIEG call and is prepared in accordance with the Guideline for Research Programmes – Rules for the establishment and implementation of programmes falling under the Programme Area “Research”.

The Guide for Applicants complements the GRIEG Call Document and the Guide for Evaluators. Both applicants and evaluators are kindly asked to familiarize themselves with the procedures described herein.

## 2. GENERAL INFORMATION

### 2.1 About the Basic Research Programme

There are two main objectives of the Norway and EEA grants: (i) to reduce economic and social disparities in Europe; and (ii) to strengthen bilateral cooperation of the Beneficiary countries and the Donor States (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein).

The main goal of the Basic Research Programme implemented by the National Science Centre is to enhance research-based knowledge development in Poland through research cooperation with the Donor States. Supporting the collaborative research projects will foster long-term strategic partnerships and provide an important step for future collaborative projects on the European level, with increasing participation in Horizon Europe.

The programme is designed, through competitive and open calls for proposals for research projects, to ensure the quality and high level of research. During the Basic Research Programme period, three open calls are foreseen: GRIEG, IdeaLab and POLS. The Programme is organised in cooperation with the Research Council of Norway.

### 2.2 Allocation for projects in the GRIEG call

The GRIEG call receives financial support from the Norway Grants (85%) and the Polish national contribution (15%). The budget of the call is EUR 37,340,107.

The minimum amount of project grant is EUR 500,000 and the maximum amount is EUR 1,500,000.

It is expected that the eligible costs claimed by Norwegian entities participating in the project will normally not exceed 40% of the total eligible costs of the project.

### 2.3 Expected results of the GRIEG call

The GRIEG call will be implemented through curiosity-driven joint research projects, enabling Polish-Norwegian research teams to bring together complementary skills, knowledge and resources to jointly address specific research problems.

Expected results of the GRIEG call are:

- Internationally refereed joint publications in high-impact journals, in line with the programme's open access policy;
- Active involvement of young<sup>1</sup> researchers in the projects, in a way which supports their career development and skills: as work package or task leaders, carrying out the research needed for their PhD or for further career steps, etc.;
- Close cooperation between the Polish and Norwegian partners involved in projects with the aim for building cooperation for future activities (like joint applications to EU Horizon Europe);
- Knowledge transfer, sharing experiences and best practices;
- Enhancement of the collaboration between science and society, including the involvement of public organisations, NGOs or other public benefit organisations.

## 2.4 Areas of the call

The GRIEG Call will support collaborative research projects in all areas of the fundamental sciences.<sup>2</sup> Based on the provisions of the MoU between Poland and Norway, research groups within polar research and social science research are particularly invited to submit proposals to this call.

Twenty-five research discipline-specific evaluation panels are grouped in the three main domains: HS – Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; NZ – Life Sciences; ST – Physical Sciences and Engineering. The applicant (Principal Investigator) should choose the main discipline panel. All panels are presented on the website: <https://www.ncn.gov.pl/finansowanie-nauki/panele-ncn?language=en>

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<sup>1</sup> A young researcher is a person involved in scientific activities: a doctoral student or a university teacher without a doctoral degree, or a person who has held a doctoral degree for a period not exceeding 7 years.

<sup>2</sup> The list of 25 NCN panels determined by the Resolution of the Council of the National Science Centre (66/2018).

HS – Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences		NZ – Life Sciences		ST – Physical Sciences and Engineering	
HS1	Fundamental questions of human existence and the nature of reality	NZ1	Molecular biology, structural biology, biotechnology	ST1	Mathematics
				ST2	Fundamental constituents of matter
HS2	Culture and cultural production	NZ2	Genetics, genomics	ST3	Condensed matter physics
HS3	The study of the human past	NZ3	Cellular and developmental biology, molecular and cellular neurobiology	ST4	Physical and analytical chemical sciences
HS4	Individuals, institutions, markets	NZ4	Biology of tissues, organs and organisms	ST5	Materials and synthesis
HS5	Norms and governance	NZ5	Human and animal non-infectious diseases	ST6	Computer science and informatics
HS6	Human nature and human society	NZ6	Human and animal immunology and infection	ST7	Systems and communication engineering
		NZ7	Diagnostics tools, therapies and public health	ST8	Products and processes engineering
		NZ8	Evolutionary and environmental biology	ST9	Astronomy and space research
		NZ9	Fundamentals of applied life sciences and biotechnology	ST10	Earth system science

### 3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

#### 3.1 Project partnerships

Proposals for collaborative research projects shall be submitted by a partnership comprising at least one Polish and at least one Norwegian research organisation, *the Project Partners*. Beyond this minimum condition, there is no limitation on the number of partners: any public or private entity can be a partner. However, only partners from Poland and Norway can be supported by the GRIEG project grant.

For each proposal, the Project Partners shall designate a leading entity called the Project Promoter, which has the scientific and administrative responsibility for the project and shall electronically submit the proposal on behalf of the entire consortium. The Project Promoter has to be a Polish research organisation. The Project Partners have to supply a [letter of intent](#) for the implementation of the research project, which has to be submitted together with the proposal. **Please note** that adding Project Partners during the project is not allowed.

The Project Promoter and Project Partners must sign a partnership agreement for the implementation of the research project before the Project Contract is signed. The partnership agreement template will be provided at the contracting stage.

### 3.2 Eligibility of Project Promoter

The eligible Applicants<sup>3</sup> are research organisations, as defined in the Commission Regulation (Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty), and as specified in Article 27, section 1, point 1, 3-6 of the Act on the National Science Centre of 30 April 2010, established as a legal person in Poland and employing the Principal Investigator. These are:

- universities;
- federations of science and HE entities;
- research institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences, operating pursuant to the Act on the Polish Academy of Sciences of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1475);
- research institutes operating pursuant to the Act on Research Institutes of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 736);
- international research institutes established pursuant to separate provisions and operating in the Republic of Poland;
- the Łukasiewicz Centre<sup>4</sup>, operating pursuant to the Act on the Łukasiewicz Research Network (Journal of Laws 2019, item 534);
- institutes operating within the Łukasiewicz Research Network within the meaning of the Act on the Łukasiewicz Research Network (Journal of Laws 2019, item 534);
- the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences;
- other institutions involved in research independently on a continuous basis;

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<sup>3</sup> The Applicant is named "Project Promoter" in the Guideline for Research Programmes and in the Regulation on the implementation of Norwegian Financial Mechanism

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.pl/web/science/lukasiewicz-research-network-the-bill-has-been-signed-by-the-president>

- scientific and industrial centres within the meaning of the Act on Research Institutes (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 736);
- research centres of the Polish Academy of Sciences within the meaning of the Act on the Polish Academy of Sciences of 30 April 2010;
- scientific libraries;
- companies operating as R&D centres within the meaning of the Act on Certain Forms of Support for Innovative Activity of 30 May 2008 (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 141).

The Project Promoter (the applicant) is the leading entity which has the scientific and administrative responsibility for the project, and should electronically submit the proposal on behalf of the partnership. The Project Promoter must be a Polish research organisation. The Project Promoter has to sign the Project Contract with the PO. The Project Promoter is responsible for submitting annual reports and a final report to the Programme Operator.

### 3.3 Eligibility for project partners

The eligible project partners may be any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial as well as non-governmental organisations, established as a legal person in Poland or Norway. At least one Norwegian partner has to be approved as a research organisation according to the definition for eligibility at the Research Council of Norway.<sup>5</sup>

Polish eligible project partners may be:

- universities;
- federations of science and HE entities;
- research institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences, operating pursuant to the Act on the Polish Academy of Sciences of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1475);
- research institutes operating pursuant to the Act on Research Institutes of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 736);
- international research institutes established pursuant to separate Acts, operating in the Republic of Poland;
- the Łukasiewicz Centre, operating pursuant to the Act on the Łukasiewicz Research Network (Journal of Laws 2019, item 534);
- an institute operating within the Łukasiewicz Research Network within the meaning of the Act on the Łukasiewicz Research Network (Journal of Laws 2019, item 534);
- the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences;

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.forskningsradet.no/en/apply-for-funding/who-can-apply-for-funding/research-organisations/approved-research-organisations/>

- other institutions involved in research independently on a continuous basis;
- scientific and industrial centres within the meaning of the Act on Research Institutes (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 736);
- research centres of the Polish Academy of Sciences within the meaning of the Act on the Polish Academy of Sciences of 30 April 2010;
- scientific libraries;
- companies operating as R&D centres within the meaning of the Act on Certain Forms of Support for Innovative Activity of 30 May 2008 (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 141);
- legal entities established with registered offices in Poland;
- companies conducting research in another organisational form than laid down above.

Entities established in third countries can participate, but they cannot receive funding from the project grant.

The Project Partners authorise the Project Promoter to sign and submit the proposal on their behalf. The Project Promoter and Project Partners must sign a partnership agreement for the implementation of the research project before the Project Contract is signed. The Project Partners are responsible for providing to the Project Promoter the complete and reliable information which is necessary for submitting the annual reports and final report.

**Please note** that adding Project Partners during the project is not allowed.

### 3.4 Eligibility of Principal Investigator

For each project, the Project Promoter designates a *Principal Investigator* – a researcher who provides the scientific lead for the research project on a daily basis.

- a) The Principal Investigator must be researcher with at least a doctoral degree in the field related to the project research area;
- b) The Principal Investigator (of any nationality) has to be employed full time in the Polish Project Promoter, with a permanent position or with a fixed term contract covering at least the duration of the project;
- c) The Principal Investigator cannot be the authorised representative of the Project Promoter;
- d) The involvement of the Principal Investigator must be significant and sufficient for proper implementation of the project;
- e) A researcher can be Principal Investigator for one proposal in the GRIEG call only.

**Please note** that the evaluators will pay particular attention to the qualification and scientific record of the PI. She/he is responsible for monitoring the technical direction and scientific quality of the project and ensures that the project is carried out in



compliance with the terms and conditions of the call as well as with those specified in the Guidelines for Research Programmes – Rules for the establishment and implementation of programmes falling under the Programme Area “Research”.

### **3.5 Project Promoters and Partners excluded from the possibility of receiving funding**

Project Promoters or Partners excluded from the possibility of receiving funding cannot submit proposals. This eligibility criterion shall be verified during the eligibility check based on the Project Promoter’s statement.

According to article 9.2 of the Guidelines for Research Programmes, grants may not be awarded to potential participants who are, at the time of the grant award procedure, bankrupt or being wound up, convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct, not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes, the subject of a judgment for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money-laundering or any other illegal activity, subject to a conflict of interests or guilty of misrepresenting information.

Any potential participant who has committed an irregularity in the implementation of any other action under financing provided by the European Union or under financial contributions provided by the EFTA States in relation to the EEA Agreement may be excluded from the selection procedure at any time, with due regard being given to the principle of proportionality.

Project Promoters and Polish Project Partners are excluded from the possibility of receiving funding in particular pursuant to:

- art. 207 section 4 of the Act on Public Finance of August 27, 2009 (Journal of Laws of 2019, item 869, as amended);
- art.12 section 1 item 1 of the Act of the consequences of entrusting work to foreigners who are contrary to the provisions on the territory of the Republic of Poland of June 15, 2012 (Journals of Laws of 2012, item 769, as amended);
- art. 9 section 1 item 2a of the Act on the Liability of Collective Entities for Acts Prohibited Under Penalty of October 28, 2002 (Journals of Laws of 2002, no 197, item 1661, as amended).

### **3.6 Eligible duration of the projects**

Minimum eligible duration of the projects is 24 months.

Maximum eligible duration of the projects is 36 months.

Duration of the projects (24 or 36 months) may be extended up to 12 months, without additional funds. The end of the period for eligibility of expenditures in the GRIEG projects is 30 April 2024.

## 4. COSTS AND EXPENDITURES

Please use the exchange rate of the Polish National Bank on the day of the call announcement to calculate if the project budget in PLN is within the eligible limits. It is expected that the eligible costs claimed by the Norwegian entities participating in the project shall normally not exceed 40% of the total eligible costs of the project.

**Please note** that there must be no double financing of any part of the project by any other source of funds.

### 4.1 General principles on the eligibility of expenditures

Eligible expenditures of projects are those actually incurred within the project, which are in accordance with Chapter 8 of the Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the project contract (**please note that any expenditures incurred after 30 April 2024 will not be eligible**);
- they are connected with the subject of the project contract and they are indicated in the detailed budget for the project;
- they are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project;
- they must be used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective(s) of the project and its expected outcome(s) in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular through being recorded in the accounting records of the Project Promoter and/or Project Partner and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the Project Promoter and/or Project Partner is established and according to generally accepted accounting principles;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable public procurement law; detailed requirements concerning public procurement are described in the Guidelines of the National Focal Point the public procurement, available on the site <https://www.eog.gov.pl/strony/zapoznaj-sie-z-funduszami/podstawy-prawne/>

Expenditures are considered to have been incurred when the cost has been invoiced, paid and the subject matter delivered (in the case of goods) or performed (in the case of services and works). Exceptionally, costs in respect of which an invoice has been issued in the final month of eligibility are also deemed to be incurred within the dates of eligibility if the costs are paid within 30 days of the final date for eligibility. Overheads and depreciation of equipment are considered to have been incurred when they are recorded on the accounts of the Project Promoter and/or the Project Partner.

The Project Promoter's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the expenditures and revenue declared in respect of the project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

The eligibility of expenditures is checked during the proposal evaluation. The evaluators will pay attention to the composition of the budget.

Please note that eligibility of expenditures is also verified during the evaluation of the annual reports and the final report and during the external control and audit.

#### **4.2 Eligible direct expenditures**

The eligible direct expenditures for a project are those expenditures which are identified by the Project Promoter and/or the Project Partner, in accordance with their accounting principles and usual internal rules, as specific expenditures directly linked to the implementation of the project and which can, therefore, be booked to it directly. The following direct expenditures are eligible:

- costs of staff assigned to the project;
- cost of new or second-hand equipment;
- travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project;
- costs of consumables and supplies;
- costs entailed by other contracts;
- costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the project contract for each project.

All costs budgeted in the project (e.g. equipment, consumables and supplies, etc.) will be charged to the programme, VAT included. However, VAT is not considered an eligible cost in case the entity can reclaim the VAT from the national tax authorities in conformity with national indirect tax regulations.

##### **4.2.1 Costs of staff assigned to the project**

The costs of staff assigned to the project (researchers, master and PhD students, technicians and other research-supporting staff directly involved in the project, and

the person responsible for the administrative and financial management of the project), comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, are eligible provided they comply with the Project Promoter's and Project Partner's standard policy on remuneration.

Timesheets should be used so that the actual time is recorded against a project to form the basis of the costs charged. If persons are contracted to work 100% of their time on a single project (whether they are working full-time or part-time), timesheets are not necessary as their costs can only be charged to that activity. In all other cases, timesheets are required. This includes those who might be contracted to work on two or more projects, since it is essential when charging to have a means of recording and verifying the actual time applied to each activity.

#### Staff costs for Polish partners

Remuneration for Polish members of the scientific team and additional staff supporting the implementation of the project cannot exceed per year:

- PLN 190,000 – the Principal Investigator;
- PLN 170,000 – the Project Partner (the scientist leading the project partner's team);
- PLN 120,000 – the researcher;
- PLN 100,000 – the person employed as a specialist auxiliary post/administrative project manager.

**Please note** that the above amounts concern full-time employment for a full year. In the case of part-time employment and/or employment for less than the entire year, the maximum amount is proportionally calculated.

Remuneration and scholarships for under- and post-graduate students of the Project Promoter and Polish Project Partners have to be awarded according to the relevant [Resolution of the Council of the National Science Centre](#). The recipients of NCN scholarships must be selected in an open call. An indicative minimum amount of scholarships is PLN 3,500 per month. Additionally, the total scholarship budget for each month of the project implementation for the Project Promoter and Polish Project Partners may amount to PLN 30,000. If the funding of a research project by the National Science Centre constitutes State aid for the Project Promoter or Partners, scholarships are not eligible.

A full-time employment contract for a person newly employed in a post-doc post must be awarded in accordance with the relevant [Resolution of the Council of the NCN](#). Persons newly employed as post-Docs must be selected in an open call. A new post-doc contract is reserved for a person who has obtained their PhD within 7 years of joining the project. This period may be extended by a period of long-term (in excess of 90 days) documented sick leaves or rehabilitation leaves granted on account of

being unfit to work. In addition, the period may be extended by the number of months of childcare leave granted pursuant to the Labour Code and, in the case of women, by 18 months for every child born or adopted, whichever manner of accounting for career breaks is preferable.

The costs of natural persons working with the beneficiary under a contract other than an employment contract may be incurred as costs of staff, provided the requirements of the applicable public-procurement law are complied with and the following conditions are fulfilled:

- the natural person is assigned to the project and named in the project team;
- the natural person works under the instructions of the Project Promoter or Project Partner and, unless otherwise agreed with the Project Promoter or Project Partner, on the premises of the Project Promoter or Project Partner;
- the results of the work belong to the Project Promoter or Project Partner; and
- the costs are not significantly different from the costs of the staff performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the Project Promoter or Project Partner.

#### Staff costs for Norwegian partners

Most partners (such as universities, university colleges, enterprises) from Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, should use the same rates for personnel costs as in H2020 projects. Indirect costs (overheads) are calculated as a flat rate of 25% of all the direct costs.

However, Norwegian research institutes which report personnel rates to the Research Council of Norway, and have those personnel rates approved by the RCN, may use those as Standard scales of unit costs (ref. Regulation art. 8.4.b). This means they should use the same rates as in applications to RCN calls. It is important to note that in such cases, no indirect or overhead costs should be included in the budget, as they are already included in the personnel rates.

(Footnote) Link to list of institutes with personnel rates approved by the Research Council of Norway which can be used as Standard scales of unit costs in EEA and Norway Grants projects:

<https://www.forskningsradet.no/contentassets/3aac4d1b26724a1d8b9d1919814e84d7/stim-eu-liste-over-institutter-2019-med-logo.pdf>

#### **4.2.2 The cost of new or second-hand equipment**

Where new or second-hand equipment is purchased, only the portion of the depreciation corresponding to the duration of the project, and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the project may be considered eligible expenditure.

In the event that the Programme Operator determines, based on a justification provided in the project proposal, that the equipment is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project, the entire purchase price of that equipment may by way of exception be eligible. The entire purchase price of that equipment cannot exceed PLN 500,000 according to the Law on Higher Education and Science of 20 July 2018. Requirements of the applicable public-procurement law must be complied with.

In the case of the Project Promoter or Project Partner applying for State aid, the costs of research equipment qualify as eligible costs to the extent and for the period in which they are used for the implementation of the research project. If the research equipment and devices are not used for the research project's purposes over the entire period of use, only depreciation costs corresponding to the period of the project's completion, calculated pursuant to the accounting regulations, are deemed eligible costs.

Where the entire purchase price of the equipment is eligible, the Project Promoter and/or partner:

- keeps the equipment on its own for a period of at least five years following the completion of the project and continues to use that equipment for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project for the same period;
- keeps the equipment properly insured against losses such as fire, theft or other normally insurable incidents both during project's implementation and for at least five years following the completion of the project; and
- sets aside appropriate resources for the maintenance of the equipment for at least five years following the completion of the project.

The Programme Operator may release any Project Promoter and/or Partner from the above obligations with respect to any specifically identified equipment where the Programme Operator is satisfied that, having regard to all relevant circumstances, continued use of that equipment for the overall objectives of the project would serve no useful economic purpose.

#### **4.2.3 Travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project**

The travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project must be in accordance with the applicable national rules. As a general rule, travel costs should be limited to the project's necessities and calculated on the basis of economy class travel on public transport. The Programme will cover real expenses for travel, accommodation, medical insurance and conference fees. For subsistence allowances, the Project Promoter and Partners shall follow the national rules.

#### **4.2.4 The costs of consumables and supplies**

The costs of consumables and supplies must be identifiable and assigned to the project. The type of consumables (reagents, office supplies, small laboratory equipment, etc.) should be indicated, with justification for the estimated total costs. Requirements of the applicable public-procurement law must be complied with.

#### **4.2.5 Costs entailed by other contracts**

The costs of other contracts linked to the implementation of the project are eligible for the Project Promoter and/or Partner, provided the awarding complies with the applicable rules on public procurement and the Regulation.

#### **4.2.6 Costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the project contract for each project**

Where the total grant from the programme to the respective Project Promoter or Partner is EUR 325,000 or more, proof of expenditure is required and must be submitted with the final project report in the form of a certificate by an independent auditor. The invoice for the audit may be issued up to 30 days from the project's completion but not later than 30 April 2024.

In line with the Article 34.5 Law on the National Science Centre, the proof of expenditure by means of a report by an independent auditor described in paragraph 4 of Article 8.12 of the Regulation is mandatory for project partners whose primary location is in Poland and in research projects awarded with a grant amount equal to or greater than PLN 2 million. Where applicable, this shall be submitted with the final project report.

The costs of the Project Promoter's opening and maintaining a separate interest-bearing bank account dedicated to the payments of the project grant are eligible.

All reported publications should have Green or Gold access<sup>6</sup>. Open Access costs are eligible under the Basic Research Programme.

#### **4.3 Indirect costs in projects**

Indirect eligible costs will be determined by applying a flat rate of 25% of the total direct eligible costs, excluding direct eligible costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the beneficiary, as well as financial support to third parties.

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<sup>6</sup> Gold open access is where an author publishes the article in an online open access journal. Green open access is where an author publishes the article in any journal and then self-archives a copy in a freely accessible institutional or specialist online archive known as a repository, or on a website.

The indirect costs can include salaries for administrative staff which are not part of staff costs (financial department representatives, acquisitions responsible, PR officer etc).

According to the Research Council of Norway's procedure for "Payroll and indirect costs", the Norwegian entities classed as "Research Institutes" calculate the payroll and indirect costs together, as hourly rates for the staff participating in a project.

#### **4.4 Subcontracting**

As a general rule, the expertise and resources needed to implement a project should be available within the project partnership. However, the subcontracting of research tasks is possible as long as it is clearly stated and justified in the project proposal and contract. Subcontracting may cover only a limited part of the planned research tasks. Examples of subcontracting are contracts with public or private entities or natural persons for a clinical study, opinion survey, testing or analysis of samples, measurements using equipment not available within the consortium, etc.

Subcontracting is based on business conditions and, therefore, is eligible provided that the awarding of the contract complies with the applicable rules on public procurement and the Regulation.

Subcontractors have no direct obligations under the project contract. Therefore, it is the Project Promoter or Partner who must ensure that the subcontractors comply with obligations under the Basic Research Programme.

In the case of contracts with natural persons, costs qualify as subcontracting when the work is done without the direct supervision of the Project Promoter or Project Partner. Typically, contracts for the commission are regarded as subcontracting.

Contracts to purchase goods, works or services, which are necessary for the implementation of the project, but are not scientific services, needed to carry out the research activities in the project, are not considered subcontracting.

The transfer of project costs intended to increase the eligible costs for "subcontracting" is considered to reflect a significant change in the project, and normally requires an amendment.

The Project Promoter and partners may NOT subcontract tasks to each other.

#### **4.5 Excluded costs**

The following costs will not be considered eligible:

- interest on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges;
- charges for financial transactions and other purely financial costs, except costs related to accounts required by the FMC/NMFA, the National Focal Point or the applicable law and costs of financial services imposed by the project contract;



- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- exchange losses;
- recoverable VAT;
- costs that are covered by other sources;
- fines, penalties and costs of litigation, except where litigation is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project;
- excessive or reckless expenditure.

#### 4.6 State aid

If funding of a research project by the National Science Centre constitutes State aid for the Project Promoter and/or Project Partners, State aid will be granted under conditions regulated by the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 9 September 2015 on the terms and mode for granting State aid via the National Science Centre (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1381). The Regulation is in accordance with the Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty.

**Please note**, that all documents concerning proposals for State aid must be signed with a qualified electronic signature in the PAdES format.

Detailed information can be found in the [section State aid](#).

#### 4.7 Co-financing requirements

Grants from the programme may be up to 100% of total eligible project costs, provided all applicable National and EU rules on State aid are complied with.

Any remaining costs of the project have to be provided or obtained by the Project Promoter and the Project Partners, according to their respective shares of the project budget. Co-financing cannot be in-kind.

#### 4.8 Budgetary flexibility

Applicants should note that during the course of the project, budgetary flexibility is given in order to allow for appropriate project management. Reallocation of funds among the cost categories does not require the prior approval of the Programme Operator and would not result in an addendum to the contract. Cost categories are defined as one of the main sub-heads of the budget which are the cost of staff assigned to the project; the cost of new and second-hand equipment and other costs.

Such reallocation cannot exceed 15% of the total eligible costs of a Project Promoter or Partner and cannot exceed PLN 100.000.

For reallocation above this limit, a contract amendment will be required before the date the modification should take place. The request must be fully substantiated and justified. If the request is deemed unfunded by the Programme Operator, the Project Promoter will be advised in writing.

The 15% rule is NOT applicable to the budget sub-head of indirect costs.

Please note, that if funding a research project constitutes State aid for the Project Promoter and/or Project Partners, each cost reallocation (also below the 15% limit) will require the approval of the Programme Operator.

## 5. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL

### 5.1 Rules and procedures for submission of proposals

The proposals must be written in English, with title and summary also in Polish. The proposals shall be submitted electronically via the ZSUN/OSF platform (Integrated Services for Science/Funding Stream Support), available online (<https://osf.opi.org.pl/>). To submit an application via ZSUN/OSF the applicant must be registered as a user of the system and follow the instructions given in the ZSUN/OSF system. Only the Project Promoter is authorized to submit a proposal using the username and password. **The application deadline is September 17, 2019, at 24.00 CEST.**

Correcting or revising proposals after this deadline will not be possible.

Each application has a unique identification code (assigned by ZSUN/OSF) which will remain the same throughout the duration of the project. Any technical issues about using ZSUN/OSF can be resolved by contacting technical support via e-mail (see the link below)

<https://osf.opi.org.pl/app/toModule.do?prefix=/adm&page=/uwagi.do>

or by phone (on working days between 8.15 am – 4.15 pm). The contact details are available on the opening page of ZSUN/OSF.

Versions of proposals sent on paper, removable electronic storage medium, by email or by fax will not be regarded as having been received by the PO.

You can find details of the [proposal submission procedure](#) on the NCN website under the section GRIEG – call documentation.

If the applicant plans to submit a proposal in the GRIEG call, he/she should:

- 1) review, in particular, the specimen proposal form, where you can find out about information and the annexes needed to complete the electronic proposal form in ZSUN/OSF;
- 2) decide how long the project is to be: 24 or 36 months;

- 3) obtain any data from the applicant that is required to complete the proposal and find out about the internal procedures that may affect the proposal and project performance (cost planned in the project, procedure for acquiring signature(s) or authorised representative(s) of the institution to confirm submission of the proposal);
- 4) draw up:
  - a summary of the research project as well as a full project description (in English);
  - an abstract of the project for the general public (in Polish and in English);
- 6) draw up a [Letter of Intent](#) for the purposes of completion of the requested research project;
- 7) prepare acceptance letters from publishers confirming that the work has been accepted for publication (when the scientific achievements section includes papers accepted for publication that have not been published yet);
- 8) prepare annexes required in the event that the Project Promoter and/or Project Partner are applying for State aid;
- 9) prepare a statement that the project complies with the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities and the principle of equality between women and men;
- 10) prepare a statement that the applicant and partners are not excluded from the possibility of receiving funding.

## 5.2 The project application form

The project application form has the following components:

- Project Promoter (Applicant)
- Partners/Collaborators
- General Information
- Abstract
- Description for the General Public
- Justification – basic research criterion
- Expert(s)
- Principal Investigator/leading foreign partner/main Polish partner/partners
- Workplan
- Financial resources
- Financial resources – entity/entities
- Declarations/Certifications
- Proposal description
- Attachments

## 6. ELIGIBILITY CHECK

The applicant should check the completeness and correctness of the application form

by clicking the Sprawdz kompletność/[Verify Completeness] button.

**Please note** that automatic verification does not exempt the applicant from ultimate responsibility for the content of individual sections.

In order to be retained, the proposals must fulfil all of the following administrative eligibility criteria:

- 1) Proposals must be submitted by an eligible applicant (Project Promoter) – a research organisation specified in article 27, section 1, point 1, 3-6 of the Act on the National Science Centre established as a legal person in Poland;
- 2) Project partners (any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial as well as non-governmental organisations) have to be established as a legal person in Poland or Norway;
- 3) Proposals must meet the criterion concerning the number of Participants – at least one Polish research organisation and one research entity from Norway;
- 4) Proposals must be submitted via the electronic proposal submission system ZSUN/OSF before the submission deadline of 17 September 2019, 24.00 CEST;
- 5) The project implementation period is either 24 or 36 months;
- 6) The minimum grant amount is €500,000 and the maximum amount is €1,500,000. The exchange rate of the Polish National Bank on the day of the call announcement must be used to calculate if the project budget in PLN is within the eligible limits;
- 7) Receipt of the proposal before the deadline date and time established in the call;
- 8) All fields on the proposal application form must be completed;
- 9) All administrative forms specified in the proposal application form must be present and duly signed by the person(s) authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisation. The Principal Investigator's declaration must be present and signed;
- 10) Proposals must comply with the language requirements set out in the proposal application form: all fields must be filled in English unless specifically indicated in the application form;
- 11) A statement that the project complies with the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities and the principle of equality between women and men must be signed;
- 12) A statement that the applicant and partners are not excluded from the possibility of receiving funding must be signed. (For more information, please consult section 3.5 of the Guide for Applicants);
- 13) The content of the proposal must relate to the scope of the call.

**Please note** that the completeness of the information contained in the proposal will be for the experts to evaluate; the eligibility checks only apply to the presence of the appropriate parts of the proposal. If it becomes clear that one or more of the eligibility criteria have not been fulfilled, the proposal is declared ineligible and withdrawn from any further evaluation. A negative decision by the Director may be appealed against within 14 days from the date of receiving the decision to the Appeal Committee of the Council of the National Science Centre.

If a proposal fails to meet the requirements, then the applicant will be notified of that including information of the reasons for rejection within 14 days after the due date for submission of applications.

## 7. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

A detailed description of the review process and the selection criteria can be found in “Guide for Evaluators”. The evaluation process is based on a number of well-established principles:

- **Excellence** – the projects selected for funding must demonstrate high quality in the context of the key topics and criteria set out in the call.
- **Transparency** – the funding decisions must be based on clearly described rules and procedures, and applicants should receive adequate feedback on the outcome of the evaluation of their proposals;
- **Fairness and impartiality** – all proposals submitted to the call are treated equally. They are evaluated impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants;
- **Confidentiality** – all proposals and related data, knowledge and documents communicated to PO are treated in confidence;
- **Efficiency and speed** – evaluation, award and contract preparation should be as rapid as possible, commensurate with maintaining the quality of the evaluation and respecting the legal framework;
- **Ethical and security considerations** – any proposal which contravenes fundamental ethical principles may be excluded at any time from the process of evaluation, selection and award.

The proposals will be evaluated by panels composed of internationally recognized experts. The experts will be invited to evaluate the proposals that are closely related to their field of expertise. They must be resident and working outside of Poland and Norway.

The pool of experts has been established by the Coordinators of the National Science Centre in cooperation with the RCN. Experts will be recruited by using expert identification tools (Elsevier’s Experts Lookup, Publons Reviewer Connect, etc.) and from National Science Centre’s existing database of international experts having experience in evaluating project proposals at international level.

NCN as the Programme Operator draws up a list of appropriate experts using as main selection criteria their high level of expertise and their appropriate range of competencies.

NCN will, whenever possible, take into account the need for gender balance among the experts.

The evaluation process consists of the following steps: individual evaluation, consensus assessment, panel review and Programme Committee selection meeting.

### 7.1 Individual evaluation

Each eligible proposal will be evaluated by three international experts. The experts first work with the proposals individually online. They answer Yes/No in criterion 0 and award scores on a scale from 0 to 5 as well as comments for the following selection criteria 1 - 3:

*Criterion 0: Relevance in relation to the objectives and priorities of the Basic Research Programme – Yes/No, threshold Yes*

The main content of the proposal must be basic research, understood as “*experimental or theoretical endeavours undertaken to gain new knowledge of the foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any direct commercial use*”. The presence of elements of applied research activity does not lead to the disqualification of a proposal, as long as the main content is basic research. If the proposal fails the criterion of basic research, the experts will answer No and the proposal will fall under the threshold. During the panel evaluation, proposals failing this criterion will be discussed and may be excluded from the evaluation by the decision of Panel of Experts. A justification of the assessment is provided to the applicant in the application system ZSUN/OSF.

*Criterion 1: Scientific excellence – max. 5 points, weighing 60%, threshold 3 points*

*Sub-criterion 1. Evaluation of the scientific excellence of the proposal*

*Sub-criterion 2. Evaluation of the research track record of the Principal Investigator and the consortium partners*

*Equal weight will be given for the sub-criteria. Evaluation of the track record will be in relation to the stage of the career.*

*Criterion 2: Quality and efficiency of the implementation and management, including quality and implementation capacity of the applicants and contribution to capacity and competence building – max. 5 points, weighting 20%, threshold 3 points*

*Criterion 3: Potential impact through the development, dissemination and use of project results – max. 5 points, weighing 20%, threshold 3 points*

Experts examine the issues to be considered comprising evaluation criteria 1 - 3 and score these on a scale from 0 to 5.

Score values indicate the following assessments:

0 – the proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information

1 – Poor. The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 – Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3 – Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary.

4 – Very good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible.

5 – Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

## **7.2 Consensus assessment**

Once all the experts have completed their individual assessments online, they meet to compare and discuss their assessment with the objective of establishing a consensus report, representing the common view of the three experts. In the event that it is impossible to reach a consensus, the report sets out the experts' majority view, but also records any dissenting views. The NCN Coordinators are present during the consensus meeting and take the necessary steps to assure the quality of the consensus reports. The signing of the consensus report completes the consensus step of the evaluation.

## **7.3 Panel review**

Three panels are organised by the National Science Centre Coordinators: the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Panel; the Life Sciences Panel; and the Physical Sciences and Engineering Panel. The panels shall consist of the international experts who prepared the individual evaluation reports in the previous step. The panel review entails a comparison of the consensus reports, consistency of the scores and justifications check, resolving cases where experts could not reach consensus concerning a particular aspect of a proposal, recommending a priority order for proposals with the same score. The outcome of the panel review is a panel report containing:

- an Evaluation Summary Report for each proposal;
- a list of proposals found ineligible during evaluation;
- a list of proposals passing all thresholds;
- a list of evaluated proposals having failed one or more thresholds;
- recommendations for priority order;

- recommendations for proposals passing to final evaluation;
- a summary of any other recommendations of the panel.

#### **7.4 Thresholds and the ranking lists**

A proposal can obtain a total number of 15 points in the evaluation procedure. In order to be considered for funding, a proposal must pass all thresholds by:

- obtaining answer Yes for criterion 0;
- receive at least a total score of 9 (out of 15);
- and pass the threshold of 3 points in criteria 1, 2 and 3.

Please note that due to budgetary constraints, not all of the proposals passing the thresholds will be funded.

Based on the evaluation results, the Programme Operator draws up the 3 preliminary ranking lists (one for each research domain: HS – Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; NZ – Life Sciences; ST – Physical Sciences and Engineering).

### **8. SELECTION MEETING OF THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE**

The Coordinators of the National Science Centre prepare preliminary ranking lists, one for each research domain (HS – Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; NZ – Life Sciences; ST – Physical Sciences and Engineering) with a requested grant amount for each proposal. The proposals representing polar research and social sciences should be presented on the preliminary ranking lists.

Prior to the Programme Committee meeting, the Programme Operator will provide access to the Programme Committee members at evaluated proposals, individual reviews, consensus reports and panel reports. The task of the Programme Committee is to decide about the final ranking order of the proposals on the basis of the total consensus scores assigned to the projects and the panel reports. The Programme Committee will review the proposed preliminary ranked lists of projects and may modify the ranking of the projects in justified cases. The justification for modifications will be detailed in the minutes of the meeting of the Programme Committee. The Chair of the Programme Committee will submit the minutes and the list of recommended projects, together with a reserve list and the list of rejected project applications and the reason for their rejection to the Programme Operator.

The Programme Committee may decide to add a maximum of one additional point per project in cases where:

- the project is led by a researcher at the early stage of her/his career;
- the project is led by a female researcher in scientific areas where the women are under-represented and vice-versa.

While making a recommendation for funding, the Programme Committee takes into consideration: a) the quality of the proposals; b) a similar success rate for each



research domain; and c) the overall portfolio of the programme, including the provision of the MoU to support polar research and social sciences, and the total budget for the call.

In the event that the final ranking lists, approved by the Programme Committee, reveal that limitations in the amount of funding prevent the full inclusion of another project into the final list, the Programme Operator may, acting on a proposal from the Programme Committee, apply minor budget cuts uniformly across all projects, not exceeding 3% of the requested budget.

## 9. FUNDING DECISIONS

The Programme Operator issues individual decisions to award a grant to projects based on the final ranking lists approved by the Programme Committee, for those projects for which grants are available. The decisions of the Director of the National Science Centre are submitted to the Project Promoter and to the Principal Investigator in accordance with the [Rules for delivering the NCN Director's decisions](#). The decision of the Director may be [appealed against](#) to the Appeal Committee of the Council of the National Science Centre.

A number of proposals may be kept in reserve to allow for eventualities such as the failure of negotiations on projects, the withdrawal of proposals, budget savings agreed during the negotiation or the availability of additional budget from other sources.

The lists of selected projects are published on the PO's website. The applicants are given access to the evaluation results (the assessments of the individual experts, consensus assessments and results of the panel review) through the ZSUN/OSF system.

## 10. NEGOTIATION OF PROPOSALS

The Project Promoters of proposals that have not been rejected, and for which funding is available, are invited to begin negotiations.

In addition to any issues raised in the Evaluation Summary Report, the applicants may receive requests for further administrative, legal, technical and financial information necessary for the preparation of the project contract. The Programme Operator may request changes, possibly including modifications to the budget. The Programme Operator must justify all the requested changes.

If it proves impossible to reach an agreement with a Project Promoter within a reasonable deadline, by the end of March 2020 at the latest, the negotiations may be terminated and the proposal rejected by negative decision of the Director of the National Science Centre. Negotiation of proposals from the reserve list may begin

once it is clear that sufficient budget has become available to fund one or more of these projects.

The Programme Operator may also terminate negotiations if the Project Promoter proposes to modify the project to the extent that it becomes significantly different from the proposal that has been evaluated.

## 11. APPEALS

Project Promoters who wish to [appeal](#) the final results may send their complaints directly to the PO headquarters, within 14 days from the date of receiving the decision of the Director of the National Science Centre. The obtained appeals of the Project Promoters are proceeded by the Appeal Committee of the Council of the National Science Centre. The Appeal Committee issues a decision to grant or to refuse to grant funds. The final decision about registered appeals will be made by the Programme Operator after consulting the Programme Committee members.

The decision of the Council Appeal Committee may be appealed against at the administrative court.

**Please note** that comments and scores given by experts and members of panels will not be subject to appeals. Grounds for appeals include conflicts of interest and errors in administrative procedure.

## 12. CONTRACTING OF PROJECTS

With regard to each grant, a trilateral Project contract between the National Science Centre, the Project Promoter and the Principal Investigator will be concluded for the term of the grant.

The project contract will set out the terms and conditions of grant assistance, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the parties. It will in particular, include provisions that ensure that the Project Promoter undertakes to comply fully with the provisions of the legal framework of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 referred to in Article 1.5 of the Regulation that is relevant for the implementation of the project, including any obligation that is valid after the project has been completed.

The Project contract will contain an explicit reference to the programme agreement and the Regulation and, as a minimum, provisions on the following:

- a) the obligation regarding reporting that enables the Programme Operator to comply with its reporting obligations to the NMFA and the National Focal Point;

- b) the maximum amount of the project grant in PLN and Euro<sup>7</sup> and the maximum project grant rate;
- c) the eligibility of expenditures and requirements regarding submission of proof of expenditures;
- d) the method for calculating indirect costs and their maximum amount;
- e) the first and final dates of eligibility of expenditures;
- f) modifications to the project;
- g) ensuring that the access requested in relation to monitoring, audits and evaluations is provided without delay;
- h) ensuring that obligations regarding information and communication are complied with;
- i) the right of the Programme Operator to suspend payments and request reimbursement from the Project Promoter in case decision on such actions is taken by the NMFA, Programme Operator or the National Focal Point;
- j) the resolution of disputes and jurisdictions;
- k) a detailed budget, which may allow for up to 5% contingency;
- l) a reference to partnership agreements.

## 13. REPORTING AND PAYMENTS

### 13.1 Payment model

The Project Promoter is obliged to open and maintain a separate bank account indicated in the project contract.

Payments towards the projects will be in the form of advance payment and interim payment(s). The Programme Operator will ensure the timely transfer of those payments.

Payments of the project grant shall take the form of advance instalments and provide the projects with a positive cash flow. The first advance instalment will be transferred to the Project Promoter within 30 days from the signature of the project contract. Further advance instalments (interim payments) will be transferred to the project in accordance with an individual pre-defined schedule of payments based on the project budget, as stipulated in the project contract. These interim payments are made twice a year, each corresponding to 50% of the planned annual project budget. The interim payments may be paid when at least 70% of the previous advance instalment(s) has been reported as incurred in the form of a certified statement. The Programme

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<sup>7</sup> The exchange rate of the Polish National Bank on the day of the call announcement will be used to calculate the maximum project budget in Euro.

Operator shall monitor the level of incurred expenditure and amend the annual budget annexed to the project contract when appropriate.

The Project Promoter must ensure that all payments to the other project partners are made without unjustified delay, and not later than 15 days after the Project Promoter has received payment from the Programme Operator.

The payment model will be specified in the project contract.

### 13.2 Annual reporting

During the course of the project, the Project Promoter submits an annual report within 60 days of the end of each reporting period set out in the project contract. The 1<sup>st</sup> technical report must contain the progress of the work for at least 6 months of the project's implementation. The annual report must comprise:

- A technical report containing:
  - an explanation of the work carried out by the participants;
  - an overview of the progress of work towards the objectives of the project, including milestones and deliverables identified in the project contract. The report must include explanations justifying the differences between work expected to be carried out in accordance with the project contract and that actually carried out;
  - details on the exploitation and dissemination of the results, and – if required in the project contract – an updated plan for the exploitation and dissemination of the results;
  - a summary for publication by the Programme Operator.
- A financial report containing:
  - An individual financial statement from each participant for the reporting period concerned;
  - An explanation of the use of resources and the information on subcontracting.
- A summary financial statement from the PP consolidating the individual financial statement for the reporting period concerned.

### 13.3 Final reporting

The Project Promoter submits a final report within 60 days after the project's end. If the implementation of the projects ends in the first 6 months of the year, then the annual report for the previous year is not requested separately. This final report must comprise:

- A final technical report containing:
  - 1) an overview of the results and their exploitation and dissemination;
  - 2) the conclusion on the project;

- 3) the socio-economic impact of the project: a report covering the wider societal implications of the project, in the form of a questionnaire, including gender equality actions, ethical issues, efforts to involve other actors and to spread awareness, as well as the plan for the use and dissemination of the foregoing;
  - 4) a summary for publication by the PO.
- A final financial report containing:
- 1) a final individual financial statement from each participant for the final reporting period, as defined in the project contract;
  - 2) a final summary financial statement from the PP consolidating the individual financial statement for the all reporting periods and including the request for payment of the balance (final payment claim);
  - 3) distribution of the financial contribution between the Project Promoter and Project Partners;
  - 4) an audit certificate on the financial statements for each participant if the total grant from the programme to the respective Project Promoter or Partner is EUR 325,000 or more. In line with the Article 34.5 Law on the National Science Centre, the audit certificate is mandatory for Project Partners whose primary location is in Poland and in research projects awarded with a grant amount equal or superior to PLN 2 million.

### 13.4 Reporting on scientific publications

During and after the project, the Project Promoter provides references and an abstract of all scientific publications relating to the results of the project no later than 60 days following publication.

As part of the final project report, the Project Promoter will be required to submit a full list of publications relating to the results of the project.

All reported publications should have Green or Gold access. Gold open access is where an author publishes the article in an online open access journal. Green open access is where an author publishes the article in any journal and then self-archives a copy in a freely accessible institutional or specialist online archive known as a repository, or on a website.

**Please note** that Open Access costs are eligible under the Polish Basic Research Programme.

All publications must include the following statement to indicate that the results of the project were generated with the assistance of financial support from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism:

***“The research leading to these results has received funding from the Norway Grants 2014-2021 operated by National Science Centre under Project Contract No xxx.”***

## 14. CONTACT PERSONS

National Science Centre – Programme Operator:

Dr Marzena Oliwkiewicz-Miklasińska

Phone office: +48 12 341 9151; mobile: +48 519 404 996

e-mail address: [marzena.oliwkiewicz@ncn.gov.pl](mailto:marzena.oliwkiewicz@ncn.gov.pl)

Please contact the EEA and Norway Grants Team at the National Science Centre with all queries concerning the Basic Research Programme and the GRIEG call. We will endeavour to answer your questions sent by e-mail as soon as possible, within 5 working days at the latest. Answers to the questions will be published in the FAQ to ensure equal access to information for all applicants.

Research Council of Norway – Donor Programme Partner:

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Lena Cappelen Endresen

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In case of specific issues concerning applicants from Norway, the Donor Programme Partner in the Basic Research Programme is the Research Council of Norway.