

Annex 1 to
Order No 15/2020 dated 13.03.2020 of the
Director of the National Science Centre
amending Order No 62/2019 on the detailed
procedure for evaluating proposals by the Expert
Team

The Order lays down the detailed procedure for evaluating proposals submitted to OPUS, SONATA, PRELUDIUM, PRELUDIUM BIS, SONATINA, SONATA BIS, MAESTRO and ETIUDA calls by the Expert Teams.

§ 1.

Whenever this Order refers to:

- 1) NCN, it shall mean the National Science Centre;
- 2) Council, it shall mean the Council of the National Science Centre;
- 3) Director, it shall mean the Director of the National Science Centre;
- 4) Coordinator, it shall mean the Coordinator in charge of a research domain, as defined in Article 2 (5) of the Act on the National Science Centre of 30 June 2010 (Journal of Laws of 2019, item 1384);
- 5) Team, it shall mean an Expert Team:
 - a) Panel Team, it shall mean an Expert Team appointed for each panel defined by an applicable Council Resolution, i.e. falling under the domains of: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (HS), Physical Sciences and Engineering (ST), and Life Sciences (NZ);
 - b) Inter-Panel Team, it shall mean an Expert Team appointed under a given research domain, i.e. HS, ST or NZ;
 - c) Inter-Domain Team, it shall mean an Expert Team comprising Experts representing different research domains, i.e. HS, ST and NZ;
- 6) Committee, it shall mean a group of Experts comprising the Expert Team, interviewing candidates at the second stage of merit-based evaluation of research Proposals in the calls where such an interview is required by this Order and Regulations on awarding funding for research tasks funded by the National Science Centre;
- 7) Expert, it shall mean an Expert Team member or Committee member;
- 8) Reviewer, it shall mean an external Expert, as defined in Article 22 (2) of the Act on the National Science Centre of 30 April 2010, who reviews the Proposal at the second stage of merit-based evaluation and is not an Expert Team member;
- 9) Proposal, it shall mean a Proposal submitted in response to a call launched by the National Science Centre;
- 10) Meeting, it shall mean an individual day in an Expert Team's or Committee's Session;
- 11) Session, it shall mean all Meetings of the Expert Team or Committee at a given stage of the merit-based evaluation;
- 12) Edition, it shall mean calls launched by the National Science Centre with deadlines expiring on the same date;

- 13) Ranking Long List, it shall mean the ranking list of Proposals evaluated at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation with an indication of Proposals approved for the second stage of evaluation; and
- 14) Ranking Short List, it shall mean the ranking list of Proposals evaluated at the second stage of the merit-based evaluation with an indication of Proposals recommended for funding.

§ 2. General Provisions

- 1) Experts shall be selected by the Council pursuant to the document “Expert teams of the National Science Centre: formation and appointment” and shall be appointed by the NCN Director.
- 2) Expert Teams shall be appointed for each call Edition and they may carry out evaluation of Proposals submitted under one or several types of calls, to a particular panel (Panel Teams) or to a group of panels (Inter-Panel or Inter-Domain Teams).
- 3) The number of Experts and composition of the Expert Team shall be decided upon by the Council, considering the number and subject of Proposals under evaluation and the need to carry out the call in a timely and orderly manner.
- 4) A Team shall consist of at least five Experts.
- 5) The work of an Expert Team shall be managed by a Chair appointed by the Council.
- 6) During the Meetings, a Team’s Chair may appoint another Expert to manage the work of the Team in his/her stead. Should the Team’s Chair be unable to appoint such an Expert, he/she shall be appointed by the Coordinator.
- 7) The Experts shall be bound by the ethical principles laid down in the “Code of ethics for experts of the National Science Centre”.
- 8) The Coordinator shall exclude an Expert from the Proposal evaluation procedure in the event of a conflict of interest or justified suspicion of a bias in the Expert’s actions.

§ 3. Teams

1. The duties of the Teams shall include:
 - 1) evaluation of Proposals;
 - 2) compilation of a Ranking Long List and Ranking Short List of projects under a given call.

§ 4. Coordinators

1. The duties of a Coordinator shall include:
 - 1) running eligibility checks on Proposals;
 - 2) naming Experts to draft individual opinions in the event of the Team’s Chair experiencing a conflict of interest;
 - 3) organising Team and Committee Meetings, including:
 - a) summoning Meetings and participating in them;
 - b) verifying the conformity of the Meeting minutes drawn up by the recording clerk with the actual course of the Meetings and resolutions of the Team or Committee;

- 4) indicating Reviewers, taking into account the candidacies put forward by the Experts;
 - 5) assessing the accuracy and impartiality of the opinions drafted by the Experts and Reviewers; and
 - 6) presenting the Director with the ranking lists established by the Teams for his approval.
2. The Coordinator shall organise the Team's work and cooperate with the Team's Chair.

§ 5. Team's Chair

1. The duties of the Team's Chair shall include:
 - 1) indicating Experts to draft individual opinions at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation, with the exception of the situation described in § 5 (1) (2);
 - 2) chairing the Team Meetings, subject to the situation described in § 3 (5);
 - 3) conducting voting and
 - 4) approving the minutes from the Team Meetings.
2. The Team's Chair shall cooperate with the Coordinator.

§ 6. Experts

1. The duties of the Experts shall include:
 - 1) drafting individual opinions on Proposals assigned by the Team's Chair or Coordinator at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation and presenting them during the first Session;
 - 2) participating in the Team Meetings, as well as:
 - a) drafting justifications for the final grades of the Proposals they have been assigned during the Team Meetings;
 - b) putting forward the candidacies of at least five Reviewers to provide their opinion on each Proposal they reviewed at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation and which has been approved for the second stage of evaluation;
 - c) presenting individual opinions by Reviewers regarding the Proposals they have been assigned during the second Session; and
 - d) participating in the work of the Committee.

§ 7. Proposal Evaluation Stages

1. Proposals shall be subject to eligibility check and merit-based evaluation.
2. Eligibility check shall be performed by Coordinators.
3. Eligibility check shall comprise:
 - 1) verification of the Proposal for completeness,
 - 2) verification whether the Proposal complies with all the requirements set out in the call announcement and
 - 3) verification whether the expenditure complies with the terms specified by the Council in the call documents.
4. Only Proposals positively reviewed by the Coordinator shall be accepted for merit-based evaluation.
5. The merit-based evaluation shall be carried out by the Teams.

6. A Proposal may also be rejected on formal grounds at the stage of merit-based evaluation.
7. The merit-based evaluation of research Proposals (OPUS, PRELUDIUM, PRELUDIUM BIS and SONATA) shall be carried out in two stages:
 - 1) at the first stage, Proposals shall undergo a qualification check, based on the data included in the Proposal and annexes thereto, with the exception of the full project description. In the case of PRELUDIUM BIS, the qualification check shall be based on all data included in the Proposal and annexes thereto. The qualification check shall consist in:
 - a) individual opinions drafted by two Experts working independently;
 - b) Team's verdict delivered at the first Session consisting in discussing the individual opinions and establishing a Ranking Long List;
 - approved for the second stage are Proposals whose total forecasted cost is up to twice the value of funds allocated by the Council for a given call under particular panels;
 - 2) at the second stage, Proposals shall undergo specialist evaluation, based on the data included in the Proposal and annexes thereto, with the exception of the short project description. In the case of PRELUDIUM BIS, the specialist evaluation shall be based on all data included in the Proposal and annexes thereto. The specialist evaluation shall consist in:
 - a) individual opinions drafted by at least two Reviewers working independently. Exceptions to the above requirements regarding the number of opinions are admitted for well-justified cases. The reason for the exception shall be reported to the Director by the Coordinator;
 - b) Team's verdict delivered at the second Session consisting in discussing the individual opinions and establishing a Ranking Short List.
8. The merit-based evaluation of research Proposals (SONATINA, SONATA BIS and MAESTRO) shall be carried out in two stages:
 - 1) at the first stage, Proposals shall undergo a qualification check, based on the data included in the Proposal and annexes thereto, with the exception of the full project description. The qualification check shall consist in:
 - a) individual opinions drafted by two Experts working independently;
 - b) Team's verdict delivered at the first Session consisting in discussing the individual opinions and establishing a Ranking Long List;
 - approved for the second stage are Proposals whose total forecasted cost is up to twice the value of funds allocated by the Council for a given call under particular domains;
 - 2) at the second stage, Proposals shall undergo specialist evaluation, based on the data included in the Proposal and annexes thereto, with the exception of the short project description. The specialist evaluation shall consist in:
 - a) individual opinions drafted by at least two Reviewers working independently; Exceptions to the above requirements regarding the number of opinions are



- admitted for well-justified cases. The reason for the exception shall be reported to the Director by the Coordinator;
- b) appraisal by the Committee based on an interview with the Principal Investigator held by the Experts:
- the Principal Investigator shall be notified of the interview by the Coordinator no later than 14 days before its forecasted date;
 - the Coordinator shall provide the Principal Investigator with the Experts' and Reviewers' opinions on the Proposal no later than 7 days before the interview;
 - the Principal Investigator shall be interviewed in Polish or in English at the registered office of the NCN. The language of the interview shall depend on the terms of the call and composition of the Committee. Under the MAESTRO call, the interview shall be held in English;
 - in exceptional and well-justified cases, the NCN shall allow for an interview to be held via available telecommunications tools. A remote interview shall be held under the Principal Investigator's responsibility and at his/her risk;
 - failure to appear for the interview shall be deemed as withdrawal from applying for funding of the Proposal under the call;
- c) Team's verdict delivered at the second Session consisting in discussing the individual opinions, results of the interview and establishing a Ranking Short List.
9. The merit-based evaluation of Proposals for funding of doctoral scholarships under the ETIUDA call shall be carried out in two stages:
- 1) at the first stage, Proposals shall undergo evaluation consisting in:
- a) individual opinions drafted by two Experts working independently;
- b) Team's verdict delivered at the first Session consisting in discussing the individual opinions and establishing a Ranking Long List;
- approved for the second stage are Proposals whose total forecasted cost is up to twice the value of funds allocated by the Council for a given call under particular disciplines;
- 2) at the second stage, Proposals shall undergo evaluation consisting in:
- a) appraisal by the Committee based on an interview with the candidate held by the Experts:
- a candidate shall be notified of the interview by the Coordinator no later than 14 days before its forecasted date;
 - the Coordinator shall provide the Candidate with the Experts' opinions on the Proposal no later than 7 days before the interview;
 - a candidate shall be interviewed in Polish or in English at the registered office of the NCN. The language of the interview shall depend on the terms of the call and composition of the Committee;
 - in exceptional and well-justified cases, the NCN shall allow for an interview to be held via available telecommunications tools. A remote interview shall be held upon the candidate's responsibility and at his/her risk;

- failure to appear for the interview shall be deemed as withdrawal from applying for funding of the Proposal under the call;

b) Team's verdict delivered at the second Session consisting in discussing the results of the interview and establishing a Ranking Short List.

§ 8. Team Meetings

1. The duration of Team Meetings should be established with regard to the number of Proposals to be reviewed and the volume of work necessary for their evaluation.
2. On having completed all individual opinions assigned to him/her, the Expert shall be given access to all the other individual opinions drafted within the Team by electronic means.
3. Team Meetings shall be held in the presence of a quorum of more than a half of the Team's members.
4. Team Meetings shall be held by the Team's Chair or Expert appointed in his/her stead.
5. A Coordinator and recording clerk shall participate in every Team Meeting but shall not take part in the voting.
6. In the case of a conflict of interest, the Expert shall have to leave the Meeting room. Exclusion of the Expert on the grounds of a conflict of interest shall not affect the quorum when voting.
7. The minutes shall be kept by the recording clerk and approved by the Coordinator and Team's Chair.

§ 9. Committee Meetings

1. In order to interview candidates, Committees shall be formed, composed of the Experts.
2. The number of Committees shall depend on the number of Proposals approved for the second stage of the merit-based evaluation and the number of Experts.
3. A Committee shall comprise at least five Experts.
4. A Committee Meeting shall be held in the presence of a quorum of more than half of the Committee members.
5. A Coordinator and recording clerk shall participate in every Committee Meeting.
6. In the case of a conflict of interest, the Expert shall have to leave the Meeting room. Exclusion of the Expert on the grounds of a conflict of interest shall not affect the quorum when voting.
7. The recording clerk shall keep the minutes of the Committee Meetings, which shall be annexed to the minutes of the Team Meetings.

§ 10. Evaluation of Proposals at the Team Meetings

1. All Proposals approved for the merit-based evaluation shall be the subject of analysis and discussions at a Team Meeting.
2. The budget shall not be changed.
3. In the OPUS, PRELUDIUM, PRELUDIUM BIS and SONATA calls, Proposals shall be given an auxiliary score based on Experts' and Reviewers' individual reviews.
4. In the SONATINA, SONATA BIS and MAESTRO calls, Proposals shall be given an auxiliary score, based on Experts' and Reviewers' individual opinions and, additionally, after an interview, the Team shall pass recommendations for Proposals: A. Proposal

- recommended for funding; B. Proposal recommended for funding in the second place; C. Proposal not recommended for funding.
5. In the ETIUDA calls, Proposals shall be given an auxiliary score, based on Experts' individual opinions and, additionally, after an interview, the Team shall pass recommendations for Proposals: A. Proposal recommended for funding; B. Proposal recommended for funding in the second place; C. Proposal not recommended for funding.
 6. Individual opinions shall not be binding upon the Team and shall be treated merely as a point of departure for the discussions on the final grade. The Team may establish an auxiliary score.
 7. The final grade of the Proposal shall be based on the analysis of individual criteria and discussions on the Proposal as compared to other Proposals reviewed under the call.
 8. Reviewers' opinions shall not be binding upon the Team, however the Experts must address them.
 9. While settling the Proposal's final grade, the Team may fully agree with the Reviewers' opinion, partly agree with it, or disagree with it.
 10. Disagreement with the Reviewers' opinion must be accounted for. A Proposal which has been given a score of zero by the consulted decision of the Team in any criterion subject to evaluation or whose evaluation form contains a consulted negative answer to any of the questions therein, with the exception of a question on the data management or a question on the ethics issues, cannot be recommended for funding.
 11. If the Team cannot find a common position on the evaluation of a Proposal, the Team shall make the decision by way of a vote.
 12. Decisions by the Team that should require a vote shall be taken by a simple majority.
 13. Ranking Long Lists and Ranking Short Lists must be approved by an absolute majority vote.
 14. The Team may conditionally recommend one Proposal for funding, which is partially within the limit of available funds agreed upon by the Council.
 15. The decision on funding the Proposals referred to in §10 (14) shall be made by the Director, who takes into account the percentage rate of exceeding the budget available.
 16. The Team shall not be required to distribute the whole funding available nor can it recommend for funding Proposals that exceed the available funding, subject to point 14.

§ 11. Ranking List

1. The Coordinator shall submit the ranking lists established by the Teams to the Director for his approval.
2. In exceptional cases, the Coordinator may, having consulted the Team, modify the order of research projects on a ranking list. The modification procedure shall be as follows:
 - 1) the consultation may have the form of circulating a query to all Experts with a justification of suggested modification and time fixed for their response;
 - 2) after the lapse of time fixed for the response, the Coordinator shall decide on the modification, taking into account the opinions received from the Experts and
 - 3) Expert's failure to respond on time shall be deemed as his/ her disagreement with the suggested modification.

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3. In the event referred to in point 2, the Coordinator shall submit the modified ranking list with a written justification to the Director for his approval.