

Attachment no 1 to Directive No 4/2016 by the Director of the National Science Centre of 19th February 2016 on specifying in detail the procedure of evaluation, by Expert Teams, of proposals submitted under the POLONEZ call for research projects carried out by incoming researchers co-financed from the Horizon 2020 framework programme, within the Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND

§ 1.

The directive sets forth in detail the procedure of evaluation conducted by Expert Teams under the POLONEZ call.

§ 2.

Wherever in the hereby directive reference is made to:

- 1) Centre – it shall be understood as the National Science Centre;
- 2) Council – it shall be understood as the Council of the National Science Centre;
- 3) Director – it shall be understood as the Director of the National Science Centre;
- 4) Coordinator – it shall be understood as the Centre's Coordinator in charge of a research domain;
- 5) Team – it shall be understood as the international Expert Team appointed for a given research domain, i.e. Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (HS), Physical Sciences and Engineering (ST) and Life Sciences (NZ); each Expert Team shall include experts from abroad; members of the team referred to as “from abroad” shall be understood as researchers employed outside the territory of the Republic of Poland;
- 6) Expert – it shall be understood as a member of the Team, or an external expert who is not a member of the Team;
- 7) Committee – it shall be understood as the Evaluation Committee composed of members of the Team interviewing candidates at the second stage of the evaluation of research proposals;
- 8) research stay – it shall be understood as a research project carried out by an incoming researcher, applied for under the POLONEZ call;
- 9) proposal – it shall be understood as a proposal submitted in response to the POLONEZ call published by the National Science Centre;
- 10) meeting – it shall be understood as an individual day in a Team or Committee's session;
- 11) session – it shall be understood as all meetings of a Team or Committee in a given stage of the merit-based evaluation process;
- 12) ranking long list – it shall be understood as the ranking list of proposals evaluated at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation with an indication of proposals approved for the evaluation's second stage;
- 13) ranking short list – it shall be understood as the ranking list of proposals evaluated at the second stage of the merit-based evaluation with an indication of proposals recommended for funding;

14) reserve list – it shall be understood as the ranking list of proposals evaluated in the second stage of the merit-based evaluation, with an indication of proposals conditionally recommended for funding.

§ 3. General provisions

1. Pursuant to article no 18 point 7 of the Act on the National Science Centre, the Council shall select the members of Expert Teams entrusted with the task of evaluating proposals. In the selection process, the Council shall be guided by the following principles:

1) Candidates shall be selected from amongst eminent Polish and foreign researchers, including the former laureates of the National Science Centre's calls, with regard to their research achievements and experience evaluating research projects financed on a competitive basis at home and abroad;

2) Evaluation of candidates shall be based on the information included in available bibliometric sources for tracking researcher achievements, predominantly the Web of Science as well as Scopus etc. and other sources specific to the nature of the respective research domains, and also in available listings of individuals granted financial resources in concluded calls for research proposals at home and abroad.

2. Members of Expert Teams shall be chosen pursuant to the principles specified in the document "Korpus Ekspertów Narodowego Centrum Nauki – tworzenie i zasady działania" ["The National Science Centre's Corps of Experts: creation and operating procedures"], which constitutes an attachment to the Resolution of the Council of the National Science Centre no 18/2013 of 14th February 2013, in accordance with the following procedure:

1) Having received opinions on the candidates issued by the Council's respective Committees, i.e. The Committee of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (K-1), The Committee of Physical Sciences and Engineering (K-2) and The Committee of Life Sciences (K-3) shall select the members of the Expert Teams each time a call is published, with regard for gender balance.

2) Upon request of the Council, the Director of the National Science Centre shall appoint Expert Teams for each call.

3. The number of members in a Team shall be decided upon by the Council, with regard for the number of proposals under evaluation and the need to carry out the call in a timely and orderly manner. A Team may consist of no fewer than five members.

4. The operations of an Expert Team are coordinated by a Head, appointed by the Council upon request by the Council's respective Committees, i.e. The Committee of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (K-1), The Committee of Physical Sciences and Engineering (K-2) and The Committee of Life Sciences (K-3) selects members of the Expert Team, or – when the Team is convening – by a member indicated by the Team's Head.

5. Teams shall be appointed each time a call is published.

6. Experts are bound by the ethical principles laid out in the document "Members of the Council and Experts' Code of Ethics," adopted by the Council.

7. The Coordinator shall exclude an expert from proposal evaluation proceedings in the event of conflict of interest.

§ 4. Expert Teams

1. The duties of the Teams include:

- 1) evaluation of research proposals;
- 2) compilation of a ranking long list, ranking short list and ranking reserve list of proposals submitted under a given call.

§ 5. Coordinator

1. The duties of the Coordinator include:

- 1) performing proposal eligibility checks;
- 2) indicating the members of the Team to carry out individual evaluations in the event of the Head experiencing a conflict of interest as regards the proposal's author or investigator who is involved in the proposal's project.
- 3) organising sessions of Teams and Committees, including:
 - a) summoning sessions and participating in them;
 - b) verifying the conformity of the minutes' text with the actual course of sessions and resolutions of Committees or Teams;
- 4) indicating external experts for the evaluation of proposals at the second stage, taking into account the candidacies put forward by members of the Team;
- 5) assessing the accuracy and impartiality of opinions drafted by the experts,
- 6) presenting the Director with lists prepared by the Teams for approval.

2. The Coordinator shall work in close contact with the Head of the Team organising the Team's actions.

§ 6. Head of the Expert Team

1. The duties of the Head of the Team include:

- 1) indicating the members of the Team to perform individual reviews at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation, with the exception of the situation described in § 5 section 1 point 2;
- 2) presiding over sessions of the Team;
- 3) conducting votes;
- 4) approving the minutes from the Team's sessions;
- 5) appointing his/her substitute from amongst the members of the Team in the event of the Head's inability to perform his/her duties.

2. The Head of the Team shall work in close contact with the Coordinator who organises the Team's actions.

§ 7. Members of the Expert Team

1. Duties of a Team Member include:

- 1) performing individual reviews of proposals allotted by the Head of the Team or Coordinator at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation;
- 2) participating in all sessions of the Team and:
 - a) writing justifications for the allotted proposals' final notes during the Team's sessions;
 - b) putting forward candidacies of at least five external reviewers to review each proposal he/she reviewed at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation and which has been qualified for the second stage of the merit-based evaluation;
 - c) presenting in the second session, notes by individual external reviewers regarding the proposals they have been assigned;
 - d) participating in the works of the Committees at the second stage of the merit-based evaluation.

§ 8. External reviewer

1. Duties of the external reviewers shall include performing individual reviews of proposals at the second stage of the merit-based evaluation of proposals.
2. An external expert may not be member of the Team evaluating a given proposal.

§ 9. Stages of the proposal evaluation

1. Proposals shall be subject to an eligibility check and merit-based evaluation:
 - 1) the eligibility check shall be performed by the Coordinators;
 - 2) the merit-based proposal evaluation shall be performed by experts.
2. An expert team may disqualify a proposal for formal reasons at a later stage of the evaluation.
3. The eligibility check shall consist of verifying whether a given proposal meets all the eligibility criteria set out in the call announcement.
4. The merit-based evaluation shall be only open to proposals approved as eligible by the Coordinator.
5. The merit-based proposal evaluation shall be carried out by Expert Teams appointed for a given research domain, i.e. Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (HS), Physical Sciences and Engineering (ST) and Life Sciences (NZ), based on individual reviews and settlement discussions.
6. The proposal evaluation by the Expert Teams shall be carried out in two stages:

1) First stage: proposals shall undergo qualification based on the information included in the proposal and attachments thereto. The qualification shall consist of drafting individual reviews of the proposal by two members of the Expert Team, a resultant common assessment to be subsequently arrived at by the Expert Team. The total budget of proposals approved for the second stage shall not exceed twice the amount of the resources allocated by the NCN Council for each research domain (HS, ST or NZ), as recommended by the Council.

2) Second stage: specialist evaluation shall be performed based on the information in the proposal and in the attachments thereto. It shall consist of individual reviews by at least two reviewers who are not members of the Expert Team which reviewed the proposal at the first stage (pursuant to article 11 section 11 of the Act on the National Science Centre), and an interview with the applicant by members of the Expert Team in English, using available telecommunication tools. Members of the Expert Team decide on the proposal's final grade based on all the individual reviews, the results of the interview, analysis and discussions.

§ 10. Order of Expert Team sessions

1. The number of planned meetings of a Team within a single session should be established with regard for the number of proposals to be reviewed and the volume of work necessary for their evaluation.

2. On having completed individual reviews, the Expert shall be given electronic access to all the other individual reviews performed in the Team by other Experts.

3. A session of a Team shall take place in the presence of a quorum of an absolute majority of the Team's members.

4. The sessions of a Team shall be chaired by its Head or a member of the Team appointed as his or her substitute.

5. Present at every session of a Team shall be the Coordinator and a minutes secretary, who shall not take part in the voting.

6. Members of a Team who have a conflict of interest with applicants (investigators) shall be obliged to leave the room where the session is being held. Exclusion of a member of a Team because of a conflict of interest shall not affect the quorum during voting .

7. The minutes secretary shall keep minutes whose conformity with the course of the session shall be verified by the Coordinator and approved by the Head of the Team.

§ 11. Order of the Committee Sessions

1. The composition of a Committee, including its Head, shall be determined during the first session of the Team.

2. A Committee should comprise at least five members.

3. A session shall be held in presence of a quorum of an absolute majority of the Committee's members.

4. Applicants shall receive written notice of the interview, from the Coordinator, no later than 14 days before its planned date, and shall be under obligation to take part in an interview with the Committee by means of telecommunication tools.
5. No later than 7 days before the interview, the Coordinator shall make available to the applicant, electronically, the remarks submitted by Experts on the proposal, with regard for the principle of anonymity of the reviewing Experts.
6. The interview shall be held in English.
7. Applicants shall present the research he or she intends to carry out in the project, whereupon members of the Team shall carry out an interview with the project's principal investigator, in which the subject of the research and the effect of the research stay on the progression of the applicant's career shall be discussed, with potential doubts regarding his or her marks being clarified.
8. Present at every session of the Committee shall be a Coordinator and a minutes secretary.
9. Members of the Team who have a conflict of interest with applicants (investigators) shall be under obligation to leave the room where the session is held. Exclusion of a member of a Team because of a conflict of interest shall not affect the quorum during votes .
10. The minutes secretary shall keep minutes to be signed by the Coordinator. The minutes shall constitute an attachment to the minutes from the session by the Team.

§ 12. Principles regulating the evaluation of proposals

1. All proposals approved for the merit-based evaluation shall be the subject of analysis and discussion during sessions by the Team.
2. In each stage, the proposals shall be given a score, derived from the mean average of the individual reviews or the settled assessment by the Team, and – additionally – of the score for the interview, if the latter has taken place.
3. While evaluating a proposal, particular note shall be taken of:
 - 1) fulfilling the criterion of basic research as defined in article 2 point 3, letter a) of the Act of 30th April 2010 on the principles of funding science;
 - 2) the applicant's scientific achievements as well as those by his or her research partner employed at the host institution;
 - 3) the scientific quality of the research;
 - 4) the impact of the research to be carried out during the research stay on the advancement of the scientific discipline;
 - 5) the effect of the research stay on the progression of the applicant's career;
 - 6) disseminating the results of the research carried out during the research stay;
 - 7) relevance of selecting the host institution by the applicant;

8) relevance of the planned costs to the subject and scope of the research;

9) whether the proposal is written in a manner allowing for an accurate assessment of the project.

4. Evaluation of proposals by the Expert Team shall be governed by the following principles:

1) the percentage share (weighting) of the scores for each criterion given by Experts during each individual proposal evaluation has been set out in attachment no 2 to the proper directive of the Council of the National Science Centre on the terms and conditions of the POLONEZ call and the regulations on awarding funding to research projects carried out by incoming researchers co-financed from the Horizon 2020 framework programme, within the Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND.

2) at the stage of qualification, referred to in § 9 section 6 point 1, and the specialist review by Experts, the proposal shall be awarded a score which shall be advisory and shall constitute a point of departure for a discussion of the final grade decided upon by the Expert Team, and of the final settled score;

3) additional information acquired in the interview referred to in § 9 section 6 point 2 may affect the final score awarded by Experts for individual categories, making up 100 per cent of the proposal's score, in accordance with the attachment to the directive of the Council referred to in point 1 above. The quality of presenting the proposal during the interview shall not constitute a separate criterion of evaluation; scores awarded for the interview shall serve only informational purposes.

4) the decision of the Expert Team on the final grade of a proposal is based on its analysis and discussion of the legitimacy of funding the proposal against other proposals reviewed under the call.

5) the final grade of the proposal at a given stage of the merit-based evaluation shall be its position on a long list after the first stage, a short list after the second stage, or a reserve list after the second stage respectively, resulting from the score awarded;

6) a proposal which has been given a score of zero by the consulted decision of the Expert Team in at least one criterion cannot be recommended for funding;

7) a proposal which has been found, by the consulted decision of the Expert Team, to fail in any of the requirements set out in the call announcement cannot be qualified for funding.

5. In the event of difficulty finding a common position, the Team shall make the decision by way of a vote. Decisions by the Team that should require a vote shall be taken by a simple majority of votes.

6. The Expert Team may recommend for funding proposals awarded at least 75 points where the maximum score equals 100, with the exception of § 12 point 7.

7. The Expert Team shall recommend for funding only proposals whose total budget does not exceed the total sum of the resources allocated by the NCN Council for each research domain (HS, ST, NZ).

8. In the event of two or more proposals with the same score occupying the last funding-awarded position within the above-mentioned number, the final order in the ranking shall be decided by the degree of interdisciplinary nature of the proposed research, with the stipulation that preference shall be given to the research deemed more interdisciplinary. The degree of the interdisciplinary nature of the research shall be assessed by the Expert Team.

9. The Expert Team may draft a reserve ranking list which shall include proposals conditionally recommended for funding which do not fit into the total duration of internships approved by the Council for each research domain panel (HS, ST, NZ), but fulfil the criteria referred to in § 12 point 6.

10. The Director of the NCN may recommend for funding the proposals referred to in § 12 point 9 in the event of applicants' resignation from signing the contract referred to in § 12 point 7. Proposals recommended conditionally shall be awarded funding following the order in which they have been placed on the reserve ranking list. For the funding of the proposals recommended conditionally, the principles set out in § 12 point 8 shall apply.

§ 13. Ranking lists

1. The Coordinator shall present the Director with the ranking lists drafted by the Teams.

2. The ranking long lists, short lists and reserve lists must be approved in a vote by the Expert Team by an absolute majority.

3. In exceptional cases, the Coordinator, having consulted the Team, may modify the order of projects on a ranking list, pursuant to article 24 section 2 of the Act of 30th April 2010 on the National Science Centre (Journal of Laws no 96, position 617 with later modifications). The procedure of modification shall follow the course described below:

1) consultation may have the form of circulating to all members of the Team a question with a justification of the suggested modification and a fixed time for their response;

2) after the time fixed for the response, the Coordinator shall decide on the modification, taking into account the opinions received from members of the Team;

3) the lack of response of a member of the Team within the fixed time shall be deemed as his or her negative position on the suggested modification.

4. In the event referred to in section 2, the Coordinator shall present the Director with the modified ranking list, with a written justification, for approval.