

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AGENDAS PROGRAMME

Competition Documentation

COMPETITION NO. 8/2017

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I. Introduction

1. The purpose of the International Research Agendas Programme is for high quality research and development works to be conducted by teams of prominent foreign and Polish scientists. The support should contribute to the creation of specialised, world-leading research units in Poland that would apply the best practices with respect to:
 - Identification of research programmes and topics;
 - HR policy and R&D works management;
 - Commercialisation of the results of R&D works.
2. Application in the Competition described in this Documentation is open to all applicants, including those who intend to carry out the project in a unit, which will be supported through phase 2 Teaming funding provided by the European Commission as part of Horizon 2020.
3. The information contained in the present document sets out the rules for submitting applications and implementing projects under the International Research Agendas Programme, which is a grant programme of the Foundation for Polish Science, carried out from the funds of the European Regional Development Fund under the Smart Growth Operational Programme (SG OP), Priority Axis 4: Increasing the research potential, Measure 4.3: International Research Agendas.
4. Should source documents be updated (e.g. the National Smart Specialisations document or the Guidelines published by the Managing Authority), certain information may be modified. This will not affect the time limits or terms of the competition, but might cause minor changes in the grant agreement or in certain appendices hereto. The Foundation will keep the applicants informed of any changes.
5. Unless stipulated otherwise, all the dates specified in the Competition Documentation referring to the obligations of applicants or grantees are the dates of delivery of the documents to the Foundation for Polish Science, not the dates of posting. With respect to time limits expressed in days, a day is deemed to be a calendar day. If the end of a time limit

falls on a public holiday or on a Saturday, the business day immediately following will be deemed to be the last day of the time limit concerned.

6. The application selection procedure within the International Research Agendas Programme is not a competition as defined in the Act of 11 July 2014 on the Principles of Implementing Cohesion Policy Programmes Financed under the 2014-2020 Financial Perspective.

II. Definitions

For the purposes of this Documentation, the terms listed below have the following meanings:

1. **Project budget** – a financial plan of the project, including the categories of eligible costs broken down into reporting periods.
2. **PhD student** – a person with the status of a student of 3rd degree studies or an equivalent programme who participates in the IRAP project under the supervision of a research team leader.
3. **Foundation** – the Foundation for Polish Science (FNP).
4. **Intermediate Body (IB)** – an entity to whom the fulfilment of tasks under a national or regional operational programme has been entrusted under an agreement or contract concluded with the Managing Authority. For Priority Axis 4 of the SG OP: National Centre for Research and Development.
5. **Managing Authority (MA)** – an institution or public entity responsible for the management of an operational programme. For the SG OP: the Minister competent for regional development matters (in accordance with Article 9 Item 1 of the Implementation Act).
6. **IRAP implementing unit (IRAP unit)** – a research unit in which the project funded as part of the competition is implemented and which meets the requirements set out herein. The IRAP implementing unit has to fulfil the definition of a research unit (below).
7. **Research units** – as defined in the Act on the Principles of Financing Science of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws No. 96, item 615, pursuant to Journal of Laws of 2014, item 1620, of 2015, item 249), conducting scientific research or development work on a continuous basis:
 - a) basic organisational units of higher education institutions within the meaning of the Charters of such higher education institutions;

- b) research units of the Polish Academy of Sciences, as defined in the Act on the Polish Academy of Sciences of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws No. 96, item 619, as amended.2);
- c) research institutes, as defined in the Act on Research Institutes of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws No. 96, item 618, as amended.3);
- d) international scientific institutes established pursuant to separate regulations, operating within the territory of the Republic of Poland;
- e) the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences;
- f) other organisational units not listed in points a to e above, which have their registered offices in the Republic of Poland, being research and knowledge-dissemination organisations as defined in Article 2(83) of Commission Regulation (EU) No. 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty (OJ L 187 of 26.6.2014, p. 1).

8. Project Manager – manager of the IRAP implementing unit – a prominent scientist from Poland or abroad who filed an application for funding under the programme or the next manager of the IRAP unit (selected in accordance with section 4.4.2 a) and who is responsible for the substantive realisation of the Research Agenda in the IRAP implementing unit.

9. National Smart Specialisation (NSS) – a document specifying the thematic scope to be financed within the competition, available on the website of the Ministry of Economy (the institution responsible for the NSS) and also on the website of the Foundation. The binding version is the one that is valid on the day proposals are invited for the IRAP programme.

10. Research Team/ Group Leader – researcher acting as the leader/manager of the research group at the IRAP Implementing Unit.

11. International Research Agenda (IRAP) – a research programme that determines a clearly defined scientific challenge (a research problem) of a scientific or social and economic nature (matching the scope of the National Smart Specialisations) and the method of work and approach to dealing with said problem, and which provides a substantive basis for the existence of the IRAP Implementing Unit. In addition to the precisely defined research problem, the research agenda should be characterised by an innovative and competitive approach to solving it, which should guarantee the IRAP Implementing Unit the position of a global leader among units dealing with similar research problems.

The first Research Agenda is created by the Applicant in cooperation with partner institutions, in particular the foreign partner unit.

- 12. International Scientific Committee (ISC)** – an international body composed of distinguished representatives of science and also, where justified by the need to facilitate attainment of the project objective, entrepreneurs who have experience in cooperating with scientists in research and development works, or entrepreneurs experienced in the implementation of new technologies. Representatives of science must account for at least one half of the ISC members and be globally recognized experts in the field represented by the IRAP.
- 13. Junior postdoctoral researcher** – a person that has held a doctoral (PhD) degree for no longer than 5 years (the beginning of the period is the year the degree was awarded and the end – the year applications were submitted in the competition for the position of a postdoctoral fellow in the research group at the IRAP unit), who is engaged in the project implementation under the supervision of the research team leader.
- 14. Project implementation period** – the period specified in the agreement that is required to fulfil the tasks and obtain the results specified in the application for funding, compliant with the time limits specified in the Competition Documentation.
- 15. Reporting period** – the period after which the IRAP implementing unit is required to submit a financial or progress report. The reporting periods that are binding in the International Research Agendas Programme are maximum semi-annual periods for financial reports and annual periods for progress reports. The grant agreement shall specify the start and end dates of reporting periods and the dates for submitting periodic reports.
- 16. IRAP project** – an undertaking aiming at implementing the International Research Agenda (described in the application for funding) and at attaining a set objective defined by indicators, with a specified start and end of implementation, co-financed under the IRA programme.
- 17. Enterprise** – an entity carrying out business activity in the Republic of Poland, regardless of its legal status or method of financing that activity.
- 18. Cost Eligibility Guide** – Cost Eligibility Guide for Measure 4.3. of the Smart Growth Operational Programme, constituting Appendix No. 1 to this Competition Documentation.
- 19. Strategic partner unit (foreign)** – a foreign unit or an international organization (public or private) which conducts research in a continuous manner, involved in the IRA Project whose obligations are defined in the Competition Documentation (e.g. cooperation in preparing the

research agenda, appointing representatives to the ISC) presented in the application for funding.

- 20. Student** – a person with the status of a student of 1st or 2nd degree studies or an equivalent programme, participating in the IRAP project.
- 21. Durability of the project results** – as defined in Article 71 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013.
- 22. Grant Agreement (Agreement)** – an agreement entered into between the Foundation and the IRAP implementing unit regarding the implementation of the IRAP project.
- 23. Application for funding** (so-called application or grant application) – under the International Research Agendas Programme, an application consists of an application form filled out on-line and all the required attachments (in electronic versions) specified in the Competition Documentation.
- 24. Applicant** – for the purposes of this documentation, the main applicant refers to a prominent scientist from Poland or abroad. An application for funding an IRAP project may also be submitted by two researchers. In such a case, the second applicant may serve as a research group leader or a scientific affairs director at the IRAP unit.

Second applicant – Research Group Leader – a prominent scientist from Poland or abroad who may serve as a research group leader without an additional competition being held, if they are recommended by the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts (III stage of evaluation). The requirements regarding the second applicant are described in section 4.3.

Second applicant – Scientific Affairs Director – a scientist with an extensive experience in conducting research and managing science, responsible for coordinating the tasks related to attainment of the objectives described in the Research Agenda at the IRAP implementing unit.

- 25. Project indicators** – indicators determined prior to the commencement of the project in order to monitor the project and evaluate its completion with respect to predetermined objectives, specified herein.
- 26. Eligible expenses** – costs or expenses incurred in connection with the implementation of a project within the International Research Agendas Programme that are eligible for settlement or reimbursement pursuant to the Grant Agreement, as specified in the Cost Eligibility Guide.

27. Guidelines – a legal instrument that determines uniform conditions and procedures for the implementation of Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund, addressed to institutions participating in carrying out operational programmes and applied by these institutions pursuant to relevant agreements, territorial contracts or contracts, and by beneficiaries (grantees) under the Grant Agreement or the project funding decision.

III. IRAP Operation

3.1 Project duration

- 3.1.1 The project may be launched no earlier than September 1, 2018.
- 3.1.2 The applicant for funding specifies the launch and completion date for the project, bearing in mind that the project implementation period is the same as the eligibility period for expenses.
- 3.1.3 The first project implementation stage is planned to be 60 months, which is the period covered by funding the application. The project implementation period may be extended until December 31st, 2023 at the request of the IRAP implementing unit if the project is positively evaluated and recommended in the second interim assessment, that is after 36 months of project implementation.
- 3.1.4 In projects, which will be carried out in a unit, which will receive Phase 2 Teaming support from the European Commission as part of Horizon 2020, project duration and cost eligibility cannot exceed December 31st, 2023.
- 3.1.5 The manager of the IRAP implementing unit submits the application to extend the project implementation period by the deadline and in the format indicated by the Foundation.
- 3.1.6 The project extension application primarily covers details of the planned research agenda adopted by the ISC for all research groups to work at the IRAP implementing unit during the extended project financing period.

3.2 Funding

- 3.2.1 The total amount of funding for a single unit implementing the IRAP for the initial 5 years should not exceed the proposed amount of **PLN 35 million**.
- 3.2.2 The total amount of funding for a single unit implementing the IRAP which will receive Phase 2 Teaming support from the European Commission as part of Horizon 2020, should not exceed the proposed amount of **PLN 45 million**.

IV. General Information

4.1 Thematic scope of the projects

The competition covered by this Competition Documentation within the International Research Agendas Programme involves the funding of projects compliant with the topics listed in the National Smart Specialisations list. The valid NSS list, published on the website of the Ministry of Economy, is available on the Foundation's website.

4.2 Amount of funds allocated to the project implementation

The total amount of funds allocated to the competition is: **PLN 140,000,000**

4.3 Applicant

- 4.3.1 Applicants may be citizens of Poland or another country, including from outside the European Union. The application is submitted by a single applicant or two applicants, e.g. if the application covers interdisciplinary research or if the main applicant does not have a full time position at the unit, however it should be clearly indicated in the application form which of the researchers is the main applicant.
- 4.3.2 The applicant or main applicant (if the application is submitted by two applicants) is an outstanding scientist and an internationally recognized expert in their field.

4.3.3 When the application is submitted by two applicants, the main applicant will serve as the IRAP implementing unit manager (depending on the legal form selected for the new unit, e.g. president of the foundation, or director) and leader of one of the research groups. The second applicant:

a) will be employed by the IRAP implementing unit as a research group leader,

or

a. will be hired as a scientific affairs director and will not work as a research group leader,

(details about research group leaders are provided in section 5.1).

4.3.4 Each of the applicants will be involved in implementing the IRAP project to the extent sufficient to implement the project. Full-time involvement is recommended, and in exceptional circumstances involvement at a level of less than full-time equivalent, but not less than 50% FTE, is permitted. The involvement required of each of the applicants is ultimately specifically decided by the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts.

4.4 IRAP implementing unit

4.4.1 The IRAP unit operates by implementing projects and research tasks in research groups and, where necessary, through the realisation of research tasks by independent researchers (see section 5.3). The number of research groups and other persons performing R&D tasks corresponds to the research agenda adopted and submitted in the project funding application, with any subsequent amendments introduced by the International Scientific Committee.

4.4.2 The IRAP unit must comply with the following criteria during the project implementation period and project durability period:

a) **Manager of the IRAP implementing unit**

1. The manager of the IRAP implementing unit is the applicant selected in the competition by the Foundation.

Throughout the entire period of the project funding and at least in the period of its durability, the manager of the IRAP implementing unit may only be a person who will fulfil the criteria of the Competition Documentation, including also performing the role of research group leader. (The research group leader recruitment rules (see section 5.1)).

2. If the applicant is for any reason unable to perform the role of manager of the IRAP implementing unit until the end of the term, the next unit manager is selected from among the research group leaders working for the IRAP implementing unit, according to the internal regulations adopted by the unit.
3. During the IRA programme funding period, the IRAP implementing unit provides the Foundation for Polish Science with information and documents on the potential new individual indicated as the unit manager, in accordance with the list of documents required from the applicant at the first stage of the application (see section 4.5.4 a). The Foundation evaluates and approves the new manager of the IRAP implementing unit.
4. Since the manager of the unit is also the IRAP project manager, approval by the Foundation of the selection of any new manager in the course of the project is necessary for the IRAP project to continue.

b) Partnership with a strategic foreign partner unit

The strategic partner of the project is a foreign research centre (public or private), conducting scientific research at world-class level, which has vast experience in the area of applied research and meets top work and organizational standards.

The partnership primarily involves joint implementation, in the IRAP implementing unit, of good practice regarding organizational culture, commercialization of the results of research work and conducting research, and delegation of representatives of the partner unit or persons recommended by that unit to sit on the IRA International Scientific Committee. Research cooperation is a complementary but not a sufficient contribution of a foreign partner.

c) International Scientific Committee

One of the bodies of the IRAP implementing unit is the International Scientific Committee, whose members are researchers with globally recognized achievements, working in the research field to be developed by the IRAP and, if justified by the need to facilitate achievement of the project objectives, entrepreneurs with experience of cooperating with researchers on research and development work, or entrepreneurs with substantial experience of implementing new technologies.

During the project implementation period, the IRAP implementing unit will enable participation in ISC meetings for the Foundation's representatives and notify the Foundation of changes to the ISC membership list upon the end of its term of office, or in the course of it as the case may be.

It is necessary to comply with the following criteria for the ISC's composition:

1. The International Scientific Committee is composed of at least 9 members.
2. At least half of the ISC members must be researchers and at least half of the ISC members must be employed by foreign units conducting scientific research.
3. Members of the International Scientific Committee are appointed for terms of office not longer than 5 years. Upon expiry of the ISC term of office, no more than one half of its members may be appointed for another term. Each ISC member may perform his/her function for no more than two terms.

Responsibilities of the International Scientific Committee include:

1. Regular review of the Agenda and introduction of changes as necessary, e.g. on account of advance in global scientific research in a given domain. A review will be conducted by the ISC at least every 4 years.
2. Evaluation of the work of all research group leaders and their teams. The ISC conducts an evaluation at least every 4 years.
3. Giving opinions on the hiring decisions of the IRAP implementing unit concerning independent researchers or winners of the European Research Council competition (see section 5.3, 5.6).

4. Announcing and holding the competition for research group leaders (subject to section 5.1 to work for the IRAP implementing unit, including as managers of IRAP implementing units (subject to section 4.3.3 a) through:
 - a) approval of the competition regulations and criteria prepared by the unit,
 - b) approval of the scope of criteria for the manager or leader,
 - c) evaluation of submissions and issue of recommendations for hiring the best candidate(s).
5. In the case of an existing unit transformed into an IRA unit, the ISC's duties additionally include evaluating the employees of the unit referred to in section 4.4.3.

d) Legal form allowing granting of the required authority to ISC

Requirements set for the IRAP implementing unit can be met by e.g. a foundation established under the Act on Foundations whose statutory aim is to conduct scientific research. The foundation's statute will set forth its activities and the responsibilities of its governing bodies, and method of cooperating with foreign partner units, as well as ensure the durability of the adopted objectives and competence. An example foundation statute complying with the terms of the competition can be downloaded from the FNP website.

An IRAP implementing unit adopting a legal form other than a foundation is also required to meet all the criteria of this Competition Documentation. In addition, if it has legal personality, prior to signing the grant agreement it must conclude an agreement with a foreign strategic partner unit that specifies the method of cooperation in IRAP implementation. If the IRAP implementing unit is to be a unit operating under an international agreement (e.g. a joint unit of a Polish and foreign higher education institution), both institutions defined by the law, the Polish and the foreign, must conclude an international agreement stipulating the method for its establishing and operation in accordance with the terms of the Competition Documentation.

The applicant may use expert opinion on the various legal forms of entities, made available by the Foundation for Polish Science on the programme website. Where the assumptions of the expert opinion differ from the assumptions of the competition as stated in this Competition Documentation, the rules stipulated in the Competition Documentation take precedence.

e) Cooperation with a partner research institution from Poland (optional)

The IRAP implementing unit may establish cooperation with a Polish research partner. The partnership may involve e.g. providing laboratory infrastructure, taking joint actions relating to PhD projects or other research cooperation activities.

f) Commercialization Council (optional)

The IRAP implementing unit may establish cooperation with an advisory body composed of representatives of business entities. The role of that advisory body is to give opinions on the IRAP unit's R&D activities from the perspective of the project results business application.

g) Access to infrastructure

The applicants should obtain access to research infrastructure, such as rooms and the necessary equipment, for the IRA implementation. Where necessary, the cost of room rental and use of equipment may be covered by IRA funding in accordance with the Cost Eligibility Guide for Measure 4.3. of SGOP.

h) Regular evaluation of all research group leaders and their teams

At least every 4 years research group leaders must undergo an evaluation carried out by the International Scientific Committee. Upon completion of the evaluation, the Scientific Committee provides a recommendation on their future employment – renewal, non-renewal or termination of employment in the IRAP unit.

i) Cooperation with entrepreneurs

During the first 3 years from the launch of the project at least 2 of the research groups operating at the unit will establish cooperation with entrepreneurs.

The ultimate goal, to be achieved before the end of project implementation, is for at least half of the research groups operating at the IRAP implementing unit to cooperate with entrepreneurs. The cooperation may involve e.g. joint implementation of research tasks in the project, consultations on commercial application of the research results, or joint education for young R&D sector staff.

The partnership must be based on an agreement or memorandum of understanding signed between the entrepreneur and the IRA implementing unit, to specify the terms of

cooperation and rules for its funding, contributions of the respective partners and division, if any, of intellectual property rights (if the entrepreneur makes a contribution to the project it must be estimated). Agreements with the enterprises will be monitored by the FNP.

The IRAP implementing unit may not provide state aid to entrepreneurs.

4.4.3 Where the IRAP project is to be implemented at a unit which exists and employs staff carrying out R&D works prior to the commencement of IRA project implementation, such a unit must meet all the requirements binding upon the IRA implementing units described in the Competition Documentation along with the requirements related to its legal form, and additionally must conduct the verification procedure described in this section.

- a) An IRAP unit which conducted R&D works prior to the commencement of the project is obliged to:
 1. within 12 months of the IRAP project launch date all research groups should be evaluated by the ISC and its recommendations should be followed,
 2. within 12 months following the IRA project launch date, all R&D staff other than technical staff should be evaluated by the ISC, and based on the evaluation results either positive or negative decisions should be made as to the continuation of their employment at the IRA unit.
- b) The employment of any staff at the IRA implementing unit who fail to pass the evaluation should be terminated at the end of the third year of project implementation at the latest.
- c) Research group leaders who pass the evaluation process may continue leading their teams at the IRA implementing unit together with their teams (along with students and PhD students).
- d) The remaining R&D staff employed at the unit prior to its transformation into an IRAP unit and who have received a positive recommendation may remain at the unit provided that they join a research team that has passed the evaluation process or has been newly set up following a competition.

- e) Three years after the IRAP project launch date, the number of research groups set up through competitions following the project launch date must not be smaller than the number of groups set up prior to the project launch date.
- f) Compliance with the requirements specified in letters a-e (above) will be verified by the Foundation's experts during the first or second interim assessment, respectively.
- g) Any persons employed at the unit prior to its transformation into an IRAP implementing unit who fail to pass the ISC's evaluation may only reapply for a job at that unit after a three-year break. If that person was formerly employed as a research group leader, a break in employment at the IRA implementing unit of least five years is required.

Students and PhD students are not subject to ISC evaluation and may apply for a position in any of the research groups at the unit.

- h) The employee evaluation process regarding the IRA unit existing before the IRA project launch must comply with the following conditions:
 - i. The evaluation is conducted by the International Scientific Committee according to its established and adopted criteria. The International Scientific Committee may decide to appoint external experts/reviewers to assess the achievements and work of a research group or individual employees.
 - ii. A report on the entire evaluation process along with the ISC's recommendations as regards further employment of research groups or individual employees shall be provided by the IRAP implementing unit to the Foundation prior to the deadline for submitting the first interim report. The materials obtained in the evaluation process should be made available to the Foundation's experts during the interim assessment.
 - iii. The Foundation may accept the evaluation report without reservations or advise that further opinions be sought, and recommend other decisions concerning further employment of individual members of the unit's staff.

- iv. The IRAP unit will allow the Foundation's representatives and its experts to participate in the evaluation of the IRAP unit's research groups and staff.
- v. The IRAP unit will provide the Foundation with the evaluation schedule and a list of the employees to be subject to evaluation at least 6 months prior to the evaluation process.
- vi. The evaluation must end within a period of time allowing the unit to fulfil the requirements stipulated in section 5.2.3, in particular a-f, and to observe the time limits provided for in separate regulations concerning any potential changes in the employment relationship with the unit's staff.

4.5 Partnership in the project without the grant of state aid

4.5.1 The International Research Agendas programme does not provide for the granting of state aid to business entities.

4.5.2 Cooperation between the IRAP implementing unit and entrepreneurs must meet one of the conditions below:

- a) the enterprises bear all their respective costs of the cooperation project, or
- b) results of the cooperation which do not give rise to intellectual property rights are disseminated and any intellectual property rights resulting from the funded project are fully owned by the IRAP implementing unit, or
- c) any intellectual property rights resulting from the project, as well as related access rights, are allocated to the different cooperating partners in a manner which duly reflects their work packages, contributions and respective interests, or
- d) the IRAP implementing unit receives compensation equivalent to the market price for the intellectual property rights generated by their activities which are allocated to the participating enterprises, or to which participating enterprises are allocated access rights. The absolute amount of the value of any contribution, both financial and non-financial, by the participating enterprises to the costs of the IRAP unit's activities that produced the intellectual property rights concerned, may be deducted from that compensation; the

compensation received is equivalent to the market price if it enables the IRAP implementing unit concerned to enjoy the full economic benefit of those rights if one of the following conditions is fulfilled:

1. the amount of compensation is established in an open, transparent and non-discriminatory competitive sale procedure, or
2. an independent expert's appraisal confirms that the amount of compensation is at least equal to the market price, or
3. the IRAP implementing unit, as the seller, may demonstrate that it effectively negotiated the compensation under fully competitive conditions in order to obtain the maximum economic benefit when the contract is concluded, while considering its statutory objectives, or
4. in cases where the cooperation agreement provides the cooperating enterprise with the right of first refusal as regards intellectual property rights generated by the cooperating IRAP unit, where that unit exercises a reciprocal right to solicit more economically advantageous offers from third parties, the cooperating enterprise has to adapt its offer accordingly.

4.5.3 If none of the conditions specified in section 4.5.2 are fulfilled, the full value of the contribution to the project by the IRAP implementing unit will be considered as a benefit for the cooperating enterprises, to which state aid rules apply.

4.6 Project implementation indicators

4.6.1 The applicant is required to indicate in the form the planned project implementation indicators, that is the expected project outputs and results. Indicators from the list below apply to the IRAP programme:

- a. Number of R&D work units completed
- b. Number of research units supported in the course of R&D work
- c. Number of cooperating foreign research units
- d. Number of persons conducting R&D work within the project
- e. Number of new researchers at the units supported
- f. Number of foreign researchers in the projects supported

- g. Number of international research publications included in the JCR (Journal Citation Reports), Thomson Reuters list,
- h. Number of patent applications filed.

4.6.2 The indicators must adequately reflect a given project type and the assumed project objectives. They will be reviewed by a panel of experts during the substantive review of the application, during project implementation and after its completion, and may be subject to changes suggested by the Foundation's experts.

4.7 Reporting

4.7.1 During the project implementation period, the IRAP implementing unit submits reports to the Foundation as stipulated in the grant agreement.

4.7.2 During the project implementation period, the IRAP implementing unit submits itself to an interim assessment, performed by the Foundation at last twice.

a. the first interim assessment is conducted after the first year following the project launch date and focuses primarily on:

1. the method of implementing the organizational structure proposed in the application;
2. the implementation of good practice, e.g. with regard to recruitment of research staff;
3. cooperation with the foreign partner institution;
4. analysis of an evaluation of employees hired before the project commencement (if applicable).

b. The second interim assessment is conducted after the third year following the project launch date and focuses primarily on:

1. evaluation of the research excellence of team leaders, team members and other staff, including the number of new teams at the IRA implementing unit,
2. the research excellence of team leaders and the entire IRAP implementing unit;
3. leaders' active involvement in applying for ERC or equally prestigious grants (e.g. those awarded by Wellcome Trust),
4. establishment of cooperation with entrepreneurs;

5. the level of internationality and development of R&D personnel for the needs of an innovative economy.

4.7.3 During the second interim assessment, the Foundation will inform of the conditions for applying for additional funding, or extension of the project cost eligibility period. A precondition for granting the application will be a positive interim assessment result and recommendation by the committee conducting the assessment.

4.8 Changes to the project

4.8.1 Changes to the project that may affect the result of the project evaluation during the competition procedure at the first, second or third stage of the competition, require the Foundation's approval each time, on pain of annulment of the agreement. This applies in particular to changes in the statute of the IRAP implementing unit.

4.8.2 During the project implementation, the manager of the IRAP implementing unit may, regardless of the method of project extension resulting from the interim assessment, apply for an increase in the funding pool (project budget) or project extension.

4.8.3 The application for an increase in the project funding level may be submitted in particular in relation to:

- a) initiation of another stage of research work to produce the results of the project, so as to potentially increase feasibility of its implementation,
- b) the need to increase the number of undergraduates or PhD students, or their remuneration as compared to the original application,
- c) establishment of a new partnership within the project.

Granting of the applications will depend on experts' evaluation and availability of funding for that purpose in the programme.

V. Project staff

5.1 Research group leaders

Funding under the IRA project may only be granted to research group leaders selected in an international competition conducted by the ISC, compliant with the requirements specified in the Competition Documentation.

5.1.1 Selection of leaders hired following the commencement of IRAP project implementation

1. Research group leaders will be selected in an open international competition by the International Scientific Committee, according to the rules on employment of researchers provided in the *European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment* (downloadable from the Foundation's website) and according to the rules provided for in this Competition Documentation.
2. The applicant(s) become(s) research group leaders following the IRAP competition organized by the Foundation, based on the recommendation of the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts (see section 8.2.3 h).
3. The competition procedure must be open to all interested parties, use transparent criteria and follow the principle of equal treatment.
4. The following rules apply to the competition for research group leaders:
 - a) the competition is announced publicly so that it is available to all interested parties that meet the criteria;
 - b) the information on the competition includes, in particular, a description of the position, financial conditions (including the amount of the leader's remuneration and term of employment, information about the rules and financing possibilities for the research group members and the funds allocated to running the team or guaranteed to set up a team, ("start-up package")),
 - c) the ISC conducts the recruitment process on the basis of its own criteria, however at least one of the criteria should be the candidate's scientific research achievements to date as well as his/her competence level, which should be a level characteristic of ERC winners.
5. In addition, in the course of IRAP project implementation,

- a) the IRAP implementing unit will provide the Foundation, with sufficient notice, with details about the planned method of announcing and conducting the competition, and the anticipated dates of interviews with the candidates,
 - b) the IRAP implementing unit will enable the Foundation's representative to participate as observers in the recruitment process,
 - c) the IRAP implementing unit documents the recruitment process in a protocol (The report contains at least the list of candidates, names of the units they come from, scores received by the candidates during the recruitment, and details about competition notices, selection criteria and competition dates),
 - d) upon completion of the recruitment process, the IRAP implementing unit uploads a copy of the recruitment report in the Foundation's electronic system, retaining the original at the unit,
 - e) upon approval by the Foundation, the IRAP implementing unit hires the research group leader selected in the competition.
6. The IRAP implementing unit enters the details of the new research group leader whose team will be funded under the project in the electronic system provided by the Foundation, along with an indication of the funds allocated in the budget to his/her research group.
- a) All the research group leaders hired at the IRAP unit must be selected in competitions as described above, except for the winners of European Research Council competitions, however their hiring requires opinions from the ISC (see section 5.6.) and the research group leaders who have been positively verified by the ISC (see section 4.4.3. a).

5.1.2 All research group leaders

1. All research group leaders at the IRAP implementing unit, regardless of the source of funding and of whether they were hired before or after the IRAP project launch date, must fulfil the following conditions:
 - a) The IRAP implementing unit must be indicated as the primary employer for each person employed as the research group leader within the meaning of regulations that may affect the receipt of funding for statutory activities.
 - b) Research group leaders must be employed by the IRAP implementing unit on a full time basis (**subject to section 4.3.4.**). Remuneration of the research group leader may be fully or

partially funded from another source, e.g. another grant project. However, all research outcomes, publications, patent applications and patents obtained from the IRAP project implementation must be allocated to the IRAP implementing unit.

- c) If the leader and his/her team receive remuneration from another grant project or from a source other than the IRAP programme, then the topics of research tasks implemented by that leader and his/her team must be within the scope of the Research Agenda stated in the funding application for the IRAP project, with subsequent modifications made by ISC.
- d) The research group leader may carry out teaching activities as part of their work for the IRAP unit, however the teaching load may not exceed 60 hours per semester.

5.2 Research group members

5.2.1 The research group leader recruits undergraduate and PhD students, junior postdoctoral researchers and other staff for his/her team.

No later than 12 months from the hiring of the research group leader, his/her team must comprise at least 3 persons conducting R&D work.

5.2.2 Members of the research team: undergraduate and PhD students or junior postdoctoral researchers are selected by the leader in an open competition based on transparent criteria, in accordance with the following rules:

- a) the competition is announced publicly (at least on the EURAXESS website – this does not apply to students) and should indicate the candidacy submission method and criteria to be fulfilled by the candidates, as well as the expected amount of the stipend or remuneration,
- b) the research group leader appoints a committee composed of at least two members to be responsible for the recruitment process,
- c) the committee prepares and conducts the recruitment process on the basis of its own criteria, however at least one of the criteria should refer to the candidate's scientific research achievements to date,
- d) the committee documents the recruitment process in a report
(The report contains at least the list of candidates, names of units they come from, scores received by the candidates during the recruitment, and details about competition notices, selection criteria and competition dates),

- e) upon completion of the recruitment process, the research group leader uploads a copy of the recruitment report to the Foundation's electronic system, retaining the original at the unit,
- f) a precondition for funding the scholarship or an employment contract for the person selected in the competition under the IRAP project is approval of the recruitment report by the Foundation. In the case of scholarship agreements, the Foundation must also be provided with a certificate confirming the status of an student (or PhD student) or a copy of his/her Polish student visa.

5.2.3 The unit and the research group leader will allow the Foundation's representatives to participate as observers in the work of the competition committee.

5.2.4 Undergraduate students selected in the competition receive personal scholarships. PhD students may become team members on the basis of either a scholarship or an employment contract. The amounts of stipends are proposed by the project manager in consultation with the team leader. Junior postdoctoral researchers recruited to work in the research team may collect remuneration under the employment contract, of the amount proposed by the project manager in consultation with the team leader.

5.2.5 PhD students conducting R&D work supervised by the research group leader should have another research mentor, if possible from a foreign partner unit.

5.2.6 The stipends will be treated as financial support for project participants and paid by the Foundation only, directly into the individual bank accounts of the stipendees on the basis of separate agreements concluded with them. The stipendees may not receive remuneration from the project funds while receiving a stipend.

5.2.7 Stipends are exempt from personal income tax under Article 21(1)(137) of the Personal Income Tax Act of 26 July 1991 (Journal of Laws of 2012, item 361, as amended).

5.3 Independent Researchers (Visiting Researchers)

5.3.1 The IRAP implementing unit may hire independent researchers implementing short research projects supporting the work of IRAP teams outside the competition procedure applicable to research group leaders, for a maximum period of 6 months.

5.3.2 The hiring of an independent researcher is subject to ISC approval requested by the manager of the IRAP implementing unit.

5.3.3 A given scientist may only be employed as an independent researcher once.

- 5.3.4 Scientists employed in this way are not research group leaders. Their employment may be related to e.g. implementation of a specific research task or expert cooperation with one or several research groups operating at the IRAP unit.
- 5.3.5 The IRAP implementing unit enters information about the hired independent researcher in the Foundation's electronic system.
- 5.3.6 Remuneration of the independent researcher and the other costs related to their research may be funded from the IRAP project funds, according to the *Cost Eligibility Guide*. To that end, the unit enters details of allocated funds in the appropriate budget form available in the Foundation's electronic system.

5.4 Technical staff

Technical staff are employed by the manager of the IRAP implementing unit and their remuneration is paid from the funds allocated to the joint part of the IRAP implementing unit's budget.

5.5 Senior postdoctoral researchers

Senior postdoctoral researchers may be hired by the IRAP implementing unit upon request by the manager of the IRAP implementing unit. Employment in this category must be related to the unit's need to acquire vital R&D competences, e.g. to operate advanced research equipment or a specific technology. The hiring of a senior postdoctoral researcher at the unit requires the Foundation's approval. Remuneration of those employees is paid from the funds allocated to the joint part of the IRAP implementing unit's budget.

5.6 Winners of European Research Council grants

Winners of ERC grants may be hired as research group leaders at the IRAP implementing unit by the manager of the unit without the requirement for the competition referred to in section 5.1 for the implementation period of the grant project funded under the ERC programme. In this case the manager of the unit seeks the opinion of the ISC.

NOTE: The Manager of the Unit or another research staff member receiving remuneration for Project work who launches another project (funded from any national or foreign source) that requires professional time to be dedicated, is required to notify the Foundation accordingly within 30 days of launching that new project.

5.7 Director of Scientific Affairs

The Director of Scientific Affairs must be a scientist with extensive experience in scientific research and science management who will be responsible at the IRAP Implementing Unit for coordinating the activities related to the achievement of the research objectives and R&D work specified in the Research Agenda. The Director of Scientific Affairs may be the second applicant or may be hired for the project during its course as a result of a competition procedure analogous to that for a research team member. All administrative tasks falling beyond the scope of R&D activities must be settled from indirect costs proportionately to individual involvement.

VI. Financial terms

- 6.1** Full list of eligible expenses and rules of documenting eligible expenses in the International Research Agendas programme are specified in the *Cost Eligibility Guide*, appended to the Competition Documentation.
- 6.2** Tasks covered by the Project may not be funded from other public sources, save for expenses that cannot be classified as eligible as part of the funding awarded under the IRAP programme (according to the Cost Eligibility Guide) and expenses exceeding the amount of funding awarded.
- 6.3** The total professional involvement of each person receiving remuneration or a stipend under the project in the implementation of all projects financed from structural funds and the Cohesion Fund and in any activities funded from other sources, including the unit's or other entities' own means, may not exceed 276 hours per month. Where an employee's total workload of 276 hours per month is exceeded, his/her remuneration paid from the Project funds shall represent ineligible expenditure for each month in which the level of 276 hours is exceeded.
- 6.4** The following cost categories will be covered by the International Research Agendas programme:

DIRECT COSTS:

- W – Remuneration** - This category covers the cost of remuneration, including non-salary employment costs such as social and health insurance contributions of persons employed for research (research staff, technical staff and other auxiliary staff) or technology brokers in the

part that such remuneration is directly related to the implementation of the project covered by the grant.

NOTE: Where a staff member is working on the Project on a part-time basis at the IRAP implementing unit, the remuneration received for the Project depends on the amount of time, calculated as a share of full-time equivalent, dedicated to the performance of tasks related to implementation of the Project at the Unit, and may not exceed the same percentage share of the suggested remuneration as specified below.

- a) Remuneration of the project research group leader under the employment contract (remuneration and non-salary employment costs including social and health insurance contributions) of a proposed amount of up to PLN 27,000 per month when working full-time for the project.
- b) Remuneration of other personnel involved in R&D works in the project, to the extent that it is directly related to implementation of the project.
- c) Remuneration for PhD students and junior postdoctoral researchers, if they are to be remunerated under the employment contract (remuneration and non-salary employment costs including social and health insurance contribution), should not exceed the proposed amount of PLN 8,000 per month for PhD students and PLN 15,000 per month for junior postdoctoral researchers.

E – Cost of subcontracting – subcontracting certain substantive project work to a third party, where such work is not conducted on the premises and under direct supervision of the beneficiary, and the cost of resources provided by third parties (i.e. cost of all-encompassing laboratory rental, along with research equipment) (auxiliary activities which are required to implement project tasks, such as legal or accounting services are not considered as subcontracting) and all mandate contracts.

Subcontracting costs may not exceed the limit identified in the Cost Eligibility Guide under Measure 4.3. The Smart Growth Operational Programme.

The application should describe which activities are planned to be commissioned to subcontractors and briefly justify their necessity. This condition applies to subcontracting regardless of the form of the contract concluded for that purpose.

C – Research staff development costs (Cross-financing) – this category includes the following eligible costs related to the development of research staff:

a) Stipends

Proposed stipend rates should not exceed:

- for students up to M.A./M.Sc. degrees – PLN 1,500–2,500 per month
- for PhD students – PLN 3,500–4,500 per month

b) Study visits (by stipendees or research team members within the scope related to the research work conducted as part of the project, the commercialization of research results and state-of-the-art technology achievements or project management).

c) Training (for stipendees or research team members within the scope related to the research work conducted as part of the project, the commercialization of research results and state-of-the-art technology achievements or project management, including the cost of summer schools for PhD students).

The costs in this category (C) may not exceed the limit identified in the Cost Eligibility Guide under Measure 4.3. The Smart Growth Operational Programme.

Op – Other direct costs

1. Costs of research and scientific equipment and intangible assets.

including

a) expenditure on the purchase of low-cost research and scientific equipment, funds allocated to expenses from this category may not exceed the limit identified in the Cost Eligibility Guide under Measure 4.3. The Smart Growth Operational Programme.

2. Cost of land and buildings

3. Other operating expenses

including

a) Project promotion costs (funds allocated to expenses from this category may not exceed the limit identified in the Cost Eligibility Guide under Measure 4.3. The Smart Growth Operational Programme)

b) Rental of laboratory space

O –Costs settled using a simplified method- (“Indirect costs”) – flat rate calculated according to the method described in the Cost Eligibility Guide, constituting a specific percentage of costs settled within the indicated categories.

NOTE:

1. If the IRAP Implementing Unit is asked to refund the expenditures classified as direct costs and this causes the total amount of costs settled with the flat rate method to exceed the provided percentage limit of direct costs, then the IRAP Implementing Unit will be required to refund the corresponding part of funds settled using the flat rate in order for the limit to be observed.
 2. In the case of cost proposals exceeding the values proposed above, or inclusion in the application of costs related to purchasing tangible assets, the applicant will be required to provide the relevant justification during interviews with the interdisciplinary panel at Foundation’s main office or at the project implementation site.
- 6.4.1 Expenses eligible for financing are expenses which meet the conditions included in the Competition Documentation, including those specified in its appendices, in particular in the agreement and the *Cost Eligibility Guide*.
- 6.4.2 The budget allocated to the IRAP implementing unit will be divided into a joint part (e.g. purchase of equipment, rental, technical staff's remuneration) and budgets for projects of individual research groups or independent researchers.

The joint part of the IRAP unit’s costs is paid in tranches in accordance with the plan provided in an appendix to the grant agreement. The first tranche of the research group project or independent researcher project costs is paid upon hiring the suitable research group leader or that independent researcher.

6.5 Additional competition for research equipment funding:

- 6.5.1 During the project implementation, and no earlier than after completion of the research group leader competition procedure at the IRAP implementing unit, the unit may apply to

the Foundation for funds to purchase specialist equipment. The competition will be held as follows:

- a) applications will be filed upon request within the deadlines set by the Foundation for Polish Science,
- b) the applications will be evaluated by dedicated experts appointed specifically for that purpose,
- c) the evaluation will take into account such criteria as an analysis of the available equipment of a particular type in the country, using the available equipment lists and databases,
- d) the purchase of specialist equipment will not be approved for projects implemented with the participation of a research unit which has received substantial funding for research and scientific equipment under the Innovative Economy Operational Programme (POIG) or the Infrastructure and Environment Operational Programme (POIŚ) with respect to research carried out under the IRAP project. The Foundation for Polish Science will consult the Intermediate Body for Axis 4 of the SG OP regarding applications for the purchase of specialist equipment submitted by such units, in particular to confirm whether substantial funding has been obtained and to identify any overlaps between the themes addressed in the IRAP project and the purposes for which equipment was purchased under the 2007-2013 Operational Programmes,
- e) A representative of the National Centre for Research and Development will be invited to take part as an observer at the meeting of experts evaluating the applications for the funding of research equipment.

VII. Deadlines and application process

7.1 Deadlines for filing applications

The process of filing applications under the IRAP programme is divided into three stages.

The first part of the application should be filed no later than:

December 20th, 2017 at 4 pm (GMT + 1)

The second part of the application should be filed by Applicants who have been invited to submit it no later than:

February 23rd, 2018 at 4 pm (GMT + 1)

The third part of the application should be filed by Applicants who have been invited to submit it no later than:

May 25th, 2018 at 4 pm (GMT + 1)

The application assessment period lasts for approx. 6 months from receipt of the first part of the application for project funding until the selection of grantees.

7.2 Application submission method

Applicants submit all parts of their applications in an electronic format only via the electronic system.

- 7.2.1 Applicants register themselves in the electronic system provided by the Foundation at the following address: <https://wnioski.fnp.org.pl>. The electronic form should be filled out **in English** according to the application form instructions provided in the system and on the programme website, attachments **in the language indicated (see section below)**. The electronic system allows the online form to be modified and attachments replaced before final approval of the submitted part of the application (which takes place by closing the form).
- 7.2.2 Certain attachments must be filled out on the forms prepared for this purpose, which can be downloaded from the IRAP programme website and from the electronic system for the submission of applications. Such attachments are marked as appropriate in section 4.5.4. Submission of attachments incompliant with these forms may result in rejection of the application at the formal evaluation stage.

7.2.3 An Applicant submitting false statements will be excluded from the possibility of applying for any form of financing from the Foundation for 5 years from the date of submission of such statements.

7.2.4 The following attachments which should meet the following requirements should be enclosed with the application form in electronic format :

- **pdf format,**
- **font size no smaller than 11 pts,**
- **line spacing no smaller than 1.15,**
- **margins no smaller than 2 cm,**
- **when a list of achievements or publications is being attached, these must date back to the period specified in 4.5.4 a) 2. (publications failing to meet this requirement will be removed at the formal evaluation stage),**
- **retention of the number of pages specified in the description of the attachment - pages beyond the set limit will be removed at the formal evaluation stage.**

7.2.5 **Part 1 of the application (evaluated by the international research and economic panel) – submitted electronically includes the following elements:**

a) Documents on the applicant (in English)

(If the application is submitted by two applicants, the documents on each of the applicants should be submitted separately and the main applicant, who takes on the role and responsibilities of the manager of the IRAP implementing unit as specified in this Competition Documentation, should be indicated in the electronic system, as well as the position in which the second applicant will be employed, i.e. as a research group leader or scientific affairs director.)

1. brief CV (**up to 3 pages**),
2. no more than 10 key research and/or implementation achievements of the applicant from the last 10 years (a single achievement is e.g. full text of one publication, text of a

patent with an indication what area the patent covers and its title in English, description of a completed implementation, etc.).

NOTE: the 10-year period covers achievements in the years 2007-2017.

3. description of unique features of the applicant's achievements referred to in point (2) above, obtained in the years 2007-2017, and their influence on the development of a given scientific field or market, (up to 3 pages),
 4. list of key projects for which the applicant was granted funding in the years 2007-2017, indicating the institution providing the funding and its amount – **(up to 2 pages), (as per the form)**
 5. list of key lectures or conference speeches delivered by the applicant in the years 2007-2017 at the invitation of hosts, indicating the names of the hosts **(up to 2 pages), (as per the form)**
 6. description of research management experience (e.g. administration of research units, sitting on research councils, management of international research organizations or international research consortia) **(up to 2 pages)**,
 7. description of research-industry cooperation experience and of successful implementations **(up to 2 pages)**.
 8. **Applies only to the second applicant if he/she applies for the position of scientific affairs director and only in this case:** a cover letter describing the role to be played by the applicant at the IRAP unit and his/her vision of the unit **(up to 2 pages)**
- b) Overview of the international research agenda (cf. section II, 11) – **description of the research challenge (topic, problem)** forming the basis for designing the International Research Agenda and description of a unique approach to that challenge as proposed by the applicant, including a brief justification of the need for the creation of an IRAP implementing unit to research that challenge **(up to 5 pages)** (English) **(as per the form)**,
- c) Description of the economic and socio-economic impact and likely applications of the results of the IRAP project implementation. The description should contain at least an indication of how the results of the project will translate into economic growth (e.g. implementations, spin-off companies, etc.) **(up to 2 pages)** (English).
- d) Letter of intent from a strategic partner unit – foreign strategic partner for the project (English).

At least one but no more than two such letters of intent should be enclosed.

The letter of intent should contain at least:

1. exact name of the partner unit,
2. declaration that the partner unit will perform the role of a foreign strategic partner unit in the IRAP project at least throughout the project funding period,
3. declaration that the partner unit understands and accepts the terms of the competition and requirements for the IRAP project implementation, in particular the requirements to be met by the IRAP project implementation unit and the foreign strategic partner,
4. description of the method of involvement and substantive contribution of the partner unit in the establishment and management of the IRAP project implementation unit,
5. description of the partner unit's contribution to the acquisition of the most appropriate and experienced candidates to work for the IRAP,
6. description of the partner unit's contribution to the evaluation of the research and achievement of the project's objectives,
7. details of two persons that the partner unit proposes as future members of the International Scientific Committee for its first term of office.

The letter should be signed by a person authorized to represent the foreign partner unit, and a scan of it should be enclosed as a .pdf file. The letter should be accompanied by an authorization for the person to take binding decisions on behalf of the institution if the letter is signed by someone other than the manager of the unit, i.e. director/president. The Foundation reserves the right to verify the authorization of the individual signing the letter by directly contacting the foreign unit at the formal evaluation stage. Submission of letters signed by unauthorized persons will result in rejection of the application at the formal evaluation stage.

NOTE: The Applicant may submit no more than **two** letters of intent from foreign partner units as only strategic partnership in the project is subject to evaluation. The IRA implementing unit may also be involved in research cooperation with any number of entities that it deems fit, which is however outside the scope of the competition.

- e) The brief description of the IRAP implementing unit structure – the description should contain at least an indication of its legal form and principles for managing the IRAP implementing unit (**up to 2 pages**) (in English),
- f) Description of the place of IRAP implementation (information about the laboratory space acquired, equipment rental, if any, etc.) (in English) (as per the form),
- g) Letter of intent from a scientific partner institution from Poland, if the applicant expects such cooperation – **optional** (in English); (no more than 2),
- h) A letter of intent from an economic partner in Poland or a foreign partner interested in cooperation with the IRA unit or in using the planned results of the IRA project – **optional** (in English); (no more than 2).

NOTE: The Applicant may submit no more than **two** letters of intent from key scientific partners and no more than **two** letters of intent from economic partners. The unit may also be involved in cooperation with any number of entities, both scientific and economic, from Poland and from abroad that it deems fit, which is however outside the scope of the competition.

Any letters beyond the permitted two will be removed from the application.

NOTE: If cooperation is provided for with partner research or economic institutions (mentioned in subsections g) and h)), then the letter should indicate the planned scope of the cooperation between the IRAP implementing unit and the partner, and clearly define the intent of that partner unit, e.g.:

1. involvement in establishing the IRAP implementing unit,
2. nomination of ISC members,
3. involvement of undergraduate or PhD students in the IRAP implementation,
4. ensuring research visits for undergraduate or PhD students
5. admission of candidates for PhD courses in a competition carried out by leaders of IRAP research groups,
6. provision of laboratory space,
7. and/or other type of cooperation in the project implementation.

The letters referred to in subsections g) and h) should be signed by persons authorized to represent the partner unit.

7.2.6 **Part 2 of the application (evaluated by foreign independent reviewers) – submitted electronically**

- a) Full International Research Agenda (cf. section II, 11) (**up to 15 pages**) (in English) (**as per the form**)

The agenda should stipulate the work of the first 5-7 research groups during the period of 5 years from the start of project implementation, headed by research group leaders selected in international competitions, and indicate which groups at which stage will cooperate with entrepreneurs (see section 4.2.2. i).

- b) Description of the competence of the foreign partner unit(s) (**up to 15 pages**); the description should provide at least the following details:
1. research and implementation achievements,
 2. institutional culture,
 3. good practices of organizing and conducting scientific research and evaluation of research groups' work.

If more than one foreign partner unit is indicated in the application, the document “Overview of competence of foreign partner unit(s)” should be enclosed separately for each such unit (**up to 15 pages each**).

Details about a foreign strategic partner unit for which the overview of competence document was not enclosed will be removed from the application along with the corresponding letter of intent during formal evaluation of the second part of the application.

Substantive evaluation at this stage will cover the following documents submitted together with the first part of the application:

1. documents on the applicant(s) at the first application submission stage (submitted according to section 7.2.5a),

2. letter of intent from the foreign strategic partner unit,
3. the outline of the International Research Agenda (The complete International Research Agenda continues and expands this appendix).

7.2.7 Part 3 of the application (submitted before the meeting of the international interdisciplinary panel of experts) – submitted electronically

a) Documents establishing the framework for the work of the IRAP implementing unit according to the selected legal form (all are required in two language versions – Polish and English):

1. the statute of the IRAP implementing unit and the statute of the Polish institution establishing the IRAP implementing unit if that statute impacts the method of operation of the IRAP implementing unit;

2. text of the international agreement (for each of the foreign strategic partner units):

- a. that the IRAP implementing unit intends to conclude with the foreign partner unit (if the IRAP implementing unit has legal personality, i.e. is a foundation or a partnership/company).

or

- b. pursuant to which the IRAP implementing unit is established. This type of agreement will be required e.g. if the IRAP implementing unit takes the form of a joint unit of a Polish and foreign higher education institution, and in similar cases.

The international agreement should guarantee the fulfilment of the foreign partner unit's obligations included in the Competition Documentation and the letter of intent it issued, submitted in the first part of the application.

The statute of the unit and the international agreement must ensure that the project will be implemented in compliance with this Competition Documentation and Polish laws.

The statute and the international agreement will be reviewed, and their respective provisions may be subject to certain modifications before the grant agreement is signed.

The Applicant may use the sample statute of a foundation – IRAP implementing unit, available on the Foundation’s website.

b) Description of operating methods adopted for the IRAP implementing unit, covering primarily (**up to 20 pages**) (in English):

1. project risk assessment (SWOT analysis),
2. strategy for the acquisition of researchers, including education plans for young researchers and PhD students,
3. policy on commercialization and management of intellectual property,
4. information and promotion policy for the unit, including for actions to promote awareness of the role of science in Poland's socio-economic development,
5. development plan of the unit and plan for fundraising from non-IRAP sources during the IRAP project funding period,
6. a list of members of the International Scientific Committee (minimum 9 persons, at least half of whom must have their primary place of employment outside of Poland), who agreed to serve the role (in English) (**as per the form**)

c) Budget – the required research costs, administration costs and other operating costs of IRAP should be indicated in the format provided in the electronic application form (spending must comply with the *Cost Eligibility Guide*, included as an appendix with this Competition Documentation) (in English).

d) Project implementation schedule for the project cost eligibility period during the first 5 years of project implementation (**as per the form**) (in English) with details of:

1. organization and administration activities,
2. announcement and conduct of research personnel recruitment,
3. information and promotion actions for the IRAP project implemented,
4. research-related activities (launch of subsequent R&D),
5. evaluation of research group leaders,
6. fundraising for statutory activities.

- e) Development plan for the IRAP implementing unit after the funding period for the IRAP project (**up to 4 pages**) (in English), covering a long-term vision, primarily with respect to:
 - 1. development of the research agenda,
 - 2. cooperation with the economic sector,
 - 3. cooperation with the foreign unit,
 - 4. fundraising from non-IRAP sources.
- f) Indicators – including justification (**as per the form**) (in English)
- g) Description of the project's impact on sustainable growth, in particular environmental protection (**up to 2 pages**) (in English).

The description should include details about the planned R&D work with respect to environmental protection or nature conservation, number of patents, publications, or media releases concerning environmental innovation.

VIII. IRAP project selection system

Projects submitted for the competition are evaluated in terms of formal and substantive aspects. The evaluation criteria and their descriptions are included as an appendix to this Competition Documentation.

8.1 Formal evaluation of the application

- 8.1.1 Applicants whose applications do not meet the formal criteria at any of the three application stages are notified (by email or electronic system) that the application will not be considered in the competition due to its formal deficiencies.
- 8.1.2 It shall not be possible to re-submit applications with formal deficiencies except where removing obvious errors.
- 8.1.3 If it is found that an electronic file which is an attachment to the application is damaged, the Foundation may request the applicant to re-submit it at any stage of the competition.

8.2 Substantive evaluation of the application

Applications which have been formally approved are subsequently submitted for substantive evaluation. The substantive evaluation consists of three stages: evaluation by a scientific and economic panel, a written review process and interviews with an interdisciplinary panel of experts. The Foundation intends to engage only foreign experts for the evaluation of applications. In the event that experts of Polish descent from Poland and from abroad are engaged, they should not constitute more than 50%.

8.2.1 Stage I. Scientific and economic panel

- a) The research and economic panel includes at least 3 members with an appropriate research background or experience of implementing innovative solutions in the R&D sector. The Foundation may appoint several panels in the competition for particular disciplines represented by the applications submitted.
- b) The panel evaluates e.g. the criterion “Applicant guarantees achievement of the programme's objectives” (graded substantive criterion No. 4). If the application is submitted by two applicants, the panel examines the information submitted by both applicants to evaluate the criterion.
- c) As a result of the scientific and economic panel's evaluation at least 50% of the applications that meet substantive criteria of the first stage advance to the second stage of substantive evaluation.
- d) Notification that the application has qualified for the second stage of the evaluation is sent by email. Applicants whose applications qualify for the second stage of the evaluation are invited to submit the second part of the application before the deadline stipulated in this Documentation.
- e) Applicants that are not invited to the second stage are notified of their scores and recommendations, including a brief justification.

8.2.2 Stage 2. Written reviews

- a) Each application is reviewed by at least two external reviewers. The reviewers must not be members of the research and economic panel or of the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts (third stage of the substantive evaluation).

- b) The reviewers evaluate e.g. the criterion “Evaluation of the applicant's competence” (graded substantive criterion No. 2). If the application includes two applicants and the second applicant declares that he or she wishes to work as research group leader at the IRA Unit, the reviewers evaluate each of the applicants separately. The assessment of the first applicant constitutes a part of the evaluation score of the application at this stage, and is used to verify whether the application should go into the third evaluation stage, and the evaluation of the second applicant is to help the IPE decide whether the other applicant may be hired as a research group leader without an additional competition being held by the ISC. If the application includes two applicants and the second applicant is to work as scientific affairs director at the IRA unit, the reviewers evaluate only the documents concerning the main applicant.
- c) Apart from the substantive criteria, the reviewers may also suggest topics to be explained with the applicant during the third stage of the substantive evaluation, and indicate which applications need special attention due to their high risk, exceptional economic potential, or a potential solution to an important social problem.
- d) Notification that the application has qualified for the second stage of the evaluation is sent by email. Applicants invited to the third stage of the competition receive anonymized reviews of their applications and are requested to submit the third part of the application before the deadline indicated in the letter with information that the application has qualified for the third evaluation stage. Reviews of all the candidates are available in an electronic system, providing anonymity of experts.

8.2.3 **Stage 3 Interview with the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts (IPE)**

- a) The applications that advance to the third stage of the evaluation are those that received the highest scores, best recommendations, or those whose evaluations differ most.
- b) At the third stage, the Foundation reserves the right to request the applicant to provide any additional explanations and documents concerning the organizational form of the IRAP implementing unit. The option to obtain additional explanations is intended to enable the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts to prepare comprehensively, or to visit the IPE-evaluated project implementation site. Submission of additional explanations and documents by the applicant is supplementary, and may not lead to any changes in the previously submitted application, and only concerns the competition criteria at that stage.

- c) The Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts will compare the applications and prepare their ranking list, as well as evaluate them on the basis of the criteria adopted (see Appendix 2). The Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts consists of at least three experts representing various research disciplines and one member of the Foundation's Board (who will chair the meeting but will not have the right to evaluate the application).
- d) The IPE will compare the candidates on the basis of the written reviews obtained at the previous stage and of a direct interview with the applicants, who can also present their opinions about the reviews.
- e) The interview with the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts at the Foundation's headquarters (in particular the discussion of the project, written reviews and reviewers' comments) is complemented by verification of the details provided in the application (including the surface area allocated to project implementation) and submitted by the applicant in the course of the interview with the IPE held at the project implementation site. Verification during the visit to the project implementation site may also cover texts of agreements with major local partners, in particular on the provision of laboratory space. Experts other than those present at the interview at the Foundation's headquarters may also take part in the visit.
- f) The foreign partner unit will ensure the participation of its representative at the interview with the interdisciplinary panel of experts (in person, by phone or by Skype). The representative of the partner unit participating in the interview with the panel of experts will present the binding position of the partner unit.
- g) The evaluation by the IPE (in particular at the project implementation site) may also cover other research or economic project partners that are to be involved in the project implementation.
- h) When the application is filed by two applicants and the second applicant is to be hired at the IRAP implementing unit as a research group leader, the IPE, on the basis of the documents provided, the review from the second evaluation stage and interviews with the applicants, decides on the justifiability of hiring both applicants as research group leaders. If one of the applicants receives a poor score at the substantive evaluation stage, the IPE may recommend that he/she is not hired as a research group leader without a competition held by the ISC.

- i) When the application is filed by two applicants and the second applicant is to be hired at the IRAP implementing unit as a scientific affairs director, the IPE, on the basis of the documents provided and interviews with the applicants, decides on the justifiability of hiring him/her in this position.

8.2.4 The Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts may recommend to the applicants changes to the project that are required to ensure proper IRAP project implementation. The changes may apply in particular to the project feasibility conditions in terms of the rules of operation of the IRAP implementing unit.

8.2.5 The IPE may task the Foundation with negotiating and supervising the introduction of the recommended changes.

8.2.6 The Foundation reserves that any negotiations between the applicant and the Foundation, concerning in particular the project indicators or project budget, may continue even after completion of the third evaluation stage and before the grant agreement is signed..

8.2.7 The Board of the Foundation decides to allocate funding to particular projects by adopting a resolution on the basis of the ranking list prepared by the panel and considering the funds available for a particular competition.

8.2.8 The list of beneficiaries (grantees) is published on the Foundation's website.

8.3 Appeal procedure

- 8.3.1 The Applicant is entitled to appeal in writing to the Board of the Foundation against decisions taken with regard to its application within 7 days of being notified of funding not being granted, or of rejection of the application before the next evaluation stage. The date of receipt of the appeal by the Foundation, rather than the stamp date, will be decisive, with the proviso that the appeal may also be lodged with the Foundation by fax (+48 22 845 95 05) or email to the following address: odwolania@fnp.org.pl. The appeal will be examined within 21 days of its receipt by the Foundation.

- 8.3.2 Appeals concerning procedural matters at the stage of formal evaluation are examined by the Appeals Committee consisting of a lawyer and two of the Foundation's employees who were not involved in the evaluation of the application.
- 8.3.3 Appeals concerning procedural matters at the substantive evaluation stage are examined by a committee consisting of two external experts cooperating with the Foundation on a regular basis, who were not involved in the evaluation of applications, and an employee of the Foundation who was not involved in the evaluation of the application.
- 8.3.4 The Appeals Committee exclusively reviews procedural matters relevant for each stage of the application evaluation and selection. The final opinion is adopted by a vote. Upon examination of the committee's opinion, the Foundation's Board decides whether the application should be re-examined (by the expert panel or a reviewer) or rejected. The applicant will be informed in writing of the decision. The decision of the Board is final.

IX. Grant agreement

The grant agreement along with the application is the basis for the project manager's and IRAP unit's undertaking to implement the project.

9.1 General Provisions

- 9.1.1 The grant agreement along with the application is the basis for the project manager's and IRA unit's undertaking to implement the project.

9.2 Signing of the Agreement

- 9.2.1 Before concluding the grant agreement, the Foundation reserves the right to launch negotiations with a grant applicant in order to make necessary changes to the project resulting from the provisions of this Competition Documentation. The changes may cover primarily adaptation of the text of the statute, the international agreement and other documents organizing the unit's work to Polish and EU law and the Competition Documentation.

9.2.2 Prior to signing a grant agreement, the IRAP implementing unit may be requested by the Foundation to submit:

- 1) a survey for the applicant to be filled out for the purposes of verifying VAT eligibility in SGOP projects;
- 2) a declaration that no state aid is awarded.

9.2.3 The grant agreement is concluded between the Foundation, the unit manager and the IRAP implementing unit. The form of the agreement has been appended to the Competition Documentation and is available on the Foundation's website dedicated to the IRAP programme.

Managers of IRAP implementing units will receive the agreement by email and send three identical signed copies of the agreement, along with all the required documents (appendices), to the Foundation by mail by a deadline set by the Foundation. The Foundation sends back one signed copy of the agreement to the unit's address.

Appendices to the Agreement:

- 1) Project budget;
- 2) Project implementation schedule;
- 3) tranche payment schedule;
- 4) statute of the Unit;
- 5) international agreement;
- 6) declaration regarding VAT eligibility;
- 7) a list of indicators along with the methodology of calculating product and direct output indicators;
- 8) declaration of satisfaction of the conditions and implementation of the recommendations of the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts;
- 9) power of attorney (this appendix is required if the Agreement is executed by an individual(s) without statutory authorizations to represent the Unit).

During project implementation, the IRAP implementing unit may be requested by the Foundation to submit:

- 1) a declaration of no arrears in the payment of state budget liabilities or social insurance and health insurance contributions,

2) a document to confirm proper security for the agreement.

9.2.4 In addition to the appendices listed in section 7.2.3, before the agreement is signed, the Foundation may request access to other documents, including in particular:

1. a certificate confirming the award of a REGON (statistical) number to the Unit,
2. a decision granting an NIP (tax identification) number to the Unit,
3. a copy of an entry in the National Court Register or another relevant register.

9.2.5 The failure to submit all the required appendices and documents before the relevant deadlines may result in the Foundation's refusal to sign the agreement.

9.2.6 During project implementation, the IRAP implementing unit is required to use the Foundation's electronic system, e.g. for submitting reports, documenting research achievements or applying for changes to project budgets.

X. Contact

Additional information about the programme can be obtained by calling the following numbers:

Phone No. +48 22 845 95 46
 +48 22 311 84 39
 +48 22 845 84 30

or by email:

slominska@fnp.org.pl

pawlowska@fnp.org.pl

wegrzyn@fnp.org.pl

XI. Appendices to the Competition Documentation

1. Cost Eligibility Guide for Measure 4.3 Operational Programme Smart Growth.
2. Application evaluation criteria and overview of project selection criteria in the International Research Agendas programme.
3. Model Grant Agreement in the International Research Agendas Programme.