

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AGENDAS PROGRAMME

Competition Documentation

COMPETITION NO 3/2016

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I. Introduction

1. The information contained in the present document sets out the rules for the submission of applications and implementation of 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.
2. 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. The Foundation will keep the applicants up-to-date with any changes.
3. All the dates specified in the Competition Documentation (unless stated otherwise) referring to the obligations of applicants or grantees are the dates of delivery of the documents to the Foundation for Polish Science, not posting dates. With respect to time limits expressed in days, a day is defined as 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 the last day of the time limit concerned.

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. **Doctoral student** – a person with the status of a student of 3rd degree studies or an equivalent programme who participates in the IRA 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. **IRA Implementing Unit (IRA Unit)** – a research unit in which the project financed under the competition is implemented and which meets the requirements set out herein. The IRA Implementing Unit cannot receive state aid.
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, and 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 in 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, and are 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 IRA Implementing Unit – a prominent scientist from Poland or abroad who submitted an application for funding under the programme and who is responsible for the implementation of the Research Agenda in the IRA Implementing Unit.
9. **National Smart Specialisation (NSS)** – a document specifying the thematic scope to be financed under 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 the call is opened for proposals in the IRA programme.
10. **Research Team/ Group Leader** – researcher acting as the leader/manager of the research group at the IRA Implementing Unit.
11. **International Research Agenda (IRA)** – a research programme that determines a clearly defined challenge (problem) of a scientific or socio-economic nature (within the National Smart Specialisations framework) and the working method and approach to dealing with the challenge, and that provides a substantial basis for the existence of the IRA 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 IRA 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, where justified by the need to facilitate the attainment of project objectives, also 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 half of the ISC members and be internationally recognized experts in the field represented by the IRA.
- 13. Junior post-doctoral researcher** – a person who has held a doctoral (PhD) degree for no longer than 5 years (the beginning of this period is the year of graduation and the end is the year in which the application is submitted in the competition), who is engaged in project implementation under the supervision of the research team leader.
- 14. Project implementation period** – the period specified in the agreement that is required for fulfilling the tasks and obtaining the results specified in the funding application, in accordance with the time limits specified in the Competition Documentation.
- 15. Reporting period** – the period after which the Project Manager and the IRA Implementing Unit are required to submit a financial or technical report regarding project implementation. The reporting periods in the Research Agendas Programme are a maximum of six months for financial reports and one year for technical reports. The relevant grant agreement specifies the start and end dates of the reporting periods and the dates of submitting periodic reports.
- 16. IRA Project** – an enterprise aimed at implementing the International Research Agendas (described in the funding application) and at attaining the set objectives defined by indicators, with a specified beginning and end of the implementation, 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. Strategic Partner Unit (foreign)** – a foreign (private or public) unit or international organisation that, pursuant to its main statutory objective, conducts continuous scientific research, involved in the management of the research agenda and of the IRA Implementing Unit, as described in the funding application.
- 19. Student** – a person with the status of a student of 1st or 2nd degree studies or an equivalent programme, who participates in the IRA Project.

- 20. 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.
- 21. Grant Agreement (Agreement)** – an agreement entered into between the Foundation and the IRA Implementing Unit regarding implementation of the IRA Project.
- 22. Funding application** (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 required appendices (in electronic version).
- 23. Applicant** – for the purposes of this documentation the term refers to a prominent scientist from Poland or abroad or two scientists who file an application for funding from the IRA Programme.
- 24. 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.
- 25. Eligible expenses** – costs or expenses incurred in connection with the implementation of the project under the International Research Agendas Programme that are eligible for settlement or reimbursement pursuant to the Grant Agreement, as specified in the Cost Eligibility Guide for Measure 4.3 of the Smart Growth Operational Programme attached hereto.
- 26. 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 the implementation of operational programmes and applied by these institutions pursuant to relevant agreements, territorial contracts or agreements, and by grantees under the Grant Agreement or the project funding decision.

III. Subject Matter of the International Research Agendas Programme

The purpose of the International Research Agendas Programme is for high quality research and development work 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 management;
- Commercialisation of the results of R&D work.

IRA Implementing Unit (see section II.6)

The IRA Implementing Unit is an institution whose primary statutory objective is to conduct research and development work in accordance with the adopted Research Agenda.

Both the scientific challenge described in the Research Agenda and the proposed approaches to solving it must be interesting enough for the scientific community worldwide and entrepreneurs to ensure that the results obtained in connection with the research will be published in the best journals and presented at the most prestigious conferences, and also that intellectual property developed may be properly implemented. The research topics pursued by the unit should allow for its development beyond the period of funding under the IRA Project.

The IRA Unit must be located at one site which has adequate space for laboratory facilities and provides access to the necessary equipment. The Unit must have full discretion in making decisions regarding research, administrative and HR issues.

Strategic Partner Unit (see section II.18)

Ideally, a foreign strategic partner is a world-class higher education institution, research institute or other entity carrying out R&D activities (insignificant unimportant entities, single departments or smaller organisational units within a higher education institution should be avoided as partners), whose aim is to cooperate closely with the IRA Unit and to contribute to its establishment as a joint venture.

Cooperation with a foreign strategic partner involves not only scientific cooperation (as is the case in other grant schemes), but primarily the transfer of best practices with respect to science management, commercialisation of research results and administration. Participation in the selection of the International Scientific Committee allows the partner unit to have an impact on the HR policy of the IRA Unit.

The IRA Programme does not provide for direct financing of the partner unit's activities.

IRA Project Manager (see section II.8)

Ideally, a project manager is a scientist internationally recognised in his or her field, with outstanding scientific achievements and experience in administering and managing large projects. The project manager should be engaged as appropriate to the tasks undertaken, preferably on a full-time basis. At the same time, the project manager must continue research activities. Ideally, the IRA Unit Manager is a person whose profile is comparable to candidates applying for directorial positions at similar research organisations in the best scientific centres or higher education institutions in the world, e.g.

the position of the Director at the Max Planck Institute, technological institutes in Cambridge UK or at MIT.

IV. General Information

4.1 Information about the competition

4.1.1 The application selection procedure under 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.

4.2 Thematic scope of the projects

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

4.3 Amount of funds allocated to the project implementation

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

4.4 Time limits for filing applications

The application process for the IRA Programme is divided into three stages:

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

30 October 2016

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

16 December 2016 at 4pm

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

21 March 2017 at 4pm

The evaluation of applications will take around 6 months from the moment of application submission to when the winners are announced.

4.5 Application process

Applicants submit all their applications online.

4.5.1 Applicants register themselves in the electronic system made available 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 made available in the system and on the programme's website, appendices **in the language indicated (see section below)**. The electronic system allows modifications of the online form and replacement of attachments up until final approval of the application (which takes place by submitting the application).

4.5.2 Certain attachments must be prepared on the required forms, which can be downloaded from the IRA programme's website and from the electronic application system. These attachments are detailed in section 4.5.3.

4.5.3 The following attachments should be submitted with the application form electronically

NOTE: All attachments should meet the following requirements:

- *pdf format*
- **font size no smaller than 11 pts**
- **line spacing no smaller than 1.15,**
- **margins no smaller than 2 cm,**
- **maintaining the number of pages specified in the description of the attachment - pages beyond the set limit will be removed at the formal evaluation stage.**

Part 1 of the application (evaluated by the Scientific and Economic Panel) - submitted electronically

a) Documents about the applicant (in English)

(If the application is submitted by two applicants, documents should be submitted for each of the applicants. The principal applicant should be indicated in the electronic system. The criteria concerning the Leader of the IRA unit will apply to them.

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

indicating what area the patent covers and title in English, description of a completed implementation, etc.).

NOTE: the 10-year period covers achievements in the years 2006-2016.

3. description of unique features of the applicant's achievements referred to above in (2) from the years 2006-2016 and their impact on the development of particular research/economic domains (**up to 3 pages**)
 4. list of key projects for which the applicant was granted funding in the years 2006-2016, 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 2006-2016 at the invitation of hosts, giving 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, membership of research councils, management of international research consortia (**up to 2 pages**))
 7. description of experience in research-industry cooperation and of successful implementations (**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 design of 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 IRA implementing unit to research that challenge (**up to 5 pages**) (in English) (as per the form),
- c) Description of the economic and socio-economic impact and likely applications of the results of the IRA project implementation. The description should indicate how the results of the project will translate into economic growth (e.g. implementations, spin-off companies, etc.) (**up to 2 pages**) (in English).
- d) Letter of intent from a strategic partner unit - foreign strategic partner for the project (in 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. the exact name of the partner unit,
2. a declaration that the partner unit will perform the role of foreign strategic partner unit at least throughout the IRA project funding period,
3. a declaration that the partner unit understands and accepts the terms of the competition and requirements for the IRA project implementation, in particular the requirements to be met by the IRA project implementation unit and the foreign strategic partner,

4. a description of the method of involvement and substantive contribution of the partner unit in the establishment and management of the IRA project implementation unit,
5. a description of the partner unit's contribution to the acquisition of the most appropriate and experienced candidates to work for the IRA,
6. a 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 the person authorized to represent the foreign partner unit, and a scan of it should be attached as a .pdf file. The letter should be accompanied by an authorization for the person taking binding decisions on behalf of the institution, or an explanation of why that authorization is not necessary (e.g. if the letter is signed by a manager of the unit, i.e. director/president, etc.). 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. The 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) A brief description of the IRA implementing unit structure - the description should contain at least indication of its legal form and principles of managing the IRA implementing unit (**up to 2 pages**) (in English),
- f) A description of the place of IRA implementation (information about laboratory space acquired, equipment rental, if any, etc.) (in English) (as per the form)
- g) A letter of intent from a scientific partner institution from Poland, if the applicant provides for such cooperation – **optional** (in English).

NOTE: The applicant may submit no more than **two** letters of intent from key Polish partner units. The IRA 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.

NOTE: Any letters beyond the permitted two will be removed from the applications.

- h) A letter of intent from an economic partner in Poland or a foreign partner interested in using the planned results of the IRA project – **optional** (in English).

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

NOTE: Any letters beyond the permitted two will be removed from the applications.

If cooperation with partner research or economic institutions is provided for, then the letter should indicate the planned scope of the cooperation between the IRA implementing unit and the partner, and clearly define the intent of that partner unit, e.g.:

1. involvement in the establishment of the IRA implementing unit,
2. nomination of ISC members,
3. involvement of students or doctoral students in the IRA implementation,
4. ensuring research visits for students or doctoral students
5. admission of candidates for doctoral courses in a competition carried out by leaders of IRA research groups,
6. provision of laboratory space,
7. and/or other types 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.

Part 2 of the application (evaluated by 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 over the period of 5 years from the start of the project implementation, headed by research group leaders selected in international competitions, and indicate what groups will cooperate at which stage with entrepreneurs (see section 5.2.2. i).

- b) A 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 of any foreign strategic partner unit for which a competence overview document was not enclosed will be removed from the application along with the corresponding letter of intent in the course of formal evaluation of the second part of the application.

The 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) (submitted according to section 4.5.2.a),
2. the letter of intent from the foreign strategic partner unit,
3. an overview of the International Research Agenda, which should therefore be consistent with the full Agenda, which should elaborate on the overview.

Part 3 of the application (submitted before the meeting of the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts) – submitted electronically

- a) Documents establishing the framework for the work of the IRA implementing unit according to the legal form selected (all are required in two language versions – in Polish and English):
 1. the statute of the IRA implementing unit if the statute of the Polish institution establishing the IRA implementing unit affects its method of operation, the statute of the institution establishing the IRA implementing unit;
 2. the text of the international agreement (for each of the foreign strategic partner units):
 - a. which the IRA implementing unit intends to conclude with the foreign partner unit (if the IRA implementing unit has legal personality, i.e. is a foundation or a partnership/company).

or

- b. pursuant to which the IRA implementing unit is established. This type of agreement will be required e.g. if the IRA 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 provide, at least, all the details from the letter of intent issued by the foreign strategic partner unit and submitted with part one of the application, except for details of individuals indicated as ISC members.

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 law. The statute and the international agreement submitted 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 - IRA implementing unit, available on the FNP website.

- b) A description of operating methods adopted for the IRA implementing unit, covering primarily (**up to 20 pages**) (in English):
 1. project risk assessment (SWOT analysis),
 2. the strategy for acquiring researchers, including education plans for junior researchers and doctoral students,
 3. the 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. the unit's development plan and a plan for fundraising from non-IRA sources during the IRA project funding period,
- c) The budget – the required costs of the research, administration costs and other operating costs of the IRA 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) A 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. the announcement and conduct of research personnel recruitment,
 3. information and promotion actions for the IRA project implemented,

4. research-related activities (launch of subsequent R&D activities),
 5. an evaluation of research group leaders,
 6. fundraising for statutory activities.
- e) A development plan for the IRA implementing unit after the funding period for the IRA 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-IRA sources.
- f) Indicators – including justification (as per the form) (in English)
- g) A 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 R&D work planned with respect to environmental protection or nature conservation, number of patents, publications or media releases on environmental innovation.

V. General terms

5.1 Applicant

5.1.1 Applications are submitted by renowned researchers. The applicant may be a citizen of Poland or another country, including from outside the European Union. Where required, e.g. if the application covers interdisciplinary research, the application may be submitted by two researchers, however it should be clearly indicated in the application form which of the researchers is the principal applicant.

5.1.2 The applicant(s) should jointly meet the following criteria:

- a) Each of the applicants is employed by the IRA implementing unit as a research group leader, (details about research group leaders are provided in section 5.4.1).
- b) The first applicant will perform the role of the IRA implementing unit leader (depending on the legal form selected for the new unit, e.g. president of the foundation, or director),

- c) Each of the applicants is fully committed to implementing the IRA project. Only in particularly justified cases and never for longer than indicated by the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts is their involvement permitted to remain at the level of less than full time equivalent, but not less than 50% FTE.

5.2 IRA implementing unit

- 5.2.1. The IRA unit operates by implementing projects and research tasks in research groups and, where necessary, through the implementation of research tasks by independent researchers (see section 5.4.3).

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.

- 5.2.2. The IRA unit must comply with the following criteria during the project implementation period and project durability period:

- a) **Leader of the IRA implementing unit**

The first leader of the IRA implementing unit is the applicant selected in the competition by FNP.

The leader of the IRA implementing unit must be a person who will also perform the role of research group leader selected according to research group leader recruitment rules (see section 5.4.1).

If the applicant is for any reason unable to perform the role of the leader of the IRA implementing unit until the end of the term, the next leader of the unit is selected from among the research group leaders working for the IRA implementing unit, according to the internal regulations adopted for the unit.

During the IRA programme funding period, the IRA implementing unit provides the FNP with information and documents regarding the individual designated as the leader of the unit, in accordance with the list of documents required from the applicant at the first stage of the application (see section 4.5.3 a.). The foundation evaluates and approves the new leader of the IRA implementing unit.

Since the leader of the unit is also the IRA project manager, approval by the FNP of the choice of any new manager over the course of the project is necessary for the IRA 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), which conducts scientific research at a world-class level, has vast experience of application research and meets top work and organizational standards.

The partnership primarily involves joint implementation, in the IRA implementing unit, of good practice on work organization, commercialization of research work results and conduct of research, and a delegation of representatives from the partner unit or persons recommended by that unit to sit on the IRA International Scientific Committee. Research cooperation is a complementary, but not the primary, role of the partner.

c) **The International Scientific Committee**

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

The following criteria are recommended with regard to the composition of the ISC:

1. 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.
2. Members of the International Scientific Committee are appointed for terms of office of no longer than 5 years. Upon expiry of the ISC term of office, no more than half of its members may be reappointed 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 advances in scientific research in a given domain. The ISC will conduct a review 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 hiring decisions of the IRA implementing unit with regard to independent researchers or winners of the European Research Council competition (see sections 5.4.3, 5.4.6).
4. Announcing and holding the competition for research group leaders (subject to section 5.4.1 2.) to work for the IRA implementing unit, including as leaders of IRA implementing units (subject to section 5.2.2 a) through:
 - a) approval of the competition rules 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 the hiring of the best candidate(s).

During the project implementation period, the IRA implementing unit will enable participation at ISC meetings for an FNP representative and notify the FNP 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.

d) **Legal form allowing the required authority to be granted to the ISC**

Requirements to be complied with by the IRA implementing unit can be met by e.g. a foundation established under the Act on Foundations whose statutory objective is to conduct scientific research. The statute of the foundation will set out its activities and the responsibilities of its governing bodies, method of cooperation with a foreign partner unit, as well as ensure durability of the adopted objectives and competence. A sample statute of a foundation complying with the terms of the competition can be downloaded from the FNP website.

An IRA 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, before the grant agreement is signed it must conclude an agreement with a foreign strategic partner unit that specifies the method of cooperation in IRA implementation. If the IRA implementing unit is to be a unit operating under an international agreement (e.g. a joint unit of a Polish and a foreign higher education institution), both the Polish and the foreign institution must conclude an international agreement providing for the method of its establishment and operation in accordance with the terms of the Competition Documentation.

The applicant may use an expert opinion on the various legal forms of entities, made available by the FNP on the programme's website. Where the assumptions of the expert opinion differ from the assumptions of the competition as stated in this Competition Documentation, the rules provided for in the Competition Documentation take precedence.

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

The IRA implementing unit may establish cooperation with a Polish research partner. The partnership may involve e.g. provision of laboratory infrastructure, or joint actions relating to doctoral or other research cooperation projects.

f) **A Commercialization Council (optional)**

The IRA 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 R&D activities of the IRA unit from the application and business perspective.

g) **Access to infrastructure**

The applicant should obtain access to research infrastructure for the IRA implementation, such as offices, laboratories and the necessary equipment. Where necessary, the cost of renting and maintaining premises may be covered by IRA funding.

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

No less frequently than every 4 years, research group leaders must undergo an evaluation by the International Scientific Committee. Upon completion of the evaluation, the Scientific Committee provides a recommendation on their future employment - renewal or non-renewal, or termination of employment.

i) **Cooperation with entrepreneurs**

During the initial 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 that at least half of the research groups operating at the IRA implementing unit will 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 entrepreneurs 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's contribution is financial). Agreements with the enterprises will be monitored by the FNP.

The IRA implementing unit cannot provide state aid to entrepreneurs.

5.3 Partnership in the project without the grant of state aid

5.3.1. The International Research Agendas programme does not provide for the option of granting state aid.

5.3.2. Cooperation between the IRA implementing unit and entrepreneurs must be such that one of the conditions below is met:

- a) the enterprises bear all their respective costs of the cooperation project, or
- b) any results of the cooperation which do not produce intellectual property rights are disseminated and any intellectual property rights resulting from the funded project are fully owned by the IRA 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 IRA 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, of the participating enterprises to the costs of the IRA 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 IRA 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 evaluation confirms that the amount of compensation is at least equal to the market price, or
 3. the IRA implementing unit, as the seller, may demonstrate that it effectively negotiated the compensation at arm's length, in order to obtain the maximum economic benefit at the moment when the contract is concluded while considering its objectives as provided for in its statute, or
 4. in cases where the cooperation agreement provides the cooperating enterprise with the right of first refusal with regard to intellectual property rights generated by the cooperating

IRA unit, where such a unit exercises a reciprocal right to solicit more economically advantageous offers from third parties, the cooperating enterprise has to adapt its offer accordingly.

- 5.3.3.** If none of the conditions specified in section 5.3.2 are fulfilled, the full value of the contribution to the project of the IRA implementing unit will be considered as a benefit of the cooperating enterprises, to which state aid rules apply.

5.4 Individuals conducting R&D work at the IRA implementing unit

5.4.1 Research group leaders

1. Research group leaders will be selected in an open 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* (to be downloaded 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 IRA competition organized by the FNP, based on the recommendation of the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts (see section 6.2.3 h).
3. The competition procedure must be open to all interested parties and apply transparent criteria and principles of equal treatment.
4. The following rules apply to the competition for research group leaders:
 - a) the competition is publicly announced so that it is available to all interested parties who meet the criteria,
 - b) the committee conducts the recruitment process subject to its own criteria, however at least one of the criteria should be the candidate's scientific research achievements to date.
In addition, during the course of IRA project implementation:
 - c) the IRA implementing unit will provide the FNP well in advance with details about the planned method of announcing and conducting the competition, and the anticipated dates of interviews with the candidates,
 - d) the IRA implementing unit will ensure the FNP's representative the option to participate as an observer in the recruitment process,
 - e) the IRA implementing unit documents the recruitment process in a report,

- 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,
- f) upon completion of the recruitment process, the IRA implementing unit uploads a copy of the recruitment report to the Foundation's electronic system, retaining the original copy at the unit,
 - g) at the approval of the Foundation, the IRA implementing unit hires the research group leader selected in the competition.
3. The IRA implementing unit enters the details of the new research group leader in the electronic system made available by the FNP, along with an indication of the funds allocated in the budget to his/her research group.
 4. Research group leaders at the IRA implementing unit may only be hired if, as candidates in the competition referred to in section 5.4.1, they were recommended by the ISC (this does not apply to winners of the European Research Council competitions, whose hiring requires the opinion of the ISC - see section 5.4.6).
 5. The IRA implementing unit must be indicated as the primary employer for each person employed as a research group leader within the meaning of the regulations that may impact the granting of funding for the activities provided for in the statute.
 6. Research group leaders must be employed full-time by the IRA implementing unit (subject to section 5.1.2. c and section 5.2.2 a). The remuneration of the research group leader may be wholly or partially funded from another source, e.g. another grant project. However, all research outcomes, publications, patent applications and patents obtained from the IRA project implementation must be ascribed to the IRA implementing unit.
 7. If the leader and his/her team receive remuneration from another grant project or from non-IRA programme sources, then the subjects of any research tasks implemented by that leader and his/her team must be within the scope of the Research Agenda announced in the application for funding the IRA project, with subsequent modifications made by the ISC.

5.4.2 Research group members

1. The research group leader recruits students and doctoral students, junior post-doctoral 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.

2. Members of the research team - students and doctoral students or junior post-doctoral 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 EURAXESS website - this does not apply to students) and should indicate the method for submitting a candidacy and the criteria to be fulfilled by the candidates, as well as the estimated amount of the scholarship 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 these criteria should refer to the candidate's 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 the 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 of the scholarship or employment contract of the person selected in the competition as part of the IRA 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 the student (or doctoral student) or a copy of his/her student visa for residence in Poland.
3. The unit and the research group leader will allow a representative of the Foundation to participate as an observer in the work of the competition committee.
4. Students selected in the competition receive named grants. Doctoral students may become team members on the basis of either a scholarship or an employment contract. The amounts of the scholarships are proposed by the project manager. Junior post-doctoral researchers recruited to work in the research team may receive remuneration under the employment contract, of the amount proposed by the project manager.
5. Doctoral students conducting R&D work supervised by the research group leader should have another research mentor, if possible from a foreign partner unit.
6. The scholarships will be treated as financial support for project participants and paid by the Foundation directly into the individual bank accounts of the scholarship beneficiaries on the

basis of separate agreements concluded with them. The scholarship holders may not receive remuneration from the project funds during the term of the scholarship.

7. Scholarships are exempt from personal income tax on the basis of Article 21(1)(137) of the Personal Income Tax Act of 26 July 1991 (Journal. of Laws (Dz.U.) of 2012, item 361, as amended).

5.4.3 Independent Researchers (Visiting Researchers)

1. The IRA implementing unit may hire independent researchers implementing short research projects supporting the work of IRA teams outside the competition procedure applicable to research group leaders, for a maximum period of 6 months.
2. The ISC gives an opinion on the hiring of an independent researcher upon a motion from the leader of the IRA implementing unit.
3. A researcher may be employed as an independent researcher only once.
4. Researchers employed as independent researchers are not research group leaders. Their hiring may be related to e.g. implementation of a specific research task or expert cooperation with one or several research groups operating at the IRA unit.
5. Remuneration of the independent researcher may be funded from the IRA project funds, according to the Cost Eligibility Guide for Measure 4.3. of Operational Programme Smart Growth (Appendix 1).
6. The IRA implementing unit enters details of the independent expert hired in the FNP's electronic system.
7. The implementation of the independent researcher's task may be funded from the IRA project. To that end, the unit enters details of allocated funds to the appropriate budget form made available in the FNP's electronic system.

5.4.4 Research and technical staff

Research and technical staff are employed by the manager of the IRA implementing unit and their remuneration is paid from funds allocated to the joint part of R&D projects at the IRA implementing unit.

5.4.5 Senior post-doctoral researchers

Senior post-doctoral researchers may be hired by the IRA implementing unit upon a motion from the manager of the IRA implementing unit who selects them by conducting a competition process similar to that for junior post-doctoral researchers. Employment in the category must be related to the unit's need to acquire a specific R&D competence, e.g. to operate advanced research equipment, or a specific technology. The hiring of a senior post-doctoral researchers at the unit requires the approval of the FNP. Remuneration of those hired persons is paid from funds allocated to the joint part of R&D projects at the IRA implementing unit.

5.4.6 Winners of European Research Council grants

Winners of ERC grants may be hired as research group leaders at the IRA implementing unit by the manager of the unit outside the competition referred to in section 5.4.1 for the implementation period of the grant funded through the ERC. In this case the manager of the unit seeks the opinion of the ISC.

NOTE: The Leader 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 effort, is required to notify the FNP accordingly within 30 days of launching that new project.

5.5 Project term

5.5.1 The project may be launched no earlier than 1 June 2017.

5.5.2 The applicant for funding specifies the launch and completion dates for the project, bearing in mind that the project implementation period is the same as the eligibility period for expenses.

5.5.3 The first project implementation stage lasts 60 months, which is the period for which the funding application is made. The project implementation period may be renewed until 30 June 2023 upon a motion from the IRA implementing unit if the project is positively evaluated and recommended in the second mid-term evaluation, that is after 36 months of the project implementation.

5.5.4 The leader of the IRA unit submits the application to extend the project implementation period before the deadline, in the format indicated by the Foundation.

The project extension application primarily covers details of the planned research agenda adopted by the ISC for all research groups to work for the IRA implementation period in the extended project financing period.

5.6 Financial terms

- 5.6.1** A full list of eligible expenses and rules for documenting eligible expenses in the International Research Agendas programme is specified in the Cost Eligibility Guide for Measure 4.3. of Operational Programme Smart Growth, enclosed as an appendix to the Competition Documentation.
- 5.6.2** Tasks covered by the Project may not be funded from other public sources, save for expenses that cannot be classified as eligible in the funding awarded from the IRA programme (according to the Cost Eligibility Guide for Measure 4.3 of Operational Programme Smart Growth) and expenses that exceed the amount of funding allocated.
- 5.6.3** Persons receiving remuneration or a scholarship from the project's funds may not be professionally committed for more than 276 hours per month.
- 5.6.4** 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 insofar as 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 IRA implementing unit, the remuneration received under the Project depends on the amount of time, calculated as a proportion of full-time equivalent, dedicated to the performance of tasks related to the 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's research group leader under the employment contract (salary and non-salary employment costs, including social and health insurance contributions) of a proposed amount of up to PLN 27,000 per month in the case of full-time work on the project (remuneration for non-full time work will be reduced proportionately).
- b) Remuneration of other personnel involved in R&D for the project, to the extent that it is directly related to the implementation of the project.

c) Remuneration for doctoral students and junior post-doctoral researchers, if they are to be remunerated under an employment contract (salary and non-salary employment costs, including social and health insurance contribution), should not exceed the proposed amount of PLN 8,000 per month for doctoral students and PLN 15,000 per month for junior post-doctoral researchers.

NOTE: The total professional involvement of each person remunerated under the project in all the projects financed from structural funds and the Cohesion Fund, and in any activities funded from other sources, including those funded independently by the unit and other entities, may not exceed 276 hours per month. Where the total workload of 276 hours per month is exceeded, the staff member's remuneration paid from Project funds will represent a non-eligible cost in each month in which the level of 276 hours is exceeded.

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

Subcontracting costs may not exceed 50 % of all the eligible costs of the project.

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

a) Scholarships

Proposed scholarship rates should not exceed:

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

NOTE: The total professional involvement of each person receiving a scholarship under the project in all the projects financed from structural funds and the Cohesion Fund and in any activities funded from other sources, including the unit or other entities' own resources, may not exceed 276 hours per month. Where the total workload of 276 hours per month is exceeded, the scholarship paid from Project funds will represent a non-eligible cost in each month in which the level of 276 hours is exceeded.

- b) Study visits (by scholarship holders or research team members insofar as they are related to the research work conducted as part of the project, the commercialization of research results and state-of-the-art technological achievements or project management)
- c) Training (for scholarship holders or research team members insofar as they are related to the research work conducted as part of the project, the commercialization of research results and state-of-the-art technological achievements or project management, including the cost of summer schools for doctoral students).

The costs in this category (C) may not exceed 30% of all the eligible project costs.

Op - other direct costs

1. Costs of research and scientific equipment and intangible assets

including

- a) expenses for the purchase of low-cost research and scientific equipment, funds allocated to this category may not exceed 5% of all the eligible costs of the project.

2. Cost of land and buildings

3. Other operating expenses

including e.g.

- a) Promotion costs (up to 1% of all project eligible expenses. Subcontracting costs must not exceed 1 % of all eligible costs of the project)
- b) Rental of laboratory space,

O – Indirect costs - not exceeding 17% of the actually incurred direct eligible costs of the project, excluding third-party services and the costs of research staff development ($O=(W+Op) \times \max 17\%$).

NOTE:

- 1. The total amount of funding for a single unit implementing the IRA for the initial 5 years should not exceed the proposed amount of **PLN 35 million**.
- 2. If the IRA implementing unit is asked to refund expenses classified as direct costs which result in the total of indirect costs exceeding the stated limit of 17% of direct costs excluding third-party services and the cost of research staff development, then the IRA implementing unit will be required to refund such an amount of funding from the indirect costs that the above limit is retained.

3. In the case of cost proposals exceeding the values proposed above, or inclusion in the application of costs to purchase tangible assets, the applicant will be required to provide the relevant details during interviews with the interdisciplinary panel at the FNP's main office or at the project implementation site.

5.6.5 Expenses eligible for financing are expenses which meet the conditions included in the *Cost Eligibility Guide* and which have been incurred in accordance with the terms of this Competition Documentation.

5.6.6 The budget allocated to the IRA implementing unit will be divided into joint R&D projects at the IRA unit (e.g. purchase of equipment, rental, technical staff's remuneration) and budgets for projects of the respective research groups or independent researchers.

The costs of joint R&D projects at the IRA unit are 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's project costs is paid upon the hiring of the research group leader or that researcher.

5.6.7 Additional competition for research equipment funding:

5.6.7.1 During the course of the project, and no earlier than after completion of the research group leader competition procedure at the IRA implementing unit, the unit may apply to the FNP for the purchase of 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 assessed by dedicated experts appointed specifically for that purpose,
- c) the assessment will consider such criteria as an analysis of the equipment of a particular type available 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 regard to research carried out under the IRA 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 IRA project and the purposes for which the equipment was purchased under the POIG or POIS’.

- e) A representative of the National Centre for Research and Development will be invited to take part as an observer in the meeting of experts assessing the applications for funding of research equipment.

5.7 Project implementation indicators

5.7.1 The applicant is required to indicate in the form the planned project implementation indicators, i.e. the expected project outputs and results. The indicators on the list below apply to the IRA 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 under the project
- e. Number of new researchers at the supported units
- f. Number of foreign researchers in the supported projects
- g. Number of international research publications included in the JCR (Journal Citation Reports), Thomson Reuters list,
- h. Number of patent applications filed.

5.7.2 The indicators must adequately reflect the given project type and the project objectives assumed. 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.

5.8 Reporting

5.8.1 During the project term the IRA implementing unit submits reports to the FNP as provided for in the grant agreement.

5.8.2 During the project term the IRA implementing unit submits itself to a mid-term evaluation, performed by the FNP at last twice.

- a. the first mid-term evaluation is conducted after the first year following the project launch date and focuses primarily on:

1. the method of implementation for 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;
- b. The second mid-term evaluation is conducted after the third year following the project launch date and focuses primarily on:
 1. evaluation of research excellence of team leaders and the entire IRA implementing unit;
 2. establishment of cooperation with entrepreneurs;
 3. the level of internationality and development of R&D personnel for the needs of an innovative economy.

5.8.3 During the second mid-term evaluation, the FNP will provide the conditions for applying for additional funding, or extension of the project cost eligibility period. A precondition for the granting of the application will be a positive mid-term evaluation result and recommendation given by the committee conducting the evaluation.

5.9 Changes to the project

5.9.1 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, each time require the FNP's approval, or otherwise the agreement will be made null and void. This applies in particular to changes to the statute of the IRA implementing unit.

5.9.2 During the project implementation, the manager of the IRA implementing unit, regardless of the method for extending the project as a result of the mid-term evaluation, may apply for an increase in the funding pool (project budget) or project extension. The conditions for a project extension are included in the grant agreement.

5.9.3 An application for an increase in project funding may be submitted in particular in relation to:

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

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

VI. IRA project selection system

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

If it is ascertained that an electronic file which is an attachment to the application is damaged, the FNP may request the applicant to re-submit it at any stage of the competition.

6.1 Formal evaluation of the application

6.1.1 Applicants whose applications do not meet the formal criteria at any of the three stages of the application are notified (by e-mail or electronic system) that the application is not being considered in the competition due to its formal deficiencies.

6.1.2 It will not be possible to re-submit the applications after rectifying the deficiencies.

6.2 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 research and economic panel, a written review process and interviews with an interdisciplinary panel of experts.

6.2.1 Stage I. Research and economic panel

- a) The research and economic panel includes at least 3 members with adequate research background or experience of the implementation of innovative solutions in the R&D sector. The Foundation may appoint several panels in the competition for particular disciplines represented by the submitted applications.
- 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 details submitted by both applicants to evaluate the criterion.
- c) The research and economic panel's evaluation results in at least 50% of the applications that meet the substantive criteria of the first stage going into the second stage of the substantive evaluation.
- d) Notification that the application has qualified for the second stage of the evaluation is sent by e-mail. Applicants whose applications qualify for the second stage of the evaluation are invited to submit the second part of the application before the deadline stated in this Documentation.

- e) Applicants who are not invited to the second stage are notified of the scores they received and recommendations, including a brief justification.

6.2.2 Stage II. Written reviews

- a) Each application will be reviewed by at least two external reviewers. The Foundation's intention is for foreign expert to account for at least 50% of experts hired in a given competition. 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 is submitted by two applicants, the reviewers evaluate each applicant separately. The evaluation of the first applicant is added to 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 for the IPE to decide whether the secondary applicant may be hired as a research group leader without an additional competition by the ISC.
- c) As well as substantive criteria, the reviewers may also suggest topics to be explained by 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 an application has qualified for the third stage of the evaluation is sent by e-mail. 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 stated in the letter informing about qualification for the third evaluation stage. Other candidates receive reviews on request.

6.2.3 Stage III. Interview with the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts (IPE)

- a) The applications which reach the third stage of the evaluation are those which obtained the highest score or best recommendations, or whose evaluations differ most.
- b) At the third stage, the FNP reserves the right to request the applicant to provide any additional explanations and documents required concerning the organizational form of the IRA implementing unit. The option to obtain additional explanations is intended to enable comprehensive preparation by the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts, or a visit to the IPE-evaluated project's implementation site. Submission of additional explanations and documents by the applicant is only a supplementary procedure, it may not introduce any changes to 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 FNP Board, who will chair the meeting but 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 on the basis 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 headquarters of the FNP (in particular a discussion of the project, written reviews and reviewers' notes) is complemented by verification of the details provided in the application (including provision of office and laboratory space) and submitted by the applicant in the course of an interview with the IPE at the project implementation site. On-site verification at the project implementation site may also cover texts of agreements with major local partners, in particular on the provision of laboratory space. Other experts may be visiting the project implementation site than those present at the interview at the FNP's headquarters.
- f) The foreign partner unit will ensure participation of its representative in the interview with the interdisciplinary panel of experts (personally, by phone or 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) In addition, if the application is filed by two applicants, the IPE, on the basis of the reviews 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 not hiring them as a research group leader without a competition by ISC.

6.2.4 The Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts may recommend that the applicants make changes to the project to ensure proper IRA project implementation. The changes may apply in particular to the project feasibility conditions in terms of the rules of operation of the IRA implementing unit.

6.2.5 The IPE may task the Foundation with negotiations and supervision of the changes recommended.

- 6.2.6** The Foundation reserves that any negotiations between the applicant and the Foundation, concerning in particular the project indicators or project budget, may also continue upon completion of the third evaluation stage and before the grant agreement is signed.
- 6.2.7** The Board of the Foundation will decide 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.
- 6.2.8** The list of grantees will be published on the website of the Foundation.

6.3 Appeal procedure

- 6.3.1** The Applicant is entitled to appeal in writing to the Board of the Foundation against decisions taken with respect to its application within 7 days of being notified that funding is 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 a proviso that the appeal may also be lodged with the Foundation by fax (+48 22 845 95 05) or e-mail to the following address: odwolania@fnp.org.pl. The appeal will be examined within 21 days of its receipt by the Foundation.
- 6.3.2** Appeals concerning procedural matters at the formal evaluation stage are examined by an Appeals Committee consisting of a lawyer and two FNP employees who were not involved in evaluating the application.
- 6.3.3** Appeals concerning procedural matters at the substantive evaluation stage are examined by a committee consisting of two external experts cooperating with the FNP on a regular basis, who were not involved in evaluating the application covered by the appeal, and an FNP employee who was not involved in evaluating the application.
- 6.3.4** The Appeals Committee exclusively reviews the procedural matters relevant to each of the stages of application evaluation and selection. The final opinion is adopted by a vote. Upon examination of the committee's opinion, the Board of the Foundation 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.

VII. Grant agreement

Along with the application, the grant agreement forms the basis for the project manager's and IRA unit's undertaking to implement the project.

7.1 Signing the Agreement

7.1.1 Before concluding the grant agreement, the Foundation reserves the right to launch negotiations with the applicant in order to make any changes to the project required by the provisions of this Competition Documentation. The changes may involve adapting the text of the statute, the international agreement and other documents organizing the unit's work to the Polish and European Community legislation and the Competition Documentation.

7.1.2 The grant agreement is concluded between the FNP and the IRA implementing unit. The agreement takes the form of an appendix to the Competition Documentation and is available on the FNP website on the IRA programme.

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

Appendices to the Agreement:

- 1) the project budget
- 2) the project implementation schedule;
- 3) the tranche payment schedule;
- 4) the statute of the Unit;
- 5) the international agreement;
- 6) the unit's declaration regarding VAT eligibility;
- 7) a declaration that the conditions are met and the recommendations of the Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts implemented;
- 8) 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 IRA implementing unit may be requested by the Foundation to submit:

- 1) a declaration of no arrears towards the state budget and in social insurance and health insurance contributions,
- 2) a document to confirm proper security for the agreement.

7.1.3 In addition to the appendices listed in section 7.1.2, before the agreement is signed, the Foundation may request access to other documents, including in particular:

1. a certificate confirming the issue of a REGON (statistical) number to the Unit,
2. a decision granting a NIP (tax identification) number to the Unit,

3. a copy of an entry in the National Court Register or other relevant register.

7.1.4 Failure to submit all the required appendices or documents before the relevant deadlines may result in the Foundation refusing to sign the agreement.

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

VIII. Contact:

Additional information about the programme can be obtained from the following phone numbers:

Phone No.

+48 22 845 95 46

+48 22 311 84 39

+48 22 845 84 30

or by e-mail:

slominska@fnp.org.pl

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IX. 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. Form of grant agreement