



FIRST TEAM PROGRAMME

COMPETITION DOCUMENTATION

COMPETITION NO. 3/2017



Unia Europejska
Europejski Fundusz
Rozwoju Regionalnego



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I. Introduction

The information contained in this document presents the rules for submitting applications and carrying out projects within the framework of the **First TEAM** Programme, constituting a part of the Grant Project of the Foundation for Polish Science (under the name HOMING/POWROTY), financed from the funds of the European Regional Development Fund as part of the Smart Growth Operational Programme 2014-2020 (SG OP), Priority Axis IV: Increasing the scientific research potential, Measure 4.4: Increasing the human potential in the R&D sector.

Should source documents be updated (e.g. the National Smart Specialisations document or the Guidelines published by the Managing Authority), certain information may be changed, which will not affect the schedules or the terms and conditions of the competition, although it might cause minor changes in the grant agreement or in other appendices to the Competition documentation. The Foundation will keep the applicants informed about the scope of changes, if any.

Projects under the programme may be carried out in three options:

- by research units to the extent that they do not conduct economic activity (without granting state aid),
- by enterprises (following the rules for granting state aid for R&D activities),
- by scientific-industrial consortia consisting of one research unit and one enterprise (for the research unit: without state aid, provided it does not conduct business activity; for the enterprise, in accordance with the rules for granting state aid for R&D activities).

In the case of consortia, the project is in principle divided into two parts – one carried out at the research unit and the other carried out at the enterprise. The rules for carrying out particular parts of the project – especially for the way they are financed – are specified in the relevant Cost Eligibility Guides which are separate for research units and enterprises.

Projects carried out as part of the **First TEAM** Programme are always carried out with the obligatory participation of at least one local or foreign research partner. The project may also be carried out in co-operation with more than one project partner, in accordance with the rules described in item 5.5 “Partnership in the project”.

All the dates specified in the Competition documentation (unless stated otherwise) referring to the obligations of applicants or grantees are the dates the Foundation for Polish Science receives the documents. 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, then the next following business day is deemed to be the last day of this time limit.

II. Definitions

The terms used in the Competition Documentation have the following meanings:

- 2.1. **Industrial research** - means planned research or critical investigation aimed at acquiring new knowledge and skills for the purpose of developing new products, processes or

services or introducing significant improvements to the existing products, processes or services. It comprises the creation of complex system components and may include the construction of prototypes in a laboratory environment or in an interface environment simulating existing systems, as well as pilot lines if they are necessary to conduct industrial research, and especially to obtain evidence in the case of generic technologies.

- 2.2. **Project budget** – the financial plan of the project, taking into account the categories of eligible costs broken down into reporting periods.
- 2.3. **PhD student** – a person with the status of a PhD student participating in the project under the supervision of the project manager.
- 2.4. **Experimental development** – means the acquisition, combination, development and application of currently available knowledge and skills in the areas of science, technology and business, as well as other relevant knowledge or skills, for the purpose of developing new or improved products, processes or services. It may also include, for example, activities aimed at defining new products, processes and services in conceptual terms and at planning and documenting them.

Experimental development does not comprise routine and periodic changes introduced into existing products, production lines, manufacturing processes, services or other operations in progress, even if such changes constitute improvements.

- 2.5. **Foundation** – the Foundation for Polish Science (in Polish: FNP).
- 2.6. **Grantee** – the project manager together with the unit at which the project is carried out.
- 2.7. **Intermediary authority (IA)** – the entity entrusted with carrying out tasks within the framework of a national or regional operational programme, on the basis of an agreement or a contract entered into with the managing authority. For Priority Axis 4 of the SG OP: National Centre for Research and Development (in Polish: NCBR).
- 2.8. **Managing authority (MA)** – the institution or public entity responsible for managing 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).
- 2.9. **Unit** – the entity at which the project (or a part of it) financed as part of the competition is carried out, meeting the requirements set out in this Competition Documentation. Units may be research units or enterprises.
- 2.10. **Research units** – within the meaning of the Act on the Rules for Financing Science of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws No. 96, item 615, on the basis of 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 universities within the meaning of the Charters of these universities,
 - b. research units of the Polish Academy of Sciences within the meaning of 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 within the meaning of the Act on Research Institutes of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws No. 96, item 618, as amended.3),

- d. international research institutes established on the basis of 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 items a.-e., based in the territory of the Republic of Poland, being research and knowledge-dissemination organisations within the meaning of 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 application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty (OJ EU L 187 of 26.6.2014, p. 1).
- 2.11. **Project manager (Principal Investigator)** – an applicant who carries out the project financed under the programme on the basis of an application and a grant agreement.
 - 2.12. **Scientific-industrial consortium (consortium)** – one research unit and one enterprise co-operating for the purpose of carrying out a joint project.
 - 2.13. **Consortium member** – an entity being a member of a consortium established to carry out a joint project and carrying out a part of it, i.e. a research unit or an enterprise.
 - 2.14. **Consortium co-ordinator** – the manager of the project carried out by the consortium, employed either by the research unit or by the enterprise.
 - 2.15. **National Smart Specialisation (NSS)** – a document specifying the range of topics to be financed within the framework of the competition, available on the website of the competent Central Government Office – the institution responsible for the NSS – as well as on the Foundation’s website.
 - 2.16. **Local research partner** – a scientist or scientists holding at least a doctoral degree and employed at a local entity conducting R&D work (whether public or private), other than the research unit or the enterprise at which the project or its part is carried out.
 - 2.17. **Young doctor** – a person who has held a doctoral degree for no more than 5 years. The beginning of the aforementioned period is the year of obtaining the degree and the end is the year preceding the deadline for submitting applications in the competition for member of the research team financed in the First TEAM project.
 - 2.18. **Project implementation period** – the time specified in the grant agreement, necessary to carry out the tasks and obtain the results specified in the application for co-financing, consistent with the time limits specified in the Competition documentation.
 - 2.19. **Reporting period** – the period after which the project manager or a unit is obliged to submit a financial or merit-based report on carrying out the project. The reporting periods applicable in the **First TEAM** Programme are semi-annual reporting periods for financial reports and annual periods for merit-based reports. The grant agreement specifies the start and end dates of the reporting periods and the dates of submitting periodic reports.
 - 2.20. **Economic partner** – an entity meeting the definition of the enterprise, involved in carrying out the financed project.
 - 2.21. **Project partner** – a local or foreign entity (whether public or private) specified in the application for funding, other than a unit implementing the project or its part.
 - 2.22. **State aid** – (state aid for R&D activities) the financing of R&D projects from public sources granted to enterprises in accordance with the rules specified in Commission

Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014. The legal basis for granting state aid for R&D to enterprises under the **First TEAM** Programme is the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 25 February 2015 on the terms and procedure for granting state aid and *de minimis* aid through the National Centre for Research and Development.

- 2.23. **R&D work** – systematically conducted creative work undertaken to increase knowledge resources, including knowledge about the human nature, culture and society, as well as to find new applications for this knowledge. It includes three types of work, namely basic research (theoretical and experimental work in principle not oriented towards obtaining specific practical applications), applied research (research work undertaken to acquire new knowledge having specific practical applications), and experimental development (work consisting in applying already existing knowledge to develop new or to significantly improve existing products, services and processes).
- 2.24. **Project** – a project aimed at achieving the assumed objective defined by indicators, with the specified commencement and end dates, financed under the HOMING/POWROTY grant project within the framework of the SG OP 2014-2020.
- 2.25. **Enterprise** – an entity registered and conducting business activity in the Republic of Poland, regardless of its legal status and the method of financing such activity.
- 2.26. **Consortium member representative** – a person responsible for carrying out part of the project on the part of a consortium member.
- 2.27. **Cost Eligibility Guide** – full name: *Cost Eligibility Guides for Measure 4.4. of the Smart Growth Operational Programme*; an appendix to the Competition Documentation specifying the catalogue of eligible and ineligible costs and the rules for incurring and accounting for expenses under the project. There are two Cost Eligibility Guides – one for units that are not state aid beneficiaries and the other for state aid beneficiaries. In the latter case, they specify, among other things, the method of calculating the value of financing and the rules for benefitting from state aid for R&D activities.
- 2.28. **Student** – a person with the status of a 1st or 2nd degree student or a student of an equivalent programme, participating in the project under the supervision of the project manager.
- 2.29. **Durability of project results** – the durability of the operation within the meaning of Article 71 of Regulation No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) of 17 December 2013.
- 2.30. **Grant agreement (Agreement)** – a grant allocation agreement entered into between the Foundation and the grantee whose project has been selected for financing.
- 2.31. **Scholarship agreement** – a scholarship agreement entered into between the scholarship holder, the project manager and the Foundation.
- 2.32. **Application** (the so-called application for funding or application for the assignment of a grant) – under the **First TEAM** Programme it consists of an application form to be filled in on-line, and of all the required appendices (in an electronic version) – in accordance with the rules described in item 4.5.
- 2.33. **Applicant** – a person (regardless of nationality) who has held a doctoral degree for no more than 5 years (with the beginning of this period being the year of obtaining the

degree and the end – the year preceding the time limit for submitting applications in the competition) and is the author of an application concerning a project carried out as part of funding the first research teams, pursuant to the rules described in item 5.1.1.

- 2.34. **Project indicators** – indicators determined before the commencement of the project in order to monitor the project and evaluate its completion with reference to the predetermined objectives, included in this Documentation.
- 2.35. **Eligible expenses** – costs or expenses incurred in connection with carrying out a project within the framework of the **First TEAM** Programme that are eligible to be accounted for or refunded in accordance with the agreement, calculated in accordance with the currently applicable accounting principles and the principles of sound financial management and the unit's practices (accounting policy), described in the Cost Eligibility Guides for *Measure 4.4. of the Smart Growth Operational Programme*.
- 2.36. **Guidelines** – a legal instrument determining standardised conditions and procedures for implementing structural funds and the Cohesion Fund, addressed to institutions participating in carrying out operational programmes and applied by these institutions on the basis of relevant arrangements, territorial contracts or agreements, and by grantees on the basis of the grant allocation agreement or the decision to finance the project.
- 2.37. **Foreign research partner** – a scientist or scientists holding at least a doctoral degree and employed at a foreign entity conducting R&D work (whether public or private).

III. Subject of the First TEAM Programme

The objective of the **First TEAM** Programme is to develop the human resources of the R&D sector within the framework of financing the first research teams led by young doctors from all over the world (regardless of their nationality), with particular emphasis on the return to Poland of outstanding scientists of Polish origin at the early stages of their scientific careers or persons who have had a break in research, working at research units, enterprises or scientific-industrial consortia in Poland and pursuing research in the most innovative areas, with the **participation of a local or foreign research partner**.

The support should enable persons at the onset of their scientific career: i.e. students, PhD students or young doctors, to gain experience in conducting R&D work by carrying out internationally recognizable breakthrough scientific research of major significance for the economy and society.

IV. General information

4.1 Information about the competition

4.1.1 The procedure for selecting applications as part of the **First TEAM** Programme is not a competitive mode within the meaning of the Act on the Rules for Implementing Cohesion Policy Programmes Financed under the 2014-2020 Financial Perspective of 11 July 2014.

4.2 Range of project topics

4.2.1 Projects to be financed under the **First TEAM** Programme are projects consistent with the topics specified in the National Smart Specialisations.

4.2.2 As a matter of exception, while treating the NSS on a preferential basis, the Foundation may accept projects concerning topics not included in the NSS for financing as long as they have considerable application potential or are important for solving a major social and economic problem. Including such areas in the SG OP will be aimed at, among other things, verifying their potential as smart specialisations, which may lead to updating the NSS should the results be positive.

4.2.3 The subject of the application may be research that will contribute to solving current or changing scientific problems that are important for the developing global market or that will significantly contribute to solving certain major challenges faced by the society.

4.2.4 The subject of the project may also be R&D work relating to the development of a product or production (technological or manufacturing) process of major importance for the economy on the basis of an identified product, technology or the market of recipients of a given product or technology.

4.3 Amount of funds allocated for carrying out projects

The total amount of funds allocated to the competition is:

PLN 14 000 000

4.4 Time limits for submitting applications

The call for applications for funding projects within the framework of the **First TEAM** Programme

will close on

15 March 2017

at 16:00 of the local time (UTC+1:00)

4.5 Manner of submitting applications

Applicants must submit applications using the on-line mode only.

4.5.1 Applicants must register with the electronic system made available by the Foundation on the website www.fnp.org.pl. The electronic application form must be filled in **in English**, except for the section available for enterprises, *Evaluation of information about the enterprise*, which must be filled in in Polish. Appendixes to the application must be enclosed in the specified format and language version specified in this Competition documentation.

4.5.2 The applicants fill in an electronic form, completing it with, among other things, the details of the grantee, the location and the project budget, and enclosing the obligatory documents (see 4.5.3. a.-o.). The electronic system enables the electronic form of the application to be modified and appendices to be replaced until the moment when the data edition has been completed. Next, applicants are to enclose, within the electronic form, a *Statement of the unit* at which the project is to be carried out, i.e. the *Statement of the research unit* or the *Statement of the enterprise* (see 4.5.3 o). The above-mentioned form is to be downloaded from the Foundation's website, and then completed, printed out, signed in accordance with the representation rules applicable at the unit, scanned and enclosed in the electronic system. The *Statement of the unit* cannot be enclosed at the first stage, i.e. before completing the edition of the application data.

NOTICE:

- I. The application may be submitted electronically only after completing edition of the application data and uploading the necessary *Statement of the unit* at which the project is to be carried out.
- II. In the case of a project to be carried out by a consortium, two files must be enclosed: the *Statement of the research unit* and the *Statement of the enterprise* (these statements differ in term of their contents).

4.5.3 The following appendices in electronic form must be enclosed with the electronic application form (in **PDF format**, unless specified otherwise):

- a. the applicant's CV containing information on international co-operation (in English) – up to three A4 pages,
- b. a total of up to **five** appendices containing information on a total of no more than **five** of the applicant's most important scientific research and/or implementation achievements, which may include:
 - full texts of publications (in the original language),
 - full texts of patents (in the original language),
 - descriptions of implementations (in English),
- c. a description of the original nature of the aforementioned scientific research achievements and their impact on the development of various fields of science and, additionally, a description of the achievements and results of the recently completed project (in English) – up to three A4 pages,
- d. a description of the research programme along with the tasks assigned to the planned team members, its assumptions and the methodology and management of the expected project results (in the case of proposing a project to be carried out by a consortium, a description of the research programme should indicate two parts of the project respectively for each consortium member, along with the assignment of tasks to the planned team members) (in English) – up to ten A4 pages, not including the references,
- e. a description of co-operation with the partner(s) within the framework of the project, including at least a description of co-operation with the local or foreign research partner and – if applicable – a description of co-operation with the local enterprise as an economic partner (in English) – up to three A4 pages,

- f. a description of the available apparatus and the planned expenses on laboratory equipment, if the project envisages such costs (a limit of up to 5% of the eligible costs of the project) along with their justification to be prepared in accordance with the template available to be downloaded from the Foundation's website (in English) – up to three A4 pages,
- g. at least one letter of intent from the local or foreign research partner, containing a description of the partner's involvement and its contribution to carrying out the project concerning the substance of the project (in English) – up to three A4 pages; NOTICE: a local research partner cannot be a scientists employed at the same basic organizational unit as the applicant.
- h. letters of intent from local enterprises acting as economic partners in the project, containing a description of their involvement and contribution to carrying out the project concerning the substance of the project (in English) – up to three A4 pages (an appendix required only if an economic partner has been indicated in the project),
- i. a description of the economic or social significance and likely applications of the project results with reference to the NSS (in English) – up to three A4 pages,
- j. the time schedule for carrying out the project broken down into tasks, to be prepared in accordance with the template available to be downloaded from the Foundation's website (in English),
- k. the project indicators along with a justification, an appendix to be prepared in accordance with the template available to be downloaded from the Foundation's website (in English),
- l. the project manager's statements – an appendix to be prepared in accordance with the template available to be downloaded from the Foundation's website (in Polish or in English),
- m. a form containing information to be provided when applying for aid other than aid in agriculture or fishery, *de minimis* aid or *de minimis aid* in agriculture or fishery, available to be downloaded from the Foundation's website (in Polish, pdf format) – **an appendix required only if the project is to be carried out by an enterprise or by a consortium,**
- n. the PNT-01 form "Report on Research and Development (R&D) Activities" for the year preceding the year of submission of the application, to be filed where the enterprise is subject to the obligation to submit it with the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS) (where the enterprise has not filled in the PNT-01 form before submitting the application for co-financing and is not obliged to do so, the relevant statement should be provided. At the same time, as a result of submitting an application for funding under the **First TEAM** Programme, the entity may be included in the Central Statistical Office reporting requirements) (in Polish, the form in the xml format, the statement in the pdf format) – **an appendix required only if the project is to be carried out by an enterprise or a consortium,**
- o. a statement of the unit at which the project is to be carried out – an appendix to be prepared in accordance with the template available to be downloaded from the Foundation's website (in Polish),

NOTICE:

- I. If any among the required appendices are submitted in a language other than that specified above, the application will be rejected and will not be considered in the formal evaluation phase, Where, despite the removal of such attachments, the application complies with the formal requirements set in the Competition documentation, given application will be considered in the competition.
- II. Where an appendix is submitted whose number of pages exceed the limit indicated in this documentation, at the formal evaluation phase such appendix will be shortened to the maximum number of pages provided for in the Competition documentation.
- III. The *Statement of the unit* cannot be enclosed before completing edition of the application data. In the case of a project to be carried out by a consortium, two files must be enclosed: the *Statement of the research unit* and the *Statement of the enterprise*.

4.5.4 Where the project is carried out by a consortium, the following appendices in electronic form (**PDF format**) must be enclosed:

- a. the consortium member representative's CV (in English) – up to three A4 pages,
- b. a total of up to **five** appendices containing a total of no more than **five** of the applicant's most important scientific research and/or implementation achievements over the last 10 years, which may include:
 - full texts of publications (in the original language),
 - full texts of patents (in the original language),
 - descriptions of implementations (in English),
- c. a description of the original nature of the aforementioned scientific research achievements and their impact on the development of various fields of science and, additionally, a description of the achievements and results of the recently completed project (in English) – up to three A4 pages,
- d. a statement of the consortium member representative – an appendix to be prepared in accordance with the template available to be downloaded from the Foundation's website (in Polish or English),

4.5.5 Additionally, if the project is qualified for stage 3 of the evaluation procedure and is to be conducted at an enterprise or by a consortium (this refers only to large enterprises) – the applicant will be requested to submit a feasibility study for the project (see 5.6.3). The candidates will be informed of the time limit for submitting it and the form in which it is to be submitted in writing or by electronic mail.

4.5.6 The statements referred to in items 4.5.3.l. and 4.5.3.o. and 4.5.4.d., constituting appendices to the application, concern, among other things:

- a. a declaration that the grantee will apply for all consents of ethics or other committees and other permits required by law, necessary to conduct the research to which they refer, and will start to carry out this research only after obtaining the relevant consents and permits,

- b. consent to provide information for the purposes of the evaluation to be conducted by the Foundation for Polish Science, the SG OP managing authority, the SG OP intermediary authority or other authorised bodies, regardless of the outcome of the process of selection of projects to be co-financed,
- c. statements required to meet the formal evaluation criteria, in accordance with the appendix *Catalogue of criteria for selecting grantees*,
- d. in the case of enterprises, statements also include:
 - i. a statement that the enterprise has not received aid allocated to cover the same costs qualifying for aid, to cover which it is applying for state aid,
 - ii. a statement that the enterprise is not subject to receivership, is not in liquidation and no bankruptcy proceedings are pending in respect of it,
 - iii. a statement that the project has not commenced and will not commence until the day following the date of submitting this application for co-financing,
 - iv. a statement that no significant loss of jobs at the applicant's existing locations in the EU territory will take place in connection with carrying out the project, with the significant loss meaning the loss of at least 100 jobs.

4.5.7 If any of the aforementioned statements are filed, the Foundation may ask for documents confirming the content of the statements at any stage of the evaluation of the application or before signing the agreement.

4.5.8 An applicant submitting false statements will be excluded from the possibility of applying for any form of funding from the Foundation for 5 years from the date of submission of such statements.

V. General terms

5.1 Entities eligible to apply for funding

5.1.1 The **applicant** must meet all of the following conditions:

- a. must have held a doctoral degree for no more than 5 years, with the beginning of this period being the year of obtaining the degree and the end – the year preceding the year of submitting applications in the competition. The period of 5 years may be extended on the terms specified below, save that it may not exceed 9 years from obtaining the research degree:
 - i. the period of 5 years will be extended by all documented periods of breaks in scientific research work occurring after obtaining the research degree and by documented periods of post-doctoral fellowships in Poland or abroad, save that only breaks or post-doctoral fellowships of a total duration of no less than one year will be taken into account; each year of extension requires the full year of documented post-doctoral fellowship or a break in scientific research work.

Documented break periods are deemed to include, among others: unpaid leave, parenthood-related leave, breaks due to illness, work in the R&D sector without

being involved in scientific research, work in other sectors of the economy, etc.;

- ii. in the case of women who have given birth to a child or persons who have adopted a child, the period of 5 years is to be extended by one year per each child, regardless of the date of birth or adoption, even if the period of the related documented leave or break from work was shorter;
- b. will be employed* at the unit for the duration of the project, with his/her time commitment to carrying out the project corresponding to at least 50% of full-time employment;
 - c. is obliged to provide adequate scientific research supervision to PhD students participating in the project and to ensure that they are additionally supervised by another scientific research mentor. Mentor should be a person employed at a foreign partner institution or at a local partner institution or at a unit other than the applicant's employer – a research unit or an enterprise conducting R&D activity.

NOTICE: Due to the fact that the aim of the **First TEAM** programme is to support young doctors who are at the stage of financing their first research teams (see chapter III in this Competition documentation), the Applicants who at the time of application deadline (see item 4.4) have completed projects of similar nature are excluded for applying for funding, in particular these include LIDER projects of the National Centre for Research and Development, Sonata BIS projects of the National Science Centre, etc.

5.1.2 The **consortium member representative** must meet all of the following conditions:

- a. must hold at least a doctoral degree,
- b. will be employed* at the consortium member's unit for the duration of the project, with the time commitment to carrying out the project corresponding to at least 50% of full-time employment.

5.1.3 The **unit** which will host the project financed:

- a. is to undertake to respect the research autonomy of the project manager, in accordance with the approved research project being the subject of the application,
- b. is to provide appropriate conditions for conducting research work in accordance with the scope presented in the application as well as access to research apparatus.

5.1.4 Units cannot be entities excluded from applying for financing on the basis of:

- a. Article 207 of the Public Finances Act of 27 August 2009 (Journal of Laws No. 157, item 1240),
- b. Article 12, item 1 point 1 of the Act on the effects of assigning work to foreigners unlawfully present in the territory of the Republic of Poland of 15 June 2012 (Journal of Laws of 2012, item 769),

* As for an "employment for the project" and the resulting duty of the commitment to the project, the Foundation accepts commitment to the project in any legal form, with the exception of subcontracting, in the corresponding equivalent of the full-time basis.

- c. Article 9, item 1, point 2a of the Act on the Responsibility of Collective Entities for Punishable Offences of 28 October 2002 (Journal of Laws of 2012, item 768, as amended.).

5.2 Team members

5.2.1 The project manager is obliged to conduct an open and international competition to select team members who will receive remuneration (on the basis of an employment contract) or a stipend from the funds allocated to carry out the project. **Eligible to participate in a competition organised by the project manager are candidates for:**

- a. **students (see item 2.28);**
- b. **PhD students (see item 2.3);**
- c. **young doctors (see item 2.17).**

As a result of the above mentioned recruitment, within six months after the start of the project, the team conducting R&D work under the project should consist of at least three persons, including the project manager.

5.2.2 Team members selected in open competitions to conduct R&D work under the project should be involved to an extent adequate to their status:

- a. **students** – participation in the project is to be connected with following a 1st or 2nd degree studies programme or an equivalent programme.

It is recommended for students to be involved in the project on a full time basis, and their time commitment to the project should be no shorter than the suggested one year period;

- b. **PhD students** – participation in the project is to be connected with following a 3rd degree studies programme (doctoral studies);

It is recommended for PhD students to be involved in the project on a full time basis, and their time commitment to the project should be no shorter than the suggested three year period;

- c. **young doctors** – participation in the project is to be directly connected with carrying out the R&D work planned by the project manager as part of the post-doctoral project.

It is recommended for students to be involved in the project for no less than the suggested one year period. There are no indications in their case as to the proportion of full time employment to be assigned to carrying out the project.

5.2.3 Students and PhD students may become team members either on the basis of receiving a stipend or on the basis of an employment contract. It is prohibited to receive simultaneously a stipend or a remuneration by students and PhD students under two projects financed by the Foundation (with the exception of scholarships received as part of the START Programme).

5.2.4 Stipends will be treated as financial support for project participants and paid by the Foundation directly into the individual bank accounts of stipend beneficiaries on the basis of separate agreements concluded with them. Stipend beneficiaries may not receive remuneration from the project funds during the period of receiving a stipend.

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

5.2.6 The amounts of stipends and remuneration is to be proposed by the project manager in accordance with the rules specified in items 5.8.1.3 and 5.8.1.1 respectively.

5.2.7 Students and PhD students who receive stipends or are employed on the basis of employment contracts may receive remuneration or a stipend under the project until the end of the month in which they have defended their Master's thesis (students) or doctoral dissertation (PhD students).

5.2.8 Technicians or research-support staff may also be involved in the work on the project.

5.2.9 Employees other than students, PhD students, young doctors or research-support staff may be involved in the project only provided this is required to ensure the necessary R&D competences, e.g. competences required to operate advanced research equipment or a specific technology.

5.2.10 The employees specified in items 5.2.8 and 5.2.9 should be selected in a competition procedure proposed by the project manager. The remuneration of such employees may be financed only if the Foundation approves the need to employ them.

5.2.11 Young doctors recruited for work in the team are to receive remuneration on the basis of an employment contract.

5.3 Teaching duty

In order to enable the project manager, consortium member representative and young doctors to devote an adequate amount of time to conduct scientific research or development work, it is recommended that their teaching load should not exceed 60 hours/year for the duration of the project. In the case of PhD students, it is recommended that their education should match the carrying out of the project, which should account for the most important part of their commitment, so that their suggested teaching load should not exceed 45 hours/year.

In justified cases, the project manager can take responsibility for allowing a different teaching load for the aforementioned persons, although in such a case the Foundation should be notified about the fact.

5.4 Rules for recruiting students, PhD students and young doctors

5.4.1 Information about the competition should be announced publicly, also in the English language version, including on the Foundation's website. In the case of recruiting PhD students and young doctors information about the competition should be publicly available for at least 30 calendar days prior to the deadline for submitting applications by candidates, also on the EURAXESS website.

5.4.2 Information about the competition should contain at least a description of the application procedure, a description of the requirements for candidates and the expected amount of the stipend or remuneration.

5.4.3 The project manager is to appoint a committee composed of at least two members to be responsible for the recruitment process.

5.4.4 The committee is to prepare and conduct the recruitment process on the basis of the criteria adopted by it, with at least one of such criteria to refer to the candidate's scientific research achievements to date. The knowledge of the Polish language by the candidate cannot be a criterion for the recruitment process.

NOTICE: One of the stages of the recruiting process for team members is an interview, which depending on the candidates can be conducted in English. Such interview may be held as a teleconference, where all members of the committee must be able to participate in the conversation.

5.4.5 The recruitment committee is to document the recruitment process in the form of a protocol.

5.4.6 The protocol is to contain at least the lists of candidates, the names of their units of origin, information about the date and place of receiving a doctoral degree by candidates applying for a young doctor position in the team, the scores received by candidates in the recruitment process, the details of the mentor(s) referred to in item 5.1.1.c for each of the selected PhD students, and information concerning the announcements of the competition, selection criteria and recruitment time schedules and the proposed remuneration or stipend rates.

5.4.7 Within 14 days of the end of the recruitment process, the project manager is to supply a copy of the recruitment protocol in the Foundation's electronic system. The original recruitment protocol is to be stored at the place of carrying out the project.

5.4.8 As a condition for financing a person selected in a competition, the recruitment protocol has to be approved by the Foundation. Moreover, the Foundation must be provided with a copy of the doctoral diploma or a document certifying the award of the degree of doctor or a certificate confirming the status of a student (or PhD student) or a copy of his/her student visa for a stay in Poland.

5.4.9 The unit and the project manager will enable a representative of the Foundation to participate in the works of the committee as an observer.

5.5 Partnership in the project

5.5.1 Possible partners in the **First TEAM** project include:

- a. local research partners,
- b. foreign research partners,
- c. domestic enterprises as economic partners.

5.5.2 At least one local or foreign research partner must take part in the **First TEAM** Project.

5.5.3 The partner should be involved in the implementation of the grantee's project to achieve an effect of synergy or complementarity. Its participation should facilitate the exchange of experience, also in the area of intellectual property management and potential commercialisation. The partner may also provide supervision for students and PhD students, as well as young doctors, and allow access to other staff members or unique equipment.

5.5.4 The entity named in the application as the partner may not also be identified in the application as a consortium member.

5.5.5 If the project is implemented in partnership with an economic partner, including its R&D department, without the enterprise being awarded state aid, the grantee must meet one of the following conditions[†]:

- a. the participating undertakings bear their respective full cost of the collaboration project,
- b. the results of the collaboration which do not give rise to intellectual property rights may be widely disseminated and any intellectual property rights resulting from the financed activities are fully allocated to the research unit,
- c. any intellectual property rights resulting from the project, as well as related access rights are allocated to the different collaboration partners in a manner which adequately reflects their work packages, contributions and respective interests, or
- d. the research unit receives compensation equivalent to the market price for the intellectual property rights which result from their activities and are assigned to the participating undertakings, 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 research unit's activities that resulted in the intellectual property rights concerned, may be deducted from that compensation; the compensation received is equivalent to the market price if it enables the research unit concerned to enjoy the full economic benefit of those rights, where one of the following conditions is fulfilled:
 - i. the amount of the compensation has been established by means of an open, transparent and non-discriminatory competitive sale procedure, or
 - ii. an independent expert valuation confirms that the amount of the compensation is at least equal to the market price, or
 - iii. the research unit, as seller, can demonstrate that it effectively negotiated the compensation, at arm's length conditions, in order to obtain the maximum economic benefit at the moment when the contract is concluded, while considering its statutory objectives, or
 - iv. in cases where the collaboration agreement provides the collaborating enterprise with a right of first refusal as regards intellectual property rights generated by the collaborating research unit, where such unit exercises a reciprocal right to solicit more economically advantageous offers from third parties, the collaborating enterprise has to match its offer accordingly.
- e. If none of the conditions above are fulfilled, the full value of the contribution of the research unit to the project will be considered as an advantage for the collaborating undertakings, to which state aid rules apply.

NOTICE: Contract research and the provision of research services are not deemed forms of collaboration.

[†] Cf. Framework for State Aid for Research, Development and Innovation. Communication from the Commission (OJ C 198 of 27.6.2014), points 28-30.

5.6 Projects involving state aid

5.6.1 In any case, where the grantee is an enterprise or where a consortium member is an enterprise, rules on state aid for R&D activity for such an undertaking apply to the project. The intensity of financing of the project (or of that particular part of the project) is determined according to the Cost Eligibility Guide.

5.6.2 State aid may be granted (the project may receive co-financing) where all of the following conditions are met:

- a. the project is of an innovative nature;
- b. there is demand for the results of the project;
- c. the proposed solutions are at least comparable or better than the technical, technological or organisational state of the art;
- d. project feasibility is unquestionable and the expected result is cost effective;
- e. the planned project implementation costs are reasonable considering the subject matter and the scope of basic research, industrial research or development work.

5.6.3 For large enterprises[‡], a feasibility study for the project must be drafted considering two scenarios: with and without co-financing, in order to confirm that the aid serves as an incentive. Such internal documentation prepared by the enterprise should confirm that the aid will have one or several of the following results:

- a. significant increase in the scope or activities of the project due to the aid measure, or
- b. significant increase in the total amount spent by the beneficiary on the project or activity due to the aid measure, or
- c. significant acceleration of the completion of the project or activity.

5.7 Project duration

5.7.1 The project should start to be implemented in the recommended period of 1 September 2017–1 January 2018. The project start and end dates will be set by the applicant, taking into consideration that the project implementation period is the same as the period in which incurred expenditure may be recognised as eligible.

5.7.2 The agreement should be signed within 3 months of the date when the list of grantees is published.

5.7.3 The maximum project implementation period for a project covered by the funding application **is 36 months**.

5.8 Project financing

5.8.1 Project budget:

The suggested total project budget should not exceed **PLN 2,000,000** for projects lasting for 36 months.

The budget consists of direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include the following categories: W - remuneration, E – subcontracting costs, C – cross-financing and Op – other direct costs.

[‡] A large enterprise is understood to mean an enterprise which fails to meet the criteria set out in Annex I to Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014. Cf. also Cost Eligibility Guide for Measure 4.4 of the Smart Growth Operational Programme, chapter 6.

5.8.1.1 **W - Remuneration** – this category covers eligible remuneration costs together with non-salary costs of labour, including social and health insurance contributions of persons employed for research purposes (research staff, technical staff and other auxiliary personnel) or technology brokers:

a. Project Manager's remuneration:

The Project Manager may only be remunerated for the project under an employment contract. It is recommended that the remuneration costs, including all non-salary labour costs, do not exceed the amount of **PLN 20,000 per month**, where project work is performed on a full-time basis.

b. Remuneration of consortium member representative:

The consortium member representative may only be remunerated for the project under an employment contract. It is recommended that the remuneration costs, including all non-salary labour costs, do not exceed the amount of **PLN 15,000 per month**, where project work is performed on a full-time basis.

c. Young doctor's remuneration:

The young doctor selected in a competition may only be remunerated for the project under an employment contract. It is recommended that the remuneration costs, including all non-salary labour costs, do not exceed the amount of **PLN 15,000 per month**, where project work is performed on a full-time basis.

d. PhD student's remuneration:

A PhD student selected in a competition may be remunerated for the project under an employment contract. It is recommended that their remuneration costs under an employment contract, including all non-salary labour costs, do not exceed the amount of **PLN 8,000 per month**, where project work is conducted on a full-time basis.

e. Student's remuneration:

A student selected in a competition may be remunerated for the project under an employment contract. It is recommended that their remuneration costs under an employment contract, including all non-salary labour costs, do not exceed the amount of **PLN 4,000 per month**, where project work is conducted on a full-time basis.

f. The remuneration of other personnel involved in research or project work is eligible to the extent that it is directly related to the implementation of the project.

NOTICE:

- I. The total professional involvement of each person remunerated under the project in all projects financed from structural funds and Cohesion Funds and in any activities financed from other sources, including the own means of the unit or other entities, may not exceed 276 hours per month.
- II. Where the Project Manager applies for remuneration in excess of that indicated in the Competition documentation, FNP may appoint an additional expert to evaluate such an application.
- III. Before hiring an employee who is to be remunerated from Project funds, the unit agrees to verify whether the candidate is receiving any remuneration or scholarship as

part of a different project financed by the Foundation and to identify the candidate's total workload to ensure that it will not exceed 276 hours per month.

- IV. Where a staff member is working on the project on a part-time basis at the implementing Unit, the remuneration they will receive as part of the Project depends on the amount of time, calculated as a share of full-time equivalent, that they dedicated to the performance of tasks related to the implementation of the Project at the Unit. At the same time, it is suggested that in such cases the remuneration should not be higher than the same percentage of the suggested remuneration specified in the Competition documentation.
- V. The grantee will notify the Foundation in its financial statements of the share of full-time equivalent corresponding to the involvement in the Project of each staff member who receives remuneration from Project funds and of their total workload in hours per month. Where the workload of 276 hours per month is exceeded, the staff member's remuneration paid from Project funds will represent non-eligible expenditure in each month in which the amount of 276 hours is exceeded.

5.8.1.2 **E - Subcontracting costs** – this category includes the following eligible expenses:

- a. costs related to subcontracting to a third party some of the substantive work in the project which is not performed on-site and under the direct supervision of the beneficiary,
- b. costs of resources made available by third parties, i.e. cost of leasing a lab with research equipment,
- c. costs of all specific work contracts.

NOTICE:

- I. Subcontracting is understood not to include auxiliary activities necessary for the completion of project tasks, such as legal or accounting services.
- II. Subcontracting costs must not exceed 25% of all eligible costs of the project.
- III. Subcontracting costs are not included in the basis on which the project's flat-rate indirect cost is calculated.
- IV. Partners should not be subcontractors in the project.

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

- a. Stipends for students and PhD students selected in an open competition to participate in project research work. The suggested scholarship amounts should be within the following ranges:
 - i. for students: **PLN 1500-2500/month;**
 - ii. for PhD students: **PLN 3500-4500/month;**

Where the project or its part is carried out by an enterprise, the stipend will be granted provided that the enterprise ensures that[§]:

- the results of the collaboration which do not give rise to intellectual property rights may be widely disseminated and any intellectual property rights resulting from the activities of research organisations or research infrastructures are fully allocated to those entities, or
- any intellectual property rights resulting from the project, as well as related access rights are allocated to the different collaboration partners in a manner which adequately reflects their work, contributions and respective interests, or

the research organisations or research infrastructures (this applies to units with which PhD students are affiliated) receive compensation equivalent to the market price for the intellectual property rights resulting from their activities and assigned 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 research organisations or research infrastructures' activities that resulted in the intellectual property rights concerned, may be deducted from that compensation.

- b. Fellowships or training courses for stipend holders or employees of the research team to the extent related to the research work conducted as part of the project, the commercialisation of research results and state-of-the-art technological accomplishments or project management and in particular traineeships with project partners.

NOTICE:

- I. The total amount of eligible project expenses in the (C) category must not exceed 30% of the project's total eligible costs.
- II. The costs of research staff development are not included in the basis on which the project's flat-rate indirect cost is calculated.

5.8.1.4 **Op – Other direct costs** – this category includes the following eligible cost items:

- a. Costs of research and scientific equipment and intangible assets. Including, among others: for units which are not recipients of state aid, expenditure for the purchase of low-cost scientific and research equipment in the amount of 5% of all eligible costs in the project;
- b. Cost of land and buildings in the amount of 10% of all eligible costs in the project;
- c. Other operating costs, including, among others, promotion costs in the amount of up to 1% of all eligible costs of the project and selected costs of international collaboration on the project and of collaboration with enterprises.

5.8.1.5 **O – Indirect costs** – not exceeding 17% of the actually incurred direct eligible costs of the project, excluding subcontracting costs (E) and the costs of research staff development/cross-financing (C), i.e. $O=(W+Op) \times \max 17\%$.

[§] Communication from the Commission: Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2014/C 198/1), point 28(b)-(d).

NOTICE:

- I. Where the unit is a beneficiary of state aid, if the equipment and devices are not used for project implementation through their entire lifetime, eligible costs are only understood to mean depreciation costs corresponding to the project implementation period and only the portion corresponding to the proportion of use of assets to the project.
- II. Where the unit is a beneficiary of state aid, depreciation write-offs represent eligible costs only if the equipment and devices were purchased after the application for co-financing was submitted.
- III. In the event that the proposed project costs exceed the amounts suggested above or that the application includes expenses for the purchase of fixed assets, the Foundation may appoint a special expert to assess the legitimacy of such costs.
- IV. Indirect costs settled as a flat-rate payment cannot be listed as direct project costs.
- V. Indirect costs settled as a flat-rate payment are eligible proportionally to the direct costs used.
- VI. Each reimbursement of direct project costs entails the proportional reimbursement of indirect costs.

5.8.2 Additional competition for the financing of research equipment

During project implementation, the grantee may apply to 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 evaluated by dedicated experts appointed especially for that purpose,
- c. The evaluation will account for criteria such 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) to the extent relevant for the research conducted as part of the First TEAM project. The Foundation for Polish Science will consult with the Intermediary Authority for the 4th axis of the SG OP about applications for the purchase of specialist equipment submitted by such units, in particular in order to confirm whether substantial funding has been obtained and to identify any overlaps between the themes addressed in the First TEAM project and the purposes for which equipment was purchased under the POIG or POIŚ.
- e. A representative of the National Centre for Research and Development will be invited as an observer to take part in the meeting of experts evaluating the applications for the financing of research equipment.

5.8.3 The full list of eligible costs and the principles of documenting eligible expenses in the **First TEAM** Programme can be found in the *Cost Eligibility Guide for Measure 4.4 of the Smart Growth Operational Programme*, attached to the Competition documentation.

5.8.4 Expenses eligible for financing are expenses which meet the conditions included in the *Cost Eligibility Guide* (including the Guidelines for the eligibility of expenditure under the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund for 2014-2020 and the Guidelines for eligibility of SG OP expenditure) and which have been incurred in accordance with the terms of this Competition documentation.

5.9 Additional terms and conditions

5.9.1 The project manager under the **First TEAM** programme cannot be simultaneously a leader of the project financed under Homing or Powroty programme, nor cannot be a member of the research team financed under TEAM and TEAM Tech programme or the International Research Agendas Programme.

5.9.2 Only in justified cases and with the consent of the Foundation, The project manager under the **First TEAM** programme may simultaneously implement additional project financed by the Foundation, in particular under TEAM and TEAM Tech programme or the International Research Agendas Programme.

5.9.3 Individuals receiving remunerations from the project or two projects funded by the Foundation (with the exception of students and PhD students – see item 5.2.3 and of the START Programme) may not exceed in these projects a total equivalent of full-time employment.

5.10 Project implementation indicators

5.10.1 The applicant will provide the planned project deliverable and result indicators in the application form. The following project implementation indicators will be analysed in the **First TEAM** programme:

- a. number of enterprises collaborating with the research units, as well as the enterprises where the project is implemented, enterprises which are members of project consortia or economic partners of the project,
- b. number of people receiving support for R&D staff development – project manager and final beneficiaries involved in project implementation, i.e. students and PhD students, young doctors and others (see point 5.2),
- c. number of foreign scientists involved in the supported project – foreign partners and scientists, including PhD students who came to Poland to implement the financed project,
- d. number of international scientific publications included in the JCR (Journal Citation Reports), Thomson Reuters list,
- e. number of scientific degrees obtained – in the statutory meaning of the term (i.e. doctor and habilitated doctor degrees),
- f. number of patent applications filed.

The indicators must be adequate for the type of the project and they must reflect its assumed objectives. They will be reviewed by a panel of experts during the substantial review of the application, during project implementation and after its completion, and may be subject to change as suggested by the Foundation's experts. If the grantee fails to attain the previously

declared indicators during project implementation, financial penalties may be imposed (in particular, the amounts granted may be proportionally reduced).

5.11 Reporting

5.11.1 During the project, the Project Manager will be required to use the Foundation's IT system, including for the purposes of reporting, documenting scientific achievements and applying for changes in the project budget.

5.11.2 The detailed reporting principles for the project will be specified in the grant agreement.

5.11.3 Grantees are required to submit merit-based and financial reports to the Foundation for predetermined reporting periods. The financial reporting period amounts to 6 months and the merit-based reporting period amounts to 12 months.

5.11.4 Students, PhD students and young doctors will submit merit-based reports to the project manager.

5.11.5 The Foundation may at any time appoint an expert to review the said reports.

5.11.6 The Project Manager is required to present project results to the public as requested by the Foundation, e.g. at an interdisciplinary conference event.

5.11.7 Reporting also includes the monitoring of the attainment of objectives of the project or part of the project, especially emphasizing the expenses incurred, the purchase of fixed assets, team member recruitment and support for PhD students engaged in the project.

5.11.8 On the basis of reviews and opinions received during the merit-based report review performed by experts, the Executive Board of FNP may decide to implement a corrective action plan for the project, which may consist in the value of the financing being reduced, project implementation period being cut short or the project itself being discontinued. The grantee shall be informed in writing of the Board's decision.

5.12 Changes to the project

5.12.1 Principles concerning possible changes to the project and their scope will be specified in the grant agreement.

5.12.2 During project implementation, starting from the second reporting period for financial reports, the Project Manager may introduce the following changes with the periodic reports, unless applicable laws, valid agreements and other regulations binding on the grantee stipulate otherwise:

- a. shifts between particular budget categories, while maintaining the percentage thresholds for expenses in the cost categories set by the Foundation or the Guidelines,
- b. changes to the disbursement plan for subsequent advance payments.

The changes referred to above do not require the agreement to be amended, but must be approved by the Foundation.

5.12.3 During project implementation, the Project Manager may apply for the following changes to be introduced to the application:

- a. modification of the **substantive scope of the application** – the proposed changes will only be considered if they are substantively justified and if the Project Manager declares that they are necessary and that failure to introduce them would put correct project implementation at risk or might result in the planned project indicators not being achieved or that the changes are favourable considering the results of the application selected for financing and will allow all project indicators to be attained; changes to the substantive scope of the application may be combined with changes to project budget.
- b. **project duration**, where the proposed project implementation period must fit within the eligibility period for expenses under the SG OP and may not go beyond 30 June 2023, in particular in the following cases:
 - i. where the Project Manager is a woman who gives birth a child during project implementation or where the Project Manager adopts a child during project implementation, the project implementation period may be extended by up to 12 months for every child born or adopted in that period or
 - ii. where the project implementation period identified in the application is shorter than the maximum allowed period set in the Competition Documentation, the project implementation period may be extended to reach the aforementioned maximum project implementation time or
 - iii. where the project implementation period identified in the agreement is the same as the maximum allowed project implementation period set out in the Competition documentation, the expense eligibility period may be extended by up to 6 months,

The Foundation will examine the validity of the proposed changes to the application, considering the factors which influenced the selection of the project for financing and the impact of the proposed changes on project results and programme indicators.

5.12.4 The Foundation reserves three months as the minimum time to examine an application for changes.

5.13 Competition for the extension of the project implementation period

5.13.1 The Foundation intends to announce an internal competition for grantees to extend their project implementation period **by no more than 12 months** (subject to clause 5.12.3.b), with the following provisions:

- a. the extension of the project implementation period through the internal competition will also entail an extension of the substantive scope of the application and may translate into additional financing for the project,
- b. the notice of the internal competition will detail the guidelines for the preparation of applications and their evaluation by the Foundation, but the applications must at least include a full report on the work conducted so far, a description of the results obtained and a description of their implementation potential,
- c. applications may be submitted as part of the internal competition in particular in relation to:

- i. planning an additional stage of research work to achieve project results so as to potentially enhance their implementation capacity, or to undertake new tasks resulting from the results achieved so far,
- ii. team members' need to complete their doctoral or master's theses,
- iii. the need to increase the number of team members or their salaries as compared to the original application,
- iv. starting collaboration with a new partner.

5.13.2. The Foundation notes that the extended implementation period and the additional financing granted in the internal competition will be conditional upon the availability of funds in the programme.

VI. Project selection system

The projects submitted in the competition will be reviewed on their formal and merit-based aspects. The evaluation criteria and their descriptions have been attached as an appendix to Competition Documentation.

The expected application evaluation period (from the final deadline for submission to the publication of the list of grantees) is around 5 months.

6.1 Formal evaluation of the application

6.1.1 Applicants whose applications do not meet the formal criteria will be informed (by email or via the electronic system) that their applications have been discarded for formal reasons.

6.1.2 Where an electronic file attached to the online form is found to be defective or where any editing errors are identified, the Programme Officer may request that such defects be remedied at any stage of the competition.

6.2 Merit-based evaluation of the application

Applications which have been formally approved are subsequently submitted for merit-based evaluation. The merit-based evaluation consists of three stages: a review by a scientific and economic panel, a written review process and interviews with an interdisciplinary panel of experts.

6.2.1 Stage I – Scientific and Economic Panel (SEP)

6.2.1.1 The scientific and economic panel includes at least 3 members with a recognised research background or experience in 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.

6.2.1.2 The SEP will evaluate the applications considering the substantive criteria, awarding scores and appropriate recommendations (A – positive, B – conditional, C – negative).

6.2.1.3 Following SEP's evaluation, at least 40%, but no more than 60%, of the best applications will be processed further (as long as such a proportion of the applications meet the required minimum criteria).

6.2.1.4 Applicants who receive recommendation C from the scientific and economic panel may not be re-considered in the next edition of the competition (a one-edition deferral period).

6.2.1.5 The applicants will be informed by email on whether or not they have qualified for the second stage of evaluation.

6.2.1.6 Applicants who are not invited to the second stage will be informed of their score and of the recommendation they have been awarded, including a short justification.

6.2.2 **Stage II – Written reviews**

6.2.2.1 Each application will be reviewed by at least two third-party reviewers. The reviewers must not be members of the scientific and economic panel or of the interdisciplinary panel of experts (3rd stage of the substantive evaluation).

6.2.2.2 The reviewers will evaluate the applications considering the merit-based criteria, awarding scores and appropriate recommendations in the evaluation form, as well as providing their justification.

6.2.2.3 The reviewers may also suggest points which should be clarified with the Project Manager during the 3rd stage of the substantive review and identify applications which are especially ground-breaking, which put forward exceptionally bold or risky hypotheses and whose results, if positively verified, may have a potentially transformational effect for specific areas of science or the economy.

6.2.2.4 Following the written reviews stage, applications which have scored the highest, received the best recommendations will be qualified for further stage, along with those to which the Programme Officer, in coordination with the Programme Director, has voiced objections as regards the reliability of the review or as regards significant discrepancies between the opinions of the reviewers.

6.2.2.5 The applicants will be informed in writing or by email on whether or not they have qualified for the third stage of the evaluation process.

6.2.2.6 Promptly after a date for the meeting of the panel has been set, the applicants (and the contact persons identified by them in the application) will be informed by email of the planned date and place where interviews with the Interdisciplinary Expert Panel will be held.

6.2.2.7 The applicants invited to take part in the third stage of the evaluation will receive the reviews of their applications, but the anonymity of the reviewers will be maintained. All other candidates will be able to access their reviews in the Foundation's electronic system.

6.2.3 **Stage III – Interdisciplinary Panel of Experts (IPE)**

6.2.3.1 The Interdisciplinary Expert Panel consists of at least three experts representing various scientific disciplines and one member of the Executive Board of FNP (who will chair the meeting but will not have the right to evaluate the application) and, optionally, an expert appointed by the Intermediary Authority as an observer.

6.2.3.2 The number of applications evaluated at this stage will correspond to at least twice the amount of financing earmarked for the competition. Moreover, applicants who qualified for

the panel in appeals proceedings may also be invited to take part in this stage of the evaluation. The number of applications examined at this stage may correspond to less than twice the amount of the budget, if the required number of applications fails to meet the minimum merit-based criteria or to receive the required minimum recommendation.

6.2.3.3 The IPE will compare the applications and prepares a ranking list, as well as evaluate them on the basis of merit-based criteria. The IPE will compare the applicants on the basis of the written reviews obtained at the previous stage and on the basis of the direct interview with the applicants, who can also present their opinions about the reviews.

6.2.3.4 In exceptional cases, interviews by phone or online tools (such as Skype) may be held. Such cases will be examined individually by the Programme Officer.

6.2.3.5 The IPE may request the applicants to introduce changes to the projects which are required to ensure that it will be implemented successfully (e.g. changes to project budget, planned expenses on equipment or indicators). Furthermore, the IPE may authorise FNP to conduct such negotiations at a later stage, especially before the grant allocation agreement is signed.

6.2.3.6 The Executive 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.

6.2.3.7 The list of grantees will be published on the website of the Foundation.

6.2.3.8 The Project Manager will be informed in writing of the project being accepted. Other participants of the third stage of the substantive evaluation process will be informed of the result by traditional or electronic mail.

6.2.3.9 All applications which have not been accepted may be resubmitted, provided that they meet the competition criteria.

6.3 Appeals procedure

6.3.1 The appeals procedure in place at the Foundation does not constitute an appeals procedure within the meaning of the Act of 29 August 2014 on the Principles of Implementation of Cohesion Policy Programmes financed under the 2014-2020 Financial Framework.

6.3.2 The applicant or the unit may appeal in writing to the Executive Board of the Foundation against non-compliance with the procedures at each of the stages of evaluation of the submitted application within 7 days of the date of receipt of the official notification. The appeal will be examined within 21 days of the date of its receipt by the Foundation.

6.3.3 The date of receipt by the Foundation, rather than the stamp date, will be decisive, with the provision that the appeal may also be lodged with the Foundation by fax or e-mail. The fax number and email address can be found in Section VIII – Contact details.

6.3.4 The Appeals Committee exclusively reviews procedural matters relevant for each of the stages of application evaluation and selection.

6.3.5 Appeals concerning procedural issues at the stage of formal evaluation are examined by the Appeals Committee consisting of a lawyer and two FNP employees who were not involved in the evaluation of the application.

6.3.6 Appeals concerning procedural issues at the stage of merit-based evaluation are examined by a committee consisting of two third-party experts who were not involved in the evaluation of the application concerned in the appeal and an FNP employee who was not involved in the evaluation of the application.

6.3.7 The final opinion is adopted by a vote. Upon examination of the committee's opinion, the Executive Board of the Foundation decides whether the application should be re-examined (by the expert panel or a reviewer) or dismissed. The appellant will be informed in writing of the decision. The decision of the Executive Board is final.

VII. Grant agreement

7.1 Grant agreement

7.1.1 The applicant is obligated to implement the project under a grant agreement.

7.1.2 The grantee is responsible for ensuring that the data submitted to the Foundation in the application and during project implementation is accurate.

7.1.3 The grant agreement will be signed by the Foundation, the unit which will host the project and by the Project Manager. If the project is implemented by a consortium, the grant agreement will be signed between the Foundation, the Project Manager, a consortium member representative and consortium members.

7.2 Preparing the grant agreement

7.2.1 Prior to the execution of the grant agreement, the Foundation reserves the right to negotiate with the grantee who has applied for funding for the project, in order to introduce necessary changes to the project, including changes regarding project indicators or the project budget, especially in terms of the accuracy of the financial assumptions made in the application.

7.2.2 At the agreement preparation stage, the data necessary for the agreement shall be uploaded in the Foundation's IT system and the following documents in particular need to be provided:

- a) VAT eligibility questionnaire,
- b) a statement that no state aid applies together with the questionnaire,
- c) consortium agreement (if the project is carried out by a consortium).

Moreover, for projects where state aid will be granted, the following documents need to be submitted in particular:

- a) statement on the status of the enterprise,
- b) form with information submitted when applying for aid other than aid in agriculture or fishing, de minimis aid or de minimis aid in agriculture and fishing.

7.2.3 Before signing the agreement or during project implementation, the unit implementing the project may be requested to submit in particular:

- a) a statement of no arrears in the payment of budget payables and social insurance and health insurance premiums,
- b) a document to confirm proper security for the agreement,
- c) a certificate confirming the award of a REGON (statistical) number to the unit,
- d) a decision to award a NIP (tax identification) number to the unit.

7.2.4 Failure to submit all required information and documents referred to in points 7.2.2 and 7.2.3 by the relevant deadline will result in the Foundation's inability to prepare the agreement or its refusal to sign it.

7.3 Signing the grant agreement

7.3.1. After reviewing the correctness of the data and documents referred to in point 7.2.2, the grant agreement is prepared. The Project Manager will receive the agreement by email. Three identical copies of the agreement, signed in accordance with the rules of representation of the unit, including all the required documents (appendices) are returned to the Foundation by post. Where the project is executed by a consortium, five identical copies of the agreement need to be returned. The Foundation will send back to the unit's correspondence address specified in the agreement two signed copies of the agreement, one for the Project Manager and one for the unit (in the case of a consortium: four signed copies, one for the Project Manager and one for the unit, for the consortium member representative and for consortium members).

7.3.2. In particular, the following will be integral parts of the agreement:

- a) project budget,
- b) project implementation schedule,
- c) instalment payment schedule,
- d) VAT eligibility statement for the unit,
- e) a document to confirm that the applicant's representative is authorised to act for them and on their behalf (a power-of-attorney or other document) – this appendix is required when the agreement is signed by a persons or persons who are not statutorily authorised to represent the unit,
- f) a statement on indirect costs of the project.

7.4 Consortium agreement

7.4.1. If the project is implemented by a consortium, the consortium members are required to sign a consortium agreement and submit a copy to FNP by email prior to signing the grant agreement.

7.4.2 The consortium agreement should in particular indicate the parties' respective interests, require that both parties to the agreement execute their tasks as set out in the submitted application, and it should regulate the parties' input into the project and the distribution of intellectual property rights arising from the project implementation or rights of access to the outcome of joint delivery of the project.

VIII. Contact details

Additional information about the programme may be obtained under the following phone numbers:

Tel: + 48 22 311 84 42

or by e-mail:

anna.raiter@fnp.org.pl

IX. Appendices to competition documentation

9.1 Appendices to competition documentation for units which do not benefit from state aid:

9.1.1 Cost Eligibility Guide for Measure 4.4 of the *Smart Growth Operational Programme for units not being beneficiaries of state aid.*

9.1.1.1 Catalogue of eligible costs under Measure 4.4 Increasing the human potential of the R&D sector for units which are not beneficiaries of state aid.

9.1.1.2 Catalogue of non-eligible costs for units which are not beneficiaries of state aid.

9.1.2 Criteria for the evaluation of applications in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4)

9.1.3 Project implementation schedule (sample appendix to the application for financing in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4))

9.1.4 Description of the available equipment and planned expenses with justification (sample appendix to the application for financing in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4))

9.1.5 Project indicators with justification (sample appendix to the application for financing in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4))

9.1.6 Statement of the Project Manager (sample appendix to the application for financing in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4))

9.1.7 Statement of the consortium member representative (template appendix to the application for financing in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4))

9.1.8 Statement of the unit which is to implement the project (template appendix to the application for financing in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4)).

9.2 Appendices to Competition Documentation for units which benefit from State aid:

9.2.1 Cost Eligibility Guide for Measure 4.4 of the *Smart Growth Operational Programme for units which benefit from state aid.*

9.2.1.1 Catalogue of eligible costs under Measure 4.4 Increasing the human potential of the R&D sector for research organisations which are beneficiaries of state aid.

9.2.1.2 Catalogue of non-eligible costs for beneficiaries of state aid.

- 9.2.2 Criteria for the evaluation of applications in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4)
- 9.2.3 Project implementation schedule (sample appendix to the application for financing in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4))
- 9.2.4 Description of the available equipment and planned expenses for laboratory equipment with justification (sample appendix to the application for financing in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4))
- 9.2.5 Project indicators with justification (sample appendix to the application for financing in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4))
- 9.2.6 Statement of the Project Manager (sample appendix to the application for financing in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4))
- 9.2.7 Statement of the consortium member representative (template appendix to the application for financing in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4))
- 9.2.8 Statement of the enterprise which is to implement the project (template appendix to the application for financing in the First Team Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4)).
- 9.2.9 Information form to be submitted when applying for state aid under the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 25 February 2015 on the terms and procedure for granting state aid and *de minimis* aid through the National Centre for Research and Development – in accordance with the template annexed to the Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 29 March 2010 on the scope of the information submitted by the entity applying for aid other than *de minimis* aid or *de minimis* aid in the agriculture and fisheries (OJ 2016 pos. 238) (template appendix to the application for financing under the First TEAM Programme (SG OP Measure 4.4)).

All appendices are an integral part of the Competition Documentation and are published along with competition documentation on the website of the FIRST TEAM programme.