

## **Open, Transparent and Merit-based recruitment strategy**

As an organization whose fundamental aim is supporting science and whose programmes serve to support R&D personnel, the Foundation places great weight on principles for recruitment of scientific personnel. The Foundation does not directly employ researchers, but applies principles of openness, transparency and merits assessment in its competitions. It also takes responsibility for the rules for recruitment and compensation of researchers in the teams it finances. The Foundation takes an active part in initiating changes and qualitative improvement in Polish science by indicating best practices applied in recruitment of researchers.

The values and principles to be followed in this respect are laid down, *inter alia*, in the form of ethical codes binding on FNP staff, candidates, laureates and beneficiaries, and reviewers. The detailed solutions and procedures are set forth in the programme documentation available at the FNP website.

In the past few years the Foundation has undergone a significant organizational metamorphosis connected primarily with the disbursement of EU structural funds. Dynamic changes in the legal environment also have a great impact on its activity, such as the proposed laws for reforming Polish universities. Currently the Foundation is implementing about 15 programmes; most of them involve grants, subsidies and stipends, some involve prizes and distinctions, and others are publication programmes. The rules and procedures for each of these activities, as with the scale of funding and the expectations of the candidates and laureates, are varied and tailored to the specifics of each programme. Nonetheless, the basis for the Foundation's activity is certain universal norms developed over its more than 25 years of existence and patterned on international standards and best practices of other institutions. The main motto of the Foundation remains unchanged: supporting the best so they can become even better. The overriding aim of all FNP's activities is to support scientists in taking on new research challenges and making a real contribution to the progress of civilization.

### **Rules for FNP competitions**

FNP laureates are always selected through competitions open to researchers from all over the world. Supporting the mobility of researchers and encouraging scientists from abroad to participate in its programmes are particularly important to the Foundation. It is vital from this point of view to provide exhaustive information in both Polish and English. To actively stimulate interest on the part of researchers from abroad in participating in FNP competitions and conducting research in Poland, the Foundation organizes info days in other countries. Announcements of FNP competitions are published in international media and on the EURAXESS site. Participation in FNP competitions by foreign researchers is subject to regular monitoring, and foreign researchers are also invited to express their opinions on this topic in evaluation surveys.

The Foundation makes efforts to ensure that the application process for competitions is as simple and accessible as possible for researchers, by providing a system for electronic registration of applications and the ability to participate remotely in the stages of the competition requiring direct contact with the applicant.

The Foundation places great weight on ensuring that the requirements for applicants and the evaluation criteria do not discriminate against researchers educated and employed outside Poland

(who thus, for example, do not hold a postdoctoral “habilitation” degree required in the Polish academic system). The Foundation takes into account difficulties connected for example with parenting and interruptions in the applicants’ research career, e.g. for childrearing, work outside of science, or health problems. A special programme (POWROTY/REINTEGRATION) is dedicated to facilitating return to scientific work after an interruption, and significantly, it is targeted to both women and men on a non-discriminatory basis.

However, as a group underrepresented among grant recipients and leaders of research teams, women are a group of particular interest to the Foundation. Their representation among applicants, laureates, and expert reviewers is monitored. Moreover, the conditions for realization of a number of grants foster the introduction of appropriate solutions related to parenting.

The Foundation places great importance on ensuring that applicants who have gained experience in the non-academic sector are not discriminated against in the evaluation process. Although assessment is based primarily on scientific quality, it is not limited to purely academic indicators. Bibliometric indicators are treated with great caution, and the impact factor is entirely excluded from the process of assessing researchers’ accomplishments. The Foundation is a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). Grant competitions currently being implemented allow applicants’ accomplishments to be documented not only on the basis of scientific articles, but also based on patents received or real-world implementation of R&D results.

The rules for selection are precisely defined in the programme documentation and accessible on the Foundation website. The documentation also specifies in detail the terms of the financial support offered, the expectations of candidates, and the criteria for evaluation.

All applications are evaluated using the peer-review method, and the Foundation places particular importance on selecting competent and objective experts as well as ensuring impartial assessment through elimination of conflicts of interest. The process for selection of laureates is based on clear instructions, criteria and standardized evaluation forms, as well as training of panellists. In the case of grant-making programmes, participants in grant competitions are informed of the results of the competition, but also receive the justification of their evaluation. They may also pursue an appeal procedure. The Foundation’s intention is that the peer-review process serve not only for selection of laureates, but also help improve the projects submitted and increase their chances in future competitions. One difficulty in assessment of applications and cause for dissatisfaction among applicants is the very low rate of success in FNP competitions. Given the great level of interest in its competitions, there are many valuable projects submitted which the Foundation is unable to fund. This makes it all the more important that all applicants, regardless of the stage in their scientific career, be treated with due respect and supported so far as possible.

The Foundation’s competition procedures are subject to ongoing monitoring and periodic evaluation, taking into account the opinions of the competition participants.

### **Rules for recruitment in teams funded by FNP**

In addition to the FNP Code of Ethics for Competition Winners and Beneficiaries, responsibility for the rules for recruitment of researchers in teams funded by the Foundation is primarily manifest in the Foundation’s direct engagement in this process. Depending on the programme, the Foundation

directly establishes the rules for hiring and indicates rates of pay. The Foundation requires laureates to publicly announce their recruitment procedures, among other things on the EURAXESS site, to provide candidates with comprehensive information about the requirements, rules and selection criteria, and to conduct an impartial, merits-based evaluation.

Programmes directed to **individual researchers** (TEAM, TEAM TECH, FIRST TEAM, HOMING, POWROTY/REINTEGRATION) enable laureates to make up a team of postdocs, doctoral students, undergraduates and technical staff. In all these programmes, the project leader is required to conduct an open competition for members of the team receiving a salary or stipend out of project implementation funds. The competition notice must contain a description of the application procedure, the requirements for candidates, and the anticipated level of the stipend or salary and other funds for conducting research. The Foundation requires the project leader to appoint a committee of at least two people responsible for conducting recruitment. This process is documented in the form of a protocol including a list of candidates, their home institutions, where and when they obtained their doctorate in the case of candidates seeking postdoc positions on the team, the scores received by the candidates during the recruitment, and information about the competition announcement, selection criteria and recruitment timetable. Acceptance of the recruitment protocol by the Foundation is a condition for funding the person selected in the competition, and the institution and project leader must also allow a Foundation representative to participate in the committee's work as an observer.

The recruitment process is evaluated by the Foundation through data analysis and survey methods. Participation by candidates from different institutions is of vital importance for the Foundation. The Foundation monitors the involvement by external as well as their success rate.

Within FNP's line-up, a special programme is International Research Agendas Programme, which is aimed at **creating new research institutions in Poland** (innovative centres of excellence) where outstanding scientists from around the world will conduct high-quality research and development work concerning current, well-defined scientific challenges. The new institutions should not only conduct world-class research, but also apply global best practices in HR policy, among other areas. Their use of proper recruitment rules is integral to the success of the entire programme, and consequently the Foundation has expressly stated its expectations and requirements in this respect:

- Leaders of research teams are chosen in an open international competition by an international scientific committee, in accordance with rules for hiring researchers set forth in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.
- Information about the competition is announced publicly (on the EURAXESS site at least), so it is accessible to all interested persons meeting the criteria.
- Information about the competition includes in particular a description of the position, the requirements for candidates, the financial terms (including the salary for the leader and the period of employment), the rules and financial capabilities for funding members of the research team, and funds earmarked for conducting the team or guaranteed for establishment of the team (i.e. the "startup package").
- Members of the research team—undergraduates, doctoral students or postdocs—are selected by the leader in an open competition based on transparent criteria.

- Information about the competition for members of the research team is announced publicly (on the EURAXESS site at least, except in the case of undergraduates), including information about how applications are submitted, the requirements for candidates, and the anticipated level of the stipend or salary.
- A committee of at least two people is responsible for conducting the recruitment, and acceptance of the recruitment protocol by the Foundation is a condition for funding the stipend or employment contract of the person selected in the competition.

In 2018 the Foundation is introducing a **new programme aimed at consortia of scientific institutions**. The detailed rules for the programme are currently being developed and will be announced in August. Recruitment rules that are open, transparent, and based on meritorious evaluation will be a key condition for participation in the programme: the strategy for hiring researchers will be one of the criteria for evaluation of projects, and at further stages of implementation the Foundation will not only monitor, but actively support beneficiaries in the recruitment process. First and foremost, an issue of particular weight will be to ensure participation and equal treatment of candidates from other institutions and from abroad, as well as women.