

**THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA (EEA)
FINANCIAL MECHANISM
THE POLISH BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAMME
A GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS
THE IDEALAB CALL**

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1. Introduction

This Guide for Applicants provides detailed and practical information necessary for the Participants in the IdeaLab call. It complements the call announcement and the Guides for Evaluators. Applicants/Participants are kindly asked to familiarise themselves with all these documents.

The Guide for Applicants has been developed on the basis of the Guidelines for Research Programmes – the Rules for the establishment and implementation of programmes falling under the Programme Area “Research” and the Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 as well as relevant Polish regulations and agreements concluded by authorities of Poland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

The IdeaLab call is one of the three calls for proposals in the Polish Basic Research Programme implemented by the National Science Centre (NCN), which is the Programme Operator (PO). The Programme is organised in cooperation with the Research Council of Norway. The IdeaLab call receives financial support of the EEA Grants (85%) and the Polish national contribution (15%). The budget of the call is EUR 4,434,011.

The IdeaLab is inspired by sandpits¹ developed by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), which is part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The Research Council of Norway has organised four calls of this kind (Idélab) and is assisting NCN in the preparation and implementation of this measure.

The IdeaLab call topic is *Managing Threats*, and concerns the challenges arising from the complex processes of our times, such as globalisation, technological change, issues of the environment and climate change, demographic change, major waves of migration, geopolitical instability, and many others, which bring with them uncertainties (implying threats, and, in some cases, opportunities) which European societies have to face. A detailed description of the call topic is available in the call announcement.

2. The IdeaLab workshop

2.1 What will happen before the IdeaLab workshop?

An international Panel of Experts will select the workshop Participants by the end of September 2019. Candidates will be informed by e-mail about the outcome. Only Participants selected by the Panel of Experts are eligible to take part in the IdeaLab workshop.

The workshop will take place in a location in Poland between 21 and 25 October 2019. The participation costs (travel, catering, accommodation) will be covered by the National Science Centre. Participants will be informed about the venue of the workshop, the reimbursement of travel costs, and other organisational issues.

¹ <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/routes/network/ideas/whatisasandpit/>

2.2 What is an IdeaLab workshop?

A residential interactive workshop over five days is the main element in the IdeaLab call. The event involves around 30 Participants, the Workshop Director, mentors, and stakeholders. The workshop is organised in a location isolated from everyday distractions, so the Participants can focus on the challenges of the call.

An IdeaLab workshop is an intensive event. Due to the group dynamics, continuous expert feedback and evolution of the project ideas, it is not possible to be partially involved. Participants must stay for the whole duration of the event and be prepared to devote their undivided attention to the workshop.

English is the working language under the Basic-Research Programme, during the proposal stage and the project implementation and reporting phases. Communication during the workshop will be in English. Therefore, Participants need to have a sufficient command of English to discuss the research, and present in writing the project ideas.

The workshop is led by the Chair of the Panel of Experts (Workshop Director), who is supported by the members of the Panel of Experts (mentors), facilitators, and, if necessary, a group of stakeholders. The Workshop Director and mentors will be selected by the NCN Council. They are impartial referees in the process, and form a Panel of Experts to evaluate project ideas.

The IdeaLab workshop is an intensive discussion forum in which free thinking is encouraged on the agenda to uncover innovative solutions. Outcomes are not pre-determined, but are defined during the event. The Workshop Director is supported by the mentors, stakeholders, and facilitators, to encourage the workshop Participants to think outside the box about the challenges formulated in the call. The group, stripped of pre-conceptions, explores and deconstructs the issues, before refocusing on the emerging solutions. The workshop activities are designed to take the Participants out of their comfort zones, enabling them to develop radical research ideas and solutions to specific societal challenges. The presence of Participants representing different areas of expertise, backgrounds, research areas, and interest groups or sectors, as well as the Workshop Director, mentors, and stakeholders, facilitates the development of new insights, perspectives, and understandings.

2.3 Who is involved in the Idealab workshop?

Participants from Poland and from Norway, Iceland or Lichtenstein will be selected by the Workshop Director and mentors based on information provided on the Participant's application form. Participants come from a range of disciplines and backgrounds, including the social sciences, humanities, arts, physical sciences, engineering, and life sciences. Creativity, communication skills, and willingness to take risks and to work in teams, are the requisite personal attributes of IdeaLab Participants. It is the Participants who are responsible for the development of project ideas and partnerships.

The mentors and the Workshop Director are international experts responsible for developing the topic during the IdeaLab workshop. They facilitate discussions, challenge the Participants, and evaluate the project ideas. The Workshop Director and mentors bring a depth of rich knowledge about the topic to coach and challenge Participants in an open-minded way, and help great ideas to flourish.

The facilitators are responsible for the processes in the IdeaLab workshop. They design the activities, guide the mentors and Workshop Director, and run the IdeaLab. The facilitators provide everyone else with the appropriate processes to achieve the goals of the IdeaLab. Facilitators are external consultants with experience in organising sandpits/IdeaLabs. They will be contracted by the NCN.

The stakeholders are the people with real experience on the issues who provide invaluable insight and a unique perspective. Stakeholders can include NGO representatives, Government officials, charities, lobby groups, or citizens' groups. Their input and knowledge help Participants to explore the issues and shape potential ideas.

The National Science Centre Scientific Coordinators are scientific officers selected by the National Science Centre Council who oversee the evaluation process during this IdeaLab. They will be responsible for the impartiality of the peer-review process. The Coordinators will be assisted by the NCN office staff in administrative and organisational issues.

Representatives of the Research Council of Norway and other institutions involved in the Polish Research Programme will participate in the IdeaLab workshop as observers.

2.4 What are the stages in an IdeaLab workshop?

During the first stage in an IdeaLab workshop, the Participants get to know each other, develop trust, and learn from each other. They also connect to the topic, gain an insight into the expertise of other Participants, and agree on a common language and terminology.

As the workshop progresses, the understanding of the challenges and topic deepens. Using creative and innovative-thinking techniques helps in focusing on the problem. New possibilities are created, ideas are explored, and thinking on the topic is broadened. Project ideas are developed and project teams created. One Participant can be involved in many project ideas, as his/her qualifications or experience might be needed on many projects. The project teams might also change with the development of the project ideas. Eventually, Participants will have to make decisions about the prioritisation of the project ideas and partnerships they are involved in.

Once the project ideas become mature, and the partnerships established, they are evaluated and further elaborated on. Finally the project ideas are recorded using the application form, and submitted. On the last day, the project ideas are presented for final evaluation. The workshop ends by announcing to the Participants the results of the experts' assessment. A detailed description of the review process and the selection criteria can be found in the Guide for evaluators - the assessment of project ideas and full proposals.

2.5 What will happen after the IdeaLab workshop?

Project ideas are developed into full proposals and submitted electronically to the NCN using an online submission system by December 16, 2019. Project ideas that are not developed and submitted as full proposals cannot be funded. Please consult section 3.3.5 for details.

Bilateral or multilateral research projects involving Participants from both Poland on the one side, and Norway and/or Iceland and/or Liechtenstein on the other must be submitted. The Principal Investigator must have at least a PhD and be affiliated with a Polish research organisation during the project implementation period. The eligible duration of projects is 24 or

36 months. The minimum grant amount is €500,000 and the maximum amount is €1,500,000². Funds may be awarded for remuneration of the research team, scholarships for under- and post-graduate students, purchase or manufacturing of research equipment and other costs crucial to the research project. It is expected that the eligible costs claimed by the Liechtenstein, Icelandic and Norwegian entities participating in the project shall normally not exceed 40% of the total eligible costs of the project. You will find details concerning the eligibility criteria in this call in chapter 3 and 4.

Funding decisions will be made by February 2020, and projects are foreseen to start in the first half of 2020.

3. The eligibility criteria and application procedure at the three stages in the IdeaLab call

3.1 The application for participation in the workshop

The first stage in the IdeaLab call application procedure involves an individual application for participation in the IdeaLab workshop. Basic information on the Participant, and the Host organisation, are introduced on line on <https://idealab.ncn.gov.pl>.

Further, you will be asked to upload three documents: the Participant's application form, the Participant's statement, and the Host organisation's statement, in PDF format. Download the templates of the application form and statements from <https://idealab.ncn.gov.pl> Do not alter the text provided in the templates, but only fill the required data where indicated.

- Please fill in all fields on the Participant's application form in English. Be aware that submitting applications exceeding the limits indicated on the form can lead to your application's being considered invalid in the eligibility check. Convert the complete form to PDF format.
- Sign by hand the Participant's statement and scan the signed document, or sign the statement with a qualified electronic signature in the PAdES format.
- Complete the Participant's and Host organisation's name where required on the Host organisation's statement. The document has to be signed by hand by authorised representative(s), and scanned or signed by a qualified electronic signature in the PAdES format.

Upload the statements on line. Documents submitted on paper, on removable electronic storage media, by email, or by fax, will not be regarded as having been received by the PO. The submission deadline is 19 August, 2019, 24.00 CEST.

Participants are required to have a Master's Degree (or equivalent), or a PhD, which is confirmed by signing the Participant's statement. The Participants also confirm, using the statement, that they are fluent in English, and are ready to participate for the whole week of 21-25 October 2019 in the IdeaLab workshop in Poland, according to its programme. (Presence during all workshop activities is required).

² Please, use the exchange rate of the Polish National Bank of the day of the call announcement to calculate if the project budget in PLN is within the eligible limits.

Participants must be affiliated with legal entities (Host organisations) from Poland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, or Norway, during the project implementation. It is the persons authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the legal entities who will eventually submit the full proposal, and, if funding is granted, sign the Project Contract with the NCN and/or the partnership agreement. In the application-for-participation stage, the candidates for Participants only indicate the Host organisation, and submit the Host organisation's statement, which has to be signed by an authorised person. The Host organisation indicated in the application for participation should be any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, or non-Governmental organisation, established as a legal person in Poland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, or Norway.

During the application procedure Participants do not need to be employed by the Host organisation, unless required by national law or the institution's employment procedures. However, the person authorised to represent the indicated Host organisation must declare that, in the event of the grant's being awarded, the Participant will be employed as the project Principal Investigator, by the applicant (if the Host organisation is a Polish research organisation), or the leader of the research group, by the partner organisation, during the project implementation.

Changing the Host organisation, due to circumstances unforeseeable by the Participant at the application-for-participation stage, is possible during the application procedure, until the submission of the full proposal.

- If such a change occurs before the IdeaLab workshop starts, the Participant submits the new Host organisation's statement and a justification in writing to the e-mail address of the contact person representing the NCN provided in section 11. The consent of the NCN is needed. The NCN reserves the right to disagree and invite to the workshop another Participant from the list of substitutes according to the procedure described in the Guide for evaluators – the Participant selection.
- If such a change occurs after the IdeaLab workshop, justification must be provided in the full proposal, and is subject to the evaluation of the consistency³ of the full proposal with the project idea developed during the workshop by the experts, as the new Host organisation needs to have comparable resources to the one described on the project-idea form, and evaluated during the IdeaLab workshop.

In both cases, the Host organisation must meet the minimum requirements to be eligible under this IdeaLab call.

An international Panel of Experts will select the workshop Participants by the end of September 2019. Candidates will be informed by e-mail of the outcome. Only the Participants selected by the Panel of Experts are eligible to take part in the IdeaLab workshop.

³ Information on the consistency assessment is provided in the Guide for evaluators - the assessment of project ideas and full proposals.

The workshop will take place in a location in Poland between 21 and 25 October 2019. Participants will be informed about the venue of the workshop, the reimbursement of travel costs, and other organisational issues.

3.2 The IdeaLab workshop

The second stage in the application procedure involves participation by the selected Participants in the IdeaLab workshop.

First, the Participants get to know each other, develop an understanding of the challenges of the call, and learn about the experience and qualifications of the other Participants. As the project ideas start to be formed, the Participants form research groups. For each group the future partnership assigns a leader – the future Principal Investigator.

Workshop Participants may become Principal Investigators in the projects created during the workshop if they have at least a PhD, and are, or will be, affiliated with a Polish research organisation, as defined in article 27 section 1 point 1, 3-6 of the Act on the National Science Centre of 30 April 2010. Please consult section 3.3.1 for details.

Groups formed during the workshop may become eligible partnerships if they consist at least of the Principal Investigator and a workshop Participant from Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway. There are no limits on the number of partners in a partnership. It is expected that the groups formed during the workshop and described on the project-idea form will become partnerships at the full-proposal stage. If a specific competence needed to implement a project idea is not available among the partner organisations, it is possible to plan in the budget the subcontracting of limited research tasks. As a general rule, partners from institutions not represented in the workshop would not be invited.

In the event of a partner organisation's being unable to take part in the project, the other partners may submit the full proposal, as long as the minimum requirements for partnerships are met. The adjusted work plan must be described and justified in the full proposal, and is subject to the evaluation of the consistency of the full proposal with the project idea developed during the workshop by the experts.

Project ideas are developed during the workshop by the formed groups led by the Principal Investigator, and recorded on the project-idea form.

The eligible duration of projects is 24 or 36 months. The costs of the project should be established during the IdeaLab workshop. Please consult section 4 for details on the eligibility of costs. The minimum grant amount is €500,000, and the maximum amount is €1,500,000. Please, use the exchange rate of the Polish National Bank of the day of the call announcement to calculate if the project budget in PLN is within the eligible limits. It is expected that the eligible costs claimed by Liechtenstein, Icelandic, and Norwegian entities participating in the project will normally not exceed 40% of the total eligible costs of the project.

The total cost requested and the breakdown to be prepared according to the requirements shown on the project-idea form are submitted during the workshop. The total cost requested must not change at the full-proposal stage. The breakdown of costs is expected not to change significantly at the full-proposal stage, but should be further detailed and justified. Any justified

changes are subject to the evaluation of the consistency of the full proposal with the project idea developed during the workshop by the experts.

The submission deadline for project ideas is on Thursday 24 October 2019 at 21.00 CEST. The project ideas will be submitted on a pen drive provided during the workshop. On Friday 25 October 2019 the project ideas will be presented by each research team, led by the Principal Investigator to the Panel of Experts (Director and mentors) for final evaluation. The workshop ends with the announcement to the Participants of the results of the experts' assessment.

3.3 The full-proposal stage

3.3.1 The eligible applicants

The eligible applicants are research organisations, as defined in the Commission Regulation (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), and as specified in the Article 27 section 1, point 1, 3-6 of the Act on the National Science Centre of 30 April 2010, established as a legal person in Poland, i.e.

- universities
- federations of science and HE entities
- research institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences, operating pursuant to the Act on the Polish Academy of Sciences of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1475)
- research institutes operating pursuant to the Act on Research Institutes of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 736)
- international research institutes established pursuant to separate Acts, operating in the Republic of Poland
- the Łukasiewicz Centre
- institutes operating within the Łukasiewicz Research Network
- the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences
- other institutions involved in research independently on a continuous basis
- scientific and industrial centres within the meaning of the Act on Research Institutes (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 736)
- the research centres of the Polish Academy of Sciences within the meaning of the Act on the Polish Academy of Sciences of 30 April 2010
- scientific libraries
- companies operating as R&D centres within the meaning of the Act on Certain Forms of Support for Innovative Activity of 30 May 2008 (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 141).

3.3.2. The eligible project partners and partnerships

The eligible project partners may be any public or private entity - commercial or non-commercial – as well as non-Governmental organisations - established as a legal person in Poland, Iceland, Lichtenstein, or Norway.

Proposals for collaborative research projects should be submitted by partnerships comprising at least one research organisation from Poland and at least one entity from Iceland, Lichtenstein, or Norway.

3.3.3. The Project Promoter, Principal Investigator, and Project Partners

The Project Promoter (the applicant) is the leading entity which has the scientific and administrative responsibility for the project, and should electronically submit the proposal on behalf of the partnership. The Project Promoter must be a Polish research organisation. The Project Partners authorise the Project Promoter to sign and submit the proposal on their behalf.

Please note that adding Project Partners during the project is not allowed. The Project Promoter will sign the Project Contract with the PO. The Project Promoter is responsible for submitting annual reports and final report to the PO. The Project Promoter and Project Partners must sign a partnership agreement for the implementation of the research project before the Project Contract is signed. The partnership agreement template will be provided at the contracting stage.

The Principal Investigator is the researcher who provides the scientific lead for the research project on a daily basis. She/he is responsible for monitoring the technical direction and scientific quality of the project, and will ensure that the project is carried out in compliance with the terms and conditions of the call, as well as with those specified in the Guidelines for Research Programmes – Rules for the establishment and implementation of programmes falling under the Programme Area “Research”.

3.3.4. Project Promoters and Partners excluded from the possibility of receiving funding

Project Promoters or Partners excluded from the possibility of receiving funding cannot submit the proposals. This eligibility criterion shall be verified during the eligibility check based on the Project Promoter’s statement.

According to article 9.2 of the of the Guideline for Research Programmes grants may not be awarded to potential participants who are, at the time of a grant award procedure, bankrupt or being wound up, convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct, not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes, the subject of a judgment for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any other illegal activity, subject to a conflict of interests or guilty of misrepresenting information.

Any potential participant who has committed an irregularity in the implementation of any other action under financing provided by the European Union or under financial contributions provided by the EFTA States in relation to the EEA Agreement may be excluded from the selection procedure at any time, with due regard being given to the principle of proportionality.

Project Promoters and Polish Project Partners are excluded from the possibility of receiving funding in particular pursuant to:

- art. 207 section 4 of the Act on Public Finance of August 27, 2009 (Journal of Laws of 2019, item 869, as amended),
- art.12 section 1 item 1 of the Act of the consequences of entrusting work to foreigners who are contrary to the provisions on the territory of the Republic of Poland of June 15, 2012 (Journals of Laws of 2012, item 769, as amended)
- art. 9 section 1 item 2a of the Act on the Liability of Collective Entities for Acts Prohibited Under Penalty of October 28, 2002 (Journals of Laws of 2002, no 197, item 1661, as amended).

3.3.5. The full-proposal submission

The proposals must be written in English, with the title and summary also in Polish. The proposals are submitted electronically to the online submission system ZSUN/OSF platform (integrated Services for Science/Funding Stream Support), available on line (<https://osf.opi.org.pl/app/adm/start.do>). To submit an application via ZSUN/OSF, the applicant must be registered as a user of the system and follow the instructions given on the ZSUN/OSF system. Only the Project Promoter is authorised to submit a proposal using the user name and password. **The application deadline is 16 December 2019 at 24.00 CET.**

Project partners may access the application before it is submitted to verify the content.

Correcting or revising proposals after this deadline will not be possible.

Each application has a unique identification code (assigned by ZSUN/OSF) which will remain the same throughout the duration of the project. Any technical issues regarding using ZSUN/OSF can be resolved by contacting technical support via e-mail (see the link below)

<https://osf.opi.org.pl/app/toModule.do?prefix=/adm&page=/uwagi.do>

or by phone (on working days between 8.15 am and 4.15 pm). The contact details are available on the opening page of the ZSUN/OSF.

Any versions of proposals sent on paper, on removable electronic-storage media, by email, or by fax, will not be regarded as having been received by the PO.

Before the proposal is submitted to the NCN the Project Promoter

- checks if all information in the proposal and the annexes is correct. Verification of the proposal for completeness in ZSUN/OSF by pressing the *Sprawdź kompletność* [Check completeness] button does not guarantee that all information has been entered correctly and that the required annexes have been attached.
- disables the final version of the proposal to NCN
- downloads and signs the confirmation of submitting the proposal in the call – the Principal Investigator and the authorised representative(s) of the entity, and
- attaches the confirmation of submitting the proposal with a signature.

Once the proposal is completed and the required annexes attached, the proposal is to be electronically submitted to the NCN via the ZSUN/OSF online-submission system, using the *Wyślij do NCN* [Send to NCN] button.

More details can be found in a precise [instruction](#).

4. The eligibility of expenditures

4.1 The general principles on the eligibility of expenditures

The eligible expenditures of projects are those actually incurred within the project, which are in accordance with the Chapter 8 of the Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred between the first and final dates of the eligibility of a project as specified in the Project Contract (**please note** that any expenditures incurred after 30 April 2024 will not be eligible)
- they are connected with the subject of the Project Contract, and they are indicated in the detailed budget of the project
- they are proportionate to and necessary for the implementation of the project
- they must be used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective(s) of the project and its expected outcome(s), in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular through being recorded in the accounting records of the Project Promoter and/or Project Partner, and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the Project Promoter and/or Project Partner is established, and according to generally accepted accounting principles
- they comply with the requirements of the applicable tax and social legislation
- they comply with the requirements of the applicable public-procurement law, as described in article 8.15 of the Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014-2021; the detailed requirements concerning public procurement are described in the Guidelines of the National Contact Point for the public procurement, available on the site <https://www.eog.gov.pl/strony/zapoznaj-sie-z-funduszami/podstawy-prawne/>.

Expenditures are considered to have been incurred when the costs have been invoiced, paid, and the subject matter delivered (in the case of goods) or performed (in the case of services and works). Exceptionally, costs in respect of which an invoice has been issued in the final month of eligibility are also deemed to have been incurred within the dates of eligibility if the costs are paid within 30 days of the final date for eligibility. The overheads and depreciation of equipment are considered to have been incurred when they are recorded in the accounts of the Project Promoter and/or the Project Partner.

The Project Promoter's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit the direct reconciliation of the expenditures and revenue declared in respect of the project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

4.2 The eligible direct expenditures

The eligible direct expenditures for a project are those expenditures which are identified by the Project Promoter and/or the Project Partner, in accordance with their accounting principles and usual internal rules, as specific expenditures directly linked to the implementation of the project, and which can therefore be booked to it directly. The following direct expenditures are eligible

- the costs of staff assigned to the project
- the cost of new or second-hand equipment
- travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project
- the costs of consumables and supplies
- costs entailed by other contracts
- costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the Project Contract for each project.

All costs budgeted in the project (e.g. equipment, consumables and supplies, etc.) will be charged to the programme, VAT included. However, VAT is not considered an eligible cost if the entity can reclaim VAT from the national tax authorities in conformity with national indirect-tax regulations.

4.2.1 The costs of the staff assigned to the project

The costs of the staff assigned to the project (researchers, Master's and PhD students, technicians, and other research-supporting staff directly involved in the project, and the person responsible for the administrative and financial management of the project), comprising actual salaries plus social-security charges and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, are eligible provided they comply with the Project Promoter's and Project Partner's standard policy on remuneration.

Timesheets should be used, so that the actual time is recorded against a project to form the basis of the costs charged. If persons are contracted to work 100% of their time on a single project (whether they are working full-time or part-time), timesheets are not necessary, as the costs can only be charged to that activity. In all other cases, timesheets are required. This includes those who might be contracted to work on two or more projects, since it is essential when charging to have a means of recording and verifying the actual time applied to each activity.

Staff costs for Polish partners

The remuneration for the Polish members of the scientific team and additional staff supporting the implementation of the project cannot exceed, per year,

- PLN 190,000 – the Principal Investigator
- PLN 170,000– the Project Partner (the scientist leading the Project Partner's team)
- PLN 120,000 – the researcher
- PLN 100,000 – the person employed as a specialist auxiliary post/administrative project manager.

Please note that the above amounts entail full-time employment for a full year. In the case of part-time employment and/or employment for less than the entire year, the maximum amount is proportionally calculated.

Remunerations and scholarships for under- and post-graduate students of the Project Promoter and Polish Project Partners must be awarded according to the appropriate [Resolution of the Council of the National Science Centre](#). The recipients of NCN scholarships must be selected in an open call. An indicative minimum amount for scholarships is PLN 3,500 per month. Additionally, the total scholarship budget for each month of the project implementation for the Project Promoter and Polish Project Partners may amount to PLN 30,000. If the funding of a research project by the National Science Centre constitutes State aid for the Project Promoter or Partners, scholarships are not eligible.

A full-time employment contract for a person newly employed in the post-doc position must be awarded in accordance with the appropriate [Resolution of the Council of the NCN](#). Persons newly employed as post-docs must be selected in an open call. A new post-doc contract is reserved for a person who has obtained the PhD within 7 years before joining the project. This period may be extended by a period of long-term (in excess of 90 days) documented sick leaves or rehabilitation leaves granted on account of being unfit to work. In addition, the period may be extended by the number of months of child-care leave granted pursuant to the Labour Code, and, in the case of women, by 18 months for every child born or adopted, whichever manner of accounting for career breaks is preferable.

The recipients of NCN scholarships or persons employed as post-docs in the project must be selected in an open call. Scholarships are not allowed if the funding constitutes State aid for the Project Promoter or Project Partner.

The costs of natural persons working with the beneficiary under a contract other than an employment contract may be incurred as staff costs, provided the requirements of the applicable public-procurement law are complied with and the following conditions are fulfilled

- the natural person is assigned to the project and named in the project team
- the natural person works under the instructions of the Project Promoter or Project Partner, and, unless otherwise agreed with the Project Promoter or Project Partner, on the premises of the Project Promoter or Project Partner
- the results of the work belong to the Project Promoter or Project Partner, and
- the costs are not significantly different from the costs of the staff performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the Project Promoter or Project Partner.

Staff costs for Norwegian, Icelandic or Liechtenstein partners

Most partners (such as universities, university colleges, enterprises, health authorities) from Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, should use the same rates for personnel costs as in H2020 projects. Indirect costs (overheads) are calculated as a flat rate of 25% of all the direct costs. However, Norwegian research institutes which report personnel rates to the Research Council of Norway, and have those personnel rates calculated and approved by the RCN, may use those as Standard scales of unit costs (ref. Regulation art. 8.4.b). This means they should use the same rates as in applications to RCN calls. It is important to note that in such cases, no

indirect or overhead costs should be included in the budget, as they are already included in the personnel rates.

Link to list of institutions eligible for the STIM-EU instrument, which also lists all institutes with personnel rates approved by the Research Council of Norway which can be used as Standard scales of unit costs in EEA and Norway Grants projects:

<https://www.forskningradet.no/contentassets/3aac4d1b26724a1d8b9d1919814e84d7/stim-eu-liste-over-institutter-2019-med-logo.pdf>

4.2.2 The costs of new or second-hand equipment

Where new or second-hand equipment is purchased, only the portion of the depreciation corresponding to the duration of the project, and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the project, may be considered eligible expenditure.

If the Programme Operator determines, based on a justification provided in the project proposal, that the equipment is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project, the entire purchase price of that equipment may, by way of exception, be eligible. The entire purchase price of this equipment cannot exceed PLN 500,000, according to the Law on Higher Education and Science of 20 July 2018. Requirements of the applicable public-procurement law must be complied with.

In the case of Project Promoter or Project Partner applying for State aid, the costs of research equipment qualify as eligible costs to the extent and for the period in which they are used for the implementation of the research project. If the research equipment and devices are not used for the research project purposes over the entire period of use, only depreciation costs corresponding to the period of project's completion, calculated pursuant to the accounting regulations, are deemed eligible costs.

Where the entire purchase price of the equipment is eligible, the Project Promoter and/or Partner

- keeps the equipment in its ownership for a period of at least five years following the completion of the project, and continues to use that equipment for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project for the same period
- keeps the equipment properly insured against losses such as fire, theft, or other normally insurable incidents, both during the project implementation, and for at least five years following the completion of the project, and
- sets aside the appropriate resources for the maintenance of the equipment for at least five years following the completion of the project.

The Programme Operator may release any Project Promoter and/or Partner from the above obligations in respect of any specifically identified equipment where the Programme Operator is satisfied that, having regard to all the relevant circumstances, continued use of that equipment in fulfilling the overall objectives of the project would serve no useful economic purpose.

4.2.3 The travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project

The travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project must be in accordance with the applicable national rules. As a general rule, travel costs should be limited to the needs of the project, and calculated on the basis of economy-class travel on public transport. The Programme will cover the actual expenditure on travel, accommodation, medical insurances, and conference fees. For subsistence allowances, the Project Promoter and Partners shall follow the national rules.

4.2.4 The costs of consumables and supplies

The costs of consumables and supplies must be identifiable and assigned to the project. Requirements of the applicable public-procurement law must be complied with.

4.2.5 The costs entailed by other contracts

The costs of other contracts linked to the implementation of the project are eligible for the Project Promoter and/or Partner, provided the awarding complies with the applicable rules on public procurement, and the Regulation.

4.2.6 The costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the Project Contract for each project

Where the total grant from the programme to the respective Project Promoter or Partner is EUR 325,000 or more, proof of expenditure is required, and must be submitted with the final project report in the form of a certificate by an independent auditor. The invoice for the audit may be issued up to 30 days from the project's completion, but not later than 30 April 2024.

In line with the Article 34.5 Law on the National Science Centre, the proof of expenditure by means of a report by an independent auditor described in paragraph 4 of Article 8.12 of the Regulation is mandatory for project partners whose primary location is in Poland and in research projects awarded with a grant amount equal or superior to PLN 2 million. Where applicable, this shall be submitted with the final project report.

The costs of the Project Promoter's opening and maintaining a separate interest-bearing bank account dedicated to the payments of the project grant are eligible.

All reported publications should have Green or Gold Access⁴. Open-Access costs are eligible under the Basic Research Programme.

4.3 Indirect costs in projects

Indirect eligible costs will be determined by applying a flat rate of 25% of the total direct eligible costs, excluding the direct eligible costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the beneficiary, as well as financial support to third parties.

The indirect costs may include salaries for administrative staff which are not part of staff costs (financial-department representatives, acquisitions responsible, PR officer, etc).

⁴ Gold Open Access is where an author publishes the article in an online open access journal. Green Open Access is where an author publishes the article in any journal and then self-archives a copy in a freely accessible institutional or specialist online archive known as a repository, or on a website.

According to the Research Council of Norway's procedure for 'Payroll and indirect costs', the Norwegian entities classed as 'Research Institutes' calculate the payroll and indirect costs together, as hourly rates for the staff participating in a project.

4.4 Subcontracting

As a general rule, the expertise and resources needed to implement a project should be available within the project partnership. However, subcontracting research tasks is possible as long as it is clearly stated and justified in the project proposal and contract. Subcontracting may cover only a limited part of the planned research tasks. Examples of subcontracting are contracts with public or private entities – or natural persons – for a clinical study, an opinion survey, the testing or analysis of samples, measurements using equipment not available within the consortium, etc.

Subcontracting is based on business conditions, and, therefore, is eligible provided the awarding of the contract complies with the applicable rules on public procurement and the Regulation.

Subcontractors have no direct obligations under the project contract. Therefore, it is the Project Promoter or Project Partner who must ensure that the subcontractors comply with the obligations under the Basic Research Programme.

In the case of contracts with natural persons, costs qualify as subcontracting when the work is done without direct supervision by the Project Promoter or Project Partner. Typically, contracts of commission are regarded as subcontracting.

Contracts to purchase goods, works, or services, which are necessary for the implementation of the project, but are not scientific services, needed to carry out the research activities in the project, are not considered subcontracting.

The transfer of project costs intended to increase the eligible costs for subcontracting is considered to reflect a significant change in the project, and normally requires an amendment.

The Project Promoter and Partners may NOT subcontract tasks to each other.

4.5 Excluded costs

The following costs will not be considered eligible

- interest on debts, debt-service charges, and late-payment charges
- charges for financial transactions, and other purely financial costs, except costs related to accounts required by the Financial Mechanism Committee, the National Focal Point, or the applicable law, and the costs of financial services imposed by the project contract
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities
- exchange losses
- recoverable VAT
- costs covered by other sources
- fines, penalties and the costs of litigation, except where the litigation is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project

- excessive or reckless expenditure.

4.6 State aid

If the funding of a research project by the National Science Centre constitutes State aid for the Project Promoter and/or Project Partners, State aid will be granted under conditions regulated by the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 9 September 2015 on the terms and mode of granting State aid via the National Science Centre (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1381).

Detailed information can be found in the [section State aid](#)

PLEASE NOTE!

All documents concerning proposals for State aid must be signed with a qualified electronic signature in the PAdES format.

4.7 Co-financing requirements

Grants from the programme may be up to 100% of the total eligible project costs, provided all the applicable National and EU rules on State aid are complied with.

Any remaining costs for the project must be provided or obtained by the Project Promoter and the Project Partners according to their respective shares of the project budget. Co-financing cannot be in kind.

4.8 Budgetary flexibility

Applicants should note that during the course of the project, budgetary flexibility is given in order to facilitate the appropriate project management. The reallocation of funds among the cost categories does not require the prior approval of the PO, and would not result in an addendum to the Project Contract. Cost categories are defined as one of the main sub-heads of the budget, which are the costs of the staff assigned to the project, the costs of new and second-hand equipment, and other costs. Such a reallocation cannot exceed 15% of the total eligible costs of a Project Promoter or Partner, and cannot exceed PLN 100,000.

For reallocations above this limit, a Project Contract amendment will be required before the date the modification should take place. The request must be fully substantiated and justified. If the request is deemed unfounded by the PO, the Project Promoter will be advised in writing.

The 15% rule is NOT applicable to the budget sub-head of indirect costs.

Please note If funding a research project constitutes State aid for the Project Promoter and/or Project Partners, each cost reallocation (also below the 15% limit) will require the approval of the PO.

5. The evaluation of proposals

A detailed description of the review process and the selection criteria can be found in the Guide for evaluators – Participant selection, and the Guide for evaluators – the assessment of project ideas and full proposals.

The evaluation process is based on a number of well-established principles.

- **Excellence** – the projects selected for funding must demonstrate high quality in the context of the key topics and criteria set out in the call
- **Transparency** – the funding decisions must be based on clearly described rules and procedures, and applicants should receive adequate feedback on the outcome of the evaluation of their proposals
- **Fairness and impartiality** – all proposals submitted to the call are treated equally. They are evaluated impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants
- **Confidentiality** – all proposals and related data, knowledge, and documents communicated to the PO, are treated in confidence
- **Efficiency and speed** – evaluation, award, and contract preparation should be as rapid as possible, commensurate with maintaining the quality of the evaluation, and respecting the legal framework
- **Ethical and security considerations** – any proposal which contravenes fundamental ethical principles may be excluded at any time from the process of evaluation, selection, and award.

The proposals are evaluated by international independent experts with a high level of professional experience, and good international visibility in their specific research area. They are invited to evaluate the proposals closely related to their field of expertise. International experts must be resident and working outside Poland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

The pool of experts is established by the Coordinators of the National Science Centre in cooperation with the RCN. The PO draws up a list of appropriate experts using as the main selection criteria their high level of expertise and their appropriate range of competencies.

When possible and justified, in defining the list of experts, the gender-balance criterion will also be taken into consideration.

6. The awarding of project grants

The NCN Scientific Coordinator submits the preliminary ranking list to the Programme Committee. The Programme Committee reviews the ranked list of projects and may modify the ranking of the projects in justified cases. The justification for modifications will be detailed in the minutes of the meeting of the Programme Committee. The Chair of the Programme Committee will submit to the Programme Operator the minutes, and the list of recommended projects, together with a reserve list, and the list of rejected project applications, and the reason(s) for their rejection.

The applicants are given access to the evaluation by experts through the ZSUN/OSF system. Project grants are awarded by the Director of the Programme Operator, who issues decisions concerning project financing. The decision of the Director may be appealed against to the Appeal Committee of the Council of the National Science Centre.

If the final ranking lists approved by the PC shows that a small amount of funding prevents the inclusion of another project on the final list, the PO may, acting on a proposal from the PC, apply minor budget cuts uniformly across all projects, not exceeding 3% of the requested budget.

The PO issues individual decisions to award a grant to projects based on the final ranking list approved by the Programme Committee, for those projects for which grants are available. The decisions are submitted to the Project Promoter, and additionally to the Principal Investigator in accordance with the [Rules for delivering the NCN Director's decisions](#).

A number of proposals may be kept in reserve to allow for eventualities such as the failure of negotiations on projects, the withdrawal of proposals, budget savings agreed during the negotiation, or the availability of additional budget from other sources.

The lists of the selected projects are published on the PO website.

7. Negotiating proposals

The Project Promoters of proposals which have not been rejected, and for which funding is available, are invited to begin negotiations.

In addition to any issues raised in the Evaluation Summary Report, the applicants may receive requests for further administrative, legal, technical, and financial information necessary for the preparation of the Project Contract. The PO may request changes, possibly including modifications to the budget. The PO must justify all requested changes.

If it proves impossible to reach an agreement with a Project Promoter within a reasonable deadline, by the end of March 2020 at the latest, the negotiations may be terminated, and the proposal rejected, by a negative decision of the Director of the National Science Centre. The negotiation of proposals from the reserve list may begin once it is clear that sufficient budget has become available to fund one or more of these projects.

The PO may also terminate negotiations if the Project Promoter proposes to modify the project to the extent that it becomes significantly different from the proposal which has been evaluated.

8. Appeals

Any Project Promoters who wish to [appeal against](#) the final results may send their complaints directly to the PO headquarters, within 14 days from the date of receiving the decision of the Director of the National Science Centre. The received appeals of the Project Promoters are proceeded on by the Appeal Committee of the Council of the National Science Centre. The Appeal Committee issues a decision to grant or to refuse the granting of funds.

The decision of the Council Appeal Committee may be appealed against at an administrative court.

Please note that comments and scores given by experts and members of panels will not be subject to appeals. The grounds for appeals include conflicts of interest and errors in administrative procedures.

9. The contracting of projects

With regard to each grant, a trilateral Project Contract between the National Science Centre, the Project Promoter, and the Principal Investigator, will be concluded for the term of the grant.

The Project Contract will set out the terms and conditions of the grant assistance, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the parties. It will in particular include provisions which will ensure that the Project Promoter undertakes to comply fully with the provisions of the legal framework of the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 referred to in Article 1.5 of the Regulation which are appropriate for the implementation of the project, including any obligation which is valid after the project has been completed.

The Project Contract template will be provided at contracting stage. The Project Contract will contain an explicit reference to the programme agreement and the Regulation, and, as a minimum, provisions on the following

- obligations regarding reporting which enables the Programme Operator to comply with its reporting obligations to the FMC and the National Focal Point
- the maximum amount of the project grant in PLN and Euro⁵, and the maximum project-grant rate
- the eligibility of expenditures and the requirements regarding the submission of proof of expenditures
- the method of calculating indirect costs, and their maximum amounts
- the first and final dates of the eligibility of expenditures
- any modifications to the project
- ensuring that the access requested in relation to monitoring, auditing, and evaluating, is provided without delay
- ensuring that the obligations regarding information and communication are complied with
- the right of the Programme Operator to suspend payments and request reimbursement from the Project Promoter in the event of decisions on such actions' being taken by the FMC, Programme Operator, or the National Focal Point
- the resolution of disputes and jurisdictions
- a detailed budget, which may allow for up to 5% contingency, and
- references to partnership agreements or letter of intent.

⁵ The exchange rate of the Polish National Bank of the day of the call announcement will be used to calculate the maximum project budget in Euro.

10. Reporting and payments

10.1 The payment model

The Project Promoter is obliged to open and maintain a separate bank account indicated in the project contract.

Payments towards the projects will be in the form of advance payment and interim payment(s). The Programme Operator will ensure the timely transfer of those payments.

Payments of the project grant shall take the form of advance instalments and provide the projects with a positive cash flow. The first advance instalment will be transferred to the Project Promoter within 30 days from the signature of the project contract. Further advance instalments (interim payments) will be transferred to the project in accordance with an individual pre-defined schedule of payments based on the project budget, as stipulated in the project contract. These interim payments are made twice a year, each corresponding to 50% of the planned annual project budget. The interim payments may be paid when at least 70% of the previous advance instalment(s) has been reported as incurred in the form of a certified statement. The Programme Operator shall monitor the level of incurred expenditure and amend the annual budget annexed to the project contract when appropriate.

The Project Promoter must ensure that all payments to the other Project Partners are made without unjustified delay, and not later than 15 days after the Project Promoter has received the payment from the Programme Operator.

The payment model will be specified in the project contract.

10.2 Annual reporting

During the course of the project, the Project Promoter must submit an annual report within 60 days of the end of each reporting period set out in the project contract. The 1st technical report must contain the progress of the work for at least 6 months of the project implementation. The annual report must comprise

- a technical report containing
 - an explanation of the work being carried out by the Participants
 - an overview of the progress of the work towards the objectives of the project, including the milestones and deliverables identified in the project contract. The report must include explanations justifying the differences between the work expected to be carried out in accordance with the project contract and that actually carried out
 - details on the exploitation and dissemination of the results, and – if required in the project contract – an updated plan for the exploitation and dissemination of the results
 - a summary for publication by the PO.
- a financial report containing
 - an individual financial statement from each Participant for the reporting period involved
 - an explanation of the use of resources and information on subcontracting.

- a summary financial statement from the Project Promoter consolidating the individual financial statement for the reporting period involved.

10.3 Final reporting

The Project Promoter must submit a final report within 60 days after the project's end. If the implementation of the project ends in the first 6 months of the year, then an annual report for the previous year is not requested separately. This final report must comprise

- a final technical report containing
 - an overview of the results and their exploitation and dissemination
 - conclusions on the project
 - the socio-economic impact of the project: a report covering the wider societal implications of the project, in the form of a questionnaire, including gender equality actions, ethical issues, efforts to involve other actors and to spread awareness, as well as the plan for the use and dissemination of foreground;
 - a summary for publication by the PO.
- a final financial report containing
 - the final individual financial statement from each Participant for the final reporting period, as defined in the project contract
 - the final summary financial statement from Project Promoter consolidating the individual financial statements for all the reporting periods, and including the request for payment of the balance (the final payment claim)
 - distribution of the financial contribution between the Project Promoter and Project Partners
 - an audit certificate on the financial statements for each Participant if the total grant from the programme to the respective Project Promoter or Partner is EUR 325,000 or more. In line with the Article 34.5 Law on the National Science Centre, the audit certificate is mandatory for project partners whose primary location is in Poland and in research projects awarded with a grant amount equal or superior to PLN 2 million.

10.4 Reporting on scientific publications

During and after the project, the Project Promoter provides references and an abstract for all the scientific publications relating to the results of the project, at the latest by 60 days following publication.

As part of the final project report, the Project Promoter will be required to submit a full list of publications pertaining to the results of the projects.

All reported publications should have Green or Gold Access. Gold Open Access is where an author publishes the article in an online open access journal. Green Open Access is where an author publishes the article in any journal and then self-archives a copy in a freely accessible institutional or specialist online archive known as a repository, or on a website. **Please note** that Open Access costs are eligible under the Polish Basic Research Programme.

All publications must include the following statement to indicate that the results of the project were generated with the assistance of financial support from the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism.

“The research leading to these results has received funding from the EEA Grants 2014-2021 operated by the National Science Centre under Project Contract No. xxx.”

11. Contact persons

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Please, contact the EEA and Norway Grants Team at the National Science Centre with all queries concerning the Basic Research Programme and the IdeaLab call. We will endeavour to answer your questions sent by e-mail as soon as possible, within 5 working days at the latest. Answers to the questions will be published in the FAQ to ensure equal access to information for all applicants.

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In case of specific issues concerning applicants from the Donor States the Donor Programme Partner in the Basic Research Programme is the Research Council of Norway.