

**Directive no 35/2017**  
**of the Director of the National Science Centre**  
**on**  
**specifying in detail the procedure of evaluation of proposals by Expert Teams**  
**of 14-06-2017**

Pursuant to article 30 section 3 of the Act of 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010 on the National Science Centre (Journal of Laws of 2016, item 1071), it is hereby decided as follows:

§ 1.

The hereby directive repeals the directive no 53/2016 by the Director of the National Science Centre of 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016 on specifying in detail the procedure of evaluation of proposals by Expert Teams as amended, and it lays down in detail the new procedure of evaluation of proposals by Expert Teams, the text of which appears in Annex no 1 to the hereby directive.

§ 2.

1. For evaluation of proposals submitted in calls announced by the National Science Centre since 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017, provisions of the hereby directive shall apply.
2. For evaluation of proposals submitted in calls announced by the National Science Centre by 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017, provisions hitherto in force shall apply.

§ 3.

The hereby directive enters into force on the day of its signing.

## **§ 1.**

The directive sets forth in detail the procedure of evaluation conducted by Expert Teams under the OPUS, PRELUDIUM, MAESTRO, HARMONIA, SONATINA, SONATA, SONATA BIS, SYMFONIA, UWERTURA, FUGA, ETIUDA and TANGO calls.

## **§ 2.**

Wherever in the hereby directive reference is made to:

- 1) Centre – it shall be understood as the National Science Centre;
- 2) Council – it shall be understood as the Council of the National Science Centre;
- 3) Director – it shall be understood as the Director of the National Science Centre;
- 4) Coordinator – it shall be understood as the Centre’s Coordinator in charge of a research domain;
- 5) Team – it shall be understood as the Expert Team;
- 6) Panel Team – it shall be understood as the Team appointed for each NCN panel defined by an applicable resolution of the Council, i.e. falling under the domains of: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (HS), Physical Sciences and Engineering (ST) and Life Sciences (NZ);
- 7) Inter-Panel Team – it shall be understood as a Team appointed for all panels under one research domain, i.e. HS, ST or NZ.
- 8) Inter-Domain Team – it shall be understood as a Team comprising experts representing different research domains, i.e. HS, ST and NZ.
- 9) Expert – it shall be understood as a member of the Team, or an external reviewer who is not a member of the Team;
- 10) Committee – it shall be understood as the Evaluation Committee composed of members of the Team interviewing candidates at the second stage of the evaluation of research proposals in the calls where such an interview is required by the Centre’s terms and conditions of funding research tasks;
- 11) proposal – it shall be understood as a proposal submitted in response to calls published by the National Science Centre;
- 12) meeting – it shall be understood as an individual day in a Team or Committee’s session;
- 13) session – it shall be understood as all meetings of a Team or Committee at a given stage of the merit-based evaluation process;
- 14) edition – it shall be understood as all calls launched by the Centre with deadlines expiring on the same date;
- 15) ranking long list – it shall be understood as the ranking list of proposals evaluated at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation with an indication of proposals approved for the evaluation’s second stage;
- 16) ranking short list – it shall be understood as the ranking list of proposals evaluated at the second stage of the merit-based evaluation with an indication of proposals recommended for funding.

## **§ 3. General provisions**

1. Members of the Expert Teams shall be chosen pursuant to the principles specified in the document “Korpus Ekspertów Narodowego Centrum Nauki – tworzenie i zasady działania” [“The National Science Centre’s Corps of Experts: appointment and operating procedures”], and appointed by the Director.

2. The Expert Teams shall be appointed for each call, and they may carry out evaluation of proposals submitted under one or several types of calls, to a particular panel (Panel Teams) or to a group of panels (Inter-Panel and Inter-Domain Teams).
3. The number of members in a Team shall be decided upon by the Council, with regard for the number of proposals under evaluation and the need to carry out the call in a timely and orderly manner. A Team may consist of no fewer than five members.
4. The work of an Expert Team is coordinated by a Head, appointed by the Council upon request by the Council's respective Committees, i.e.: the Committee of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (K-1), the Committee of Physical Sciences and Engineering (K-2) and the Committee of Life Sciences (K-3).
5. During the sessions, a Team's Head may appoint another member of the Team to chair the work of the Team in his/her stead.
6. Experts are bound by the ethical principles laid down in the document "Members of the Council and Experts' Code of Ethics," as adopted by the Council.
7. The Coordinator shall exclude an expert from proposal evaluation proceedings in the event of a conflict of interest.

#### **§ 4. Expert Teams**

The duties of the Teams include:

- 1) evaluation of research proposals;
- 2) compilation of a ranking long list, a ranking short list and a ranking reserve list of proposals submitted under a given call.

#### **§ 5. Coordinator**

1. The duties of the Coordinator include:
  - 1) performing proposal eligibility checks;
  - 2) indicating the members of the Team to carry out individual evaluations in the event of the Head experiencing a conflict of interest as regards the proposal's author or investigator involved in the proposal's project;.
  - 3) organising sessions of Teams and Committees, including:
    - a) summoning sessions and participating in them,
    - b) verifying the conformity of the minutes' text with the actual course of sessions and resolutions of the Committees or Teams;
  - 4) indicating external reviewers for the evaluation of proposals at the second stage, taking into account the candidacies put forward by members of the Team;
  - 5) assessing the accuracy and impartiality of opinions drafted by the experts;
  - 6) presenting the Director with the ranking lists prepared by the Teams for approval.
2. The Coordinator shall work in close cooperation with the Head of the Team in organising the Team's work.

#### **§ 6. Head of the Expert Team**

1. The duties of the Head of the Team include:
  - 1) indicating the members of the Team to perform individual reviews at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation, with the exception of the situation described in § 5 section 1 point 2;
  - 2) chairing the Team's sessions;
  - 3) conducting votes;
  - 4) approving the minutes from the Team's sessions;
  - 5) appointing his/her substitute from amongst the members of the Team in the event of the Head's inability to perform his/her duties.

2. The Head of the Team shall work in close cooperation with the Coordinator in organising the Team's work.

#### **§ 7. Member of the Expert Team**

1. Duties of a Team Member include:
  - 1) drafting individual reviews of proposals allotted by the Head of the Team or the Coordinator at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation;
  - 2) participating in all sessions of the Team and also:
    - a) drafting justifications for the allotted proposals' final grades during the Team's sessions;
    - b) putting forward the candidacies of at least five external reviewers to review each proposal he/she reviewed at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation and which has been qualified for the second stage of the merit-based evaluation;
    - c) presenting in the second session the reviews by individual external reviewers regarding the proposals they have been assigned;
    - d) participating in the duties of the Committees at the second stage of the merit-based evaluation.

#### **§ 8. External reviewer**

1. Duties of the external reviewers shall include performing individual reviews of proposals at the second stage of the merit-based evaluation of proposals.
2. An external expert may not be a member of the Team evaluating a given proposal.

#### **§ 9. Stages of the proposal evaluation**

1. Proposals shall be subject to an eligibility check and merit-based evaluation:
  - 1) the eligibility check shall be performed by the Coordinators;
  - 2) the merit-based proposal evaluation shall be performed by the Teams. At the merit-based evaluation stage, an Expert Team may disqualify a proposal for formal reasons.
2. The merit-based evaluation of proposals (OPUS, PRELUDIUM and HARMONIA) shall be carried out in two stages:
  - 1) at the **first stage**, the proposals shall undergo **qualification**, based on the data included in the proposal and the short description of the research project. The qualification shall consist in:
    - a) drafting of **individual reviews** of the proposal by two members of the Expert Team working independently;
    - b) **the verdict of the Team's first session** following a discussion of the individual reviews and resulting in drafting a ranking long list;
      - proposals whose combined planned expenditures equal up to twice the sum of the financial resources allocated by the Council for projects financed under a given call shall be recommended for the second stage
  - 2) at the **second stage**, the proposals shall undergo **specialist review**, based on the data included in the proposal and the full description of the research project. The specialist review shall consist in:
    - a) drafting of **individual reviews** of the proposal by at least two but no more than five external reviewers working independently. Exceptions to the above requirements regarding the number of reviews are admitted for justified cases; the cause shall be reported to the Director by the Coordinator;
    - b) **the verdict of the Team's second session** following a discussion of the individual reviews and resulting in the drafting of a ranking short list.

3. The merit-based evaluation of proposals (SONATINA, SONATA, SONATA BIS, MAESTRO) shall be carried out in two stages:
  - 1) at the **first stage**, the proposals shall undergo **qualification**, based on the data included in the proposal and the short description of the research project. The qualification shall consist in:
    - a) drafting **individual reviews** of the proposal by two members of the Expert Team working independently;
    - b) **the verdict of the Team's first session** following a discussion of individual reviews and resulting in drafting a ranking long list;
      - proposals whose combined planned expenditures equal up to twice the sum of the financial resources allocated by the Council for projects financed under a given call shall be recommended for the second stage
  - 2) at the **second stage**, the proposals shall undergo **specialist review**, based on the data included in the proposal and the full description of the research project. The specialist review shall consist in:
    - a) drafting of **individual reviews** of the proposal by at least two but no more than five external reviewers working independently. Exceptions to the above requirements regarding the number of reviews are admitted for justified cases; the cause shall be reported to the Director by the Coordinator;
    - b) drafting an **appraisal review based on an interview with the project's Principal Investigator** carried out by members of a Committee:
      - the project's Principal Investigator shall receive written notice of the interview, from the Coordinator, no later than 14 days before its planned date;
      - no later than 7 days before the interview, the Coordinator shall make available to the project's Principal Investigator the remarks submitted by Experts on the proposal;
      - the project's Principal Investigator is required to appear for an interview held in Polish or in English at the Centre's registered office, during which they shall deliver a presentation on the proposed research;
      - failure to appear for the interview shall be deemed as withdrawal from applying for funding of the proposal under the call;
    - c) **the verdict of the Team's second session** following a discussion of the individual reviews and resulting in drafting a ranking short list.
4. The merit-based evaluation of proposals under the SYMFONIA call shall be carried out in two stages:
  - 1) at the **first stage**, the proposals shall undergo **qualification**, based on the data included in the proposal and the full description of the research project. The qualification shall consist in:
    - a) drafting **individual reviews** of the proposal by three members of the Expert Team working independently;
    - b) **the verdict of the Team's first session** following a discussion of the individual reviews and resulting in drafting a ranking long list;
      - proposals whose combined planned expenditures equal up to twice the sum of the financial resources allocated by the Council for projects financed under a given call shall be recommended for the second stage
  - 2) at the **second stage**, the proposals shall undergo **specialist review**, based on the data included in the proposal and the full description of the research project. The specialist review shall consist in:
    - a) drafting of **individual reviews** of the proposal by at least three but no more than five external reviewers working independently. Exceptions to the above requirements regarding the number of reviews are admitted for justified cases; the cause shall be reported to the Director by the Coordinator;

- b) drafting an **appraisal review based on an interview with the SYMFONIA project's Principal Investigator** carried out by members of the Team:
    - the project's Principal Investigator shall receive written notice of the interview, from the Coordinator, no later than 14 days before its planned date;
    - no later than 7 days before the interview, the Coordinator shall make available to the project's Principal Investigator the remarks submitted by Experts on the proposal;
    - the project's Principal Investigator is required to appear for an interview held in English at the Centre's registered office, during which they shall deliver a presentation on the proposed research;
    - failure to appear for the interview shall be deemed as withdrawal from applying for funding of the proposal under the call;
  - c) **the verdict of the Team's second session** following a discussion of the individual reviews and resulting in drafting a ranking short list.
5. The merit-based evaluation of proposals under the UWERTURA call shall be carried out in two stages:
- 1) at the **first stage**, the proposals shall undergo **qualification**, based on the data included in the proposal and the description of the research project. The qualification shall consist in:
    - a) drafting **individual reviews** of the proposal by two members of the Expert Team working independently;
    - b) **the verdict of the Team's first session** following a discussion of the individual reviews and resulting in drafting a ranking long list;
      - proposals whose combined planned expenditures equal up to twice the sum of the financial resources allocated by the Council for projects financed under a given call shall be recommended for the second stage
  - 2) at the **second stage**, the proposals shall undergo **specialist review**, based on the data included in the proposal and the description of the research project. The specialist review shall consist of:
    - a) drafting **individual reviews** of the proposal by at least two but no more than five external reviewers working independently. Exceptions to the above requirements regarding the number of reviews are admitted for justified cases; the cause shall be reported to the Director by the Coordinator;
    - b) drafting an **appraisal review based on an interview with the prospective fellowship beneficiary** carried out by members of the Team:
      - prospective fellowship beneficiaries shall receive written notice of the interview, from the Coordinator, no later than 14 days before its planned date;
      - no later than 7 days before the interview, the Coordinator shall make available to the prospective fellowship beneficiary the remarks submitted by Experts on the proposal;
      - the prospective fellowship beneficiary is required to appear for an interview held in English at the Centre's registered office, during which they shall deliver a presentation on the proposed research;
      - failure to appear for the interview shall be deemed as withdrawal from applying for funding of the proposal under the call;
    - c) **the verdict of the Team's second session** following a discussion of the individual reviews and resulting in drafting a ranking short-list.
6. The merit-based evaluation of proposals under the FUGA and ETIUDA calls shall be carried out in two stages:
- 1) at the **first stage** the proposals and, respectively, *description of the research intended by the applicant for their post-doctoral internship* under the FUGA programme, and *description of the research carried out as part of the doctoral dissertation* under the ETIUDA programme, shall undergo evaluation consisting in:

- a) drafting **individual reviews** of the proposal by two members of the Expert Team working independently;
  - b) **the verdict of the Team's first session** following a discussion of the individual reviews and resulting in drafting a ranking long list;
    - proposals whose combined planned expenditures equal up to twice the sum of the financial resources allocated by the Council for projects financed under the calls shall be recommended for the second stage
- 2) The review of proposals at the **second stage** shall consist in:
- a) drafting an **appraisal review based on an interview with the candidate**, carried out by members of a Committee;
    - candidates shall receive written notice of the interview, from the Coordinator, no later than 14 days before its planned date;
    - no later than 7 days before the interview, the Coordinator shall make available to the candidate the remarks submitted by Experts on the proposal;
    - the candidate is required to appear for an interview held in Polish or in English at the Centre's registered office, during which they shall deliver a presentation on the proposed research planned for the post-doctoral internship or doctoral scholarship;
    - failure to appear for the interview shall be deemed as withdrawal from applying for funding of the proposal under the call;
  - b) **the verdict of the Team's second session** following a discussion of the individual reviews and resulting in drafting a ranking short list.
7. The merit-based evaluation of proposals under the TANGO call shall be one-stage only.
- 1) The review of proposals at the **first stage** shall consist in:
- a) drafting **individual reviews** of the proposal by three members of the Expert Team working independently;
  - b) **the verdict of the Team's first session** following a discussion of the individual reviews and resulting in drafting a ranking long list;
    - proposals whose combined planned expenditures equal up to twice the sum of the financial resources allocated for projects financed under the call shall be recommended for the second stage
- 2) The ranking long list of the projects approved for the second stage of the call carried out by the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR) shall be published on the NCN's and NCBR's websites.

## § 10. Order of Expert Team sessions

1. The number of planned sessions of a Team within a single session should be established with regard to the number of proposals to be reviewed and the volume of work necessary for their evaluation.
2. On having completed individual reviews, the Expert shall be given electronic access to all the other individual reviews performed within the Team by other Experts.
3. A session of a Team shall take place in the presence of a quorum of an absolute majority of the Team's members.
4. The sessions of a Team shall be chaired by its Head or a member of the Team appointed as his or her substitute.
5. Present at every session of a Team shall be the Coordinator and a minutes secretary, who shall not take part in the voting.
6. Members of the Team who have a conflict of interest with applicants (investigators) shall be obliged to leave the room where the session is being held. Exclusion of a member of the Team because of a conflict of interest shall not affect the quorum during voting.
7. The minutes secretary shall keep minutes, whose conformity with the course of the session shall be verified by the Coordinator and approved by the Head of the Team.

### **§ 11. Order of the Committee Sessions**

1. The composition of a Committee, including its Head, shall be determined during the first session of the Team.
2. A Committee should comprise at least five Team Members.
3. A session shall be held in the presence of a quorum of an absolute majority of the Committee's members.
4. Present at every session of a Committee shall be the Coordinator and a minutes secretary.
5. Members of the Committee who have a conflict of interest with applicants (investigators) shall be obliged to leave the room where the session is being held. Exclusion of a member of the Committee because of a conflict of interest shall not affect the quorum during voting.
6. The minutes secretary shall keep minutes to be signed by the Coordinator. The minutes shall constitute an attachment to the minutes from the session by the Team.

### **§ 12. Principles of proposal evaluation during Team sessions**

1. All proposals approved for the merit-based evaluation shall be the subject of analysis and discussion during sessions by the Team.
2. In each stage, the proposals shall be given a score, derived from the mean average of the individual reviews or the settled assessment by the Team, and – additionally (for the SYMFONIA, FUGA, ETIUDA, SONATINA, SONATA, SONATA BIS, MAESTRO and UWERTURA) – from the score for the interview.
3. The score does not present any legally binding circumstances for the Team, and shall be treated merely as a point of departure for the discussion on the final grade.
4. The final grade of the proposal at a given stage of the merit-based evaluation shall be its position on a long list after the first stage or on a short list after the second stage. The decision of the Expert Team on the final grade of a proposal is based on the Team's analysis of the proposal for all individual criteria, as weighed against other proposals reviewed under the call.
5. The reviews by the external reviewers at the second stage of the merit-based evaluation do not present any legally binding circumstances for the Team, albeit members of the Team must address them in their discussion. While settling the proposal's final grade, the Team may fully agree with the external reviewer's evaluation, partly agree with it, or disagree with it. Disagreement with the external reviewer's evaluation must be accounted for.
6. A proposal which has been given a score of zero by the consulted decision of the Expert Team in at least one criterion or whose evaluation form contains a negative answer to any of the questions therein, cannot be recommended for funding.
7. In the event of difficulty finding a common position, the Team shall make the decision by way of a vote. Decisions by the Team that should require a vote shall be taken by a simple majority.
8. Ranking long and short lists must be approved by an absolute majority vote.
9. The Team may give a conditional recommendation to one proposal in the call that is partly within the limits of the sum of funding provided for the call.
10. The decision on funding the proposals referred to in the point above lies with the Director, who shall take into account the percentage overrun of the budget available for the call.
11. The Team is not required to distribute the whole funding available nor can it recommend funding proposals that exceed the available funding, with the reservation of section 9.

### **§ 13. Ranking lists**

1. The Coordinator shall present the Director with ranking lists drafted by the Teams.
2. In exceptional cases, the Coordinator, having consulted the Team, may modify the order of projects on a ranking list, pursuant to article 24 section 2 of the Act of 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010 on the National



Science Centre (Journal of Laws no 96, item 1071). The procedure of modification shall follow the course described below:

- 1) consultation may have the form of circulating to all members of the Team a query with a justification of the suggested modification and a fixed time for their response;
  - 2) after the time fixed for the response the Coordinator shall decide on the modification, taking into account the opinions received from members of the Team;
  - 3) no response on a member's part within the fixed time shall be deemed as his or her negative position on the suggested modification.
3. In the event referred to in section 2, the Coordinator shall present the Director with the modified ranking list, with a written justification, for approval.