

Annex 1 to  
Order No 46/2020  
of the Director of the National Science Centre  
on the procedure for evaluating proposals under DAINA 2 of 9 June 2020

The Order lays down the detailed procedure for evaluating proposals by the Expert Teams under the DAINA 2 Funding Initiative for Polish and Lithuanian research projects.

§ 1.

Whenever this Order refers to:

- 1) NCN, it shall mean the National Science Centre;
- 2) Council, it shall mean the Council of the National Science Centre;
- 3) Director, it shall mean the Director of the National Science Centre;
- 4) RCL, it shall mean the Research Council of Lithuania;
- 5) Coordinator, it shall mean the scientific coordinator, as defined in Article 2 (5) of the Act on the National Science Centre of 30 June 2010 (Journal of Laws of 2019, item 1384, hereinafter: the "Act" );
- 6) Team, it shall mean an expert team established under a given research domain, i.e. HS, ST or NZ;
- 7) Expert, it shall mean an Expert Team member;
- 8) Reviewer, it shall mean an external expert, as defined in Article 22 (2) of the Act, who reviews the Proposal at the second stage of merit-based evaluation and is not an Expert Team member;
- 9) Proposal, it shall mean a proposal submitted to DAINA 2;
- 10) Interdisciplinary Proposal, it shall mean a proposal which contains at least one auxiliary NCN Review Panel other than the one to which the proposal was submitted, which has been specified by the chair as requiring an additional individual review;
- 11) Meeting, it shall mean an individual day in a Team's session;
- 12) Session, it shall mean all Meetings of the Team at a given stage of the merit-based evaluation;
- 13) Edition, it shall mean calls launched by the National Science Centre with deadlines expiring on the same date;
- 14) Ranking Long List, it shall mean the ranking list of proposals evaluated at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation with an indication of proposals approved for the second stage of merit-based evaluation;
- 15) List of Projects Recommended for Funding, it shall mean the list of projects recommended for funding by the Expert Team;
- 16) Ranking List, it shall mean the final list of projects recommended for funding by NCN and RCL, compiled pursuant to comparison of the results of merit-based evaluation performed by NCN and RCL;
- 17) Grant, it shall mean a research project submitted to DAINA 2, for which funding is has been awarded by the NCN Director's decision issued pursuant to Article 33 (1) of the Act;
- 18) Applicant, it shall mean an entity submitting a Proposal; and
- 19) Partner, it shall mean an entity other than a member of the group of entities, as defined in Article 27 (1) (2) of the Act.

## **§ 2. General Provisions**

- 1) Experts evaluating Proposals shall be selected by the Council pursuant to the document “Expert teams of the National Science Centre: formation and appointment” and shall be appointed by the NCN Director.
- 2) Expert Teams shall evaluate Proposals.
- 3) The number of Experts and composition of the Expert Team shall be decided upon by the Council, considering the number and subject of Proposals under evaluation and the need to carry out the call in a timely and orderly manner.
- 4) A Team shall consist of at least five Experts.
- 5) The work of an Expert Team shall be managed by a Chair appointed by the Council.
- 6) During the Meetings, a Team’s Chair may appoint another Expert to manage the work of the Team in his/her stead. Should the Team’s Chair be unable to appoint such an Expert, he/she shall be appointed by the Coordinator.
- 7) The Experts shall be bound by the ethical rules principles laid down in the “Code of ethics for experts of the National Science Centre”.
- 8) The Coordinator shall exclude an Expert from the Proposal evaluation procedure in the event of a conflict of interest or justified suspicion of a bias in the Expert’s actions.

## **§ 3. Teams**

1. The duties of the Teams shall include:
  - 1) evaluation of Proposals;
  - 2) compilation of a Ranking Long List and List of Projects Recommended for Funding.

## **§ 4. Coordinators**

1. The duties of a Coordinator shall include:
  - 1) running eligibility checks on Proposals;
  - 2) providing the Chair with the list of Proposals in which at least one auxiliary NCN Review Panel has been used in a group of disciplines other than the one to which the Proposal was submitted;
  - 3) naming Experts to draft individual opinions in the event of the Team’s Chair experiencing a conflict of interest;
  - 4) naming additional experts to evaluate Interdisciplinary Proposals; additional Experts shall be appointed from among other Expert Teams established to evaluate proposals in the same edition of the calls;
  - 5) organising Team Meetings, including:
    - a) summoning Meetings and participating in them;
    - b) verifying the conformity of the Meeting minutes drawn up by the recording clerk with the actual course of the Meetings and resolutions of the Team;
  - 6) indicating Reviewers, taking into account the candidacies put forward by the Experts;
  - 7) assessing the accuracy and impartiality of the opinions drafted by the Experts and Reviewers; and
  - 8) compiling the Ranking Lists and presenting them to the Director for his approval.
2. Coordinators shall organise the Team’s work and cooperate with the Team’s Chair.

## **§ 5. Team's Chair**

1. The duties of the Team's Chair shall include:
  - 1) indicating Experts to draft individual opinions at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation, with the exception of the situation described in § 4 (1) (3);
  - 2) selecting Interdisciplinary Proposals from the list presented by the Coordinator, for which (in well-justified cases) an additional evaluation shall be drafted. The Chair may consult his decision in this respect with the Experts drafting individual opinions;
  - 3) chairing the Team Meetings, subject to the situation described in § 2 (6);
  - 4) conducting voting; and
  - 5) approving the minutes from the Team Meetings.
2. The Team's Chair shall cooperate with the Coordinator.

## **§ 6. Experts**

1. The duties of the Experts shall include:
  - 1) drafting individual opinions on Proposals assigned by the Team's Chair or Coordinator at the first stage of the merit-based evaluation and presenting them during the first Session;
  - 2) drafting a second evaluation of the Interdisciplinary Proposal at the Coordinator's request;
  - 3) participating in the Team Meetings, as well as:
    - a) drafting justifications for the final grades of the Proposals they have been assigned during the Team Meetings;
    - b) putting forward the candidacies of at least five Reviewers to provide their opinion on each Proposal they reviewed at the first stage of merit-based evaluation and which has been approved for the second stage of evaluation; and
    - c) presenting individual opinions by Reviewers regarding the Proposals they have been assigned during the second Session.

## **§ 7. Proposal Evaluation Stages**

1. Proposals shall be subject to eligibility check and merit-based evaluation performed by NCN and RCL.
2. Eligibility check and merit-based evaluation of proposals submitted to RCL shall be performed pursuant to the rules applicable at RCL.
3. Eligibility check of proposals submitted to NCN shall be performed by the Coordinators.
4. Eligibility check of proposals submitted to NCN shall comprise:
  - 1) verification of the Proposal for completeness,
  - 2) verification whether the Proposal complies with all the requirements set out in the call announcement,
  - 3) verification whether the costs comply with the terms specified by the Council in the call documents and
  - 4) in the case of Applicants outside of the public finance sector or Applicants that do not receive any institutional core funding for research activity, the analysis of their legal and

organisational and financial situation in order to assess whether they can provide a sufficient warranty for correct use of the Grant; the analysis may, in particular, cover the period in which the Applicant has carried out research on a continuous basis, examination of the Applicant's assets, including availability of the appropriate research, administrative and office infrastructure and examination of the statutory documents that constitute the basis for the Applicant's business. In the case of Applicants that form a Group of Entities, the analysis referred to in the preceding sentence shall be performed with respect to each Partner individually.

5. Only Proposals approved as eligible by the Coordinator (subject to Point 6) and RCL shall be accepted for merit-based evaluation.
6. If the analysis referred to in Point 4 (4) gives rise to any doubts as to whether the Applicant or the Partner can provide a sufficient warranty for correct use of the Grant, the proposal may be conditionally subject to merit-based evaluation. If such is the case, the Director shall require that the Applicant or the Partner provide additional explanations concerning their legal and organisational and financial situation or submit documents to confirm the same within the prescribed period that cannot be less than 7 days.
7. The merit-based evaluation of proposals submitted to NCN shall be carried out by the Teams and Reviewers.
8. A proposal may also be rejected on formal grounds at the stage of merit-based evaluation, in particular if the deadline referred to in Point 6 is not adhered to or the analysis of the explanations or documents does not dispel the doubts as to whether the Applicant or the Partner can provide a sufficient warranty for correct use of the Grant.
9. At NCN, the merit-based evaluation of funding Proposals under DAINA 2 shall be performed in two stages:
  - 1) at the first stage, Proposals shall undergo a qualification check, based on the data included in the Proposal and annexes thereto. The qualification check shall consist in:
    - a) individual opinions drafted by two Experts working independently;
    - b) additional individual opinions for Interdisciplinary Proposals;
    - c) Team's verdict delivered at the first Session consisting in discussing the individual opinions and establishing a Ranking Long List;
      - approved for the second stage are Proposals whose total forecasted cost is up to twice the value of funds allocated by the Council for DAINA 2 under particular disciplines or groups of disciplines;
      - proposals not recommended for the second stage of merit-based evaluation shall be labelled as follows: C. Proposal not recommended for funding.
  - 2) at the second stage, Proposals shall undergo specialist evaluation, based on the data included in the Proposal and annexes thereto. The specialist evaluation shall consist in:
    - a) individual opinions drafted by at least two Reviewers working independently. Exceptions to the above requirements regarding the number of opinions are admitted for well-justified cases. The reason for the exception shall be reported to the Director by the Coordinator;
    - b) Team's verdict delivered at the second Session consisting in discussing the individual opinions and establishing a List of Proposals Recommended for Funding pursuant to the score and the following recommendations:

- A Proposal recommended for funding
- B Proposal recommended for funding as second choice.
- C Proposal not recommended for funding.

10. The List of Projects Recommended for Funding by the Team shall be the basis for the final Ranking List compiled pursuant to comparison of the results of merit-based evaluation performed by NCN and RCL. Funding in DAINA 2 may be awarded to projects recommended by both NCN and RCL and falling within the budget allocated for DAINA 2 by the Council.

### **§ 8. Team Meetings**

1. The duration of Team Meetings 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 all individual opinions assigned to him/her, the Expert shall be given access to all the other individual opinions drafted within the Team to which he/she was appointed by electronic means.
3. Team Meetings shall be held in the presence of a quorum of more than a half of the Team's members.
4. Team Meetings shall be held by the Team's Chair or Expert appointed in his/her stead.
5. A Coordinator and recording clerk shall participate in every Team Meeting but shall not take part in the voting.
6. In the case of a conflict of interest, the Expert shall have to leave the Meeting room. Exclusion of the Expert on the grounds of a conflict of interest shall not affect the quorum when voting.
7. The minutes shall be kept by the recording clerk and approved by the Coordinator and Team's Chair.

### **§ 9. Evaluation of Proposals at the Team Meetings**

1. All Proposals approved for the merit-based evaluation shall be the subject of analysis and discussion at a Team Meeting.
2. The budget of the Polish part of the research project shall not be changed.
3. Proposals shall be allotted an auxiliary score based on Experts' and Reviewers' individual reviews and, if applicable, auxiliary reviews for the Interdisciplinary Proposals. Furthermore, the Team shall pass recommendations for Proposals: A. Proposal recommended for funding; B. Proposal recommended for funding in the second place; C. Proposal not recommended for funding.
4. Individual opinions shall not be binding upon the Team and shall be treated merely as a point of departure for the discussions on the grade of the Proposal. The Team may establish an auxiliary score.
5. The grade of the Proposal shall be based on the analysis of individual criteria and discussions on the Proposal as compared to other Proposals reviewed under the call.
6. The List of Projects Recommended for Funding by the Team shall be the basis for the final Ranking List compiled pursuant to comparison of the results of merit-based evaluation performed by NCN and RCL. Funding in DAINA 2 may be awarded to projects recommended by both NCN and RCL and falling within the budget allocated for DAINA 2 by the Council.

7. Reviewers' opinions shall not be binding upon the Team, however the Experts must address them.
8. While settling the Proposal's final grade, the Team may fully agree with the Reviewers' opinion, partly agree with it, or disagree with it.
9. Disagreement with the Reviewers' opinion must be accounted for. A Proposal which has been given a zero score in any reviewed criterion or whose evaluation form contains a consulted negative answer to any of the questions therein, with the exception of questions concerning data management, ethical issues or budget of the Lithuanian party, may not be recommended for funding.
10. In the case of the Team's preliminary opinion that the Proposal has been submitted to the wrong panel, the Team shall consider the opinion of the expert performing auxiliary evaluation of the Interdisciplinary Proposal. The proposal which, in the Expert's/ Experts' opinion, may impact both disciplines cannot be rejected on the grounds that it has been submitted to the wrong panel.
11. If the Team cannot find a common position on the evaluation of a Proposal, the Team shall make the decision by way of a vote.
12. Decisions by the Team that should require a vote shall be taken by a simple majority.
13. The Lists of Proposals Recommended for Funding must be approved by an absolute majority vote.
14. The Team shall not be required to distribute the whole funding available. The Team may award recommendations "A" to Proposals whose total funding is up to the value of funds allocated for DAINA 2 by the Council (subject to Point 13) and recommendations "B" to any number of Proposals.
15. The Director may decide to fund a research project, which is partially within the limit of available funds allocated for research tasks funded by NCN provide that it is also recommended by RCL.
16. The List of Projects Recommended for Funding by the Expert Team shall be the basis for the final Ranking List compiled pursuant to comparison of the results of merit-based evaluation performed by NCN and RCL. Funding in DAINA 2 may be awarded to projects recommended by both NCN and RCL.

### **§ 10. Ranking Lists**

1. In exceptional cases, the Coordinator may, having consulted the Team, modify the order of research projects on the List of Projects Recommended for Funding. The modification procedure shall be as follows:
  - 1) the consultation may have the form of circulating a query to all Experts with a justification of suggested modification and time fixed for their response;
  - 2) after the lapse of time fixed for the response, the Coordinator shall decide on the modification, taking into account the opinions received from the Experts and
  - 3) Expert's failure to respond on time shall be deemed as his/ her disagreement with the suggested modification.
2. In the event referred to in Point 1, the Coordinator shall provide the Director with the modified List of Projects Recommended for Funding (together with a written justification) for his approval.
3. The Coordinator shall compile the Ranking Lists compiled pursuant to comparison of the results of merit-based evaluation performed by NCN and RCL and deliver them to the Director for his approval.

4. A Proposal shall only be funded if:
  - 1) it has been recommended by both NCN and RCL and
  - 2) falls within the budget allocated for DAINA 2 by the Council and RCL, subject to §9 (14).
5. In well-justified cases, the Director may, regardless of any doubts arising from the analysis referred to in §7 (4) (4), approve the Ranking List and impose an obligation on the Applicant or leader of the Group of Entities defined in Article 27 (1) (2) of the Act, by way of his decision referred to in Article 33 (1) of the Act, to establish a relevant security for correct use of the Grant (e.g. promissory note, bank guarantee) within the prescribed period.