GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS AND EVALUATORS

LANGSPIL CALL FOR PROPOSALS

bilateral research projects

Basic Research Programme

EEA Grants 2021 – 2028 Poland

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1. INTRODUCTION

The terms and conditions of the Guide for Applicants and Evaluators have been developed on the basis of the Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028. The Guide specifies in detail the responsibilities of the participants in the LANGSPIL call as well as those for the evaluators and is prepared in accordance with the Guideline for Research and Innovation Programmes – Rules for the establishment and implementation of programmes falling under the Programme Area "Research and Innovation".

The Guide for Applicants and Evaluators complements the LANGSPIL Call Document. Both applicants and evaluators are kindly asked to familiarize themselves with the procedures described herein.

English is the main language of communication in the programme, and between the collaborative research teams.

1.1. Legal Basis

- Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2021-2028, Adopted by the EEA Financial Mechanism Committee pursuant to Article 9.4 of Protocol 38d to the EEA Agreement on 7 January 2025 and confirmed by the Standing Committee of the EFTA States on 27 January 2025 ("Regulation");
- Guideline for Research and Innovation Programmes (Programme Area 03) EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2021-2028, Adopted by the Financial Mechanism Committee on 18 July 2025 ("R&I Guideline");
- Bilateral Guideline EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2021 – 2028 ("Bilateral Guideline");
- Guidelines of the Polish Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy on Public Procurement under the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021–2028 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2021–2028;
- Programme Agreement between The Financial Mechanism Committee established by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway and The Department of Assistance Programmes, Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, for the financing of the Programme "Basic Research Programme;
- Act of 30 April 2010 on the National Science Centre (Journal of Laws 2026, item 101);
- Act of 20 July 2018 on the Law of Higher Education and Science, (Journal of Laws 2024, item 1571);
- Act of 27 August 2009 on Public Finance (Polish Journal of Laws 2025, item 1483 as amended, hereinafter referred also as "Public Finance Act");
- Act of 15 June 2012 on the consequences of entrusting work to foreigners staying illegally in the territory of the Republic of Poland (Polish Journal of Laws 2025, item 1567 as amended);
- Act of 28 October 2002 on the liability of collective entities for acts prohibited under penalty (Polish Journal of Laws 2024, item 1822 as amended);
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty (OJ L 187 26.6.2014, p. 1).

1.2. Polish Basic Research Programme

The overall objective of the EEA Grants is to contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in Europe and to strengthen bilateral relations between Poland and the Donor States (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein).

The main objective of the Basic Research Programme implemented by the National Science Centre is to support basic research and research-based innovation, strengthen the foundations for one of the following priorities: the European green transition; democracy, rule of law, human rights; social inclusion and resilience,

and to foster research-based knowledge development through international research cooperation of Polish institutions with entities from the Donor States. The call also encourages projects addressing both social and institutional challenges experienced in connection with the invasion of Ukraine. Supporting the collaborative research projects will foster long-term strategic partnerships and increase the internationalisation of Polish science as well as strengthen the capacity of Polish research teams to successfully participate in European framework programmes in particularly Horizon Europe.

The programme is designed, through competitive and open calls for proposals for research projects, to ensure the quality and high level of research. Under the Basic Research Programme, two main research open calls are implemented: GRIEG BIS, which was launched in June 2026, and LANGSPIL, scheduled for November 2026. Additionally, the programme includes two calls in Coordination & Capacity (C&C) formula: C&C Kick-off (concluded in 2026) and C&C Follow-up (planned for 2029).

1.3. Terms and abbreviations

Basic research – experimental or theoretical endeavours undertaken to gain new knowledge of the foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any direct commercial use;

Interdisciplinary research – *approach that integrates methodologies, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more distinct disciplines to address a research problem and advance fundamental knowledge beyond the framework of a single discipline. The present call requires significant integration of at least two distinct disciplines represented by 26 NCN Panels*[1]*;*

Cooperation Committee – a joint body composed of representatives of the Programme Operator and the Donor Programme Partners that advises on call preparation, reviews and oversees programme implementation and progress, provides guidance on programme adjustments, and takes consensus decisions on matters related to the Programme;

Donor Programme Partner – the Research Council of Norway (RCN) and the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís), agencies responsible for supporting the PO during implementation of the Programme;

Donor States – Iceland, the Principality of Liechtenstein, and the Kingdom of Norway;

Expert Team (Panel) – a body composed of all the individual international experts evaluating proposals submitted in the LANGSPIL call, responsible both for assessing individual proposals and for participating in Team discussions to reach a final consensus;

Partnership Agreement – an agreement between the Project Promoter and the project partner(s) governing the cooperation between them and the implementation of the project;

Programme – Basic Research programme funded under the EEA Financial Mechanism (EEA Grants) 2021–2028;

Programme Operator (NCN) – the National Science Centre, the government executive agency responsible for the management and implementation of the Basic Research Programme in Poland;

Project Partnership – a group of at least two eligible entities formed in order to apply for funding and implement the project;

Project Partner – a member of the Project Partnership taking active part and effectively contributing to the implementation of the project, responsible for deliverables and activities as planned in the project proposal;

Project Promoter (Applicant) – an entity eligible to submit the proposal under the Basic Research Programme;

[1] https://ncn.gov.pl/en/finansowanie-nauki/panele-ncn

Principal Investigator (PI) – a researcher responsible for the scientific lead and coordination of a project submitted under the Basic Research Programme;

Project contract – a signed agreement between the Programme Operator and the Project Promoter acting on behalf of the Project Partnership, setting out the rules according to which the PO provides funding for project implementation, as well as the rights and responsibilities of the Parties;

Results – any knowledge and scientific outputs generated during the project implementation, contributing to the development of a given research field and the advancement of scientific understanding. This may include for example, new theories, concepts, models, methodologies, algorithms, research methods, scientific data and datasets, and any results generated by the action to which access can be given in the form of scientific publications, data or other basic research outcomes. Most project results (e.g. scientific works, methodologies, databases, or discoveries) constitute intellectual contributions that may, where appropriate, be subject to protection under intellectual property regulations;

Selection Committee – a body composed of international experts possessing the relevant expertise and approved by the Cooperation Committee. The Selection Committee is responsible for preparing the final ranking list of proposals recommended for financing.

2. PROGRAMME PRINCIPLES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

2.1. Programme Principles

The following values and principles will apply to all activities supported by the Programme[2]:

- **Respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.** Applicants shall ensure that project activities align with these principles and abstain from actions that could undermine them.
- A **human rights-based approach**, which emphasises participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability, should guide project planning, delivery and monitoring to promote outcomes that are inclusive, responsible and respectful of rights.
- All supported activities must align with **sustainable development principles** and contribute to long-term economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection.

The Programme aims to enhance research quality in Poland, developing knowledge and research based innovative solutions in the three key priorities of the EEA Grants: the **European green transition**; **democracy, rule of law and human rights**; and **social inclusion and resilience**.

Support for polar research, and social sciences and humanities is also highlighted in line with the Memorandum of Understanding.

The Programme focuses on research excellence and support for human capital development, including early-stage and female researchers. The Programme promotes interdisciplinarity, non-academic approaches, and internationalisation of research, particularly through bilateral cooperation with Donor States. It also encourages the valorisation of research results, understood as process of creating social and economic value from knowledge by linking different areas and sectors, transforming data, know-how, and research results into sustainable, services, solutions, and knowledge-based policies that benefit society[3].

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming are core principles of the Programme. Applicants are expected to integrate a gender perspective throughout project design and implementation, ensuring that activities do not reinforce inequalities and that women, men and gender diverse individuals can participate and benefit equitably. Projects should consider gender analysis frameworks and, where relevant, include

[2] https://eeagrants.org/en/fmo/documents-library/blue-book-programme-areas-and-funds-eea-and-norway-grants-2021-2028
[3] Based on: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/eu-valorisation-policy_en

sex-disaggregated data and gender responsive measures. Gender mainstreaming must be considered at all stages of the project cycle to support inclusive, fair and effective results.

Digitalisation is an important crosscutting aspect of the Programme**.** Applicants are encouraged to ensure that any digital solutions developed or used within the project are aligned with the European Declaration of Digital Rights and Principles, which emphasises a human rights-based, people-centred and value-driven approach. Projects should consider both the opportunities and potential risks of digitalisation and demonstrate how proposed activities will contribute to an inclusive, safe, secure and sustainable digital environment.

By promoting the FAIR principles, open access to publications, data and software, as well as responsible research communication, the programme enhances transparency and public trust. Open Science activities will support the digital transformation of research, fostering knowledge dissemination based on verified data, which strengthens social resilience and counters misinformation, contributing to a more informed, cohesive, and democratic society. Thus, the programme fosters a research culture of excellence, openness, inclusiveness, and societal relevance. It encourages cooperation across borders and sectors, promoting values vital for democratic resilience and social cohesion.

2.2. Key priorities of the EEA Grants

According to the Programme Agreement, each project proposal shall address at least one of the three key priorities of the EEA Grants. This means that during the preparation of proposals, applicants should consider the broad societal, technological, and/or environmental challenges that the priorities refer to, explore issues related to them and orient their research in a way that ensures that the project will contribute towards solutions for one or more of the priorities.

The key priorities should not be understood in a narrow sense or as disciplinary limitations. The following descriptions of the challenges are based on Horizon Europe materials and concepts are indicative and non-exhaustive, but **c**an serve as inspiration:

- **European green transition** focuses on shift towards a climate-neutral, environmentally sustainable and circular economy, addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, while ensuring a fair and just transition leaving no one behind. The green transition depends on a broad societal transformation, encompassing technological and digital innovation, public sector innovation, as well as behavioural change and shifts in societal values. This includes raising awareness of social and collective responsibility, building trust in sustainable solutions, supporting their uptake, and facilitating co-creation processes. The green transition aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote renewable energy and energy efficiency, support circular resource use, and restore ecosystems in line with European and international environmental commitments. These challenges require the mobilisation of research and innovation across different sectors, fostering collaboration among actors in areas such as health, urban planning, construction, energy efficiency, mobility, agriculture or food systems.
- The **democracy, rule of law and human rights** priority supports Europe's capacity to uphold inclusive, transparent and accountable governance, protect fundamental rights and freedoms, and strengthen the resilience of democratic institutions. It addresses the interconnected challenges of polarisation, dis/misinformation, corruption, social inequalities and discrimination, helping societies to remain cohesive, rights respecting and able to respond to emerging political, societal and technological pressures. This priority emphasises the development of evidence-based policies, active citizenship, safeguarding the rule of law, the independence and effectiveness of institutions, and the protection of minorities and vulnerable groups. It promotes research and innovation that reinforces democratic governance, advances human-centered approaches to AI and other emerging technologies, strengthens information integrity, improves trust in public institutions, and ensures that

technological and digital transformations are aligned with European values, ethics and fundamental rights.

- The **social inclusion and resilience** priority aims to strengthen Europe's capacity to remain cohesive, fair and adaptable in the face of rapid societal, economic, technological and environmental change. It focuses on inclusive, just and sustainable development, grounded in equal opportunities, social justice, and equitable access to essential services. It highlights the need to understand and reduce structural inequalities and ensure that transitions, such as the green and digital transformations, are fair and leave no one behind. This priority emphasises integration of social innovation with technological, scientific, societal and other forms of innovation to support resilient societies capable of managing uncertainties, addressing vulnerabilities, anticipating and recovering from shock and long-term stresses, and supporting sustainable economic and social transformations. It underlines the importance of social economy actors and new forms of working and collaboration across and within organisations. In this context, it supports research and innovation that integrates co-creation and social innovation to better understand and respond to the diverse needs of citizens and users and promote skills development to meet the future labour-market demands[4].

2.3. Call ambition

The main aim of the LANGSPIL call is to enhance the quality of research in Poland and foster ambitious interdisciplinary cooperations. Furthermore, the call aims to strengthen international collaboration while encouraging meaningful partnerships with non-academic entities as equal project partners.

Expected results of the LANGSPIL call are:

- Promoting an interdisciplinary approach that tackles complex scientific problems by integrating diverse disciplines and advancing fundamental knowledge beyond the scope of a single discipline;
- Enhanced cooperation across academic and non-academic sectors, fostering the integration of research, innovation and practical knowledge, as well as the sharing of good practices and experience between institutions and countries;
- Fostering the meaningful integration of the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Arts Sciences as an essential component of the research apparatus, enabling partnerships to tackle complex and pressing societal challenges;
- Increased engagement of citizens and stakeholders in research and innovation, including public organisations, NGOs or other public benefit organisations, strengthening the relevance, uptake and societal impact of research outcomes;
- Effective knowledge transfer and valorisation of research results as highlighted by the EU Knowledge Valorisation Policy[5], contributing to the creation of social and economic value, evidence-based policymaking and informed public dialogue;
- High-quality international research outputs, including joint publications and other results disseminated in accordance with open science and open access principles as described in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation[6];
- Strengthened research capacity, including the active involvement of early-stage researchers[7] and women in science, supporting their career development through participation in international project teams: as task leaders, carrying out the research needed for their PhD or further career steps, etc.;

[4] European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe strategic plan 2025-2027, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/092911

[5] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/eu-valorisation-policy_en

[6] https://rea.ec.europa.eu/open-science_en

[7] Early-stage researchers are understood as defined in Article 360 section 2 and Article 360 section 3 of the Act of 20 July 2018 on the Law of Higher Education and Science, (Journal of Laws item 1668, 2018), which falls within profile R1 – "First Stage Researcher" or R2 – "Recognised Researcher" as defined in *Council Recommendation of 18 December 2023 on a Framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe*.

- Strengthened research administration capacity building at the institutional level to ensure effective, efficient and compliant implementation of projects funded under this Call (each Project must employ a dedicated Project Manager);
- Strengthened and sustainable bilateral partnerships between Poland and Donor State organisations, increasing their capacity to jointly address societal challenges and to successfully cooperate in future international research and innovation programmes, including Horizon Europe.

2.4. Other conditions to be fulfilled

Transparency, accountability, and cost efficiency shall be applied throughout implementation, together with good governance, partnership and multi-level governance, sustainable development, gender equality and non-discrimination.

Sanctions:

No participating entities can be subject to sanction measures and/or be included in any relevant list, both EU and national, which could in any way constitute a violation of the aforementioned sanction package, in particular the prohibition referred to in Art. 5l of the Council Regulation (EU) No. 833/2014 of July 31, 2014 concerning restrictive measures in connection with Russia's actions destabilizing the situation in Ukraine, and the Law of April 13, 2022 on special solutions to prevent support for aggression against Ukraine and to protect national security, and shall not be associated with persons or entities subject to the sanctions mentioned above. This is also in accordance with the resolution no. 136/2022 of 8 December 2022 by the Council of the National Science Center on collaboration with the Russian Federation within the framework of the NCN-funded grants[8].

Furthermore, the granted funds may not be used in any way, both direct or indirect, to provide support to persons or entities subject to the above-mentioned sanctions.

The total number of NCN projects managed by a researcher and proposals submitted to the NCN and subject to evaluation or recommended for funding, in which that researcher is named as the Principal Investigator must be in line with the NCN Regulations. Research project management applies to the period from the date of signing the funding agreement for a project under an NCN call until the day of submitting the final report on the completion of the research project.

Economic difficulties and irregularities:

Funds may not be awarded to entities which are, at the time of the funding decision procedure, bankrupt or being wound up, convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct, not in compliance with their obligations related 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 entity which has committed an irregularity in the implementation of any other action under financing provided by the European Union, under financial contributions provided by the EFTA States in relation to the EEA Agreement or under Swiss Enlargement Contribution may be excluded from the selection procedure at any time, with due regard being given to the principle of proportionality.

The programme shall fund projects with a civilian purpose, without precluding their potential dual-use applications.

Use of AI in preparation of proposals:

In line with the Horizon Europe Framework Programme, when considering the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the preparation of the proposal, it is imperative to exercise caution and careful

[8] https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/pliki/uchwaly-rady/2022/uchwala136_2022_ang.pdf

consideration. The AI-generated content should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicants to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations. Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal (especially those parts produced by the AI tool).

3. APPLICATION IN THE LANGSPIL CALL

The LANGSPIL call will be implemented through curiosity-driven joint research projects, enabling Polish and Donor State research teams to bring together complementary skills, knowledge and resources to jointly address specific research challenges.

Collaborative research project proposals are invited in all areas of the basic sciences reflected by the list of NCN scientific disciplines, grouped in three research domains[9], i.e. HS, NZ and ST. Research groups within Humanities, Social Sciences and Art Sciences are particularly invited to participate in the LANGSPIL call. Meaningful integration of Humanities, Social Sciences and Art Sciences alongside Physical Sciences and Engineering or Life Sciences in the project proposals will qualify it for additional points, as described in Section 4.3.5.

The Principal Investigator is responsible for selecting the appropriate main discipline panel to which the proposal is submitted. Proposals are evaluated by a multidisciplinary Expert Team, comprising experts from all three research domains.

HS – Humanities, Social Sciences and Art Sciences		**NZ – Life Sciences**		**ST – Physical Sciences and Engineering**	
HS1	Fundamental questions about human existence and the nature of reality	NZ1	Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions	ST1	Mathematics
				ST2	Fundamental constituents of matter
HS2	Culture and cultural production	NZ2	Integrative Biology: from Genes and Genomes to Systems	ST3	Condensed matter physics
HS3	The study of the human past	NZ3	Cellular, Developmental and Regenerative Biology	ST4	Chemistry
HS4	Institutions, markets, space	NZ4	Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing	ST5	Synthetic Chemistry and Materials Science
HS5	Law and political science	NZ5	Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System	ST6	Computer science and informatics

[9] The list of NCN panels: https://www.ncn.gov.pl/en/finansowanie-nauki/panele-ncn

HS6	Human nature and human society	NZ6	Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy	ST7	Systems Engineering
		NZ7	Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases	ST8	Production and processes engineering
		NZ8	Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution	ST9	Astronomy and space science
		NZ9	Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering	ST10	Earth sciences
				ST11	Materials Engineering

3.1. Composition of Project Partnership

Proposals for collaborative research projects shall be submitted by a Partnership comprising (as a minimum) of at least one Polish and at least one Norwegian or Icelandic or Liechtenstein research organisation called the Lead Donor Project Partner. Lead Donor Project Partner should be research organisation approved by RCN or Rannis respectively.

In the case of partnership containing more than one Donor Project Partner, only one of them is considered as Lead Donor Project Partner. The academic and research track record of the researcher representing Lead Project Partner will be evaluated by international experts.

Beyond the minimum condition indicated in the first paragraph, there is no limitation on the number of Project Partners: any public or private entity meeting the eligibility criteria of the call can be a partner. Entities established in third countries can participate, but they cannot receive funding from the project grant.

For each proposal, the Project Partners shall designate a leading entity called the Project Promoter, which has the scientific and administrative responsibility for the project and shall electronically submit the proposal on behalf of the entire partnership. In line with the Article 7.5.3 Regulation, the eligible Project Promoters and partners must respect the values and principles referred to in Article 1.3.1.

The Project Promoter has to be a Polish research organisation. The Project Partners have to supply a Letter of Intent for the implementation of the research project, which has to be submitted together with the proposal.

Please note that adding Project Partners during the project is not allowed.

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.

3.2. Eligibility of Project Promoter

The eligible Applicant (Project Promoter) is a research organisation defined by 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 established as a legal person in Poland. The Article 27 section 1 of the Act on the National Science Centre of 30 April 2010 indicates the eligible entities' catalogue, which may apply in the calls launched by NCN. These are:

1) University
2) Federation of science and HE entities
3) Research institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences
4) Research institute
5) International research institute
   5a. Łukasiewicz Centre
   5b. Institute operating within the Łukasiewicz Research Network
   5c. Centre of Postgraduate Medical Education
6) Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences
7) Entity involved in research independently on a continuous basis (not listed in sections 1-6)
8) -
9) Scientific and industrial centre
10) Research centre of the Polish Academy of Sciences
11) Scientific library
12) Company operating as R&D centre
13) Legal entity established with registered office in Poland
    13 a. President of the Central Office of Measures

Tasks of the Project Promoter

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 Promoter has to sign the Project Contract with the Programme Operator. The Project Promoter is responsible for submitting midterm reports and a final report of the project realisation to the Programme Operator. The Project Promoter (the Applicant) shall employ the Principal Investigator - a researcher responsible for the scientific lead and coordination of a project submitted under the Programme.

3.3. Eligibility of Project Partners

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, Liechtenstein or Norway.

At least one of the Donor Project Partner must be the Lead Partner, which must be approved as research organisation according to the definition for eligibility at the Research Council of Norway or the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannis) respectively.

Please note that the eligible entities are listed in line with the application form.

Polish entities:

For Polish eligible project partners – all institutions listed in sec. 3.2 above are expanded with:

15) Company conducting research in another organisational form than laid down in section 3.2, points 1-13

Norwegian entities:

1) Universities, specialised university colleges, university colleges accredited at the institutional level by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)
2) Organisations covered by the Guidelines for central government basic funding of research institutes and research groups
3) Other organisations covered by the Government's Strategy for Comprehensive Institute Policy

4) Health trusts/hospitals with statutory tasks in research and development and private, non-profit hospitals that are included in the Ministry of Health and Care Services' measurement system for research
5) Other entities in the public sector that are required to carry out research
6) Research organisations approved following an application to the Research Council
7) Other entities (public, private, commercial or non-commercial), as well non-governmental organisations established in Norway

In the case of a Norwegian entity acting as the Lead Donor Partner, only research organisations approved and listed by the Research Council of Norway are permissible (legal statuses from 1 to 6).

The list of approved research organisations in Norway is available on the RCN official website.

For any additional Norwegian entity (Project Partner) participating in the project, statuses 1–6 as well as status 7 (Other) are allowed.

Liechtenstein entities:

8) Entity established as a legal person in Liechtenstein

Icelandic entities:

9) Universities, specialised university colleges, and university colleges accredited in accordance with the Higher Education Institution Act No. 63/2006
10) Research organisations within universities and public research institutions
11) Other organisations that have research as an objective and have been assessed and approved in accordance with the definition of research organisation in the state aid rules and an overall assessment carried out by the Icelandic Centre for Research
12) Other (enterprises, public sector, NGO, or otherwise organizations not covered by 9-11)

In the case of an Icelandic entity acting as the Lead Donor Partner, only statuses from 9 to 11 are permissible. The Icelandic Centre for Research shall confirm that partners from Iceland are permissible.

For any additional Icelandic entity (Project Partner) participating in the project, statuses 9–11 as well as status 12 (Other) are allowed.

3.4. Principal Investigator

For each project, the Project Promoter designates a Principal Investigator – a researcher who provides the scientific lead for the research project on a daily basis. Conditions that must be met by the Principal Investigator include:

- The Principal Investigator must be researcher with at least a doctoral degree in the field related to the project research area;
- The Principal Investigator (of any nationality) has to be employed full time in the Polish Project Promoter, with a permanent position or with a fixed term contract covering at least the duration of the project;
- The Principal Investigator cannot be the authorised representative of the Project Promoter;
- The involvement of the Principal Investigator must be significant and sufficient for proper implementation of the project;
- The Principal Investigator is responsible for monitoring the technical direction and scientific quality of the project and ensures that the project is carried out in compliance with the terms and conditions of the call;
- A researcher can be Principal Investigator for one proposal in the LANGSPIL call only.

Within a calendar year, a person may be named as the Principal Investigator in no more than two proposals, provided that at least one of those proposals has been submitted under a call announced by the NCN in cooperation with foreign research funding agencies. The limitation referred to in the first sentence shall apply to the calendar year in which the call for proposals closes, irrespective of the year in which the call is announced or the proposal is submitted. Proposals ultimately rejected on formal grounds, as well as other proposals where the NCN Regulations so provide, shall not be counted towards the limit referred to above. In the event of a breach of the restriction set out herein, only the proposal submitted first through the OSF system shall be considered.

Furthermore, a person named as the principal investigator in an NCN proposal must not be a person who, at the time of submitting the NCN proposal, is named as the person implementing a research activity in a proposal which has been submitted under the MINIATURA call and for which the funding decision has not become final.

Please note that the evaluators will pay particular attention to the qualification and scientific record of the Principal Investigator in relation to the topic of the project.

In line with the Call ambition described in sec. 2.3 early-stage researchers are encouraged to assume the role of the Principal Investigator in the project. Encouraged measures are subject to additional scoring as described further in sec. 4.3.5.

3.5. Funding and budgeting

3.5.1. General rules

Total allocation for the LANGSPIL Call	€ 12 000 000 / 50 911 200 PLN
Minimum project grant amount	€ 800 000 / 3 394 080 PLN
Maximum project grant amount	€ 1 500 000 / 6 363 900 PLN
Project duration	36 months
Final date for cost eligibility	30.04.2031

Project Promoters and partners are strongly advised to thoroughly assess the Partnership's capacity to implement the project within the applicable final cost eligibility date. The start and end dates for cost eligibility for each project will be specified in the project contract.

The project funding rate shall in all cases be set at a level that complies with the State Aid rules in force. The remaining costs of the project shall be provided or obtained by the Project Promoter and/or Project Partner(s).

The total costs planned by all Donor Project Partners from Donor State(s) should normally not exceed 40 % of the Partnership's total budget.

Please note that there must be no double financing of any part of the project by any other source of funds.

3.5.2. Currency

The currency used for completing the Application form, and payments from the Programme Operator to the Project Promoter, is Polish zloty (PLN). The exchange rate to be used during the preparation and submission of proposals is: **EUR 1 = PLN 4.2426**.

3.5.3. Eligibility of expenditures

Eligible expenditures of projects are those actually incurred as well as expenditures covered by simplified cost options (unit costs, flat rates) by the Project Promoter or project partner(s) within the project, which are in accordance with Chapter 8 of the Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028 and meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the project contract;
- they are connected with the subject of the project contract, and they are indicated in the detailed budget for the project;
- they are proportionate 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;
- For actually incurred cost, 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 applicable tax and social legislation;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable public procurement law; detailed requirements concerning public procurement are described in the Guidelines of the National Focal Point the public procurement.

Expenditures are considered to have been incurred when the cost has 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 be incurred within the dates of eligibility if the costs are paid by the end of the next month after the final date of eligibility. Overheads and depreciation of equipment are considered to have been incurred when they are recorded on the accounts of the Project Promoter and/or the Project Partner.

Please note that any expenditures incurred after **30 April 2031** (the final date of cost eligibility under the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021- 2028) shall not be eligible.

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

The eligibility of expenditures is checked during the proposal evaluation. The evaluators will pay attention to the composition of the budget and reject an application with grossly unjustified costs.

Please note that eligibility of expenditures is also verified during the evaluation of the midterm and final reports and during the external control and audit.

3.5.4. Cost categories

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:

- costs of staff assigned to the project;
- cost of new or second-hand equipment;
- travel and subsistence allowances for staff and participants in the project;
- 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 in case the entity can reclaim the VAT from the national tax authorities in conformity with national indirect tax regulations.

3.5.4.1. Costs of staff assigned to the project

The costs of staff assigned to the project (researchers, master 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.

Only the costs of the actual hours worked by the persons directly carrying out work under the project may be charged. Working time is the total number of hours, excluding holidays, personal time, sick leave, or other allowances. Working time should be recorded throughout the duration of the project by timesheets or suitable time recording system, adequately supported by evidence of their reality and reliability.

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 their costs can only be charged to that activity.

Article 8.6.5 of Regulation introduces a fixed percentage method for calculating staff costs of part-time project employees. Each employee's monthly project involvement is set as a fixed percentage in a formal document. This method eliminates the need for timesheets or separate time tracking, as the percentage already accounts for time worked.

In all other cases, timesheets are required.

Staff costs for Polish partners

Remuneration for Polish members of the scientific team and additional staff supporting the implementation of the project cannot exceed per year:

- PLN 220,000 – the Principal Investigator;
- PLN 190,000 – the Project Partner (the scientist leading the project partner's team);
- PLN 140,000 – the researcher;
- PLN 120,000 – the administrative project manager;
- PLN 100,000 – the person employed as a specialist auxiliary post.

Please note that the above amounts concern 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.

Each Project Promoter must employ a dedicated Project Manager to ensure effective coordination and capacity building at the institutional level. An administrative position can be filled with a maximum of 2 people. Partners from Donor States and other Polish partners may also hire administrative staff - a maximum of 2 persons.

Students and PhD students may be involved in research projects and paid under the remuneration framework described above, NCN scholarships and doctoral scholarships.

NCN scholarships are awarded pursuant to the Regulations for awarding scholarships for NCN-funded research projects laid down in NCN Council Resolution No 25/2024 of 4 March 2024, provided that NCN scholarships shall be deemed ineligible cost if a project is carried out in an entity, for which funding constitutes State aid.

It is recommended that the minimum NCN scholarship amount be at least PLN 3,500 per month.

Doctoral scholarships may be awarded according to the rules laid down in the Act on Higher Education and Science of 20 July 2018 throughout the performance period of the tasks in the project (except when education at the doctoral school is suspended).

Full-time remuneration for a post-doc type position of PLN 140,000 – PLN 210,000 per annum may be planned within the funds for the research project provided that all of the following conditions are met by the person to be employed at that position:

a) they are selected by means of open competition procedure, carried out by a recruitment committee appointed by the head of the project's host entity, composed of the project's principal investigator as its chair and at least two other persons appointed by the principal investigator, who have necessary scientific or professional qualifications. The assessment of the candidates is carried out pursuant to the criteria outlined in the call announcement, subject to an obligatory eligibility criterion according to which a PhD degree must be conferred in the year of employment in the project or within 12 years before 1 January of the year of employment in the project. This period may be extended by a time of long-term (in excess of 90 days) documented sick leave or physiotherapy leaves granted on account of being unfit to work. In addition, the period may be extended by the number of months of a childcare 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 above-mentioned period must not be shortened or extended any longer by call organisers. The call results are posted on the website of the host institution for the project;
b) their PhD degree has been conferred by an institution other than the one employing them at this position. Otherwise, they must have completed a continuous and evidenced research fellowship of at least 9 months during their studies at the doctoral school, doctoral studies or after being conferred their PhD degree at another institution than the participating entity for the project and outside the country in which their PhD degree was conferred;
c) they will be employed for a period of at least 6 months;
d) when the remuneration is paid, they will be receiving no other remuneration paid from the funds granted to research projects under NCN calls under the heading of direct costs;
e) full-time remuneration for a person at a post-doc type post may be planned for a period shorter than the duration of the research project reduced in proportion to the period for which it is planned.

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

a) the natural person is assigned to the project team;
b) 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;
c) the results of the work belong to the Project Promoter or Project Partner; and
d) 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.

<u>Staff costs for Norwegian, Icelandic or Liechtenstein partners</u>
Partners from Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein should use the same rates for personnel costs as in Horizon Europe projects.

Alternatively, some categories of Norwegian partners may instead

use simplified cost options in accordance with Article 8.3.2(b) of the Regulation. This applies to:

1. 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 a simplified cost option. 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.

2. Norwegian universities and university colleges that budget and report their costs to the Research Council of Norway in accordance with the Norwegian Full Cost Model (TDI-model), may use the TDI-model to calculate personnel costs and indirect costs covering:
   - Personnel costs of academic staff, and
   - Personnel costs of other staff directly attributed to the project, excluding technical staff not directly attributed to the project;
   - Indirect costs of general services and research activities, excluding indirect costs of using RIR;
   - Expenditure covered by the abovementioned unit costs cannot be included in other cost categories of the project. Double funding of costs is prohibited.

3.5.4.2. The cost 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.

In the event that 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 the individual item of equipment cannot exceed PLN 500,000 according to the Law on Higher Education and Science of 20 July 2018. This limit is binding on all project partners. Furthermore, the requirements of applicable public procurement law must be complied with.

In the case of the 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's purposes over the entire period of use, only depreciation costs corresponding to the period of the 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 on its own for a period of at least three 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;
- where possible, keeps the equipment properly insured against losses such as fire, theft or other normally insurable incidents both during project implementation and for at least three years following the completion of the project; and
- sets aside appropriate resources for the maintenance of the equipment for at least three years following the completion of the project.

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

3.5.4.3. Travel and subsistence allowances for staff and participants in the project

The travel and subsistence allowances for staff and participants in the project must be in accordance with the applicable national rules. As a general rule, travel costs should be limited to the project's necessities and calculated based on economy class travel on public transport. The Programme will cover real expenses for travel, accommodation, medical insurance and conference fees. For subsistence allowances, the Project Promoter and Partners shall follow the national rules.

Please note that travel and accommodation costs of external experts and service providers should not be included under this heading, but under costs entailed by other contracts awarded by a Project Promoter for carrying out the project.

3.5.4.4. The costs of consumables and supplies

The costs of consumables and supplies must be identifiable and assigned to the project. The type of consumables (reagents, office supplies, small laboratory equipment, etc.) should be indicated, with justification for the estimated total costs. Requirements of the applicable public-procurement law must be complied with.

3.5.4.5. 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.

3.5.4.6. Costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the project contract for each project

Eligible costs arising directly from the requirements imposed by the project contract may include dissemination activities, report by an independent auditor, opening and maintaining a separate bank account by the Project Promoter, Open Access costs, cost of using one's own research infrastructure and equipment, etc., provided that the corresponding services are purchased in accordance with the applicable rules on procurement.

This cost category should also include simplified costs used by the Norwegian partners.

This applies to Norwegian universities and university colleges that budget and report their costs to the Research Council of Norway in accordance with the Norwegian Full Cost Model (TDI-model), may use the simplified cost options (ref. Regulation art. 8.3.2 b) in the form of unit costs to calculate:

Costs attributable to the use of Research infrastructure resources (RIR) covering:

- costs of new or second-hand equipment connected to the RIR;
- costs of consumables and supplies connected to the use of the RIR;
- costs arising from other contracts connected to the use of the RIR;
- indirect costs connected to the RIR;
- expenditure covered by the abovementioned unit costs cannot be included in other cost categories of the project. Double funding of costs is prohibited.

All peer-reviewed scientific publications resulting from the project shall be made available in Open Access immediately upon publication. Open Access may be ensured in one of the following ways: by depositing the publication in a repository for scientific publications or by publishing the research in full Open Access journals.

Please note that costs related to Open Access publishing (APC) are direct eligible costs under the Basic Research Programme.

3.5.4.7. Indirect costs in projects

Indirect eligible costs will be determined by applying a flat rate of 25% of the total direct eligible costs, excluding 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 can include salaries for administrative staff which are not part of staff costs (financial department representatives, acquisitions responsible, PR officer etc).

Norwegian entities using SCOs according to Regulations (Art. 8.3.2 b) are not allowed to apply the 25% flat rate, as it would constitute double- funding.

For entities applying for state aid, indirect costs can be up to 20% of direct costs. Indirect costs include operational costs “Op” (including materials and small equipment, supplies, business trips, visits, and consultations), and other overhead costs “O” (including Open Access costs) directly incurred from project implementation.

3.5.4.8. Subcontracting

As a general rule, the expertise and resources needed to implement a project should be available within the project partnership. However, the subcontracting of 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, opinion survey, testing or analysis of samples, measurements using equipment not available within the partnership, renting labs and research equipment, etc.

Subcontracting is based on business conditions and, therefore, is eligible provided that 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 Partner who must ensure that the subcontractors comply with obligations under the Basic Research Programme.

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

Please note that The Project Promoter and partners may NOT subcontract tasks to each other.

3.5.4.9. Excluded costs

The following costs will not be considered eligible:

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

Additionally, costs for the purchase of land and/or real estate shall not be eligible.

3.5.5. Co-financing requirements

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

Any remaining costs of the project have to 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.

3.5.6. Budgetary flexibility

Applicants should note that during the course of the project, budgetary flexibility is given in order to allow for appropriate project management. Reallocation of funds among the cost categories does not require the prior approval of the Programme Operator and would not result in an addendum to the contract. Cost categories are defined as one of the main sub-heads of the budget which are the cost of staff assigned to the project; the cost of new and second-hand equipment and other costs.

Such reallocation cannot exceed 15% of the total eligible costs of a Project Promoter or Partner and cannot exceed PLN 100.000.

For reallocation above this limit, a 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 unfunded by the Programme Operator, the Project Promoter will be advised in writing.

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

Please note, that 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 Programme Operator.

3.5.7. State aid

If 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 for granting State aid via the National Science Centre (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1381). The Regulation is in accordance with the 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.

State aid under the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education from September 9, 2015, regarding the conditions and procedures for granting public aid through the National Science Centre may be available until June 30, 2027. If a project is qualified for funding and the project contract is signed after June 30, 2027, the entity may be required to submit additional annexes and consider changes to the project related to state aid under the new Regulation.

Please note, that all documents concerning proposals for State aid must be signed with a qualified electronic signature in the PAdES format.

Detailed information can be found in the section State aid.

3.6. Submission of project proposals

3.6.1. General rules and procedures for submission of proposals

The proposals must be written in English, with title and summary also in Polish. The proposals shall be submitted electronically via the OSF submission system available online. To submit an application via OSF the applicant must be registered as a user of the system and follow the instructions given in the OSF system. Only the Project Promoter is authorized to submit a proposal using the username and password.

The application deadline is March 15, 2027, at 14:00, UTC+02:00 (CEST).

Any corrections or revision of proposals after this deadline will not be possible.

Each application has a unique identification code (assigned by OSF) which will remain the same throughout the duration of the project. Any technical issues about using OSF can be resolved by contacting technical support via e-mail (see the link) or by phone (on working days between 8.15 am – 4.15 pm). The contact details are available on the opening page of OSF. Versions of proposals sent on paper, removable electronic storage medium, by email or by fax will not be regarded as having been received by the Programme Operator. You can find details of the proposal submission procedure on the NCN website under the section LANGSPIL – call documentation.

If the applicant plans to submit a proposal in the LANGSPIL call, he/she should:

1) review, in particular, the specimen proposal form, where you can find out about information and the annexes needed to complete the electronic proposal form in OSF;
2) obtain any data from the Project Promoter that is required to complete the proposal and find out about the internal procedures that may affect the proposal and project performance (cost planned in the project, procedure for acquiring signature(s) or authorised representative(s) of the institution to confirm submission of the proposal);
3) draw up:
   - an abstract of the research project as well as a full project description (in English);
   - an abstract of the project for the general public (in Polish and in English);
4) draw up a Letter of Intent for the purposes of completion of the requested research project with Partners;
5) prepare acceptance letters from publishers confirming that the work has been accepted for publication (when the scientific achievements section includes papers accepted for publication that have not been published yet);
6) prepare annexes required in the event that the Project Promoter and/or Project Partner are applying for State aid (See sec. 3.5.7);
7) prepare a statement that the project complies with the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities and the principle of equality between women and men;
8) prepare a statement that the applicant and partners are not excluded from the possibility of receiving funding.

3.6.2. The project application form

The project application form includes the following components:

- General Information
- Project Promoter (Applicant)
- Partners/Collaborators
- State Aid (if relevant)
- Abstract
- Proposal description
- Description for the General Public
- Workplan
- Research Team
- Principal Investigator/leading foreign partner/main Polish partner/partners
- Financial resources – personnel costs, research equipment, other direct costs
- Financial resources – entity/entities
- Ethical Issues
- Data Management Plan
- Administrative Declarations/Certifications

- Experts (potential conflict of interest)
- Individuals involved in the project
- Attachments

4. SELECTION PROCEDURE

4.1. General outline of the selection procedure

Proposals submitted under the LANGSPIL call are evaluated in accordance with the procedure outlined below. Proposals first undergo an eligibility check, followed by a merit-based evaluation. At the merit-based evaluation stage, proposals are assessed by the independent international experts forming a single, multidisciplinary Expert Team. The evaluation process concludes with a meeting of the Selection Committee, which decides on the final list of projects recommended for funding and, if applicable, reserve list. Both Expert Team and Selection Committee are appointed by the Programme Operator.

The evaluation of the proposals submitted to the call includes the following steps:

Eligibility check

1) National Science Centre (NCN) as the Programme Operator checks the proposals against the eligibility criteria listed in sections 3 and 4.2.

Individual expert evaluation

2) Each eligible proposal is sent to three independent international experts (with at least a doctoral degree) based on their closest possible competence in relation to the topic of the proposal and expertise necessary to cover the evaluation criteria set. International experts must be employed by or have an equivalent affiliation with an organization outside Poland and the Donor States.
3) Each expert examines the received proposals individually and independently and submits an evaluation report for each proposal separately through the online submission system OSF by a given deadline. The proposals are evaluated on the basis of their individual merits applying the criteria presented in this guide, according to the principles of confidentiality and the conflict-of-interest rules. The evaluation is done by the expert alone. The use of generative AI tools or any external systems to process, analyze, or otherwise handle proposal content is strictly prohibited. All experts are required to participate in the Panel stage held at the NCN (Kraków, Poland), during which they will discuss their individual evaluations with co-evaluators and perform scoring calibration across all the proposals submitted to the call.

Panel stage – phase 1 (Consensus stage)

4) First, the three experts who read and evaluated each proposal meet to discuss and prepare consensus reports, representing their common view. Each expert has access to the scores and comments of co-evaluators in the OSF online system once they complete their individual assessments. A rapporteur is appointed from among the three experts by the NCN coordinator(s). The task of the rapporteur is to draft the consensus report with the support of the NCN coordinator. The rapporteur is responsible for presenting the consensus report during the Expert Team meeting.
5) After discussions between experts, the agreed scores and comments are set out in the consensus report for each proposal. The NCN Coordinators take part in the consensus meeting and take the necessary steps to assure the quality of the consensus reports. If, during the consensus discussion, it is found to be impossible to bring all the experts to a common stance on any particular aspect of the proposal, the Programme Operator official in charge of the evaluation, may ask additional experts to examine the proposal. If it is still impossible to reach a consensus, the report sets out the experts' majority view but also records any dissenting views, which will be discussed by the entire Expert Team. Preparing the consensus report completes the consensus step of the panel meeting.

Panel stage – phase 2 (Final discussion)

6) The panel stage consists of the meeting of the multidisciplinary Expert Team, and involves all the international experts responsible for the evaluation. The panel review entails a comparison of the consensus reports, checking the consistency of the scores and justifications, resolving cases where the experts could not reach consensus concerning a particular aspect of a proposal and recommending a priority order for proposals with the same score. The panel review culminates with a panel report containing:
   - an Evaluation Summary Report for each proposal;
   - list of proposals found ineligible during evaluation;
   - list of proposals passing all thresholds;
   - list of evaluated proposals having failed one or more thresholds;
   - recommendations for proposals passing to final evaluation;
   - a summary of any other recommendations of the panel.

   Based on the outcome of the panel meeting, the Coordinators of the National Science Centre prepare preliminary ranking list with a requested grant amount for each proposal.

Final decision stage

7) The final step of the evaluation is the meeting of the Selection Committee, which, in accordance with its mandate (see details in sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.5), decides on the allocation of additional points and on the final composition of the list of proposals recommended for funding, as well as the reserve list, if applicable.

4.2. Eligibility check

Proposals must fulfill all eligibility criteria if they are to be retained for merit-based evaluation. The NCN as the Programme Operator will carry out the eligibility check.

Administrative eligibility criteria to be fulfilled are listed below:

a) Proposals must be submitted by an eligible applicant (Project Promoter) – a research organization specified in Article 27 section 1 of the Act on the National Science Centre of 30 April 2010, established as a legal person in Poland. The Applicant shall also meet the criteria of research organizations defined by 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. The Applicant shall employ the Principal Investigator;
b) Lead Project Partners (any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial as well as non-governmental organisations established as a legal person in Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway) has to be approved as research organisation according to the definition for eligibility at the Research Council of Norway and/or the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannis). Entities established in third countries can participate, but they cannot receive funding from the grant;
c) Proposals must meet the criterion concerning the number of Participants – at least one Polish research organisation and one research entity from the Donor State;
d) According to the NCN Regulations, it is not permitted to submit a proposal with the same research tasks that are under evaluation at the same time or have already been funded;
e) Receipt of the proposal before the deadline date and time established in the call announcement. Proposals must be submitted via the electronic proposal submission system OSF before the submission deadline of 16 March 2027, 14.00 CEST;
f) The project implementation period is 36 months;
g) The minimum grant amount is €800,000 (PLN 3 394 080) and the maximum amount is €1,500,000 (PLN 6 363 900) (including overhead costs). The following exchange rate of the Polish National Bank

must be used to calculate whether the project budget in PLN is within the eligible limits 1EUR = 4,2426 PLN;

h) All fields of the proposal application form must be filled correctly;
i) All administrative forms specified in the proposal application form must be present and duly signed by the person(s) authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisation. The Principal Investigator's declaration must be present and signed;
j) Proposals must comply with the language requirements set out in the proposal application form: all fields must be filled in English unless specifically indicated otherwise in the application form;
k) A declaration that the Applicant and project Partners fully respect, adhere to, and actively promote the values and principles referred to in Article 1.3.1 of the Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2021-2028, including but not limited to the respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities;
l) A declaration that the Applicant and Polish project Partners are not excluded from receiving financial support under the following legal provisions:

- *Article 207 (4) of the Public Finance Act,*
- *Article 12(1)(1) of the Act of 15 June 2012 on the consequences of entrusting work to foreigners staying illegally in the territory of the Republic of Poland,*
- *Article 9(1) (2a) of the Act of 28 October 2002 on the liability of collective entities for acts prohibited under penalty*

m) A declaration that the Applicant is not subject to any exclusion, suspension, or disqualification from public funding under the applicable national and international regulations;
n) A statement that the project complies with the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities and the principle of equality between women and men must be signed;
o) A statement that the applicant and partners are not excluded from the possibility of receiving funding must be signed (for more information, please consult section 2.4 of the Guide);
p) The content of the proposal must relate to the scope of the call and address at least one of the programme key priorities;
q) The project budget shall complyonly with the eligible expenditures listed in the documentation of the call.

If it becomes clear at any point in the selection process that one or more of the eligibility criteria have not been fulfilled, the proposal is declared ineligible by the Programme Operator and is withdrawn from further examination. A proposal may also be rejected as not eligible at the stage of merit-based evaluation.

4.3. Evaluation process

The evaluation process rests 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 Programme Operator are treated in confidence;
- **Efficiency** – evaluation, award and contract preparation should be as efficient as possible 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.

4.3.1. Multidisciplinary Expert Team

The proposals will be evaluated by amultidisciplinary Expert Team composed of internationally recognized experts. International experts will be invited to evaluate the proposals that are closely related to their field of expertise. International experts must be employed by or have an equivalent affiliation with an organisation outside the respective Programme Operator and the Donor States.

The pool of potential members of the Expert Team is established by the Council of the National Science Centre for each scientific domain (HS – Humanities, Social Sciences and Art Sciences; NZ – Life Sciences; ST – Physical Sciences and Engineering). Experts are recruited by using the expert identification tools (Elsevier's Experts Lookup, Publons Reviewer Connect, etc.) and from RADAR, which is the National Science Centre's existing database of international experts having experience in evaluating project proposals at international level. The Programme Operator (NCN) draws up a list of appropriate experts using, as main selection criteria, their high level of expertise and their appropriate range of competencies including experience with evaluation of and participation in interdisciplinary research projects. NCN will, whenever possible, take into account the need for a reasonable gender balance among the experts.

The role of the Expert is to perform individual assessment of proposals assigned by the Chair and participate in the Expert Team meeting, including consensus and final discussion stages (see section 4.1).

Among the experts appointed to the Expert Team, a Chair will be appointed by the Council of the National Science Centre. The Chair must have appropriate research experience and be a recognised scientist in their field. In order to ensure the highest quality of work preference will be given,to candidates with prior experience in proposal evaluation for NCN . The role of the Chair is to allocate proposals to Expert Team members for individual reviews and to lead the discussions during the Expert Team meeting.

4.3.2. Evaluation criteria

Each eligible proposal is evaluated with the following evaluation criteria:

Criteria	Description
0: Relevance in relation to the objectives and priorities of the Basic Research Programme, including values and principles in line with Article 1.3.1. of the Regulation	
1: Scientific excellence	
1.1. Evaluation of the scientific excellence of the proposal	Objectives, ambition, methodology
1.2. Evaluation of the research track record of the Principal Investigator and the partnership's members	Qualifications of the PI and research team
1.3. Evaluation of the interdisciplinary character of proposal	Scientific ambition of the interdisciplinary approach; suitability of the selected disciplines for the research problem; degree of integration and added value beyond the development of individual disciplines
2: Quality and efficiency of the implementation and management, including quality and implementation capacity of the applicants and contribution to capacity and competence building	Work plan, risk assessment, composition of the research team, capacity of participants and consortium as a whole
3: Potential impact through the development, dissemination, and use of project results	Pathways to impact, dissemination strategy, communication and exploitation
4: Bilateral dimension	Quality of bilateral cooperation
Costs	Justification of costs
Data Management Plan	Assessment of whether data management has been duly planned

Ethics issues	Assessment of whether ethic issues have been duly planned.

Criterion 0:

The elimination criterion, evaluated as YES/NO. The main content of the proposal must be interdisciplinary basic research (according to the definitions in Section 1.3). Moreover, the project shall contribute towards at least one of the key priorities of the EEA Grants specified in the project documentation. The presence of elements of applied research activity does not lead to the disqualification of a proposal, if the main content is basic research. If the proposal fails to meet the definition of basic research or interdisciplinary research or does not fulfil the program priorities, the experts will select NO and write the justification. During the panel evaluation, proposals failing the criterion of basic research or interdisciplinary research will be discussed and may be excluded from the evaluation. Otherwise, the experts will select YES.

Criterion 1:
For each sub-criterion, an equal weight will be given.

In terms of scientific excellence of the proposal (criterion 1.1), clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state-of-the-art will be assessed. The experts will evaluate soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content, and engagement of citizens, civil society and end users where appropriate.

Evaluation of the track record of the PI and Partners (criterion 1.2) will be assessed in relation to the stage of the career as well as in relation to the topic of the project.

In terms of quality of the interdisciplinary character of proposal (criterion 1.3) Experts will specifically assess:

- to which extent the project delivers genuine interdisciplinarity, rather than a combination of sub-disciplines or closely aligned research fields;
- the complexity and ambition of the research problem and project design, how well suited is the proposed interdisciplinary approach; in particular, the research objectives should be unachievable within the framework of a single discipline;
- Originality and novelty of the integration of involved disciplines, as well as the level of integration and resulting synergy;

Criterion 2:
In this criterion, the quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort allocated to research tasks, and the resources overall will be judged.

Experts will evaluate whether the interdisciplinary elements are reasonably planned and operationally feasible, including the alignment of tasks, methodologies, and timeframes across the different disciplinary components.

Moreover, the capacity and role of each participant, and extent to which the partnership as a whole brings together the necessary complementary expertise to bridge all the disciplines involved and successfully execute the project, will be assessed.

Criterion 3:
Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions due to the project will be evaluated. Experts will specifically assess whether the project is designed to advance state-of-the-art in more than one of the participating disciplines. What is more, the suitability and quality of the measures to maximize expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in

the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities tailored to the respective scientific communities of all involved disciplines, will be assessed.

Criterion 4:
In this criterion, the quality of the bilateral cooperation will be assessed, i.e., its benefits and positive contribution to achieving project's objectives, the role of each Donor project partner(s), the appropriateness of division of tasks and resources. Moreover, the justification of why such bilateral cooperation will enhance the project's excellence due to combined complementary expertise and integrated research work.

Costs:
The elimination criterion, evaluated as YES/NO. The experts will assess the justification of planned costs in terms of the subject and scope of the research. If the costs are grossly unjustified, the experts will decide on the answer NO and the project will be rejected from further discussion.

Data Management Plan:
YES/NO question. It will be assessed if the data management plan was prepared correctly and in accordance with guidelines[10]. The agreed NO answer does not disqualify the proposal from further assessment.

Ethics Issues:
YES/NO question. It will be assessed if the ethics issues have been duly addressed in accordance with the guidelines[11]. The agreed NO answer does not disqualify the proposal from further assessment.

4.3.3. Proposal scoring

Experts examine the issues to be considered comprising each evaluation criterion and score these on a scale from 0 to 5, with short comments. The experts are expected to use the entire range of scores detailed below. Half-point scores may be awarded where applicable under the relevant criteria. The individual scoring and expert's comments provided in the justification will be further discussed during the expert panel meeting.

Score values indicate the following assessments:

0 – The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information;
1 – Poor. The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses;
2 – Fair. While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses;
3 – Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary;
4 – Very Good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible;
5 – Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

To be recommended for funding, the proposal must receive a positive recommendation from the Expert's Team and pass all the thresholds (for each evaluation criterion) at the consensus stage. The final score, scaled to a 20-point scale, is determined using the weighted average method. The weights and thresholds for each criterion are listed below.

[10] https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/pliki/regulaminy/wytyczne_zarzadzanie_danymi_06_2020_ang.pdf
[11] https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/pliki/regulaminy/2023_wytyczne_dla_wnioskodawcow_kwestie_etyczne_ang.pdf

Criteria	Score	Threshold	Weight
0: Relevance in relation to the objectives and priorities of the Basic Research Programme, including values and principles in line with Article 1.3.1. of the Regulation	YES/NO	YES	n/a
1. Scientific excellence 1.1: Evaluation of the scientific excellence of the proposal	0–5	3.5/5	60%
1. Scientific excellence 1.2: Evaluation of the research track record of the Principal Investigator and the partnership's members	0–5	3.5/5	
1. Scientific excellence 1.3: Evaluation of the interdisciplinary character of proposal	0–5	3.5/5	
2: Quality and efficiency of the implementation and management, including quality and implementation capacity of the applicants and contribution to capacity and competence building	0–5	3.5/5	10%
3: Potential impact through the development, dissemination, and use of project results	0–5	3.5/5	10%
4: Bilateral dimension	0–5	3.5/5	20%
Costs	YES/NO	YES	n/a
Data Management Plan	YES/NO	n/a	n/a
Ethics Issues	YES/NO	n/a	n/a

4.3.4. Selection Committee

The Selection Committee is established by the Programme Operator after approval of its members by the Cooperation Committee. Selection Committee is composed of at least five persons possessing the relevant expertise, including the Chair of Expert Team and at least one Expert Team member representing each domain - HS, ST, and NZ, and at least one Expert Team member with experience in non-academic cooperation. Selection Committee members with shall be external to the Programme Operator and Donor programme Partners.

Representatives of the Programme Operator, Donor Programme Partners, Financial Mechanisms Office, the embassies of the Donor States, and the National Focal Point can participate in the meetings as observers.

The tasks of the Selection Committee include:

a) discussion and awarding additional points to individual applications under the additional scored criteria, in accordance with the rules set out in sec. 4.3.5;
b) deciding on the order of equally scored proposals in the case of insufficient funds to finance them all (subject to provisions in sec. 4.4);
c) deciding on the necessary modifications to the proposal indicated in consensus reports (i.e. budget cuts) - in the event that the final ranking list, approved by the Selection Committee, reveals that limitations in the amount of funding prevent the full inclusion of another project into the final ranking

list, the Programme Operator may, acting on a proposal from the Selection Committee, apply uniform budget reductions across all projects, not exceeding 3% of the requested amount;

d) deciding on the necessary modifications to the proposal as a result of the eligibility check of the costs by the Programme Operator;
e) deciding on the total number of proposals recommended for funding taking into account the overall quality of the evaluated proposals and indicative call budget, including reserve list (if applicable);
f) approves a final ranking list of proposals for funding together with the reserve list (if applicable).

4.3.5. Additional points

In line with the competencies of the Selection Committee outlined in sec. 4.3.4., during the committee meeting each proposal achieving the defined thresholds will be subject to further discussion with regard to the three additional criteria presented in the table below, aligned with the objectives of the programme, each worth 0.5 points. Fulfilment of the conditions of the additional criteria may result in the award of up to one and a half additional points in total.

Criterion	Description	Score
PI is an early-career stage researcher	Early-stage researcher status in line with definition provided in section 2.3; granted based on information indicated by the Project Promoter in relevant part of the Project Proposal.	0.5
Project is led by the female/male researcher from the under-represented research area	Project is led by a female/male researcher from an under-represented research area, in line with NCN's calls statistical data provided by the Programme Operator.	0.5
Involvement of non-academic partners	Project involves at least one non-academic partner who is essential to the successful execution of the project. In particular: • proposal clearly demonstrates the intended basic research objectives could not be fully realized through academic means alone, and the unique input, data, facilities, methodologies, or practical expertise of the non-academic partner is crucial. • The non-academic partner is an equal partner across the project lifecycle and takes direct responsibility for specific, well-defined tasks or work packages. • Non-academic involvement directly supports and enriches the core scientific research process, rather than serving solely commercial, operational, or practical outcomes. **Exclusions:** Passive consultation, ad-hoc advisory roles, general endorsement, service provision (outsourcing), or simple dissemination and communication activities do not constitute **scientific partnership** and will not qualify for additional points.	0.5
Intergration of Humanities, Social Sciences and Art Sciences (HS)	Project meaningfully integrates perspective, methodologies, or research questions from the Humanities, Social Sciences and Art Sciences (HS) alongside other research domains (Physical Sciences	0.5

	and Engineering - ST, or Life Sciences - NZ). In particular: • the HS elements are essential to achieve research objectives; • concepts and analytical tools from HS actively shape and enrich the overall research design and realization, rather than playing a peripheral role; • the project has potential for significant impact in both HS and the partnering disciplines.	

4.4. Final ranking list

The responsibility of the Selection Committee is to decide on the final ranking list of proposals on the basis of the Evaluation Summary Report provided by the Expert Team and the additional points awarded under the additional criteria.

While making a recommendation for funding, the Selection Committee additionally, takes into consideration the total budget for the call and the principles and key priorities of the EEA Grants and the call's ambitions. In the event that the final ranking list, approved by the Selection Committee, reveals that limitations in the amount of funding prevent the full inclusion of another project into the final ranking list, the Programme Operator may, acting on a proposal from the Selection Committee, apply uniform budget reductions across all projects, not exceeding 3% of the requested amount. The Selection Committee may recommend additional projects for reserve lists. Proposals recommended for the reserve list may be funded if additional budget becomes available.

4.5. Confidentiality and conflict of interest

International experts (serving on Expert Team) and Selection Committee members sign a contract in advance with the Programme Operator, which includes a statement on confidentiality and conflict of interest. All individuals involved in the evaluation process are required to sign a declaration that no such conflict of interest exists at the time of their appointment and that they undertake to inform the Programme Operator if one should arise in the course of their duties. When informed, the Programme Operator takes all the necessary actions to remove the conflict of interest. Additionally, all experts are required to confirm that they have no conflict of interest for each proposal that they are asked to examine at the moment of the evaluation.

4.5.1. Confidentiality

By joining the Expert Team/Selection Committee evaluating proposals submitted within the LANGSPIL call, each expert agrees to the following principles:

- full confidentiality must be maintained regarding all information contained in the reviewed proposals, including the names of applicants, the proposal content, and any materials or discussions related to the evaluation process;
- information obtained from proposals may be used exclusively for the purposes of the evaluation process;
- withdrawal from the evaluation process does not release the expert from the obligation to maintain confidentiality;
- proposals must not be discussed with anyone outside the Expert Team/Selection Committee; discussion with other members of the Expert Team is permitted only during official panel or committee meetings;
- the use of generative AI tools or any external systems to process, analyze, or otherwise handle proposal content is strictly prohibited;

- the evaluation is expected to represent the independent work of the Expert; a confidentiality declaration confirming adherence to these principles must be signed.

4.5.2. Conflict of Interest (CoI)

The impartiality of international experts must be beyond any doubt. By signing the declaration, each expert (including members of the Expert Team and Selection Committee) confirms their commitment to the Code of Ethics for Experts of the NCN. Experts are expected to avoid situations in which previous relationships or experiences could, knowingly or unknowingly, influence their judgment and compromise an objective review. Any situation in which an expert is unable to make an objective decision due to a real or perceived bias arising from personal or institutional connections with the Principal Investigator named in the proposal is considered a conflict of interest (CoI).

Before accepting an invitation to review a proposal, potential CoI must be assessed. An expert is required to disclose any CoI related to a proposal assigned to them and to withdraw from its evaluation.

In such cases, the expert does not take part in the discussion or in voting on the proposal and must leave the meeting room during the discussion. It is the expert's responsibility to identify and declare any potential CoI. In case of doubt, consultation with the coordinator is recommended.

An expert will be excluded from the evaluation process if any circumstances exist that may affect impartiality or the reliability of their review. CoI may, in particular, arise from the following types of relationships:

- personal relations
  - the expert is married to, or related by blood or affinity up to the second degree to, any applicant;
  - the expert has a legal relationship with the applicant (e.g., custody, power of attorney);
  - the expert has a personal conflict or a close personal relationship with the applicant;
- professional relations
  - the expert is, or has been within the last three years, employed at the same research unit or department from which the proposal originates or where the applicant is employed;
  - the expert is, or has been within the last three years, a line manager or direct supervisor of the applicant;
  - the expert is employed at an institution with which collaboration is envisaged under the evaluated proposal;
  - the expert is an associate or regular collaborator of the entity submitting the proposal;
- scientific relations
  - the expert has acted as the applicant's supervisor or mentor;
  - the expert has co-authored publications or participated in research cooperation or joint projects with the applicant within the three years preceding the submission deadline;
  - the expert is in direct research competition with the applicant or has conflicting scientific interests;
- economic or financial relations
  - the expert could directly benefit financially from the acceptance or rejection of the proposal;
  - the expert may gain personal or institutional financial advantages, or suffer losses, as a result of the proposal outcome;
- other situations
  - the expert has been involved in drafting the proposal;
  - the expert is, or has been, involved in the implementation of a research project, doctoral scholarship, or postdoctoral fellowship related to the proposal;
  - other significant circumstances exist that may compromise the expert's impartiality or credibility in evaluating the proposal.

The cases listed above do not exhaust all possible situations that may constitute conflict of interest. If, during the evaluation process, any circumstance arises that may affect an expert's impartiality or the reliability of their assessment, the Expert is expected to immediately inform the coordinator.

4.5.3. Inability to perform obligations and termination

When a disqualifying conflict of interest is reported by the expert or established by the Programme Operator on the basis of any available source of information, the expert shall not evaluate the proposal concerned.

When a potential conflict of interest is reported by the expert or brought to the attention of the Programme Operator by any means, the Programme Operator will consider the circumstances of the case and will decide, on the basis of the objective elements of information at its disposal, on the existence of a disqualifying conflict of interest. If such a disqualifying conflict is established, the expert will be excluded from the evaluation process.

5. CONTRACTING

5.1. Funding decision

The Programme Operator issues individual decisions to award a grant to projects based on the final ranking lists approved by the Selection Committee, for those projects for which grants are available. The decisions of the Director of the National Science Centre are submitted to the Project Promoter and to the Principal Investigator. The decision of the Director may be appealed against to the Appeal Committee of the Council of the National Science Centre according to the appealing procedure available on the NCN website[12].

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 selected projects are published on the Programme Operator website.

5.2. Appeals

Project Promoters who wish to appeal the final results may send their complaints directly to the Programme Operator headquarters, within 14 days from the date of receiving the decision of the Director of the National Science Centre. The obtained appeals of the Project Promoters are proceeded by the Appeal Committee of the Council of the National Science Centre. The Appeal Committee issues a decision to grant or to refuse to grant funds. The final decision about registered appeals will be made by the Programme Operator after consulting with the Cooperation Committee members.
The decision of the Council Appeal Committee may be appealed against the administrative court.

Please note that any merit aspects of the project assessment, such as comments and scores given by experts, will not be subject to appeals. Grounds for appeals include conflicts of interest and errors in administrative procedure.

5.3. Partnership agreement

The Project Promoter must sign a Partnership Agreement with the project partner(s) before signing the project contract with the Programme Operator.

The Partnership Agreement template is based on the Horizon Europe (DESCA) model and available on RCN's website.

Project Promoter should consider any updates to the document template. All project partners should ensure the timely preparation and negotiation of the Partnership Agreement provisions so that the process of signing the project contract does not lead to delays in project implementation.

When the Project Promoter submits the partnership agreement to the Programme Operator, it must document and justify any deviations from the template.

[12] https://www.ncn.gov.pl/en/finansowanie-nauki/informacje-dla-wnioskodawcow/instrukcja-odwolania

5.4. Project contract

After the funding decision is issued, Project Promoter is required to fulfil any conditions on the award of funding as suggested by the Selection Committee. Programme Operator may request changes, including modification of the budget (e.g. shifts between budget items, new budget items, deletion of budget item etc.), in accordance with the funding decision. Programme Operator may request further administrative, legal, technical or financial information necessary for the preparation of the project contract.

The contract template will be available on the Programme Operator's website at the latest by the time the call results are announced.

Please note that the amount of funding indicated in the funding decision cannot be increased.

With regard to each grant, a trilateral Project contract between the National Science Centre, the Project Promoter acting on behalf of all Project partners on the basis of the Partnership Agreement referred to in section 5.3 and the Principal Investigator will be concluded for the term of the grant.

The project contract will set out the terms and conditions of grant assistance, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the parties. It will in particular, include provisions that ensure that the Project Promoter undertakes to comply fully with the provisions of the legal framework of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028 referred to in Article 1.5 of the Regulation that is relevant for the implementation of the project, including any obligation that is valid after the project has been completed.

The Programme Operator shall specify the procedure and the deadline for signing the project contract. This deadline may be extended with the approval of the Programme Operator.

Failure by the Project Promoter to meet the deadline specified by the PO shall be considered a withdrawal from the concluding of the project contract. In such a case, the Director of the PO issues a decision concerning declaration of the expiration of the previous funding decision.

The Project contract will contain an explicit reference to the programme agreement and the Regulation and, as a minimum, provisions on the following:

a) the obligation regarding reporting that enables the Programme Operator to comply with its reporting obligations to the FMC and the National Focal Point;
b) the maximum amount of the project grant in PLN and the maximum project grant rate;
c) the eligibility of expenditures and requirements regarding submission of proof of expenditures or proof of conditions fulfilled;
d) the forms of grants for all costs in the project and their calculation method, as referred in Article 8.3;
e) the first and final dates of eligibility of expenditures;
f) modifications of the project;
g) ensuring that the access requested in relation to monitoring, audits and evaluations is provided without delay;
h) ensuring that obligations regarding information and communication are complied with;
i) the right of the Programme Operator to suspend payments and request reimbursement from the Project Promoter in case decision on such actions is taken by the FMC, Programme Operator or the National Focal Point;
j) the resolution of disputes and jurisdictions;
k) a detailed budget, which may allow for up to 5% contingency and which foresees flexible rules for shift between budget headings;
l) a reference to partnership agreements.

The project contract shall include provisions that ensure that project partners are informed sufficiently in advance of all provisions of the project contract that are relevant for them and all modifications to the project contract that affect them.

6. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

6.1. Payment model

The payment model will be based on advance payments made by the Programme Operator to the Project Promoter. The Project Promoter will then be responsible for transferring the funds to the Project partners.

Payments towards the projects shall be in the form of tranches. The first tranche (advance payment) shall be paid after the signature of the contract. Subsequent tranches (interim payments) shall be transferred according to a pre-defined schedule based on the annual project budget contained in the project contract.

The payments shall be made once a year, each corresponding to the planned annual project budget.

The condition for payment of funds for the following year is that the Project Promoter submits a declaration of expenditure showing at least 70% of the funds received in the previous payment (s) has been reported as incurred in the date stipulated in project contract. The payment is issued within 15 days of the positive verification of the declaration of expenditure.

The Programme Operator will ensure the timely transfer of those payments. The Project Promoter is obliged to open and maintain a separate bank account indicated in the project contract. The Project Promoter must ensure that all payments to the other project partners are made without unjustified delay, and not later than 30 days after the Project Promoter has received payment from the Programme Operator.

The Project Promoter and project partners are obliged to maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all transactions relating to the project without prejudice to national accounting rules.

Payments to the Project Promoter will be made in PLN by the Programme Operator through Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego (BGK) system in accordance with the payment schedule of the European Funds budget for the given year.

Donor project partners shall receive payments in a currency that their banks can support, relevant provisions in Partnership Agreement should be agreed between the Project Promotor and Donor project partners.

The Programme Operator shall monitor the level of incurred expenditure and amend the annual budget annexed to the project contract when appropriate. The payment model will be specified in the project contract.

6.2. Verification of payment claims

The Project Promoter and project partners shall document all costs incurred in connection with the implementation of the project, in the form of invoices or, alternatively, accounting documents of equivalent probative value. Each original accounting document must be annotated. Documents must be retained in compliance with national and EU regulations.

The verification of costs incurred will be carried out as part of the assessment of midterm and final reports. On top of the above, on-the-spot verifications of projects, which may be carried out on a sample basis, will be carried out by the Programme Operator.

Accounting documents (invoices etc.) must be kept at the premises of Project Promoter and project partners and will be checked during on-site verifications/audit of the project or upon request in case of required clarification.

6.3. Proof of expenditure

Project Promoters and project partners may submit proof of expenditure for incurred costs by way of:

- a report by an independent auditor qualified to carry out statutory audits of accounting documents, certifying that the claimed costs are incurred in accordance with this Regulation, the national law and relevant national accounting practices; or
- a report issued by a competent and independent public officer recognised by the relevant national authorities as having a budget and financial control capacity over the entity incurring the costs and who has not been involved in the preparation of the financial statements, certifying that the claimed costs are incurred in accordance with this Regulation, the relevant law and national accounting practices.

Proof of expenditure shall not be submitted where the total eligible costs reimbursed by the grant to the respective Project Promoter or project partner does not exceed EUR 430,000.

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 3 b) 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 to or greater than PLN 2 million. A joint report is prepared for the Project Promoter and all Polish project partners irrespective of the amounts budgeted for individual entities. The audit confirms that the declared expenditures have been incurred in compliance with, the Regulation, Polish legislation, accountancy practices and project contract. The PO evaluates if the audit recommendations have been fulfilled.

In case the Project Promoter and Polish project partners are not required to conduct the aforementioned project audit, the obligation to submit proof of expenditure still applies where the total eligible costs reimbursed by the grant to the respective partner will be EUR 430.000 or more.

The cost of the audit reports (both on Polish and Donor State partners side) are eligible costs, provided that the audit commenced after completion of at least 60 % of the planned expenditure related to project implementation and ends on the completion date of the project. Costs of audit should be planned for in the project's budget if planned requested funding in project proposal already exceeds limits mentioned above. Where proof of expenditure or Polish audit are required, they shall be submitted once with the final report.

6.4. Proof of conditions fulfilled for simplified cost options

Where simplified cost options are concerned, settlement of expenditure is carried out on the basis of fulfilment of conditions. This depends on the type of simplified cost option used. Where the flat rates are used, the proof of conditions fulfilled depends on the form of the basis costs:

- in case the basis costs take the form of actual costs it should be part of proof of expenditure; the fulfilment of the condition is that the incurred costs are eligible and meet the proof of expenditure requirements for real costs;
- in case the basis costs take the form of unit cost, the fulfilment of the condition is that the said unit costs have been correctly established and correctly applied;
- In case of staff costs calculated in the form of unit costs (hourly rates), these will include documents confirming the method of calculating hourly rates and documents confirming the hours worked by particular person). In case of Research infrastructure resources (RIR) unit costs, these should be the registered use of each RIR on the project, whether it they are user-hours, provided services or otherwise defined.

Proof of conditions by Project Promoter and project partners shall not be submitted where the total eligible costs respective project promoter or project partners do not exceed EUR 430.000. Where proof of conditions or Polish audit are required, they shall be submitted once with the final report.

6.5 Reporting

6.5.1 Midterm reporting

During the course of the project, the Project Promoter submits one midterm (interim) report at the date set out in the project contract.

The interim report must comprise:

- an explanation of the work carried out by the project partners;
- an overview of the progress of work towards the objectives of the project, including milestones and deliverables identified in the project contract;
- explanations justifying any deviations between the carried out work and the planned work according to the project contract and suggestions on updates of the planned work if necessary;
- an update and explanation of critical risks to the project, including foreseen risks, unforeseen risks and the state of play for mitigation measures;
- details on the exploitation and dissemination of the results, including status on the pathways to impact, and the amended data management plan;
- a summary suitable for a general audience for publication by the Programme Operator; and
- a financial summary from the project promoter presenting the financial progress of the project.

In addition, the Programme Operator conducts a midterm review based on the interim report. The midterm review shall be conducted with a focus on providing guidance on the technical and scientific implementation of the projects.

The midterm review shall take the form of a dialogue between international experts and the project promoter and project partners. If there are implementation issues related to the national context, national experts may also be invited to join the dialogue.

Depending on the needs and capacities of all parties involved, the Programme Operator will determine the format of the dialogue, including whether it will be conducted in person or digitally.

6.5.2 Final reporting

The Project Promoter submits a final report within 60 days after the project's end as stipulated in the project contract.

This final report must comprise:

- a final technical report containing:
  - an overview of the results of the project;
  - a description of the foreseen impact of the project, including the pathways to impact, socio-economic impact and its wider societal implications;
  - a summary suitable for a general audience for publication by the Programme Operator; and;
  - a full list of publications relating to the results of the project.
- a final financial report containing:
  - a 'final financial summary' from the project promoter covering the whole project;
  - distribution of the financial contribution between the project promoter and project partners;
  - distribution of the financial contribution between the Project Promoter and Project Partners;
  - proof of expenditure and/or proof of conditions for each partner, if required.

6.6. Durability of projects

For the projects funded under the LANGSPIL Call, the period of minimum post-completion operation shall be at least 3 years from the date of acceptance of the final project report by the Programme Operator.

6.7. Reporting on scientific publications

During and after the project, the Project Promoter provides references and an abstract of all scientific publications relating to the results of the project.
As part of the final project report, the Project Promoter will be required to submit a full list of publications relating to the results of the project.
All peer-reviewed scientific publications resulting from the project shall be made available in Open Access immediately upon publication. Open Access may be ensured in one of the following ways: by depositing the publication in a repository for scientific publications or by publishing the research in an Open Access journal.

Please note that Open Access costs are direct eligible cost under the 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 EEA Financial Mechanism:

"The research leading to these results has received funding from the EEA Grants 2021-2028 operated by National Science Centre under Project Contract No xxx.".

6.8. Other requirements

Proposals selected for funding under the LANGSPIL Call shall submit following documents before the signature of the project contract:

- a communication strategy, and
- a project indicator table.

In line with the Regulation, a Project Promoter implementing a project with a total project budget larger than EUR 1 000 000 shall organise at least one information activity on progress, achievements and/or results in the project. Additional communication related requirements will be indicated in the project contract. Project Promoter should familiarise themselves with the communication requirements available at the official FMO website.

6.9. Programme documents

All Programme documents are available on the Programme Operator's website.

6.10. Contact information

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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 LANGSPIL call. We will endeavour to answer your questions sent by e-mail as soon as possible, within 7 working days at the latest. Answers to the questions will be published in the FAQ to ensure equal access to information for all applicants.

In case of specific issues concerning applicants from Norway, the Donor Programme Partner in the Basic Research Programme is **the Research Council of Norway (RCN)**:

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