

**Order No 74/2024
of 23 December 2024
by the Director of the National Science Centre
laying down the proposal evaluation procedure by Expert Teams
under SHENG 4 Polish-Chinese Funding Initiative**

Pursuant to Article 30 (3) of the Act on the National Science Centre of 30 April 2010 (Journal of Laws 2023, item 153) and pursuant to Article 2 (3) of Annex 1 to the Organisational Regulations of the National Science Centre's Office and according to the tasks of the Scientific Coordinators of the National Science Centre, as laid down in Order No 66/2022 of 28 October 2022, it is hereby decided as follows:

§ 1

The proposal evaluation procedure by Expert Teams under the SHENG 4 Polish-Chinese Funding Initiative shall be laid down and annexed hereto.

§ 2

This Order shall apply to the evaluation procedure of proposals submitted to the SHENG 4 Polish-Chinese Funding Initiative launched by the National Science Centre on 16 December 2024.

§ 3

This Order shall enter into effect on the date of signing.

Director of the National Science Centre

Annex 1
to the proposal evaluation procedure under
SHENG 4 of 23 December 2024

The Order shall lay down the proposal evaluation procedure by the Expert Teams under the SHENG 4 Polish-Chinese Funding Initiative

§ 1

Whenever this Order refers to:

- 1) NCN, it shall mean the National Science Centre;
- 2) Council, it shall mean the Council of the National Science Centre;
- 3) Director, it shall mean the Director of the National Science Centre;
- 4) NSFC, it shall mean the National Natural Science Foundation of China;
- 5) Coordinator, it shall mean the scientific coordinator for the purposes of Article 2(5) of the Act on the National Science Centre of 30 June 2010 (consolidated text in Journal of Laws 2023, item 153, hereinafter: the "Act");
- 6) Team, it shall mean an Expert Team defined in Article 18 (7) of the Act, responsible for the evaluation of proposals submitted to the Call. The NCN Director shall establish:
 - a) Panel Teams which shall mean teams established for each panel specified in the respective Council Resolution, i.e. falling under the domains of Humanities, Social Sciences and Art Sciences (HS), Life Sciences (NZ) and Physical Sciences and Engineering (ST);
 - b) Inter-Panel Teams which shall mean teams established under a given research domain, i.e. HS, NZ or ST; and
 - c) Inter-Domain Teams which shall mean teams comprising Experts representing different research domains, i.e. HS, NZ and ST;
- 7) Chair, it shall mean a Team member appointed by the Council to manage the work of the Team;
- 8) Review, it shall mean a descriptive and justified proposal review drafted by an Expert or a Reviewer pursuant to the call documents;
- 9) Expert, it shall mean an expert team member;
- 10) Reviewer, it shall mean an external expert defined in Article 22(2) of the Act, who drafts an individual review of the proposal at stage II of merit-based evaluation and who is not an expert team member;
- 11) Proposal, it shall mean a proposal submitted to SHENG 4;
- 12) Interdisciplinary Proposal, it shall mean a proposal which contains at least one auxiliary NCN Review Panel other than the one to which the proposal was submitted and which has been identified by the Chair as requiring an additional individual review;
- 13) Meeting, it shall mean an individual day in an Expert Team's session;
- 14) Session, it shall mean all meetings of the Expert Team at a given stage of the merit-based evaluation;
- 15) Edition, it shall mean calls of the National Science Centre with deadlines expiring on the same date;

- 16) Ranking Long List, it shall mean a ranking list of proposals evaluated at stage I of the merit-based evaluation with an indication of proposals recommended for stage II of the merit-based evaluation;
- 17) List of Projects Recommended for Funding, it shall mean a list of projects recommended for funding by the Expert Team;
- 18) Ranking List, it shall mean the final list of projects recommended for funding by the NCN and the NSFC, compiled pursuant to comparison of the results of merit-based evaluation performed by the NCN and the NSFC;
- 19) Grant, it shall mean a research project awarded funding by the NCN Director pursuant to his decision issued under Article 33 (1) of the Act;
- 20) Applicant, it shall mean an entity submitting a proposal;
- 21) Participating Entity, it shall mean the entity identified in the proposal as a grant recipient for the purposes of Article 31(5) of the Act; and
- 22) Partner, it shall mean a member of the group of entities for the purposes of Article 27(1)(2) of the Act.

§ 2. General Provisions

1. Experts shall be selected by the Council pursuant to the document: *Expert teams of the National Science Centre: formation and appointment* and shall be appointed by the NCN Director.
2. Teams shall be formed for each call Edition. They shall evaluate Proposals submitted to one or several calls in a specific panel or groups of panels.
3. The number of Experts and composition of the Team shall be decided upon by the Council, considering the number and subject of Proposals under evaluation and the need to carry out the call efficiently.
4. A Team shall consist of at least five Experts.
5. The work of an Expert Team shall be managed by the Chair appointed by the Council.
6. During the Meetings, the Chair may appoint another Expert to manage the work of the Team in their stead. Should the Chair be unable to appoint such an Expert, they shall be appointed by the Coordinator.
7. The Experts shall be bound by the ethical rules laid down in the *Code of ethics for experts of the National Science Centre*.
8. The Coordinator shall exclude an Expert from the Proposal evaluation procedure in the event of a conflict of interest or justified suspicion of a bias in the Expert's actions.

§ 3. Teams

1. The duties of the Teams shall include:
 - 1) evaluation of Proposals, including the individual Reviews;
 - 2) compilation of a list of Proposals recommended for stage II of evaluation; and
 - 3) compilation of Ranking Lists and specifying Proposals recommended for funding.

§ 4. Coordinators

1. The duties of a Coordinator shall include:
 - 1) running eligibility checks on Proposals;
 - 2) providing the Chair with the list of Proposals in which at least one auxiliary NCN Review Panel has been specified from another panel or group of disciplines than the one to which the Proposal was submitted;
 - 3) naming Experts to draft individual Reviews in the event of the Chair experiencing a conflict of interest;
 - 4) naming additional Experts to evaluate Interdisciplinary Proposals; additional Experts shall be appointed from among other Teams established to evaluate Proposals in the same call Edition;
 - 5) organising Team Meetings, including:
 - a) summoning Meetings and participating in them;
 - b) verifying the conformity of the Meeting minutes drawn up by the Recording Clerk with the actual course of the Meetings and Team's resolutions;
 - 6) selecting Reviewers, taking into account the candidacies put forward by the Experts;
 - 7) assessing the accuracy and impartiality of the reviews drafted by the Experts and Reviewers; and
 - 8) compiling the Ranking Lists by comparing the results of merit-based evaluation performed by the NCN and NSFC and presenting them to the Director for his approval.
2. Coordinators shall organise the Team's work and cooperate with the Chair.

§ 5. The Chair

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

§ 6. Experts

1. The duties of the Experts shall include:
 - 1) drafting individual Reviews on Proposals assigned by the Chair or Coordinator at stage I of the merit-based evaluation and presenting them during the first Session;
 - 2) drafting a second review of the Interdisciplinary Proposal at the Coordinator's request;
 - 3) participating in the Meetings, as well as:

- a) drafting justifications for the final grades of the Proposals they have been assigned during the Meetings;
- b) putting forward the candidacies of at least five Reviewers to provide their opinion on each Proposal they reviewed at the stage I of merit-based evaluation and which has been approved for the stage II of evaluation; and
- c) presenting individual Reviews by Reviewers regarding the Proposals they have been assigned during the second Session.

§ 7. Evaluation of Proposals

1. An eligibility check and merit-based evaluation of Proposals submitted to SHENG 4 shall be performed in parallel by the NCN and NSFC.
2. Eligibility check of proposals submitted to the NCN shall be performed by the Coordinators.
3. Eligibility check of proposals submitted to the NCN shall comprise:
 - 1) verification of the Proposal for completeness,
 - 2) verification whether the Proposal complies with the call text,
 - 3) verification whether the costs of the Polish part of the project laid down in the NCN proposal and JPD comply with the terms of SHENG 4;
 - 4) verification whether the information in the JPD comply with information in the Proposal;
 - 5) for Applicants outside of the public finance sector or Applicants that do not receive any institutional core funding for research, analysis of their legal, organisational and financial situation to assess whether they can provide a sufficient warranty for correct use of the Grant; the analysis shall focus on the period of the Applicant's continuous research, examination of the Applicant's assets, including availability of the relevant research, administrative and office infrastructure as well as examination of the Applicant's statutory documents. In the case that an individual applies, the Participating Entity shall undergo the analysis and in the case that a Group of Entities applies, each Partner individually.
4. Only Proposals approved as eligible (subject to Article 7(5)) shall be recommended for a merit-based evaluation.
5. In the case that the analysis referred to in Article 7(3)(5) give rise to any doubts as to whether the Applicant, Participating Entity or Partner can provide a sufficient warranty for correct use of the Grant, the Proposal may be conditionally recommended for a merit-based evaluation, in which case the Director shall require that the Applicant, Participating Entity or Partner additionally explain their legal, organisational and financial situation or submit documents to confirm the same within no less than 7 days.
6. Proposals shall be rejected as ineligible at a later stage of evaluation, in particular if the deadline referred to in Article 7(6) is not adhered to or the analysis of the explanations or documents does not dispel the doubts as to whether the Applicant, Participating Entity or Partner can provide a sufficient warranty for correct use of the Grant.
7. Only Proposals approved as eligible by both the NCN and the NSFC shall be recommended for a merit-based evaluation by the NCN and the NSFC.
8. NCN's merit-based of Proposals submitted to SHENG 4 shall be performed in two stages:

- 1) Stage I:
 - individual Reviews are drafted by two members of the Team and presented at the first Session. In the case of a Proposal which is assigned an auxiliary NCN review panel specifying disciplines covered by NCN review panels other than the one to which the Proposal was submitted, the Chair of the Expert Team may decide to seek another Review from a member of another Team;
 - the Team decides on the evaluation of the Proposal based on individual Reviews;
 - a list of Proposals recommended for stage II of evaluation is agreed upon; and
 - justifications for the final decision on Proposals not recommended for Stage II of evaluation are drafted,
 - proposals not recommended for the stage II of a merit-based evaluation shall be labelled as follows:
 - C. *Proposal not recommended for funding.*
- 2) Stage II:
 - individual Reviews are made by at least two Reviewers based on the data included in the Proposal and annexes thereto. In specific cases, derogations are allowed from the number of individual Reviews. The Coordinator must justify the reasons for the derogation to the Director;
 - the Reviews drafted by the Reviewers are presented by the Experts at the second Session;
 - the final decision on the Proposal is agreed upon by the Team based on the individual Reviews drafted by the Reviewers;
 - a ranking list of Proposals recommended for funding is compiled pursuant to the score and the following recommendations:
 - A. *Proposal recommended for funding*
 - B. *Proposal recommended for funding as second choice.*
 - C. *Proposal not recommended for funding*
 - justifications for the final decision on proposals not recommended for funding are drafted.

Information in the Proposal and annexes thereto shall be evaluated.

§ 8. Team Meetings

1. The duration of Team Meetings shall depend on the number of reviewed Proposals and volume of work necessary for their evaluation.
2. On having completed all Reviews assigned to them, Experts shall be given electronic access to all Reviews drafted within the Team to which they were appointed.
3. Team Meetings shall be held in the presence of a quorum of more than a half of the Team's members.
4. Team Meetings shall be held by the Chair or Expert appointed in their stead.
5. A Coordinator and Recording Clerk shall participate in each Team Meeting but shall not vote.
6. In the case of a conflict of interest, an Expert shall have to leave the Meeting room. Exclusion of an Expert on the grounds of a conflict of interest shall not affect the quorum for the purposes of voting.

7. The minutes shall be kept by the Recording Clerk and approved by the Coordinator and Chair.

§ 9. Evaluation of Proposals at Team Meetings

1. Proposals approved for the merit-based evaluation shall be analysed and discussed at Team Meetings.
2. A merit-based evaluation of Proposals shall be based on the analysis of individual criteria and discussions on the Proposal as compared to other Proposals reviewed in the call. The evaluation criteria shall specify any other applicable documents.
3. The budget of the Polish part of the project shall be accepted or rejected by the Team. The Team shall not amend the budget section of the Proposal.
4. Proposals shall be allotted an auxiliary score based on the individual Reviews by Experts and Reviewers and (if applicable) auxiliary Reviews for the Interdisciplinary Proposals. Furthermore, the Team shall pass recommendations for Proposals as follows:
 - A. *Proposal recommended for funding*
 - B. *Proposal recommended for funding as second choice*
 - C. *Proposal not recommended for funding*
5. Individual Reviews shall not be binding upon the Team and shall be treated merely as a point of departure for the discussions on the grade of the Proposal. The Team may establish an auxiliary score.
6. A List of Projects Recommended for Funding by the Team shall be the basis for the final Ranking List compiled pursuant to comparison of the results of a merit-based evaluation performed by the NCN and the NSFC. SHENG 4 funding shall be awarded to projects recommended by both the NCN and the NSFC and falling within the budget allocated for SHENG 4 by the Council.
7. A Proposal which has been given a “zero” score or “no” answer by the Expert Team in any reviewed criterion, except for the justification of the costs as regards the subject and scope of research by the Chinese research teams, shall not be recommended for funding.
8. If, following the Expert Team’s merit-based evaluation of Proposals, the NCN continues to have doubts as to the ethical aspects of the Polish or Chinese part of the research then, acting pursuant to Article 30 of the NCN Act, it shall perform an additional merit-based evaluation of Proposals recommended for funding. If the ethical aspects fail the evaluation, Article 9(7) shall apply.
9. If the Team cannot find a common position on the evaluation of a Proposal, voting shall be conducted.
10. Team’s decisions by voting shall be taken by a simple majority.
11. Ranking Long Lists and Lists of Projects Recommended for Funding shall be approved by voting by absolute majority.
12. The Team shall not be required to distribute the whole funding available. The Team may award recommendations “A” to Proposals whose total funding is up to the value of funds allocated for SHENG 4 by the Council (subject to Article 9(13)) and recommendations “B” to any number of Proposals. Recommendations referred to in the preceding sentences shall be specified in Article 7(8).

13. The Director may decide to fund a research Project which is partially within the limit of available funds allocated to SHENG 4 for research tasks funded by the NCN, provided that it is also recommended by the NSFC.

§ 10. Ranking Lists

1. In specific cases, a Coordinator may, having consulted the Team, modify the order of Proposals on the List of Projects Recommended for Funding. The modification procedure shall be as follows:
 - 1) the consultation may have the form of circulating a query to all Experts with a justification of suggested modification and time fixed for their response;
 - 2) after the lapse of time fixed for the response, the Coordinator shall decide on the modification, taking into account the opinions received from the Experts and
 - 3) Expert's failure to respond on time shall be deemed as their disagreement with the suggested modification.
2. In the event referred to in Article 10 (1), the Coordinator shall provide the Director with the modified List of Projects Recommended for Funding (together with a written justification) for his approval.
3. The Coordinator shall compile the Ranking Lists compiled pursuant to comparison of the results of merit-based evaluation performed by the NCN and the NSFC and deliver them to the Director for his approval.
4. Proposals shall be funded if:
 - 1) they have been recommended by both the NCN and the NSFC and
 - 2) they fall within the budget allocated for SHENG 4 by the Council and the NSFC, subject to Article 9 (12).
5. In well-justified cases, the Director may, regardless of any doubts arising from the analysis referred to in Article 7 (3) (5), approve the Ranking List and impose an obligation on the Applicant, Participating Entity or leader of the Group of Entities defined in Article 27 (1) (2) of the Act, by way of a decision referred to in Article 33 (1) of the Act, to establish a relevant security for correct use of the Grant (e.g. promissory note, bank guarantee) within the prescribed period.

The English version of this Order does not constitute a sworn translation and has been prepared as an auxiliary document for your convenience. In case of any doubts as to the interpretation of its provisions, the Polish version shall prevail.