Coordination and Capacity Kick-off Call

Criteria for administrative and eligibility assessment

1. Introduction and General Principles

The administrative and eligibility assessment is the decisive instrument used to determine which applications will be awarded funding under the Kick-off grant. This comprehensive check is conducted by the National Science Centre (NCN) Coordinators defined in Article 2 of NCN Act to verify strict compliance with all formal and technical requirements of the call.

Applications are evaluated strictly **in the form in which they were originally submitted**. Applicants are subject to the following conditions:

- **Application Withdrawal:** An Applicant may formally withdraw a submitted application at any stage of the process. The submission of a revised or corrected version is possible only before the 1 September 2026 (14:00 CEST).
- **Scope of Assessment and External Verification:** The evaluation is based solely on the information provided within the application. However, the NCN reserves the right to verify the accuracy of the submitted data (such as the Principal Investigator's reported research projects or track record) against external databases and official reporting systems.
- **Accuracy and Truthfulness of Data:** The Applicant bears full legal and formal responsibility for the completeness, accuracy, and truthfulness of all data provided in the application. Presenting false, misleading, or incorrect information will result in immediate rejection of the proposal or termination of the grant agreement if discovered at a later stage.

Proposals that fail to meet any of the defined administrative and eligibility criteria will be rejected and automatically excluded from further assessment or funding recommendations.

2. Administrative criteria

Each criterion listed below is subject to a strict binary evaluation, where the only permissible assessments are **"YES"** (compliance) or **"NO"** (non-compliance). Receiving a **"NO"** response to any of the questions below shall result in the immediate rejection of the application.

No.	Criterion	Description and basis for assessment
1.	Application submission deadline met	The application must be submitted electronically to: • the electronic delivery address (EDA) of the National Science Centre: AE:PL-30168-16398-EHSIE-12 (for all Applicants) or • the electronic delivery box of the National Science Centre (/ncn/SkrytkaESP) (for

		Applicants that are public entities specified in Article 2 of the Act on the Electronic Delivery of Documents of 18 November 2020), no later than 1 September 2026 (14:00 CEST).
2.	Correct application submission form	The proposal must be prepared using the official application template provided for this call (Annex 1).
3.	Representation of the Applicant	The application form and all required declarations must be signed with a qualified electronic signature or advance electronic signature in compliance with Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93/EC and have a PAdES extension.

3. Eligibility criteria

Each criterion listed below is subject to a strict binary evaluation, where the only permissible assessments are **"YES"** (compliance) or **"NO"** (non-compliance). Receiving a **"NO"** response to any of the questions below shall result in the immediate rejection of the application.

No.	Criterion	Description and basis for assessment
1.	Eligibility of the Applicant	The Applicant is eligible according to the conditions defined in 'Basic information' section of the call text. Furthermore, the grant funding must not constitute state aid. The Applicant complies with 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. The Applicant must not be excluded from receiving financial support under the relevant legal provisions specified below: a) Article 207 (4) of the Public Finance Act, b) 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,

		c) Article 9(1)(2a) of the Act of 28 October 2002 on the liability of collective entities for acts prohibited under penalty. The Applicant must not be subject to any exclusion, suspension, or disqualification from public funding under the applicable national and international regulations.
2.	Eligibility of the Principal Investigator	The Principal Investigator must hold a PhD degree and be employed by the Applicant at the time of application submission.
3.	Completeness of submitted application	All mandatory fields, text boxes, and tables within the application form must be fully completed. Placeholder text (e.g., "to be determined", "n/a") in mandatory sections is prohibited.
4.	Language requirements	The application must be drafted entirely in English. Polish is allowed only in Section A of the application form.
5.	Character limits	Character limits are strictly respected in all fields of the application form where such a limit was specified.
6.	Excess Information and Quantitative Limits	Applicants must strictly adhere to the quantitative limits specified for the Principal Investigator's track record. A maximum of 3 publications and a maximum of 3 research projects completed or ongoing within the designated timeframe may be listed.
7.	Reliability of the Principal Investigator's and Track Record	All information provided in the Principal Investigator's research track record (Section C of application form) must be fully accurate, complete, and truthful. The NCN reserves the right to cross-check and cross-reference any data submitted in the application against external databases, public registers, and official reporting systems.

4. Funding Selection under Budget Constraints

All applications that successfully pass the administrative and eligibility assessment (receiving a "YES" to all criteria) are, in principle, recommended for funding. However, if the total financial request of all eligible applications exceeds the available call budget, a cascading priority system will be applied to determine the final selection.

The criteria will be applied sequentially (in descending order of importance) until the successful proposals fit within the available budget.

Tier 1: Principal Investigator's Track Record

Priority will be granted based on the PI's documented achievements listed in the application form (subject to the maximum limits of 3 research projects from the last 10 years, and a maximum of 3 publications for each of those projects). The track record will be assessed strictly relative to the PI's career stage, comparing applicants with similar academic longevity.

To establish a clear ranking, a cascading order of **six priority levels** will be applied based on the PI's specific role and the nature of the research experience (listed in descending order of importance):

1. **Cooperation with the Non-Academic Sector as Principal Investigator:** Top priority is given to PIs who have managed, as the Principal Investigator research-based cooperation involving stakeholders such as NGOs, policymakers, industry, or local authorities.
2. **International Research Experience as Principal Investigator:** If a tie persists, preference will be given to PIs with a documented history of managing international research projects as the Principal Investigator.
3. **Domestic Research Experience as Principal Investigator:** If a tie still persists, preference will be given to PIs with a documented history of managing national research projects as the Principal Investigator.
4. **Cooperation with the Non-Academic Sector as an Investigator:** If a tie still persists, preference will be given to PIs who have participated as a key researcher, expert, or team member in research-based cooperation beyond academia.
5. **International Research Experience as a Manager of local group/Investigator:** If a tie still persists, preference will be given to PIs with a documented history of actively participating as a researcher or team member in international research projects.
6. **Domestic Research Experience as an Investigator:** If a tie still persists, preference will be given to PIs with a documented history of actively participating as a researcher or team member in national research projects.

Tier 2: Career-Stage and Demographic Preferences

Should the academic track record criteria fail to differentiate the proposals and differentiate the budget cutoff, the following social and demographic factors will be applied:

- Early-Career Researchers (ECR): Preference will be given to applications led by ECRs. In accordance with the *Council Recommendation of 18 December 2023 on a Framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe*, an ECR is defined for this call as a researcher within the first 7 years of completing their PhD (with standard allowances for parental or medical leave).
- Underrepresented Genders: If the ECR status does not resolve the selection, preference will be given to applications led by PIs representing the

underrepresented gender within their respective research field (based on current national statistical data for the specific discipline).

Tier 3: Thematic Priority Balancing

Should a deadlock still remain after applying all the above steps, the NCN will prioritize proposals that contribute to ensuring as balanced a success rate as possible across the three thematic priorities indicated in the Application Form.

For accountability purposes, in the specific event of budget over-subscription where the priority criteria must be applied to differentiate between eligible proposals, the entire assessment and ranking process shall be formally documented in a dedicated Selection Report. This report, detailing the sequential application of the tie-breaking rules, will be officially archived and maintained by the Programme Operator, and shall be made fully available to the Cooperation Committee for review and inspection upon request.

5. Funding Selection under Budget Constraints

Based on the comprehensive criteria specified in this document, the Programme Operator shall establish the list of proposals recommended for funding. In reaching its final decision, the Programme Operator will consult the Cooperation Committee and consider its recommendations.

Should the consultation process with the Cooperation Committee lead to any modifications to the initial funding recommendations generated by the cascading priority system, a formal justification note must be drafted. This note shall explicitly detail the rationale, objective criteria, and strategic arguments underpinning the agreed-upon changes. Once finalized, the justification note shall be appended to and archived with the main Selection Report as an integral part of the call documentation.