Guide for Applicants and Evaluators

POLNORIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Applied Research and Innovation Programme
EEA Grants 2021-2028 Poland

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1. General outline

1.1 Legal basis

The "Applied Research and Innovation Programme EEA Grants 2021-2028 Poland" (hereinafter referred to as the "Programme") is implemented on the basis of the following legal acts:

- 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*");
- 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 "Applied Research and Innovation";
- Act of 30 April 2010 on the National Centre for Research and Development (Polish Journal of Laws 2024, item 1170, hereinafter referred also as "Act on the National Centre for Research and Development");
- Act of 20 July 2018 on the Law of Higher Education and Science, (Journal of Laws 2024, item 1571 as amended, hereinafter referred also as "Law on Higher Education and Science");
- Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 17 September 2010 on the detailed mode of performance of tasks of the National Centre for Research and Development (Polish Journal of Laws 2010 No. 178, item 1200 as amended);
- Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 17 August 2020 on granting state aid through the National Centre for Research and Development (Polish Journal of Laws 2025, item 783 as amended);
- Act of 14 June 1960 - Code of Administrative Procedure (Polish Journal of Laws 2025, item 1691 as amended, hereinafter referred also as "Code of Administrative Procedure");
- 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);
- 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;
- 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 General information

The overall goals of the EEA Grants are reducing economic and social disparities within the European Economic Area, and strengthening bilateral relations between Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Beneficiary States.

The Programme "Applied Research and Innovation" is funded by the EEA Grants and a 15 % contribution from the Polish State Budget, and shall adhere to the values and principles defined in Article 1.3.1 of the Regulation and Article 12 of the MoU signed by Poland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The objectives of the programme will be achieved through projects funded following three calls for proposals and additional bilateral activities at programme level.

The National Centre for Research and Development is the Programme Operator for the Programme. The Donor Programme Partners are the Research Council of Norway (RCN) and the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís).

The body overseeing the implementation of the Programme is the Cooperation Committee consisting of representatives of the Donor Programme Partners and the Programme Operator, while representatives of the Donor States, including the embassies of the Donor States, as well as the National Focal Point, the National Science Centre (NCN) and the Financial Mechanism Office are invited to participate as observers.

This guideline sets out the basic rules for the application process and for the implementation of projects funded under the POLNORIS Call. As this Call is for international projects, project applications and all other relevant documentation shall be prepared and submitted in English.

1.3 General Glossary

Defined terms have the meanings set out below:

Cooperation Committee (CC) – 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 (DPP) – 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;

Early-stage researcher – is understood as a person conducting scientific activity who: 1) is a doctoral student or an academic teacher – and does not hold a doctoral degree; or 2) holds a doctoral degree not more than 7 years since obtaining it and is employed in a research organisation (the 7 years period referred to above shall not include periods of leave in connection with parenthood, or periods of receipt of maternity benefit or parental benefit, or periods of receipt of sickness benefit or rehabilitation benefit in connection with incapacity for work, including that caused by a disease requiring medical rehabilitation).

Enterprise – an entity as defined in Article 1 of Annex I to 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.

Legal person – a legal entity other than a natural person that has the legal capacity to hold and to exercise legal rights and obligations within a given legal system, including the capacity to enter into contracts, sue, and be sued.

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 - Programme "Applied Research and Innovation" funded under the EEA Financial Mechanism (EEA Grants) 2021–2028;

Programme Operator (PO) – the National Centre for Research and Development, agency responsible for the management and implementation of the Programme "Applied Research and Innovation" in Poland;

Project Consortium – 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 Consortium 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 (PP) – an entity eligible to submit the proposal under the Programme "Applied Research and Innovation";

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

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

Research organisation – an entity as defined in Article 2(83) of 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 in Article 37(1) of the Act on the National Centre for Research and Development, in conjunction with Article 7(1)(1, 2 and 4-8) of the Law on Higher Education and Science.

Selection Committee – a body composed of independent international experts (who must be employed by,or have an equivalent affiliation with an organisation outside of Poland or Donor States) that draws up and approves the final ranking list of proposals for funding. A member of the Selection Committee cannot act as an expert evaluating proposals.

1.4 Terms used in the application form

Defined terms have the meanings set out below:

Cross-sectoral (transdisciplinary) approaches – a collaboration spanning multiple different partners, both academic and non-academic, to solve a common problem. Activities may involve governmental agencies and offices, non-governmental organisations, charitable organisations, private companies, civil society, grassroots movements, etc.

Interdisciplinary approaches – a collaboration spanning multiple academic disciplines (e.g. natural sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities, engineering sciences, technological sciences, medical sciences) and involving the use of complementary methodologies to address a common problem in a more innovative and comprehensive manner than would otherwise be possible within a single discipline.

Knowledge valorisation – the process of creating social and economic value from knowledge by linking different areas and sectors and transforming data, know-how and research results into sustainable products, services, solutions and knowledge-based policies that benefit society.

Impacts – wider long-term effects on society (including the environment), the economy and science, enabled by the outcomes of R&I investments (long term). It refers to effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or overall quality of life - beyond academia. Impacts generally occur sometime after the end of the project.

Objectives – the work performed within the projects, in terms of its research and innovation content. This will be translated into the project's results. These may range from tackling specific research questions, demonstrating the feasibility of an innovation, sharing knowledge among stakeholders on specific issues. The nature of the objectives will depend on the type of action, and the scope of the topic.

Outcomes – the expected medium-term effects of supported projects. The results of a project should contribute to these outcomes, fostered in particular by the dissemination and exploitation measures. This may include the uptake, diffusion, deployment, and/or use of the project's results by direct target groups. Outcomes typically occur during or shortly after the end of the project.

Pathway to impact – logical steps towards the achievement of the expected impacts of the project over time, in particular beyond the duration of a project. A pathway begins with the project's results through their dissemination, exploitation and communication, contributing to the expected outcomes in the work programme topic, and ultimately to the wider scientific, economic and societal impacts.

Research output – results generated by the action to which access can be given in the form of scientific publications, data or other engineered outcomes and processes such as software, algorithms, protocols and electronic notebooks.

Results – outputs generated during the project implementation. This may include, for example, know-how, innovative solutions, algorithms, proof of feasibility, new business models, policy recommendations, guidelines, prototypes, demonstrators, databases and datasets, trained researchers, new infrastructures, networks, etc. Most project results (e.g. inventions, scientific works, etc.) constitute intellectual property, which may, if appropriate, be protected by formal intellectual property rights.

2. Programme principles and Call ambition

2.1 Programme Principles

The following values and principles will apply to all activities supported by the Programme[1]:

- **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**.

The Programme focuses on research excellence and support for human capital development, including early-stage and female researchers, and research managers. The Programme promotes interdisciplinarity, cross-sectoral approaches, and internationalisation of research, particularly through bilateral cooperation with Donor States. It also encourages the valorisation of research results.

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming are core principles of the Programme. Applicants are expected to integrate a gender perspective throughout the 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 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.

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

[1] https://eeagrants.org/en/fmo/documents-library/blue-book-programme-areas-and-funds-eea-and-norway-grants-2021-2028

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, and can serve as inspiration:

1. **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.
2. 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.
3. 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. [2]

2.3 Call Ambition

The main aims of the POLNORIS Call for Proposals are to enhance the **quality of research** in Poland and strengthen **international collaboration** in research and innovation. The POLNORIS Call will fund Donor partnership projects, which are research and innovation projects implemented in close cooperation with a project partner whose primary location[3] is in one of the Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein, or Norway). The Call is thematically open, however proposals shall address at least one of the priorities of the EEA Grants described in sec. 2.2.

The Call also aims to **promote the leadership of early-stage researchers.** Early-stage researchers often face significant challenges in establishing themselves in international research, including limited access to independent funding and restricted opportunities to develop and implement their own innovative ideas. Consortia are encouraged to provide opportunities for early-stage researchers to take on the role of Principal Investigator or Work Package leader in the project. Early-stage researcher is understood as person conducting scientific activity who: 1) is a doctoral student or an academic teacher – and does not hold a doctoral degree; or 2) holds a doctoral degree not more than 7 years since obtaining it and is employed in a research organisation (the 7 years period referred to above shall not include periods of leave in connection with parenthood, or periods of receipt of maternity benefit or parental benefit, or periods of receipt of sickness benefit or rehabilitation benefit in connection with incapacity for work, including that caused by a disease requiring medical rehabilitation)[4].

Interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches are strongly encouraged under this Call. Applicants should demonstrate how their projects integrate diverse scientific disciplines and engage partners from different sectors - such as academia, industry, public authorities, NGOs or end-users. Interdisciplinary work enables more comprehensive problem solving, while cross-sectoral cooperation increases the relevance, applicability and uptake of research results.

Knowledge valorisation is an important aspect of the Call. Applicants are required to demonstrate how their projects will contribute to transforming research results, data and knowhow into social and economic value, as highlighted by the EU Knowledge Valorisation Policy. Valorisation involves linking actors and sectors to convert knowledge into sustainable products, services, solutions or evidence-based policies that benefit society, ensuring that publicly funded

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[2] 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

[3] The primary location of entities refers to the location of the managerial and administrative centre of the entity (e.g. headquarters, head office, board of directors, etc.). Given the variety of potential entities under consideration, and the complexity of different international structures, a decision on primary location may have to be taken on a case-by-case basis. For international NGOs, a national section will in most cases qualify.

[4] 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* https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj/eng

research generates meaningful **Impact**. Impact refers to broader effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or overall quality of life - beyond academia. This process covers both technological and nontechnological pathways and relies on active collaboration across the research and innovation ecosystem - including academia, industry, citizens, public and non-governmental bodies - to maximise the societal benefits of research outcomes.

The Programme also promotes **co-creation**, understood as jointly designing solutions along with relevant stakeholders to ensure that research outputs address real needs and are more readily implemented.

Skills development and capacity building are important elements of this Call for Proposals. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how their projects will strengthen the competences, capabilities and long-term potential of individuals and organisations involved in research and innovation. This includes developing scientific, technical and transferable skills; enhancing the ability of institutions to manage and implement high quality research; and fostering an environment that supports learning, collaboration and continuous improvement. **Research managers and research administration staff** play a key role in ensuring effective, efficient and compliant implementation of projects funded under this Call. Applicants are encouraged to highlight the role of research manager in the project and how their expertise will support, among others, effective coordination, communication, and achievement of project objectives. Projects are expected to show how the planned activities will reinforce human capital, improve organisational performance and generate lasting benefits for the wider research and innovation ecosystem.

The Programme supports digital transformation of research and innovation through upholding **Open Science** principles. In line with Horizon Europe, Open Science is an approach based on open cooperative work and systematic sharing of knowledge and tools as early and widely as possible in the process. It has the potential to increase the quality and efficiency of research and accelerate the advancement of knowledge and innovation by sharing results, making them more reusable and improving their reproducibility. It entails the involvement of all relevant knowledge actors.[5] The Project Promoter and project partners shall follow the principles on Open Access as described in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation when exploiting and disseminating results, in particular in relation to publications – following the principle **"as open as possible, as closed as necessary".** Even if data cannot be made openly accessible, it can still comply with FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable).

Projects addressing **challenges experienced in Poland as a result of the invasion of Ukraine** are encouraged under this Call. Examples of relevant topics include: **(1) Addressing the social and economic impact of the war**, such as mitigating pressures on communities, enhancing energy security and adoption of low-carbon technologies, supporting affected populations, and responding to disruptions in labour markets, public services or local economies; **(2) Supporting information integrity**, including strengthening resilience against mis/disinformation, addressing "cyber security" and "hybrid threats", improving access to reliable information, and enhancing media literacy and public trust in evidence based knowledge; and **(3) Capacity building in key**

[5] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide_horizon_en.pdf

areas, for example improving institutional readiness, supporting researchers and research administration, digitalisation, or enhancing systems needed to manage long-term social, economic or crisis related consequences. Projects in these areas are expected to contribute to greater societal resilience, improved institutional capacity, and more effective responses to the evolving impacts of the war.

2.4 Other conditions to be fulfilled by the proposals

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.

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 abovementioned sanctions.

Economic difficulties and irregularities:

Programme Operator verifies whether there is a risk of irregularities in the substantive or financial implementation of the project. For this purpose, it analyses, among other things, information on the financial capacity to implement the project (where applicable – applicants that are enterprises) in the period of two years preceding the year of submission of the application, as well as forecasts for the project implementation period, and information on projects that the applicant is currently implementing or has implemented under agreements with Programme Operator (this information is prepared by the Programme Operator). The Programme Operator analyses, in particular, the information and data referred to in the preceding sentence, primarily in order to decide:

- whether the beneficiary will be provided with advance payments or whether the project will be settled solely on a reimbursement basis, and
- whether the beneficiary will be required to provide additional security for the proper performance of the project co-financing agreement.

Programme Operator may enter into a project contract provided that the Project Promoter and/or project partner:

1) is not excluded from applying for funding on the basis of:
   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,

2) is not an entity subject to an obligation to repay aid because the European Commission has declared such aid unlawful and incompatible with the internal market,
3) is not in arrears with payments of public dues or with social security and health insurance contributions,
4) is not an undertaking in difficulty within the meaning of EU state aid rules[6] and is not under receivership,
5) is not subject to exclusion from applying for funding due to sanctions.

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 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 (even those parts produced by the AI tool) and must be transparent in disclosing which AI tools were used and how they were utilized.

3. Applying in the POLNORIS Call

Projects must be implemented by a Project Consortium, and Project Proposals must be submitted by the Project Promoter on behalf of the Project Consortium.

3.1 Composition of Project Consortium

Subject to Sections 3.2 and 3.3, the eligible Project Consortium must include:

- **at least one research organisation or enterprise established[7] in Poland as Project Promoter**, and
- **at least one research organisation from one of the Donor States** (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway)

Norwegian research organisations are research organisations approved and listed by the Research Council of Norway. The list of approved research organisations in Norway is available on the RCN official website[8].

For Iceland, the Icelandic Centre for Research shall confirm that partners from Iceland are considered research organisations in Iceland.

[6] The definition of an undertaking in difficulty is set out in Article 2(18) of Regulation (EU) No 651/2014

[7] entity must be established as a legal person (as defined in 1.3. General Glossary) under Polish law and conduct its business, R&D or any other activity on the territory of the Republic of Poland, confirmed by an entry into a relevant register maintained in Poland (if registration is required) or must be a natural person conducting business on the territory of the Republic of Poland, confirmed by an entry into Central Registration and Information on Business (CEIDG).

[8] https://www.forskningsradet.no/en/financing/research-organisations/approved-research-organisations/

Other entities from Poland and Donor States may participate in the project consortium provided that they meet the eligibility criteria described in sec. 3.3, after the minimum required consortium composition described above has been fulfilled.

Each entity participating in the consortium must be formally established before the submission of a project proposal.

Entities from countries other than Poland and the Donor States, provided that Poland maintains diplomatic relations with the country concerned [9], may participate in the project only on a self-financed basis (such entities shall not be eligible to receive funding from the project grant). Such entities must have legal capacity, including the capacity to enter into legally binding agreements. No restrictions apply regarding their legal form.

The Consortium composition may be modified during the project implementation, however any changes to the composition must be compliant with eligibility rules and are subject to the Programme Operators' approval.

3.2 Eligibility of Project Promoter

Each Project Proposal must have a designated leading entity called **Project Promoter** (PP). The PP is responsible for formal submission of project proposal, signature of Partnership Agreement between project partners, distribution of funding among the project partners, reporting on project implementation to the Programme Operator, and general management of all activities related to project application, implementation and closing.

Eligible **Project Promoter** entities are:

- **Research organisations established[10] in Poland**, as defined in the Article 2(83) of 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 in Article 37(1) of the Act on the National Centre for Research and Development, in conjunction with Article 7(1)(1, 2 and 4-8) of the Law on Higher Education and Science.
- **Enterprises established[11] in Poland**, as defined in the Article 1, Annex I, 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.

[9] https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/podmioty-z-ktorymi-polska-utrzymuje-stosunki-dyplomatyczne and Taiwan.

[10] entity must be established as a legal person (as defined in 1.3. General Glossary) under Polish law and conduct its business, R&D or any other activity on the territory of the Republic of Poland, confirmed by an entry into a relevant register maintained in Poland (if registration is required).

[11] entity must be:

1) established as a legal person (as defined in 1.3. General Glossary) under Polish law and conduct its business, R&D or any other activity on the territory of the Republic of Poland, confirmed by an entry into a relevant register maintained in Poland (if registration is required) or
2) a natural person conducting business on the territory of Republic of Poland, confirmed by an entry into Central Registration And Information on Business (CEIDG).

3.3 Eligibility of project partner

The following entities are eligible to participate in the Consortium as project partners:

- Any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organisations, established[12] in Poland;
- Enterprises, established[13] in Poland, as defined in the Article 1, Annex I, 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;
- Any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organisations, established[14] in one of the Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway);
- Enterprises, established[15] in the Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), as defined in the Article 1, Annex I, 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.

3.4 Principal Investigator

The Principal Investigator (PI), is the **lead researcher** holding the primary responsibility for the scientific and technical aspects of the whole project. The PI is responsible for controlling the technical direction and academic quality of the project and shall ensure that the project is carried out in compliance with the terms, conditions of the Call as well as those specified in the *Regulation* and *Guideline*. The Principal Investigator (of any nationality) **must be an employee of the Project Promoter** or **will have to be employed by the Project Promoter for at least the duration of the project implementation period**. The costs of the Principal Investigator must be documented in line with the requirements set out in the Cost Eligibility Guide. There can be only one PI in the project.

In line with the Call Ambition described in sec. 2.3 the early-stage researchers are encouraged to assume the role of the PI 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 POLNORIS Call	€ 70 000 000 / 296 982 000 PLN
Minimum project grant amount	€ 1 000 000 / 4 242 600 PLN
Maximum project grant amount	€ 1 750 000 / 7 424 550 PLN
Project duration	36 months
Final date for cost eligibility	30.04.2031

[12] as in footnote 11 above
[13] as in footnote 11 above
[14] entity must be established as a legal person (as defined in 1.3. General Glossary) and conduct its business, R&D or any other activity on the territory of one of the Donor States, confirmed by an entry into a relevant register maintained in one of the Donor States.
[15] as in footnote 14 above

Project Promoters and partners are strongly advised to thoroughly assess the Consortium'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 Consortium's total budget.

In the case of participation in a consortium of entities from outside Poland and Donor States, their share in the total project budget should normally not exceed **10 %**.

3.5.2 Currency

The currency used for completing the Proposal 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**.

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

3.5.3 Types of activities

In the POLNORIS Call only applied research will be funded – specifically industrial research and experimental development. Fundamental (basic) research is not eligible for funding.

Eligible types of applied research activities[16]:

- **Industrial research** – planned research or critical investigation aimed at the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for developing new products, processes or services or for bringing about a significant improvement in existing products, processes or services. It comprises the creation of component parts of complex systems, and may include the construction of prototypes in a laboratory environment or in an environment with simulated interfaces to existing systems as well as of pilot lines, when necessary for the industrial research and notably for generic technology validation;
- **Experimental development** – acquiring, combining, shaping and using existing scientific, technological, business and other relevant knowledge and skills with the aim of developing new or improved products, processes or services.
  Experimental development may comprise prototyping, demonstrating, piloting, testing and validation of new or improved products, processes or services in environments representative of real-life operating conditions where the primary objective is to make further technical improvements on products, processes or services that are not substantially set. This may include the development of a commercially usable prototype

[16] as defined in the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668, as amended); and Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 (GBER), including the amendment introduced by Regulation (EU) 2023/1315.

or pilot which is necessarily the final commercial product and which is too expensive to produce for it to be used only for demonstration and validation purposes.
Experimental development does not include routine or periodic changes made to existing products, production lines, manufacturing processes, services and other operations in progress, even if those changes may represent improvements.

Other type of activities (e.g. coordination, dissemination, management), cannot be separate WPs and may only be parts of research tasks. **It is not possible to have a separate WP dedicated to management and dissemination/communication activities**. Those activities shall be described and planned within research tasks, provided they are in line with the "Cost eligibility guide".

Proposals are expected to include activities aimed at enhancing the **valorisation of research**, contributing to transforming research results, data and know-how into meaningful broader **Impact.** All costs of such activities, provided they are in line with the "Cost eligibility guide", are eligible but should all be included within the research tasks.

3.5.4 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), which meet cumulatively the following criteria:

- they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the project contract; for unit costs, the actions constituting the basis for payment are carried out 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 of 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 the applicable public-procurement law, in line with Article 8.16 of the Regulation and as described in the guidelines on public procurement issued by Polish Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy (relevant only to Polish entities).

Expenditures actually incurred are considered to have been incurred when the cost has been invoiced, paid and the subject matter delivered (in case of goods) or performed (in 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 project partner.

Expenditures incurred after 30th April 2031 shall not be eligible.

The Project Promoter and project partner(s) internal accounting and auditing procedures must allow for direct reconciliation of the expenditures and revenue declared in respect of the project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

The Programme Operator distinguishes between direct costs and indirect costs. For more information, see the Cost Eligibility Guide.

3.5.5 Cost categories

Expenditures incurred or covered by simplified cost options in the frame of the project may fall into one of the following categories:

- Staff costs
- Subcontracting
- Equipment and intangible assets
- Other direct costs
- Overheads

For detailed description of each category and further information regarding costs, please refer to *Cost Eligibility Guide*. Please note that the *Cost Eligibility Guide* contains **separate sections** for research organisations (and other types of entities) and enterprises.

3.5.6 State Aid

Funding in the POLNORIS Call may cover **up to 100 %** of eligible costs for research organisations and entities other than research organisations and enterprises.

In case of enterprises, funding quota will be decided on a case-by-case basis depending on the size of the company, type of research/development, according to the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 17 August 2020 on granting state aid through the National Centre for Research and Development (Journal of Laws item 1456, 2020 as amended).

The aid intensity for each beneficiary shall not exceed:

- 50 % of the eligible costs for industrial research;
- 25 % of the eligible costs for experimental development;

The aid intensities for industrial research and experimental development may be increased up to a maximum aid intensity of 80 % of the eligible costs in accordance with the below points (a) to (c), where points (b) and (c) must not be combined with each other:

a. by 10 percentage points for medium-sized enterprises and by 20 percentage point for micro/small enterprises;
b. by 15 percentage points if one of the following conditions is fulfilled:
   (i) the project involves effective collaboration between enterprises among which at least one is a SME, or is carried out in at least two EU Member States, or in an EU Member

State and in a Contracting Party of the EEA Agreement, and no single enterprise bears more than 70 % of the eligible costs;

(ii) the project involves effective collaboration between an enterprise and one or more research and knowledge-dissemination organisations, where the latter bear at least 10 % of the eligible costs and have the right to publish their own industrial research results;

(iii) the results of the project are widely disseminated through technical and scientific conferences, publication, open access repositories, or free or opensource software;

(iv) the applicant commits to, on a timely basis, make available licences for research results of aided research and development projects, which are protected by intellectual property rights, at a market price and on non-exclusive and non-discriminatory basis for use by interested parties in the EEA;

(v) the project is **carried out** in the following provinces: kujawsko-pomorskie, lubelskie, lubuskie, łódzkie, małopolskie, opolskie, podkarpackie, podlaskie, pomorskie, śląskie, świętokrzyskie, warmińsko-mazurskie i zachodniopomorskie or region mazowiecki regionalny.

c. by 5 percentage points if the research and development project is **carried out** in an assisted region:

(i) the project is carried out in the following provinces: dolnośląskie and wielkopolskie, and region warszawski stołeczny on areas within following communes: Baranów, Błonie, Dąbrówka, Dobre, Góra Kalwaria, Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Jadów, Jaktorów, Kałuszyn, Kampinos, Kołbiel, Latowicz, Leoncin, Leszno, Mrozy, Nasielsk, Osieck, Prażmów, Serock, Siennica, Sobienie-Jeziory, Strachówka, Tarczyn, Tłuszcz, Zakroczym and Żabia Wola.

A project is understood to be **carried out** in a region provided the majority of the eligible costs is incurred in that region.

Table 1. State aid rules – aid intensity

Type of activity	Aid intensity	Micro/Small Enterprises	Medium Enterprises	Large Enterprises
Industrial Research	Without increase	50 %	50 %	50 %
	Including increase based on enterprise size (a.)	70 %	60 %	50 %
	Including increase by 15 percentage points (b.)	80 %[17]	75 %	65 %
	Including increase by 5 percentage points (c.)	75 %	65 %	55 %
Experimental development	Without increase	25 %	25 %	25 %
	Including increase based on enterprise size (a.)	45 %	35 %	25 %

[17] The aid intensities for industrial research and experimental development may be increased up to a maximum aid intensity of 80 % of the eligible costs.

	Including increase by 15 percentage points (b.)	60 %	50 %	40 %
	Including increase by 5 percentage points (c.)	50 %	40 %	30 %

Only industrial research and experimental development will be funded. Other type of activities (e.g. coordination, dissemination, management) cannot be separate WPs and may only be parts of research tasks.

In February 2026, the European Commission launched a public consultation on a draft of a new General Block Exemption Regulation. Once adopted, the new Regulation will replace Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market pursuant to Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty, which currently determines the funding conditions applicable under this Call for Proposals. The new General Block Exemption Regulation, expected to be adopted in Q4 2026, may require an update of the funding conditions set out in this Guide for Applicants and Evaluators.

3.6 Submission of project proposals

Project Promoter submits project proposal for funding under the POLNORIS Call to the *Programme Operator* on behalf of all consortium partners.

Project Promoter must be duly authorized to represent all project partners on behalf of which it submits the project proposal. At least a letter of intent (regarding the conclusion of the *Partnership agreement*) must be signed between Project Promoter and all consortium partners.

Proposals shall be submitted electronically in **English** through the *Programme Operator's* on-line submission system, available under the following address: https://lsi.ncbr.gov.pl/.

The Project Promoter can edit and validate the proposal until the closing date of the Call.

Proposals must be completed correctly and fully.

Detailed description of the application form and the instruction on how to submit the proposal are presented in *the* ***Proposal Manual***.

The deadline to submit the proposals is:

17th December 2026, 15:00:00 (CET)

Only the Project Promoter (identified by user id and password) is authorised to submit a proposal on behalf of the consortium.

The Programme Operator has no access to the proposal until the Call deadline has passed.

Versions of proposals sent on paper, removable electronic storage medium (e.g. CD-ROM portable drive etc.), by email, by fax or any other system will not be regarded as having been received by the Programme Operator.

If more than one copy of the same proposal is submitted, only the most recent eligible version (before deadline) is evaluated.

A proposal may be withdrawn by the PP at any stage of the Call procedure, that is until the publication of the final ranking list. In order to withdraw a proposal, the PP delivers a written statement, signed by the PP's legal representative, to the PO's seat. The statement has to indicate clearly the proposal in question and PP's intent to withdraw it. Date of delivery of the abovementioned statement to PO will be regarded as date of proposal's withdrawal.

The date and time of receipt of the last version of submitted project proposals are recorded by the on-line submission system. After the submission, an acknowledgement of receipt is sent to the proposal's PP.

The Programme Operator reserves the right to amend the call documentation or any relevant document applicable to the POLNORIS Call for proposals. Information on any such amendments, including their effective date, shall be published on the Programme Operator's website. The Programme Operator shall also inform individually those applicants who have already submitted applications about such amendments. Prior to the amendments, the Programme Operator shall consult the Cooperation Committee. Changes are effective as of the date indicated in the information on these changes published on PO's website. Any amendments shall be implemented in a transparent manner and shall not result in unequal treatment of applicants.

4. Selection procedure

4.1 General outline of the selection procedure

Proposals submitted to the *Programme Operator* via the on-line submission system undergo two stages of assessment: formal administrative check and expert evaluation.

The selection procedure follows the principles of good governance, transparency, equality, efficiency and zero tolerance towards corruption.

The provision of false information as well as plagiarism may result in a rejection of the proposal. The *Programme Operator* reserves the right to pursue further steps according to the respective regulations.

Stage one is the formal (administrative and eligibility) assessment, where Programme Operator verifies whether each proposal meets all administrative and eligibility criteria, including compliance with formal submission rules, completeness of documentation, and fulfilment of eligibility conditions regarding applicants, partnerships, and project scope. Proposals that do not meet these criteria do not proceed to further assessment. The Programme Operator shall as soon as possible after deciding that a proposal is ineligible, inform the Cooperation Committee and clarify the reasons for the decision. Scope-related rejections are subject to review by the Selection Committee before a final decision is taken; proposals will be deemed ineligible on grounds of "scope" only in clear-cut cases.

Stage two is the expert evaluation. Proposals that passed the formal assessment are submitted by the Programme Operator to **international peer evaluation**. Each eligible proposal is assessed by three international experts (outside Poland, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway) who independently and separately score the proposal according to the evaluation criteria. The result of the assessment is a **consensus report** summarizing the collective evaluation.

Based on the results of the expert evaluation, the Programme Operator prepares a preliminary ranking list and examines the eligibility of project budgets. The **Selection Committee** reviews this list together with the expert assessments and establishes the **final ranking list**, which forms the basis for funding decisions. The Programme Operator also identifies any necessary modifications before issuing funding decisions, which may be included in the conditions on the award of funding as suggested by the Selection Committee.

Following approval of the final ranking list by the Selection Committee, the Programme Operator issues **funding decisions and publishes the results**. A **reserve list** may be established for proposals that may be funded if additional budget becomes available.

The content of the individual expert evaluation and consensus report will be made available to the *Project Promoter* after the completion of the POLNORIS Call selection procedure – within 15 working days after publication of the final ranking list on PO's website. The Project Promoter shall share this information with all project partners. The anonymity of the experts shall be preserved.

4.2 Formal assessment (administrative and eligibility review)

Proposals must fulfil all of the administrative and eligibility criteria if they are to be retained for expert evaluation.

The following administrative and eligibility criteria apply to all proposals submitted under the call:

1. Receipt of proposal by the Programme Operator before the deadline date and time established in the Call documentation and in compliance with sec. 3.6;
2. fulfilment of conditions related to:
    a. composition of the project consortium as defined in sec. 3.1,
    b. Project Promoter and project partners eligibility as defined in secs. 3.2 and 3.3,
    c. minimum and maximum amount of funding quota as defined in sec. 3.5.1,
    d. project duration and final cost eligibility date as defined in sec. 3.5.1,
    e. types of activities as defined in sec. 3.5.3,
    f. currency as defined in sec. 3.5.2,
    g. cost categories as defined in sec. 3.5.5,
    h. intensity of state aid as defined in sec. 3.5.6;
3. confirmation that project proposals, *Project Promoter* and project partners*:*
    a. comply with the values and principles of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028, as defined in sec. 2.1
    b. comply with all the requirements defined in sec. 2.4;
4. completeness of the proposal as required in the Proposal Manual;
5. accordance with the scope of the call as stipulated in sec. 2.2– the content of the proposal shall address at least one of the key priorities of the EEA Grants described in the above-mentioned point; a proposal will only be deemed ineligible on grounds of 'scope' in clear-cut cases.

Formal assessment is carried out by the PO staff in close cooperation with the Donor Programme Partners.

Each proposal that fulfils all the eligibility criteria it is sent by the PO for expert evaluation.

- **Proposals deemed ineligible in formal assessment**

In case the proposal does not fulfil criterion 1, the proposal is deemed ineligible and left without further assessment, with no right to appeal.

The Project Promoter of a proposal deemed ineligible in the abovementioned cases will be informed of the grounds for such a determination in writing or in electronic form.

In case a proposal does not fulfil criteria 2a-2f, 3 or 5, the Director of the Programme Operator issues an order refusing to initiate evaluation proceedings that includes statement of reasons. Project Promoter may file an interlocutory appeal against this order within 7 days from its receipt.

In case the proposal does not fulfil criterion 2g, 2h, 4 it is sent to the Project Promoter through the online system for amendment or completion. Please note that **scientific content-related parts of Sections III and IV of the proposal, cannot be modified after submission and are not subject to correction or supplementation.**

If the proposal requires an amendment or supplementation, the Programme Operator issues a request to the Project Promoter. The PP is given 7 calendar days, counting from the day after the request was delivered, to implement all necessary changes and to resubmit the proposal via Programme Operator's on-line submission system. The amendment or supplementation may only refer to administrative parts of the proposal or include obvious technical errors.

The scientific content-related parts of the proposal (in sections III and IV of the proposal) must remain unchanged.

A proposal may be amended/supplemented only once.

If the Project Promoter fails to implement the requested changes according to the request, or implements changes other than requested, or fails to resubmit the complete proposal in requested time, the proposal is deemed ineligible and left without further assessment, with no right to appeal.

The Project Promoter of a proposal deemed ineligible in the above mentioned cases will be informed of the grounds for such a determination in writing or in electronic form.

If it becomes clear at any point in the selection process that one or more of the administrative and/or eligibility criteria have not been fulfilled, the **proposal is declared ineligible** by the Programme Operator, and is withdrawn from any further examination.

4.3 Evaluation process

4.3.1 International Experts

The evaluation procedure is carried out by international experts employed by or have an equivalent affiliation with an organisation outside Poland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. International experts conduct their tasks in a personal capacity and in performing the work do not represent any organisation.

Experts are required to have skills and knowledge appropriate to the areas of activity in which they are asked to assist. They must also have a high level of professional experience in the public or private sector in one or more of the following areas or activities:

- research in the relevant scientific and technological fields or field of innovation;
- administration, management or evaluation of projects;

- use of the results of research, technological development and/or innovation projects;
- technology transfer and innovation; and
- international cooperation in science, technology and/or innovation.

Each international expert is required to enter into a Framework Cooperation Agreement with the Programme Operator, which regulates the general rules of cooperation with the PO as an institution, establishes a code of conduct, the essential provisions regarding confidentiality and specifies in particular, the description of work and conditions of payment.

To evaluate the proposals submitted in response to a call, the Programme Operator draws up a list of appropriate experts (including, if necessary, a reserve list). The lists are drawn up primarily using as selection criteria:

- a high level of expertise; and
- an appropriate range of competencies.

In constituting the lists of experts, the PO also takes into account, as necessary, their abilities to appreciate the industrial and/or societal dimension, and policy relevance. Experts must also have the appropriate language skills required for the proposals to be evaluated. Providing the above conditions can be satisfied, a reasonable gender balance shall also be taken into consideration.

The PO, on the basis of the information gathered in the database of experts in its possession, pre-selects experts, corresponding with the field of a given proposal. Then experts on the basis of titles, keywords, etc. determine the readiness to evaluate individual proposals. On this basis, the PO assigns specific proposals to specific experts. The names of the experts assigned to individual proposals are not made public. However, the Programme Operator shall within six months from publication of the decision to award project grants, publish on the internet the list of experts used for the evaluation of projects in the call.

4.3.2 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 minimum 5 international experts who have not participated in the evaluation process. Representatives of the Programme Operator, Donor Programme Partners, FMO, of the embassies of the Donor States, and the National Focal Point can participate in the Selection Committee meetings as observers.

The tasks of the Selection Committee include:

- deciding on the final score for the proposal if the consensus has not been reached during individual evaluation. In this case, the Selection Committee may award points for each evaluation criterion in the consensus report in line with procedures described in sec. 4.4. The points awarded by the SC for each evaluation criterion cannot exceed the highest and the lowest score given for that criterion in the individual evaluations of the proposal. The score awarded by the SC is final and is taken into account while deciding the final ranking list.
- 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);
- deciding on the necessary modifications to the proposal indicated in consensus reports (i.e. budget cuts);

- deciding on the necessary modifications to the proposal as a result of the eligibility check of the costs by the PO;
- 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);
- approves a final ranking list of proposals for funding together with the reserve list (if applicable).

The SC is not entitled to change the final scores received by the proposals in the consensus report where consensus has been reached.

Ultimately, the goal of the Selection Committee is to decide about the final ranking order of the proposals on the basis of the total consensus scores assigned to the projects.

4.3.3 Evaluation criteria

Proposals are selected and funds are awarded on the basis of the following selection criteria:

Criteria	Description
Relevance	Proposal shall address at least one of the key priorities of the EEA Grants
Excellence	Objectives and ambition
	Methodology
Impact	Project's pathways towards impact
	Measures to maximise impact - Dissemination, exploitation and communication
Implementation	Work plan and resources
	Capacity of participants and consortium as a whole
Bilateral dimension	Quality of bilateral cooperation

Relevance

This criterion is considered as an elimination criterion, evaluated as a YES or NO question. The project proposal shall address at least one of the key priorities of the EEA Grants as described in sec. 2.2. If all 3 experts assess this criterion as "NO", the proposal is considered to be out of 'scope' - the proposal does not pass to the consensus report and it is deemed ineligible. The PO then issues a resolution refusing to initiate proceedings with regards to proposal in question. If at least one expert selects the "YES" answer for this criterion, the proposal proceeds to the consensus report.

Excellence

The weight for this criterion is 3. The following aspects are evaluated:

- Objectives and ambition – 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.

- Methodology – Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, interdisciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content, and the quality of open science practices including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end users where appropriate.

Impact

The weight for this criterion is 2. The following aspects are evaluated:

- Project's pathways towards impact - Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the call text, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions due to the project.
- Measures to maximise impact - Dissemination, exploitation and communication - Suitability and quality of the measures to maximize expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

Implementation

The weight for this criterion is 1. The following aspects are evaluated:

- Work plan and resources - Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.
- Capacity of participants and consortium as a whole - Capacity and role of each participant, and extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

Bilateral dimension

The weight for this criterion is 1. The following aspects are evaluated:

- Quality of bilateral cooperation - the benefits of the bilateral partnership and its positive contribution to achieving the project's objectives; the extent to which the Donor project partner(s) has a clear, active and meaningful role and provides added value to the project; the appropriateness of the division of tasks and resources considering the Donor partner's activities; the extent of cooperation through joint activities requiring contributions from the Donor project partner(s), and how this bilateral cooperation enhances the project's excellence by combining complementary expertise and integrated research or innovation work.

4.3.4 Proposal scoring

Experts examine the issues to be considered under each evaluation criterion. For criterion *Relevance (Proposal shall address at least one of the key priorities of the EEA Grants)* the scale 'yes' or 'no' is used. For the rest of criteria, a scale from 0 to 5 is applied. Half point scores may be given. Score values indicate the following assessments:

YES/NO	Relevance (Proposal shall address at least one of the key priorities of the EEA Grants)

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

A 'minor shortcoming' is an issue that relates only to a marginal aspect of the proposal with respect to the criterion and/or can easily be rectified (it will not impact the scoring).

A 'shortcoming' is a problem that relates to an important aspect of the proposal. It impacts the scoring but does not render the proposal inappropriate for funding, i.e. the proposal is still expected to lead to useful results with positive impact.

A 'significant weakness' means that the proposal addresses the criterion in a limited and/or not sufficiently effective way (will lower the score below threshold). This can also be the case when the proposal includes a large number of shortcomings, each one of them not rendering the proposal inappropriate for funding, though all together make the proposal not addressing the criterion sufficiently in an effective way.

Top scores should only be awarded to proposals of exceptionally high quality (high international calibre and major scientific impact).

A proposal can receive a total number of 35 points for the evaluation criteria. To be recommended for funding, the proposal must receive at least 23 points in total for the evaluation criteria and pass all the thresholds (for each evaluation criterion) at the consensus stage according to the values presented in the table below.

Criteria	**Threshold**	**Weight**
Relevance	YES	N/A
Excellence	3/5	x3
Impact	3/5	x2
Implementation	3/5	x1
Bilateral dimension	3/5	x 1

4.3.5 Encouraged measures – additional points

In line with Call Ambition described in sec. 2.3, additional points may be granted based on the following criteria:

Score	Description	Condition of award
1	The PI is an early-stage researcher.	Early-stage researcher status in line with definition provided in sec. 2.3; granted based on information indicated by the Project Promoter in relevant part of the Project Proposal.
1	Project includes interdisciplinary approaches.	Project proposal demonstrates a sufficient and relevant level of collaboration spanning multiple academic disciplines (e.g. natural sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities, engineering sciences, technological sciences, medical sciences) and involving the application of complementary methodologies to addressing a common problem in a more comprehensive and innovative way than would otherwise be possible. An interdisciplinary approach is understood to involve an active outreach beyond one discipline. Work conducted solely within one field does **not** constitute interdisciplinarity. For example, biochemistry within one department or within closely related sub-fields is not considered interdisciplinary. Applicants are expected to engage with disciplines outside their usual research environment and establish cooperation with entities that are not part of their standard academic networks.
1	Project includes cross-sectoral (transdisciplinary) approaches.	Project proposal demonstrates a sufficient and relevant level of collaboration spanning multiple different entities, both academic and non-academic, to solve a common problem. These entities may be governmental agencies and offices, non-governmental organisations, charitable organisations, private companies, civil society, grassroots movements, and other relevant stakeholders. Cross-sectoral cooperation requires active engagement with actors outside the academic environment.

The above scores are not included in the thresholds level indicated in sec. 4.3.4. Half point scores cannot be given.

4.3.6 Individual evaluation of proposals

Each proposal that has passed the formal (administrative and eligibility) assessment is evaluated by three international experts (from outside of Poland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) who independently and separately score the proposal according to the evaluation criteria. Each expert provides a written evaluation and a scoring for each criterion by completing an evaluation form in the online system (LSI).

If the Programme Operator finds that an individual evaluation does not meet the required standards and the justification is not sufficiently detailed, consistent and coherent, the expert may be asked to revise and correct the evaluation. After the selection procedure is completed and all funding decisions have been issued, individual evaluations will be anonymised and shared with the Project Promoter and project partners.

The *evaluation form* contains 3 parts:

- Part 1: Ethics, DNSH and AI Review
- Part 2: Evaluation of the proposal
- Part 3: Overall assessment

Part 1. Ethics, DNSH and AI Review

In this part experts:

- assess whether the proposal deals with sensitive ethical issues, including use of human embryonic stem cells (hESC) and human embryos (hE), based on the information provided by Project Promoter in the *Ethics Issues Table Checklist,* and whether it is consistent with the research activities planned in the Project Proposal;
- address any ethical issues identified and determine whether any of the issues raised constitute grounds for not funding the project;
- examine whether the proposal is compliant with the "Do no significant harm" (DNSH) principle[18] in accordance with the EU Taxonomy Regulations, and provide comments in the case the answer to the question is 'Partially', 'No' or 'Cannot be assessed';
- determine whether proposal involves the use and/or development of AI-based systems and/or techniques;

The proposal which contravenes fundamental ethical principles may be excluded at any time from the process of evaluation, selection and funding.

Part 2: Evaluation of the proposal

Experts evaluate each of the criterion described in sec. 4.3.3 in line with scoring described in sec. 4.3.4. For each criterion experts provide justification explaining why that particular score was awarded, as well as an indication of what was missing for the criterion to receive a higher score.

Individual evaluation of proposals, including all comments and arguments provided by the individual experts, will form a basis for preparing a consensus report, and will be essential for the final decision making process regarding funding of the highest ranked proposals.

Part 3: Overall assessment

Experts provide the following information:

[18] Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2020 on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment, and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/2088 http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2020/852/oj

- overall assessment of the proposal with the relevant justification. Experts indicate the most important strengths and weaknesses of the project proposal and provide any necessary supplementary comments;
- if planned research activities are compliant with the research categories (industrial research and experimental development). Each discrepancy shall be reported and described;
- if proposal includes interdisciplinary approaches in line with sec. 4.3.5;
- if proposal includes cross-sectoral approaches in line with sec. 4.3.5;
- if the planned resources and total budget are appropriate and if any modifications to the proposal are necessary (i.e. budget cuts).

Additionally, this part will include automatic information if the Project Proposal is granted additional point for the PI being an early-stage researcher - in line with sec. 4.3.5.

4.3.7 Consensus assessment

After the individual evaluation of a proposal, the three experts assigned to the proposal proceed to a consensus assessment and complete a *consensus report form*. A consensus assessment consists of an exchange of views/discussion which allows the experts to establish a joint position and a common view. One of the three experts is assigned the role of a lead expert, and is responsible for finalisation of the consensus assessment.

If the Programme Operator finds that a consensus report does not meet the required standards and the justification is not sufficiently detailed, consistent and coherent, the experts may be asked to revise and correct the report. After the selection procedure is completed and all funding decisions have been issued, consensus report will be anonymised and shared with the Project Promoter and project partners.

The *consensus report form* contains 3 parts, consistent with the individual *evaluation form* described in sec. 4.3.6:

- Part 1: Ethics, DNSH and AI Review
- Part 2: Evaluation of the proposal
- Part 3: Overall assessment

All three experts are required to provide a common opinion and justification on all parts of the *consensus report form* in line with descriptions in sec. 4.3.6.

Evaluation criteria must be scored as described in sec. 4.3.3 in line with scoring described in sec. 4.3.4. Scores given during the consensus assessment do not necessarily have to reflect individual scores given during the individual evaluation of the proposals. The scores given during consensus are an independent, jointly agreed assessment that shall be clearly and explicitly justified, and may differ from each of the individual evaluations.

The *consensus report* needs to additionally fulfil the following requirements:

- The arguments in the consensus shall be based on the arguments provided in the individual evaluations. Individual comments by experts should not be repeated, the report should demonstrate how the individual assessments lead to the overall conclusion;

- Any new positive or negative arguments introduced during the consensus assessment (which were not raised in the individual evaluations) must be clearly identified and justified with supporting evidence;
- The report must be coherent and consistent throughout the text;
- Major conflicting arguments identified across the individual evaluations must be addressed along with justified opinion/solution.
- Information that has a significant impact on the funding decision must be duly verified for accuracy and validity;
- Critical remarks must be supported with examples;
- Where relevant, proposed modifications or recommendations to improve the quality of the project should be clearly indicated.

The outcome of the consensus step is the consensus report approved by all the experts. If consensus cannot be reached, the report sets out the majority view of the experts but also records any dissenting views from any particular expert(s).

4.4 Final ranking list

The Programme Operator shall examine the eligibility of the proposed budget for each proposal which according to a ranking based on consensus reports is likely to be recommended for funding or to be included in the reserve list (if applicable). For the budgets of partner(s) from Donor States, the Programme Operator may consult the Donor Programme Partners.

The Programme Operator shall prepare a preliminary ranking list based on the international experts' evaluation of the proposals and the eligibility check of the proposed budget. Due account is taken of the scores received and of any advice from the experts. A suggested funding amount is determined for each of these proposals (based on experts' recommendation and PO's eligibility examination of the proposed budget).

Within the groups of equally scored proposals, the criteria for ranking are applied in the following prioritisation order:

1) proposals are prioritised according to the scores awarded for the criterion Excellence,
2) proposals are prioritised according to the scores awarded for the criterion Impact,
3) where proposals remain tied following the application of points 1 and 2, priority shall be given to proposals addressing those key priorities of the EEA Grants which are least represented among the projects recommended for funding, to ensure a balanced coverage of the key priorities financed in the Call.

The preliminary ranking list is then discussed by **the Selection Committee** at the Selection Committee meeting. The Selection Committee reviews the Programme Operator's preliminary ranking list, taking into account the overall quality of the evaluated proposals, the indicative budget allocation of the Call, and the number of proposals to be recommended for funding. If all of the prioritisation rankings are applied and equally scored proposals remain, the Selection Committee may decide to further prioritise by considering other factors relevant to the Call as described in secs. 2.1 Call Principles and 2.3 Call Ambition.

During the Selection Committee meeting, the Programme Operator may address any aspects that would need to be modified before issuing the funding decisions, based on the recommendation

of the experts and the PO's eligibility examination of the proposed budget. The SC draws up the final ranking list, and doing so, the SC may also propose conditions for possible inclusion in the funding decisions.

Following the general ranking order, a number of proposals may be included on a reserve list to account for eventualities such as the withdrawal of proposals, budget savings or the availability of additional budget from other sources.

The Programme Operator issues individual decisions awarding funding to projects based on the final ranking list approved by the Selection Committee. For project proposals not recommended for funding, including those on the reserve list, the Programme Operator issues individual decisions refusing funding.

In the event that the Selection Committee is unable to issue recommendations regarding the selection of projects, the authority to decide on the selection shall be exercised by the Cooperation Committee of the Programme upon the Programme Operator's request.

4.5 Confidentiality and conflict of interest

4.5.1 Confidentiality

All proposals and related data, knowledge and documents communicated to the *Programme Operator* are treated in confidence. Project proposal therefore are handled with care and are treated as confidential before, during and after the evaluation process.

Experts, *Selection Committee* members, *Cooperation Committee* members and observers must not:

- disclose any information concerning project proposals/application documents or evaluations to third parties, nor should they use confidential information to their own or any other party's benefit or disadvantage;
- communicate with applicants on topics related to project proposals;
- communicate their advice on any proposals (given to the *Programme Operator*) to the applicants or to any other person;
- show the content of proposals or information on applicants to third parties.

The experts will be held personally responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any documents or electronic files sent, and for returning, erasing or destroying all confidential documents or files upon completing the evaluation as instructed.

4.5.2 Conflict of interest

All persons involved in the evaluation process are required to declare any personal conflict of interest according to the following criteria. The declaration is in the form of a written statement and is made before the work begins - the declaration makes a distinction between 'disqualifying' and 'potential' conflicts of interest.[19]

A **disqualifying** conflict of interest exists if a person:

- took part in the preparation of the project proposal

[19] Article 24 of the Code of Administrative Procedure, in conjunction with Article 40(4) of the Act on the National Centre for Research and Development, shall apply accordingly.

- is employed by one of the applicant organisations in the proposal
- remains in such personal relationship with the applicant that could raise doubts as to his/her impartiality
- is related to the applicant through marriage, family relationship and affinity up to the second degree
- is or has been linked with the applicant: by means of adoption, custody or guardianship
- remains in such a legal relationship with the applicant which could result in the outcome of the case affecting his or her rights or obligations
- is in any other situation that may affect his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially.

A **potential** conflict of interest may exist, even in cases not covered by the clear disqualifying conflicts indicated above, if a person:

- remained in the three years preceding the date of submitting the statement, in a business relationship or in any other form of cooperation with the applicant, in particular:
  - was linked with the applicant through an employment relationship,
  - provided services for the applicant based on relations under the civil law, which could raise doubts as to impartiality,
  - was a member of the management and supervisory bodies of the applicant,
  - was a partner, shareholder or stockholder of the applicant.
- is in any other situation that could cast doubt on his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party.

Persons involved in the evaluation process must also declare if a conflict of interest appears at any time during the process.

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.

5. Contracting

The Project contract is signed between the Programme Operator and Project Promoter that represents the Project Consortium and all partners. During the contracting stage, following steps apply:

- submission of additional documents required to issue a funding decision (documentations required varies depending on type of entity – public or private, etc.)
- decisions issued by the PO;

- submission of additional documents required to sign the contract (documentations required varies depending on type of entity – public or private, etc.);
- fulfilment of conditions set by the Selection Committee and included in the funding decisions;
- signature of the project contract.

The PO shall specify the procedure and deadline for submitting additional documents in communication with the Project Promoter. The list of required documents is in Annex 1 to the Guide.

5.1 Funding decisions

The funding to the projects is awarded via a decision of the Director of the Programme Operator.

Any decisions, orders or other determinations shall be served on the Project Promoter in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Administrative Procedure. All determinations shall be issued in writing or in electronic form. The Project Promoter shall be responsible for promptly forwarding any such correspondence to the Project Partners.

Funding decisions specifying the amount awarded, including any conditions on the award of funding as suggested by the Selection Committee, are issued for all proposals selected for financing. For the proposals which have not been recommended for financing, refusal decisions are issued. All decisions are issued no later than 12 months after the call closure.

Prior to issuing the decision, the PO shall request the *Project Promoter* to provide the documents referred to in Annex No. 1 to the Guide. Failure by the *PP* to comply with the deadline set by the PO shall be deemed a withdrawal of the proposal and shall result in the Director of the PO issuing a decision to discontinue the proceedings, unless the Programme Operator - upon a justified request from the Project Promoter, grants an extension of that deadline. The Programme Operator may request additional documents to be provided by the Project Promoter and/or project partners.

The Selection Committee may designate a number of proposals to be kept in reserve. Once it is clear that sufficient budget has become available to fund one or more of these projects, the Programme Operator may award funding to projects on the reserve list, subject to the Project Consortium's capacity to implement the project within the final date for cost eligibility.

Appeals

A decision of the Director of the Programme Operator concerning the award of fundings may be appealed against on grounds of procedural breach or other formal issues, to the Appeal Committee of the Council of the National Centre for Research and Development, within 14 days from the date of the decision's delivery. The opinions and scores given by experts will not be subject to appeals. The Appeal Committee of the Council of the National Centre for Research and Development will issue its decision no later than within 3 months after the appeal date.

The decision of the Appeal Committee of the Council of the National Centre for Research and Development may be subject to appeal before a competent administrative court.

5.2 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 at: https://www.forskningsradet.no/en/financing/international-funding/eea-grants/

Project Promoter should take into account any updates to the document template. All project consortium 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.

5.3 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. PO may request further administrative, legal, technical or financial information necessary for the preparation of the project contract.

The contract template is available at the PO's website at https://www.gov.pl/web/ncbr/iv-edycja-funduszy-eog and https://eeagrants.org/en/poland/programmes/applied-research-and-innovation.

The amount of funding indicated in the funding decision cannot be increased.

If a project contract is not signed within a reasonable deadline indicated by the Programme Operator, the process may be terminated, and proposal shall be rejected from being funded. The Programme Operator may also terminate the process if the Project Promoter proposes to modify the project to the extent that it becomes significantly different from the proposal that has been evaluated and for this reason the project contract is not signed within a reasonable deadline indicated by the Programme Operator. In the abovementioned cases, the Director of the PO issues a decision concerning a declaration of expiration of the previous funding decision.

As a condition for concluding a project contract, the PP must submit the documents referred to in Annex No. 1 to the Guide. The PO shall specify the procedure and deadline for submission of the documents. This deadline may be extended with the approval of the PO.

Failure by the PP to meet the deadline specified by the PO for submitting the documents 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.

Once the conditions have been fully met and all required documents have been submitted, the project contract shall be signed between the Programme Operator and the Project Promoter,

acting on behalf of all Project Consortium partners on the basis of the Partnership Agreement referred to in section 5.2.

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. Where the Project Promoter is an enterprise or other entity obliged to provide a contract performance security, the Programme Operator will carry out a financial analysis to verify the entity's financial position and financial capacity. In justified cases, the Programme Operator may decide to transfer reduced advance payments (e.g. 5 % or 10 % of grant), which should be taken into account when forming the project consortium.

In case of justified doubts as to the proper performance of the project and in exceptional cases, e.g. unclear financial status, previous irregularities, warning signals /suspicion of financial abuse, a payment model based on the reimbursement of incurred expenses may apply to the project. Then the advance payments may be conditional upon the provision of contract performance security in one or several of the forms referred to in the Regulation of the Minister of Development Funds and Regional Policy of 21 September 2022 on advance payments under programs financed with European funds (Polish Journal of Laws of 2022, item 2055 as amended).

The Programme Operator ensures a timely transfer of an advance payment and interim payment(s) to the Project Promoter.

The Project Promoter is obliged to open and maintain, for the period of implementation of the project, a separate bank account for the funding under the Programme.

The PO transfers funds for the implementation of the project to the above-mentioned bank account. The Project Promoter distributes appropriate payments to the other project partners without undue delay and not later than 30 days after the project promoter has received payment from the PO. 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.

The first advance payment is transferred to the PP based on the signed project contract. The maximum value of the first advance payment for PP is up to 30 % of the total funding. Subsequent advance payments will be transferred in accordance with the payment schedule once the payment request has been approved, provided that at least 70 % of the funds from all previously transferred advance payments have been used.

The PP submits to the PO payment requests before the date stipulated in the project contract. Payment requests are subject to verification based on a checklist.

Payments shall be made by the Programme Operator to the project promoter within 15 days after the Programme Operator's approval of payment requests. Payments to the PP will be made in PLN by the PO through Polish Development Bank (Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego, BGK) system in accordance with the payment schedule of the European Funds budget for the given year.

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 payment model based on payment requests (payment claims) submitted by the PP will be applied, as described in the chapter above. The financial information contained in the payment claims is limited to a summary financial statement for the entire consortium at the date of the payment claim submission, whilst the financial information contained in the interim reports follows the reporting requirements described in sec. 6.5 below. Each PP submits a payment claim within the deadlines specified in the project contract. Formal and accounting verification of the payment claim is carried out by Programme Operator based on a checklist. The verification of costs incurred will be carried out as part of the assessment of 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 PP and project partners and will be checked during on-site verifications/audit of the project or upon request in case of required clarification (i.e. during the verification of interim reports or at any time if the Programme Operator deems it necessary).

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.

Based on the national legislation, for projects where the total funding amount exceeds PLN 3,000,000, the correctness of expenditures incurred by the Project Promoter and Polish project partners is verified in form of an audit carried out by an independent certified auditor. 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. For these projects an additional proof of expenditure referred above shall not be submitted by the Project Promoter and Polish project Partners, as the report mentioned above covers all the obligations. 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 50 % of the planned expenditure related to project implementation. 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 mentioned in sec. 6.6.

6.4 Proof of conditions fulfilled for simplified cost options

Where simplified cost options are concerned, reimbursement 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 be 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 reimbursed by the grant to the respective project promoter or project partner does not exceed EUR 430.000. Where proof of conditions shall be submitted, this shall be submitted once with the final report.

6.5 Reporting

During the course of the project, the project promoter shall submit one midterm (interim) report at a date set out in the project contract.

The interim report shall comprise:

a) an explanation of the work carried out by the project partners;

b) an overview of the progress of work towards the objectives of the project, including milestones and deliverables identified in the project contract;

c) 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;

d) an update and explanation of critical risks to the project, including foreseen risks, unforeseen risks and the state of play for mitigation measures;

e) details on the exploitation and dissemination of the results, including status on the pathways to impact, and the amended data management plan;

f) a summary suitable for a general audience for publication by the Programme Operator; and

g) a financial summary from the project promoter presenting the financial progress of the project.

In addition to the midterm report, the Programme Operator will carry out a midterm review based on the interim report. The review focuses on providing guidance on the technical and scientific implementation of the projects.

The midterm review takes 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.

Additionally, Project Promoter will be required annually to provide information summarizing the activities carried out during that period. This information will be used for monitoring and statistical purposes.

6.6 Final reporting

The project promoter shall submit a final report, within 60 days after the end of the project as stipulated in the project contract. It consists of two parts, a technical part and a financial part.

The technical part shall contain:

1. an overview of the results of the project;
2. a description of the foreseen impact of the project, including the pathways to impact, socio-economic impact and its wider societal implications;
3. a summary suitable for a general audience for publication by the Programme Operator; and
4. a full list of publications relating to the results of the project.

The financial part shall contain:

1. a 'final financial summary ' from the project promoter covering the whole project;
2. distribution of the financial contribution between the project promoter and project partners;
3. proof of expenditure and/or proof of conditions for each partner, if required.

6.7 Durability of projects

For the projects funded under the POLNORIS Call, the period of minimum post-completion operation shall be 5 years from the date of acceptance of the “Final Programme Report” by the Donor States.

6.8 Other requirements

Proposals selected for funding under the POLNORIS Call shall submit the following documentation after the signature of the project contract. The specific requirements, including mode of submission, which details, including mode of submission, will be indicated in the project contract:

- a **communication strategy**, to be submitted within 3 months of the signature of the project contract;
- a detailed **data management plan** for making the data/research outputs findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable (in line with FAIR principles), to be submitted within 6 months after signature of the project contract;
- a **plan for the dissemination and exploitation including communication activities** to be submitted within 6 months after signature of the project contract.

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 at https://eeagrants.org/en/fmo/documents-library/2021-2028-communication-and-design-manual.

The total costs of all Donor Project Partners from Donor State(s) should normally not exceed 40 % of the Consortium's total budget. These requirements shall apply approximately in case of budget modifications during the project implementation taking a justified case by case flexible approach into account.

7. Further information and queries

7.1 Programme documents

All Programme documents are available in English on the Programme Operator's websites:

https://www.gov.pl/web/ncbr/iv-edycja-funduszy-eog

https://eeagrants.org/en/poland/programmes/applied-research-and-innovation

7.2 Contact information

For any additional information about the POLNORIS Call and the Programme 'Applied Research and Innovation' please contact:

- Wanda Miczorek tel.: +48 507 064 518
- Dominika Jasińska tel.:+48 571 226 672
- Dorota Juszczyk tel.: +48 510 803 269
- Monika Krysik tel.:+48 510 932 299

The following e-mail address should be used when contacting the PO on the matters concerning the POLNORIS Call: eeagrants-at-ncbr.gov.pl. The timeframe for answering e-mail queries is 3 working days.

7.3 Annexes

Annexes to the Guide for Applicants and Evaluators:

- Annex 1 List of necessary documents
- Annex 2 Declaration of submission of the proposal through the electronic system
- Annex 3a. Evaluation survey template research organisation_pl_en
- Annex 3b. Evaluation survey template enterprise pl_en
- Annex 4. Declaration of no obligation to draw up financial statements_pl_en
- Annex 5. Form of information to be provided when applying for other forms of aid_pl_en
- Annex 6. Analysis of the financial capacity to implement the project_POLAND
- Annex 7a. Sanction declaration pl
- Annex 7b. Sanction declaration en
- Annex 8. Bioethical or ethical consents_pl_en
- Annex 9. Statement by a spouse of a natural person_pl_en
- Annex 10. Declaration of non-marriage or separation of property_pl_en

Proposal Manual
Proposal Manual (doc)
GDPR information clause
Project Contract template _en
Project Contract template _pl
Cost Eligibility Guide POLNORIS