

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAMME no 18/2021 of 14 May 2021

I. SCOPE OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Based on Article. 19 section 1 of the Act of 7 July 2017 on the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange, the Director of the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange announces a call for proposals for participation in the Polish Returns Programme 2021 (hereinafter "the Programme").

II. PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

2.1. Programme objective

The objective of the Polish Returns Programme 2021 is to enable outstanding Polish scientists to return to Poland and take up employment in Polish universities, scientific institutes or research institutes.

The Programme creates optimal conditions for Returning Scientists to conduct their research or development work in Poland. Scientists covered by the Programme shall be able to use the knowledge and experience gained in a foreign unit when creating their own Project Group in Poland or participating in research conducted in already operating research teams. Financing available under the Programme includes remuneration for the Returning Scientist and members of the Project Group. Another element of the Programme constitutes the Research Component financed by the National Science Centre.

2.2. Deadline and other terms for submitting the application

Deadline for submitting the application	The call for proposals shall be conducted from 14 May 2021 till 29 July 2021, 3:00:00 pm (local time for Warsaw) in the Agency's ICT system.
Method of submitting the application	Only in electronic form in the Agency's ICT system. By submitting the Application, you accept the content of the Regulations and the Announcement.
Language of the application	The application has to be drafted in English.
Maximum number of applications which may be submitted by the Applicant	Maximum 1 Application submitted jointly by the Returning Scientist and the Employing Institution. The Returning Scientist may appear in only one Application submitted in a given Call. There is no limit to the number of Applications submitted by the Employing Institution, as long as each Application is submitted with a different Returning Scientist. If more than one Application is submitted with the same Returning Scientist, the Agency shall assess the last Application, leaving other Applications without consideration.
Additional information	The Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange would like to emphasize that the Applicant, before drafting the Application and the

	required attachments, should read the documents related to the Call, including in particular the substantive assessment criteria in the Programme. The Applicant should present the Project (scientific achievements and description of the planned research) in such a way as to enable both the Evaluation Team and the Reviewers to adequately assess the Application.
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2.3. Thematic scope of activities implemented under the Programme

The Programme allows the Returning Scientist to be employed in a Polish higher education and science institution and covers two tracks, depending on the stage of the Returning Scientist's academic career:

- 1) Junior scientist;
- 2) Experienced scientist.

The tracks determine the requirements for the Returning Scientist, the composition of the Project Group, the length of the Project and the amount of financing, as detailed in the relevant sections of the Announcement.

The Programme assumes that during the implementation of the Project, the Returning Scientist should carry out the research activities planned in the Application, and at the same time apply for domestic and foreign research grants, which would allow him/her and the Project Group (if applicable) to continue their scientific activities in Poland after the end of the Project.

An element of the Programme constitutes the Research Component - a starting grant financed by the National Science Centre, intended for the implementation of basic research during the first 18 months of the Project implementation.

The Programme is open to all fields of science. Representatives of fields of art may participate in the Programme, provided that the activities planned in the Project are of a scientific nature.

2.4. Eligible Applicants

Requirements for the Returning Scientist:

1. Junior scientist track

A Returning Scientist may be a person who:

- 1) has Polish citizenship;
- 2) holds a doctoral degree obtained not earlier than 7 years before submitting the Application;
- 3) within the last 2 years (counted back from 1st May 2021), has been working abroad for at least 12 months in total in: a foreign university, research institute, scientific institute or research department of a foreign enterprise based outside Poland (the period of foreign scientific work shall not include the stay financed or co-financed from the funds of the Polish state) and at that time has not been living or working in Poland (as working in Poland shall be considered employment in an entity based in the territory of the Republic of Poland on the basis of an employment contract or managing a research grant with affiliation of a Polish unit, provided that remuneration has been paid on this account);

- 4) can demonstrate research, implementation or artistic achievements which are internationally recognized and stand out in the context of a given discipline and career stage.

2. Experienced scientist track

A Returning Scientist may be a person who:

- 1) has Polish citizenship;
- 2) holds at least a doctoral degree;
- 3) within the last 5 years (counted back from 1st May 2021) has been working abroad for at least 36 months in total in: a foreign university, research institute, scientific institute or research department of a foreign enterprise based outside Poland (the period of foreign scientific work shall not include the stay financed or co-financed from the funds of the Polish state) and at that time has not been living or working in Poland (as working in Poland shall be considered employment in an entity based in the territory of the Republic of Poland on the basis of an employment contract or managing a research grant with affiliation of a Polish unit, provided that remuneration has been paid on this account);
- 4) can demonstrate scientific, implementation or artistic achievements which are internationally recognized and stand out in the context of a given discipline and career stage;
- 5) as part of the research work abroad, he/she has been managing implementation of at least one research project selected in a national or international competition.

The condition for conclusion of the Project's financial agreement with the Agency is that the Returning Scientist does not take up employment in Poland from the moment the Application is submitted until he/she receives the Director's decision.

Requirements for the employing institution:

The employing institutions may be the entities referred to in Art. 7 section 1 points 1, 2 and 4-8 of the Higher Education and Science Law (HES). Other entities conducting mainly independent and continuous scientific activity, referred to in art. 7 section 1 point 8 of HES may also be employing institutions, provided that they have a scientific category.

In the event of a failure to conclude or terminate the financial agreement between the employing institution, the Agency and the Returning Scientist after financing is granted for the Project implementation, the Director may announce a supplementary call for proposals.

2.5. Obligations of the Employing Institution

If financing is obtained, the employing institution shall be required to:

- 1) employ the Returning Scientist under a full-time employment contract for the entire duration of the Project. A copy of the employment contract with the Returning Scientist should be sent to the Agency not later than within 30 days after its conclusion.
- 2) create a Project Group (if applicable), in accordance with the principles described in section 2.6 of the Announcement;

- 3) create conditions for the Returning Scientist and the Project Group allowing implementation of the activities planned in the Project, including provision of office and laboratory space as well as scientific and research equipment and access to infrastructure enabling research and teaching activities;
- 4) provide administrative and financial support for activities carried out in the Project, including for matters related to the return of the Returning Scientist and creation of the Project Group;
- 5) support the Returning Scientist and the Project Group in applying for funds for the implementation of the scientific research or development works, in obtaining the required approvals, opinions, permits, including those related to applying to relevant ethical committees and to support their participation in conferences and networking;
- 6) participate in the Programme evaluation;
- 7) if the Research Component is planned in the Project - to submit application to the National Science Centre in order to receive financing, and if this financing is received, to support the implementation and provide administrative and financial services for the Research Component.

2.6. Project Group and Inviting Person

As part of the Project, the Returning Scientist together with the Employing Institution are going to establish a Project Group.

The composition of the Project Group shall depend on the chosen track - of Junior scientist or Experienced scientist. On the Junior scientist track, the Project Group has supporting character for the Returning Scientist, and on the Experienced Scientist track, the Project Group works under the direction of the Returning Scientist.

On both tracks, members of the Project Group may be scientific staff, auxiliary personnel, technicians and employees responsible for the administrative service of the Project; newly hired for the purpose of the Project implementation, employed to perform specific tasks in the Project or being current employees of the Employing Institution.

It is permissible not to create a Project Group, if the type or scope of the conducted research does not require it.

The supporting role in the Project shall be performed by the Inviting Person, who is an independent scholar of the organizational unit in which the Returning Scientist is employed. The Inviting Person's task is to support the Returning Scientist in the implementation of substantive tasks and operating within the structures of the Employing Institution throughout the Project's implementation period.

2.7. Research component

As part of the Project, the Returning Scientist and the Employing Institution may plan a Research Component in the maximum amount of PLN 200,000 to be used during the first 18 months of the Project implementation. The research Component shall be financed by the National Science Centre (Narodowe Centrum Nauki, NCN) and is intended solely for financing basic research.

The substantive assessment by the Evaluation Team shall verify whether the research planned under the Research Component belongs to the basic research. If the Evaluation Team decides that the research planned under the Research Component does not belong to basic research, it shall not be possible to submit the application to NCN. However, financing of the Project by NAWA shall still be possible, excluding the costs of the Research Component. The Evaluation Team may recommend a modification of the Research Component budget, which has to be taken into account when submitting the application to NCN.

Beneficiaries (employing institutions) selected under the Programme shall be required to submit a separate application in the NCN's ICT system under the call for proposals addressed exclusively to them. Proposals shall only be subject to formal assessment by NCN. In the case of formally correct applications, the NCN Director shall issue a decision to finance the Research Component and appropriate agreement shall be concluded.

The Research Component in the application submitted to the Agency is optional, and if it is planned in the application, the Applicant may not simultaneously apply for financing of the costs of adaptation and organization of the workplace and preparation of research facilities.

Projects including a Research Component are taken into consideration in the evaluation of the quality of scientific activity.

2.8. Applying

The Returning Scientist shall submit the application on his/her own behalf and on behalf of the employing institution.

The Application should be accompanied by:

- 1) Link to the most important publications of the Returning Scientist (between 3 and 5), if free access to the full content of the publication is available through the link or, if it is impossible, copies of these publications. In the case of monographs, a file including the title page, editorial page, table of contents and a selection of fragments containing the author's most important theses - a total of no more than 20 pages should be uploaded in the Agency's ICT system. In the case of patents and implementations, please provide their numbers and indicate the appropriate links or attach scans of confirming documents. In the case of representatives of the fields of art, copies of the catalogues with ISBN number or other formal confirmation of compliance with the conditions set out in section 2.4 of the Announcement should be attached.
- 2) scan of the document confirming possession of an academic degree/title by the Returning Scientist.

- 3) commitment of the Employing Institution signed by a person authorized to represent the Employing Institution (model document is attached as Attachment 4 to the Announcement).
- 4) Information sent to the Agency about the invitation of the Returning Scientist signed by the Inviting Person (model document is attached as Attachment 5 to the Announcement).
- 5) Declaration of the Returning Scientist (model document is attached as Attachment 6 to the Announcement).
- 6) Copy of documents unequivocally confirming that the Returning Scientist has been working abroad on the terms specified in section 2.4 of the Announcement (a certificate from the HR department or a certificate issued by a person representing the employer's unit, containing the name of the position and the period of employment).
- 7) Power of attorney for the Returning Scientist to submit the application and for further operation of the account in the Agency's ICT system under the Programme on behalf of the Employing Institution. If the power of attorney was granted in electronic form with the use of a qualified electronic signature, it has to be attached to the Application, and if it was granted in writing, its scan should be attached to the Application and the original should be delivered to the Agency's address (the suggested model document is attached as Attachment 7 to the Announcement).
- 8) Declaration on the absence of state aid (model document is attached as Attachment 8 to the Announcement).

CAUTION:

Attachments should be placed in the system as PDF files not larger than 2 MB. When attaching a document, please cover the photo. Attaching a document with a photo shall mean consent to the processing of personal data in this regard.

2.9. Timeframe for the project implementation

Project start date	The project should start between 1 st March 2022 and 30 th October 2022.
Project length	<p><u>Junior scientist track</u> The project may be implemented for a period not shorter than 24 months and not longer than 36 months.</p> <p><u>Experienced scientist track</u> The project may be implemented for a period not shorter than 36 months and not longer than 48 months.</p>
Changes to the Project implementation date	<p>In justified cases, the Project start date indicated in the application may be postponed by no more than 6 months.</p> <p>In justified cases, the Project implementation period may be extended by no more than 12 months. Requests for extension shall be decided individually by the Director. The Agency has to request the Evaluation Team for the opinion on this matter.</p> <p>In the case of breaks at work of the Returning Scientist related to maternity leave, leave on the terms of maternity leave, paternity leave or parental leave, granted in accordance with the provisions of the Labour Code, or receiving a sickness benefit or a rehabilitation benefit due to incapacity for work, including the incapacity caused by a disease requiring rehabilitation, the Project implementation period may be</p>

	<p>additionally extended, upon approval of relevant request by the Director, for a period corresponding to the duration of the above-mentioned breaks.</p> <p>In the situation described above, the total amount of the grant awarded by the Agency shall not be increased. The above reservation shall not apply to possible co-financing by the employing institution, which may financially support the Project at all stages of its implementation.</p>
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2.10. Procedure of assessment and selection of applications for financing

General assumptions	Applications shall be subject to formal and substantive assessment.
Formal assessment	The purpose of the formal assessment is to verify the applications in terms of meeting the formal criteria specified in this Announcement and in the Regulations.
Substantive assessment	<p>The objective of the substantive assessment is to verify the Applications in terms of meeting the substantive assessment criteria.</p> <p>The substantive assessment consists of three stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Initial assessment of Applications by the Evaluation Team. Applications which are not recommended by the Evaluation Team at this stage shall not be subject to further assessment; 2) Assessment of Applications by two Reviewers; 3) Final assessment by the Evaluation Team after it familiarizes itself with the assessment by the Reviewers. <p>The assessment at each stage shall be made on the basis of 3 criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Scientific or technological quality of the Project, including the scope and manner of implementation of the planned activities; 2) Scientific achievements of the Returning Scientist, including the past course of the scientific or academic career; 3) Potential significance of the Project for the development of science. <p>At a given stage the Project may receive a maximum of 5 points for each of the criteria. The scores from the subsequent stages of the assessment do not add up.</p> <p>If any unreliability is found at the stage of the application's preparation, the Evaluation Team shall give the application 0 score (zero).</p> <p>In justified cases, the Evaluation Team may recommend reduction of the requested amount of financing.</p> <p>The Evaluation Team shall prepare a ranking list of Applications, indicating Applications recommended for financing and Applications on the reserve list which shall receive financing if relevant funds are available. The number of points awarded by the Evaluation Team at the stage of final assessment of Applications shall determine the place on the ranking list.</p>

2.11. Project budget

1. Under the Project, the following costs may be financed as elements of the financing granted to the Employing Institution:

- 1) **Remuneration of the Returning Scientist:**
 - a) PLN 220,000 - PLN 240,000 per year for the Junior Scientist track;
 - b) PLN 300,000 - PLN 330,000 per year for the Experienced scientist track;
- 2) **Remuneration of the Inviting Person** in the amount of PLN 14,400 per year;
- 3) **Remuneration of members of the Project Group:**
 - a) maximum of PLN 120,000 per year for the Junior Scientist track;
 - b) maximum of PLN 250,000 per year for the Experienced Scientist track.

Decisions on the amounts of remuneration of members of the Project Group shall be made by the Returning Scientist. The amounts of remuneration include the employer's costs.

- 4) **Adaptation and organization of the workplace and preparation of research facilities** - up to PLN 50,000 gross.

If the Research Component is planned in the Application, it shall not be possible to simultaneously apply for financing of this cost category. Eligible costs in the category "Adaptation and organization of the workplace" may be, among others, minor renovations, repairs, purchases (e.g. laptop or printer, small research equipment and instruments, qualified electronic signature, research materials and necessary reagents), costs of preparation of applications to agencies financing research, costs of networking and participation in conferences. These costs shall be settled on the basis of actually incurred expenses and should be incurred not later than within 18 months from the Project implementation start date. The Employing Institution should keep accounting records of their incurrence. The equipment purchased under this cost item shall constitute the equipment of the Project Group.

Ineligible costs shall include the purchase of research equipment, understood as a set of research, measuring or laboratory equipment with a low degree of universality and high technical parameters (usually several levels of measurement accuracy higher than typical equipment used for production or operational purposes), which according to the accounting rules (policy) in force in the Employing Institution is classified as fixed assets.

2. As part of the Project, the Returning Scientist shall receive a Fellowship. The Fellowship, granted and paid by the Agency directly to the Returning Scientist, is intended to cover the costs of resettlement (travel) in the form of a one-time mobility allowance (lump sum) in the amount of PLN 20,000. The Fellowship shall be paid to the Returning Scientist within 30 days from the conclusion of the Agreement. Applying the lump sum form in the Project means that the part of the Project covered by it shall not be settled on the basis of actually incurred expenses. The Returning Scientist shall not be obliged to collect and present accounting evidence in order to confirm expenses. Pursuant to Art. 21 section 1 point 39a of the Act of 26 July 1991 on Personal Income Tax (i.e. Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1426, as amended) scholarships and other financial resources referred to in Art. 18 section 2 point 1 of the Act of 7 July 2017 on the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange are free from tax.

3. If the Project does not include the Research Component, the maximum amount of financing may not be higher than:

- 1) PLN 1,193,200 for the Junior Scientist track;
 - 2) PLN 2,447,600 for the Experienced scientist track.
4. If the Project includes the Research Component, the maximum amount of financing may not be higher than:
- 1) PLN 1,343,200 (including PLN 1,143,200 from the Agency's funds and PLN 200,000 from the NCN funds) for the Junior Scientist track;
 - 2) PLN 2,597,600 (including PLN 2,397,600 from the Agency's funds and PLN 200,000 from the NCN funds) for the Experienced scientist track.
5. The Fellowship for the Returning Scientist and the amount allocated to the adaptation and organization of the workplace may be increased by 20% if the Returning Scientist is a person with a certificate of moderate or severe disability. In such a case, the maximum amount of financing for the Project shall be increased accordingly.
6. The Project budget may be increased by the Employing Institution's own funds.

2.12. The amount of funds available under the Call for proposals

The total allocation for the Call for proposals is PLN 18,000,000, while the Agency reserves the right to increase the allocation of funds as well as not to utilize the entire amount of allocation.

2.13. Planned date of announcing the results of the Call for proposals

The results of the Call for proposals shall be announced by 31 January 2022.

2.14. Programme's Source of financing

National resources

III. ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Model application for financing
- 2) Regulations of the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange programmes in which the beneficiaries are jointly a natural person and an institution
- 3) Catalogue of eligible costs under the Research Component
- 4) Model commitment of the Employing Institution
- 5) Model information about the invitation given by the Inviting Person
- 6) Model declaration of the Returning Scientist
- 7) Model power of attorney for the Returning Scientist to submit the Application
- 8) Model declaration on the absence of state aid
- 9) Model Agreement
- 10) Model Interim Report
- 11) Model Final Report
- 12) Forms of assessment cards (1-3)

IV. CONTACT WITH THE AGENCY

For more information, please contact:

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