

Regulations of Bulgarian National Science Fund

*Issued by the Ministry of Education and Science
Prom. SG. issue 41 of 31 2016*

/translation of relevant parts/

Part related to Scientific expert panels

Chapter II

FUND BODIES

Section V

Scientific Expert Panels

Art. 22 (1) Scientific Expert Panels carry out activities determined by the Scientific Research Promotion Act, this regulations and the decisions of the Managing Board.

(2) The members of Scientific Expert Panels shall be habilitated professionals.

Art. 23. (1) The members of Scientific Expert Panels shall be nominated by a decision of the Executive Board subject to compliance with the provisions of Art. 13, item 7 and must:

1. meet the minimum requirements, laid down in the Appendix to Art. 7, par. 2;
2. have managed minimum one successfully completed research project, financed by the Fund or by European Union funds;
3. have stated their wish to participate in a permanent scientific expert panel in the respective mandate period or in a temporary scientific expert panel for a particular competition.

(2) The provisions of Art. 11, par. 5, items 1 through 6 shall apply to the members of scientific expert panels.

(3) The Manager shall conclude agreements with the members of scientific expert panels.

(4) Members of a temporary scientific expert panel cannot be involved independently and/or as managers or members of research teams applying with projects, the assessment of which is assigned to the panel.

(5) Members of a permanent scientific expert panel cannot apply or be involved in projects financed by the Fund.

Art. 24. (1) A member of a scientific expert panel shall be discharged prematurely subject to compliance with the provisions of Art. 12, par. 1, items 1, 2, 4 and 5 in case of absence from three subsequent panel sessions with no valid reason upon occurrence of the circumstances under Art. 11, par. 5, items 1 through 6 and having violated the provisions of Art. 23, par. 4 and 5.

(2) The discharging decision shall be taken by the Managing Board under a report of the Fund Manager. The Managing Board shall nominate a new member of the scientific expert panel following the provision of Art. 23.

(3) A proposal for discharging under Art. 12, par. 1, items 4 and 5 can be made by a research organization or by minimum three project managers.

Art. 25. (1) Scientific expert panels work shall be organized by a Chair, who:

1. leads the sessions and signs minutes with the adopted decisions;
2. submits for consideration by the Managing Board the reports of the scientific expert panel;
3. submits for consideration by the Manager decisions, opinions, proposals or reports of the scientific expert panel.

(2) In case of Chair's absence their functions shall be carried out by a Deputy Chair.

(3) The Chair and the Deputy Chair shall be elected by a secret vote amongst the members of the respective scientific expert panel. The applicant having got more than the half of the votes of all scientific expert panel members shall be selected.

Art. 26. (1) Sessions of scientific expert panels shall be legitimate if two third of the listed members are attending them. Scientific expert panels can hold absentee sessions.

(2) Decisions shall be taken by a simple majority of listed members.

(3) Minutes of the session of scientific expert panel shall be kept. The minutes shall be signed by the Chair and by the Secretary of the panel, and also by all members of scientific expert panel, including those with minority report.

(4) Minutes referred to in par. 3 shall be kept for a period of five years after the finalization of all projects in the respective competition.

Art. 27. Scientific expert panels shall carry out their activity following rules adopted by the Managing Board upon proposal of the Fund Manager.

Art. 28. The Chair and the members of scientific expert panels shall get monthly remuneration of BGN380. They shall be entitled to get paid only for the months in which they have attended the sessions.

Art. 29. (1) Permanent scientific expert panels shall carry out current monitoring, analysis and assessment of implementation of the finance competitive projects.

(2) Permanent scientific expert panels shall consist of 5 to 9 members and shall have got a two-year mandate. Members of permanent scientific expert panels shall be entitled to maximum two subsequent mandates.

(3) A permanent scientific expert panel shall be set up for each scientific field under Art. 6, par. 2.

(4) For each project, the permanent scientific expert panel shall nominate its member to be in charge of the monitoring and control of project implementation, and also of the intermediate and final project assessment.

(5) Permanent scientific expert panels shall hold regular scheduled sessions 6 times a year according to a schedule approved by the executive board. By a decision of the executive board or of the Manager the commissions can hold extraordinary sessions.

Art. 30. (1) Temporary scientific expert panels shall organize the assessment and shall rank project proposals.

(2) Temporary scientific expert panels shall consist of 5 to 9 members.

(3) Temporary scientific expert panels shall be elected within two weeks before the expiration of the term for submission of project proposals for the respective competition and shall keep functioning until signing of financing agreements for competitive agreements.

Part related to evaluation of proposals

Chapter Three.

FUND ACTIVITY

Section IV. Eligibility, assessment and ranking of projects

Art. 51. (1) The respective temporary scientific expert panel with the assistance of Fund employees shall review the submitted project proposals for administrative compliance and eligibility against the following criteria:

1. existing project proposal, including administrative and scientific project description, and also all appendixes determined in the Guidance on application in the competition;

2. compliance of project proposal with the requirements laid down in the Guidance on application in the competition;

3. determination of project proposal as one going beyond the scope of the state aid framework or project proposal compliance with the state aid regime for the respective competition under methodology, laid down in Guidance on application in the competition.

(2) After completing the revision under par. 1, the Manager of the Fund shall notify research teams managers, whose project proposals do not meet one or more requirements, laid down in the Guidance on application in the competition. Non-conformities can be repaired within 7 days after the

notice. Failure to repair the non-conformities shall entail suspension of the project proposal for further advancing to the next assessment stage.

(3) Upon expiration of the term for repairing of non-conformities under par. 2, the temporary scientific expert panel shall make a list of project proposals which are not eligible for scientific assessment, which shall be published on the Internet site of the Fund.

Art. 52. (1) Organization of assessment and ranking of submitted project proposals shall be arranged by the temporary scientific expert panel.

(2) For interdisciplinary projects, the proposal shall be reviewed by the temporary scientific expert panel for the main research field or subject range of the project, stated in the project proposal.

Art. 53. Projects assessment shall be carried out in compliance with projects assessment and ranking methodology, determined by the Guidance on application in the competition and shall include the following stages:

1. scientific assessment of project proposals, assessment of team capacity and of the project implementation schedule, and also assessment of the effect of project implementation results on the society;

2. issuing of a complex evaluation of project proposals and ranking of project proposals with a score exceeding the minimum.

Art. 54. (1) Project proposals assessment is carried out by independent evaluators, listed in the data base under Art. 6, par. 1, item 2 for the respective year.

(2) One independent evaluators can assess maximum five project proposals within one competition.

(3) Assessment of project proposals in subject areas or scientific fields in cases referred to in Art. 41, par. 4 can be carried out also only by national independent evaluators.

Art. 55. (1) An independent evaluator cannot assess projects in a certain subject area or scientific field of a competition, if they are involved as a manager or a member of a research team of a project proposal in the same subject area or scientific field of the competition.

(2) An independent evaluator cannot assess a project:

1. of an organization, where they work under a main labor agreement, or of the organization, having hired then under an employment agreement and/or under a civil contract within the last three years;

2. where they are a spouse or a co-habitant or a lineal relative without restrictions, in-laws up to fourth degree inclusive or by marriage up to fourth degree inclusive of the manager or of a member of the research team of the project;

3. where they have got joint research publications over the last five years with the manager of with a member of the research team of the project.

(3) Members of the Executive Board, of permanent or of temporary scientific expert panels cannot be evaluators of project proposals during their mandate. Members of temporary scientific expert panels can participate with a consultative vote at evaluators sessions for getting a consensus for the final assessment of projects in cases referred to in Art. 58, item 3.

Art. 56. (1) After publication of the list of project proposals under Art. 51, par. 3, the evaluators under Art. 6, par. 1, item 2 for the respective research field or subject area shall get access to the administrative description of project proposals, eligible to be assessed. Access to the administrative description of interdisciplinary projects shall get evaluators in all research fields, stated in the project proposal.

(2) After getting access to the information under par. 1 evaluators shall:

1. nominate the projects for the assessment of which they have got:

a) specific competency for the project scope;

b) general competency in the respective research field.

2. declare non-existence of the particulars for the nominated projects under Art. 55, par. 1 and 2.

(3) In case of identification of a declaration containing incorrect information under par. 2, item 2, the evaluator shall lose the right to assess project proposals for life, as well as to be involved in projects finance by the Fund for a period of five years.

(4) The circumstance under par. 3 shall be confirmed by a decision of the Executive board, which shall be communicated to the evaluator and shall be published on the Internet site of the Fund.

(5) Based on the determined competency under par. 2, item 1, the respective temporary scientific expert panel shall decide by drawing lots:

1. three independent evaluators having got specific competency on project issues – for project proposals in competitions with maximum total amount per project exceeding BG400.000;

2. two independent evaluators having got specific competency on project issues – for project proposals in competitions with maximum total amount per project less than BG400.000.

(6) Project proposals in “Ideas” competition shall be assessed by at least one foreign independent evaluator, except for cases under Art. 41, par. 4.

(7) If for a project proposal the number of nominated evaluators having got specific competency is less than six under par. 5, item 1 or less than four under par. 5, item 2, evaluators having declared general competency shall be included in the draw lots.

(8) If no evaluators can be appointed according to the provisions of par. 5 or 7, they shall be nominated by the temporary scientific expert panel from the data base under Art. 6, par. 1, item 2 for the respective research field. The nominated evaluators shall be notified in writing and in case of

having their consent, they shall declare non-existence of the particulars for the indicated project proposals according to Art. 55, par. 1 and 2.

(9) Project proposals for co-financing of projects under international programs, including independent scientific project assessment by a European or international organization, shall not be assessed scientifically by evaluators, but the positive assessment of the assessing organization shall be accepted instead.

(10) Project proposals in competitions with maximum amount for project financing less than ten thousand levs can be assessed by one evaluator.

Art. 57. (1) For every project proposal the respective temporary scientific expert panel shall nominate a speaker who is a member of the panel, and who following the decision of the temporary scientific expert panel under Art. 56, par. 5, 7 and 8 shall notify the nominated independent evaluators and shall send them:

1. the guidance for application in the competition under Art. 39, par. 1;
2. the filed project proposal in electronic format;
3. a link to the information in the Fund data base about the manager and the members of the project research team and their current projects or projects having been completed within the last three years.

(2) The nominated independent evaluators shall be anonymous for all persons, except for the members and the secretary of the respective temporary scientific expert panel, and also for other project proposal evaluators in cases under Art. 58, item 3.

(3) Within a term determined by the Guidance on application, every independent evaluator shall prepare electronically an assessment of the respective project proposal, containing:

1. evaluation of eligibility of the provided activities and expenses and of the type of provided research studies;
2. project proposal assessment by appraisal by points against the scientific assessment criteria of project proposals and justification of individual items for every criteria;
3. recommendations for amendments of the work program and/or the financial schedule of the project, if they are considered to be relevant.

Art. 58. After having received the assessments the respective temporary scientific expert panel shall review them individually for every project proposal, and shall:

1. verify the compliance of the allocated points with the justifications under every criterion and with the project assessment methodology and shall compare evaluators' assessments;
2. in case of compliance and with a difference between the points allocated by the evaluators, the value which is lower than the one determined by the methodology shall form the complex evaluation score of the project as an arithmetic mean of evaluators' assessments;
3. in case of non-compliance under item 1 of some of the assessments or in case of difference between the individual assessments which is more than the value determined by the methodology, shall arrange a discussion between the evaluators, moderated by the speaker on the respective project proposal from the temporary scientific expert panel; in the course of discussion

evaluators shall decide jointly on the wording of their justification and the assessment under each criterion and shall adopt the complex evaluation score of the project proposal.

Art. 59. (1) Upon completion of the assessment under Art. 57 and 58 temporary scientific expert panels shall:

1. rank project proposals in a descending order of their complex evaluation score;
2. list project proposals for financing within the framework of preliminary allocated funds.

(2) Project proposals having got an assessment score less than the minimum threshold, determined in the Guidance on participation in the competition shall not be ranked.

(3) If independent evaluators have suggested adjustments of the financial schedule of a certain project, the respective temporary scientific expert commission shall review the justification thereof and shall take them into account fully or partially for their proposal for financing.

(4) If after issuing the list of project proposals to be financed under par. 1, item 2, there are project proposals which have been assessed with a score exceeding the minimal threshold, but are not suggested to be financed because of exhaustion of the provided financial resources for the respective subject area or scientific field, there project proposals shall be included in a list of alternative project proposals.

(5) The temporary scientific expert panel shall issue a report to the Executive board on the carried out activities for the organization of assessment and ranking of project proposals with the decisions under par. 1 attached thereto.

(6) A member of a temporary scientific expert panel can express an exception report in writing, which shall be submitted within three days after the panel session at which project ranking in the competition has been adopted, and it shall become an integral part of the decision.

Art. 60. (1) Upon submission of the report of the respective temporary scientific expert panel, the Executive board shall approve the ranking, the list of projects subject to financing and a list of alternative projects.

(2) The decision of the Executive board shall be published on the Internet site of the Fund. A list of ranked projects shall be attached to the decision, containing the following information:

1. project title;
2. applying organization and partner organizations, if any;
3. research team coordinator;
4. complex evaluation score of the project.

(3) For the projects approved for financing the total amount of allocated financing shall be published, as well as project summary and the list of research team members.

(4) If project proposals having been assessed with a score higher than the minimum threshold, are not sufficient to exhaust the allocated resources for a particular subject area or research field, the remaining amount shall be distributed by the Executive board for financing of alternative project proposals in other subject areas or research fields within the same competition.

(5) The decision under par. 1 shall be taken within 15 weeks after the expiration of the deadline for submission of project proposals, except for those under the procedure of Art. 62, for

which the decision shall be taken within 18 weeks after the expiration of the deadline for submission of project proposals. The periods from 1 to 31 August and from 23 December to 3rd January are not included in these terms.

Art. 61. Within ten work days after taking the decision under Art. 60, par. 1 the Manager shall send to the research teams managers the received scientific assessments, the justifications thereof, and the complex evaluation score of the project proposal submitted thereby.

Art. 62. (1) By a decision of the Executive board, the assessment of project proposals within competitions with a minimum project budget exceeding a certain value fixed by the Executive board, can include two stages:

1. assessment by independent evaluators;
2. defense of project proposals, having passed successfully the first stage.

(2) Assessment under par. 1, item 1 shall be carried out subject to compliance with the provisions and following the procedure of Art. 51 – 59, where evaluators can issue recommendations about amendments of the project work schedule and/or the financial schedule. Projects shall be assessed only by foreign independent evaluators, except for the cases referred to in Art. 41, par. 4

(3) The defense of project proposals under par. 1, item shall take place for projects having got evaluation score exceeding the minimum threshold laid down in the Guidance on application in the competition. Based on the recommendations issued by the independent evaluators, research teams shortlisted to advance to the second evaluation stage can make amendments in the submitted project proposal.

(4) The defense of project proposals shall include presentation of the project by the research team manager before the respective temporary scientific expert panel, giving answers to independent evaluators' questions and recommendations.

(5) Minutes and audio-record of the defense of project proposals shall be kept, and based on them independent evaluators shall issue their assessment score for the second assessment stage.

(6) Projects shall be ranked based on the average score of the first and the second assessment stage.

(7) The approval of projects for financing shall take place subject to compliance with the provision of Art. 60.

Art. 63. (1) Independent evaluators and the super-evaluators shall get paid a remuneration based on a concluded agreement with the Fund. The amount of their remuneration for an evaluated project shall depend on the type of competition and shall be fixed on an annual basis by the Executive board, where it cannot be less than BGN50.00 and more than BGN300.00.

(2) The remuneration shall not be paid if through independent evaluator's fault the assessment result has not been submitted within the term set in the Guidance on application.

(3) Assessment of project proposals and the intermediate and final assessment of financed projects shall be an integral part of research studies. The activity of independent evaluators is a specific research and development work connected with determination of project parameters and can include also recommendations for quality improvement of research studies.

Part related to minimal requirements for evaluators of proposals

Appendix to art. 7, para. 2

Minimum requirements for the members of the Executive Board of the Fund, members of the scientific expert committees and evaluators.

3. The minimum requirements for evaluators in scientific areas are:

- a) minimum five scientific publications for the last five years;
- b) all the following requirements to be met during the whole career

Biological Sciences: 15 scientific publications, of which at least 10 scientific papers in journals with impact factor or impact rank, Hirsch index 6

Mathematical Sciences and Informatics: 10 scientific publications, including at least 6 scientific papers in journals with impact factor or impact rank, Hirsch index 4

Medical Sciences: 20 scientific publications, of which at least 10 scientific papers in journals with impact factor or impact rank, Hirsch index 6

Earth Sciences: 15 scientific publications, of which at least 8 scientific articles in journals with impact factor or impact rank, Hirsch index 5

Social Sciences: 1 monograph or 15 scientific publications, 15 citations

Agricultural Sciences: 15 scientific publications, of which at least 8 scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals, 10 citations

Technical Sciences: 15 scientific publications, of which at least 8 scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals, 10 citations

Physical Sciences: 15 scientific publications, of which at least 10 scientific papers in journals with impact factor or impact rank, Hirsch index 5

Chemical sciences: 15 scientific publications, of which at least 10 scientific papers in journals with impact factor or impact rank, Hirsch index 6

Humanities: 1 monograph or 15 scientific publications, 15 citations.

4. Scientists working in interdisciplinary areas can participate in all areas of competence, as one interdisciplinary publication may be represented in all scientific fields concerned.

5. Hirsch Index is validated for all publications of the scientist, according to Thomson Reuters or SCOPUS (the larger of the two).

6. The number of scientific publications includes:

- Publications in scientific journals with impact factor or impact rank;
- Publications in scientific journals without impact factor or impact rank in which manuscripts are reviewed;
- Studies;

- Reports from scientific conferences, published in full text;

- Patents.

7. Publications notified under pt. 6 must be able to be verified by the Fund through Thomson Reuters, Scopus, Google Scholar or Inspire databases, through the official pages of publishers of magazines or monographs or to be proven by the authors in another way.

8. The number of citations does not include citing the authors themselves or the other co-authors of the scientific publications.