

## **Conditions of and Procedure for Application for Personal Research Funding**

### **Chapter 1**

#### **GENERAL PROVISIONS**

##### **1. Scope of application**

The directive establishes the conditions of and procedure for applying for, evaluating, granting and reporting on personal research funding.

##### **2. Personal research funding**

2.1. Personal research funding (hereinafter *grant*) means the funding of high-level research and development activities carried out by researchers or small research groups who are employed by a research and development institution and comprises two categories of grants:

2.1.1. a grant to support an individual high-risk or innovative research project (hereinafter *exploratory research grant*) at a high international level;

2.1.2. a grant to support researchers who wish to establish an independent research group (hereinafter *start-up research grant*).

2.2. A grant shall be awarded for the implementation of an independent research project and the purpose of the project is not the co-funding of other grants awarded under the Organisation of Research and Development Act.

##### **3. Research project**

A research project is a description of a study with a clearly defined research problem and fundamental or applied research planned to address the problem.

##### **4. Applicant**

A researcher can apply for funding upon receiving consent from an Estonian research and development institution (hereinafter *host institution*). The consent must include confirmation that the host institution shall enter into an employment contract with the applicant if such a contractual relationship does not already exist at the time of submitting the application. The applicant must be the principal investigator of the project for which the grant is applied.

##### **5. Reviewer**

The review of applications for grants (hereinafter *application*) is organised by the Estonian Research Council (hereinafter *Council*).

##### **6. Grant award contract**

6.1. The Council shall enter into a tripartite one-year grant award contract (hereinafter *grant award contract*) with the host institution and the principal investigator specified in Section 4. The grant award contract sets out the mutual rights, duties and liability of the parties. In the event of

a multi-annual research project, a new grant award contract is concluded annually. A grant award contract is concluded via the Estonian Research Information System ETIS (hereinafter *ETIS*).

6.2. A grant is awarded to the host institution that is required to allow the principal investigator to use the direct costs portion of the awarded grant for the implementation of the project in compliance with the application.

6.3. If a grant is awarded to a research project, the host institution shall enter into an employment contract with the principal investigator and the implementers specified in Section 9.1.1 for implementing the research project if such a contractual relationship does not already exist at the time of awarding a grant..

6.4. If the employment contract between the principal investigator and the host institution expires during the grant term and the parties do not enter into a new employment contract:

6.4.1. the Council will unilaterally terminate the grant award contract and

6.4.2. shall enter into a new grant award contract with the principal investigator and the research and development institution with which the principal investigator has signed a new employment contract and that consents to enter into the grant award contract. Before entering into the grant award contract, the Council shall assess whether the new host institution has the necessary research environment and infrastructure required for the implementation of the research project. In the event of a negative assessment, no grant award contract shall be entered into with the host institution.

6.5. A principal investigator who has taken up employment abroad may apply for the conclusion of a grant award contract with a foreign host institution only if the research-funding organisation of the country of location of the host institution has ratified the EUROHORCs' Letter of Intent "Money Follows Researcher" ([http://www.eurohorcs.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/EUROHORCs\\_MFR\\_Letter\\_of\\_Intent\\_Revised\\_081105.pdf](http://www.eurohorcs.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/EUROHORCs_MFR_Letter_of_Intent_Revised_081105.pdf)). A decision on an application is made in accordance with the provisions of the Letter of Intent of EUROHORCs.

6.6. After the termination of a grant award contract, the host institution with which the employment contract of the principal investigator has expired is required to refund the grant to the Council.

6.7. In the event specified in Section 6.4.2, a new grant award contract is entered into not later than within three months as of the termination of the previous one. Until conclusion of a new grant award contract, the Council will suspend grant payments.

6.8. If a new grant award contract has not been entered into by the end of the term specified in Section 6.7, the Board of the Council will repeal the decision to approve the application.

## **Chapter 2**

### **CONDITIONS OF APPLYING FOR GRANT**

#### **7. Applying for a grant**

7.1. A researcher draws up an application and the host institution submits it to the Council via the ETIS. An application can be submitted between September 1 and 5:00 p.m. on September

30 in the year preceding the start year of a research project.

7.2. The part of an application to be submitted to foreign experts must be in English.

7.3. The following must be set out in the English part of an application:

7.3.1. the principal investigator and other research staff;

7.3.2. the title of the research project;

7.3.3. a project summary;

7.3.4. the period to be financed;

7.3.5. the general theoretical background of the planned research project and its link to previous research carried out by the principal investigator and other research staff;

7.3.6. the main objectives of the research project, hypotheses, description of methods, and the annual research plans (including an explanation of how ethics requirements will be adhered to in the event of animal and/or human experiments);

7.3.7. expected results, their potential applicability as well as possible future research directions;

7.3.8. a description of previous research and development activities and the track record of the principal investigator;

7.3.9. information on Estonian and international joint projects in which the principal investigator has been involved;

7.3.10. a description of the infrastructure and research environment at the host institution;

7.3.11. the budget of the research project.

7.4. The following must be set out in the Estonian part of an application:

7.4.1. the title of the research project;

7.4.2. a project summary.

7.5. The Council has the right to demand additional information from the applicant and the host institution.

## **8. Principal investigator**

8.1. A principal investigator is a person who:

8.1.1. has been awarded a doctorate in Estonia or who has foreign qualifications equal thereto;

8.1.2. is employed full-time at the host institution at the time of implementing a research project. By way of exception, a principal investigator who is employed at least half-time at a host institution can be considered compliant by the evaluation committee of the Council (*hereinafter evaluation committee*) if this does not jeopardise the successful implementation of the research project.

8.2. The principal investigator of a start-up research grant may be a researcher who:

8.2.1. has been awarded the first doctorate in Estonia or equivalent foreign qualifications no more than 7 years prior to the year of applying for the grant. The evaluation committee may, where justified, consider a person who has been awarded their first doctorate in Estonia or obtained equivalent foreign qualifications more than 7 years prior to the year of applying for the grant as having met the criteria. If the person has been on parental leave or served in the Defence Forces following the award of the first Estonian doctorate or equivalent foreign qualifications, the maximum time elapsed since the award will be extended;

8.2.2. at the time of implementing the research project, is employed full-time at the host institution;

8.2.3. has not been the principal investigator of a target-financed research theme of a research and development institution, the holder of a grant financed by the Estonian Science Foundation, the principal investigator of a research project of personal research funding or the principal

investigator of a research theme of institutional research funding.

8.3. A principal investigator cannot act as any of the following during the grant term:

8.3.1. the principal investigator or research staff of another personal research funding project;

8.3.2. the principal investigator or primary research staff of an institutional research funding theme;

8.3.3. the principal investigator or primary research staff of a research theme target-financed by a research and development institution.

8.4. By way of exception, a principal investigator can be the principal investigator of a post-doctoral funding project during the grant term.

8.5. A principal investigator cannot be replaced during the grant term.

## **9. Participants of research project**

9.1. In addition to a principal investigator, the following persons may participate in the implementation of a research project:

9.1.1. up to two members of the research staff who have been awarded a research degree in Estonia or who have equal foreign qualifications and who work at a host institution at least half-time during implementation of the research project;

9.1.2. technical or auxiliary staff whose wages are covered in full or in part from the funds of the given research project;

9.1.3. master's students or doctoral candidates whose work is substantively related to the research project specified in the application and whose scholarships or wages are covered in full or in part from the funds of the research project.

9.2. A member of research staff cannot act as any of the following during the grant term:

9.2.1. the principal investigator or research staff of another personal research funding project;

9.2.2. the principal investigator or primary research staff of an institutional research funding theme;

9.2.3. the principal investigator or primary research staff of a research theme target-financed by a research and development institution.

9.3. By way of exception, a member of research staff can be the principal investigator of a post-doctoral funding project during the grant term.

## **10. Budget of research project**

10.1. The budget of a research project contains expenses directly related to the implementation of a research project and overheads.

10.2. Direct costs are:

10.2.1. staff costs (wages along with any and all state taxes, contributions, benefits and compensation arising from law and the research scholarships of master's students and doctorate candidates);

10.2.2. travel costs;

10.2.3. acquisition costs of fixed assets directly related to the implementation of a research project (in accordance with the definition established by the host institution), to the extent of up to 10% of the direct expenses of the research project;

10.2.4. subcontracting;

10.2.5. costs relating to the publication and popularisation of results of research and

development obtained by way of implementing a research project, and expenses relating to the protection of intellectual property;

10.2.6. other direct costs required for research, based on the characteristics of the research project.

10.3. overheads account for 20% of the amount of the direct costs (excl. subcontracting specified in Section 10.2.4).

10.4. The Council retains the right to establish the maximum amounts or rates of cost categories.

## **11. Grant term**

The grant term is up to four years.

## **Chapter 3**

### **EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS AND AWARD OF GRANTS**

#### **12. Evaluation of grant applications**

12.1. The evaluation of applications is organised by the Council.

12.2. Applications are evaluated by the Evaluation Committee on the basis of Regulation No. 74 "Procedure for Formation and Rules of Procedure of Evaluation Committee of Estonian Research Council" of the Minister of Education and Research of 27 December 2011 and the evaluation guidelines approved by the Council.

12.3. In order to evaluate applications, the Evaluation Committee forms area-based expert panels comprising mainly of foreign experts.

12.4. Expert panels submit to the Evaluation Committee reasoned evaluations of the applications belonging to their area of expertise.

12.5. The Evaluation Committee shall assess applications and draws up the final evaluation of each application on the basis of the evaluations of the expert panels and taking into account the following:

12.5.1. justification of the research project and a description of the expected results, taking into account the specifics of the research field and their applicability;

12.5.2. the qualifications and track record of the principal investigator (in the event of a start-up research grant, also whether the principal investigator has been a post-doctoral fellow);

12.5.3. the quality of the infrastructure and research environment available for carrying out the research project at the host institution;

12.5.4. justification for the proposed budget (including the share of subcontracting).

12.6. The Council retains the right to demand additional information from an applicant regarding the data specified in Section 12.5.

12.7. In the final assessment of an application, the Evaluation Committee may prescribe the conditions that the principal investigator and the host institution are required to fulfil upon receipt of the grant.

12.8. The Council makes the final evaluation of the application and the initial proposal of the Evaluation Committee (hereinafter *proposal*) available to the applicant and the host institution via the ETIS. The applicant and the host institution have the right to submit a joint written opinion on the proposal within the time limit established by the Council. If the Evaluation Committee has prescribed in the final evaluation of the application the conditions that must be fulfilled for receiving the grant, the applicant and the host institution will submit the consent and the action plan for fulfilment of the conditions.

12.9. An application of a member of the Evaluation Committee shall be assessed pursuant to the usual procedure, in accordance with subsections 6 (4) and (5) of the Regulation No. 74 "Procedure for Formation and Rules of Procedure of Evaluation Committee of Estonian Research Council" of the Minister of Education and Research of 27 December 2011.

### **13. Award of grant**

13.1. Taking into account the final evaluation, the joint opinion received from the applicant and the host institution, the consent and the action plan, the Evaluation Committee submits to the Board of the Council a reasoned and impartial proposal:

- 13.1.1. to award the grant to the requested extent;
- 13.1.2. to award the grant to a higher-than-requested extent;
- 13.1.3. to award the grant to a smaller-than-requested extent;
- 13.1.4. not to award the grant.

13.2. Upon reasoning its decision, the Board of the Council has the right to submit a proposal to the Evaluation Committee for a repeat review.

13.3. A decision to approve or reject an application is made by a directive of the Board of the Council.

## **Chapter 4**

### **APPLYING FOR CONTINUANCE OF AWARD OF GRANT AND REVISION OF GRANT AMOUNT**

#### **14. Applying for continuance of award of grant and evaluation of follow-up application**

14.1. The continuance of the award of a grant is applied for annually until the end of the grant term in the manner and by the date specified in Section 7.1.

14.2. A follow-up application sets out data regarding substantial revisions of the research project, including revisions of the research staff provided for in Section 9.1.1 and the reasons for the sustainability of the research project.

14.3. On the basis of a follow-up application, the documents annexed thereto, and the annual report and, if necessary, an interim report, the Evaluation Committee shall assess the following:

- 14.3.1. the implementation of the research project to date;
- 14.3.2. in the event of substantial revisions, the sustainability of implementation of the research project;
- 14.3.3. if the grant was awarded conditionally, the fulfilment of the conditions established upon awarding the grant pursuant to the action plan specified in Section 12.8.

14.4. Upon evaluation of the first follow-up application, the annual report of the research project

is not evaluated.

## **15. Continuance of award of grant and revision of grant amount**

15.1. On the basis of evaluation of a follow-up application and the data annexed thereto, the Evaluation Committee makes to the Board of the Council a reasoned proposal:

- 15.1.1. to continue awarding the grant in the former amount;
- 15.1.2. to continue awarding the grant in a higher-than-requested amount;
- 15.1.3. to continue awarding the grant in a smaller-than-requested amount;
- 15.1.4. not to continue awarding the grant.

15.2. The proposal to continue awarding the grant in the former amount is made by the Evaluation Committee if the implementation of the research project is successful and no substantial changes in the sustainability of implementation of the research project or in the fulfilment of other conditions established by this procedure are identified.

15.3. A proposal to continue awarding the grant in a higher-than-expected amount may be made by the Evaluation Committee, stating the reasons for its decision, if:

- 15.3.1. in the year preceding the follow-up application, the amount of the grant has been reduced due to the circumstances set out in Section 15.4 and the circumstances that caused the award of the smaller-than-requested grant have lapsed;
- 15.3.2. other substantial and reasoned circumstances exist.

15.4. A proposal to continue awarding the grant in a smaller-than-expected amount may be made by the Evaluation Committee, stating the reasons for its decision, if:

- 15.4.1. the progress of implementation of the research project was insufficient;
- 15.4.2. a violation of other conditions established by this procedure becomes evident;
- 15.4.3. other substantial and reasoned circumstances exist.

15.5. The Evaluation Committee makes a proposal to continue to award the grant in a smaller-than-requested amount if the need arises from the annual allocation from the state budget.

15.6. In the final evaluation of a follow-up application, the Evaluation Committee may describe the conditions that the principal investigator and the host institution are required to fulfil upon receipt of the grant. If the Evaluation Committee has described in the final evaluation of a follow-up application of a research project the conditions that must be fulfilled in order to continue receiving the grant, the principal investigator and the host institution submit the consent and the action plan for the purpose of fulfilment of the conditions.

15.7. The Evaluation Committee may make a proposal to discontinue awarding the grant if:

- 15.7.1. the action plan described in Section 15.6 has not been fulfilled;
- 15.7.2. the progress of implementation of the research project and the sustainability of implementation of the research project have decreased considerably;
- 15.7.3. other substantial and reasoned circumstances exist.

15.8. The Council has the right to revoke a decision to approve an application and terminate the grant award contract if:

- 15.8.1. the host institution and the principal investigator have submitted a respective application;
- 15.8.2. the Evaluation Council has made a respective proposal in accordance with Sections 15.7 or 18.2.3;
- 15.8.3. the host institution, the principal investigator or the research staff specified in Section 9.1.1 have fundamentally violated the requirements of the Organisation of Research and

- Development Act or this procedure;
- 15.8.4. the circumstance described in Section 6.8 exists;
  - 15.8.5. the principal investigator is not able to or does not want to manage the research project;
  - 15.8.6. other substantial and reasoned circumstances exist.

15.9. After the revocation of a decision to approve an application and termination of a grant award contract, the host institution is required to refund the unused grant to the Council.

## **Chapter 5**

### **REPORTING AND PUBLICATION OF RESULTS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT**

#### **16. Submission of annual report**

- 16.1. The principal investigator draws up an annual report on each calendar year of receipt of the grant, indicating the following:
  - 16.1.1. a summary of the research results of the research project in the reporting year;
  - 16.1.2. the summarised working time equivalent to full time of the research staff financed by the grant;
  - 16.1.3. the division of the direct expenses specified in Section 10.2, which are financed by the grant;
  - 16.1.4. fulfilment of the conditions established upon awarding the grant.

16.2. The annual report is drawn up by the principal investigator and the host institution submits it to the Council via the ETIS not later than by January 31 of the year following the reporting year. No annual report needs to be submitted on the last year of the research project, but the respective data is submitted in the final report of the research project.

#### **17. Submission of interim report**

17.1. In case of justified circumstances, the Council has the right to demand the submission of an interim report of a research project. An interim report must be submitted via the ETIS within two months as of the receipt of the request.

- 17.2. The following is specified in an interim report of a research project:
  - 17.2.1. the results corresponding to the purposes specified in the application;
  - 17.2.2. the number and structure of the jobs used and necessary for the implementation of the research project;
  - 17.2.3. other data requested by the Council;
  - 17.2.4. other circumstances that are substantial on the estimate of the host institution or the principal investigator.

#### **18. Evaluation of interim report**

18.1. An interim report is evaluated if it is not reasonable to do it jointly with the evaluation of a follow-up application or in the last year of a research project.

- 18.2. An interim report is evaluated by the Evaluation Committee who makes a reasoned proposal to the Board of the Council:
  - 18.2.1. pursuant to the regulations provided for in Section 15.2, to continue awarding the grant in the former amount;

18.2.2. pursuant to the regulations provided for in Section 15.4, to continue awarding the grant in the smaller-than-requested amount;

18.2.3. pursuant to the regulations provided for in Section 15.7, not to continue awarding the grant.

18.3. Upon reasoning its decision, the Board of the Council has the right to submit a proposal to the Evaluation Committee for a repeat review.

## **19. Submission of final report**

19.1. The final report is drawn up by the principal investigator and submitted by the host institution to the Council via the ETIS not later than by March 31 of the year following the grant term.

19.2. In addition to the information specified in Section 16.1, the following is indicated in the final report of a research project:

19.2.1. the results in accordance with the purposes specified in the application;

19.2.2. the number and structure of the jobs used and necessary for the implementation of the research project;

19.2.3. other circumstances that the principal investigator or the host institution deem relevant.

## **20. Evaluation of final report**

On the basis of the final report, the Evaluation Committee evaluates the implementation of a research project and the Council makes the evaluation available to the principal investigator and the host institution via the ETIS, and shall make a summary thereof public.

## **21. Publication of results of research project**

21.1. Consolidated texts of publications drawn up as a result of the implementation of a research project are made freely available to the public via ETIS by the host institution, unless the conditions of publication, copyright or intellectual property protection state otherwise.

21.2. If a research publishing house temporarily restricts access to the public publications on the basis of Section 21.1, the consolidated texts of the publications drawn up as a result of the implementation of the research project will be made freely available via the ETIS by the host institution after the expiry of the restriction.

21.3. Upon publication of the results of implementation of a research project, it is indicated which funds of the grant the implementation of the research project has been financed.

## **22. Recovery of grant**

22.1. A grant not used for the intended purpose is recovered by the Council from the host institution along with a proportional fee of the overheads.

22.2. The host institution is required to allow the Council or a person authorised by it to audit the use of a grant and assist it in every way, including allowing access to the premises and the territory of the host institution and submitting all the requested documents for the purpose of verifying the correctness of the submitted information.