

The following is a translation from Estonian. In case of disputes, the Estonian text shall prevail.

Conditions and Procedure for Postdoctoral Grants

Chapter 1 GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Scope of Application

- 1.1. This directive establishes the conditions and procedure for applying for, evaluating, awarding, allocating, and reporting on the postdoctoral grants (hereinafter also *grant*) awarded to researchers going abroad. The conditions and procedure for applying for, evaluating, awarding, allocating, and reporting on the postdoctoral grants for researchers coming to Estonia have been established in the directive for applying for a postdoctoral grant for researchers coming to Estonia.
- 1.2. The Estonian Research Council (hereinafter *Council*) is entitled to make well-considered decisions and consult experts where necessary in relation to matters not covered by this directive.

2. Goal

- 2.1. The postdoctoral grant is aimed at supporting the launch of the research career of the people who have obtained a doctoral degree or equivalent qualification in Estonia, at strong research and development (R&D) institutions, incl. research-intensive enterprises, and in highly qualified research groups in a foreign country.
- 2.2. The postdoctoral grant is awarded for the implementation of an independent research project and its purpose is not funding self-financed research projects.
- 2.3. In awarding the grants, the Council is entitled to prioritise R&D fields for each year.

3. Postdoctoral Project

A postdoctoral project (hereinafter also *project*) is a description of a scientific study with a clearly defined research problem and a plan for conducting fundamental or applied research to address this problem.

4. Applicant of the Postdoctoral Grant

- 4.1. A person (hereinafter also *applicant*) can apply for the grant upon receiving consent from a positively evaluated Estonian R&D institution (hereinafter also *institution*). The institution will give the consent for submitting the application and for fulfilling its obligations by confirming the application.
- 4.2. The following individuals can apply for the grant:
 - 4.2.1. individuals who have obtained their first doctoral degree or equivalent qualification in the research field in which the application is to be processed no more than five years prior to 1 January of the year of the call. The date of awarding a doctoral degree or equivalent qualification is the date in the respective document issued by the awarding body. If the applicant has been on pregnancy, maternity or parental leave, in compulsory

military service, or there have been other exceptional circumstances (e.g., serious illness) after obtaining his/her first doctoral degree or equivalent qualification in the research field in which the application is to be processed, the period of qualification is extended by the corresponding period in full months and is rounded up to the higher number of months. The applicant who does not have a doctoral degree or equivalent qualification at the time of submitting the application may submit the application, provided that the applicant will obtain a doctoral degree or equivalent qualification before 1 January of the year the project is scheduled to begin;

- 4.2.2. who has undertaken doctoral studies at and obtained a doctoral degree from an Estonian university;
 - 4.2.3. who has worked or studied in Estonia for at least 12 months by the closing date of the call.
- 4.3. An applicant cannot apply for:
- 4.3.1. more than one postdoctoral, starting, or team grant simultaneously. The applicant cannot simultaneously be listed as a member of the (senior) research staff in a starting or team grant application.
 - 4.3.2. a postdoctoral grant to use it for implementing the project in Estonia. It is possible to implement the project in Estonia only partially, but no more than up to a limit of 50 per cent.
- 4.4. A person cannot apply for the grant if:
- 4.4.1. he/she has previously received postdoctoral research funding from the Council;
 - 4.4.2. his/her postdoctoral grant applications submitted during the two previous consecutive calls did not pass the qualification threshold set by the Council in at least one evaluation criterion;
 - 4.4.3. his/her postdoctoral grant application submitted during the previous call did not pass the qualification threshold set by the Council in at least two evaluation criteria;
 - 4.4.4. he/she has, during the three years before applying for the grant, failed to submit the report on a previous project funded by the Council by the deadline without a valid reason or the report has not been accepted by the Council;
 - 4.4.5. a serious breach of contract, intentional false information, plagiarism, or fraudulent activities have become evident in the previous grant application submitted by him/her to the Council or in his/her activities in the previous project funded by the Council and if less than three years have passed since the discovery of the breach of contract by 1 January of the year of the call.

5. Institution, Collaborating Institution, and Postdoctoral Supervisor

- 5.1. The institution is the Estonian R&D institution that will enter into an employment contract with the recipient of the postdoctoral grant (hereinafter *postdoctoral fellow*) for implementing the project if such a contractual relationship does not already exist before the allocation of the grant.
- 5.2. The collaborating institution is the foreign R&D institution, incl. a research-intensive enterprise, where the postdoctoral fellow will carry out the project.
- 5.3. The supervisor of the postdoctoral fellow must have a doctoral degree or equivalent qualification

and have an employment contract with the collaborating institution. The supervisor cannot be the same person who has been the (co-)supervisor of the applicant's doctoral dissertation.

- 5.4. In justified cases, the postdoctoral fellow can have a co-supervisor. The co-supervisor of the postdoctoral fellow is subject to the same conditions as the supervisor, except for the condition of having an employment contract with the collaborating institution.
- 5.5. In justified cases, it is possible to request the change of the (co-)supervisor. The members of the Evaluation Committee who are the experts of this particular research field shall assess the necessity for changing the supervisor as well as the qualification and supervision experience of the requested new supervisor.
- 5.6. The decision not to approve the request to change the supervisor is concluded by a directive of the Management of the Council. The decision to approve the request will be concluded as an amendment of the grant contract stipulated in clause 14.1. If the Management of the Council does not approve the request to change the supervisor, the grant contract will be terminated pursuant to clause 20.

6. Processing Grant Applications

- 6.1. The Council is responsible for processing grant applications.
- 6.2. The application process takes place in the Estonian Research Information System (hereinafter *ETIS*). The submission of the application and the communication with the applicant is conducted via ETIS. The decisions made during the stages of the application process, incl. the decision to approve or not to approve the application, will be announced via ETIS. The applicant is required to monitor the messages sent via ETIS regularly and keep the contact information up to date.

Chapter 2

CONDITIONS FOR APPLYING FOR THE GRANT

7. Applying for the Postdoctoral Grant

- 7.1. The period of the annual call for applications is established and announced by the Council.
- 7.2. The applicant is to submit the application, which has been approved by the institution, to the Council via ETIS.
- 7.3. The application must be written in English.
- 7.4. The application shall specify the following:
 - 7.4.1. the applicant and the (co-)supervisor;
 - 7.4.2. a letter of confirmation from the collaborating institution;
 - 7.4.3. the title of the project in Estonian and in English;
 - 7.4.4. a summary of the project in Estonian and in English;
 - 7.4.5. the requested grant period;
 - 7.4.6. the grant amount applied for pursuant to the fixed grant amounts set out in the "Guidelines for Budgeting Grant Applications" (hereinafter *budget guidelines*) as well as the justification for the budget, incl. the distribution of direct costs;
 - 7.4.7. the scientific background of the project;

- 7.4.8. the main objectives of the project, research questions and/or (excl. justified exceptional cases) hypotheses, methods, and the work plan together with risk reduction measures and a back-up plan, incl. tentative annual work plans and the availability of the infrastructure necessary for achieving the objectives of the project. If the exception for implementing the project partially in Estonia is applied for, the work plan has to include the time periods of working in Estonia as well as the activities undertaken in Estonia;
 - 7.4.9. the expected results, their potential scientific impact, and possible directions for future research;
 - 7.4.10. the estimated technology readiness level (hereinafter *TRL*) of the results of the project in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Council¹, and the potential societal impact of the results, incl. the potential applicability of the results and their importance for Estonian culture, society, and/or economy;
 - 7.4.11. an explanation about how the results of the project will be disseminated to the wider public;
 - 7.4.12. an explanation about how the compliance with the principles of research ethics will be secured during the implementation of the project and a comment on whether the project requires a licence from a specific ethics committee or the licence has already been obtained, and if the project necessitates compliance with the Nagoya Protocol, an explanation about which genetic resources will be used and whether the project requires the due diligence declaration or the due diligence declaration has already been submitted;
 - 7.4.13. a summary, which is optional, of a grant application on the same subject matter that has been submitted during the previous call(s) describing the changes made compared to the previous application(s) and explaining if the changes stem from the feedback given by the reviewers;
 - 7.4.14. an explanation about which data will be generated during the implementation of the project and how the data will be managed;
 - 7.4.15. a description of the applicant's previous R&D activities;
 - 7.4.16. a description of the supervisor's R&D activities and experience in supervising doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows during the past 10 years;
 - 7.4.17. if necessary, additional documents;
 - 7.4.18. a confirmation that the principles of research ethics and good research practice will be adhered to during the conception and implementation of the project.
- 7.5. The Council is entitled to demand additional information and documents from the applicant and the institution.

8. Postdoctoral Fellow

- 8.1. During the grant period, the postdoctoral fellow has to be employed on a full-time basis at the institution with a place of work at the collaborating institution.
- 8.2. During the grant period, the postdoctoral fellow cannot be the postdoctoral fellow of another

¹ <https://www.etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Technology-readiness-levels.pdf>
<https://www.etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Technology-readiness-levels-in-HU-and-SO-fields.pdf>

postdoctoral project funded by the Council, or the Principal Investigator or the member of the (senior) research staff of a starting grant, exploratory, or team project.

9. Amount of the Postdoctoral Grant

- 9.1. The postdoctoral grant contains costs directly related to the implementation of the project and overhead costs. Direct costs of the postdoctoral grant consist of staff costs, research costs, and mobility costs.
 - 9.1.1. Staff costs consist of the salary along with any and all state taxes, contributions, and compensations arising from law.
 - 9.1.2. Research costs are travel costs, subcontracting costs, costs related to the (open access) publication and popularisation of the R&D results obtained during the implementation of the project, costs related to the protection of intellectual property, and other direct costs that are necessary for conducting research and stem from the characteristics of the project.
 - 9.1.3. Mobility costs are the costs that are related to moving to and/or visiting the collaborating institution.
 - 9.1.4. Overhead costs are incurred by the institution and are related to the management of the grant by the institution.
- 9.2. The Council may establish the maximum amounts for various types of costs.
- 9.3. Pursuant to clause 11, the Council is entitled to reject the application if it becomes evident as a result of checking its technical details that the justification for the grant amount applied for is inadequate.

10. Funding Period of the Postdoctoral Grant

- 10.1. The postdoctoral fellow has to begin working on the project no later than on 1 July of the year following the call. In justified cases, it is possible to request a later start date of the project than 1 July from the Council after the decision to approve the application has been made, but in this case the end date of the project will not be extended.
- 10.2. The grant period is a minimum of 12 months and a maximum of 36 months.

Chapter 3

EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS AND AWARD OF GRANTS

11. Checking the Technical Details of the Applications

- 11.1. The Council is responsible for checking the technical details of the applications.
- 11.2. When checking the technical details of the applications, it will be determined if:
 - 11.2.1. the application, the applicant, and the institution meet the necessary requirements;
 - 11.2.2. the grant amount applied for meets the necessary requirements.
- 11.3. The content of the applications will not be evaluated.
- 11.4. In case formal inaccuracies which can be corrected without changing the content of the application are present, the Council will set a deadline of up to ten working days for correcting the

mistakes.

- 11.5. The Council is entitled to reject the application without processing it if:
 - 11.5.1. the applicant, the application, the institution, or the the grant amount applied for does not meet the requirements and it has been impossible to correct the inaccuracies stipulated in clause 11.4;
 - 11.5.2. the applicant did not correct the inaccuracies within the time limit established by the Council;
 - 11.5.3. the applicant has made changes in the application that are unrelated to the correction of formal inaccuracies specified by the Council.

12. Evaluation of Applications

- 12.1. The applications are evaluated on the basis of the “Guidelines for Evaluating Postdoctoral Grant Applications” (hereinafter *evaluation guidelines*) established by the Council.
- 12.2. The Council shall set qualification and quality thresholds in the evaluation guidelines for evaluating the applications. The application will not be approved if it does not pass the quality threshold, or the qualification threshold in at least one evaluation criterion.
- 12.3. After the technical details of the applications have been checked, the applications will be processed by the field-specific Expert Panels. Each application will be appointed an expert from among the members of the field-specific Expert Panel, who will be responsible for suggesting the reviewers and for compiling the combined evaluation. The Evaluation Committee is entitled to decide which Expert Panel will process which application.
- 12.4. Each application will receive a review by at least two independent reviewers.
- 12.5. The Expert Panel will submit the combined evaluations given to each application belonging to their field of expertise to the Evaluation Committee. Although non-binding, the Expert Panel shall rely on the scores and their justifications given by the reviewers.
- 12.6. The Evaluation Committee is responsible for giving each application its final evaluation. Although non-binding, the Evaluation Committee shall rely on the combined evaluations given by the Expert Panel when forming the scores and their justifications in the final evaluation.
- 12.7. Based on the final evaluations, the Evaluation Committee will compile field-specific ranking lists for all applications. The applications of equal standing will be ranked by the Evaluation Committee according to the principles described in the evaluation guidelines.
- 12.8. In the final evaluation, the Evaluation Committee may prescribe certain conditions that the postdoctoral fellow and the institution are required to fulfil upon receiving the grant.
- 12.9. The Council will make the reviews stipulated in clause 12.4, the final evaluation stipulated in clause 12.6, and the position of the applicant in the field-specific ranking list of postdoctoral grant applications known to the applicant and to the institution.
- 12.10. The applicant and the institution are entitled to submit a written joint opinion and make objections regarding the reviews and the final evaluation within the time limit established by the Council (hearing). At the hearing, attention will primarily be paid to the assessment of the adherence to procedural rules and to the correction of possible factual errors. The scientific evaluation given by the reviewers or by the Evaluation Committee will not be re-evaluated. If the Evaluation Committee has prescribed certain conditions in the final evaluation that must be

fulfilled in order to receive the grant, the applicant and the institution have to submit a consent to secure the compliance with these conditions.

- 12.11. The Council is entitled to reject the application if intentional false information, plagiarism, or fraudulent activities become evident.

13. Award of the Grant

- 13.1. Considering the final evaluation, the results of the hearing, and the position of the applicant in the field-specific ranking list of postdoctoral grant applications, the Evaluation Committee will submit a justified and impartial proposal the Management of the Council:
 - 13.1.1. to approve the application and award the grant;
 - 13.1.2. not to approve the application.
- 13.2. The decision to approve the application and award the grant or not to approve the application is concluded by a directive of the Management of the Council.
- 13.3. If an applicant whose application was to be approved by the Management of the Council based on the proposal made by the Evaluation Committee, or who has been awarded the postdoctoral grant by the Management of the Council waives the grant before the beginning of the new call, then the grant will be awarded to the next applicant in the same field-specific ranking list of postdoctoral grant applications. In justified cases, the Evaluation Committee may propose to award the grant to an applicant in the ranking list of starting or team grant applications in the same research field, or to award the grant to the next applicant in the ranking list of postdoctoral, starting, or team grant applications in another research field.

Chapter 4

ALLOCATION OF GRANTS AND CONTINUATION OF FUNDING

14. Allocation of the Grant

- 14.1. The grant is allocated to the institution based on a tripartite contract (hereinafter *grant contract*) entered into by the Council, the institution, and the postdoctoral fellow that is signed via ETIS. The grant contract entails the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of the parties. During the period of the project, the grant contract is concluded each calendar year. The grant contract may be concluded for two consecutive calendar years if the contractual period during one of these calendar years is six months or less. The contractual period cannot exceed 18 months.
- 14.2. The first grant contract for the projects beginning in January shall be entered into no later than two months after the decision stipulated in clause 13.2 has been made and the grant contract for the projects beginning later shall be entered into during one month before the project is scheduled to begin.
- 14.3. Before entering into the grant contract, the institution shall enter into an employment contract with the postdoctoral fellow for implementing the project if such a contractual relationship did not already exist before the allocation of the grant, or amend the existing employment contract accordingly.
- 14.4. During the first six months of the project, the postdoctoral fellow shall submit the data

management plan to the Council.

15. Continuation of Funding

- 15.1. In order to continue receiving funding, the postdoctoral fellow has to submit the following information, which has been approved by the institution, via ETIS before the grant contract expires and within the time limit established by the Council:
 - 15.1.1. the distribution of the direct costs financed with the grant;
 - 15.1.2. a summary of the research conducted during the previous contractual period, incl. the activities which required consultation with or a licence from a specific ethics committee, and significant changes in the research plan, compared to what has been initially envisaged;
 - 15.1.3. a licence from a specific ethics committee (if applicable);
 - 15.1.4. the fulfilment of the conditions stipulated in clauses 12.8 or 15.4 in case such conditions were prescribed.
- 15.2. The Council is entitled to demand additional information from the postdoctoral fellow and the institution.
- 15.3. If the Council does not identify significant changes concerning the sustainability of the project or in the fulfilment of other conditions established by this directive, a new grant contract will be signed to continue funding at the requested rate, but no more than at the rate of the fixed grant amount of this grant type.
- 15.4. If it is necessary to secure the sustainability of the project or the fulfilment of other conditions established by this directive, the Council is entitled to prescribe certain conditions in the grant contract that the postdoctoral fellow and the institution are required to fulfil to continue receiving funding.
- 15.5. The Council is entitled to make the decision not to continue funding with a directive of the Management of the Council if:
 - 15.5.1. the conditions stipulated in clauses 12.8 or 15.4 have not been fulfilled;
 - 15.5.2. the sustainability the project has significantly decreased or is insufficient;
 - 15.5.3. the postdoctoral fellow has not submitted the data management plan stipulated in clause 14.4 or the information stipulated in clause 15.1 within the prescribed time limit, incl. a licence from a specific ethics committee (if applicable);
 - 15.5.4. the postdoctoral fellow and/or the institution did not agree with the conditions stipulated in clause 15.4;
 - 15.5.5. there are other adverse and justified circumstances.
- 15.6. Before making the decision stipulated in clause 15.5, the postdoctoral fellow and the institution are entitled to submit a written joint opinion and make objections within the time limit established by the Council.

Chapter 5 TEMPORARY SUSPENSION AND TERMINATION OF THE PROJECT

16. Temporary Suspension of the Project

- 16.1. The postdoctoral fellow may request the temporary suspension of the project in case of pregnancy, maternity or parental leave, compulsory military service, serious illness, or other exceptional circumstances, due to which the implementation of the project will become impossible or significantly more difficult.
- 16.2. The request for the temporary suspension of the project has to be submitted prior to the beginning of the suspension period in agreement with the institution to the Management of the Council.
- 16.3. The postdoctoral fellow may request the temporary suspension of the project for up to three years. The end date of the project will be extended by the suspension period.
- 16.4. The grant contract will be suspended for the temporary suspension period of the project.

17. Termination of the Project

- 17.1. The project will end on the end date of the grant period.
- 17.2. All the costs of the activities financed with the grant must be paid by the end date of the project. As a rule, all the activities financed with the grant have to be carried out by the end date of the project, with the exception of carrying out dissemination activities, which is allowed until the submission of the final report.
- 17.3. The institution is required to refund the unused grant money along with a proportional fee of overhead costs to the Council's bank account no later than seven calendar days upon receiving the corresponding claim for refund from the Council. The postdoctoral fellow and the institution are required to submit the final report of the project pursuant to clause 18.

18. Submission of the Final Report

- 18.1. The postdoctoral fellow shall prepare the final report of the project in Estonian. The final report can be submitted in English if the postdoctoral fellow has no knowledge of Estonian. The final report, after having been approved by the institution, has to be submitted via ETIS during two months after the end of the project.
- 18.2. The final report shall include the following:
 - 18.2.1. the results (incl. the main results of the project in the form of a popular science summary both in Estonian and in English, the full texts of the publications that have been published as a result of implementing the project and also contain a reference to the grant as well as the industrial property items) in accordance with the objectives set in the application. Pursuant to clause 19.1, the publications that do not contain a reference to the grant must not be included in the final report;
 - 18.2.2. the TRL of the results of the project;
 - 18.2.3. the potential applicability as well as the scientific and societal impact of the results, incl. the importance for Estonian culture, society, and/or economy as well as possible directions for future research (if applicable);

- 18.2.4. public outreach activities;
 - 18.2.5. a report on the usage of the grant in accordance with the accounting records of the institution;
 - 18.2.6. the realisation of the data management plan;
 - 18.2.7. the fulfilment of the conditions stipulated in clauses 12.8 or 15.4 in case such conditions were prescribed;
 - 18.2.8. if the project necessitated compliance with the Nagoya Protocol, the due diligence declaration;
 - 18.2.9. additional information directly related to the project that the postdoctoral fellow or the institution deem relevant;
 - 18.2.10. other materials necessary for introducing the project requested by the Council in the ETIS form.
- 18.3. If the postdoctoral fellow fails to submit the final report by the deadline, the final report shall be prepared and submitted by the institution.
- 18.4. The Council will either approve or not approve the final report. The Council will not approve the report if the report does not meet the requirements established by this directive and the inaccuracies have not been corrected within the time limit established by the Council. Neither will the final report be approved if the requirements for the use of the grant have been violated, especially if the circumstances described in clauses 20.1.4, 20.1.5, or 20.1.6 have occurred. The decision and its justification will be made available to the postdoctoral fellow and to the institution via ETIS.

19. Making the Results of the Project Public

- 19.1. Upon the publication of the results of the project, a reference to the grant that was used for funding the project must be included.
- 19.2. The full texts of the publications that have been published as a result of implementing the project and also contain a reference to the grant will be made freely available by the institution via ETIS, unless limited by publishing restrictions, copyright, or other intellectual property laws.
- 19.3. If a publishing house restricts access to the articles for a certain period, the institution will make the full texts of the articles published as a result of implementing the project freely available via ETIS once the restriction has expired.
- 19.4. The main results of the project in the form of a popular science summary both in Estonian and in English will be made freely available by the Council via ETIS.

Chapter 6

PREMATURE TERMINATION OF THE GRANT CONTRACT AND RECLAMATION OF THE GRANT

20. Premature Termination of the Grant Contract

- 20.1. The Council is entitled to revoke the decision of awarding the grant or the decision to continue funding and terminate the grant contract if:
 - 20.1.1. the postdoctoral fellow or the institution have submitted the respective request;

- 20.1.2. the postdoctoral fellow does not meet the requirements stipulated in clause 8, or is unable to lead the project (the death of the postdoctoral fellow, serious illness, transitioning to other employment, or other substantial and justified circumstances);
 - 20.1.3. the supervisor is unable to supervise the postdoctoral fellow (in case of death, serious illness, transitioning to other employment, or other substantial and justified circumstances) and the request to change the supervisor was not approved by the Council;
 - 20.1.4. the postdoctoral fellow or the institution have fundamentally violated the requirements stipulated in this directive or by the legislation;
 - 20.1.5. the licence from a specific ethics committee has not been submitted prior to the beginning of human or animal experiments or it has become evident the due diligence declaration stemming from the Nagoya Protocol has been disregarded;
 - 20.1.6. the postdoctoral fellow has failed to submit the data management plan on time;
 - 20.1.7. the postdoctoral fellow or the institution have intentionally presented false information, or plagiarism or fraudulent activities have become evident in the project-related activities;
 - 20.1.8. there are other adverse and justified circumstances.
- 20.2. After the revocation of the decision to award the grant or to continue funding the project and after the termination of the grant contract, the institution is required to refund the unused grant money along with a proportional fee of overhead costs and the mobility allowance to the Council's bank account no later than seven calendar days upon receiving the corresponding claim for refund from the Council. The postdoctoral fellow and the institution are required to submit the final report of the project pursuant to clause 18.
- 20.3. If the decision of awarding the grant or the decision to continue funding is repealed retrospectively, the Council may reclaim the grant from the institution.

21. Audit and Reclamation of the Grant

- 21.1. The institution is required to allow the Council or a person authorised by the Council to audit the use of the grant and provide necessary assistance, including allowing access to the premises and the territory of the institution and submitting all the requested documents for the purpose of verifying the correctness of the information provided.
- 21.2. A grant not used for the intended purpose may be reclaimed by the Council from the institution along with a proportional fee of overhead costs.