Euroopa Liit
Euroopa Sotsiaalfond

Eesti tuleviku heaks

Mobilitas
ESF programm

Minutes No. 100
13 September 2011
Approved by the Council of
Estonian Science Foundation

Guidelines on Applying for Postdoctoral Research Grant

6th call for applications with deadline 27 October 2011

With a purpose to develop and diversify Estonian research potential through the mobility of researchers and exchange of experience, and thereby to activate international exchange of knowledge and support the development of careers of young researchers, the Estonian Science Foundation (hereinafter referred to as the "Foundation") announces a call for postdoctoral research grant applications. With the grants, financed with a support of the European Social Fund (ESF), the researchers are enabled to blend in with the academic world by continuing the work in their field of science in a new research and development institution. That enables the young researchers to diversify their competence by exchanging experience. Awarding postdoctoral research grants is a contribution to the coherence between the researchers and Estonian research and development institutions.

The terms and conditions of the Guidelines on Applying for Postdoctoral Grant have been prepared on the basis of the Guidelines on Applying for Postdoctoral Research Grant approved on 18 September 2007 by the Council of the Foundation, in compliance with the researcher mobility programme "Mobilitas" (hereinafter referred to as "programme "Mobilitas"") of the measure "Preferential development of key areas of research and development, innovation strategy and educational science" of priority axis "Development of the Human Resources of Research and Development Activities" of "Operational Programme for Human Resource Development". The issuing of grants fulfils the objectives of the Estonian Research and Development and Innovation Strategy 2007–2013 "Knowledge-based Estonia" (hereinafter referred to as RD&I Strategy) and Estonian Higher Education Strategy 2006–2015. The Intermediate Body of the programme "Mobilitas" is the Ministry of Education and Research (hereinafter referred to as the "Intermediate Body"), the Implementing Agency is Archimedes Foundation (hereinafter referred to as "Implementing Agency") and it is carried out by the Foundation.

The postdoctoral researcher grant is a research grant awarded by the Foundation on the basis of the positive evaluation results of international public application round for the purpose of implementing a particular research project. Upon issuing the postdoctoral research grant, the

postdoctoral researchers coming from abroad to Estonia and starting to work at Estonian research and development institutions will be preferred. It is also possible to be awarded a grant for going from Estonia to a research and development institution of a foreign state (attention must be paid to the differences in tax systems and consequently to the possibilities of using grants financed from structural funds) as well as an inter-Estonian postdoctoral research grant. The aim of postdoctoral studies abroad after the end of grant funding is to implement the acquired knowledge in Estonia. The number of researchers going to a foreign state cannot exceed 20% out of all grants awarded from the programme. The amount of inter-Estonian grants will be no more than 10% out of all grants. Pursuant to the terms and conditions of these guidelines, the postdoctoral research grant may contain remuneration for the postdoctoral researcher, research expenses, a one-time relocation allowance, and overhead costs. The duration of a postdoctoral grant is either two or three years. Upon use of a postdoctoral grant and reporting one has to be guided by the programme "Mobilitas" and the Structural Assistance Act for the Period of 2007–2013.

1. Requirements to the Applicant of the Postdoctoral Research Grant

1.1. Subject to approval of the partner institution[1], the postdoctoral research grant may be applied for by a person who

1.1.1. has been awarded a doctoral degree or an equivalent qualification not earlier than 2006. In case that, after obtaining the degree, a person applying for the position of a postdoctoral researcher was on parental leave or in compulsory military service, the qualification period is extended by the period of the parental leave or compulsory military service;

1.1.2. will be awarded a doctoral degree or an equivalent qualification no later than the start of the postdoctoral research grant applied for;

1.1.3. has not been awarded the doctoral degree by the same research and development institution (partner as well as receiving institution; one university will be deemed to be one research and development institution) in which the person is applying for the position of a postdoctoral researcher.

1.2. The topics of research projects will not be prescribed regarding applications for grants meant for researchers coming from abroad to Estonia and inter-Estonian grants.

1.3. Grants given to a postdoctoral researcher going abroad will only be financed if the research belongs to the first priority areas of RD&I Strategy[2].

1.4. Inter-Estonian grant may be applied for by a person who has obtained a doctoral degree in Estonia and who wishes to continue his/her career in an Estonian research and development institution.

[1] Concerning postdoctoral research grants, the research and development institutions in the sub-register of Estonian Research Portal which are positively evaluated in the respective field of research and development pursuant to the Ministry of Education and Research Regulation No. 83 of 15 December 2009 "Detailed Conditions and Procedure for Applying for, Conducting and Approving the Result of Regular Evaluation of Research and Development." will be involved as partner institutions. In case of postdoctoral researcher working in Estonia, the receiving Estonian research and development institution will be the partner institution. In case of a postdoctoral researcher going abroad, the partner institution will be the Estonian research and development institution sending the postdoctoral researcher to a foreign state.

[2] The first priority areas of the Estonian Research and Development and Innovation Strategy 2007–2013 "Knowledge-based Estonia" are information and communication technology, material technology, biotechnology, energy, environmental technology and health (programme "Mobilitas", p. 3).

1.5. A postdoctoral researcher is obliged to publish at least one peer-reviewed science publication during the grant period.

1.6. A person applying for a grant to go abroad will take contractual obligation, after completing the grant, to apply for a position in the partner institution which is connected to the researcher's area of specialization and qualifications, and will be obliged to work there for at least three years. If the postdoctoral researcher will not perform the obligations assumed with acceptance of the grant, he/she and/or the partner institution may be required to refund the grant either partly or fully, unless the failure to perform obligations arose from medical or family reasons or reasons independent of the postdoctoral researcher and the partner institution.

1.7. If the partner institution is not able to offer a position which is equivalent to the researcher's area of specialization and qualifications, then the postdoctoral researcher will have the right to get a job in Estonia in an institution of his/her choice.

2. Requirements to Partner Institutions and Supervisors of Postdoctoral Researchers

2.1. The Foundation will conclude a Partnership Agreement with a partner institution which regulates the activities of the parties upon carrying out the programme "Mobilitas" and which contains the mutual rights, obligations and liabilities of the parties. The Partnership Agreement will be concluded as a single agreement and it applies for all research grants awarded from the finances of the programme "Mobilitas" where this research and development institution has been involved.

2.2. A partner/receiving institution will provide a necessary working environment (incl. working space, administrative and support structure etc.) and supervisor to the postdoctoral researcher.

2.3. The supervisor of a postdoctoral researcher may be a holder of a large-scale research project (i.e. at least with the same value as the postdoctoral research grant applied for) or a main executor assigned by a holder of a large-scale project.

2.4. The supervisor has to be the staff employee of the partner institution. In case of postdoctoral researchers going abroad, the supervisor has to be the staff employee of the receiving institution.

2.5. The Foundation has the right to request for additional documents from the research and development institution where a postdoctoral research grant is applied for regarding the respective research activities.

3. Amount of the Postdoctoral Research Grant

3.1. For remuneration and taxes payable thereon (income tax, social tax and unemployment insurance premium) there is up to EUR **25,600** per year.

3.2. To cover research costs, up to EUR **5,760** per year will be paid in experimental science disciplines and up to EUR **3,200** per year in non-experimental science disciplines.

3.3. A partner institution will be compensated for 5% of overhead costs related to the postdoctoral research grant of the costs indicated in clauses 3.1 and 3.2.

3.4. The postdoctoral researchers whose employment entails relocation from one country to another will receive a one-time relocation allowance in the sum of EUR **6,500**. The relocation allowance will be paid to the postdoctoral researchers who have not resided/studied/worked in the country of destination during the period 1 May 2011 – 27 October 2011. The Foundation is entitled to require an applicant to submit relevant supporting evidence. The relocation allowance is paid as a single payment. The taxes prescribed by Estonian law (income tax, social tax and unemployment insurance premium) shall apply to the relocation allowance.

4. Procedure for Applying for the Postdoctoral Research Grant

4.1. The application round for the postdoctoral researcher grant shall be arranged by the Foundation who also sets out the terms and conditions of acceptance of the applications. The Foundation arranges the evaluation of the applications and finances the successful projects pursuant to the decision of the Council of the Foundation.

4.2. According to these guidelines, applications will be accepted until **27 October 2011 at 17:00 Estonian time**. The application is submitted in English.

4.3. The application has to be submitted electronically via the Estonian Research Portal (www.etis.ee) and for that one has to register as a user of the system following the instructions given on the website[3]. Also, the partner institution approves and signs the applications electronically via ETIS.

4.4. The application for a postdoctoral research grant contains the following:

- general data of the applicant and the partner institution/receiving research and development institution (incl. the supervisor and his/her research project) and an annotation of the research project (up to 2,000 characters);
- a scientific description of the postdoctoral researcher's project (not more than 18,000 characters (with spaces), the list of references not included) providing an overview of the theoretical background of the intended research as well as references to what has been done so far, major goals and working hypotheses of the project, the research methodology, the equipment to be used and literature cited. The connection between the proposed project with the research of the postdoctoral researcher's supervisor must be specified separately;
- the CV of the applicant containing references to his/her publications;
- the CV of the supervisor containing his/her major publications in 2006-2011;
- regarding the applicant going from Estonia to a foreign state, an invitation or a written confirmation from the receiving research and development institution.

4.5. While completing the application in the Estonian Research Portal it must be marked whether studies involving humans or tests involving animals will be conducted. If such studies or tests are planned, the positive decision concerning the project by the human research ethics committee or the approvals committee for animal tests must be submitted to the Estonian Science Foundation no later than the start of grant.

4.6. The postdoctoral researchers who have been awarded a grant as a result of the application round on the basis of these guidelines will commence work no later than on 1 August 2012, unless, with good reason, agreed otherwise.

5. Processing the Applications for the Postdoctoral Research Grant

5.1. Processing the applications for the postdoctoral researcher grant complies with the guidelines on processing the applications laid down in the Foundation.

5.2. Applications which do not meet the requirements of the guidelines will not be accepted.

5.3. If an application or an applicant fails to meet the requirements, then the applicant will be notified of that within twenty working days after the due date for submission of applications.

[3] Partner institution will arrange access of persons who have not been registered in ETIS.

5.4. Each application will be assigned a unique identification code which will remain the same throughout the duration of the top researcher grant. Applications and all relevant documentation will be maintained in the databases of ETIS and the Foundation.

6. Procedure for Evaluation of Applications for Postdoctoral Research Grant and Rules of Expert Assessment

6.1. The application for a grant will be given for evaluation to at least two independent reviewers with a doctoral degree or an equivalent academic degree, of whom at least one is from a foreign country. No other reviews or opinions addressed to the Foundation will be taken into account.

6.2. Applications for a grant and the reviews will be reviewed by the Evaluation Committee formed by the Foundation which includes representatives from all research fields to which the applications pertain, also representatives from the Intermediate Body, other ministries, professional organizations, etc may be engaged. The composition of the Committee will be made public at the web page of the Foundation after making the decision on financing.

6.3. Members of the Committee as well as reviewers are obliged to comply with the guidelines on evaluation of grant applications and the rules of procedure concerning conflicts of interest approved by the Council of the Foundation which have been made public on the web page of the Foundation. The Evaluation Committee has the right to consult the competent institutions and advisory councils (the Academy of Sciences, the Research and Development Council, etc) as well as the partner institutions.

6.4. Both applications and reviews will be confidential. Members of the Evaluation Committee and the reviewers will not be allowed to disclose information contained in applications or use it for the benefit of themselves or of any other persons or to detriment of any persons.

6.5. The Committee will compile a ranking list of applications and submit it to the Council of the Foundation for decision making. There is a single ranking list for all postdoctoral researchers.

6.6. The Council of the Foundation will make its decision to finance/refuse to finance an application on the basis of the ranking list and recommendations received from the Committee. A decision of the Council will be final.

6.7. The applicant will be notified of the results of evaluation of applications by the end of March 2012. Each applicant will receive a notice regarding the decision of the Council. The applicant can read the reviews of his/her application in ETIS, the names of the reviewers will not be disclosed.

6.8. All materials relating to the evaluation of application will be confidential until the adoption of financing decisions by the Council. Projects to be financed will be disclosed in ETIS. Applications rejected by the Foundation will be confidential until the end of term of archiving on 31 December 2025.

7. Entry into Grant Agreement

7.1. With regard to each grant a trilateral Grant Agreement between the Foundation, a partner institution and a postdoctoral researcher will be concluded for the term of the grant.

7.2. The Agreement will establish mutual rights, obligations and liabilities of the parties, including remuneration payable to the postdoctoral researcher and the term of the employment contract.

7.3. The postdoctoral researcher with a 2- year grant has a possibility to extend his/her grant for the period of one year.

8. Use of the Postdoctoral Research Grant

8.1. The costs incurred upon the use of postdoctoral researcher grant are eligible if they are directly related to the activities of the programme "Mobilitas" and comply with the conditions of eligibility of the programme "Mobilitas" and the regulation "Terms and Procedure for Designating Period 2007-2013 Structural Assistance Expenses Eligible or Ineligible".

8.2. The Foundation will compensate for the eligible expenditures of the postdoctoral researcher grant to the partner institution in respect to eligible costs on the basis of payment claims approved by the Implementing Agency.

8.3. The procedure and deadlines for submitting summary tables and expense receipts will be established in the Partnership Agreement.

8.4. Arrangements for using the grant for research expenses will be made by the postdoctoral researcher in cooperation with the supervisor. The postdoctoral researcher and the partner institution will be liable for purposeful and proper use of the grant and for purposeful process of the intended research project.

9. Reporting on the Postdoctoral Research Grant

9.1. A postdoctoral researcher will submit the reports on the use of grant and research activities to the Foundation pursuant to the procedure and deadlines stipulated in the Grant Agreement.

9.2. The partner institution takes part in compilation of activity reports of the programme "Mobilitas" pursuant to the procedure and deadlines stipulated in the Partnership Agreement and its supplements.

9.3. In case that the results of the research of the postdoctoral researcher are published, a notation must be added to the publication (article, books, website, etc.) specifying that the research was carried out with the financial support of the European Social Fund and indicating the number of the grant.

9.4. A substantive interim report will only be submitted by the postdoctoral researcher to whom a two-year grant was awarded and who wants to apply for an extension. The interim report will be submitted via ETIS three months before the final deadline of the Grant Agreement. The decision regarding the extension of the grant will be made by the Foundation on the basis of successfulness of the work of the postdoctoral researcher and the existence of the financial means.

9.5. The final report of the postdoctoral researcher grant will be submitted via ETIS within one month after termination of the grant. The final report includes information on the use of grant and the summary of research results.

10. Criteria for Evaluation of Applications for a Postdoctoral Research Grant

10.1. Scientific quality and innovativeness of the planned research project

- Novelty of the project and the potential for the creation of new knowledge;
- Relevance of the research topic and contribution of the expected results to the development of science, technology and/or social sphere;
- Degree of elaboration of the project plan and validity of the methodology to be used and the quality of the project implementation plan.

10.2. Competence of the postdoctoral researcher

- Quality and results of the applicant`s previous research activities, and the capacity of the applicant to carry out the proposed project;

- Experience of the applicant in (international) research-related cooperation and his/her teamwork skills;
- Potential contribution of the applicant to the research activities carried out in the receiving institution, training aspects of the proposal and impact of the project on his/her research career.

10.3. Evaluation of the research project on the basis of the general selection criteria of "Operational Programme for Human Resource Development" priority axis "Development of the Human Resources of Research and Development Activities"

- Impact of the project on the priority axis' goals, national and sectoral strategies and development plans;
- Feasibility of the proposed research project;
- Impact of the proposed research project on the horizontal topics;
- Economic efficiency of the research project;
- Sustainability of the proposed research project.