



GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

SCHOLARSHIP AND TRAINING FUND

DEVELOPMENT OF POLISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

*Deadline for submitting applications
from **27 March 2014** to **27 May 2014***

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. GENERAL INFORMATION	4
1.1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT FINANCIAL MECHANISMS	4
1.2. PROGRAMME DOCUMENTS.....	5
2. WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR SUPPORT	5
2.1. GENERAL INFORMATION.....	5
2.2. APPLICANTS	6
2.3. PARTNER INSTITUTIONS - DEVELOPMENT OF POLISH HEIs	6
3. INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION – HOW IT WORKS	7
3.1. GENERAL INFORMATION.....	7
4. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS.....	8
4.1. GENERAL INFORMATION.....	8
4.2. PROJECT BUDGET.....	9
4.2.1. ELIGIBLE COSTS - TYPES OF COSTS.....	10
4.2.2. INELIGIBLE COSTS.....	13
4.2.3. APPLICANTS’ OWN CONTRIBUTIONS	14
4.2.4. CHANGES TO THE PROJECT BUDGET.....	14
4.2.5. SUBCONTRACTING.....	15
5.APPLICATION PROCEDURE.....	15
5.1. PREPARING AND SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION	15
5.2. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION FORMS AND PERIOD COVERED BY THE GRANT.....	16
5.3. APPLICATION FORM.....	16
5.4. SIGNING THE APPLICATION BY A LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE(S) OF THE APPLICANT	17
5.5. ENCLOSURES TO APPLICATIONS	17
5.5.1 <i>Letter of Agreement</i>	18
6. APPLICATION ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION PROCEDURE.....	20
6.1. APPLICATION ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE.....	20
6.2. FORMAL ASSESSMENT	21
6.3. QUALITY ASSESSMENT	22
6.4. INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESULTS OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS	23
6.5. THE APPEAL PROCEDURE	24
7. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	24
7.1. CONCLUDING A FINANCIAL AGREEMENT	24
7.2. ENCLOSURES TO THE AGREEMENT.....	25
7.3. COST ELIGIBILITY PERIOD.....	25
7.4. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS	26
7.5. GRANT CLEARANCE PRINCIPLES	26
7.6. REPORTING.....	26
7.7. PROJECTS NOT COMPLETED AND AGREEMENT TERMINATION	28
8.MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION.....	28
8.1. PUBLIC AID.....	28
8.2. PUBLIC PROCUREMENT	28
9. PROJECT MONITORING AND AUDITS	29
9.1. MONITORING AND AUDIT.....	29
9.2. RECORD KEEPING.....	29
10. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY	29
11. CONTACT WITH STF OFFICE	30

Glossary of basic terms

Applicant	Entity applying for co-financing within the Programme (after receiving co-financing acts as Beneficiary and Project Promoter);
Application	An application form for a project within the Scholarship and Training Fund along with enclosures, submitted by an Applicant in order to obtain support within the Programme;
Beneficiary (Project Promoter)	An Applicant (Polish HEI), with whom the Programme Operator has signed the <i>Financial Agreement</i> ; acts as a Project Promoter;
Donor States	The Kingdom of Norway, the Republic of Iceland, the Principality of Liechtenstein;
National Focal Point (NFP)	National public entity designated by the Beneficiary State to have the overall responsibility for reaching the objectives of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms for the period 2009-2014 and implementing the Memorandum of Understanding. In Poland, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development acts as the National Focal Point;
Programme Operator (PO)	Entity responsible for the implementation and management of the Programme, granting financial support to the Applicants for the implementation of the projects. For the Scholarship and Training Fund, the Foundation for Development of the Education System acts as the Programme Operator;
Donor Programme Partner from Norway	- the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU) ;
Project co-financing	Funding granted to the beneficiary by the Programme Operator for the implementation of the project;
Project Partner	Entity from Norway or Poland. Partnership with a Norwegian HEI is obligatory for projects aiming at development of joint degree programmes. In other project types partnership is optional. Partnership is confirmed by signing the <i>Letter of Agreement</i> .
Selection Committee	Committee responsible for the recommendation of projects eligible for co-financing within the Programme, consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, representatives appointed by the above mentioned ministries, representatives of the Programme Operator. Representatives of the Donor Programme Partners participate in the meeting in an advisory capacity, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development (the National Focal Point) and the Financial Mechanism Office participate as observers.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. General information about Financial Mechanisms

The Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the EEA (European Economic Area) Financial Mechanism are the sources of non-refundable aid for Poland, offered by three countries - members of the EFTA (European Free Trade Association), which are also members of EEA (European Economic Area) i.e. Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Scholarship and Training Fund was created on the basis of *Memorandum of Understanding* of implementing of Financial Mechanism EEA 2009-2014 between Iceland, Liechtenstein, Kingdom of Norway and Poland, as well as on the basis of *Memorandum of Understanding* of implementing of Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 between Kingdom of Norway and Poland.

Foundation for Development of Education System acts as a Programme Operator of Scholarship and Training Fund in Poland.

Strategic Objective

The main purpose of the Fund is to reduce the social and economic disparities within the European Economic Area and to strengthen bilateral relations in the area of education between Poland, Norway, and Liechtenstein the field of education. In the context of EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism 'strengthening bilateral relations' is understood as cooperation, joint efforts and increased knowledge and understanding between Donor States and Beneficiary States.

Operational Objective

The aim of the Fund will be enhancement of the human capital and knowledge base through:

- increased higher education staff and students mobility between Poland and Donor States,
- increased and strengthened institutional cooperation and partnership at all levels of the education sector (schools, higher education, vocational training/education and adult education) between Poland and Donor States.

Additionally, activities undertaken under the Mechanisms should cover various cross-cutting aspects which improve quality of implemented projects, while increasingly contributing to the achievement of social and economic cohesion.

The main cross-cutting aspects include:

- sustainable growth that integrates the environmental, economic and social dimensions,
- equal opportunities for men and women,
- good governance, which is characterised by participation of a wide group of partners in the decision-making process and taking decisions in compliance with the law and clear rules, as well as fighting corruption.

Cross-cutting issues should be included in the project proposal while planning the project activities by the Applicant. The Applicant should describe in what way the project will address to the horizontal issues and assess the level of reference of proposed project results to the horizontal issues on a scale from 0 to 2.

Scoring for cross-cutting issues is described in section 5.6 of the *Application Form*:

2 points - maximum number of points is given if the project in principle refers to a given aspect, if it directly refers to a given aspect, and forms the main goal for the development and implementation of the project. For example: in the case of *Equal opportunities for men and women* aspect, it is recommended to tick 2 points if the project focuses on specific activities aimed at raising social awareness in matters related to gender, e.g. it refers to studies on violence with taking gender issues into consideration or the project is submitted by an institution, where gender issues form a priority of its operations included in the statute.

1 point - is given if the project indirectly relates to a given aspect, and to a certain extent. A given aspect is addressed by the project, however it is not the main reason for its implementation. For example: it is recommended to tick 1 point for the *Equal opportunities for men and women* aspect in the case of a project, which focuses on research in a field, which does not relate to gender issues, but at the same time great importance is attached in the project that the scientists represent both sexes and are equally represented in project activities.

0 points - is given if a given aspect is not addressed in any way in the thematic scope of the project.

More information on the cross-cutting issues may be found in official documents of the Financial Mechanisms available at www.fss.org.pl.

1.2. Programme Documents

During the implementation of activities under the measure *Development of Polish Higher Education Institutions*, Project promoters are obliged to follow the rules included in programme documents:

1. Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-14 between the Kingdom of Norway and the Republic of Poland, signed on 10 June 2011, along with attachments;
2. Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014, along with attachments;
3. All guidelines referring to the Programme implementation adopted by Programme Operator, Ministry of Regional Development for the EEA Grants and Norway Grants 2009-14, or the EEA Financial Mechanism Committee/ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including:
 - a. Guidelines of the Minister of Regional Development on the call for proposals procedure regarding contest projects under the EEA Financial Mechanism for the period 2009-2014 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the period 2009-2014;
 - b. Guidelines of the Minister of Regional Development to orders under the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014, to which the Act of 29 January 2004 - Public Procurement Law is not applicable;
 - c. Guidelines of Donor States for strengthened bilateral relations.

2. WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR SUPPORT

2.1. General information

The Scholarship and Training Fund was established to support the process of improving the quality of education at Polish educational institutions, with special regard to higher education institutions. The Fund also aims at the enhancement of human capital and broadening of knowledge through, among others, fostering the mobility of pupils, students as well as education staff between Poland and Norway. The Fund also supports projects which aim to enhance the capacity of staff and institutional structures to participate in international cooperation. Thus projects submitted to the STF should be designed to achieve these objectives.

Projects submitted within the Programme must meet certain requirements, i.e. must belong to the specific thematic areas, be among the eligible types of activities and the Applicants must belong to the catalogue of entities eligible to apply for the funds.

2.2. Applicants

The eligible Applicants are Polish Higher Education Institutions (public and private). HEIs listed as “in liquidation” or “deleted” in the *POL-on Higher Education Information System* at <https://polon.nauka.gov.pl> are excluded from applying.

Note: at the moment of lodging its application under the measure *Development of Polish HEIs* (date as postmark) the Applying institution must have been registered in the Republic of Poland (entry in a relevant register, deed of settlement, founding act, decision of a Minister) for at least 12 months.

Only a Polish party can be an Applicant.

2.3. Partner institutions - Development of Polish HEIs

The Scholarship and Training Fund promotes cooperation between Poland and Norway. To make the best of the Fund, setting up partnerships as well as the cooperation of institutions and organisations, aimed at promoting best practices and transfer of knowledge as well as innovative solutions, are of paramount importance for co-financed projects.

For partnership purposes it is imperative that a Polish institution establishes cooperation with at least one Donor State institution.

Partnership between Polish and at least one Norwegian Higher Education Institution is obligatory for projects aiming at the development of joint study programmes. In such cases eligible institutions from Poland will apply on behalf of the a partnership consortium. The partnership shall consist of at least two institutions, at least one of which must be from Norway.

In other projects the partnership will be optional, i.e. Polish HEI might apply for funds in order to implement unilateral project, with itself as the main Applicant.

Project partners can be:

- **institutions dealing with education** (for example schools, secondary technical schools, higher education institutions, institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences offering PhD studies, public continuing education and practical training establishments) and institutions whose charters define them as providers of educational activities and of certified education leading to obtaining a certificate/diploma;
- **companies/firms and social partners** cooperating with a HEI (main Applicant);
- **public or private organisations** cooperating with a HEI - including not-for-profit institutions and non-governmental organisations, research centres.

A partner institution participating in the implementation of a project must have its registered seat in Norway or Poland (for Polish partners). Partners from other countries are not eligible. The participation of a partner institution in a project must be justified and it must serve the purpose of achieving project objectives.

While choosing project partners please remember that participation of each partner institution should be explained in the context of planned role and should lead to achieving project objectives.

To find a partner institution from Norway or register your own institution , giving short possible thematic area of cooperation, the Programme Operator recommends using the Norwegian Centre for Cooperation in Education (SIU) database for partner searching, available at: <http://siu.no/eng/Front-Page/EEA-Partner-search>

In case of serious problems with finding partners Polish institution may contact with one of the Donor Programme Partner institutions. Contact data can be found at:
<http://www.fss.org.pl/en/programme-partners>

3. INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION - How it works

3.1. General information

The Call is open for applications submitted within the *Development of Polish HEIs* - unilateral and multilateral projects aimed at the enhancement of teaching and organisational capacities of Polish Higher Education Institutions.

Activities undertaken as part of particular projects should lead to:

- development of study programmes in English as a language of instruction;
- development of joint study programmes (at bachelor, master or doctoral level) leading to double diploma;
- development of new, innovative study programmes, responding to new needs and challenges emerging at national or European level;
- preparation of a new course, module, specialization, study programme;
- establishment of two-cycle study programmes based on learning outcomes, with ECTS as an accumulation system;
- development of quality culture, including internal systems for Quality Assurance;
- development of study programmes in cooperation with private sector.

Projects can envisage:

- international mobility between partners;
- preparation of teaching programmes;
- organization of meetings, seminars, workshops;
- need analysis;
- development of policy plans;
- development of teaching tools, methods, materials.

Priority shall be given to projects related thematically to *environment and climate change*. All relevant academic disciplines will be eligible for support, including multidisciplinary projects.

The catalogue of possible activities regarded as referring to *environment and climate change*

A project proposal or activities planned within the project aim at or refer to i.a.:

1. Increased awareness and strengthened knowledge base on the environment and climate change among HEI students, graduates and employees;
2. Improved compliance with the EU environmental legislation, including e.g. increased exchange of information between Norway and Poland on environmental impact, status and trends, as well as adaptation of the legal regulations to the EU legislation;
3. Increased awareness of and education in environmental monitoring and integrated planning and control as well as education in this scope, including e.g. improvement of efficiency and quality of environmental monitoring through improved quality of environmental data and information;
4. Increased social awareness of and education in biodiversity and ecosystem services, including increased awareness of and education in the linkage between biodiversity and climate change, and economic valuation of ecosystems;

5. Increased awareness of and education in climate change and renewable energy sources, with reference to e.g. energy efficiency, capacity to assess vulnerability to climate change, adaptation to a changing climate, reduction of industrial pollution, or polar research connected to climate change. Development of adaptive management skills with reference to climate change;
6. Broadened knowledge of and strengthened international co-operation on climate change mitigation options, including e.g. more frequent use of so-called “green” environmentally friendly technologies or CO₂ capture and storage (CCS);
7. Increased awareness of and education in hazardous substances, including e.g. prevention of adverse environmental effects caused by chemicals and hazardous waste;
8. Increased awareness of and education in integrated management of marine and inland water resources;
9. Inclusion of business models concerned with environmental issues and climate change into study programmes and courses, as well as increased green, environmentally friendly job creation and entrepreneurship, analyses of labour market in terms of supply and demand for jobs in the sector of environmental products and services;
10. Increased qualifications of HEI graduates and employees of companies and public institutions in the field of environmental and climate issues, as an important factor of economic growth;

or any other issue concerning environment or climate change.

3.2. Project duration

The estimated duration of a project is from 12 to 17 months. For projects to be co-financed the period of project costs eligibility will be set out in a *Financial Agreement*, but no activity linked to a project can commence earlier than on 1st January 2015 or finish later than on 31st May 2016.

NOTE: An institution may lodge more than one application under one Call for proposals. Each such application will be subject to formal and quality assessment, and if granted co-financing it will be the subject matter of a separate *Financial Agreement*.

4. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. General information

Planned expenditure should be in line with the principles of the Scholarship and Training Fund. The total cost of a project is composed solely of its eligible costs indicated by its Applicant (on behalf of the whole project consortium) in a detailed budget proposal. These costs are estimated in accordance with the principles of accounting and standard internal regulations as specific expenses directly linked to the implementation of the project, which will be directly entered in its books.

When filling in the budget part of an application, Applicants should estimate their project budget in PLN. The awarded co-financing will not exceed 90% of total eligible project costs. For the purpose of filling in the application, the amounts in EUR will be converted into PLN (for example when estimating remuneration costs) using the average monthly InforEuro conversion rate of the month when this Call for proposals was published, that is:

$$1\text{EUR} = 4.1779\text{ PLN}$$

Information on conversion rates is regularly published by the European Commission at:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm

The decision as to the final grant amount in EUR shall be made by the Programme Operator on the basis of the resolution of Selection Committee.

General information relating to project budget:

- the minimum grant for one project that Applicants can apply for is the equivalent of EUR 20,000 converted into PLN using the average monthly InforEuro conversion rate of the month when the Call for proposals was published, that is 1 EUR = 4,1779 PLN equalling 83 558,00 PLN;
- the maximum grant for one project that Applicants can apply for is the equivalent of EUR 250,000 converted into PLN using the average monthly InforEuro conversion rate of the month when the Call for proposals was published, that is 1 EUR = 4,1779 PLN equalling 1 044 475,00 PLN;
- the maximum grant is up to 90% of total eligible project costs;
- the remaining costs (10% minimum) linked to the project will be covered from different sources by Applicants and their partners (in the case of partnership projects). Applicants' own contributions have to be made in money (strictly financial contribution). Any own contributions in kind (for example voluntary work) will be regarded as an ineligible project cost.

Total budget 100% = 90% Scholarship and Training Fund co-financing + 10% Applicants' own contribution (and of their project partners, if applicable)

The same expenses must not be financed from two different sources (double funding). Should such cases come to light (at each project stage), the Programme Operator will take steps to recover improperly used funds or even to terminate the agreement.

Grant payment

If a grant is awarded, then its amount will be quoted in PLN in the financial agreement. Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego will then transfer the funds in PLN into the Project Promoter's bank account indicated in the *Financial Agreement*. Specific information relating to the clearance rules will be published in the *Financial and administrative Guide for Project Promoters* (available before signing *Financial Agreements* with Project Promoters).

Grant will be paid in the form of advance payments, except for the final payment, which will be the balance payment.

Programme Operator reserves the right to include additional instalments in the payment schedule, if such an approach results from a recommendation made after the financial eligibility testing. In the case of non-public HEIs, after staging financial eligibility testing of Project Promoter by Programme Operator, it may be required to secure proper execution of the *Financial Agreement* with the use of security interests. Such a security interest may include:

- payment break down into a bigger number of advance payments and/or
- a blank bill of exchange and promissory note declaration and/or
- bank guarantee and/or
- reimbursements.

4.2. Project Budget

When filling in the budget tables in *Section 10. Project budget* of the measure *Development of Polish HEIs* application, the following rules should be remembered:

- a) individual amounts in budget items are to be quoted in PLN as integers;
- b) only eligible costs as described in this *Guide for Applicants* can be quoted in the budget;
- c) the grant amount applied for cannot be lower than the equivalent of EUR 20,000 converted into PLN using the average monthly InforEuro conversion rate of the month when the Call for proposals was published, that is 1 EUR = 4,1779 PLN equalling 83 558,00 PLN and cannot exceed the equivalent of EUR 250,000 converted into PLN using the average monthly

- InforEuro conversion rate of the month when the Call for proposals was published, that is 1 EUR = 4,1779 PLN equalling 1 044 475,00 PLN;
- d) the budget should be coherent with the project schedule and planned activities (*Section 6 of the application form Project description*);
 - e) using the services of subcontractors should be planned only when a given activity/task cannot be carried out by project consortium staff. The need of using subcontractors' services should be justified and described in detail in the application form.

4.2.1. Eligible costs - types of costs

Eligible costs are costs which are indispensable and directly linked to the implementation of a project and incurred within the cost eligibility period in accordance with *Financial Agreements* to be signed with Applicants (on behalf of the whole project consortium for partner projects - if project is implemented in partnership) if the Scholarship and Training Fund approves their projects for implementation.

Costs will be deemed eligible only when they:

- are incurred between the first and the last day of the cost eligibility period, defined in the *Financial Agreement* linked to a given project;
- are quoted in the budget;
- are rationally calculated, based on market prices and in line with applicable tax and social laws;
- are proportional to planned activities and indispensable for project implementation;
- are used solely for the achievement of the project objective/objectives and of its expected result/results in a way that complies with the rules of economic efficiency;
- are identifiable and verifiable, in particular through entering them into the project books, and comply with the general accounting principles.

Project Promoters will be obliged to keep separate financial and accounting documentation of project implementation funds in accordance with the Accounting Act, and in a way which allows identification of separate accounting operations.

Expenses will be regarded as incurred when their costs have been invoiced, paid and the object has been delivered to a Project Promoter or other institutions belonging to a project consortium (for merchandises) or performed (for works and services). General expenses and equipment depreciation are regarded as incurred the moment they are entered in the books by a Project Promoter. In exceptional cases, costs invoiced within the last month of eligibility are also regarded as incurred within the eligibility period if they were paid within 30 days of the last eligibility day (date of submitting the Final Report indicated in the *Financial Agreement*, however, not later than until 30th June 2016).

The following **categories of eligible costs** may be funded as part of *Development of Polish HEIs projects*:

1. **Costs of travel, insurance and subsistence**, on condition that they are in accordance with the usual practices of Project Promoters and project partners and that they do not exceed the national rates - for example project managing group working meetings, domestic and European meetings indispensable for achieving project objectives (EU, EFTA and EEA countries only), among other things:
 - costs of transport to the place of destination;
 - accommodation costs;
 - board and local travel costs (if not included in the subsistence fees);
 - insurance - only costs indispensable for project implementation (policy insurance scope should not include, for example, practising extreme sports);
 - costs of internal travel directly linked to project implementation (for example working visits).

NOTE: In case when travel is planned outside Poland and Norway, it is necessary to provide justification of the travel purpose and its connection with planned project activities. It will not be possible to clear conference charges costs as project costs - they are to be funded from the costs of other programmes or from one's own funds (but in this case it will not be regarded as a consortium's own contribution to a given STF project)

For Polish institutions staff:

- the provisions of the *Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 29th January 2013 on business travel compensation for employees of state-owned and self-government budgetary unit (Journal of Laws 2013 from 5th February, item 167)* are applicable when clearing daily subsistence amounts and hotel allowances;
- the provisions of the *Regulation of the Minister of Infrastructure of 25th March 2002 regarding the conditions for the determination and the method of reimbursement of costs of business-related use of private cars, motorcycles and motorbikes not constituting the employer's property (Journal of Laws 2002, Nr. 27, item 271 with subsequent amendments)* are applicable when clearing car travel costs.

For institutions based in Norway - the relevant national regulations are applicable, which take into consideration the limits that are applied in a particular partner institution.

At the project clearing stage the Programme Operator may request access to the documents confirming the amount of the rates applied.

2. **Organisational costs for seminars/ conferences, workshops, ,** among other things:
 - costs of hiring premises, equipment, audio system;
 - hotel services (costs of experts'/speakers' overnight accommodation) and catering services (costs of refreshments, for example coffee breaks, conference lunches);
 - preparation of training and conference materials (including costs of material copying, purchase of stationery and supplies for the event organised);
 - interpreting costs (for example simultaneous, consecutive, etc.) - but only in case of receipts or invoices, all personnel costs should be presented in *Remuneration costs* category);
 - costs of disseminating information about planned events (for example advertisement on social websites and in newspapers, etc.);
 - other costs directly linked to the organisation of an event.

3. **Remuneration costs (remunerations and fees)** for factual and administrative work, containing actual remunerations, national insurance contributions, costs incurred by employers in connection with employing a worker and other statutory costs constituting remuneration (provided that they comply with the standard rules of remuneration calculation adhered to by Applicants and project partners), among other things:
 - remuneration of persons directly involved in project implementation - as a form of compensation for part of their remuneration or overtime, calculated at the rate that applies to these persons in their institution;
 - remuneration of lecturers/experts/key speakers (commission contract/ contract for specific work);
 - book-keeping costs;
 - graphic design and/or typesetting costs;
 - publication translation costs;
 - linguistic training/language training courses for staff (understood as costs of tutor remuneration) who will hold classes as part of a field of study, course or specialisation delivered in English or other foreign language.

NOTE: The duration of that kind of training course should not exceed 1/3 of the total project duration set out in the schedule (however, not longer than 6 months) and it cannot exceed 60 course hours. The classes should be held by employees of the Applying HEI and/or project partner staff (if applicable). To justify the costs applied for, the following components are to be quoted/explained: (a) estimated course cost, (b) number of course

participants, (c) number of language study hours, (d) who will hold classes, (e) what methods will be used and (f) expected level of participants' competence, (g) expected results of this training/ training course and how they will be measured, whether the results will be satisfying;

- other kinds of remuneration/fees directly linked to project implementation (for example costs of evaluation of all/part of project activities, legal expenses - if applicable, etc.).

The necessity to employ project consortium staff should be justified in each application lodged. The implementation of project activities may mean the necessity to employ new staff - in such cases Applicants should use best efforts to ensure that if funding is granted new staff are ready for work on the day when the project activities commence.

The Programme Operator will require working time records in the form of time sheets to enable the identification of tasks/activities for which remuneration has been calculated. It refers to, among others, persons employed to work on two or more projects - in such cases the number of hours spent working on the Scholarship and Training Fund project should be carefully marked and described.

4. Preparation and production of project materials (except remuneration costs), among other things:

- costs of preparing and printing promotional, information and teaching materials, for example leaflets, brochures, books and posters;
- non-event-specific advertisement in the press/on the Internet/on TV/on the radio and social networks;
- purchase of stationery and supplies for disseminating project information.

NOTE: the cost of purchasing stationery and supplies for the purposes of an individual project event - for example a conference - should be planned in category *Costs of organising seminars, workshops, conferences*. In any case, costs associated with the ongoing management and administration of the project (e.g. copying drafts of documents) cannot be included in this category.

5. Purchase of teaching equipment (fixed assets) indispensable for project implementation - not exceeding 30% of total eligible costs, among other things:

- purchase of teaching equipment (including computer equipment and servers, furniture, textbooks, apparatus and/or reagents and materials for conducting research etc.);
- cost of new or used equipment indispensable for conducting course programme-related scientific research;
- costs of purchasing licences and software used for the purposes of project implementation, etc.;
- costs of accessing scientific databases, periodicals databases etc., for the purposes of the project implementation.

If equipment is depreciated according to tax and accounting provisions, SOLELY equipment depreciation cost is eligible. The part of depreciation which corresponds to the duration of a project and reflects the real consumption for the purposes of the project will be regarded as the only eligible equipment depreciation cost.

Purchase, rental or lease of equipment (new or second-hand), including installation, maintenance and insurance costs will be considered eligible only if it is directly related and necessary to achieve the objectives of the project.

6. Administrative costs not exceeding 10% of total eligible project costs shall be settled as flat rate. In this category the following expenses, among others, can be planned :

- administration and office-related costs (except remuneration costs);
- costs of purchasing stationery and other services solely for project purposes;
- ICT services;
- costs of parcel post;

- domestic business travel related to project management (except trips directly related to project implementation, for example working visits).

NOTE: *This budget item should include trips organised by the Programme Operator to meet Project Promoters. At least two meetings of that kind will take place - one after the end of the Call for proposals and at the stage of signing Financial Agreements with project promoters (January-February 2015), and the other one in order to lodge and clear Interim/Completion Reports (2016). It is necessary to plan the participation of a person responsible for the relevant content-related (quality) tasks (e.g. coordinator, manager) and of a person who will deal with the financial clearing of a project.*

- costs of bank charges and commissions for opening and running project accounts and other bank services related to a project (except charges for the running and account operation of institutions' general accounts);
- part of rent, charges for energy / water consumption borne by the Applicant / Partner in connection with project implementation;
- other - incurred after the Operator's prior agreement and acceptance.

The Applicant shall not submit to the Operator any documents proving the expenses mentioned above. Administrative costs are flat rate and will be settled on the basis of declaration of the Applicant on the amount spent.

7. Additional costs related to special needs (if applicable). Grants obtained in relation to special needs can be spent on:

- costs linked to wheelchair transport;
- costs linked to the stay and travel of an accompanying person;
- costs of a local carer;
- costs of special teaching materials;
- health care costs;
- costs of special insurance;
- other - incurred after the Operator's prior consent and acceptance.

The above costs refer to persons registered as disabled (if planning for such costs in the project budget, Programme Operator might ask to enclose a valid registered disability degree certificate with the Interim/Completion Report).

A certificate of disability registration from the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) covering the period for which higher funding is awarded constitutes the basis of awarding higher additional costs related to Polish participants' special needs. In the case of Norwegian individual participants documents translated into English, are the basis of awarding a grant under this category:

- special needs declaration signed by the individual participant, where s/he explains his/her situation and justifies the need for higher funding ("Egenerklæring" in Norwegian);
- document from a doctor or a psychologist confirming the existence of special needs („Generell studiekompetanse og evt spesielle opptakskrav" in Norwegian);

The Project Promoter has to keep the above mentioned documents in project documentation (original or authenticated copies).

4.2.2. Ineligible costs

The ineligible costs of a project are:

- expenses for cooperation with countries other than the Programme countries, that is other than Poland and Norway;
- expenses covered outside the cost eligibility period;
- costs other than those directly related to the project implemented;
- expenses being already financed from other programmes (funding from other sources must be clearly justified and explained in detail);

- foreign exchange loss, currency exchange commission, charges resulting from financial transaction debit rate;
- rewards, bonuses and other forms of financial or in-kind consideration for persons involved in project implementation (*except compulsory components of remuneration for persons employed in public institutions if specified in national legislation and planned in the application*);
- individual maintenance grants, scholarships and training grants;
- costs of higher education of persons involved in project implementation;
- non-evidenced expenses;
- indemnity against damages and potential future liability (contractual liability, civil liability, economic penalties, legal fees);
- interest earned on accounts where STF funds are located;
- debts, fines, tickets, financial penalties and court costs;
- loan and its servicing costs;
- tax on goods and services and other taxes and fees which can be legally recovered;
- excessive or imprudent expenses;
- in the cases of equipment hire or lease - costs of any purchases at the end of the hire or lease period;
- costs of transactions covered from accounts other than the account of Project Promoter/Partner(s);
- costs related to general accounts servicing;
- non-financial (in-kind) contribution - for example, the costs of volunteering.

Ineligible costs cannot also be treated as total or part of a Project Promoter's own contribution to the implementation of a project.

Scholarship and Training Fund grants cannot be used to generate any profit to Project Promoters and/or partner institutions. Projects cannot have commercial capacity. All interest accrued from the advanced payment of the STF grant while remaining at the Beneficiary's disposal must be returned to the Programme Operator.

4.2.3. Applicants' own contributions

Applicants and their partners (if applicable) are under the obligation to ensure the covering of 10% of total eligible project costs from sources other than the Scholarship and Training Fund. Applicants' own contributions have to be made exclusively in money (strictly financial contribution).

Room rental from other departments / units and charging the accounting notes is not a financial contribution.

In the final clearance of a project, after lodging a Completion Report, the final amount of project eligible costs will be determined, out of which up to 90% will be funded by the Scholarship and Training Fund.

4.2.4. Changes to the project budget

In the course of project implementation and without prior consultation with the Operator, Project Promoters will have the right to adjust the budget approved in their *Financial Agreements* by way of transfers between individual budget items, on condition that:

- expenses adjustment does not affect the quality of activity implementation;
- the total of reallocations for the whole project budget between individual cost categories does not exceed 15% of the amount in each budget category of the Financial Agreement for which such transfers have been allowed.

If there is doubt whether the reallocation is eligible or not, please always consult the STF's staff supervising your project.

The principle of transferring a maximum of 15% of costs in individual budget categories does not apply to:

- categories for which a limit has been determined in relation to the amount of project eligible costs, that is category “*Costs of teaching equipment purchase*” - maximum 30% of total budget understood as incurred eligible costs, and category “*Administration expenses*” - maximum 10% of total budget understood as incurred eligible costs;
- costs questioned by the Selection Committee;
- creating new budget items within a category (without the Operator’s prior consent it is only possible to increase or decrease expenses for the items that appear in the approved project budget).

If in doubt - always contact the Programme Operator. All other budget changes should be consulted with the Programme Operator. In such cases Project Promoters shall submit a *Chart of Changes* together with an application to make budgetary transfers, specifying the reasons for the changes proposed. Having read the explanations the Programme Operator shall make a decision to refuse or allow the proposed changes to the project budget. Having approved the changes proposed the Programme Operator shall prepare a letter communicating his decision or an Annex to the relevant financial agreement taking account of the budgetary transfers which will be signed by both parties.

4.2.5. Subcontracting

Subcontracting is the situation when the Applicant/Project Promoter or Partner outsources the project tasks which constitute their statute activity for another institution.

It is permitted to subcontract part of the project tasks related to the project content, which the Beneficiary/Partner is not able to perform themselves due to a justified reason. These expenses will solely be accepted if the personnel of the partner organization taking part in the project does not possess the necessary skills to perform the required tasks. For the expenses to be eligible it is necessary to state in the project application that subcontracting will be necessary for some of the project activities. If it is not stated in the project application, a request to do so must be made with the Intermediary.

If the Beneficiary’s request is not granted approval, the Intermediary will assume the expense as ineligible.

NOTE: None of the core project activities can be the subject of the subcontracting. Otherwise, the idea of partnership would be questioned. Consequently, the Applicant must not subcontract all of the project management and administration activities nor any organization participating in the project may subcontract significant part or whole of the activities assigned to them.

5. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

5.1. Preparing and submitting an application

The call for proposals is due **from 27th March 2014 to 27th May 2014**. The final deadline for applying refers to both electronic applications submitted on-line through an application generator and to documentation submitted on paper (date as postmark - read the information below). **On-line applications have to be submitted by 16.00 hours**. After that time the on-line system will be closed for applications.

Main Applicant completes the application form in Polish. The application form contains elements partially translated into English. For partnership projects the Main Applicant applies for funds for the implementation of activities on behalf of the whole project consortium. The application must be submitted through an application generator which is to be found at online.frse.org.pl. Each application should be printed in two copies, stamped and signed by a person/persons authorised to make representations on behalf of their institution (in accordance with an extract from the National Court Register or other registration document applicable in the case of an Applicant) and delivered together with all the required enclosures to the Operator.

The documents (2 original copies of the application and all the required enclosures) are to be delivered in one envelope or packet, by post (date as postmark), by courier (handing over date is decisive) or in person to the Operator at the following address:

**Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE)
Scholarship and Training Fund
ul. Mokotowska 43
00-551 Warsaw, Poland
Marked: *VI Call for proposals***

It is recommended to deliver the application documents by registered mail (e.g. registered letter) and to keep the proof of posting. Applicants will be emailed application lodging confirmation together with a unique registration number which will be indispensable in the process of obtaining more information relating to the application.

Applicants may not negotiate the deadline for applications. Applications lodged after **27th May 2014** will be rejected on formal grounds.

Applications together with enclosures lodged in the course of this Call for proposals will not be returned.

5.2. Deadline for submission of application forms and period covered by the grant

Applications will be received from **27th March 2014** to **27th May 2014**.

No.	Application deadline	Period covered by the grant	Project duration
1.	27 May 2014	The earliest possible project start date: 01/01/2015 The latest possible project end date: 31/05/2016	minimum 12 months, maximum up to 31/05/2016

5.3. Application form

You should carefully read this *Guide* prior to filing in the application form. The application form should be filled in and lodged online at online.frse.org.pl.

NOTE: The Applicant should make sure that the final printed version of the application without the water mark “SZKIC” (DRAFT) is submitted. Applications submitted on inappropriate forms will be rejected as formally ineligible. It is not possible to submit an application outside the on-line system.

The specimen of application form available on STF website as an enclosure (in “pdf” format) is a draft printed version of on-line application form and as such - cannot be hand-filled and/or send to the Programme Operator. Submitting hand-written draft form, taken from STF website in “pdf” format, instead of filling in on-line form will result in rejection an application as not meeting formal criteria of the *Call for proposals*.

Applicants are not allowed to modify the form - any way of modification (e.g. any handwritten completion /supplementing/ making strikeouts in the application form) is unacceptable and will give ground to rejecting the application form as ineligible. This rule does not refer to fields/ blanks in the application form where, according to the instruction, the Applicant must fill it in by hand (e.g. field for handwritten signature).

Applicants should complete the application form in Polish, and a part of the application form in the content-related section must be completed in English. Information provided in Polish and English sections of the application forms should be consistent.

When filling in the application, you should provide exhaustive answers to all the questions, and observe the limits for the number of characters to be included in a given section.

The application form should be logical, clear and coherent. The planned project should be realistic, and its description explicit and exhaustive. Activity schedule and planned budget should cover the whole project implementation period.

Before submitting an application, Applicant should check it themselves with regard to the scope, quality, coherence and completeness of the information contained therein, and make sure that the annexes are complete; the *Checklist* included in the application form and *Formal Eligibility Form*, as well as *Quality Assessment Form* will be useful for this purpose.

5.4. Signing the application by a legal representative(s) of the Applicant

The application form should be signed by legal representative(s) of the Applicant, according to appropriate document confirming the form of legal representation, e.g. a statute, a copy of an entry in the National Court Register or a printout of Central Record of Business Activity (CEIDG) certificate or other documents confirming the existence of the institution and its legal representation, depending on the legal form, if the institution is not entered in KRS.

In the case of Higher Education Institutions, pursuant to the act of 27 July 2005 - Higher Education Law, the Rector is a legal representative of a HEI. If an application has been signed by a HEI's legal representative other than the Rector, an excerpt from the University's Statute providing information on legal representation (copy authenticated by a legal representative, legal councillor, solicitor or notary), which confirms the powers of such a person to incur financial obligations on behalf of the HEI or an original copy of an authorisation/ power of attorney authorising such a person to sign the application (and the Agreement) and to represent the institution before the Scholarship and Training Fund signed by the legal representative of the Applicant

Information on the method of authenticating the documents has been posted on Programme Operator's website at www.fss.org.pl (document available in Polish).

5.5. Enclosures to applications

If the Programme Operator requires the original copy of an enclosure, no authenticated copy is permitted. If the Programme Operator allows document copies, they should be authenticated by an Applicant's legal representative or by a person authorised by him/her. Copies of documents may be certified as true copies by a solicitor, lawyer or notary, or by another person whose duties include certifying documents as true copies.

Each application is considered together with its enclosures. They are to be sent together with the application in one envelope to the Programme Operator's address.

The following enclosures are to be sent with an application:

- **Letters of agreement** in Polish or English from all the participating project partners (in the case of projects submitted by Applicants on behalf of a consortium of partners) - original copy or an authenticated copy certified by an authorised person;
- **CVs of project consortium key staff involved** in relevant administrative and technical activities (for example project coordinator, main partners) in accordance with the specimen shown in the application and together with consent to processing personal details by the Programme Operator and a manual signature - original or copy certified for originality;
- **CVs of experts** (if applicable) in accordance with the specimen shown in the application and together with consent to processing personal details by the Programme Operator and a manual signature - original or copy certified for originality;
- **extract from relevant registers** (for example the National Court Register) for legal entities or a complete copy of an entry in other similar registers, containing information about an Applicant's legal representation - original copy or an authenticated copy certified by an authorised person
- sole traders as project partners - printout from the Central Registration and Information on Business - original copy or an authenticated copy;

- correct and complete attachments to public aid declaration (if applicable) original enclosures or their authenticated copies certified by an authorised person;
- should an application form be signed by a person other than an Applicant's legal representative, the original copy of the appropriate letter of authority/special power of attorney issued for that person should be sent along with the application.

Additionally, non-public institutions have to enclose:

- copy of a formal financial statement (balance sheet, profit and loss account) for the last two financial years - if the total grant amount applied for in all applications lodged in the course of the same Call for proposals by an Applicant exceeds EUR 25,000.

In the case of Higher Education Institutions, pursuant to the act of 27 July 2005 - Higher Education Law, the rector is a legal representative of a HEI. If an application has been signed by a HEI's legal representative other than the Rector, an excerpt from the University's Statute providing information on legal representation (copy authenticated by a legal representative, legal councillor, solicitor, notary or by another person whose duties include certifying documents as true copies), which confirms the powers of such a person to incur financial obligations on behalf of the HEI or an original copy of an authorisation/ power of attorney authorising such a person to sign the application (and the Agreement) and to represent the institution before the Scholarship and Training Fund as part of the Development of Polish HEIs measure signed by the legal representative of the Applicant.

Copies of documents should be certified for originality by the authorised person. Instruction referring to the certification of documents for their authenticity is available at www.fss.org.pl.

NOTE: The possibility of submitting copies of attachments does not refer to these enclosures where it is clearly indicated that they should be send in the original form.

5.5.1 Letter of Agreement

A *Letter of Agreement* specimen is available at www.fss.org.pl. It contains compulsory elements which cannot be deleted by Applicants. Applicants may, however, add supplementary elements to the agreement, which result from their institution's and/or partner institution's internal regulations (for projects implemented by a partner consortium) or additional arrangements with a partner institution provided that these provisions are not inconsistent with the Programme Documents and with the Programme rules and guidelines published in the Call documents.

Letter of Agreement. Should the project be implemented in a partnership, *Letters of agreement* containing the following information (in Polish and/or English, original copies or authenticated copies) from all project partners have to be enclosed with an application for a grant:

- full project title;
- address of the coordinating institution (Applicant);
- address of the partner institution;
- description of the organisation and its role in the project:
 - short description, competences and experience relevant to the project;
 - short description of its specific role in the project;
 - Applicant's undertaking to ensure the high quality of the project;
- declaration worded: *"The partner institution is fully aware of the nature of cooperation undertaken as part of this project, has read the application lodged by the Applicant and fully accepts its contents, in particular:*
 - *division of duties between the partners as required by the implementation and management of the project;*
 - *proposed project budget, finance management and cash flow between the partners;*
 - *it acknowledges the fact that the Selection Committee may make budget changes to the budget proposed in the application and the final amounts for particular budget categories will be set out in a Financial Agreement signed by the Operator and the project Main Applicant;*

- *it is aware of interest rate changes resulting from the implementation of the project and it accepts them as ineligible costs”.*
- place and date;
- signatures of persons authorised to represent the partner institution.

Partner agreements. In the case of awarding a grant for the implementation of a project, pursuant to Article 6.8 of the *Regulations*, the Operator must obtain the original copy of a Partner Agreement before signing a *Financial Agreement* with a Project Promoter.

A Partner Agreement should contain at least the following elements:

- a) provisions concerning the roles and responsibilities of the parties;
- b) provisions concerning financial arrangements between the parties, including those which refer to which expenses of the project partners can be reimbursed from the project budget;
- c) currency conversion rules applied for expenses and their reimbursement;
- d) provisions concerning audits involving the project partners;
- e) detailed budget with itemised costs and unit prices and;
- f) dispute resolution provisions.

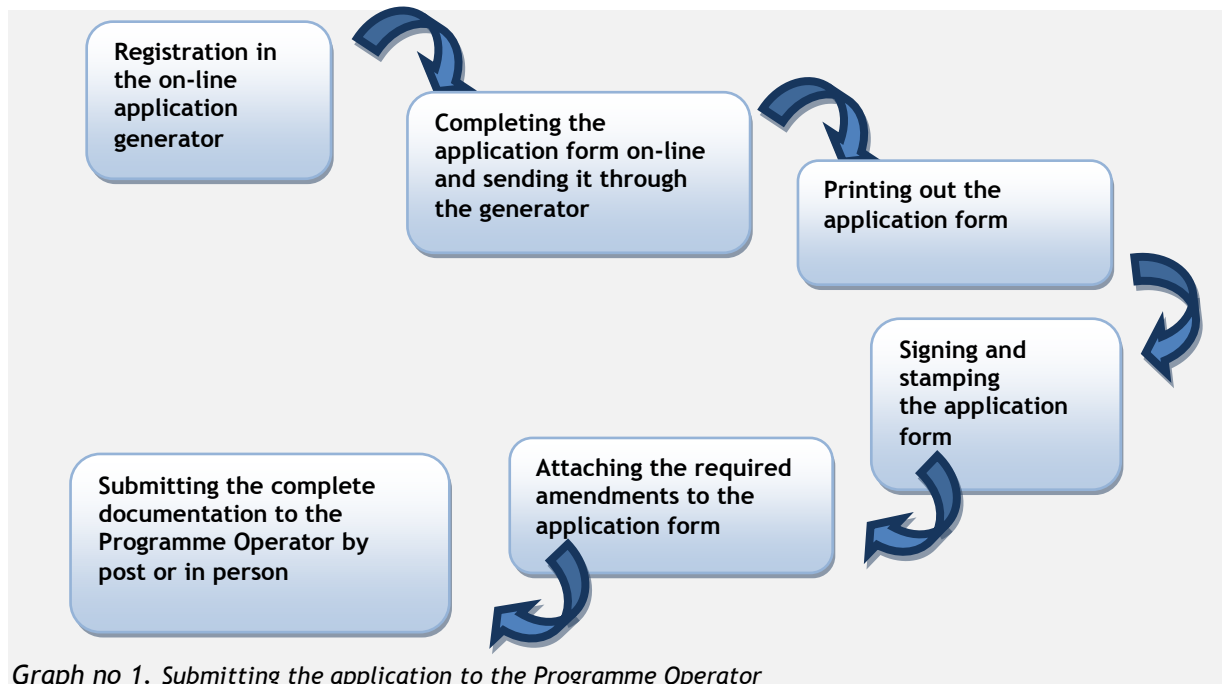
The eligibility of expenses incurred by project partners will be subject to the same limitations that would be applied if the expenses were incurred by Polish project promoters who have been awarded a grant. Partnership agreements should be drawn up in English if one of their parties is from Norway.

In case when the *Development of Polish HEIs* project includes elements of common research, partner agreement should contain intellectual property provisions. The Project Promoter is obliged to award the Programme Operator and other authorized entities the right to non-commercial using of project results in a different ways with condition that it does not infringe intellectual or industrial property provisions and confidentiality.

The establishment and maintenance of relations between Project Promoters and Project Partners shall conform to applicable national and EU legislation governing public procurement, to the Minister of Regional Development Guidelines to orders under the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009- 2014, to which the Act of 29 January 2004 - Public Procurement Law is not applicable and to the Regulations on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) 2009-2014.

The *Partner Agreement* should be line with the Article 6.8 of the *Regulations*.

6. APPLICATION ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION PROCEDURE



Graph no 1. Submitting the application to the Programme Operator

The Programme Operator is responsible for the selection of the submitted project proposals. Each application will be registered and given a reference number, whereupon the Operator will check if the application meets formal and quality (content-related) criteria. Only applications which fulfil formal eligibility criteria will be subject to quality (content-related) assessment. Decision on formal acceptance might be taken after first eligibility check, in cases where shortcomings are identified, the Operator might call in the Applicant to supplement the application or reject the project proposal without the possibility of supplementing additional documentations.

6.1. Application assessment schedule

The selection schedule for submitted applications is outlined in the table below.

Activity	Time frame	Responsible
Registration and formal assessment of applications	Registration carried out on the on-going basis as applications are submitted. Only paper versions of the applications sent to Programme Operator are subject to formal and eligibility assessment. Formal assessment should end 10 working days after the applications are submitted	Operator
Informing Applicants about the receipt of applications and the possibility to make up for minor formal deficiencies (if applicable)	Information should be sent to Applicants after 7 days of completing formal assessment at the most.	Operator
Making up for minor deficiencies in applications (only with regard to formal eligibility check)	Not later than 3 days after the receipt of the request from the Programme Operator	Applicant
Transferring the applications to external experts for quality assessment	Not later than 8 weeks after the closing date for submitting applications	External Experts

Activity	Time frame	Responsible
Quality assessment of submitted applications		External Experts
Drawing ranking lists of assessed projects; projects, which were awarded the number of points below the threshold specified for quality assessment are rejected	Not later than 14 weeks after the closing date for submitting applications	Operator
Informing about entering on the ranking list and about the number of points given or about rejecting the application and about the number of points given with giving reasons for the rejection	10 days after the completion of quality assessment, i.e. from the date of drawing the ranking list	Operator
Selection Committee makes a decision about approving/rejecting the application	Not later than 20 weeks after the closing date for submitting applications	Operator
Informing Applicants about selection results	Not later than 22 weeks after the closing date for submitting applications	Operator

6.2. Formal assessment

Each application submitted in paper to the Operator is subject to formal assessment. After meeting the formal criteria, the application is submitted for quality assessment conducted by external experts.

During formal assessment Operator verifies if:

- ✓ Applying institution is eligible to apply for funding under the Scholarship and Training Fund;
- ✓ in case of joint degree studies (at the bachelor, master degree or doctoral level) leading to a double diploma, the cooperation with appropriate Norwegian HEI as project partner has been planned in a project;
- ✓ application has been submitted on the right form;
- ✓ application has been submitted within the deadline published in the *Call for Proposals*;
- ✓ application is complete (all parts are filled-in, especially the project description and budget parts);
- ✓ application is signed by the legal representative of the Applying Institution; all relevant powers of attorney and supporting documents concerning the representations and incurring financial obligations by the person who has signed the application and other required documents have been submitted;
- ✓ in the case of submitting copies of documents, they have been authenticated by a person authorised to do so;
- ✓ project implementation period is consistent with time limits specified in the Guide for Applicants” (see: point 5.2. *Deadline for submission of application forms and period covered by the grant*);
- ✓ all required enclosures have been attached to the application form (see point 5.5. *Enclosures to applications*);
- ✓ Applying institution has fulfilled earlier obligations arising from any previous agreements concluded with the Foundation for the Development of the Education System.

Where specific minor formal shortcomings are identified, the Operator will request the Applicant to make up for deficiencies in the application form. Only the elements errors may be corrected and documents be supplemented:

- proof of posting the application within the deadline published in the *Call for Proposals* (if postmark date is indecipherable),
- part of an enclosure, e.g. one of the pages of a public aid certificate (however, not the cover page and the page containing signatures),
- letter of authorisation to authenticate documents.

It will not be possible to provide an attachment in full, if it has not been enclosed to the application form.

The communication about shortcomings will be sent to the *contact person* of the Applicant concerned by an e-mail, therefore the Applicant should make sure that the e-mail address given in the application form is active and up-to-date. Documents should be supplemented within the non-extendible deadline of 3 working days from the date of receipt of the request from the Operator.

Results of the formal and eligibility check will be published on the website at www.fss.org.pl on an on-going basis, the first information about formal assessment will appear not later than two weeks after the receipt of the first application forms by the Operator. Applications meeting formal requirements will be submitted for quality assessment.

Formal Assessment Form has been posted on www.fss.org.pl in the *Calls for proposals* → *Development of Polish HEIs* tab.

6.3. Quality assessment

The quality assessment of all applications lodged is carried out by two independent external experts. They are appointed by the Programme Operator.

The following elements will be taken into consideration in the process of *assessing Development of Polish HEIs* projects:

- **objectives, schedule of activities and work methodology** (for example: whether the tasks have been planned in a clear and logical way, whether means of effective communication have been ensured, whether project implementation monitoring and progress assessment have been provided for, also internal and/or external evaluation. For partner projects: whether the tasks have been defined and divided between the partners to ensure the achievement of the objectives planned, whether the task have been divided to ensure all partners' active participation);
- **project's innovative character** (innovation character of the project measured as creating new value e.g., in a certain field of education);
- **adequacy of the budget applied for** to the activities planned, (among other things whether the budget is coherent with the activities planned and the expenses are logically coherent with the project activities, whether the expenses have been rationally planned and estimated and whether they are reflected in market prices);
- **final results and project impact** (among other things - whether the results are in line with the project assumptions, expected influence on target groups, whether the project character is innovative and whether the expected results will influence the strengthening of inter-institutional cooperation - if project is implemented in partnership);
- **project results dissemination:** activities disseminating project results have been planned and the durability of the project results has been described after the end of the STF funding of the project;
- **reference of the project to *environment and climate change***

Projects involving activities **directly** related thematically to environment and climate change shall be granted additional 20% of points (the score of quality assessment will be multiplied by coefficient 1,20).

In pursuance of expert`s recommendation, additional 20% shall be added to general score if the project substantially focuses on environment and climate change. The issue of environment and climate change should be addressed directly and constitute the main objective of project development and implementation.

Example: expert`s recommendation of the option “+20% in addition to general quality assessment score” should be applied if the project increases social awareness and education regarding reduction of pollution caused by industry, refers to research on pollution reduction, or includes development of environment-friendly technologies.

Additional points shall not be given if the proposed project refers to *environment and climate change* only in part, indirectly and when the issue is addressed in the project but does not constitute one of the main reasons of its implementation.

Example: the project focuses on the selected study area irrelevant to environment and climate change, but at the same time attaches great importance to the use of environmentally friendly technologies - e.g. teaching aids purchased for the purpose of the project or constituting results of its implementation will be produced in an environmentally friendly way, with eco-friendly materials, or in the course of research activities undertaken will be aimed at e.g. reducing the ecological footprint of such a project or its participants, etc.

Quality Assessment Form has been posted on www.fss.org.pl in the *Calls for proposals* → *Development of Polish HEIs* tab.

Each application meeting formal requirements will be assessed by two independent external experts. Each of them will assess separate application parts and give the application a general score (ranging from 1 to 100). If the difference between the two experts` scores is bigger than 30%, the Programme Operator will commission an assessment from a third expert. In such cases the average of the two closest scores will be used to create a primary/basic project ranking list. Based on the recommendations of external experts on possible direct reference of the project to the Call priority “environment and climate change” Programme Operator shall take a final decision whether to increase the score (+20% to general score) of projects whose activities relate **directly** to environment and climate change.

Ranking list includes all projects which have received a score above the specified threshold for quality assessment, in the order from highest to the lowest number of points awarded. Within 10 days of the of completion of the quality appraisal, i.e. from the date of drawing up the ranking list, the Applicant is informed about the inclusion of the proposal in the ranking list, along with the score awarded or about the rejection of the application along with the score awarded and the reasons for rejection. Information on inclusion of the application in the ranking list and information on the rejection of the application also includes an instruction about the right to an appeal, the time limit and manner of its filing by the Applicant.

On the basis of the external experts` assessment and on completion of the appeal procedure the Programme Operator draws up a ranking list of projects proposed for financing and a standby list which will be presented to the Selection Committee. The Selection Committee prepares a shortlist of projects recommended for financing. The Programme Operator (the Board of Directors of the Foundation for the Development of the Education System) will make the final decision on financing these projects).

6.4. Information about the results of the call for proposals

Before the commencement of the activities applied for the Programme Operator shall inform all Applicants about the results of the grant award process and in the case of successful applications - about the grant amount. This notification will be made by letter and by email.

The Programme Operator will inform unsuccessful applicants about the reasons why their applications have been rejected. Standby list applicants shall be informed about the time limit by which a grant awarding decision may be changed if some funds are released.

The results of the assessment will be published on the Programme Operator's website.

In case of withdrawal from signing *Financial Agreement* by any of parties, subsequent project(s) from ranking list, approved after quality assessment, may have an opportunity for funding depending on available funds released and in accordance with rules approved by the Selection Committee by means of resolution, and approved by the FRSE's Management Board.

6.5. The appeal procedure

Applicants may appeal against the decision on rejecting an application during the formal and quality assessment. The appeal procedure is two-instance. The appeal body of the first instance is the Programme Operator. The appeal body of the second instance is the National Focal Point. No appeal can be lodged against the decision of the National Focal Point. No appeal may be lodged against the final decision of the Programme Operator regarding the awarded funding.

After the exhaustion of the appeal track described in the assessment and selection procedure (against the results of formal and eligibility check and/or quality check), no re-appeal against the Operator's decision will be possible.

By submitting their applications, Applicants accept the principles of the Scholarship and Training Fund and the rules of the *Call for proposals*, and the rule of the competitiveness of projects in particular.

The appeal procedure concerning the formal and quality assessment will be staged in accordance with the *Guidelines of the Minister of Regional Development regarding the procedure for the selection of applications under EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 and Financial Mechanism 2009-2014*.

7. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

7.1. Concluding a Financial Agreement

On completion of the Call for proposals procedure *Financial Agreements* detailing the parties' responsibilities, fund transfer conditions as well as reporting and fund clearing requirements will be signed with those applicants whose projects have been selected for funding.

The Programme Operator shall draw up such agreements in 2 original copies, one for each party.

NOTE: Before signing their agreements non-public sector Project Promoters will be asked to provide the following documents:

- a valid (i.e. not older than three months) **Social Insurance Institution certificate** confirming the absence of arrears in payment of contributions;
- a valid (i.e. not older than three months) **certificate from a relevant tax office** confirming the absence of arrears in payment of tax;

Considering the length of time needed to produce the above mentioned documents, Applicants should apply for them to the relevant institutions once their project has been put on the ranking list.

In the case of non-public institutions applying for grants exceeding EUR 25,000 (all projects approved for implementation, made by an Applicant under all programmes managed by the FRSE, will be taken into consideration) financial eligibility testing will be carried out before signing a *Financial Agreement*. The Operator will inform applicants about their testing results and if necessary - a form of ensuring correct agreement fulfilment will be proposed to applicants.

On the basis of the results of financial eligibility testing the Operator will make a decision as to the form of security interest to be applied in the agreement with an individual project promoter.

The Operator has the right to ask Applicants for additional documents and information if he deems it indispensable for signing the *Financial Agreement*.

7.2. Enclosures to the agreement

Before signing an agreement the Applicants are under the obligation to provide:

- in the case of non-public HEIs - documents required for signing up the *Financial Agreement* (see point 7.1 - *Concluding a financial agreement*);
- information about a separate bank account open for the purposes of their project (account or sub-account);
- in the case of non-public institutions and a grant exceeding EUR 25,000 - on completion of financial eligibility testing the Operator may demand additional documents to secure the obligations of the *Financial Agreement*, such as, for example, a blank promissory note, bank guarantee, or decide to break down the payments into additional instalments;
- power of attorney - in writing, if an agreement is to be signed by a person other than the one authorised to bind the institution on behalf of an applicant, in accordance with the relevant register or other documents;
- original copies of letters of agreement, CVs of key staff and experts, if copies of such documents were enclosed with the application.

The Operator has the right to ask Applicants for additional documents and information if he deems it indispensable for signing a *Financial Agreement*.

The Operator reserves the right not to sign a Financial Agreement with an Applicant in the following cases:

- the Applicant is in arrears with payments to the state treasury,
- the Applicant has submitted forged or counterfeit documents or those certifying untrue statements
- a petition for bankruptcy has been filed against the Applicant or the Applicant remains bankrupt or is subject to an administration order
- the Applicant has refused to supply the required documents or did not submit the document in due time,
- the Applicant has not met the obligations under his previous agreements concluded with FRSE.

7.3. Cost eligibility period

The cost eligibility period is set out in the *Financial Agreement*, depending on the schedule presented in the application.

- **eligibility starting date** - starting date of eligibility given in the agreement. For *Development of Polish HEIs* projects the earliest date of project costs eligibility is 01/01/2015.
- **eligibility ending date** - date given in the financial agreement as the ending date of costs eligibility, at least 12 months after start of the project - however, not later than until 31/05/2016.

Any project activities and costs incurred outside the dates quoted in the Financial Agreement will be deemed ineligible and unauthorised. In special circumstances costs invoiced in the last eligibility month are also deemed as incurred within the eligibility period, if they were incurred within 30 days of the last day of eligibility (e.g. until the deadline for submitting the Completion Report, but paid not later than by 30 June 2016).

7.4. Schedule of payments

Project Promoters are obliged to open and keep for the time of project implementation a separate bank account or a sub-account in PLN designated for project implementation and financial analytics needs.

Payments to Project Promoters will be made in the form of advance payments, interim payment and balance payment. Payments to Project Promoters will be effected by *Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego* to bank accounts specified in *Financial Agreements* in accordance with the schedule for payment of European funds.

- **advance payment** - up to 80% after signing a *Financial Agreement* (depending on the result of financial eligibility testing staged prior to signing the agreement). In the case of non-public HEIs, which are awarded grants exceeding EUR 25,000, following the financial eligibility testing advance payments may be effected in several instalments. In such a case, an *Interim report* constitutes the basis for the payment of a subsequent advance payment, which will be effected only after 70% of the previous advance payment has been used up;
- **balance payment** - payable after the approval of a *Completion report*.

Operator may make a decision on effecting advance payments in several instalments. However, before the submission of a *Completion report*, the total amount of advance payments made to Project Promoter cannot exceed 80% of the awarded grant under the grant agreement.

The amount of balance payment constitutes the difference between the approved grant amount and the total amount of advance payments transferred to the Project Promoter. Depending on the amount of the final balance payment, Operator transfers funds to a project promoter or requests the repayment of unused or incorrectly used amounts of advance payments.

The grant amount from the STF may not exceed 90% of total eligible project costs.

7.5. Grant clearance principles

Project Promoters are required to use their grants in accordance with the Scholarship and Training Fund rules, the purpose for which the grants have been awarded and the conditions laid down in the *Financial Agreement*.

Submitting a *Completion Report* together with a payment application should take place not later than 1 month after the completion of a project, in line with the date set out in the financial agreement.

Together with the *Completion Report* each Project Promoter should provide 3 copies of each end product (for example a publication or a study programme) developed in the course of the project (in the form of printouts and/or an electronic version).

When agreeing the project ending date, the time needed for gathering the relevant documentation and producing the required documents should to be taken into consideration.

The detailed rules of project clearing (*Guide for Project Promoters*) will be published on the webpage www.fss.org.pl before signing the first financial agreements with *Development of Polish HEIs* Project Promoters.

7.6. Reporting

Every 4 months, project promoters submit *Interim Reports* covering three reporting periods in each calendar year, within the deadline of 10 days after the end of the reporting period. A *Completion Report* should be submitted within 1 month of the completion of eligibility period. *Interim Reports* should feature information on the progress and expenditures made. The *Completion Report* should include the documentation of activities and expenditures and should prove that the project has

been completed with observance of conditions, on which the grant was awarded. Reports are drawn on forms prepared by the Operator and posted on its website at: www.fss.org.pl.

Payments of funds to Project Promoters are effected based on an approved report (in terms of funds and activities):

- *Interim Report* including a request for an interim payment - a request for transferring a pre-determined part of the grant in accordance with project implementation schedule;
- *Completion Report* including a request for a balance payment - the last request for payment under a given project, which sums up its implementation in terms of funds.

The reports are composed of two parts; one devoted to activities and the other devoted to funds, which describes the progress of project implementation.

Interim Reports feature information on the progress of the implementation of project guidelines and the level of use of funds in a given settlement period. Financial information is presented in the form of a list of financial proofs for a given reporting period.

Completion reports feature information on project implementation taken as a whole, and on all expenditures made by the project promoter as part of the project. Financial information is presented in the form of a list of financial proofs for the whole project implementation period.

A completion report constitutes the basis for the approval of the final grant amount and for determining the amount of final balance payment.

Operator, when verifying the reports, can make corrections of evident errors in writing and in calculations, and will inform a project promoter about such a fact. The Project Promoter duly informed by the Operator about the errors and shortages in the submitted report is obliged to correct them and send them within a deadline specified in the request.

Project promoters are obliged to keep separate books of accounts concerning the implemented project and document expenditures made with the use of adequately described invoices or equivalent accounting documents along with proofs of payment and other documents stipulated in the *Financial Agreement*. Expenditures included in the reports are verified based on the list of accounting proofs. As part of the verification of the report, Operator can make random inspections of accounting documents supporting the expenditures made.

In the case of a project partner seated in Norway, a sufficient proof of expenditure is a report by an independent chartered auditor confirming that the reported costs have been incurred in accordance with the Regulations, domestic law and accounting practices in Norway, as well as Partnership Agreement. Invoices (bills or equivalent documents) submitted by the partner shall be treated as evidence of costs incurred by the project partner.

Project promoters are responsible both for the final contents of their reports submitted to the Programme Operator and for the correctness of financial and statistical data. Before sending the reports to the Operator they should be consulted with the whole project group in order to gather the most credible and up-to-date information about the project implemented. All amounts quoted in such reports should be in PLN.

Costs of exchange rate differences and foreign exchange loss are ineligible costs.

All invoices and other accounting records of equal probative value mentioned in the financial part must be paid in full, even if they refer to Applicants' own financial contributions or they have to be reimbursed as late as with the last payment paid by the Programme Operator. If a document only partially refers to the project implemented, payment must be linked to the total amount shown on the document and not only to the part referring to the project implemented.

All expenses linked to the project are to be listed in the financial part. The Operator may demand the submission of copies of accounting documents appearing on the *Accounting Documents List* enclosed with the report. Having analysed the documents submitted and having determined the

final grant amount, the Programme Operator shall make the final balancing payment or issue a request to repay any unused funds.

If a Project Promoter does not submit a report within the deadline, Programme Operator will send a formal request to submit the report within 5 calendar days from the required submission date. If the report is not submitted within the designated deadline, Programme Operator will send by a registered mail an official notice on the termination of the *Financial Agreement* and will request the repayment of the full amount of advance payments made so far.

7.7. Projects not completed and agreement termination

If a Project Promoter aborts the implementation of a project before its implementation period is over, he is under the obligation to notify the Programme Operator immediately and give reasons for it. Depending on the project results and objectives achieved the Programme Operator will decide what amount of funds has to be returned.

8. MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

8.1. Public aid

A declaration from the Applicant on the public aid received forms an integral part of an application. Providing support and implementing projects within the framework of the Norway Financial Mechanism requires that regulations on public aid are applied where the Applicant is an entity pursuing economic activity. However, one should bear in mind that economic activity is defined broadly in the community legislation and understood as any activity where goods and services are offered on a given market, regardless of the fact whether such activity is or is not intended to generate profit.

In accordance with Article 87 (1) of the Treaty establishing the European Community, support for entities exercising economic activity is subject to the regulations on public aid if the following conditions are fulfilled simultaneously:

- 1) it is provided by the State or from public funds;
- 2) the entity gains benefit under more favourable conditions than those offered on the market;
- 3) it is selective (favouring certain entities or the production of certain goods);
- 4) it threatens to distort or distorts competition and affects trade between EU Member States.

A grant for the Applicant pursuing economic activity fulfilling all of the above-mentioned conditions is considered public aid and can be awarded in the form of *de minimis* aid, provided that, in total with any other *de minimis* aid received over the past three tax years from various sources and in various forms, it will not exceed a gross amount of EUR 200 000.00, with the observance of Article 63 of the Act of 30 April 2004 on proceedings in public aid cases (O.J.no. 123, item 1291, as amended).

All Applicants, including those who have not received such aid and entities not engaged in economic activity (regardless of their legal form), are required to submit to FRSE a declaration on *de minimis* aid received within the current reporting period and two preceding taxation years prior to the date of submitting the grant application.

8.2. Public procurement

Applicants are obliged to apply the provisions of the *Public Procurement Act of 29th January 2004 (Official Journal of 2010, No. 113, item 759 with subsequent amendments)*, if they are legally bound to do so. Applicants shall also be obliged to apply provisions of the Regulation on public procurement (Section 7.16 of the *Regulation*) as well as *Minister's of Regional Development Guidance on Public Procurement as part of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014* in accordance with the *Public Procurement Act of 29th January 2004 with subsequent amendments* - Public Procurement Law. Relevant documents are published on the website www.fss.org.pl.

9. PROJECT MONITORING AND AUDITS

9.1. Monitoring and audit

Monitoring of projects implemented by project promoters is one of the tasks of Programme Operator. It consists in consistent collecting, reporting and interpreting data describing the progress and results of implemented projects.

Monitoring aims at ensuring that activities presented in the report have been implemented, related expenditure really incurred and that underlying financial transactions are correct and legal. The checks cover project expenditure incurred not only with the funds coming from STF grants, but also with project promoters' own funds and with other sources of financing in a given project

Programme Operator stages annual checks of a sample not smaller than 10% of the total number of projects, selected based on risk analysis and including random sample.

The scope of primary checks, which can be staged by Programme Operator includes:

- Analyses of *Interim and Completion Reports*, i.e. routine checks;
- "desk checks" of documents supporting the staging of activities and incurring the costs presented by project promoters upon Programme Operator's request;
- on the spot desk checks during the implementation of a project for which grant has been awarded;
- on the spot checks (audits) staged upon completion of a project for which grant has been awarded (prior to or after effecting the final payment);
- special checks - performed ad hoc, based on the evidence occurred - can have the form of each of the primary controls, except for routine checks, which in principle cover all reports.

Programme Operator can stage emergency on the spot checks (special checks), if irregularities or doubts concerning the correctness of implemented project appear.

Upon each request of Programme Operator, Project Promoters are obliged to provide all necessary explanation and present all documents which refer to the project co-financed under the Scholarship and Training Fund to the financial and content-related check.

9.2. Record keeping

Project Promoters are required to keep all documents related to project implementation until 31 December 2020.

10. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

In connection with the receipt of a grant from the Scholarship and Training Fund, Project Promoters are required to acknowledge the support received in all documents related to the visit and any material related to, or produced as a result of the visit (e.g. training materials, brochures, leaflets, posters). This is intended to make recipients of implemented projects aware that funding for projects in which they participate is provided by the Scholarship and Training Fund established under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, and co-financed by the Polish funds.

All the materials related to projects co-financed with the Scholarship and Training Funds grants must be provided with the following information:

in Polish:

Projekt (publikacja, szkolenie, konferencja itd.) finansowany ze środków funduszy norweskich oraz środków krajowych.

in English:

Project (publication, training, conference etc.) is supported by a grant from Norway through the Norway Grants and co-financed by the Polish funds.

Detailed information on publicity, including logos of Norwegian Financial Mechanism and *Communication and Design Manual* describing the requirements concerning information and publicity are posted on the Operator's website in the PROMOTION tab at: www.fss.org.pl.

11. CONTACT WITH STF OFFICE

Persons interested in the opportunities offered by the Fund and Applicants may obtain information on how to apply for grants under the Scholarship and Training Fund by phone from Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Information can also be obtained in writing or directly at the Operator's office, by prior arrangement:

**Foundation for the Development of the Education System
Scholarship and Training Fund
ul. Mokotowska 43
00-551 Warszawa
tel. 022 46 31 470
fax. 022 46 31 028**

Consultations offered by the Programme Operator do not consist in providing advice on the contents of individual application forms.

Contact person for the *Development of Polish Higher Education Institutions* measure:

Anna Pavlovyh
anna.pavlovyh@frse.org.pl
tel. +48 22 46 31 474

Agata Hernik-Ślusarczyk
agata.slusarczyk@frse.org.pl
tel. +48 22 46 31 475