

Pursuant to Article 13, paragraph 1, item 3) of the Law on the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 95/18 - hereinafter: the Law) and Article 10, paragraph 1, item 4) of the Statute of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, No. UO 2/19 of 17 April 2019, to which the Government gave its consent by the decision number: 110-5430/2019 of 30 May 2019 ("Official Gazette of the RS", number 38/19), at the constitutive session of the second convocation of the Managing Board held on 11 August 2023, and at the 18th session held on 2 September 2024, the Managing Board of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia rendered the following

## **IDEAS 2024 Programme - Act on Objectives, Implementation Method and Project Financing Conditions**

**(Revised text)**

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## **INTRODUCTORY PROVISIONS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Article 1**

This Act regulates the objectives of the IDEAS 2024 Programme (hereinafter: The Programme) and the projects within this Programme (hereinafter: the Project), the conditions for announcing and the procedure for conducting public calls within the Programme, and in particular the procedure and conditions for the submission of Project Proposals (hereinafter: the Proposal), the Proposal evaluation procedure, the Proposal evaluation criteria, project implementation monitoring procedure, the procedure for evaluating the projects results, financing conditions, as well as the rights and obligations of the project funds beneficiaries.

### **PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES**

#### **Article 2**

The Programme objectives include: financing projects based on excellent ideas that in the future can have a significant impact on the development of science and research, businesses and/or society as a whole; clearly stated motivation for research within the framework of modern trends in the development of science in respective scientific fields; development of scientific and practical aspects in the field of technical and technological sciences; development of research of strategic importance for agriculture, food production and environmental protection; the development of experimental, practical and clinical research that should contribute to the health of people in Serbia; researching topics that contribute to development in the fields of social sciences and humanities in Serbia; raising the level of science in artificial intelligence and its application; involving young researchers in research and development and strengthening the professional capacities of researchers within research teams.

The Programme supports basic and applied research in all scientific fields. Projects within this Programme do not have predetermined topics. The Programme allows researchers to define their own research programmes, to form their own teams and to cooperate with appropriate laboratories, research centres and businesses both in the Republic of Serbia and globally.

The programme is of public interest for the Republic of Serbia, and it is planned and implemented in accordance with the Law on the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, and in accordance with other regulations in the field of scientific research and innovation activities. The objectives of the programme are aligned with "The Power of Knowledge" Strategy of Scientific and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2025, the Smart Specialization Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2027, as well as with the Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence in the Republic Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2025.

### **PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION**

#### **Article 3**

The IDEAS 2024 Programme is implemented within six sub-programmes for the development of scientific research in the following scientific fields: 1) natural sciences and mathematics, 2) technical and technological sciences, 3) biotechnical sciences, 4) biomedical sciences, 5) artificial intelligence and 6) social sciences and humanities.

## **CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PUBLIC CALL**

### **Project Lead Institution and Project Participants**

#### **Article 4**

Accredited scientific research organisations in the Republic of Serbia have the right to participate in this programme (hereinafter: SRO) either in the capacity of Project Lead Institution or Project Participant.

The Project Team consists of the Principal Investigator and team members who meet the requirements of this Act.

The Lead Institution is the SRO in which the Principal Investigator is employed, while the other SROs are Project Participants.

### **Principal Investigator**

#### **Article 5**

The Principal Investigator must meet the following conditions:

- Has the scientific title of Doctor of Science and a valid scientific or equivalent teaching title according to the regulations on higher education at the time of Project Proposal submission, i.e. Public Call closing, as well as during the Project implementation;
- Is employed in an accredited SRO in the Republic of Serbia leading the project proposal, whereby his/her employment in that SRO on a monthly basis amounts to a minimum of 50% of his/her full-time work for the entire duration of the project, as well as at the moment of submission of the Proposal, i.e. Public Call closing.

In addition to the requirements to be met at the moment of project proposal submission, the Principal Investigator shall submit information on the five most significant scientific results in the past five years,<sup>1</sup> which shall, inter alia, be subject of evaluation.

A person can be the Principal Investigator for only one Project Proposal within the same IDEAS 2024 Programme Public Call.

The Principal Investigator must be engaged on the project for a minimum of 30% of his/her full time engagement for the entire duration of the Project implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> The justification of discontinuances/stays/standstills in research work relevant to the fulfilment of these conditions - for example, temporary incapacity for work, leave of absence, including maternity leave or absence from work for (special) care of a child or other person - may be taken into account in the assessment and determining the duration of the five-year period, but it must be adequately justified.

## **Project Team Members**

### **Article 6**

In this Programme, each Project Team member must meet the following requirements:

- Holds one of the valid titles: of research or scientific or equivalent title<sup>2</sup> in higher education at the moment of project submission,<sup>3</sup> as well as during his/her engagement in the Project implementation;
- He/she is employed in an accredited SRO in the Republic of Serbia<sup>4</sup> during his/her engagement in the Project implementation, whereby employment in that SRO on a monthly basis is equal to a minimum of 50% full-time engagement for the entire duration of his/her engagement on the Project;
- The same person can be a team member in only one Project Proposal within the IDEAS 2024 Programme;
- In case of engagement of a person in various Science Fund programmes in the capacity of a Project Team Member or Principal Investigator, such person must comply with the legally prescribed restrictions related to engagement in Science Fund programmes, as well as the conditions prescribed in the Acts of individual programmes.

## **Engagement of the Project Team Members**

### **Article 7**

A Project Team Member with full-time employment (including teaching and research, support through institutional or other types of funding) cannot be engaged by more than 30% of his/her full-time work per month on projects financed by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia (including various programmes).

A Project Team Member can be project-financed, that is, employed and financed from the proposed Project up to 100% full-time engagement in accordance with other engagements and the Labour Law. A person who is engaged on the Project with 100% working time cannot have any other engagement in SRO.

Project Team Members may be engaged during the entire duration of the Project or only during certain time intervals, depending on the Project needs and in accordance with the proposed budget.

A person who is not employed by the SRO at the time of submission of the Proposal may be included in the proposed Project as a team member only if the SRO submits a signed statement that, in the event that the Proposal is approved for financing, that person will be employed by that SRO during the duration of the Project, i.e. during the proposed period of engagement for that person, in accordance with the terms of this Act.

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<sup>2</sup>Researcher-trainee, research associate, scientific associate, senior scientific associate or scientific advisor, i.e. teaching associate, PhD teaching fellow, doctoral assistant, assistant professor, associate professor or full professor.

<sup>3</sup>The exception regarding the requirement that all team members must have a valid title at the time of submitting the Project Proposal, i.e. on the Public Call closing date are the persons who are PhD students and who have never been selected for a research position until that point. They may apply as team members even though they do not have a title, while the SRO is obliged to nominate their appointment to a title as soon as they receive information about the acceptance of the Project Proposal. When preparing the budget for persons referred hereto, the fee is calculated according to the title they will acquire by the commencement of Project implementation.

<sup>4</sup>Project Team Member can also be employed in an innovation centre whose founder is an accredited SRO, however, such innovation centre cannot be the leader in project implementation.

## **Project Team**

### **Article 8**

The project team comprises a minimum of three team members. The maximum number of team members on one project is not determined, including young researchers.

Within one Project, the participation of team members who are employed in various accredited SROs in the Republic of Serbia is permitted, whereas the lead in the Project implementation is the SRO in which the Principal Investigator is employed.

## **External Associates**

### **Article 9**

Within this Programme, when the proposed research topic or activity so requires, the following may be included in the Project as an external project associates:

- 1) Diaspora researcher employed in an accredited SRO abroad,
- 2) Full-time university professors or retired scientific advisors, emeritus professors or retired members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts;
- 3) Researchers from the region (in accordance with the Law on Diaspora and Serbs in the Region) employed in an SRO in the region;
- 4) Foreign researchers employed in an accredited SRO abroad.

External project associates are not entitled to financial compensation for their engagement in the Project from the Project's budget, however the costs of travel and stay in Serbia for project activities and knowledge transfer, as well as the costs of joint participation in the project related scientific conferences in the country and abroad, can be financed from the Project's funds.

The number of external associates on one Project Proposal cannot exceed four, i.e. maximum one from each category specified herein, whereby the number of external associates cannot exceed the number of Project Team Members.

## **Project Duration**

### **Article 10**

The duration of the Project is up to three years (36 months).

## **Gantt Chart**

### **Article 11**

The Plan of Project Activities (Gantt Chart) is prepared in such a way as to show the plan of project activities with time schedule for the realization of each specific activity and the participation of members of the Project Team in individual activities.

The percentage of a Project Team Member engagement must be in accordance with the allowed percentage of engagement for each specific team member and Principal Investigator, according to the rules of this Programme in accordance with the Employment Act.

## **Budget**

### **Article 12**

The maximum amount of the budget is EUR 300,000 in dinar equivalent per Project.

The programme budget is specified in the Public Call.

The budget of each sub-programme will be defined in relation to the Programme budget and the results after the first stage of evaluation. The budget of each sub-program will be calculated taking into account only those Project Proposals that after the first stage of evaluation achieved 70 or more points (for all sub-programmes). The budget of sub-programmes is not specified in advance and depends on proportional value and number of project budgets proposed from the given sub-programme achieved 70 or more points after the first stage of evaluation and fulfilled all criteria stipulated by Article 33 herein. If the calculated budget of one of the sub-programmes is less than 1/12 of the programme budget, and the project proposals whose sum of project budgets exceeds 1/12 of the Programme budget have qualified for that sub-programme in the second stage of evaluation, the budget of that sub-programme will be adjusted so that it amounts to 1/12 of the Programme budget, and the necessary difference is proportionally compensated from the budgets of other sub-programmes.

The sum of the budgets of all sub-programmes must not exceed the total programme budget.

## **Eligible Expenses**

### **Article 13**

The following categories of Project costs are eligible for financing under the Programme:

#### **1) Fees for Team Members**

- the total costs of team members' fees including all fees established by the SRO's internal acts with associated taxes and contributions;

#### **2) Procurement Costs**

- **Equipment and Consumables**
  - equipment, software, consumables and other resources necessary for the implementation of the Project,
  - contingency expenses for equipment and consumables;
- **Travels**
  - short-term trips in the country and abroad (up to 28 days per trip) that are necessary for the implementation of the Project;
  - trips for participation in national and international conferences of importance for the project implementation;
- **Dissemination and Visibility**
  - Costs of publication of papers in journals,<sup>5</sup> as well as in the open access journals, participation in conferences, publication of books and monographs,

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<sup>5</sup> The journal category must be defined in the budget justification. Researchers are suggested to aspire to publish papers in foreign journals from the JCR list of category M21, with the exception of research areas that do not have journals in this category.

- Organization of conferences and seminars and other costs of disseminating the results of the Project;
- Patent application and intellectual property protection arising as a result of Project activities and the related costs;

### **3) Costs of Services and Subcontractors**

- external services of all natural persons and legal entities required for the research and implementation of the Project - hiring of natural persons refers to persons who are not employed within SROs participating in the project, and are necessary for the implementation of Project activities. These persons shall be considered service providers or subcontractors and not participants in the Project.

### **4) Indirect costs**

- Compensation of SROs employing Project participants for administrative and other costs related to the Project;
- External audit costs at the end of the Project implementation period;
- Other costs, such as bank commission costs, exchange rate differences, import costs, customs, postage, etc.

## **Project Budget Distribution by Cost Categories**

### **Article 14**

Taking into account the specificity of each Project, the distribution of the Project Budget by cost categories should be such that it reflects the Project objectives and must be clearly justified in accordance with those objectives.

In the structure of the Project's budget, the costs of services and subcontractors referred to under Article 13 can contribute with a maximum of 10% of the total budget.

Indirect costs referred to under Article 13 amount to maximum 20% of the total planned costs of fees for project team members and procurement costs. Indirect costs pertaining to SRO fee, bank commission costs and exchange rate differences need not be justified when reporting, however, the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia may ask to inspect and verify the documentation at any time throughout the duration of the Project.

## **Remuneration for Team Members**

### **Article 15**

The maximum allowed remuneration for the Principal Investigator and Team Member depends on the title and the percentage of involvement in the Project on a monthly basis, and according to the maximum net monthly fees for participation in the project specified in the document "Amount of remuneration (earnings and fees) of researchers financed through programmes of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia", which was published on the website of the Science Fund ([www.fondznanaku.gov.rs](http://www.fondznanaku.gov.rs)).

The highest allowed remuneration for a Principal Investigator/Team Member corresponds to the maximum net amount of remuneration envisaged for the title of that person, and it is scaled proportionally to the percentage of his/her monthly engagement in the Project.



The engagement of team members can be budgeted with lower amounts. Also, it is possible to envisage different remunerations for persons with the same title, in accordance with the experience and skills of those persons.

The type of remuneration is determined by the SRO, in accordance with the Law and the internal acts of the SRO, but the amount of remuneration stated in the budget must include net and gross amounts.

## **Equipment and Consumables**

### **Article 16**

The costs of equipment and consumables can be used for the procurement of equipment, software, consumables, as well as other resources that are necessary for the implementation of the Project. When preparing the budget, prices are planned and reported VAT inclusive.

## **Contingency Expenses**

### **Article 17**

Contingencies can only be used for additional costs of equipment and consumables and/or a change in the amount of the envisaged equipment and consumables.

Contingencies can amount to 2% of the corresponding budget subcategory for procurement of equipment and consumables.

In case this cost category remains unspent until the end of the project implementation, these funds, as a rule, within the last quarter, can be used for professional development of young researchers engaged in the project, as well as short-term travel of young researchers for the purpose of training. In addition, these funds can be used for the realization of research activities of young researchers, as well as for the procurement of equipment and materials for young researchers (computers, etc.) who are members of the team.

## **Travel, Dissemination and Visibility of the Project**

### **Article 18**

Only the costs of publication, travel, organization of workshops, meetings and seminars, dissemination and visibility of the project incurred during the implementation of the Project are allowed.

Publication costs are accepted as project results only if the publications were published after the commencement of project implementation. Only publications that have clearly indicated the support of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, according to the rules of the Agreement, will be considered as the results of the Project, Programme and the support of the Science Fund.

## **Services and Subcontractors**

### **Article 19**

Subcontractors can be legal or natural persons.

SROs participating in that project cannot be service providers, or persons employed in SROs participating in that project.

The highest allowed fee for a natural person engaged for the performance of services corresponds to the market amount of the person's earnings for the specified service, and is scaled proportionally to the percentage of his/her monthly engagement in the Project. In the case of hiring a

natural persons for specific services, the remuneration of the natural person is calculated over the market price for the procurement of a specific type of service.

When planning and procuring services from this category, it is necessary to adhere to the Law on Public Procurement, and prices must be planned and stated with all associated taxes and contributions.

## **Reimbursement to SRO for Administrative and Other Costs Related to the Project**

### **Article 20**

Compensation for the SRO employing team members should be allocated for administrative and other costs related to the Project.

Budgeting of technical or support staff of the SRO is possible within this category, which should be calculated based on the salary they receive in the SRO at the moment of submission of the Proposal, scaled to the percentage of their monthly engagement in project activities. If more than one SRO participates in the Proposal, this cost category should be allocated proportionally in accordance with the total requested budget for each SRO, unless the Principal Investigator and all SROs participating in the Project make a different agreement, with a written explanation provided in the Project Proposal Budget.

## **External Audit Costs at the End of the Project Implementation Period**

### **Article 21**

The Principal Investigator must envisage the cost of the external audit at the end of the project implementation period in the Budget, which shall be borne by the Project Lead.

The external audit is performed at the level of the entire Project and includes the audit of project documentation and financial management of the Project at the levels of all SROs participating in the Project.

## **Ineligible Expenses**

### **Article 22**

The expenses not to be considered by the Science Fund for funding include, but are not limited to:

- adaptation and furnishing of SRO premises and any construction or other works;
- repair, servicing or maintenance of existing SRO equipment, unless that equipment is required for the Project and its necessity is explained and documented in the Project Proposal;
- payment of interest or existing debt to any person, including such obligations incurred or assumed during the consideration of the Project application or after the approval of the Project financing;
- costs of activities financed from other sources (that are already financed through another programmes or by a company/industry);
- costs/participation in the costs of procurement, lease, sublease or adaptation of land, buildings and/or other immovable property, including vehicles and movable property and equipment not intended for scientific research activities related to the implementation of the Project.

- cash payout from Project special purpose (sub)accounts.

## **APPLICATION TO PUBLIC CALL AND PREPARATION OF PROJECT PROPOSAL**

### **Public Call**

#### **Article 23**

The first public call for the application of research and development projects to sub-programmes within the framework of the IDEAS 2024 Programme (hereinafter: the Public Call), shall include:

- Full name of the IDEAS 2024 Programme;
- Programme and sub-programme objectives;
- Duration of the Projects;
- Conditions that must be met by the Principal Investigator and Team Members;
- Total budget available for the Programme implementation per Public Call;
- The largest budget of individual Projects;
- Eligible categories of expenses for financing by the Science Fund;
- Method of submitting the Proposal;
- Deadline for submitting Proposals;
- List of necessary documentation to be enclosed with the duly and complete application of the Proposal;
- Method and criteria for evaluation of Proposals;
- Expected duration of the evaluation procedure of the proposed Projects;
- Reporting requirements;
- Other data of relevance for the Programme implementation and realization.

The public call shall be published on the website of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia ([www.fondznanauku.gov.rs](http://www.fondznanauku.gov.rs)).

### **Project Proposal - Mandatory Content**

#### **Article 24**

Mandatory elements of the Proposal are as follows:

- Specification of the sub-programme<sup>6</sup> under the Public Call to which the Project is being applied (in English);
- Title, acronym, scientific field (primary, secondary and tertiary), abstract and keywords of the Project (in English);
- Data related to the Principal Investigator, Team Members, SROs participating in the Project (in English);

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<sup>6</sup> For a multidisciplinary Proposal, the Principal Investigator should select a sub-programme that belongs to the predominant area of research within the Proposal.

- Description of projects A and B according to the form from the documentation (in English);
- Total Project Budget (in English, completed in accordance with the Instructions and the form included in the documentation);
- Gantt Chart in English, completed according to the Instructions and the form included in the documentation;
- Environmental and Social Impact Screening Questionnaire;
- Ethical consent (if applicable for the Project);
- Enclosures (statements of the SRO, joint statement of the Team and evidence of compliance with the requirements for the Principal Investigator and Team members stipulated by the Programme, in Serbian or English, prepared according to the Instructions and forms included in the documentation, etc.).

## **Documentation Preparation**

### **Article 25**

The documentation, which is a mandatory element of the Project Proposal, is prepared in accordance with this Act, the Instructions for the Preparation and Submission of Project Proposals (hereinafter: "Instructions"), the Form and notes in the forms, which are published on the website of the Science Fund of the RS.

## **Application to Public Call and Preparation of Project Proposals**

### **Article 26**

The application for the Public Call is submitted exclusively in electronic form, through a specialized portal, with the documentation specified in the Public Call and according to the Instructions for conducting the Public Call (hereinafter: "Instructions"), posted on the Science Fund website.

The proposal must be complete and contain all necessary attachments and must be prepared in accordance with the Instructions. Otherwise, the Project Proposal shall be excluded from further evaluation.

The Proposal shall be submitted by the potential Principal Investigator.

### **Article 27**

When submitting the Proposal, a Statement signed by the SRO's authorized persons and the Principal Investigator is enclosed confirming the fulfilment of the required conditions for the Principal Investigator and team members, signed under full moral responsibility and criminal liability. If the Project is approved for financing, the Science Fund may request evidence of the fulfilment of these conditions.

If, after the approval of the project, it is determined that this or other information from the Project Proposal is not true (data related to participants or SRO), the project shall be disqualified, and the person who submitted the project shall be barred from applying for the projects of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia for the next two years.

The Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia reserves the right not to allow applications within the Fund's programme to those researchers whose applications contain incorrect data or whose content is formulated in a way calculated to lead to wrong conclusions, up to two years after such an event. If a researcher has been determined to have violated the code of ethics, the Ethics Committee, formed by

the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, may propose a ban on funding Science Fund research and development projects for that researcher for a period of up to five years.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Article 28**

The Principal Investigator may submit a Proposal for only one Project within the Public Call. The Principal Investigator who submitted a Proposal for one Project may not be listed as a Team Member in other proposed Projects within the same Public Call.

A person not participating in the capacity of Principal Investigator registered for the Public Call, may have the capacity of a team member on one Project only within the same Public Call.

The number of Proposals per one SRO is not limited in the Public Call.

### **PROJECT PROPOSALS EVALUATION PROCEDURE**

#### **Article 29**

The evaluation of each Proposal is carried out within the sub-programme for which the Project has been submitted.

Received Proposals with application documentation referred to in Article 24 herein are checked and evaluated through a procedure consisting of an administrative check and two stages of evaluation.

In the first stage of evaluation, independent reviewers (hereinafter: Reviewer) evaluate the Proposals of all submitted projects. A ranking list of Proposals is compiled based on the descending order of points assigned by the Reviewers to those Proposals, and based on it, a Preliminary Ranking List of project proposals is made.

In the second stage of evaluation, the Programme Board for Project Evaluation (hereinafter: The Programme Board) evaluates the Proposals from the Preliminary Ranking List and compiles the Proposal for the Final Ranking List.

The evaluation of the Proposal is carried out according to the procedure set out by the relevant Science Fund acts and in accordance with the criteria specified in the Programme.

#### **Article 30**

Reviewers are, as a rule, foreign experts, and exceptionally domestic experts with an internationally recognized professional career. Reviewers are selected by way of matching their areas of expertise with the scientific field of the proposed Project, as a rule based on the key words specified in the Proposal.

The Programme Board is composed of six Programme sub-committees - expert panels (hereinafter: Expert Panel). Each Expert Panel is responsible for one sub-programme referred to under Article 3 herein: for natural sciences; technical and technological sciences; biotechnical sciences; biomedical sciences; artificial intelligence and social sciences and humanities, and consists of three to five members. The Programme Board members are international experts from the scientific fields of the sub-programmes, and exceptionally, domestic experts with an internationally recognized professional career.

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<sup>7</sup> As prescribed by Articles 94 and 95 of the Law on Science and Research, "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 49 of 8 July 2019.

## Administrative Check

### Article 31

All received Proposals undergo an administrative check, which includes a review of the documentation submitted to the Public Call, in order to determine:

- the timeliness of the submitted Proposal in relation to the deadline set in the announced Public Call;
- technical correctness and completeness of the Proposal documentation, including all enclosed appendices, confirmations, and signatures;
- fulfilment of the general conditions of the competition prescribed in the Public Call within the Programme, including formal compliance with the criteria for the Principal Investigator, Team Members and SRO.

A Proposal that has passed the administrative check is then referred to the first stage of the evaluation procedure.

The Science Fund may request clarification or additional information from the applicant if it deems it necessary to perform a complete administrative check. If the Proposal did not meet the criteria of the administrative review, the Science Fund excludes the Proposal from further evaluation and informs the applicant of the Public Call about the reasons for rejecting the Proposal in the administrative review procedure.

## Project Evaluation - General Rules

### Article 32

In the evaluation process, the Proposal grades are given numerically and descriptively, according to the appropriate form available in the Programme documentation on the Science Fund website.

The evaluation criteria are:

- **Excellence** - quality, relevance and topicality of the proposed topic, scientific grounding, innovation, realistic objectives, significance of the research, applicability of the research results and the perspective of the proposed research, assessment of the implementation of open scientific practice in the proposed methodology, assessment of the competence of the Principal Investigator and other Team members;
- **Impact** - contribution to science, businesses and society in the Republic of Serbia, the impact of scientific research on businesses, society, climate changes, the environment, health care, education and other aspects of social development at the international and national level, the effectiveness of the proposed measures for the promotion and visibility of the Project and application of the Project results, assessment of whether the scientific research clearly identifies potential stakeholders and users who will be affected by the Project;
- **Implementation** - realistic effect of the implementation plan, possible risks and measures for risks mitigation, realistic and balanced budget, assessment of the defined roles of project team members and partners, as well as the complementarity of their expertise with the project topic.

## First Stage of Evaluation

### Article 33

In the first stage of evaluation, each Project Proposal is evaluated by Reviewers.

The Reviewer evaluates each question both numerically (assigning from 1 to 5 points) and descriptively. The Reviewer gives an explicit recommendation whether he/she supports the Proposal or not.

In the event that the highest and lowest total score given by the Reviewers differ by more than 20 points, a discrepancy is noted and the Reviewers' work is coordinated in order to reach a consensus or confirm the discrepancy. In case consensus is not reached, the Project is referred for an additional review of the Project Proposal. Upon obtaining a second review, the result of the first stage of evaluation shall be determined based on the two reviews with the closest total numerical grades assigned by the Reviewers. Should the additional review grade be equally different from the initial reviews, the result of the first stage of evaluation shall be based on the two reviews by the Reviewers that are more positively inclined towards the Project.

The maximum score that a Reviewer can give is 100 points, in accordance with the evaluation criteria from Table 1 herein. In order for the Proposal to pass the Reviewers' evaluation, the number of points assigned to the average score for each evaluation criterion must not be lower than the minimum number of points specified in Table 1 herein and the total average score must not be lower than 70 points.

Table 1 - Criteria for Project evaluation; maximum (and minimum) number of points.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>First Stage (points)</b>
<b>Excellence</b>	<b>50 (min. 30)</b>
<b>Impact</b>	<b>30 (min. 18)</b>
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>20 (min. 12)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 (min. 70)</b>

Upon completion of the first stage of evaluation, each Principal Investigator will receive a notification about the evaluation result.

### Forming Preliminary Ranking List

#### Article 34

Before the start of the second stage of evaluation, a preliminary ranking list of Project Proposals is drawn up for each sub-programme, based on the ranking list of all submitted Project Proposals of that sub-programme, arranged in descending order of the value of the Reviewers' evaluation after the first stage of evaluation. The Preliminary ranking list of Proposals contains only the highest ranked Proposals of the corresponding sub-programme that have met the criteria from Table 1 hereto and whose total budget, cumulatively, does not exceed twice the budget of the corresponding sub-programme.

After the first stage of evaluation, all Principal Investigators who are on the Preliminary Ranking List have the opportunity to submit to the Science Fund of the RS a short written response (up to 500 words) with comments on the results of the first stage of evaluation, which are then referred to the Programme Board and used during the second stage of evaluation.

The answer should only include the facts from the Project Proposal that the Reviewers did not notice and/or that are contrary to the statements in the review.

## **Second Stage of Evaluation**

### **Article 35**

In the second stage of evaluation, the Programme Board for Project Evaluation (hereinafter: The Programme Board) evaluates the Proposals from the Preliminary Ranking List and compiles the Proposal for the Final Ranking List. The evaluation of the Proposal is carried out according to the procedure set out by the relevant Science Fund acts and in accordance with the criteria specified in the Programme.

Proposals from the preliminary ranking list are evaluated by six panels of experts, one panel for each sub-programme. The quality of the project is evaluated according to the criteria of scientific excellence, impact and implementation, taking into account the objectives and conditions of the programme. Projects are initially classified into three groups based on the position on the preliminary ranking list, i.e. the grade after the first stage of evaluation:

- group I – the highest ranked Project Proposals (30% of the highest ranked Project Proposals);
- group II – medium-ranked Project Proposals (next 40% of Project Proposals);
- group III – the lowest ranked Project Proposals (the last 30% of Project Proposals from the preliminary ranking list).

Each project from the preliminary ranking list is assigned to one member of the respective panel who becomes the Rapporteur for that project. The Rapporteurs review the project proposals and the results of the first stage of evaluation and report to the members of the Programme Board based on that.

If the Rapporteur and panel members have no objections to the Project Proposals from group I, nor to the results or content of the evaluation from the first stage of the evaluation, the Proposals from group I are proposed for financing in the order found. If the Rapporteur believes that the group I project proposal has important shortcomings or that there are inconsistencies in the results of the first stage of evaluation, he/she will inform the panel members thereof, i.e. the Programme Board and propose a more detailed analysis and discussion of that Project Proposal in consultations with the Reviewers of the Project Proposal for clarification. As a rule, the Rapporteur can nominate up to two projects from group I for this type of quality check and more detailed discussion. This additional quality check of the project can result in the confirmation of quality, after which the project remains in line for funding, or in a reasoned decision on a new evaluation result and ranking.

If the Rapporteur or Panel Members, i.e. the Programme Board have no objections to the scores of Project Proposals from group III, nor to the results or content of the evaluation from the first stage of evaluation, then the Proposals from group III are not proposed for funding. If the Reporter believes that the group III Project Proposal has significant qualities, or that there are inconsistencies or oversights in the results of the first stage of evaluation, he/she will inform the panel members thereof, i.e. The Programme Board and propose a more detailed analysis and discussion of that Project Proposal. If necessary, it is possible to consult the Reviewers of the Project Proposal for clarification. As a rule, the Rapporteur can nominate up to two projects from group III for this type of quality check and more detailed discussion. This additional quality check of the project can result in the confirmation of quality with a statement of reasons, after which the Project is classified in group II, or in a decision of non-funding.

After checking the projects at the suggestion of the panel members and possible changes in the preliminary ranking list, the list of projects is updated by groups, as defined in this Article.

The focus of the analysis of the Programme Board is on all projects from group II, which are analysed in detail and discussed during the work of the Programme Board, after which they are ranked among themselves and a decision is made on the projects that will be supported for financing.



The Programme Board can ask the Principal Investigator to rebalance the proposed budget of the Project as a whole or in individual items. In addition, the Programme Board can request from the Principal Investigator to correct and/or clarify milestones of the Proposal, or another type of modification of the project proposal with all associated elements.

## Draft Final Ranking List

### Article 36

At the end of the work of the Programme Board, based on the results of the second stage of evaluation, project proposals are ranked and classified into categories A, AB, B, C and D according to project quality and budgets.

Table 2 - Results of the second stage of evaluation

Project rating (category)	Description*
A	The highest ranked Project Proposals after the second stage of evaluation with a budget that makes up 20% of the Programme budget, and which are <b>supported for financing</b> ,
AB	The next ranked Project Proposals after the second stage of evaluation with a budget that makes up 40% of the Programme budget, which are <b>supported for financing</b> ,
B	The following ranked Project Proposals after the second stage of evaluation with a budget that makes the remaining 40% of the Programme budget, which are <b>supported for financing</b> ,
C	The Project Proposals ranked below the Project budget limit after the second stage of evaluation, which are <b>not supported for financing</b> ,
D	Projects where a deficiency or irregularity has been identified, due to which they cannot be supported for financing.

\* In the event that the budget limit that determines the difference between two categories does not include a whole number of projects, the classification of projects into categories is performed by rounding up to the full number of projects, taking into account that the sum of the budgets of projects from categories A, AB and B cannot exceed the available budget of the corresponding sub-programme.

The total required budget for all Projects accepted for financing cannot exceed the total budget of the Programme defined by the Public Call.

### Article 37

In accordance with the rules from Table 2, the Programme Board creates a Draft Final Ranking List of projects proposed for funding under the Public Call based on this Programme and submits it to the Science Fund Scientific Council with the Report on the Programme Board's work.

The Scientific Council reviews the Programme Board's Report and submits a Proposal of the Final Ranking List and, along with its opinion on procedural correctness, submits to the Science Fund

Board of Directors the Proposal of the Final Ranking List of projects proposed for funding under the Public Call based on this Programme.

### **Article 38**

Based on the Proposal of the Final Ranking List of projects proposed for funding under the Public Call based on this Programme referred to under the previous article, the Science Fund Board of Directors renders a decision on the adoption of the Final List of Projects that have been approved for financing with the funds of the Science Fund under the Public Call based on this Programme, as well as on the amount of funds allocated to each Project to which the funding has been approved.

### **Article 39**

After the decision of the Science Fund Board of Directors on the adoption of the Final Ranking List of Projects for each of the sub-programmes, the Science Fund posts the final lists of Proposals approved for funding on its website.

Upon completion of the second stage of evaluation, each Principal Investigator will receive a notification about its outcome.

## **Complaint Filing**

### **Article 40**

Applicants of Proposals under this Programme have the right to submit a fact-based complaint to the result of:

- a) administrative checks specified under Article 31 herein (referring to obvious omissions, oversights or material errors on the part of the Science Fund);
- b) the evaluation procedure (referring to obvious omissions, oversights or material errors on evaluators).

The complaint is submitted by the applicant in writing on the form of the Science Fund, in 500 words maximum, within 8 days from the date of receipt of the notification from the Science Fund on the outcome of the administrative check/evaluation results.

The content of the complaint must be limited to clarifying the data that already exists in the Proposal and cannot in any way suggest or imply a change in the content of the proposed Project in any segment.

The Science Fund shall issue an official response to the complaint within 30 days from the day of receipt of the timely complaint.

## **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Agreement**

#### **Article 41**

For Proposals approved for financing, the Project Lead Institution and Project Participants shall sign an Agreement with the Science Fund.

### **Payment and Reporting**

#### **Article 42**

The Science Fund shall transfer the funds to SRO, in accordance with the approved Project budget and the signed Agreement.

The first payment made by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia shall be an advance payment for the first reporting period, within 45 days from the date of Agreement signing.

The distribution of payments is set out in the Agreement. Equipment and consumables are procured at the beginning of the Project implementation.

The Science Fund can retain up to 5% of the total approved project budget until the adoption of the Final Report. In this case, the last payment is paid within 30 days after the Science Fund confirms the acceptance of the Final Report.

All payments are made in dinars (RSD), to a special SRO current account (or a special sub-account) used only for the Project purposes within this Programme.

The Principal Investigator shall deliver Project Progress Update on a six-month basis, prepared on the forms of the Science Fund. Project Progress Update shall not be accompanied by supporting documentation, and the Principal Investigator and authorised persons of the Project Lead and Project Participants are responsible for data accuracy and the dedicated spending of funds in accordance with the applicable law.

The Principal Investigator submits to the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia the Annual Report on the progress of the Project at the end of each project year, and the Final Report of the Project upon completion of the Project implementation. The reports shall be prepared on the prescribed forms, in accordance with the instructions and deadlines set by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia. The Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia shall inspect complete administrative and financial documentation of a certain number of randomly selected projects for each reporting period. The number of randomly selected projects for each reporting period shall, as a rule, include no less than 10% of approved projects.

The Principal Investigator shall obtain and keep in the archive all the accompanying administrative and financial documentation of the Project and, if requested, submit it to the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia for inspection and verification. The Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia may ask to inspect and verify the documentation at any time throughout the duration of the Project.

The Principal Investigator must provide appropriate information and documents for the external audit of the Project. The Principal Investigator and SRO must ensure that the use of funds is in accordance with the law and the agreed conditions and obligations. The SRO shall pay funds to third parties in accordance with the implementation of activities on the Project.

## **Procurement of Goods and Services**

### **Article 43**

Procurement of goods and services related to the Project implementation, the financing of which is approved under the Programme, is carried out in accordance with the law and the Agreement on financing the implementation of the scientific research project of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter: the Agreement) entered into by the Science Fund and the Project Lead Institution and Project Participants, and in accordance with the procedures required by the funding source, which will be specified in the Agreement.

The Principal Investigator shall submit relevant documentation related to the completed procurements referred to under paragraph 1 herein to the Science Fund in accordance with the Programme, the Agreement or at the Fund's written request.

## **Project Management**

### **Article 44**

The Principal Investigator shall manage the Project in good faith, responsibly and in accordance with the regulations governing science and research, environmental protection, protection of intellectual property, protection of personal data, prevention of conflicts of interest and other regulations of importance for the ethical and lawful realization of the Project activities.

### **Article 45**

The Principal Investigator must be engaged on the Project for the entire duration of the Project. Project Team Members may be engaged for the entire duration of the Project or only during certain time intervals, depending on the Project needs and in accordance with the proposed budget.

If, during the implementation of the Project, it is necessary for the Principal Investigator to replace a Team Member with another member or to change the percentage of his/her engagement in the Project, the Principal Investigator shall submit a reasoned proposal for the change to the Science Fund and must obtain the written consent of the Science Fund for this before such change is made. The team member to replace the previous one must meet all requirements referred to in Article 6 and 7 herein.

### **Article 46**

If a justified and objective need arises during the implementation of the Project, the Principal Investigator can propose amendments to the Project Budget within the same budget category and amendments to the Project Budget between budget categories. All proposed amendments must be for the purpose of the implementation of project activities and in accordance with the rules of the programme governing eligible expenses.

### **Article 47**

According to the regulations governing scientific research activity, the rights based on all new intellectual property and know-how, which may be created during the Project implementation, belong to the SRO. If the members of different SROs participate in the Project, i.e. Team Members who are employed in different SROs, the Project Lead Institution and Project Participants, as well as all Team Members must agree and regulate their mutual relations and intellectual property rights that will be created during the Project implementation, and to notify the Science Fund thereof.

The commercialization of the results is carried out in accordance with the law and the SRO rulebook. SRO shall ensure intellectual property rights and know-how in contracts concluded with any third party.

The principles of open science shall apply to the Project results, in accordance with the Open Science Platform of the Ministry responsible for scientific research activities (hereinafter: the Ministry).

## **Project Monitoring and Evaluation during Implementation**

### **Article 48**

The Science Fund shall supervise and monitor the implementation of the Project regularly, by evaluating submitted reports, conducting supervisory visits to Project Participants, direct monitoring of individual project activities, and evaluating the final reports on the project results. If it is established that the Project funds have been spent for unintended purposes, the Science Fund reserves the right to suspend the implementation and funding of the Project, request the return of funds, and undertake such other activities that it deems appropriate.

The Science Fund may periodically organise an audit of the expenditure of funds during the implementation of projects, in accordance with the acts of the Science Fund.

#### **Article 49**

In order to monitor and evaluate the Programme, the Science Fund can organize an independent review of the funds beneficiaries once a year, as well as at the end of the implementation of the Programme under the Public Call, based on clearly defined milestones and results. In order to achieve the stated objective, the beneficiaries of the funds shall provide all the necessary information and documentation and access to relevant sites and facilities to the Science Fund.

#### **Article 50**

The achieved results of the Project are continuously monitored and evaluated through annual, extraordinary evaluation and evaluation at the end of the Project implementation. Evaluation may also include audit.

The Project monitoring and evaluation includes a comparison of the proposed and realised research objectives, achieved scientific results, assessment of the funds execution and other relevant indicators. If, during the implementation of the Project, it is established that the Project was not fully implemented according to the Proposal, the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia shall inform thereof the competent bodies of the Science Fund. Based on the findings, a decision to suspend the next disbursement of the funds may be made until the reasons causing the Project deviation are determined/removed. The Science Fund also has the right to decide to reduce the budget dedicated by the Agreement or to completely suspend the Project funding, including the initiation of the procedure for the return of misapplication of or unlawfully spent received funds or any other procedure that it deems appropriate.

### **Project Results**

#### **Article 51**

The achieved results of the Project shall be monitored and evaluated during the implementation of the Project in accordance with the rules of this Act. If necessary, the implementation and dedicated spending of funds in accordance with the approved budget of the Project can be evaluated on an extraordinary basis at the initiative of the Science Fund or on the basis of a reasoned request from the SRO or the Principal Investigator.

For the purpose of evaluation, the Principal Investigator reports the results of the Project by submitting an appropriate report.

### **External Audit**

#### **Article 52**

At the end of the implementation of the first stage of the Project, the Project Lead Institution shall organise an external audit at the expense of the project, from the portion of the budget planned within the Lead's budget, and the findings and opinion of the certified auditor shall be enclosed with the Final Report.

The external audit shall be performed at the level of the entire Project and shall include the audit of project documentation and financial management of the Project at the levels of all SROs participating in the Project.

## **Archive**

### **Article 53**

The Project Lead Institution and Project Participants shall create the Project archive for keeping accurate and regular records related to the Project implementation, using appropriate systems in accordance with accounting regulations, financial and other regulations.

The Project archive must be available to the Science Fund.

## **PROMOTION AND VISIBILITY OF PROJECT RESULTS**

### **Article 54**

The Principal Investigator shall ensure the promotion of the Project and the visibility of the results during the Project implementation by participating in conferences, publishing scientific publications, organizing gatherings and seminars, promotion in the media and on social networks, organizing visits to the Project Team and the laboratory and in other ways. Publication of papers in leading scientific journals, including journals that apply the principle of open science, as well as presentation of papers at leading scientific international conferences is suggested.

In all works published in journals and presented at conferences, the Principal Investigator and Team Members are obliged to state that the results stemmed from the Project financed by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, as defined by the Agreement.

The Principal Investigator shall allow access to the Project results to the interested parties, at any time during the Project implementation as well as at least one year after the end of the Project.

Additional rules on visibility and statements will be set out in the Agreement.

It is recommended that the primary data collected during the implementation of the Project be systematized, structured and electronically formatted and that open access be made available (open data).

## **FINAL PROVISIONS**

### **Article 55**

This Act shall enter into force on the eighth day from the date of its publication on the website of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia.

Science Fund of the Republic of  
Serbia

**MANAGING BORAD**

President

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Mihailo Vesovic

This Act is published on the website of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia upon receipt of the decision of the Government of the Republic of Serbia: 05 Number: 451-10326/2023- 1 of 3 November 2023 on giving consent for the IDEAS 2023 Programme ("Official Gazette of RS", number 97/2023 of 3 November 2023). The Programme on Amendments to the IDEAS 2024 Programme is published on the website of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia upon receipt of the decision of the Government of the Republic of Serbia: 05 Number: 451-9723/2024 of 10 October 2024 ("Official Gazette of the RS, number 82/2024 of 11 October 2024)