

Questions and answers regarding open call for proposals for the National Scientific Program “Excellent Research and People for the Development of European Science” (VIHREN)

10.09.2019

1. Question

In proposal part A of VIHREN's call 2019 there is a section entitled "Registration number of the organization in BNSF" - could you please tell us where can we find the registration number of a given host institution, in my case the Institute of Solid State Physics, Academician Georgi Nadjakov? There is complete lack of information regarding such a registration number, so your prompt response will be highly appreciated.

Answer

This field should be empty, it is for internal use. When you register your project in the proposal submission portal this number appears automatically.

2. Question

1. Applicant organizations need to present approved individual chart of accounts showing a separation of economic and non-economic activities for the purposes of the project. Is this chart of accounts for the specific project only?
2. It is written that for Established researcher program the PI shall have been awarded his/her first PhD ≤ 15 years prior to the deadline of this project call. Does this mean that for the Leading researcher program the PI need to have his/her PhD degree awarded more than 15 years ago?

Answer

1. No, this is related to overall accounting policy of the host institution and such information is provided also for the other calls of the Bulgarian Science Fund.
2. No, for Leading researcher scheme there is no such restriction, PhD degree may be awarded either less or more than 15 years ago.

3. Question

In the guide for applicants to VIHREN call 2019, in the section for direct eligible costs, there are two terms that are not unambiguously defined. First - "small equipment" - does this include scientific equipment such as high speed camera, contact angle measurement system, tribometer, porosimeter, etc. or? Second - "scientific infrastructure" - if by scientific infrastructure one means the above mentioned equipment, then, the logical question is: If there are no money allocated for specialized equipment, how can we deliver the project's objectives?

In my opinion, the term "small equipment" must include the possibility for purchasing of specialized scientific apparatus for the implementation of the project. Please respond to this crucial question as soon as possible.

Answer

The budget for small equipment is included in the total annual budget of the project. Due to variety of possible equipment in different research fields, no explicit list for such equipment can be provided.

Available large scale equipment in the host institution or in other research institutions may be used for the research activities in the project.

09.09.2019

1. Question

In the online portal, <http://vh.stko.eu/>, in the 'Host Institution' field, under the 'Legal Name list', the old name of our institute is written:

Institute of System Engineering and Robotics, Bulgarian Academy of Science. The present name of the institute is: Institute of Robotics.

How to solve this problem?

Answer

The names of the institutions are obtained from the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency. Since the institution is accredited under this name, it also appear in our list. In order to avoid complications, a statement from the host institution that its name is changed should be uploaded as a separate filed together with the proposal.

04.09.2019

1. Question

1) Should the "Legal Name of the organizations" and the "Registration number of the organization in BNSF" correspond to those from the drop-down menu in the online submission system and if yes, should we name the host organization in the same way throughout the form (in e.g. Name of the PI's host institution for the project:, Current Organisation name) even if its official name, as mentioned elsewhere, differs?

2) Are we allowed to include a Keyword that is listed in the same panel, but in different sub-title than the primary Keyword? This is not possible with the drop-down menu: only Keywords belonging to the same panel sub-title are allowed.

3) This form must be signed by the applicant on 2 places and therefore these 2 pages must be scanned. How should we proceed, if these scanned pages can not be signed electronically? Sign electronically the form without the applicant's signature or ...?

I have a concern also regarding your answer that: "The written consent from all team members mentioned in the proposal should be stored by the PI. No copies of those documents have to be submitted with the proposal, but such copies may be requested at the stage of preparation of the contract if the proposal is approved."

4) How can we possibly have "the written consent from all team members mentioned in the proposal", if they will be hired using the project funding and only if such funding is received (for the research staff) and if they don't need to be on employment contract, i.e. personally specified, (for the administrative and technical staff)?

Answer

1. Yes.

2. Only keywords that belong to the selected sub-panel can included.

3. The procedure for signing pdf files electronically works both with automatically generated pdf files (e.g. from MS Word) and with scanned pdf files. You may either i) provide electronically signed pdf file, which

is signed manually and scanned, or ii) provide electronically signed pdf file, which is automatically generated (without signatures), and in addition to upload scanned file with manual signatures.

4. There is no requirement to include team and mention team members in the proposal, neither researchers nor administrative/technical staff. However, if you would like to mention some envisaged team members in the proposal, then you have to have written consent from them.

2. Question

My question is regarding the team members such as senior staff and postdocs: For example, is it possible for 1 year, one working place for senior researcher (work 100% time) to be divided between 2 senior researchers x work 50% time on the project? If yes, is it possible one postdoc - work 100% time on the project to correspond to these 2 senior researchers in order the ratio (sum senior researchers work time)/(postdoc work time) to be 1:1?

Answer

The distribution of the work load and work time among researchers hired on the project is up to the PI. There are no special requirement in the call guidelines, related to the hired staff, except the requirement *"up to six months after the start of the project, according to the date stated in the Contract, the team of the lead scientist to consist of at least one post-doctor / senior assistant and one Ph.D. student, or at least one post-doctor and one senior associate"*.

03.09.2019

1. Question

I have the following comments and questions that need clarification

There is a difference between the following texts in NSP GENERAL GUIDELINES and NNP_obshti_nasoki_BG. In the first it is stated:

"If an organization submits more than one project proposal as a base organization, an official copy of Appendices 1 and 2 shall be submitted to the Fund Office and each project proposal shall present the incoming document number. Appendix 3 is submitted for each project proposal."

and in NNP_obshti_nasoki_BG

"Ако една организация подава повече от едно проектно предложение като базова организация, в Деловодството на Фонда се представя един официален екземпляр от Приложения 1 и 2. Приложение 3 се подава за всяко проектно предложение."

1. Please clarify the procedure - only in the English version you say: "and each project proposal shall present the incoming document number." Where is this number to be put on the project proposal, on which document should this number be filled in or attached or scanned? Why is this not translated in the Bulgarian version?

2. In the forms of Prilojenie 1 and Prilojenie 2 there is a field which requires information on particular project proposal. How these documents to be submitted only once by the host institution for all applications if they are proposal dependent? What should be filled in after project (проект) below

See the text here

"базова организация по проект, кандидатстващ за финансиране по Национална научна програма, декларирам , че представяваната от мен организация е:"

3. Who can deposit Prilojenie 1 and Prilojenie 2 in the fund ? Could a researcher do it on behalf of the institution ?

4. Should Appendix 3 be submitted both electronically and in person in the fund? It is not clear from your answer to Question 2 on 19.08 from questions and answers and the text cited above "Appendix 3 is submitted for each project proposal."

Answer

1. The number may be provided in a separate file named *Addiitonal_request.pdf*, which may be uploaded together with the other documents via the proposal submission system. In any case, during the eligibility check, the Fund's staff will check if the host institution provided the originally signed documents.

2. The declaration include general statements for the organization, thus they are valid for all proposals submitted for the same host organization independent whether it is submitted with the name of the specific proposal or it is submitted as a separate declaration. We already invited all eligible host institutions to sign such declarations and to provide the other necessary documents, described in the General Guidelines, for all call announced by the Fund for this year.

3. The address of the Fund is available on our web site: <http://www.fni.bg/?q=node/21>, it is "София 1309, бул. „Александър Стамболийски“ № 239 Б, ет. 3". The applicant may bring the originally signed document on behalf of the host institution.

4. Appendix 3 should be filled by the researcher – applicant and should be submitted electronically.

02.09.2019

1. Question

I have a couple of questions related to the program 'Vihren'. I've obtained my Ph.D. degree 15.5 years ago from the date of the application deadline. Am I eligible to apply as an Established researcher? Formerly, this is more than 15 years, but it is not 16 years yet, so I think that it could be considered equal to 15 years?

I did apply for ERC Advance grant in 2017 and received a score 'C'. Is this disqualifying me for applying for 'Vihren'? Since then, we have new data and new publications that can help significantly to improve the proposal.

Answer

1. No, you are eligible only for Leading researcher scheme.

2. No, you can apply for Vihren program.

30.08.2019

1. Question

Should the project title and acronym be written/translated into Bulgarian language in the documents in Bulgarian language (Appendices 1, 2 and form Vihren_2019_part A BG), considering that probably after the translation they will not match properly?

Answer

No, the acronym should be written as it is in English alphabet in all documents, including those in Bulgarian.

29.08.2019

1. Question

I have 2 questions related to the following text in the Guide for Applicants (page 10):

"It requires up to six months after the start of the project, according to the date stated in the Contract, the team of the lead scientist to consist of at least one post-doctor / senior assistant and one Ph.D. student, or at least one post-doctor and one senior associate."

1) Are the combinations (Post-doctor+PhD student) and (Post-doctor+Senior associate) strictly defined or there can be the option (PhD student +Senior associate)?

2) Are these 2 options equally valid for both Schemes, Leading and Established Researcher?

I have also a question about the types of the appointment contracts:

3) I would agree that the core research team (PI, Senior staff, Post-doc, PhD) must be hired with a standard appointment contracts, but should the technical and administrative staff be hired in the same way and should they be permanently involved with the project during its duration? For example, I will need somebody handling the administrative affairs, but should I necessarily specify the person or I can just direct certain amount of personnel costs that can be paid by e.g. civil contracts to different people at different time?

Answer

1. All three combinations are acceptable.

2. This requirement and the corresponding options are valid for both schemes.

3. There is no requirement the administrative and technical staff to be hired and paid under an employment contract.

2. Question

I have a question concerning some of the documents. For the documents titled Vihren_HI_letter BG; Vihren_HI_letter EN; Appendix_3 EN;

it says on that they need to "Template files to be downloaded, filled, transformed into pdf, signed electronically by the host organization and uploaded".

However, it seems that they need to be signed manually (подпис на ръка) by either the representative or the applicant as there is space for this signature. Moreover, in Vihren_HI_letter EN there the requirement of "stamp of the host institution (applicant legal entity)". There are two concerns:

1. Why should it be signed twice or it is not explained well ? Please clarify.

2. In my institution they are unsure if they will be able to sign electronically a scanned file and the files will have to be scanned as they require signature (подпис на ръка) and a stamp by the host institution.

Answer

The instructions all files to be signed electronically are related to all parts of the proposal, A, B1 and B2. The letter from the host institution has to be signed manually and stamped, and after that to be scanned in pdf format and submitted via the proposal submission web site. It is not necessary the scanned pdf file to be signed electronically but during the contract preparation stage the Funding agency may request from the host institution the originally signed letters for the proposals that are selected for funding. Similar procedure should be followed for Appendix_3 EN.pdf or Prilojenie_3 BG.pdf, they have to be signed manually by the researcher, scanned and submitted. The Funding agency may request the originally signed declaration during the evaluation of the proposal or at the stage of contract preparation.

27.08.2019

1. Question

1. The Specific guidelines for the National Scientific Program "VIHREN" make mention of "work program". However, there is no instruction about the inclusion of such a program in the project proposal. So, if the work program is a necessary part of the proposal, how detailed it should be and where it should be applied?
2. Is there a conflict if the PI is a coordinator of an on-going project funded in a previous session of NSF in "Competition for financial support of research projects"? If this is not admissible, what are the possible options?

Answer

1. Work program will be required only at the stage of contract preparation for those proposal that are selected for funding. It will include the work described in Part B1 and B2 of the proposal distributed in time for the full duration of the project. In the Specific guidelines for the VIHREN program the term "work program" is mentioned only in relation to the specific case when a PI supported by VIHREN program wins later also an ERC grant.
2. There is no conflict but the tasks/activities that are performed and financed by running BNSF project have to be clearly separated from those in the VIHREN project. Double funding is not allowed.

26.08.2019

1. Question

In the work program (bottom of page 6), it is stated: "Applicants submitting proposals may request that up to three specific persons who would not act as peer reviewers in the evaluation of their proposal." Where should I list these persons and what information is required?

Answer

This request may be provided as a separate letter by the researcher named *Addiitonal_request.pdf*, which may be uploaded together with the other documents via the proposal submission system.

2. Question

In the online portal, <http://vh.stko.eu/>, in the 'Host Institution' field, there is a small bug which induces a shift of the selected host institution by one entry when displayed in the 'Preview' field. For instance, in the 'Host Institution' field under the 'Legal Name list', the following institutions are listed in consecutive order: "RUSE UNIVERSITY", "SOFIA UNIVERSITY", "ACADEMY OF ECONOMICS -- SVISHTOV". If in the 'Host Institution' field I select "SOFIA UNIVERSITY", then the "Preview" field displays "ACADEMY OF ECONOMICS -- SVISHTOV". If, on the other hand, in the 'Host Institution' field I select "RUSE UNIVERSITY", then the "Preview" field displays "SOFIA UNIVERSITY".

Please advice how to proceed to avoid causing confusion once the proposal is submitted.

Answer

Thank you for informing us about this problem, it is corrected.

3. Question

Excuse me for the question but it is not clear for me: 1) only PI have to fulfill, sign and upload Appendix 3 or all team members mentioned in the proposal? 2) All team members mentioned in the proposal should sign written consent and the PI must store the copies concerning Part A in EN Q1-declarations?

Answer

1. Only PI has to sign Appendix 3 since only PI is official applicant, together with the host institution. Names of other researchers, who may be involved in accomplishment of the project, are just for information during evaluation and no any documents are required from them.

2. The written consent from all team members mentioned in the proposal should be stored by the PI. No copies of those documents have to be submitted with the proposal, but such copies may be requested at the stage of preparation of the contract if the proposal is approved.

4. Question

I have the following questions:

- 1) If the cost of Small equipment in Other Direct Costs is limited (as percentage of the Total Direct Costs)
- 2) Is it necessary to keep any proportion between Other Direct Costs and Total Personnel Cost.

Answer

In the documents for the call there is no specific percentage for the Small equipment or for the proportion between Other Direct Costs and Total Personnel Cost.

21.08.2019

1. Question

Is it possible young scientists from **no** EU countries to be included/invited in post-doc position for short period (e.g., 4-6 months), because sometimes it is difficult to find person with good expertise in the specific field of research? Only Bulgarian citizens in the research team or not?

Answer

The recruitment processes of the academic staff to work on the project have to be transparent and based on merit and career development, following the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. There is no restrictions related to the nationality or citizenship of the scientists.

19.08.2019

1. Question

I have a Q about the Appendix (Funding ID): should the amounts be listed in EUR or BGN? Currently, the form for Part B1 says EUR.

Answer

The information in the Appendix of form B1 is related to the previous and current activities of the applicant and the values in the table should be in EUR.

2. Question

the online submission portal, under section FILES states:

In the section "Files" you will find information for submission of proposals and all templates for the proposal. They are the same as those at the website with announcement of the call. In this section all parts of the proposal (A, B1, B2), the official letter from the host institution (either in English or in Bulgarian) and Appendix 3 (either in English or in Bulgarian) have to be uploaded. For proposals Type 1, also the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) from the ERC evaluation have to be uploaded. All uploaded files have to be signed electronically by the official representative of the host organization.

The uploaded files have to be named as follows:

Vihren_2019_part A EN.pdf

Vihren_2019_part A BG.pdf

Vihren_ER_2019_B2.pdf

Vihren_ER_2019_B1.pdf

Vihren_HI_letter BG.pdf or Vihren_HI_letter EN.pdf

Appendix_3 EN.pdf or Prilojenie_3 BG.pdf

ESR.pdf (only for proposals type 1)

It looks like the files Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, listed under "Templates and Proposal Forms" on the Vihren call website, are not required in the online portal. Could you please confirm if Appendix_1 and Appendix_2 have to be submitted along with the proposal?

Answer

Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 (in Bulgarian) are related to the Bulgarian host institution but not the researcher. By this reason, the documents originally signed by the official representative of the host institution have to be presented in the Bulgarian Science Fund before the call deadline. Invitation to sign those document for all running calls of the Fund have already been sent to the eligible host institutions.

It is not necessary copies of Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to be submitted via the electronic system along with the proposal.

18.08.2019

1. Question

Is it possible researchers, who are already appointed to an employment contract with the scientific institution to apply for the program with the same institution?

Answer

Yes.

15.08.2019

1. Question

1) the work program, Sec. 5, says that the budget for an established researcher is up to BGN 210 k/year. However, the text of the National program (page 8) published on the website states a different number: BGN 250 k/year. Which one of the two amounts is the relevant one and why is there a discrepancy?

2) Are the 10% indirect costs to be subtracted from maximum amount (e.g. BGN 210 k/year) or not? In other words, is BGN 210 k/year the budget which would be available to the PI, or rather BGN 189 (= 0.9 x 210) k/year?

3) how are the 10% indirect costs managed by the host institution? Are additional agreements between the PI and the host institution allowed (e.g. to renovate office/lab space, etc)? Are such agreements to be reported in Part B2 c of the proposal?

4) If bachelor/baster students are hied to work on the project, should the corresponding costs in the table in Part B2 c be reported as senior staff, PhD students, or technical/administrative?

5) Could you clarify what is meant by "Scientific services" (part of the budget table in B2 c)? Could you provide concrete examples?

Answer

1. The actual text of the National program reads "Financial support is **up to** 300 000 BGN per year for Leading researcher and **up to** 250 000 BGN per year for Established researcher". Taking into account the total budget allocated to the program for financing projects and the balance between the three panels and between the two types of projects, the maximal amounts per project for Leading and for Established researcher are fixed at 265 000 BGN and 210 000 BGN, within the limits stated in the National program.

2. According to p. 9 of the Specific guidelines indirect institutional costs are 10% of all other planned (direct) costs, not of the full amount of the project. If an applicant for Established researcher applies for the full amount of 210 000 BGN per year, the maximal direct cost will be 190 909.09 BGN and indirect cost will be 19 090.91 BGN per year.

3. All such aspects have to be clarified in the Supplementary agreement between the host organization and the principal investigator, that specifies the obligation of the applicant legal entity to meet its

obligations under the Contract, as described in the Official letter from the host organization (see the template for such a letter, which is provided as part of the call documents).

4. Bachelor or master students cannot be hired to work on the project as senior staff or PhD students. Note that recruitment processes of the academic staff have to be transparent and based on merit and career development, following the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

5. Scientific services are specific for each scientific field. As examples, one may include payment for synthesis, preparation, characterization or testing of compounds, materials, components, for accomplishment surveys, for use of special equipment, etc.

2. Question

The requirement:

"All uploaded files have to be signed electronically by the official representative of the applicant organization. Each document has to be uploaded as a single file" leads to some serious issues, which I would like to flag.

In particular, since this requires the pdf files of Part B1 and Part B2 to be scanned in the process of obtaining the e-signature. Scanning would occur for applying from abroad, but also for domestic applicants because no institution will send an applicant the file with their official e-signature for them to place it themselves. As a consequence of the scanning, any internal references, hyperlinks and links within the project (e.g. to figures, citations, equations, abbreviations, sections and subsections, etc.) will be lost. The highly valuable search option for expressions within the pdf is also lost for scanned pdf files. Scanning basically destroys all purposes of the pdf format.

This will cause serious trouble and a lot of headache for international referees, diminish the quality of data and figures presented, and not last -- make proposals look unprofessional.

Please note that, even though proposals have to be printable for historic reasons, in 2019 scientists read and review each other's papers and proposals on a computer.

The above is just one of many good reasons, why e-signatures of scientific proposals is not required by funding agencies, in particular also not by ERC. Another is the (very serious!) intellectual property issue I raised in a previous email, which arises from the need for an e-signature of the proposal pdf document.

I sincerely hope that the B-NSF will revise their policies in time for the 2019 call, to keep up-to-date with international academic standards.

Answer

Your concern is not clear since ERC also requires submission of the proposal parts in PDF format. For example, on p. 28 of the Instruction for applicants to the Advanced grant 2018 Call it is stated: "The Research Proposal (Part B1 and B2) and all supporting documentation should be uploaded and submitted via PPSS as PDF files". We also require the documents to be submitted as PDF files. The regular way to produce PDF files from MS Word or other document generating program is simply to save the file in PDF format. If you have not experience how to do this, you may consult the Help option of the program in which you prepare your application. In this way one keeps the search option in the document and most of the links and it is not necessary to print and scan the application documents. Electronic signature of the already generated PDF file is simple and does not change the features of the file, as you may check in the

file with instruction “How to sign documents in pdf format with electronic signature using Adobe Acrobat”, which is signed electronically. Thus, all features (as search options and links) in the PDF file signed electronically will be preserved and will be available for the referees during the evaluation.

Your concerns on the IP issues is addressed in the reply of your question of 12.08, and the explanation why this procedure is necessary for the call is provided in the answers of your question of 6.08.

14.08.2019

1. Question

Please precise the *exact requirement*: Guide for applications, p. 8 (please use whole BGN values only) while in Part B2, section c. Resource (please use whole euro values only). BGN or EUR in budget table?

Answer

Thank you very much for this correction, the correct text is in the Guide for applications (all values should be in BGN), the Parts B are now corrected accordingly.

13.08.2019

1. Question

1. Is it an absolutely necessary requirement that the Established researcher possesses a patent?
2. Is it possible to apply for funding if the applicant is employed by the Host Institution for 4 working hours daily? If yes, will this affect the funding? Can the researcher apply for the complete grant? How will this affect the month's wages of the team, how they will be calculated? as a percentage of the full working 8hour day or as a percentage of the half-working day (working period 6 months for the Host)?
3. What is meant by returning of the sum in case of poor outcome? In the worst case: who returns to whom and what?

Answer

1. No.
2. The payment for salary of the researcher is proportional to the percentage of the time in which the researcher works of the project. Note that the minimal percentage is 60% or 80%, depending on the type of the grant. The calculation of the payment for salary for the team members hired on the project has to be done in the same way.
3. This aspect has to be clarified in the Supplementary agreement between the host organization and the principal investigator, that specifies the obligation of the applicant legal entity to meet its obligations under the Contract (as described in the Official letter from the host organization, see the template provided as part of the call documents).

12.08.2019

1. Question

I have a technical question about the following submission requirement below.

"All uploaded files have to be signed electronically by the official representative of the applicant organization."

According to the answer of Question 1 from 06.08.2019, "The documents have to be signed with the official electronic signature of the head of the applicant organization, which are available in each organization. If the submitted files are not signed in this way, the application will not pass the eligibility and admissibility check."

I am applying from abroad and I do not know the local procedures at the host institution, nor do I know if the staff doing the e-signature can be trusted to keep the proposal confidential. Proposals of the rank of ERC are intellectual property worth an entire scientific career, and should not fall in the hands of competitors.

- 1) how exactly does the Bulgarian NSF guarantee that my proposal will not leak out to unknown third parties during or after the process of obtaining electronic signature?
- 2) who carries the legal responsibility, should such a leak occur?

Answer

1) If one applies for ERC grant, the host organization will also have access to the proposal via the registration of a contact person from the host organization in the corresponding electronic submission system (for example see Section 3.1 of the ERC document "Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2019 Calls"). In addition, a requirement for the call is a Letter from the host institution in which the official representative of the institution confirms the agreement the project to be performed there and the institution to provide necessary conditions for its accomplishment. This letter also requires the host institution to be informed for the text of the proposal.

Recommended procedure (which is not part of the call documentation) for electronic signature will be published at the call web page.

2) This question is not related to the call. However, if the applicant is afraid that her/his intellectual property will be stolen from the host institution, it is not clear why the applicant select to apply to accomplish the project in that institution.

09.08.2019

1. Question

1) I have applied for the ERC StG 2019 (starting grant!) with a Bulgarian host institution, and received grade B in Part 1 of the evaluation. I have the ESR from the ERC evaluation. Should I submit my proposal as Type 1 or Type 2?

2) For a Type 1 proposal, according to the instructions I have to submit "the file that was submitted and evaluated at the ERC call". However, the budget for ERC StG calls (EUR 300/year) is about three times larger than for Vihren calls for established researcher (BGN 210/year), which means at least part B2 c on Resources and project costs needs modification (if not other parts of the project, provided manpower has to be cut due to budgetary restriction). How should I proceed?

3) ERC calls allow for additional incentive in form of up to EUR 1 000 000 for start-up costs and equipment, for researchers applying from a Third Country (i.e. outside the EU and the associated states) and moving permanently to the EU for the purpose of the call. Is there a corresponding incentive for Vihren calls, and in what amount?

- 4) The submission instructions say "All uploaded files have to be signed electronically by the official representative of the applicant organization". Can you provide more information on what this signature should be/how the files should look like, etc. (this is not a requirement for ERC calls)?
- 5) The submission portal at <http://vh.stko.eu/> is currently broken; On a separate note, should I submit the proposal only once or is there an option for multiple submissions of improved versions in the EU Funding & Tenders portal?
- 6) ERC calls allow the PI to distribute the funding unevenly across the years the actions is funded for (e.g. to facilitate buying large equipment). In Vihren calls, is it possible to design a budget which overshoots the allocated BGN 210/year in some years but which compensates for this with a lower budget in other years, so that the total of the grant remains BGN 1 050 000 over the five-year period?

Answer

- 1) The calls eligible for Type 1 proposals are stated in the Official text of the program and in the Specific guidelines for the call: ERC-2017-AdG and ERC-2018-AdG, ERC-2017-CoG and ERC-2018-CoG. Applications for ERC Starting grants are not eligible as Type 1 proposals. Thus, you may submit your proposal as Type 2.
- 2) For proposals Type 1 all changes with respect to the original proposal, evaluated within the ERC call should be explained in Part A in the Table on the last page of the template: "Please, describe any changes with respect to the project, submitted and evaluated within the ERC call (e.g. duration of the project, budget, etc.)".
- 3) Such incentive is not envisaged within the VIHREN program.
- 4) Recommended procedure (which is not part of the call documentation) for electronic signature will be published at the call web page.
- 5) The submission portal at <http://vh.stko.eu/> is functional, it needed some technical adjustment. Via the portal proposals may be prepared in several sessions and the uploaded files may be substituted by newer/improved versions of the files. However, when the proposal is submitted, it cannot be modified.
- 6) The budget of the Vihren program is defined by decision of the Government and the maximal amount of funding provided by the Bulgarian Science Fund per year cannot be higher than that stated in the Specific guidelines for the call. However, according to the Regulations of BSF, the PI may redistribute up to 15% of the annual budget for the next period. In this way, for example the budget for the second year may be increased in expense of the budget for the first year.

2. Question

1. Are candidates in possession of a PhD degree from an EU country, respectively university, which has not passed the local process of approval and legalisation, eligible to apply and, in case of successful application, also eligible to start the grant in the host institution?
2. Are candidates, awarded their PhD degree 15 years ago, during the months before the application deadline, e.g. July, August 2004, eligible to apply?
3. Are candidates, who have participated in the preparation of National Science Program "VIHREN" and/or the competition documentation eligible to apply and is this an acceptable local practice?

4. Are candidates, who work in close connection with, are relatives, work under the supervision of the above mentioned, eligible to apply and is this an acceptable local practice too?
5. In the Aims and objectives of the National Science Program "VIHREN" is mentioned that the program aims at attracting outstanding scientist from Europe and also thirs countris. Where, except at the web site of the NSF, were the program and the related competition advertised?

Answer

1. Yes, candidates with PhD degree from other countries are eligible for the call without approval in Bulgaria. The eligibility to start work in the host institution has to be discussed with the host institution.
2. They are eligible to apply for "Leading researcher" type of grant.
3. No restrictions are envisaged in the Official text of the program or in the Guidelines for the call. Regular restrictions, stated in the Regulations of Bulgarian Science Fund apply.
4. See the reply of the previous question.
5. The Bulgarian Science Fund will be grateful to anyone who distribute the information about this call (and also the P. Beron call) worldwide. Information for the call is published in the European portal for researchers Euraxess and distributed via British council and several facebook pages. ERCEA was also kindly asked to distribute the information about the call to candidates eligible for type 1 proposals.

08.08.2019

1. Question

1. Is it possible the approved scientist lead the project at the NSF in a competitive session 2017 year for young scientists whose project ends now in December 2019?
2. Is it possible to buy fixed assets, for the engineering sciences we need expensive equipment, for example, some device in the order of 100,000 leva? 3. What does it mean 80% of the working time to be for the project? If the scientist works on 8-hour work day, he is not permitted to work for the project more than 4 hours a day.

Answer

1. Yes.
2. According to Specific guidelines for the program, eligible cost category is the following "the costs of carrying out the scientific work of the team (without scientific infrastructure, allowing for the purchase of office equipment, including computer equipment, based on a clear justification in the project proposal). Those costs may include consumables, scientific services, travel for dissemination of the results and networking, organization of events, etc."
3. It means that the researcher has to work at least 80% of the regular 8 hours working time on the project.

07.08.2019

1. Question

Is it possible to include in The Established researcher team a scientist who is on a contract of employment in another organization other than the host organization (The beneficiary) of the "Vihren" program?

Answer

According to the General guidelines “Under the Vihren program, an applicant-researcher will apply with a Bulgarian higher education institution or scientific organization in which the project will be implemented (applicant - host organization).” No team have to be specified in the proposal, the applicants are only the researcher and the host organization.

06.08.2019

1. Question

I would like to ask about the following procedure stipulated in "Instruction for submission - Vihren": "All uploaded files have to be signed electronically by the official representative of the applicant organization." Could you please give details what this instruction requires? Is it a standard procedure for submission to Bulgarian Science Fund? Does it require official Electronic Signature or it requires signature in pdf which could be done from Adobe Reader?

It is confusing with the fact that European calls are automatically signed upon submission by the receiving agency and the applicants and the host institution themselves DO NOT sign the documents. I believe such a clarification would be beneficial.

Answer

The electronic signature of the submitted documents by the official representative of the applicant host organization is required in order to:

- assure the authenticity of the submitted documents;
- to confirm that the applicant organization supports the proposal;
- to confirm that the following requirement in the Specific guidelines for the call is accomplished: “The beneficiary must check the information regarding the principal investigator's eligibility at the call deadline (i.e. CV, track record, etc.).”.

The documents have to be signed with the official electronic signature of the head of the applicant organization, which are available in each organization. If the submitted files are not signed in this way, the application will not pass the eligibility and admissibility check.