

FUND FOR STRATEGIC FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH (FRFS)

RULES AND REGULATIONS REGARDING THE INSTRUMENTS RELATED

TO THE

"FRFS-WELBIO" CALL FOR PROJECTS 2015:

➤ **STARTING GRANT (SGR)**

➤ **ADVANCED GRANT (AGR)**

FRFS-WELBIO Fund for Strategic Fundamental Research – Strategic axis Welbio

F.R.S.-FNRS Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique

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CHAPTER I: SCOPE

Article 1

The Fund for Strategic Fundamental Research (FRFS) is an Associated Fund of the F.R.S.-FNRS which funds the fundamental research of excellence in strategic axis, within the framework of a mission assigned by the Walloon region.

The FRFS-WELBIO is the FRFS strategic axis in life sciences.

The Board of Trustees of the virtual Walloon institute of fundamental research of excellence in life sciences (ASBL WELBIO) constitutes the animation and valorisation platform (PAVA) of the FRFS-WELBIO, named WELBIO.

The hereby rules and regulations shall only apply to instruments giving access to the funding of research programmes lead by team leaders who are assigned as principal investigator (PI).

Article 2

The "FRFS-WELBIO" call for projects enables to request a funding through 2 instruments:

- Starting grant (SGR)
- Advanced grant (AGR)

Article 3

The research programme must be conducted within a university from the French-speaking Community of Belgium that will sign a collaboration convention between the FRFS-WELBIO, WELBIO as well as with the university of the PI.

Article 4

The PI is the person in charge of the scientific responsibility as well as the administrative management of the funded research programme.

According to the collaboration agreement, the PI is also a researcher for WELBIO.

CHAPTER II: APPLICATIONS

II- A.: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OF THE PI

Article 5

The F.R.S.-FNRS ensures that the eligibility criteria are met on the closing date of validation of the application by the academic authorities (rectors), the PI applicant should be:

- either a Research Associate, a Senior Research Associate or a Research Director of the F.R.S.-FNRS and assuming the function and duties of such position,
- or a researcher holding a permanent position or the like, on probation for instance, but holding a position equivalent to a permanent position in a university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium.

The project falls within scientific areas as provided for by WELBIO.

Article 6

The PI applicant to the "starting grant (SGR)" instrument will be holding a Ph.D. obtained after defending a thesis and awarded by an academic institution for 12 years maximum. This period shall expire on the closing date of validation by the academic authorities (rectors).

The maximum period as referred to in paragraph 1 is extended for one year per childbirth occurring after obtaining the Ph.D. and defending a thesis.

Article 7

The "advanced grant (AGR)" instrument is only available to experienced researchers.

II- B.: CUMULATION RULES

Article 8

The PI applicant may only submit a single application:

- Through the "starting grant (SGR)" or "advanced grant (AGR)" instrument.

II- C.: SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

Article 9

The "FRFS-WELBIO" call for projects is opened according to a decision from the FRFS Board of Trustees.

The opening of this call **for projects** is posted on the F.R.S.-FNRS website <http://www.fnr.be/> and on the WELBIO website <http://welbio.org>.

Applications can only be submitted online, in English, through SEMAPHORE, the management platform dedicated to calls for **projects** at the following address <https://applications.frs-fnr.be/>.

All applications are subject to a procedure including two successive electronic validations on the dates that will be indicated when the call is published:

- a. The validation by the PI applicant, spokesperson responsible towards the Fund administration: it accounts as a confirmation that the application file is complete.
- b. The validation by the research unit (or Board of Education) of the academic institution to which the PI applicant is related – the Authority to which the application file is transferred once the PI applicant has given her/his consent. This authority can accept or refuse the application. The ultimate deadline for the validation by the rectors puts a final end to the call for applications.

Applications that have not been validated within the time-frame of the call for **projects** cannot be taken into account.

A mini-guide specifies the validation dates.

II- D.: RENEWAL

Article 10

The PI who benefitted from a funding for the first two years of the four-year programme may submit a renewal application for the last two years. The approval of the supervising authority of the hosting institution is required.

Article 11

The renewal application is submitted online, in English, through SEMAPHORE, the management platform dedicated to calls for projects at the following address <https://applications.frs-fnrs.be/> and includes two successive electronic validations detailed under article 9.

CHAPTER III: INSTRUMENTS "STARTING GRANT (SRG)" AND "ADVANCED GRANT (ARG)"

Article 12

The "advanced grant" (AGR) and "starting grant" (SGR) instruments are applicable for a two-year period, renewable for two years once after examination of the renewal application and within the limits of the financial resources of the FRFS-WELBIO.

The starting date of the AGR and SGR instruments is set for the 1st October and the ending date for the 30th September.

Article 13

An application made through the AGR instrument enables to seek a funding of 350k€ maximum per year.

An application made through the SGR instrument enables to seek a funding of 200 k€ maximum per year.

Article 14

The allocated fund through the AGR and SGR instruments can cover three types of expenses:

- Human resources
- Operating
- Equipment

Article 15

The categories falling within the scope of human resources¹ are detailed in the table **below**:

Categories	Activity	
	Part time	Full time
Non Postdoctoral Researcher	x	x
Postdoctoral Researcher	x	x
Technician	x	x
Short-term Postdoctoral Researcher ²		x

Personnel may be recruited for **minimum one month** and this period must not exceed the maximal duration of the funding application.

The identity of human resources is not required when submitting an application, however, the human resources category must be specified (see above table). Curricula vitae are not provided to the members of the Scientific Commission.

Article 16

The eligible operational expenses are the following:

- Consumables
- Costs for small scientific and technical equipment
- Costs for equipment maintenance and insurance
- Internal services
- Trainings

¹ *For all categories (Non Postdoctoral Researcher, Postdoctoral Researcher, Technician, Short-term Postdoctoral Researcher), the PI applicant shall contact the relevant service of her/his university to obtain an estimate of the total personnel costs involved based on the seniority scale.*
Amounts cannot be changed after request submission.

² *The Short term Postdoctoral Fellowship (CTP) is applicable for a maximal duration of 3 years. The Short term Postdoctoral fellow's stay should not exceed the duration of the research agreement. The CTP should be in an "international mobility situation" and should not have resided or carried out his/her main activity (job, studies...) in Belgium for more than 24 months during the 3 last years directly before the first stay as Postdoctoral fellow.*

- Missions
- Overhead costs³ (15% of the eligible expenses for personnel and operating costs excluding subcontracting).
- Subcontracting
- Softwares

Article 17

The eligible expenses for equipment are the following:

- Acquisition cost of cutting-edge scientific equipment essential for scientific research
- Amortisation costs of scientific and technical equipment essential for scientific research

Article 18

Teams' personnel other than the staff whose salary is included in the project may include amongst others:

- members of the teaching, scientific, administrative or technical staff pertaining to a university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium.
- members who benefit from a grant allocated by a Belgian or a foreign body promoting research.

No compensation can be granted to the PI or to the above-mentioned staff.

CHAPTER IV: EXAMINATION OF THE AGR AND SGR APPLICATIONS

Article 19

The evaluation process of the FRFS-WELBIO is detailed in appendix 2.

CHAPTER V: FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

Article 20

The funding granted is subject to a research agreement.

This agreement bears the signature of the following parties:

- **The principal investigator (PI)** commits to carrying out or pursuing the subsidised research and to devote at least 40% of his/her research time to the project;
- **The FRFS-WELBIO** commits to allocating grants covering the personnel costs, the operating and equipment costs, each year covered by the agreement;

³ Missions carried out by research staff for research purposes having their remuneration partially or fully or not included in eligible expenses.

- **Welbio** ensures full compliance with the valorisation provisions mentioned in the research agreement;
- **The host institution** provides the necessary logistics but made no commitment to take on this charge after the expiration date of the research agreement.

The agreement provides for unilateral termination clauses, which must in any case come with a period of notice.

Article 21

Grants for PI's are covering personnel, operating and equipment costs. Each of these sections may include subsections.

Transfers between subsections of the same section are unrestricted. However, prior written approval of the FRFS-WELBIO is required for transfers between sections.

Article 22

If agreements allow the PI to recruit scientific and technical staff, the recruitment cannot exceed the duration of the agreement and should be done in accordance with the scales and regulations in force within the hosting academic institution.

Article 23

The FRFS-WELBIO financial contribution is limited to the total amount mentioned in the agreement.

Article 24

The grants may be postponed to the fiscal year following the one for which they are granted. The remaining amount at the expiry of the research agreement will be recovered by the FRFS-WELBIO.

Article 25

At the end of the research agreement, after gathering the supporting documents, the FRFS-WELBIO will establish a final account and propose the annulment of any remaining budget.

The PI is always notified of this procedure and should react as soon as possible if he/she wants to amend the final account.

Article 26

The grants at the disposal of the PI's are managed by the financial department of the institution to which they are attached.

The financial department of the institution is invited to send the supporting documents to the F.R.S.-FNRS as soon as possible. The deadline for sending the documents being 5 months after the end of the convention, before the 1st March following the end of the research convention.

CHAPTER VI: OTHER PROVISIONS

Article 27

Any device acquired with a credit from the FRFS-WELBIO becomes the property of the host institution, to which the recipient of the credit is attached.

The purchase of any device must be done with due respect for the provisions defined by the relevant department of the host institution.

This institution commits, however, to putting the mentioned device at the disposal of the researcher for the time needed in order to pursue the research, which led to its purchase in the first place. In addition, the host institution commits not to alienating or lending the equipment without the approval of the FRFS-WELBIO.

In the event that the device was purchased with the provision of an additional credit, the Board of Trustees of the FRFS will settle the ownership issue with the competent authorities.

Article 28

Given that grants are exclusively allocated for the execution of a research programme approved by the FRFS-WELBIO, PI's are required to use them solely for that purpose. Grants or any remaining budget will be recovered by the FRFS-WELBIO as soon as they are not used for this purpose anymore.

Any fundamental change in the ongoing research programme must obtain the prior approval of the FRFS-WELBIO and of WELBIO

CHAPTER VII: RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE PI

Article 29

Any funded research programme must comply with the legal provisions in force regarding ethics.

Article 30

The PI must submit to the rules imposed by the academic authority and observe its regulations: the PI must also adhere to the collaboration agreement between the FRFS-WELBIO, WELBIO and the university to which the PI is related.

Article 31

Throughout the duration of the research programme approved by the FRFS-WELBIO, the PI is forbidden to pursue any research for third parties on the subject of the research programme unless prior written approval from the FRFS-WELBIO.

Article 32

The PI must send administrative reports to the FRFS-WELBIO:

➤ **An administrative progress report**

This report should summarise the scientific publications, filed patent applications, valorisation opportunities and the composition of the team. The report is due on the following dates:

- 1st period of 6 months: reports due at the latest 45 days after the period,
- 2nd period of 6 months: reports due at the latest 45 days after the period.

➤ **An administrative and scientific final report**

This report mentions the same elements as in the progress report accompanied by a short scientific report for the 2 years of research subsidised by the FRFS-WELBIO. The final report is due at the latest 45 days following the end of the research agreement.

Article 33

Pursuant to the “Regulation on the application of the Open Access policy to scientific publications resulting from research programmes supported by the F.R.S.-FNRS and its associated funds”, any scientific publication resulting partially or fully from the funding granted through the call for projects “FRFS-WELBIO” instrument shall mention the source of this funding as follows:

This work was supported by the Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique - FNRS for the FRFS-WELBIO under Grant(s) n° (agreement number).

The PI, WELBIO researcher, F.R.S.-FNRS researcher / member of the university does mention his/her double affiliation in each of her/his publications or communications dealing with the subject of research subsidised by the FRFS-WELBIO.

CHAPTER VIII: RESULTS VALORISATION

Article 34

WELBIO ensures, with assistance from the experts, the follow-up of the project progresses, maintenance of confidentiality, detection of results with a valorisation potential, and adherence to the necessary constraints regarding public communication of the project results for the protection of intellectual property.

Article 35

Intellectual property of results generated by programmes within the research convention framework is the exclusive property of the university of the French-Speaking Community of Belgium.

Article 36

The valorisation of intellectual property is the responsibility of WELBIO, which performs this task through a valorisation committee, including the university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium, a representative from the university's Technology Transfer Office, the PI and WELBIO.

The valorisation Committee may invite external people, subject to signature of a confidentiality agreement.

APPENDIX 1

Attached institutions giving access to the funding of the FRFS-WELBIO

AGR & SGR Instruments
Call for projects "FRFS-WELBIO"

INSTITUTIONS DE RATTACHEMENT / ATTACHED INSTITUTIONS

INSTRUMENTS SGR ET AGR

<p>Investigateur principal (PI)</p>	<p>► Universités de la Communauté française de Belgique (CFB) Universities of the French-speaking Community of Belgium (CFB)</p> <p>Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL) Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) Université de Liège (ULg) Université de Mons (UMons) Université de Namur (UNamur) Université Saint-Louis - Bruxelles (USL-B)</p>
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APPENDIX 2

Evaluation process of the FRFS-WELBIO

**AGR & SGR Instruments
Call for projects "FRFS-WELBIO"**

1. THE SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION

The evaluation and the selection are made in several steps under the responsibility of the Scientific Commission. These processes lead to a priority ranking which is submitted to the Board of Trustees of the FRFS. This ranking is also sent to the Board of Trustees of WELBIO which submits its comments and proposals to the Board of Trustees of the FRFS.

The Scientific Commission is made up of 13 internationally renowned experts in the domains of life sciences, among which:

- 9 members located outside Belgium or at least outside of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation;
- 4 members within the universities of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

A Guidance Committee of the FRFS-WELBIO, composed of 3 WELBIO academic administrators and of members from the Guidance Committee of the F.R.S.-FNRS skilled in the field, suggests a composition for the Scientific Commission. The FRFS-WELBIO Guidance Committee is chaired by one of these three WELBIO academic administrators.

The composition of the Scientific Commission is published on the F.R.S.-FNRS website <http://www.fnrs.be/> and on the WELBIO website <http://welbio.org/>.

2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation criteria are: the quality of the curriculum vitae, considering the team size and the funding already granted; the quality of the data of the project; the originality and feasibility of the project; the quality of the suggested team and the attention paid to valorisation.

For researchers who have already benefited from a funding from a previous call for projects, concrete actions toward a potential valorisation of the results will also be analysed.

These criteria are detailed in the table at the bottom of the document.

3. PROPOSALS EVALUATION

3.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The principle of a two-step procedure has been adopted: individual evaluations by experts of the first step, followed by a consolidation within the Scientific Commission.

During the first step, the proposals are reviewed by several experts. Each expert works individually and remotely through SEMAPHORE, and evaluates the proposal according to the evaluation criteria detailed in the table at the bottom of the document.

An expert usually has to review several proposals. However, the expert is not requested to establish any ranking between them, as each proposal must be reviewed independently. A marking grid of the proposals is provided in section 3.2, with the intention to standardise the grading.

The names of the experts linked to a given proposal remain undisclosed.

The FRFS-WELBIO sends a letter of appointment to each selected expert, whether it is an individual reviewer or a member of a Scientific Commission. This letter constitutes an agreement between the FRFS-WELBIO and the expert. It sets out the precise terms of the position: it imposes upon her/him the respect of a code of conduct and sets essential regulations in terms of confidentiality. It includes the description of tasks s/he is entrusted with, as well as the conditions for the remuneration and reimbursement of expenses.

Within the limits of the information provided by the experts, the FRFS-WELBIO has put in place a mechanism that ensures they do not face a conflict of interest regarding the proposals they are invited to evaluate. To that end, the experts must sign a declaration stating that there is no conflict of interest at the time of the appointment and that they commit to informing the FRFS-WELBIO in cases where such a conflict arises during the fulfilment of their tasks.

3.2 GRADING OF THE PROPOSALS

The experts (both individual experts and members of Scientific Commission) review the aspects to be considered for each evaluation criterion and classify the proposals as follows:

NOTES	
A+	<u>outstanding</u>
A	<u>excellent</u>
A-	<u>very good</u>
B+	<u>good</u>
B	<u>average</u>
B-	<u>weak</u>
C	<u>insufficient</u>

3.3 STEP 1 - INDIVIDUAL REVIEWS

Experts selection

- Potential experts registered on SEMAPHORE are identified according to their field of expertise, based on the descriptor fields selected that they may, if necessary, complete with unrestricted keywords and on the project.
- The applicant indicates up to 5 experts he/she does not wish to have as reviewer for reasons of a potential conflict of interest.
- For each proposal, the potential experts confirm whether or not they are competent to evaluate the project based on the title and on the summary of the project. They also confirm that they do not face a potential conflict of interest with regards to the evaluation of the given proposal.

Individual reviews procedure

- The projects are assessed by at least 2 scientific experts.
- The experts of a given proposal work individually, drawing up an evaluation report for this proposal using the electronic form provided.
- The individual evaluation report of the expert cannot be subsequently changed.

3.4 STEP 2 - SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION

Preselection

- The Board of Trustees of the FRFS and/or the members of the Scientific Commission may ask to interview the applicant during the Scientific Commission meeting.
- In such case, the Scientific Commission may proceed to a preselection of the projects, supported by the individual evaluations aiming at selecting the applicants shortlisted for a hearing.

Role of the "Rapporteurs" and the "co-rapporteurs"

- Each preselected project is assigned to a single "rapporteur" who is assisted by a "co-rapporteur" for the task. The "rapporteur" prepares the work and the debates of the Scientific Commission, through the elaboration of a consolidated evaluation draft report, based on individual evaluations. The consolidated evaluation draft report will afterwards be reviewed by the Scientific Commission. The "co-rapporteur" is not requested to draft any evaluation report; he will be able to express his opinion during the Scientific Commission meeting and add a different or complementary point of view.

Mission of the Scientific Commission

- In order to carry out their work, the Scientific Commission has the application files (on SEMAPHORE), individual evaluation reports and consolidated draft reports, prepared by the "rapporteurs" at their disposal.
- The Scientific Commission meets at the F.R.S.-FNRS (rue d'Egmont, 5 –1000 Brussels) to establish a consolidated ranking of the proposals and budget recommendations that will be suggested based on the evaluation criteria, which are provided to the applicants and the first step

reviewers and on the potential interviews of the applicants. The Scientific Commission transfers this ranking to the FRFS and WELBIO Boards of Trustees.

- The Scientific Commission validates the final evaluation report to be sent to the applicant.

3.5. STEP 3 - NOTIFICATION OF THE FUNDING DECISION

The decision on the funding will be taken by the Board of Trustees of the FRFS after gathering the WELBIO Board of Trustees proposals.

The granting or rejection decision, and possibly the amounts granted, is notified in writing to the applicant by the F.R.S.-FNRS Secretary-General and WELBIO Director-General.

The administrative staff of the FNRS transfers to the applicants:

- the final evaluation report and,
- the evaluation reports by the first step individual experts on an anonymous basis.

EVALUATION CRITERIA CALL FOR PROJECTS " FRFS-WELBIO "

QUALITY OF THE APPLICANT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adequacy between the level of education and experience of the applicant to carry out the suggested project. ➤ "Leadership" at global level. ➤ Productivity: number and quality of the publications considering the size of the team and the funds already granted. ➤ Adequacy of the time that will be devoted by the applicant to the project ("percent effort"). ➤ For "junior" researchers holding a Ph.D. for 12 years maximum: scientific independency of the applicant whose salary is guaranteed independently of the project throughout its duration. ➤ Other...
QUALITY OF THE PROJECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Does the project address an important issue? ➤ Questions to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project properly planned? • Is the project feasible? • Is the project based on a hypothesis? • Is the experimental approach appropriate? • Are the preliminary results on which the project is based quality results? • Is the presentation clear ? • If a "screening" approach is used, are the organisation and the analysis of the results explained? ➤ Adequacy between the proposed budget and the objectives of the project. ➤ Adequacy between the requested budget and the time devoted by the applicant to the project. ➤ Other...
ATTENTION PAID TO VALORISATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Scientific originality: does the project include new concepts or new approaches? Are the objectives original and innovative? Does the project question established paradigms? ➤ Technical originality, use of new technologies. ➤ Application potential of the results that could lead to the development of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • therapeutical products: cell therapy, vaccines, targets identification..., • diagnoses: identification of biological markers, genetical..., • production processes, • predictive models: in vivo, in vitro, • other. ➤ For researchers who already have benefitted from a funding from a previous call for projects, concrete actions toward a potential valorisation of the results.