

# **Statute of the IMPULZ Programme of the Slovak Academy of Sciences**

## **Article I Objectives**

The IMPULZ Programme is the flagship grant scheme of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, whose mission is to enable exceptional scientists to build research teams and conduct world-class research at the highest international level. The program is designed for ambitious researchers who have the vision and potential to become leaders in their field of study. The IMPULZ Programme provides them with the opportunity, resources, and institutional support to assemble their own research teams, define original research directions, and produce results with international impact. The principal outcome of the Programme is not merely the implementation of individual projects, but above all the development of new generations of scientific leaders who will permanently strengthen the scientific capacity of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and deepen its integration within the European Research Area. The IMPULZ Programme represents, above all, an investment in the future of the Slovak Academy of Sciences—in its people, culture, excellence, and long-term scientific identity.

## **Article II Basic rules and eligibility criteria of the Programme**

1. The Statute of the IMPULZ Programme of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (hereinafter referred to as the “Statute”) establishes the basic rules of the IMPULZ Programme, the application procedure, and the fundamental principles governing the evaluation and funding of projects under the IMPULZ Programme (hereinafter also referred to as the “Programme”).
2. The Programme is open to researchers regardless of nationality, country of residence, or country of employment.
3. Applicants for support under the Programme must hold a PhD degree or an equivalent scientific qualification as of the date of application submission.
4. Applicants must demonstrate relevant international research experience through one of the following:
  - a) completion of doctoral studies at an internationally recognised research institution abroad;
  - b) a long-term research residence outside the Slovak Republic lasting at least two years;

or

- c) other forms of international research experience comparable in scope, duration, and scientific significance to the options listed above.
5. Applicants must demonstrate an internationally recognised level of scientific productivity and standing within their field, for example through regular publication in leading peer-reviewed scientific journals, invitations to present research results at major international conferences, and experience in leading research projects as principal investigator.
  6. In the case of early-career researchers, applicants must demonstrate scientific independence from their doctoral supervisor, for example by providing a list of publications on which the supervisor is not a co-author.
  7. As a condition of eligibility, the proposed research topic must be clearly distinct from the applicant's doctoral dissertation research.
  8. The proposed research topic must constitute a substantial innovation for the host public research institution established by the Slovak Academy of Sciences (hereinafter also referred to as the "Host Institution"). This means that the topic must either be entirely new to the Host Institution or have been pursued there for no longer than three years. The evaluation process shall also take into account the topic's potential long-term contribution to the development of the Host Institution and the sustainability of the research after the completion of the project.
  9. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to lead the proposed research team and to secure competitive research funding on a long-term basis. During the first half of the project implementation period, the applicant shall be required to submit a proposal to the European Research Council (ERC) or to another prestigious international funding scheme of comparable standing and funding volume. The expected financial benefit to the Host Institution should be comparable to the funding provided under the IMPULZ Programme, thereby supporting the continuity of the research team beyond the duration of the project.

### **Article III**

#### **Preparation and submission of applications**

1. Applications to the IMPULZ Programme shall be submitted in response to a call announced by the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (hereinafter referred to as the "SAS"). Applications shall be submitted in English.
2. The application must contain all of the following mandatory components:
  - a) Principal Investigator Profile – a structured curriculum vitae of the applicant, including an overview of their scientific achievements, research activities, and outputs. The curriculum vitae must include a unique researcher identifier (ORCID,

- ResearcherID, or an equivalent identifier);
- b) Extended project abstract – a concise summary of the proposed research, its scientific objectives, and its expected contribution;
  - c) Full project proposal – a comprehensive description of the proposed research programme covering the entire project duration, including a detailed work plan for the first half of the project implementation period with clearly defined milestones;
  - d) Budget proposal – a detailed and duly justified budget covering the entire project implementation period;
  - e) Host institution confirmation – confirmation that the principal investigator will be employed on a full-time basis and that the Host institution will provide the personnel, facilities, infrastructure, and other resources necessary for the implementation of the project.
  - f) Applicant declarations – a declaration confirming compliance of the project with applicable ethical standards and legal requirements, consent to the processing of personal data, and a declaration that all information provided in the application is true, accurate, and complete.

#### **Article IV**

##### **Evaluation of applications**

1. All submitted applications shall be subject to a formal eligibility and completeness check, including an assessment of their compliance with the published application template and the instructions set out in the call. Applicants whose applications do not meet the prescribed formal requirements shall be invited to remedy the deficiencies within five working days of receiving the request for completion. Only applications that meet all mandatory formal requirements specified in the call proceed to scientific evaluation.
2. The scientific evaluation of applications shall be carried out by the IMPULZ Programme Evaluation Committee (hereinafter referred to as the “Committee”), established by a decision of the Presidium of the SAS. The powers and activities of the Committee are governed by the Statute and rules of procedure of the IMPULZ Programme Evaluation Committee.
3. The evaluation process shall consist of three stages.
4. In the first stage, the research proposal and the applicant’s profile shall be evaluated. The Evaluation Committee shall assess, in particular, the following criteria:
  - a) Quality of the research proposal – the scientific originality and innovativeness of the proposed research, as well as the timeliness and relevance of the research topic in an international context.

- b) Scientific Excellence of the Applicant – the applicant’s scientific achievements, research experience, qualifications, and capabilities; the quality and international impact of their scientific outputs; their ability to establish and lead a research team; their capacity to secure and successfully manage competitive research funding, including their potential to apply for ERC grants or other prestigious international funding schemes; as well as the extent of their national and international collaborations, their degree of scientific independence from their doctoral supervisor, and their leadership and organisational skills.
5. Based on the results of the evaluation, the Committee shall determine which applications proceed to the second stage. The number of applications advancing to the second stage shall be at least three times the planned number of projects to be funded under the Programme. Applicants whose applications do not advance to the second stage shall receive a brief written evaluation of their application.
  6. During the second stage, the full project proposals submitted as part of the applications shall undergo comprehensive scientific evaluation. Each application shall be evaluated by three independent international reviewers. On the basis of the reviewers’ assessments, the Committee shall subsequently conduct an overall evaluation of the projects.
  7. The highest-ranked applications from the second stage shall advance to the third stage. The number of applications advancing to the third stage shall be at least twice the planned number of projects to be funded. Applicants advancing to the third stage shall be invited to an interview before the Committee, conducted either in person or by videoconference, with representatives of the Host Institution participating in the interview.
  8. All applicants who advance to the second or third stage shall receive a written consensus evaluation of their application prepared by the member of the Committee designated as rapporteur, on the basis of the reviewers’ assessments. The reports of the external reviewers shall constitute internal work product of the Committee and shall not be disclosed to the applicant or the Host Institution.
  9. The final decision on the projects to be funded shall be made by the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences on the basis of the Committee’s recommendation.

## **Article V**

### **Project Funding**

1. The maximum funding available for a project shall be EUR 160,000 per year for a period of five years. The maximum grant amount awarded to a single project shall therefore be EUR 800,000. The exact amount of the grant awarded shall be determined individually on the basis of the approved project budget.

2. Eligible project costs shall be those expenses directly related to the implementation of the approved project activities that are necessary, efficient, reasonable, and verifiable. Eligible cost categories shall include:
  - a) personnel costs;
  - b) travel costs;
  - c) consumables and equipment;
  - d) research infrastructure;
  - e) costs of publishing and Open Access;
  - f) services.
3. The salary contribution funded from the project for the successful applicant acting as Principal Investigator shall be set at 1.5 times the salary corresponding to Grade 11, Step 14 of the Special salary scale for University teachers and Research and development employees.
4. Indirect costs of the project shall be borne by the Host Institution.
5. Grant funds shall be provided to the Host Institution on the basis of a Grant Agreement concluded between the Host Institution and the Slovak Academy of Sciences. The Grant Agreement shall also specify the conditions governing the use of the grant funds.

## **Article VI**

### **Interim and final evaluation of projects**

1. Continued funding of a project shall be conditional upon compliance with the reporting obligations throughout the entire project implementation period. The successful applicant acting as Principal Investigator shall be required to submit interim reports and a final report in accordance with the schedule specified in the Grant Agreement.
2. The interim report shall be submitted upon completion of the first half of the project implementation period. The interim report shall form the basis of the mandatory interim evaluation, the outcome of which shall determine whether project funding continues. The interim report must demonstrate progress towards the scientific milestones and objectives set out in the project proposal, provide evidence of scientific outputs achieved (including publications, conference presentations, and other outputs), and report on activities undertaken to secure additional external funding beyond the Slovak Academy of Sciences, in particular through the submission of a proposal to the European Research Council (ERC) or another prestigious international funding scheme of comparable standing and funding volume.
3. The interim report shall be evaluated by the Committee. As part of the interim evaluation, the Principal Investigator shall be required to deliver a presentation before the Committee, conducted in person or, in exceptional and duly justified cases, by

videoconference, with representatives of the Host Institution in attendance. On the basis of the Committee's recommendation, the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences shall decide either to continue funding the project, provided that the evaluation is positive and all applicable conditions have been fulfilled, or to terminate the funding prematurely in the event of a negative evaluation or failure to meet the prescribed conditions.

4. The final report shall be submitted no later than one month after the completion of the project. The final evaluation shall include a mandatory final presentation by the Principal Investigator before the Committee, conducted in person and attended by representatives of the Host Institution. On the basis of the Committee's evaluation, the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences shall issue a decision on whether the objectives of the project have been achieved.
5. For the purposes of both interim and final evaluation, only those publications and other project outputs shall be taken into account that contain an acknowledgement of support from the IMPULZ Programme or from prestigious international grant schemes awarded during the project implementation period and related to the activities of the research team.
6. The Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences may order an extraordinary interim evaluation of a project at any time during its implementation, either upon the recommendation of the Committee or on its own initiative. The provisions of this Statute governing interim project evaluation shall apply accordingly to any extraordinary interim evaluation.
7. The successful applicant acting as Principal Investigator must remain employed on a full-time basis by the Host Institution throughout the entire project implementation period.

## **Article VII**

### **Final Provisions**

1. This Statute of the IMPULZ Programme was approved by the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences at its meeting held on 14 May 2026 and shall enter into force on the day following its publication on the IMPULZ Programme website. Upon the entry into force of this Statute, the Statute of the IMPULZ Programme approved by the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences on 13 February 2020 shall cease to have effect.
2. The current version of the Statute shall be published on the IMPULZ Programme website.

Bratislava, 14 May 2026

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Sciences