

Italian Ministerial Decree 12 January 2012

NEW PRIN CALL FOR FUNDING PROPOSALS

This decree has been forwarded to the control bodies, for the required preventive examination; the effects of the decree are therefore subject to the positive outcome and to the subsequent analysis by the National Audit Office.



Il Ministro dell'Istruzione dell'Università e della Ricerca

The Ministry of Education, University and Research

IN CONSIDERATION OF Decree-Law No. 85 of 16 May 2008, transformed with modifications from law no. 121 of 14 July 2008, and institutive – among other things – of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR);

IN CONSIDERATION OF Italian Ministerial Decree No. 1152/Recognised of 27 December 2011, with which the new 2010-2011 PRIN call for funding proposals has been issued;

IT HAS BEEN DEEMED appropriate to introduce some changes to the call for funding proposals in question, in order to promote greater participation connected with specific meritocratic factors of success, though without renouncing the primary need of considering the PRIN intervention as an essential element for systemically reinforcing the national scientific bases, also in view of a more effective participation in the European initiatives related to the European Union Framework Programmes;

IT HAS THEREFORE BEEN DECIDED to mitigate the strictness of some settings of the call for funding proposals on the pre-selection modalities and on the characteristics of the projects, and to specify in greater detail the use limits of the resources in the course of issuing the Italian Ministerial Decree appointing the National Committee of Research Guarantors (CNGR) and taking into account the elimination of chapter 1683/10;

IN CONSIDERATION OF Italian Legislative Decree No. 165 of 30 May 2001 and subsequent amendments and additions;

DECREES

ART. 1

Purpose

- 1. This decree regulates the procedures for the Ministry of Education, University and Research funding of research projects of national interest, which are freely proposed in the 14 areas of study established in Italian Ministerial Decree No. 175 of 4 October 2000, by Universities.
- 2. The purpose of this call for funding proposals is the reinforcement of the national scientific bases, also in view of a more effective participation in the European initiatives related to the European Union Framework Programmes.
- 3. For the purpose of this decree, the following terms are used as indicated below:
 - Minister and Ministry refer to the Minister and Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), respectively;
 - CNGR refers to the National Committee of Research Guarantors, pursuant to article 21 of Law No. 240 of 30 December 2010;
 - CdS refers to the Selection Committee pursuant to Law No. 240 of 30 December 2010;
 - Universities refer to all Italian Universities and university institutions, both state and private, with any name, including special order high schools;
 - Research Organisations refer to all Public Research Agencies supervised by the Ministry;
 - teachers refer to permanent university teachers and non renewable positions as assistant professors;
 - researchers refer to researchers of university position and researchers of the position of the public research agencies supervised by the Ministry, also for a given time;
 - research organisations refer to all other non-profit public or private, national or international bodies whose main purposes consist in developing research activities as well, and in making known their results by means of teaching, publication or the transfer of technologies, and whose possible profits are entirely reinvested in research activities, in making known their results or in teaching.

ART. 2

Selection procedure

- 1. The selection procedure of the proposals is managed by individual universities and by the Ministry; in particular, the Ministry works by means of fourteen Selection Committees (CdS), one for each area of study, which are appointed with directorial decree, after the appointment of its members by the National Committee of Research Guarantors (CNGR), pursuant to the provisions of article 20 and article 21, paragraph 2, of Law No. 240 of 30 December 2010.
- 2. Each CdS is made up by three experts in research and in assessing research projects, one of whom works abroad. Before accepting the job, each expert must issue a declaration of commitment in relation to compliance with ethical principles, confidentiality and absence of incompatibilities.
- 3. The members of the CNGR and of the CdS shall under no circumstances participate in the projects included in this call for funding proposals, nor take part in the project pre-selection phase.
- 4. Participation in CdS is honorary. Each of the members shall only be reimbursed for the expenses that may have been sustained in accordance with the relevant legislation in force.
- 5. Office V of the General Directorate for Research Coordination and Development ensures the secretarial functions of the CNGR and of the CdS.

ART. 3

Characteristics of the projects

- 1. The research projects of national interest (PRIN) can be related to one of the 14 areas of study established in the abovementioned Italian Ministerial Decree No. 175 of 2000, and have characteristics (costs and number of units) within the following limits:
 - a. Areas of study 02-03-05-06-09: costs between € 800,000 and € 2,000,000; minimum number of five units, none of which shall have a cost below € 100,000;
 - b. Other areas of study: costs between € 400,000 and € 1,500,000; minimum number of two units, none of which shall have a cost below € 75,000;
- 2. The PRIN programme intends to finance projects that – due to their complexity and nature – normally require the collaboration of several scholars and several research organisations, either national or international, and with funding needs that exceed the regular availability of individual institutions, giving priority, in terms of assessment awarding, to those project that foresee international collaboration, without prejudice to the prohibition to use PRIN funds for paying fees to foreign scholars or research organisations, and which trace back to the objectives of Horizon 2020.
- 3. The nature, methodology and objectives of each project must be clearly defined, characterised by a high scientific level (comparable to the one of advanced research at international level) and reasonably completed within the project duration.
- 4. Each research project is developed in several operative units and must be coordinated by a teacher or researcher of university position, or by a non renewable assistant professor, called scientific Coordinator. In addition to the coordination activity, the scientific Coordinator must – through his/her own operative unit – be directly involved in the research. The discontinuance from service of the scientific coordinator, for any reason, before the issuing of the decree mentioned in the following article 7, paragraph 1, entails the project exclusion from the procedures of this call for funding proposals.
- 5. The coordination of each operative unit is entrusted to individuals having the qualifications indicated in paragraph 4, or to a temporary researcher, called unit Managers. However, within each project, an operative unit belonging to a public research Organisation related to the Ministry can participate, under the direct responsibility of a researcher belonging to the position of the Organisation itself.
- 6. The scientific Coordinator has the scientific, organisational and financial responsibility for the project, except for the responsibility of each research unit in the operational management of the contributions assigned, in compliance with the internal regulations of administration, finance and accounting.
- 7. Each teacher/researcher can participate in only one research project and in only one operative unit. The teachers/researchers acting as unit managers who did not submit the account rendering of the expenses according to the terms established in the 2007 PRIN application for loans may not participate in this call for funding proposals in any capacity.
- 8. The research projects of national interest last three years.
- 9. All the teachers/researchers who were included in co-financed research groups in the 2009 PRIN programme, specified in Italian Ministerial Decree No. 51/Recognised of 19 March 2010, may not participate in any capacity in the national research groups of the 2010-2011 PRIN programme.

ART. 4

Submission of the projects

- 1. Each research project of national interest shall be submitted by the scientific Coordinator.
- 2. The deadline to submit projects is 9th March 2012 at 5:00 p.m. for unit Managers (form B), and 16th March 2012 at 5:00 p.m. for scientific Coordinators (form A).
- 3. The projects shall be written in English and Italian, and shall be exclusively submitted over the Internet by the deadline indicated in paragraph 2. Within the five days following the deadline indicated in paragraph 2, a paper copy of the projects must be submitted, duly signed by the proposing parties, to the Rectors of the Universities to which they belong, and, in case of unit Managers of the Research Organisations, to the respective Chairmen. For subsequent verifications, the Ministry may ask for a copy of the document submitted.
- 4. Each University and each research Organisation can access the applications submitted by their own staff.
- 5. The applications shall be written by using forms/application (A and B) specially prepared by the Ministry, which are available on the net in the specific site. The applications must include, among other things, the following data:
 - a) project title, area of study and corresponding scientific-disciplinary sector;
 - b) name of the scientific coordinator and of the managers of the participating research units;
 - c) list of the teachers/researchers participating in the research project subdivided into operative units;
 - d) abstract of the research project;
 - e) suggested key words;
 - f) final objectives to be achieved by the project;
 - g) state of the art;
 - h) articulation of the project and execution times;
 - i) the role of each operative unit according to the objectives established and corresponding integration and collaboration modalities;
 - l) overall cost of the project, divided into the following items:
 - staff costs (share of the salary of employees and/or specially hired contract workers);
 - general costs (lump sum equal to 60% of the total staff cost, including the cost of the publications and of the missions in Italy);
 - equipment, tools and software products;
 - consulting and similar services;
 - other running costs;
 - m) expected results of the research, their interest for the progress of knowledge and possible application potentials;
 - n) elements and criteria proposed for verifying the results obtained.
- 6. The costs related to the employees already working at the universities and research organisations by the deadline of this call for funding proposals shall not exceed 30% of the project cost.

ART. 5

Pre-selection

- 1. The projects closed by the deadline indicated in article 4, paragraph 2, are subjected to pre-selection by the universities.

- 2. Each university subjects to pre-selection, at its own expenses, only those projects in which the Coordinator is a teacher/researcher belonging to the positions of the same university.
- 3. Once the pre-selection phase has been completed, which is performed in complete autonomy, but in compliance with the basic criteria mentioned in the following paragraphs 4, 5 and 6, each university takes full responsibility for identifying, by way of appropriate electronic data procedure prepared by CINECA and within the mandatory term of 15th June 2012, those projects that deserve admission to the MIUR assessment phase; each university may pre-select, at the scientific Coordinator level, a number of projects: a) not above 0.75% of the number of teachers and researchers present in their own positions at the time of the deadline of the call for funding proposals, with rounding up to the next whole number; b) or, if higher, a number not above the average (multiplied by 0.75, with rounding up to the next whole number) of the financed projects, at the scientific coordinator level, in the last three PRIN call for funding proposals. The projects that are not pre-selected by the university are excluded from access to the assessment phase performed by the MIUR. Similarly, if the pre-selection is not completed within the mandatory term of 15th June 2012, all the projects submitted by scientific coordinators related to the defaulting university shall be excluded from the assessment phase.
- 4. Each university must make use of anonymous reviewers, even foreigners, who can be selected among the experts belonging to the data bank of the Ministry (made available to each university by CINECA), according to the "peer review" criterion.
- 5. The reviewers must never be chosen among the participants of the projects included in this call for funding proposals, and, for each project, they must not belong to the positions of the same university or other universities or organisations involved in the same project.
- 6. The reviewers must make analytic judgements summarising them in final synthetic assessments expressed on predefined scales of numerical values, according to the following criteria:
 - innovativeness and originality of the proposed research and its methodology: up to 30 points;
 - scientific qualification, also in relation to the submitted project, of the scientific coordinator and of the unit managers, in relation to the assessment of their scientific activity in the last five years and to the competence in the sector object of the proposal: up to 25 points;
 - possible impact of the proposed research and potential achievement of significant progress of the knowledge with respect to the state of the art, with special reference, for the areas involved, to the subjects that are object of the Horizon 2020 programme: up to 25 points;
 - significant interactions among several parties, in particular among universities and/or between universities and public research organisations supervised by the MIUR; but also between universities and other national and international, public or private research organisations: up to 15 points;
 - coherence between the economic requests and the proposed research: up to 5 points.

ART. 6

Scientific assessment of the projects

- 1. The scientific assessment of the pre-selected research projects is managed – for each area of study – by the relative CdS, which works by using appropriate Internet-based instruments, making a comparative analytic judgment on the projects within its competence,

which is summarised in a final synthetic assessment expressed on a predefined scale of numerical values, according to the criteria indicated on paragraph 7 of the previous article 5.

- 2. Only those projects with a score above 80/100 can be usefully placed in the final classification indicated in the following paragraph 5, for the purpose of the possible admission to funding. Under no circumstance shall the attainment of a score at least equal to the abovementioned limit guarantee funding.
- 3. Only for the projects that can be usefully placed in the classification, in compliance with the provisions set forth in the previous paragraph 2, each CdS defines the final classification of projects, for the purpose of admission to funding.
- 4. In case of ex-aequo, and in order to ensure compliance with the overall expenditure limits per area of study defined in the following article 7, priority is given to those projects that have obtained the highest score according to the criterion established in article 5, paragraph 7, letter c.
- 5. Each CdS proposes to the Ministry, on the basis of the abovementioned classification, the list of the projects to be accepted for funding, indicating the proposed contribution for each of them, on the basis of the overall congruity determined, but also not below 80% of the amount requested or deemed necessary.
- 6. Any amount that may not be used by individual areas will increase the resources of the other areas, according to proportionality criteria with respect to the percentages defined in the following article 7, paragraph 3.

ART. 7

Approval of projects and extent of the funding

- 1. By way of a specific Directorial Decree, the list of financed projects is approved and made public.
- 2. After the publication of the decree mentioned in the previous paragraph, each proposing party will be able to examine, on the professor website, the assessment sheets corresponding to the submitted project, without prejudice to the anonymity of the reviewers.
- 3. For each project accepted for funding, and for each operative unit participating in such project, the MIUR guarantees funding amounting to 70% of the costs deemed reasonable by each CdS. Funding is assigned to the projects (in compliance with the provisions of the following article 10) guaranteeing, for each area of study, where possible (and taking into account the provisions of the previous article 6, paragraph 6), a share of resources equal to the historical mean of PRIN assignments of the last five years, according to the table shown below:

AREA 1	3.30%	€	5,790,249
AREA 2	7.50%	€	13,159,658
AREA 3	10.93%	€	19,178,008
AREA 4	3.05%	€	5,351,594
AREA 5	12.39%	€	21,739,754
AREA 6	18.97%	€	33,285,160
AREA 7	6.21%	€	10,896,196
AREA 8	6.15%	€	10,790,919

AREA 9	10.90%	€	19,125,369
AREA 10	6.29%	€	11,036,566
AREA 11	5.08%	€	8,913,475
AREA 12	3.18%	€	5,579,695
AREA 13	3.05%	€	5,351,594
AREA 14	3.00%	€	5,263,863

- 4. The cost recognised as reasonable for each project is communicated by the Ministry to the scientific Coordinator, who – within 15 days from the time of the request – modifies the costs of the individual operative units, communicating them to the Ministry.
- 5. After the modification, the Ministry communicates the share of funding to be paid to each operative unit to the Rectors of the Universities involved in the projects and to the Chairmen of the research organisations, each of them for the part within their competence.
- 6. The contribution for the execution of the projects is assigned in a single advance payment to the Universities or to the Head offices of the research units.

ART. 8

Management and account rendering of the projects

- 1. The scientific Coordinator has the scientific responsibility for the project and is therefore responsible for implementing the project according to the procedures and time limits indicated when submitting the application, without prejudice to the responsibility of individual research units, as regards the operational management of the contributions assigned to them.
- 2. For all the publications and other scientific products made within the research project, the group members must indicate that they have made use of funding within the scope of this call for funding proposals.
- 3. It is explicitly forbidden to use the PRIN resources for paying, even by using the resources corresponding to the "general costs" item, bonuses and/or allowances of any kind to the employees participating in the project; should situations contrary to this provision be detected, the entire contribution that had been previously paid to the research unit that did not comply with the prohibition will be recovered.
- 4. Account rendering is made by the unit Managers and by the scientific Coordinator (who, acting as officials, certify their truthfulness for all legal purposes), in compliance with the "cash basis" and by way of appropriate electronic data procedure, within 60 days from the completion of the project. For the necessary certification of compliance with legislation and regulations and with administrative provisions and procedures, each account rendering is also subjected to appropriate central internal audits by suitable structures of the universities and research organisations, or to a special certification issued by the competent Board of Auditors. The Ministry carries out some audits by sample of the account rendering, asking the Universities for the relative accounting documentation. In any case, the adequacy criterion of the sample (not less than 10% of the financed projects for an amount at least equal to 10% of the Ministry funding) must be ensured.
- 5. In particular, if the MIUR detects violations of laws and/or regulations on individual account rendering, without prejudice to civil and criminal responsibilities, the unit manager will be automatically excluded from subsequent PRIN calls for funding proposals (for a period of five years from the date in which the situation was detected); if the MIUR detects frequent irregularities in the audits or repeated violations of laws and/or regulations on

overall account rendering produced by the individual university or research organisation, the university or the research organisation will be excluded from subsequent PRIN calls for funding proposals for a period of five years from the date in which the situation was detected.

- 6. Any amounts paid to the universities or research organisations that must be recovered can be repaid, at any time, by deducting such amounts from any other disbursement or contribution to be assigned to the same University or Organisation, even by other way.

ART. 9

Scientific reports

- 1. Within the 90 days following the project completion date, the scientific Coordinator must write a conclusive scientific report on the execution of the activities and on the research results obtained, and forward it to the Ministry over the Internet.
- 2. The report must also include the detailed list of the publications and other scientific products made within the scope of the research project indicating the origin of funding.
- 3. In compliance with the regulations in force as regards the assessment of the university and research system, the ex-post assessment of research products is within the competence of the Italian Agency for the Assessment of University and Research (ANVUR, for its acronym in Italian), which will perform it according to the times, forms and modalities established by such Agency.

ART. 10

Financial cover

- 1. For the purposes indicated in article 1, the MIUR co-finances the research projects of relevant national interest, with the overall maximum limit of € 175,462,100.00, before the share for the operation of the CNGR and of the CdS, to the extent established by the legislation in force, according to the provisions of article 21 of law 240/2010.
- 2. The procedures of this call for funding proposals are managed by the General Directorate for Research Coordination and Development - Office V - PRIN Sector.
- 3. The person in charge of the procedure is Eng. Mauro Massulli - General Directorate for Research Coordination and Development - Office V - ufficioprin@miur.it.

ART. 11

Request for information and forms

- 1. For information and clarifications, contact the Research Offices of universities and organisations, as well as the General Directorate for Research Coordination and Development, Office V - PRIN Sector.

- 2. On the site <http://prin.miur.it/>, you can find the forms as well as the necessary information (explanatory note) for submitting the applications indicated in this call for funding proposals.
- This decree is sent to the National Audit Office for registration and publication on the Ministerial web site: <http://prin.miur.it/> .

Rome, 12 January 2012

Signed by THE MINISTER