

5th Call for two interdisciplinary Dioscuri Centres of Scientific Excellence in Poland

Preamble

The Dioscuri Programme aims to strengthen international standards of scientific excellence in Central and Eastern Europe and to support the on-going transformation processes in the EU-13 countries. The person-centred programme was initiated by the Max Planck Society (MPG) and is funded by the German Federal government as well as the government of the respective host country: Poland and the Czech Republic.

A Dioscuri Centre (DC) goes beyond the scope of a project grant. It is built around a distinguished researcher position and is expected to become a lighthouse of scientific excellence according to international quality standards.

Each Centre is funded with up to EUR 300,000 p.a. for five years and can be extended for another five years after successful external evaluation.

Funding for the programme is provided by the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR), funding for the Centres of the fifth call is provided by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MNiSW).

The programme is jointly managed by the Max Planck Society (MPG) and the National Science Centre Poland (NCN).

Eligible applicants

The 5th Call for two **interdisciplinary** Dioscuri Centres of Scientific Excellence in Poland is directed at internationally competitive and scientifically outstanding **researchers with a proven ability to conduct innovative research independently from all disciplines and all nationalities**, and who:

- completed a PhD no longer than 15 years prior to the application deadline¹;
- have proven international mobility over the course of their scientific career;
- pursued their PhD and Post-doc(s) at different research institutions;
- have not been employed at the Host Institution during the last three years prior to the application deadline;
- provide an excellent interdisciplinary research concept (10 pages excl. references and budget plan) with significant impact on at least two or respectively three scientific disciplines² within these domains:

¹ Female applicants can add 18 months for each child, male applicants can add the number of months of parental leave if applicable.

² Lists of the disciplines for each domain and auxiliary panels of disciplines to be found here:

<https://www.ncn.gov.pl/en/finansowanie-nauki/panele-ncn>



Humanities, Social Sciences and Art Sciences (HSS)
Life Sciences (LS)
Physical Sciences and Engineering (STEM)³

- who will closely cooperate with a scientific partner (from a German university or research institution) independently selected by the Applicant and will establish an international Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) for his or her Dioscuri Centre.

The Leader of a Dioscuri Centre will receive:

- a full-time employment contract with a competitive salary for the DC Leader at the Host Institution; with long-term perspective of permanent employment following the Dioscuri funding;
- annual funds in PLN equivalent to EUR 300.000 provided by NCN, that will be administered by the Host Institution (including an annual salary for DC Leader in PLN equivalent to up to EUR 100.000);
- min. annual funds in PLN equivalent to EUR EUR 25.000 provided by the Host Institution;
- office and/or laboratory space as well as research equipment;
- a mentor to navigate the on-boarding process at the Host Institution over the first year of establishing the DC;
- full-time Centre Coordinator (English language skills required) as well as administrative and financial support by the Host Institution
- relocation support (depending on the country where the DC leader is relocating from)
- dual career opportunities and child care support (if applicable)

Application procedure

The **application** must be submitted via [online platform](#) until **15 September 2026**. An application form and the guidance on how to prepare and submit the application on the online platform can be found [here](#).

Applications must be in English and consist of:

- a research proposal (max. 10 pages + references and indicative budget plan),
- a declaration of the Applicant (Attachment 1),
- a declaration of the Polish Host Institution (Attachment 2) ⁴,
- a declaration of the German Partner (Attachment 3),⁵
- names of six reviewers with an indication of possible conflict of interest,
- a signed application form.

³ Lists of the disciplines for each domain and auxiliary panel of disciplines to be found here:

<https://www.ncn.gov.pl/en/finansowanie-nauki/panele-ncn>

⁴ Eligible as Host Institutions are research units specified in article 7 section 1,4,5,6 and 6b of the Act of 20 July 2018 Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2018 no 1668) hereinafter referred to as "research institution". Consortia of research institutions are not eligible in the call for Dioscuri – Centres of Scientific Excellence.

⁵ Eligible as German Partners are researchers employed at all German universities and research institutions, i.e. Max Planck Institutes <https://www.mpg.de/institutes>.



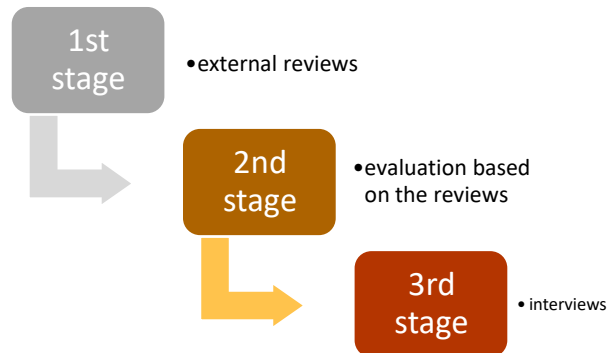
The research proposal must contain the following information:

1. five most important publications
2. disciplines to be combined in the research concept
3. short abstract (1500 characters incl. spaces)
4. five most important publications of the German Partner (attached as PDFs)
5. indicative budget
6. requirements from the Host Institution
7. CV of the Applicant
8. CV of the German Partner
9. complete list of publications, invited lectures of the Applicant and of the German Partner
10. justification for choosing the Host Institution in Poland
11. justification for selecting the partner from Germany
12. names and affiliations of six international experts who can judge the quality of the application. Confirmation that there are no conflicts of interest.
13. research concept containing a short introduction, the goals and the interdisciplinary approach, methodology and expected scientific (and if applicable societal) impact, a work plan with contributions of both Dioscuri Leader and German Partner, short descriptions of expected synergies and the added value of the international cooperation), description (and justification) of the implementation of the research program, such as new research groups and personnel, joint training measures, conferences etc. (overall length incl. references max. 15 pages).

Evaluation proces

1. The Dioscuri Programme is governed by a Scientific Committee (hereinafter referred to as 'Dioscuri Committee') which is responsible for the overall review and selection process for the establishment of Dioscuri Centres of Scientific Excellence. It is composed of renowned scientists from European universities and European research institutions from outside Poland that have been nominated by the President of MPG and by the Director of NCN. Furthermore, two renowned Polish scientists are members of the Dioscuri Committee in a consultative capacity.
2. The review of all eligible applications is based solely on the scientific merit of the applicant and the quality of their research concept. Members of the Dioscuri Committee will maintain objectivity of judgement and impartiality, apply uniform assessment criteria and avoid conflicts of interest.
3. All decisions made by the Dioscuri Committee are binding collective decisions. The proceedings of the Dioscuri Committee will remain confidential, individual feedback will be provided.

4. Selection procedure



- All applications are subject to external peer review in the first stage.
 - In the second stage the Dioscuri Committee will assess the proposals based on the external reviews and
 - select applicants for interviews in the third stage of the selection process.
4. The research concept will be evaluated against qualitative criteria set out in the evaluation form, covering its excellence, ground-breaking nature, innovativeness, interdisciplinarity, impact, and coherence.
 5. Interviews will take place in NCN headquarters in December 2026. Potential Leaders and representatives of a Host Institution will be asked to meet the Dioscuri Committee for an in-person interview.
 6. The final applicants selected through the interviews receive recommendations for the establishment of their DC from the Dioscuri Committee.
 7. All applicants are informed about the outcome of the Committee's decisions after second and third stage of the selection process by MPG and NCN and receive the reviews and justification of the decision.
 8. Final decisions will be announced by the end of December 2026.

Post-evaluation procedures

1. Upon the approval of the proposal, a **grant agreement** will be drawn up between the NCN, the Host Institution and the leader on the basis of a standard format provided by the NCN.
2. After the selection by the Scientific Committee, each designated leader of a DC and NCN representatives will **negotiate** specific conditions, e.g., provision of infrastructure, career perspectives etc., with the representatives of the respective Polish Host Institution. Negotiations should be concluded within several months of the Committee's final decision. Ideally, operations of the DC should start within a year after the funding decision. The precise starting date of the DC will be set during the negotiations.

Funding

1. The funding period for each DC comprises five years beginning from the date of the establishment of the respective DC.
2. The budget of each DC transferred to the respective Host Institution will be a PLN equivalent to EUR 300,000 per year.

3. Upon positive evaluation of a DC in its fourth year, and subject to the availability of funding, the respective DC may be extended for another five years.
4. Eligible costs from the DC budget (including the additional budget provided by the Host Institution):
 - i. Salary of the Leader of the DC: up to the PLN equivalent of EUR 100,000 per year;
 - ii. Salaries of the DC research team and doctoral scholarships;
 - iii. Costs related to the research conducted at the DC (consumables, travel, publications, outreach activities etc.);
 - iv. Costs of joint activities with the German Partner.
5. The DC budget (including the additional budget provided by the Host Institution) cannot be used for expenses related to:
 - i. Infrastructure;
 - ii. Scientific equipment⁶;
 - iii. Administration and overheads⁷.

Such costs must be fully covered by the Host Institution.

6. Relocation costs for the leader of the DC (in case she/he needs to move to the city where the DC is established) shall be covered in a single lump-sum payment derived from the first annual contribution of the Host Institution. The amount of the lump-sum payment depends on the current residency of the DC Leader and the number of family members accompanying her/him to Poland⁸.
7. The Leader of the DC will be eligible, and encouraged, to apply for additional funding from NCN and other Polish and European/international sources.

⁶ Research equipment understood (in accordance with the definition by the Central Statistical Office of Poland, GUS) as sets of testing, measurement and laboratory apparatuses of limited application and high technical parameters (usually several orders of magnitude higher than typical apparatus used for production or utilization purposes), which constitutes the tangible assets of the Host Institution, according to the accounting policies adopted by it. Small devices that cost up to EUR 2,500 per item may be paid from the DC budget (up to a total of EUR 10,000 p.a.).

⁷ Salaries of the administrative and financial staff (performing services related to personnel, accounting, legal issues, including the outsourcing of accounting to an accountancy office), costs of renovation of facilities, costs of adapting/upgrading facilities, so that they can meet the needs of the research tasks, fees and rent for the use of facilities, property taxes, etc., utilities (cost of electricity, heating, heating gas, water, as well as other transmission fees, sewage, etc.), costs of cleaning, janitorial and security services to facilities, cost of non-life insurance, handling and administrative fees, cost of banking services, including opening a separate account for the grant, bank fees, costs of external audits.

⁸ Relocation costs will be covered in the amount of:

- i. Leader of the DC currently living in Poland: EUR 2,000 (spouse or civil partner: + EUR 500; per child + EUR 250);
- ii. Leader of the DC currently living in other European Countries* : EUR 4,000 (spouse or civil partner: + EUR 1,000; per child + EUR 500);
- iii. Leader of the DC currently living in non-European Countries: EUR 8,000 (spouse or civil partner: + EUR 2,000; per child + EUR 1,000).

*European countries include: EU member states, Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Holy See, Iceland, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, FYR Macedonia, Monaco, Montenegro, Moldova, Norway, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the UK.

Funding Conditions

1. The Dioscuri Programme in Poland is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR), funding for the Centres of the 5th Call is provided by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MNiSW) through the National Science Centre Poland.
2. The funds for a Dioscuri Centre are transferred to the Host Institution on the basis of a written grant agreement. Before signing the agreement, the leader of the DC and the Host Institution have to provide an updated budget table including the starting date of the DC.
3. The rules for annual and final reporting requirements will be based on the written agreement.
4. The funding period is five years beginning from the date of the establishment of the respective Dioscuri Centre. Upon positive merit-based and formal evaluation and subject to the availability of funding, the funding period may be extended once for another five years.

Merit-based Evaluation of the Dioscuri Centre after 4 years

After approximately four years the Dioscuri Center will undergo an in-depth evaluation by external experts during an on-site panel meeting, which forms the basis for a decision to continue the Dioscuri Center for another five years (availability of funds provided). The final decision on the extension will be made by the Dioscuri Scientific Committee and NCN unless formal criteria are not met.

Partner from Germany / Scientific Advisory Board

1. Applicants shall designate a senior scientist affiliated with a German university or research institution as a DC partner (a natural person, not an organization).
2. The German Partner shall be well suited to advise on the scientific and structural development of the DC. Applicants are responsible for identifying and securing a German Partner.
3. Joint activities with the German Partner are eligible for funding within the Dioscuri Programme and might take various forms (e.g., collaboration on research projects, exchange of PhD-students or post-docs, mutual research visits, joint organization of workshops/conferences etc.)
4. Each DC is encouraged to establish an international Scientific Advisory Board. Regulations concerning the establishment of a Scientific Advisory Board will be provided together with the recommendations from the Dioscuri Committee.

Webinars for researchers

To provide a comprehensive overview of the Dioscuri Programme funding and to support potential applicants in preparing their application, we will offer webinars during the call period. The webinars are scheduled on 21 May 2026, from 16.00 to 17.30 (CET) and on 16 June 2026 from 16.00 to 17.30 (CET). [Webinars registration](#).

Webinars for researchers - Dioscuri
5 - Centres of Scientific Excellence

