



OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

for the use of financial resources under

POLISH – NORWEGIAN RESEARCH FUND



**THE INFORMATION PROCESSING CENTRE
IN WARSAW**

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Introduction

According to Article 8 and Annex C of the *Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2004 - 2009*, concluded on the basis of the *Agreement of 14 October 2003 between the Kingdom of Norway and European Community on the Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the period 2004 – 2009* and the *Operational Programme for the use of financial resources under the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism* approved by the Council of Ministers on 26 July 2005, there has been elaborated the *Operational Programme on the implementation of Polish – Norwegian Research Fund*.

The Operational Programme - RF¹ will be financed under Polish – Norwegian Research Fund (RF) established within the allocation of the Priority No. 6 *Academic Research* of the *Operational Programme - the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms*.

Financial resources assigned for Polish – Norwegian Research Fund will be granted by the Norwegian side (Norwegian Financial Mechanism) and Polish side (state budget). According to *Guidelines for Polish – Norwegian Research Fund* approved by the European Committee of Council of Ministers on 14 April 2006, the responsibilities of the Fund Operator will be executed by the Information Processing Centre (IPC) in Warsaw.

The objective of the Polish Norwegian Research Fund is to establish and strengthen cooperation between Polish and Norwegian researchers focusing primarily on environmental and health research.

¹ Operational Programme for the use of financial resources under Polish – Norwegian Research Fund

The Fund² will provide grant assistance for projects, up to 2.000.000 euro, with preference given to large projects from area of protection of the environment³ and healthcare⁴. Projects implemented under the *Operational Programme - RF* will be complementary with reference to the projects that have been already implemented under the *Operational Programme - EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms* and will contribute strengthening the co-operation between Poland and Norway.

Financial resources of Polish – Norwegian Research Fund under the *Operational Programme - RF* will be used for the purpose of the implementation of the projects within two activities:

Activity 1. Research projects

Activity 2. Workshops and seminars

In Poland the use of resources provided within the framework of the Fund will play a supplementary role for actions implemented with the use of the EEA/ Norwegian Financial Mechanisms.

Applications to the *Operational Programme for the use of financial resources under Polish – Norwegian Research Fund* shall be submitted in English on the specific application form elaborated by the Fund Operator (IPC) (form different than the standard application used under the *Operational Programme - EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms*).

Costs stipulated in the application form will be given in euros.

In order to launch the Fund, Information Processing Centre has filled in and submitted the application to the National Focal Point.

² Polish – Norwegian Research Fund

³ including: projects concerning research on environmental management, economy as a factor of climatic changes, biological diversity and its protection, optimisation of the use of natural resources, recircular economy and other means of technical protection of the environment, arctic research, energy including the alternative sources of energy, forestry and water, in particular water scarcity

⁴ including: projects concerning research on epidemiology, molecular background and risk factors influencing the processes of obsolescence, pathogenesis, genetics and immunology of cancerous diseases, innovative and genetic medicines, medicine's impact on the improvement of health condition and quality of public life, environmental conditions and its' impact on the health threats, health system and health services research and telemedicine

IPC, acting as the Fund Operator, will become the entity responsible for the proper process of Fund implementation including but not limited to the publication, promotion, preparing call for proposals and the process of projects' selection, signing agreements with beneficiaries, reimbursements of payments to the beneficiaries, monitoring and control of projects (administrative and financial tasks) and report on irregularities.

The implementation and management of individual projects under the *Operational Programme – RF* will lie within the responsibility of the beneficiaries.

1. Overall objective

The objective of the *Operational Programme – RF* is to establish and strengthen cooperation between Polish and Norwegian researchers focusing primarily on environmental and health research.

Implementation of the projects of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, that will contribute to the academic research development and the rise of standard of living in the social and economic context both in Poland and Norway. Financial support granted to joint research and development projects will aim to establish fruitful and long-term co-operation between both countries.

In order to achieve the objective of the *Operational Programme – RF*, the total amount of 14, 594 mln euro will be disbursed.

2. Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of grant assistance under *the Operational Programme – RF* will be research institutions that carry out regular academic research or development activities (according to the definition set out in the act of 8 October 2004 on the rules of financing the science (Official Journal No. 238, pos. 2390) and non - governmental organisations constituted as legal entities in Poland and operating in the public interest, submitting the projects in the partnership with the Norwegian side.

The priority shall be given to the entities eligible to apply for assistance under the Priority no. 6 *Academic Research* of the *Operational Programme – EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms*, such as:

- primary organisational units of schools of higher education or schools of higher vocational education, as understood by provisions of those schools' statutes;
- research centres of the Polish Academy of Sciences;
- research and development entities/institutions;
- non-governmental organisations.

3. Description of activities

3.1 Activity 1. Research projects

The objective of the activity is to support implementation of joint⁵ research projects and projects related to technological progress realised by Polish and Norwegian researchers. This goal may be achieved by making resources under the RF available for research institutions so that researchers from both countries could carry out joint research in that field.

Within this activity, beneficiaries may apply for grant assistance for research projects under two scientific fields:⁶

1. Protection of the environment, including:

projects concerning research on environmental management, economy as a factor of climatic changes, biological diversity and its protection, optimisation of the use of natural resources, recircular economy and other means of technical protection of the environment, arctic research, energy including the alternative sources of energy, forestry and water, in particular water scarcity.

2. Healthcare, including:

projects concerning research on epidemiology, molecular background and risk factors influencing the processes of obsolescence, pathogenesis, genetics and immunology of cancerous diseases, innovative and genetic medicines, medicine's impact on the improvement of health condition and quality of public life, environmental conditions

⁵ In the time of submission of the application, the role of Norwegian partner in the project may be certified by the letter of intent, however, at the moment of signing the grant agreement under RF, it should be confirmed by the partnership agreement, determining rights and duties of both contracting parties.

⁶ according to Guidelines for Polish – Norwegian Research Fund and strategic research fields as well as priority research directions included in National Framework Programme

and its' impact on the health threats, health system and health services research and telemedicine.

Upon the previous request of Polish or Norwegian authority (Fund Operator or Research Council of Norway) the scope of eligible projects may be extended by the Board of the Fund.

Eligible costs:

Eligible costs shall be defined in line with *Detailed eligibility provisions – expenditures. The EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2004-2009.*

The above may be expenses borne for the following:

1. Preparatory work, including cost of tender dossier preparation, tender preparation expenses, cost of public procurement publication,
2. Financial fees, taxes and overheads, such as VAT tax (only if the tax cannot be recovered),
3. Expenditure on project implementation, including:
 - costs of research;
 - costs of purchase and installation of research and scientific equipment;
 - costs of purchasing computer software required for project's realization;
 - costs of domestic and foreign trips;
 - costs related to the publication of projects results;
 - project's administration and finance related service;
 - translation costs of the application form and supporting documents.
4. Costs of information and project promotion.
5. Costs directly connected with Project (academic research) outside mother institution of the researchers.
6. Costs connected with mobility of research team's members if necessarily for project's purpose

Projects implemented by research institutions cannot involve investment and renovation activities, but should be limited to academic research.

Types of beneficiaries

The preference shall be given to the research institutions set out in the act of 8 October 2004 on the rules of financing the science (Official Journal No. 238, pos. 2390), in particular to:

- primary organisational units of schools of higher education or schools of higher vocational education, as understood by provisions of those schools' statutes;
- research centres of the Polish Academy of Sciences;
- research and development entities/institutions;
- non-governmental organisations.

Co-financing level:

According to *Guidelines for Polish – Norwegian Research Fund*, the following co – financing levels shall apply:⁷

- a) up to 60% of total eligible expenditure with the exception of the situation referred to in the point b)⁸,
- b) co – financing up to 90%; in case if 10% or more total eligible expenses will be financed from the budget of public finance entity.

Within the activity 1 – Research projects - beneficiaries may receive grant assistance under RF up to 2.000.000 euro for the realisation of the individual research project.

Monitoring indicators for activity 1:

While implementing their projects, beneficiaries should demonstrate accomplishment of product and result indicators according to indicators defined in the appendix no. 1 to the Operational Programme for the use of financial resources under Polish - Norwegian Research Fund.

⁷ depending on the source of the project co – financing on the side of beneficiary

⁸ admitted assistance shall take into account conditions for admissibility of the state aid

3.2. Activity 2 Workshops and seminars

The objective of this activity is to finance workshops and seminars facilitating co-operation of Polish and Norwegian researchers under the priority areas of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.⁹

Projects related to workshops or research seminars may be awarded grant assistance up to 20.000 euro. Workshops and seminars must be organised in the co-operation with the Norwegian side, whose participation in the project should be confirmed by the letter of intent.

Under the above – mentioned amount it is possible to cover all the expenses directly related to the organisation of workshops and seminars.

Eligible costs:

Eligible costs under this activity will be defined in line with *Detailed eligibility provisions – expenditures. The EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2004-2009*, however, they need to be related directly to the organisation of workshop or seminar. Among costs related to the project implementation there are the following expenses: facility rental costs, lecturer remuneration costs (up to 100 euro per lesson hour of the lecture per one lecturer), general costs related to organisation of workshop or seminar.

Beneficiaries:

Under this activity of the *Operational Programme* the preference shall be given to Polish research institutions enumerated in the act of 8 October 2004 on the rules of financing the science (Official Journal No. 238, pos. 2390), that is:

⁹ Protection of the environment, Promotion of sustainable development through improved resource use and management, Conservation of European cultural heritage, including public transport and urban renewal, Human resource development through, inter alia, promotion of education and training, strengthening of administrative or public service capacities of local government or its institutions, as well as strengthening of democratic processes that support it, Health and childcare, Academic research, Implementation of Schengen acquis, support of National Schengen Action Plans, as well as strengthening the judiciary, Protection of the environment, with a particular emphasis on strengthening the administrative capacity to implement relevant acquis crucial for the execution of investment projects, Regional policy and cross-border activities

- primary organisational units of schools of higher education or schools of higher vocational education, as understood by provisions of those schools' statutes;
- research centres of the Polish Academy of Sciences;
- research and development entities;
- non-governmental organisations.

Co-financing level:

According to *Guidelines for Polish – Norwegian Research Fund*, the following co – financing levels shall apply:¹⁰

- a) up to 60% of total eligible expenditure with the exception of the situation referred to in the point b)¹¹,
- b) co – financing up to 90%; in case if 10% or more total eligible expenses will be financed from the budget of public finance entity.

Within this activity maximum grant assistance for the project under the RF accounts for 20.000 euro.

Monitoring indicators for the activity 2 – Workshops and seminars:

While implementing their projects, beneficiaries should demonstrate accomplishment of product and result indicators according to indicators defined in the appendix no. 1 to *the Operational Programme for the use of financial resources under Polish - Norwegian Research Fund*.

4. Financial plan

4.1. Budget

According to *Guidelines for Polish – Norwegian Research Fund*, approved by the European Committee of the Council of Ministers on 14 April 2006, **in order to implement projects in all the activities of the Operational Programme – RF the total amount of 14,594 mln euro under Polish – Norwegian Research Fund will be**

¹⁰ depending on the source of the project co – financing on the side of beneficiary

¹¹ admitted assistance shall take into account conditions for admissibility of the state aid

disbursed, including 12,3 mln euro under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and 2,294 mln euro from the state budget (the contribution of the Polish side to the Fund). Resources disbursed under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism will be transferred to the Information Processing Centre (Fund Operator) account, every year. The contribution of the Polish side will be send to IPC once a year. Taking into account the operation period of *the Operational Programme – RF*, that is, years: 2006 – 2008, and assuming that first call for proposals will take place in 2007, the breakdown of allocation of Polish – Norwegian Research Fund in the following years is described in the chart below.

Allocations of Polish – Norwegian Research Fund in the years 2007 – 2008 for the implementation of the projects under *the Operational Programme – RF* (in mln euros):

Source	2007	2008	Total
Norwegian Financial Mechanism	6,8330	5,4670 ¹²	12,3000
Contribution of the Polish side (state budget)	1,2740	1,0200 ¹³	2,2940
Total allocation of Polish – Norwegian Research Fund	8,1070	6,4870	14,5940

Annual allocations shall be divided into the assistance for the activities relating to research projects as well as workshops and seminars in all the priority areas stipulated in the *Priority Academic Research of the Operational Programme – the EEA/ Norwegian Financial Mechanisms*, with special attention given to areas pointed out in *Guidelines for Polish – Norwegian Research Fund*.

¹²in the year 2008 the total amount of 5,4670 mln euro will be disbursed so that the allocation of NFM is fully used

¹³in the year 2008 the total amount of 1,0200 mln euro will be provided from the state budget, so that the allocation of NFM, that is ensured for the RF, is fully used

Breakdown of allocation of Polish – Norwegian Research Fund (in mln euros) on particular activities is described in the chart below:

Activity	% of allocation for the activity	Research Fund	2007	2008
Academic research	90%	13,1346	7,2965	5,8381
Workshops and seminars	10%	1,4594	0,8105	0,6489
TOTAL	100%	14,5940	8,1070	6.4870

Breakdown of allocations on particular activities within *the Operational Programme – RF* has been suggested by the Fund Operator (IPC) and results from the recognition of the needs of research institutions’ in terms of the implementation of given types of projects and Intermediary’s and Operator’s experiences in the field of the realisation of projects co-financed under the European funds.

In the course of the implementation of *the Operational Programme – RF*, the reallocation of financial resources among different activities has been allowed. Decision on the reallocation of resources shall be taken by the Board of the Fund upon the written request of the Joint Fund Secretariat.

4.2. Co - financing level

At the level of Processing Information Centre (contribution elements of the Fund)

In the case of *the Operational Programme for Polish - Norwegian Research Fund* co-financing level stipulated in the article 3.2 of the *Rules and Procedures on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2004-2009* and *the Operational Programme – the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms* (up to 60%, up to 85% and above) refer only to the Fund Operator, that is IPC. They do not concern the beneficiary of *the Operational Programme - RF*. The required 15% of national co-financing, so called contribution of the Polish side to the resources under the

Norwegian Financial Mechanism, constitutes an element of Polish - Norwegian Research Fund and shall be ensured at the level of Fund Operator - IPC (resources from the state budget – the promise of the Minister of Science and Higher Education). Due to that fact, co-financing level for the projects under *the Operational Programme - RF* may differ from co-financing level fixed for large projects under *the Operational Programme – the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms* (the former is being fixed by the Fund Operator – IPC).

At the level of the Programme beneficiary

Co – financing level for the individual projects under Polish – Norwegian Research Fund shall be fixed individually by IPC on the basis of detailed application appraisal and shall be included in the grant agreement. While fixing co-financing level, the following factors need to be taken into account: kind of project, project impact, legal status of the beneficiary as well as effectiveness of the expenditures.

Obtainable co-financing level depends on the source of project co-financing by the beneficiary¹⁴. The maximum co-financing level under the RF is 90% of total eligible costs of the project, when at least 10% of the beneficiary's contribution comes from the budget of the public finance entity.

The beneficiary's contribution must be given in the monetary units, it cannot be in-kind contribution.

For the projects financed on the side of beneficiary from the budget of public finance entity or other financial resources (e.g. private), the grant rate will be calculated on the basis of the following formula:

100% of the total eligible costs – x% of resources from budget of public finance entity
- y% of other financial resources = z%
of donors' grant rate, whereby x% is > or = 10%.

¹⁴ In compliance with the *Operational Programme – the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms*.

The grant rate awarded from the RF¹⁵ may be up to 2.000.000 euro, with the exception of the Activity 2 – Workshops and seminars, where an amount up to 20 000 euro may be awarded.

Grant assistance shall be provided as reimbursements of already incurred expenditures.

Advance payment

As a general rule, grant assistance under the RF shall be given as reimbursements of already incurred eligible costs, according to the disbursement schedule agreed in the grant agreement.

In case if grant assistance for the particular project exceeds 200 000 euro, the applicant may apply for the advance payment, maximum up to 10% of eligible costs, by filling in appropriate fields in the application form.

4.3. State aid

If applications are submitted by applicants handling economic activity, whose projects are co-financed from the budget of public finance entity, grant assistance must take place with regard to the conditions for admissibility of state aid.

The applicant, who has received or receives assistance, is obliged to present, at the stage of submitting the application:

- information on received state aid other than *de minimis* (template of the information form constitutes an appendix to the *Regulation of 11 August 2004 on the information on obtained state aid other than* (Official Journal No. 191, pos. 1960) or,
- if received assistance fulfils *de minimis* criteria, information on *de minimis* aid received in the past three years, including certificates on the state aid acquired by the entities that granted assistance to the applicant – in compliance with the template set out in the regulation issued by the Council of Ministers on 11 August 2004 r. on the certificates on *de minimis* aid (Official Journal No. 187, pos. 1930).

¹⁵ It is maximum amount available from the RF, that can be spent on an individual project. Beneficiary may apply for higher grant rate under the *Operational Programme – the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms*.

4.4. Eligible costs

Under the *Operational Programme – RF*, in the catalogue of eligible expenditure (only in the case of positive decision on awarding grant assistance to the project) may be included costs incurred in accordance with provisions set out in the Article 3 of the *Rules and Procedures* and *Detailed eligibility provisions – expenditures. The EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2004-2009*.

Eligible costs are only those costs that are borne by the entity submitting the project. Division of costs among partners of the project will be determined in the partnership agreement, however the maximum admissible participation of the Norwegian partner in the eligible costs of the project should not exceed 50%.

4.5. VAT and other taxes and charges

The expenditures related to VAT and other taxes, levies or charges of whatever nature, which by law are not recoupable from the Beneficiary State, are eligible for financing. Other taxes and charges (in particular direct taxes and social security contributions on wages and salaries) which arise from co-financing from the Research Fund, do not constitute eligible expenditure, except when they are genuinely and definitely borne by the beneficiary.

4.6. Disbursements under the Research Fund

Article 3 of the *Rules and Procedures on the Implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism* defines eligibility and disbursement provisions within the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

Polish – Norwegian Research Fund is supplied by two sources: the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and state budget. Financial resources coming from both sources are combined at the level of the Fund Operator.

Transfer of the financial resources from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism to the Fund Operator

Transfer of the resources from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism to Fund Operator (Information Processing Centre) will be made on the basis of the grant agreement concluded between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Focal

Point (Ministry of Regional Development) as well as the agreement between the Intermediate Body (Ministry of Science and Higher Education) and Fund Operator (Information Processing Centre).

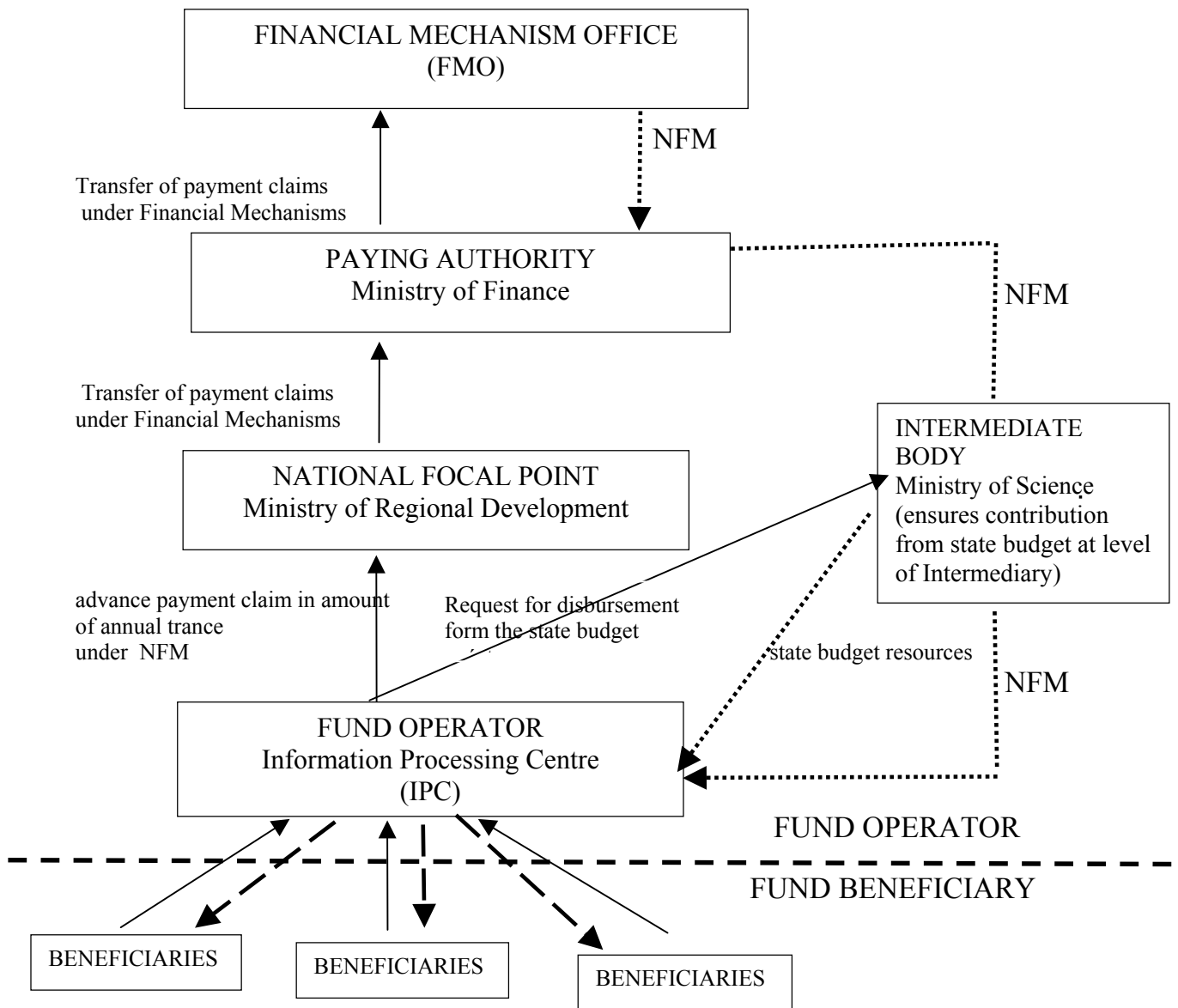
Fund Operator (IPC) will be applying to the Intermediate Body for the advance payment from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism in the amount of the allocation for the year. Intermediate Body, after concluding the verification of the application, will send it to the Focal Point. In the Focal Point applications under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism shall be accumulated and passed on jointly to the Paying Authority (Ministry of Finance), and in the next step – to the Financial Mechanism Office in Brussels (FMO). Annual allocations under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism will be disbursed to *the Operational Programme – RF* by the FMO as an advance payment to the bank account of the Paying Authority.

Paying Authority shall transfer one-off, annual advance payment received from the FMO for *the Operational Programme – RF* to the Intermediate Body – Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Intermediate Body shall transfer one-off, annual advance payment received for *the Operational Programme – RF* to the special, separate account in Fund Operator (IPC). Financial resources from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism assigned for the management of *the Operational Programme – RF* in the amount of 0,7 mln euro will be sent to IPC as an advance payment, which IPC will apply for in the application form for the Fund Operator.

State budget resources at the level of Fund Operator

The financial contribution of the Polish side to Research Fund will be transferred to IPC once a year, on the basis of the promise granted by the Minister of Science and Higher Education in order to ensure Polish contribution to the resources under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

Financial flow in the Operational Programme for the use of financial resources under Polish – Norwegian Research Fund:



payment claims	
advance payments under RF (NFM and state budget) – Fund Intermediary	
reimbursement under RF for beneficiaries	

4.7. Reimbursements under the Research Fund made for the beneficiaries:

All the projects that are awarded grant assistance under the Research Fund with the *Operational Programme* must be implemented in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement concluded between IPC and the beneficiary as well as Project Implementation Plan, constituting appendix to the agreement. Disbursement must refer to the grant agreement and to agreed project implementation plan.

The grant agreement shall describe conditions for assistance admitted under the RF.

The grant rate stipulated in the agreement will be given in euros.

Reimbursement of incurred eligible costs will take place upon request for disbursement, which constitutes appendix to the project interim report (quarterly). Such a report shall be submitted by the beneficiary to IPC along with appendices.

While reimbursing payments under the RF, the Fund Operator will follow rules below:

1. Resources disbursed under the RF shall not replace different sources of financing, but they will play supplementary role in relation to them.
2. In each project there will be pointed out required co-financing of the beneficiary.
3. Disbursements for beneficiaries shall be made as reimbursements (with the exception of projects which will receive advance payment) of incurred eligible expenses, in accordance with the grant agreement and planned schedule of expenditures.
4. All the eligible expenses that are to be reimbursed should be proven by the submission of the copy of the invoice or other accounting documents of equivalent probative value with confirmed receipt.

Beneficiary will submit to IPC, no more than once every calendar quarter, project interim report together with payment claim. Forms of project interim reports shall be elaborated by IPC.

Fund Operator (IPC), after positive verification of the report and documents certifying that eligible costs have been borne, it will immediately transfer resources to the bank account designated by the beneficiary. Detailed information on reimbursements made by IPC for the project implementation will be set out in

the grant agreement. Final clearance of the project will be made by the beneficiary on the basis of completion report including last payment claim submitted to IPC.

5. Reimbursement of eligible expenses, if irregularities are found in the project implementation, will be made on terms and date described in the financial plan constituting appendix to the grant agreement.
6. Initial and final eligibility date of the expenses within the project shall be fixed individually in the grant agreement. It will not be sooner than before a day of the decision on awarding grant assistance to the project made by the Board of the Fund. Final eligibility date will be fixed by the Intermediary, however, it will not be later than on 30 April 2011.
7. In case of suspected or actual irregularities occurred during disbursement of grants made by the beneficiary, the Fund Operator (IPC), Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the National Focal Point or Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs may decide on inhibition/ suspension of further payments till the clarification of the case.

In the course of the implementation of the *Operational Programme – the RF* financial resources among particular activities may be reallocated. Decision on the reallocation of resources shall be taken by the Board of the Fund upon written request of the Fund Operator.

5. Implementation system

5.1. Management

The overall responsibility for the management of both Financial Mechanisms' activities in Poland is exacted by the National Focal Point, tasks of which are performed by the Ministry of Regional Development. The Intermediate Body responsible for the implementation of the Priority 6 *Academic Research*, within which Polish- Norwegian Research Fund has been created, is the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

An institution responsible for financial management of the resources under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism at the national level is the Paying Authority, which tasks are performed by the Ministry of Finance.

The operator of Polish – Norwegian Research Fund, within which is financed this Operational Programme is the Information Processing Centre in Warsaw, unit subordinated to the Minister of Science and Higher Education.

To fulfil the common objectives on Polish and Norwegian sides to secure fruitful joint Polish Norwegian research projects, the Fund Operator will act in cooperation with the Research Council of Norway, a subordinate of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

While performing tasks related to the Fund implementation, IPC acting as Fund Operator, will be directly responsible to the Board of the Fund and to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education – Intermediate Body.

Board of the Fund

According to *Guidelines for Polish- Norwegian Research Fund*, the Board of the Fund has the responsibility for strategic management and implementation of the Research Fund. The Board consists of 6 members, 3 persons appointed by the Polish side, including Chairman of the Board¹⁶ and 3 persons appointed by the Norwegian side

¹⁶ The Ministry of Science and Higher Education in Poland shall appoint the chair of the Board and two of the Board members

including vice-chairman of the Board¹⁷. The Board will make the final decision concerning content – related appraisal, call for proposals and will choose the projects to be financed within Research Fund.

The Board will approve the content and conditions of the call for proposals according to the statutes and scientific priorities of the Fund, especially the amount of money available for projects.

Fund Operator

Information Processing Centre, as the Fund Operator, bears the overall responsibility for the proper process of Fund implementation and its tasks include above all:

- publication, promotion, preparing call for proposals and the process of projects' selection,
- signing agreements with beneficiaries,
- reimbursements,
- monitoring and control of projects (administrative and financial tasks) and report on irregularities.

The Fund Operator will cooperate with Research Council of Norway in order to elaborate adequately the call for proposals.

Team of referees

Team of referees will evaluate each application in content-related and technical appraisal. Team of referees consists 2 referees appointed by Research Council of Norway and 2 referees appointed by IPC (the Fund Operator).

Referees shall be appointed in the priority areas assigned for assistance under the Research Fund. The identity of the referees will be disclosed to IPC and the Board of the Fund (selection for the referees on the Polish side shall be carried out by IPC).

On the basis of referees' evaluation the Joint Fund Secretariat shall draw up ranking list of eligible projects (shortlist), on a scale of highest to lowest score awarded. The Rejection of the application at the stage of content-related and technical appraisal requires brief justification.

¹⁷ The Ministry of Education and Research in Norway shall appoint the vice-chair of the Board and two of the Board members

The Joint Fund Secretariat

In order to operate effectively within Polish – Norwegian Research Fund, after approval by the FMO IPC's application for the Fund Operator, there will be the **Joint Fund Secretariat** created within the structures of IPC. The Joint Fund Secretariat consists the Fund Operator and the team of referees (cooperation with Research Council of Norway). Team of referees will be a resource that the Joint secretariat can make use of in the content evaluation of the applications not its formal part.

Among others Joint Fund Secretariat will be tasked with:

- cover research administrative issues and tasks as well as the financial Fund management
- preparing documents (shortlist proposal of the applications for the final decision by the Board) and organisation meetings of the Board, support Board activities
- regularly preparing announcements on calls for proposals under the *Operational Program – the RF* in co-operation with the Board,
- dealing with correspondence with applicants and applicants' institutions,
- receiving and registering all application forms,
- operating the procedure of technical and content-related project appraisal (appointment of team of experts, establishment of working procedures as well as rules related to participation in the meetings (remuneration, reimbursement of travel costs),
- carrying out the eligibility check of proposals,
- managing with reporting on the implementation of particular projects and the Research Fund (collecting periodic reports from beneficiaries and preparing collective report),
- support the team of referees
- reporting on the activities within the Fund and submitting collective reports to the Focal Point, Ministry of Science and Higher Education and Paying Authority,
- financial management and accounting for the Fund (collecting payment claims from beneficiaries, preparing requests for disbursement to the Paying Authority, reimbursement of expenses),

- cooperation with partner institution and informing about current project implementation under the *Operational Programme- the RF*– the Research Council of Norway,
- preparing and maintaining comprehensive information on the objective and application rules under the *Operational Programme- the RF* on the Internet,
- manage the evaluation process of the Research Fund
- informing and advising the applicants,
- promoting Polish – Norwegian Research Fund.

5.2. Appraisal and selection of projects

Information on the call for proposals under the *Operational Programme - the RF* shall be published by Fund Operator - IPC in the co-operation with the Board of the Fund.

The content of publication will be in line with general requirements and will contain the following information:

- source of grant assistance and total amount of resources available in the given call,
- information on the activities, within which project can be submitted,
- information on the place where is application form and required templates of appendices,
- project selection criteria,
- deadline and place for submission the application,
- manner of delivering the application,
- forms of submitting the application (signed hard copy and electronic version),
- number of original versions and copies of submitted applications,
- Internet address, where beneficiaries may find more information on the Research Fund,
- rules and co-financing levels,
- types of beneficiaries,
- documentation of Polish – Norwegian co-operation (all the applications should concern bilateral co-operation),
- project duration,

- description of the appealing procedure related to the formal appraisal, including deadline for submission appeals,
- abridged description of the appraisal procedure.

Applications for the *Operational Programme – the RF* shall be submitted on the specific application form (differing from the standard application for the *Operational Programme – the EEA/ Norwegian Financial Mechanisms*) in English. Costs shall be given in euros. The applicant and beneficiary of the assistance always will be Polish side (for example Polish research institution, non- governmental organisation).

Application forms for particular activities may be submitted only for individual projects.

The priority shall be given to the projects related to scientific co-operations in the public sector.

Applications that fails to meet formal criteria set out in the publication of the call for proposals, in particular if application is:

- submitted after deadline,
- submitted with the use of a wrong application form,
- submitted in an inappropriate number,
- incomplete (lack of appendices),
- not related to Polish – Norwegian bilateral co-operation,

will be returned to the applicant. One original version will remain in IPC.

The appraisal of the applications submitted to the Operational programme – the RF consists of three stages and shall be carried out in the following manner:

Stage I – Formal/general appraisal (formal screening of the project)– Joint Fund Secretariat

All submitted applications will be subject to registration performed by Information Processing Centre.

After registration, applications can not be subject to any modifications or completions. Within 10 working days of date of interim appraisal, the Joint Fund Secretariat will carry out formal project evaluation. Applications that fails to meet formal criteria, will be returned to the applicant within 20 days of the close of call for proposals and be

accompanied with reasoned opinion on the rejection of the application. One original version will remain in the Joint Fund Secretariat.

Upon the request of IPC, beneficiary will be able to complete the application only once under the procedure of 48 hours. Only formal lack such as e.g. lack of signature or lack of appendix may be completed.

Information on the results of formal appraisal is communicated to the applicant in writing by the Joint Fund Secretariat.

Stage II - Content-related and technical appraisal – Team of referees

Content-related appraisal of each application shall be evaluated by four referees: two referees appointed by Research Council of Norway and two referees appointed by IPC (the Fund Operator). The identity of the referees will be disclosed to IPC and the Board of the Fund, but otherwise remain confidential (selection for the referees on the Polish side shall be carried out by IPC).

On the basis of referees' evaluation the Joint Secretariat shall draw up ranking list of eligible projects (shortlist), on a scale of highest to lowest score awarded. This list shall be accompanied with separate reasoned opinions on the position of each project.

Stage III – Decision on co- financing the project – Board of the Fund

Ranking list of applications that obtained at least 60% of total scores during content-related and technical appraisal is presented to the Board of the Fund. The Board starts its meeting within 21 days of preparation of that ranking list. On the basis of ranking list, the Board makes final decision on the approval or rejection of the application and fixes co-financing level granted under the Research Fund.

Within 10 working days of the Board's meeting, the Joint Secretariat provides the applicants with a funding decision of the Board and communicates the list of approved projects along with justification to the Research Council of Norway, Ministry of Science and Higher Education as well as the Focal Point. In the case of rejection, reason for negative decision shall be given to each applicant, including the report of the referees.

Selection of projects to be implemented under the *Operational Programme – the RF* takes place only on the side of Fund Operator; projects are not subject to the appraisal of the Financial Mechanism Office.

Positive decision on the project issued by the Board of the Fund constitutes basis for signing the grant agreement between Fund Operator - IPC and beneficiary.

Grant agreement determines co-financing level under the Research Fund and project implementation plan, that is: dates, terms of co-financing and tasks and obligations of each contracting party (article 4.8. of *Rules and Procedures on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism*).

The Fund should aim to complete the entire evaluation and selection process within 18 weeks from the closing date of the call for proposals.

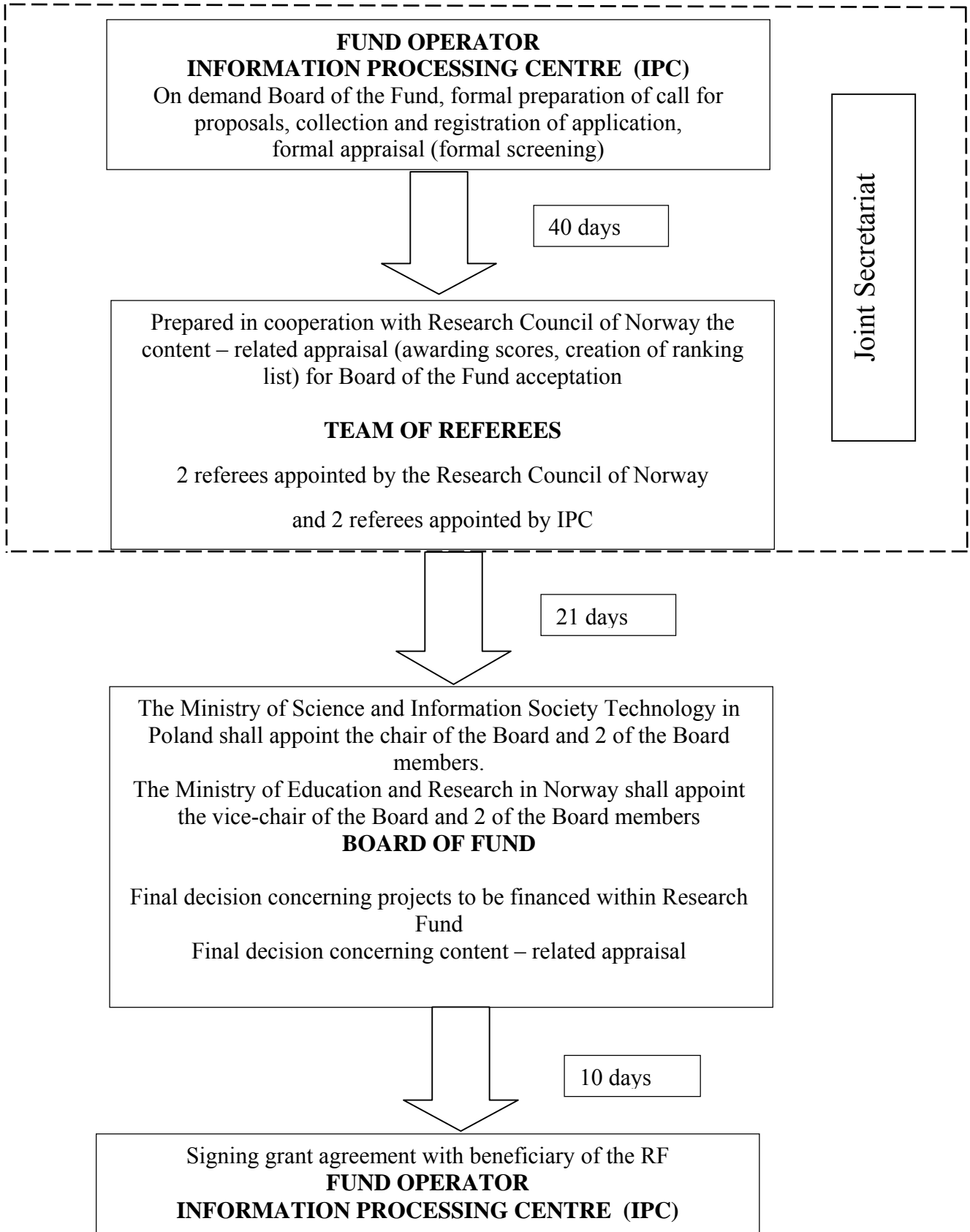
5.3. Appealing procedure

Any applicant may appeal against the decision of refusal of its application with regard to the compliance with formal requirements within 14 days of the notification of results by the joint secretariat to the applicant. Applicants cannot appeal against the decision of a content-related character, nor with regards to the decisions of the Board of the Fund.

The appeal procedure takes place in two instances. In the first instance, the appeals are to be filed with IPC. In the second instance, the appeals are to be filed with the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. In order to examine an appeal, the Ministry requests IPC, to present the manner of conducting and score of particular project selection criteria. Decision of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education is final.

In the case of positive decision on the appeal, application is recovered and is further appraised. Response to the appeal submitted to IPC should be given within one months of submission of the appeal.

Scheme of application selection process
within the Operational Programme for the use of financial resources under
Polish – Norwegian Research Fund



6. Monitoring

General information

Reporting and monitoring system are to control progress in the process of the project implementation.

Overall recommendations related to the monitoring of projects implemented under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2004-2009, are stipulated in the *Rules and Procedures on the Implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2004-2009*. According to the above document, as well as Article 4.6 of the *Memorandum of Understanding on the Implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2004-2009*, responsibility for reporting and monitoring of the use of the resources under the Financial Mechanisms lies in hands of the National Focal Point.

IPC, acting as the Fund Operator, is tasked with monitoring of implemented projects under the *Operational Programme – the RF*.

Monitoring Committee

Monitoring Committee for the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism was established in 2005. The overall objective of the Monitoring Committee is to ensure proper use of the financial resources as well monitoring of the implementation of projects realised within the Financial Mechanisms, including Polish – Norwegian Research Fund. The objective of the Monitoring Committee's activity is to guarantee effectiveness and quality of the implemented *Operational Programme – the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms*, and within its frames - the *Operational Programme – the RF*. Generally, the Monitoring Committee acts as an independent advisory and consultative body of the Focal Point – issues recommendations in the field of all adjustment changes in terms of directions and manners of the implementation of the Financial Mechanisms, referring to both content – related progress and to the financial programme.

On the basis of data received from the beneficiaries (reports), the Fund Operator, IPC, will prepare reports on the use of resources of Polish – Norwegian Research Fund and send them to the Intermediate Body – Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

Responsibilities of beneficiaries

Responsibility for the monitoring of the project implementation process lies in institutions involved in the implementation of the financial resources available under the Research Fund, i.e. beneficiaries, the Fund Operator, the Intermediate Body, Paying Authority and the Focal Point.

According to *Guidelines for Polish – Norwegian Research Fund* and grant agreement, beneficiaries implementing projects co-financed by the Research Fund, will be obliged to provide the Fund Operator – IPC- with the following reports on the project implementation:¹⁸

6.1 Interim report (quarterly) on the project implementation:

Interim report on the project implementation prepared by the beneficiary for the Fund Operator will consist of:

- a) part related to progress in the project implementation.
 - information on financial and actual progress in the project implementation,
 - comparative study of actual and planned expenditure,
 - comparison of actual and planned progress,
 - explanation of possible deviations from project implementation plan,
 - information on the progress in reaching indicators of the product,
- b) section containing payment claim, on the basis of which (after report approval) the Fund Operator will reimburse incurred eligible expenditure in the reporting quarter. Beneficiary does not need to apply for the payment at the end of each quarter, however, he cannot request for reimbursement more often than once every quarter.

Interim report on the project implementation should embrace the period of calendar quarter.

It must be submitted to IPC no later than on the fifth day of the month following calendar quarter, i.e. till 5 April, 5 July, 5 October, 5 January, due to the fact that IPC sends report on the project implementation to the Intermediate Body up to fifteenth day.

¹⁸ Reports shall be submitted to the Fund Operator by the RF beneficiaries in Polish and English, both in hard copy and electronic version.

The beneficiary is informed electronically about the approval of the interim report and reimbursement of resources within the Research Fund. In the case of mistakes occurred in the report, the Fund Operator requests for correction or the clarification of the actual situation in the fixed date.

6.2 Annual report on the project implementation (information on content – related implementation of the project)

Annual report includes:

- concise information about financial progress in the reporting year,
- accumulated data (financial) for the day of the conclusion of the reporting period,
- comparative study of actual and planned expenditure,
- comparison of actual and planned progress,
- description of possible effects of deviations for the project,
- analysis of the reasons of deviations,
- proposed action plan in case of deviations,
- information on the progress in reaching indicators of the product and result,
- risk analysis and risk management (feasibility of assumptions, possibility of occurrence of risk of a new sort).

This report will be presented to the Board of the Fund as the annual information about the progress of Fund implementation.

Annual report must be submitted to IPC no later than on 5 January of the following year in relation to the reporting year, due to the fact that IPC is obliged to send collective report on the RF implementation to the Intermediate Body till 15 of January. If beneficiary submitted completion report on the project implementation up to 1 of January of the next year, in that case he does not need to submit annual report.

The beneficiary is informed electronically about the approval of the annual report and reimbursement of resources within the Research Fund. In the case of mistakes occurred in the report, the Fund Operator requests for correction or the clarification of the actual situation in the fixed date.

6.3 Completion report on the implementation of the project.

This report should include:

- certification, that the project was implemented in accordance with specific criteria, basing on which co-financing was granted,
- information on the holistic result of the project in relation to the primary plan,
- information on:
 - reaching indicators of the product and result,
 - perspectives for durability of benefits,
 - most important knowledge acquired,
 - opinion on necessary actions following the project completion.
- last payment claim.

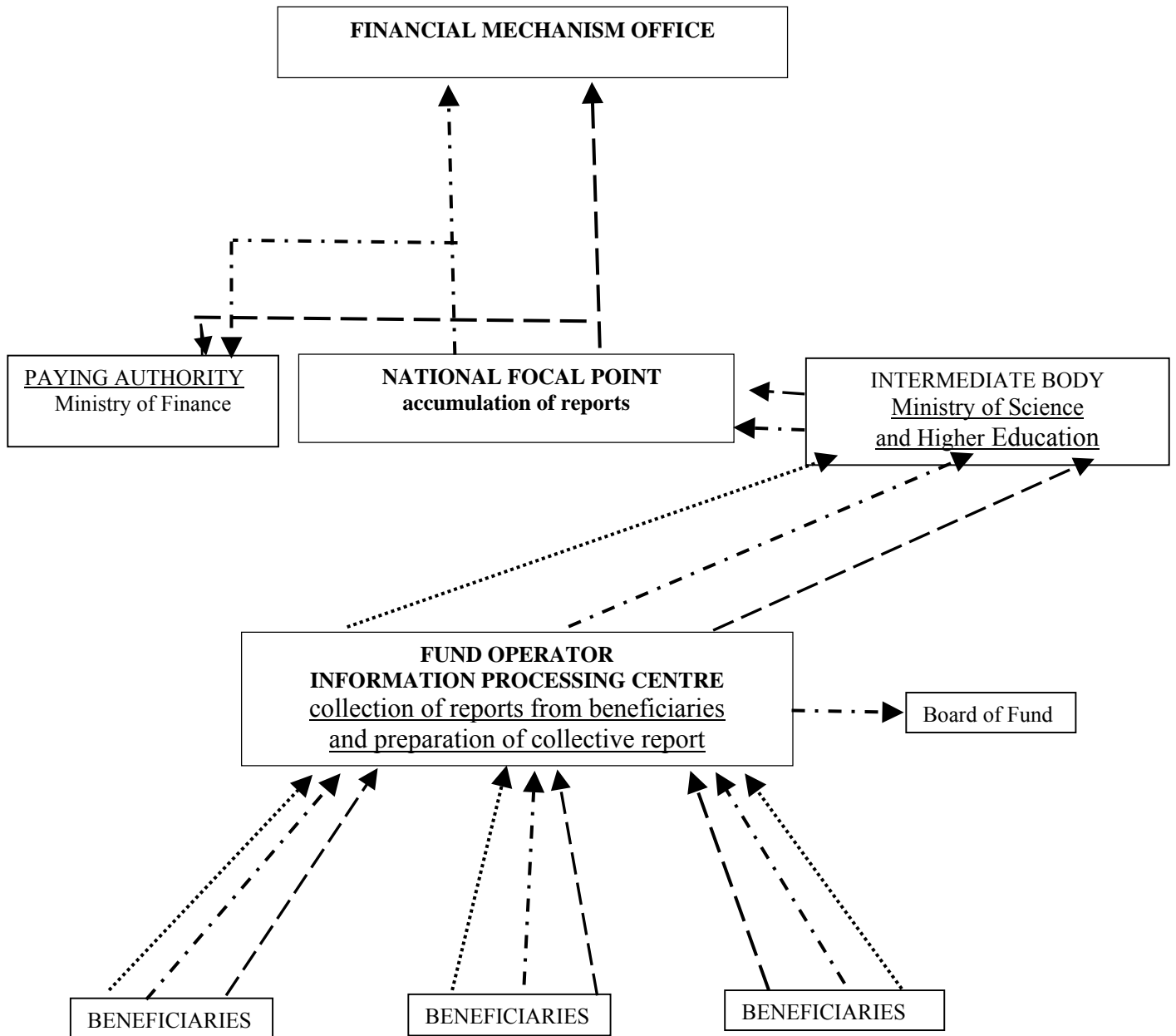
Completion report must be submitted to IPC no later than on the fifth day of the month after conclusion of the project. In the case of mistakes occurred in the report, the IPC requests for correction or the clarification of the actual situation in the fixed date.

After the approval of the completion report by the Fund Operator and the Intermediate Body, last tranche for the given project is being disbursed.

Depending on the character and the value of the project, the Fund Operator predicts verification of documents and on-the-spot checks.

External monitoring control of the project may be carried out also by the Financial Mechanism Office in Brussels. The objective of such control is the verification if the project is implemented in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement. Objective control shall be carried out by an independent entity acting on behalf of the Financial Mechanism Office. As a rule, monitoring visit will have a form of on-the-spot check. Polish side shall be informed two weeks in advance about date of external monitoring visits. The Focal Point immediately after receipt from the FMO of the information on date of such monitoring visit, will pass it on to the beneficiary of the project.

Reporting system within the Operational Programme for the use of financial resources under Polish – Norwegian Research Fund



Interim report→
Annual report	- - - - -→
Completion report	— — — — →

7. Audit and financial control

The Fund Operator and Fund beneficiaries can be controlled financially or audited¹⁹.

The Fund Operator – IPC while performing functions related to financial management and control, shall be responsible for:

- verification and certification of expenditure incurred by beneficiaries,
- detection of irregularities and reporting these to the Focal Point,
- carrying out full control of invoices or other accounting documents of equivalent probative value,
- conducting spot checks of expenditure, therein determining a representative sample of expenditures to be controlled,
- storing all the documents for the period of 10 years after the implementation of all projects co-financed within the Fund.

Responsibilities of beneficiaries

The Fund beneficiary is obliged to ensure the possibility to carry out audit of the project co-financed by the Fund. In particular, it is necessary to collect all the documents required to the project implementation and to store them for 10 years after completing project so that it would be possible to:

- compare amount under the RF with records of particular expenditure and originals of documents confirming it,
- check the accuracy of eligible expenses on the basis of the representative sample of approved activities.

Relevant documents must be stored in strictly defined place, secured from potential destruction, and in the right order.

¹⁹ According to recommendations stipulated in the operational Programme for the use of financial resources under the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism, system of financial management and control of resources within the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, shall be consistent with a system of financial management and control in the structural funds, with reservation of provisions of *Disbursement Guidelines*. The Beneficiary State is responsible for the financial control and audit of projects approved for the implementation, is also obliged to act against fraud.

Beneficiary implementing project co-financed with the resources of the Research Fund, must have financial – accounting system, enabling the settlement of all operations related to the project regardless of other activity.

Moreover, it is required to create, for the purpose of the project, separate sub –account or bank account.

Fund beneficiaries must be prepared for the control and making project documentation available for controlling institutions pointed by the FMO in the period of 10 years of completion the project.

8. Promotion

Promotional activities within Polish – Norwegian Research Fund carried out by the Fund Operator – IPC- shall be in compliance with *Publicity Guidelines* approved by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and will contribute to increase of a wide range of recipients' awareness of the financing possibilities available in activities under the Research Fund.

Among the promotional activities carried out by IPC there will information actions issued in media about the possibilities of the use of resources within the Research Fund, deadlines for submitting applications and about approved projects together with co-financing sources.

Moreover, every beneficiary of the *Operational Programme – the RF* shall be obliged to promote the Fund according to the information and promotion plan of the implemented project attached to the application form.

Appendix 1.**Catalogue of monitoring indicators for the beneficiaries of Polish – Norwegian Research Fund**

Indicators of the product Name of indicator	Indicator's measurement unit
Number of researchers from Poland participating in the project	Persons
Number of researchers from Norway participating in the project	Persons
Number of women among project participants	Persons
Number of scientific research within the project	Units
Number of purchased scientific -research equipment for scientific research	Units
Number of seminars organised within the project	Units
Number of workshops organised within the project	Units
Number of seminar, workshop participants	Persons
Number of speakers participating in seminar, workshop	Persons
Number of women among speakers participating in seminar, workshop	Persons
Number of presentations, lectures during seminar, workshop	units

Indicator of result Name of the indicator	Indicator's measurement unit
Number of all joint scientific publications	units.
Number of joint publications in scientific magazines of international importance informing about results of research within the project	units
Number of letters of intent concerning the implementation of new joint scientific projects	units
Number of conference reports (e.g. lectures, presentations, speeches)	units
Number of submitted patent applications related to the project implementation	units
Number of projects submitted jointly to 6 Framework Programme (and 7 FP) by the team of researchers, being continuation of the project	units
Number of projects submitted jointly to the Operational Programme by the team of researchers, being continuation of the project	units
Number of post – conference materials that were elaborated and made available	units
Number of certificates on the completion of seminar, workshop	units