

# NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION OF UKRAINE

APPROVED by  
the decision of the Scientific Committee  
of the National Council of Ukraine for Science  
and Technology Development  
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Protocol № 3

## **GENERAL STRATEGY** **of the National Research Foundation of Ukraine** **for 2024-2027**

KYIV – 2024

## **1. General part**

### *Concept of the NRFU Strategy*

General Strategy (hereinafter – the Strategy) of the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (hereinafter – the Foundation) describes the directions and ways of development of the Foundation in 2024-2027 and concerns the mission, vision, principles and foundations of its activities, the system of relations within the Foundation, the position of the Foundation in the research sphere of Ukraine and the world, as well as the risks and challenges associated with the implementation of the tasks outlined in the Strategy.

The Strategy of the Foundation is a roadmap for the development and support of advanced research in Ukraine, raising the national research to the world level both in terms of research results and the way research is administered.

The development of the Strategy coincided with the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian Federation which has put Ukrainian society in general and the Ukrainian research community in particular before a number of serious new challenges. In these extremely difficult times, the Foundation has developed clear awareness of the correctness of its perception of research as a strong and necessary component of building an independent Ukraine with a sustainable and competitive economy and a developing society. Wide involvement of advanced research technologies is the key to successfully addressing the most complex issues of our time, including common global challenges such as climate change, threats of pandemics, wars, transition to digital technologies, and the use of artificial intelligence. Research makes it possible to solve other problems of dynamic societies. Therefore, the need for financial and administrative support for research and innovation structures is growing.

### *What was taken into account when developing the Strategy*

When developing the Strategy, the authors took into account the challenges faced by the Foundation during its activities in 2018-2023, in particular those related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of martial law. These challenges necessitate a change in the priorities of funding Ukrainian research and require the introduction of new formats for its integration into the international research area, which is dictated by the need to increase the competitiveness of existing and newly created research teams capable of generating internationally recognized research results in Ukraine and implementing innovative areas of development and using the achievements of world research in our country.

The role of research in addressing societal and global challenges, such as sustainable economic growth, education and healthcare, public safety, or environmental protection, is vital, as rightly stated in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the same time, distrust of research and technology is growing among segments of the

population in societies with insufficient acceptance of it, as partly demonstrated by the vaccination campaign during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*What the Strategy is based on?*

The Strategy of the Foundation's activities is outlined in the Law of Ukraine 'On Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activities', 'Regulations on the National Research Foundation of Ukraine', approved by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 528 of July 4, 2018 (as amended); specific provisions of the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 776 of August 21, 2019 'On Approval of the Procedure for Grant Support of Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activities at the Expense of the State Budget' and other regulatory acts.

The Strategy of the Foundation contributes to the implementation of the Recovery Plan of Ukraine and takes into account the topics of the national programs included in it.

### **What caused the need to develop a new Strategy?**

The need to develop this Strategy is driven by the emergence of new social challenges for Ukrainian research related to 1) the dispersion and loss of its potential due to the war, 2) the need to rethink and use the experience of the Foundation gained in 2018-2023, 3) the multidisciplinary nature and complexity of the tasks the Foundation and Ukraine are facing. These tasks include, but are not limited to, the need to build an effective system for selecting reviewers, introducing flexible legislative changes in the field of regulating research, gaining national and international recognition by Ukrainian research communities, promoting national reform in the field of open science to modernize the research system and its European integration, implementing existing best practices and developing recommendations and mechanisms for reforming assessment of research activities in the process of reviewing research projects, etc.

The Foundation is aware that the continuation of outdated, inefficient practices of organizing and funding research based on a paternalistic philosophy poses critical risks to the development of human resources and innovation technologies in Ukraine. In the context of current or future external aggression, this may jeopardize the very existence of the Ukrainian state or lead to a partial loss of its independence.

## **2. Advantages, challenges and risks of the Foundations's activities.**

**The advantages of the Foundation's activities are as follows:**

- providing funding to research groups and individual researchers on a competitive basis, regardless of the institutional funding of the institutions they work for;
- providing funding that meets the needs of the project, satisfies the requests of its implementers and allows for the provision of the necessary material and technical conditions for research communities to implement research tasks;

- creation of transparent mechanisms for proper independent incentives for research teams, individual researchers and research in general;
- independence in the implementation of the state policy on scientific and scientific-technical activities within the defined priorities of research funding;
- availability of legal conditions and mechanisms for attracting alternative sources of funding for research projects;
- raising awareness of the research community about grant project management and opportunities to attract grant funding;
- opportunities provided by the Foundation to Ukrainian researchers to integrate national research into the global research area.

**The challenges of the Foundation's activities** are related to

- the russian aggression and martial law which complicates the operation of the Foundation, research institutions, communities and individual researchers;
- unpredictability of amounts of state funding;
- complexity and duration of developing compromise and effective procedures, lack of experience of specialists involved in the development of policies and practices of the Foundation;
- multitasking, complexity of developing the regulatory framework taking into account the needs of the research community and the *de facto* situation in Ukrainian research, harmonizing this framework with the needs of society and current legislation, the need to analyze actions and improve them – all in real time and while actively working;
- imperfection of the legal and regulatory framework;
- insufficient level of grant culture in the research environment of Ukraine;
- the need for continuous professional development of the Foundation's staff, in particular, in the absence of appropriate specialized educational programs in research administration and the constant evolution of approaches to grant administration in Ukraine and the world;
- the need to diversify funding sources;
- attempts of external interference in the independent statutory activities of the Foundation;
- the lack of interagency coordination of financial support for research projects, which can lead to double funding;
- the lack of inter-sectoral communication and a common vision of research development in Ukraine;

- the status of the Scientific Council of the NRFU as a collegial body that works on a voluntary basis, which may affect the effectiveness of its work.

**The risks of the Foundation's activities** are caused by

- unpredictability of the situation in the country and obstacles to research activities caused by martial law (risk of budget sequestration, disruptions in operations of infrastructure, destruction of laboratories and equipment, mobilization of project authors to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, forced migration of researchers within Ukraine and abroad, etc;)

- potential funding restrictions during post-war recovery, rising inflation;

- insufficient number of qualified reviewers;

- technical imperfection of the Foundation's electronic information system;

- insufficient level of research culture (in particular, in terms of adherence to the principles of academic integrity) in Ukraine, which complicates the procedures and criteria for selecting reviewers and members of call commissions, and reduces the quality of project assessment;

- a decrease in intellectual potential due to the migration of researchers outside Ukraine, their deaths at the front, and the resulting problem of restoring and ensuring the continuity of research practices;

- difficulties in attracting and supporting early-career researchers;

- the critical state of research facilities in Ukraine.

### **3. Mission, vision, values of the NRFU**

**MISSION** (*or what we are working for in the end*)

The Foundation's activities are aimed at supporting and developing an effective, sustainable, productive and dynamic research **community** in Ukraine, capable of generating new relevant knowledge in response to the needs of modern Ukrainian society and the state. The Foundation also sees its mission in creating a favorable environment and attractive conditions for Ukrainian and foreign researchers in Ukraine.

The Foundation aims to facilitate the comprehensive integration of the Ukrainian research community into the global research area by increasing its competitiveness and strengthening cooperation with foreign research networks and environments in the interests of Ukraine.

To achieve this goal, the Foundation through open calls provides direct financial and informational support for advanced and innovative research and development projects of Ukrainian researchers in all fields of knowledge, as well as support for interdisciplinary projects that are promising growth points and offer solutions to the current challenges of modern Ukrainian society and research.

## **VISION/VIEW** *(how we see the direction and way of movement)*

The Foundation sees its task in increasing the public prestige and effectiveness of research work which should serve the common good by consistently ensuring the high quality of research and development results in Ukraine, improving the conditions for financing applied and basic research, and encouraging their practical and applied orientation as a public service.

The Foundation stimulates research mobility and cooperation on the basis of partnership between it and other grantors, between grantors and grantees, research groups and institutions as a basis for research, social and personal development as opposed to emigration risks.

The Foundation works in compliance with the norms of research ethics to improve the system of assessment of research results and research achievements of researchers, research groups and institutions with the involvement of international reviewers, counteracts any manifestations of dishonesty, unprofessionalism or non-compliance with the requirements for the Foundation's reviewers and the results of research and developments, develops effective methods that allow the most adequate, independent and complete determination of the contribution of researchers to research progress and an objective assessment of their positioning in the respective field of knowledge.

The Foundation sees the way to overcome ineffective management of research in a radical change in the principles of its financing, namely in directing significant funds from the state budget to support research centers, groups of researchers and individual researchers to directly finance projects on the basis of fair competition and to form a socially active research community as an important player in the political, social and economic arena of the country.

The Foundation moves away from the practices of passive-consumer attitude of research structures to the state budget as the main and only source of funding for research and developments, encouraging instead the diversification of sources of potential resources, the search for alternative donors, including international ones, and the creation of sustainable and self-sufficient research groups capable of generating a valuable research product for society.

In its activities, the Foundation seeks to develop a balanced system of funding distribution that takes into account the need to develop various research areas, seeks to simplify project administration and interaction between the grantor and grantees.

The Foundation considers the Ukrainian research community as an integral part of the global research area and promotes the formation, development and strengthening of transnational research networks and research exchanges, as well as represents this community and acts in its interests in international donor structures.

## **VALUES**

The value principles of the Foundation's activities are as follows:

*independence* – the Foundation ensures independence, qualification and objectivity of the review and assessment of projects submitted for calls, counteracts attempts of third-party interference or influence on the Foundation's activities and decisions;

*responsibility* – the Foundation acts exclusively within the limits established by the Constitution and in accordance with the laws of Ukraine, is a reliable partner of researchers and ensures effective administration of its relations with individual researchers and research institutions; fulfills its obligations correctly and ethically, properly justifies its decisions, and guarantees the observance of copyright and related rights;

*fairness* – the Foundation creates equal conditions for all applicants, combats discrimination on any grounds, ensures fair competition, prevents conflict of interests and strictly adheres to the principles of academic integrity;

*transparency* – the Foundation ensures responsible, appropriate, efficient and transparent use of funds, regularly informs the scientific community about its activities, encourages the movement of science towards open access to its socially important results;

*quality* – in its work, the Foundation adheres to standards and procedures that would ensure control and evaluation of the quality of implementation of any aspects of its activities: develops quality policy and goals, conducts quality planning, quality management, quality assurance and quality improvement of its activities.

### **3. General strategic goal of the NRFU activities and strategic objectives**

The peculiarities of wartime and post-war recovery require the Foundation to comprehensively promote the rapid transformation of Ukraine into a highly competitive country by creating opportunities for the development of both human capital and technology. Achieving this is the strategic goal of the Foundation. Moving towards its achievement is impossible without a fundamental reform of the principles of work organization of research groups and individual researchers, as well as the system of research funding. Instead, according to Article 49, Part 1 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On Scientific and Scientific - Technical Activities’, the objective of the National Research Foundation of Ukraine is to provide grant funding for projects. Therefore, the Foundation is one of the main implementers of the reform practices in the research sphere of Ukraine. Therefore, when implementing grant support programs, organizing its own work, as well as carrying out other activities defined by the current legislation of Ukraine, the Foundation focuses on achieving the following strategic objectives:

#### ***Strategic objective 1:***

Formation of sustainable, efficient and effective national research communities.

#### ***Strategic objective 2:***

Integration of Ukrainian research into the global research area.

***Strategic objective 3:***

Effective interaction between the leaders of research and innovation activities with a focus on national security and defense capabilities and the step-by-step recovery of Ukraine.

***Strategic objective 4:***

Dissemination of research knowledge in the Ukrainian society and formation of a decent social status of a researcher.

***Strategic objective 5:***

Further institutional development of the Foundation and improvement of its regulatory framework.

**4. Operational objectives, tasks, expected results of the NRFU activities**

The achievement of strategic objectives is possible through the setting and implementation of respective operational objectives. The definition and subsequent implementation of operational objectives is based on the mechanisms of the Foundation's activities provided for in Articles 49, 50 and 51 of the Law of Ukraine 'On Scientific and Scientific - Technical Activities'.

***Strategic objective 1:*** 'Formation of sustainable, efficient and effective national scientific communities' – includes achievement of the following operational objectives:

**1.1.** Annual grant funding for collective projects of basic and applied research and developments with open topics.

**1.2.** Support for the development of research infrastructure and advanced research teams and centers as points of growth of Ukrainian research, support for the formation and development of research schools, research continuity, and the transmission of research tradition through the cooperation of experienced and early-career researchers, and research mentoring,

**1.3.** Grant funding for individual research projects.

**1.4.** Grant funding for research projects of early-career researchers.

***Strategic objective 2:*** 'Integration of Ukrainian research into the global research area' – it will require the achievement of the following operational objectives:

**2.1.** Stimulating the circulation and research mobility of highly qualified researchers as a counterweight to their outflow.

**2.2.** Organization of bilateral and multilateral calls/initiatives in cooperation with foreign partners and donors.

**2.3.** Facilitation of participation of Ukrainian researchers in grant programs funded by the international research community.

**2.4.** Support of international conferences, schools, workshops and participation of Ukrainian researchers, graduate students and students in them.

***Strategic objective 3:*** ‘Effective interaction between leaders of research and innovation activities with a focus on national security and defense capabilities and Ukraine's step-by-step recovery’ – it will require the following steps:

**3.1.** Establishing an effective mechanism of communication between the research community and representatives of the military-industrial sector, as well as other developers, manufacturers and customers of products that are important for defense and security.

**3.2.** Grant funding for applied projects aimed, in particular, at solving technology-based defense tasks.

**3.3.** Grant funding for projects aimed at developing information security measures, promoting historical justice and decolonizing knowledge.

**3.4.** Promoting knowledge transfer and commercialization of research results.

***Strategic objective 4:*** ‘Dissemination of research knowledge in the Ukrainian society and raising the prestige of research activities’ – it envisages, in particular, the achievement of the following operational objectives:

**4.1.** Popularization of research knowledge and results of research and developments obtained by Ukrainian researchers among the general public and government agencies.

**4.2.** Involvement of students in research activities within the framework of research projects.

**4.3.** Implementation of measures to train reviewers and prepare grant applications.

**4.4.** Ensuring proper funding for research work.

**4.5.** Grant funding for research popularization projects provided appropriate legislative changes.

***Strategic objective 5:*** ‘Institutional development and improvement of the legal framework of the Foundation's activities’ – it requires achievement of the following operational objectives:

**5.1.** Increase in the efficiency of managerial processes in the Foundation, bringing the quantitative and qualitative staff of the Directorate in line with the operational tasks, increase in professional competencies and improvement of skills of the employees of the Directorate of the Foundation;

**5.2.** Systematic interaction with the government agencies to improve the regulatory framework of Ukraine in order to achieve the most efficient operation of the Foundation;

**5.3.** Improvement of the system of requirements for reviewers and appropriate streamlining of the electronic database of the Foundation, improvement of reviewing procedures.

**5.4.** Improvement of the system for administering calls and projects, as well as technical support for the work of the Foundation (NRFU Calls for Projects, Automated system, database of reviewers, database of projects funded by the NRFU) and implementation of electronic document flow system.

**5.5.** Increase in the efficiency of project reporting procedures, development of reliable criteria for assessing the availability and quality of research products.

**5.6.** Focus on transition to regular, sustainable, and predictable funding of calls aimed at the comprehensive development of various research fields.

This Strategy is a key and comprehensive document that defines the directions and ways of the Foundation's development in the medium-term perspective. However, given the risks and challenges associated with the implementation of the tasks set in the Strategy, it may be subject to adjustment in the middle of its validity period.