



The START Scholarship of the Foundation for Polish Science



The Foundation for Polish Science (FNP) is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit organization founded in 1991, whose mission is to support the development of science in Poland. Its activities focus on supporting outstanding scholars and research teams representing all fields of science, promoting new research methods and forms, and supporting innovative scientific projects.

The START Scholarship of the Foundation for Polish Science is one of the oldest and most important scholarship programs in Poland, dedicated to young scientists, including doctoral students. Established in 1993, this program aims to provide financial support to the most talented researchers at the beginning of their scientific careers, enabling them to further develop and pursue ambitious research projects. The START Scholarship is not only a form of financial support but also a recognition of the previous work and outstanding scientific achievements of young researchers. In addition to annual scholarships, the Foundation for Polish Science also enables laureates to participate in various scientific initiatives, lasting up to 4 weeks in total (travel scholarship), providing them with access to an extensive network of contacts and the opportunity to exchange experiences with other outstanding scientists. Both scholarships can only be awarded once.

The scholarship is intended for young scientists who have not reached the age of 30 at the time of application. This age limit may be extended due to childbirth or adoption, as well as due to a break in scientific work. This means that individuals who are doctoral students or doctors in Poland, or who are conducting research and development (R&D) work in an entity whose statutory goal is to conduct scientific research or development work, can participate in the program. Candidates must demonstrate enormous potential and documented scientific achievements. The program is open to all fields of science. Applicants in the competition can be educational institutions training doctoral students or institutions where candidates are conducting R&D work. Applying for a START scholarship is a multi-stage process. Candidates must submit a detailed application, which includes a scientific CV, a motivational letter, a description of their previous scientific achievements, and future research plans. An important element is also a recommendation from a recognized scientist in the field, usually encompassing an opinion from a scientific supervisor or head of the research team in which the candidate works. Applications are evaluated by committees composed of experts and reviewers who make selections based on the substantive value of the submissions, including the quality and originality of the candidate's previous achievements and the description of the most important scientific achievement.



The Foundation's Management Board makes the final decision on awarding the scholarship, which is then approved by the FNP Council. The START Scholarship is awarded for any purpose.

Applications submitted in the START competition are also considered for the Barbara Skarga Scholarship. To receive this scholarship, candidates must conduct research that boldly crosses the boundaries between different fields of science. The START program also awards distinctions to candidates whose scientific achievements have been highly rated and recognized as outstanding. Additionally, since 2015, the Adam Sobczyński Award has been awarded to individuals conducting high-quality scientific research in the fields of mathematics, theoretical physics, or astronomy. On the other hand, the Waław Szybalski Award may be granted to individuals with innovative achievements in the field of biotechnology, genetics, or molecular biology, established by the Founder's testament. Scholarships for distinguished laureates are increased.

Only candidates applying for the START Scholarship can apply for the Travel Scholarship. The Travel Scholarship can be awarded for a period of up to 4 weeks and should be completed within 6 months after the end of the START Scholarship. The application form for the Travel Scholarship should include explanations of why a trip to a foreign institution is necessary and what the goals of this trip are, information about the chosen foreign institution, with particular emphasis on the scientific achievements of the inviting person (based on their scientific CV), as well as an invitation from a scientist from the foreign institution who undertakes to provide scientific support to the scholarship holder. The main evaluation criteria include the substantive justification for the planned stay and the rank of the selected institution along with the innovativeness of the mentor's scientific achievements who will provide scientific support to the scholarship holder.

The START Scholarship opens doors to a wide range of opportunities, giving young researchers, including doctoral students, access to additional support programs and international mobility. By 2024, the Foundation for Polish Science has awarded a total of 3,500 young scientists, granting 4,136 scholarships totaling over PLN 96.5 million. The START program is highly sought after, which reflects its prestige and importance in the Polish scientific community.



In summary, the START Scholarship has a tremendous impact on the development of Polish science. Supporting young talents contributes to raising the level of scientific research in the country and to increasing innovation. Scholarship recipients often become leaders in their fields, leading innovative research projects with the potential to transform into commercial innovations. This program is also an important element in building a positive image of Poland internationally as a country investing in the development of science and technology.

Information about the competition is posted annually on the Foundation for Polish Science website: <https://www.fnp.org.pl/en/>.



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