Annex 5

To Regulations for the Open Tender for 2024 Fundamental and Applied Research Projects (15.03.2024)

**Methodology for the Evaluation of the Project Proposal, Mid-Term Scientific Report and Final Scientific Report of the Project**

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# Introduction

The Methodology for the Evaluation of the Project Proposal, Mid-Term Scientific Report and Final Scientific Report of the Project (‘Methodology’) was developed for the Open Tender for 2024 Fundamental and Applied Research Projects (‘open tender’) with an implementation period of 36 months, intended for preparing the necessary documentation and conducting the evaluation.

The Methodology was developed for independent foreign scientific experts (‘expert’) who perform the scientific evaluation of the project proposal, mid-term scientific report, and final scientific report of the project.

The Methodology was developed in accordance with Cabinet Regulation 725 ‘Procedures for Evaluating Fundamental and Applied Research Projects and Managing their Financing’ of 12 December 2017 (‘Cabinet Regulation 725’), and the Regulations for the Open Tender for 2024 Fundamental and Applied Research Projects (‘regulations’).

# 1 Definitions of terms

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| **1** | **Scientific Group** | Scientific staff and scientific technical staff involved in the implementation of the project. A scientific team is composed of the project leader, lead project participants, and project participants, including project participants who are students. |
| **2** | **Project applicant** | A scientific institution registered in the register of scientific institutions (‘scientific institution’) which regardless of its legal status (entity governed by public or private law) or type of financing in conformity with the laws and regulations governing its activity (articles of association, statute or constitution) performs its main activities of non-economic nature and which complies with the definition of a research organisation stated in Article 2(83) of Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty. |
| **3** | **Project manager** | The scientist who proposes the project, manages the project, ensures its implementation: plans and supervises the fulfilment of the project tasks, is responsible for their own activities and the activities of other persons involved in the project in conformity with the tasks set for the project and rules of scientific ethics, ensures timely drafting and submission of the documentation reporting on the progress of the project in accordance with the procedures laid down in Cabinet Regulation 725. |
| **4** | **Principal investigator** | The scientist implementing the project and being responsible for the execution of its parts. |
| **5** | **Project performer** | A member of the scientific team who fulfils individual scientific tasks in the project, including the student of a higher education institution and candidate for a doctoral degree (student project participant)[[1]](#footnote-2) |
| **6** | **Student project participant** | A member of the scientific team who is a university student and a doctoral candidate (‘student’) who carries out individual scientific tasks as part of the implementation of the project |
| **7** | **Project Contact Person** | A natural person who has registered in the National Research Information System (Information System) completes information about the project, uploads annexes thereto and reports and, if necessary, maintains contacts with the staff of the Council (the project leader may also be the project contact person). The applicant shall indicate the project contact person in Annex 1 "Project Application", Part D "Applicant's declaration". |
| **8** | **Project Secretary** | A specialist who organises the selection of experts for the purpose of evaluating the project proposal, mid-term scientific report, and final scientific report, who manages the supervision and circulation of documents and information relating to the project, and the preparation of draft decisions and communications of the Council. |
| **9** | **Expert** | A foreign scientist who independently evaluates the project proposal, the mid-term scientific report and the final scientific report of the project, and whose scientific qualifications, evaluation expertise, and work experience are relevant to the scientific field and subject matter of the project proposal, and the mid-term/final scientific report. |
| **10** | **Reporter** | An expert who performs the individual scientific evaluation of the project proposal, mid-term scientific report, or final scientific report of the project and prepares a consolidated evaluation of the project proposal, mid-term scientific report, or final scientific report of the project by coordinating it with the second expert. |

# 2 Scientific Evaluation of the Project Application

1 The process of scientific evaluation of project applications is organised by the project secretaries.

2 If a project proposal meets the administrative eligibility criteria, the project secretary must, in accordance with the Council’s internal rules providing guidelines and principles for the selection of foreign experts, involve two suitable experts from the list of experts for each project proposal for the scientific evaluation of the project proposal.

3 Prior to obtaining access to the project proposal in the information system, the expert must:

3.1 confirm that they are in no conflict of interest and that they undertake to conform to the confidentiality requirements by signing a statement on the absence of conflicts of interest, and a commitment to respect confidentiality (‘expert statement’), and send the statement via e-mail to the Council;

3.2 conclude an expert agreement with the Council.

4 After receiving the expert statement, and concluding the expert agreement, the Council provides the expert with access to the project proposal and all the information in the information system necessary to perform the evaluation of the project proposal.

5 The expert must perform the scientific evaluation of the project by using their knowledge in the relevant science field, and by providing a scientific justification for their opinion.

6 During the expert examination, the expert must cooperate with the Council and observe the instructions given by the Council in relation to the procedures for the performance of the expert examination.

## 2.1 Individual evaluation of the project application

7 The expert must complete and approve the individual evaluation (Annex No. 6) of the project proposal in the Information System within three weeks after the conclusion of the expert agreement, and obtaining access to the project proposal and all the necessary information, unless another deadline is specified in the expert agreement.

8 The expert evaluates each criterion in the individual evaluation and gives a score in points, taking into account the considerations specified in this methodology.

9 The criteria are evaluated with a score of 1 to 5 points for each criterion where: If the grade of the project proposal for the criterion exceeds the requirements of the nearest lower grade, but does not fully meet the requirements of the next higher grade, the grade may be awarded with half a point, i.e. 0.5. For each score, a description of the grade is as follows:

9.1 Excellent: 5 points (an excellent project proposal which conforms to the highest requirements of the science sector or even exceeds the requirements for the criterion; any deficiency in the project proposal is insignificant);

9.2 Good: 4 points (a good project proposal which conforms to the requirements of the science sector for the criterion. However, there are certain deficiencies);

9.3 Satisfactory: 3 points (a satisfactory project proposal which in general conforms to the requirements of the science sector for the criterion, there are certain deficiencies which will impede the project and prevent high performance);

9.4 Poor: 2 points (a poor project proposal, with partial or only general conformity with the requirements of the science sector for the criterion, with the presence of deficiencies that obstruct the successful implementation of the project and the achievement of its objectives);

9.5 Unsatisfactory: 1 point (an unsatisfactory project proposal which does not conform to the requirements of the science sector for the criterion. The provided information is insufficient for providing an evaluation for the criterion, and there are significant deficiencies which cast doubt over the implementation of the project and the achievement of its objectives);

10 The quality threshold of the consolidated score of the project proposal provided by the experts (in accordance with Section 38 of the Regulations) is at least 4 points for the criterion specified in Section 19.1 of Cabinet Regulation 725 (the scientific quality of the project proposal), at least 3 points for the criterion specified in Section 19.2 of Cabinet Regulation 725 (the impact of the project results), at least 3 points for the criterion specified in Section 19.3 of Cabinet Regulation 725 (the project possibilities and security) and at least 10 points for all the criteria specified in Section 19 of Cabinet Regulation 725 (‘Cabinet Regulation criteria’ collectively, and individually: ‘Cabinet Regulation criterion’).

11 The ratio of the Cabinet Regulation criteria against the total score of the project proposal is as follows:

11.1 the scientific quality of the project proposal: 50%;

11.2 the impact of project results: 30%;

11.3 the project implementation capacity and support: 20%.

12 The expert provides a reasoned explanation for the score of each Cabinet Regulation criterion.

13 Within three working days after the receipt of the individual evaluation for the project proposal from the expert, the project secretary evaluates the conformity of the individual evaluation to the Cabinet Regulation criteria, and to the considerations referred to in Sections 20, 21, and 22 of Cabinet Regulation 725, and with the methodology for the expert examination, if necessary, returning the respective evaluation to the expert for a revision/rework, with justified reasons for returning it, via e-mail. If the evaluation is returned, the expert must update, revise and validate the individual assessment in the information system within three business days after receiving the notification from the Council.

14 The expert must enter the individual evaluation in the Information System (see Annex 6 ‘Form for the Individual/Consolidated Evaluation of the Project Application’ to the Regulations) in accordance with the following criteria and considerations:

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| **Individual/consolidated evaluation of the project application** | | |
| Project title:  Expert(s): | | |
| **1** | **Criterion: Scientific quality of the project application** | Maximum 5 points |
| **1.1** | Consideration: scientific quality, reliability, and novelty of the research | *The expert must explain their grade, taking into account the fulfilment of the criterion in general and the fulfilment of the considerations for each criterion.*  *1 Information specific to the criterion is provided in Chapter 1 ‘Scientific Excellence’, Sub-chapter 2.1 ‘Scientific Results and Technological Findings of the Project, Plan for their Distribution’, and Sub-chapter 3.1 ‘Project Applicant and Scientific Team’ of Part B ‘Description of the Project’ of the project proposal but, in evaluating the criterion,* ***the project proposal must be taken into account as a whole.***  *2 The scientific excellence of the project, including the selected research strategy and methodological solutions, as well as the ability to create new knowledge or technological findings and justification for the necessity of the project and the novel characteristics of the project within the context of the research field is evaluated in accordance with the specific nature of the science sector or sectors, of the project and of the specific nature of the project applicant and partners of the project (if any).*  *3 In the case of an interdisciplinary project application, the expert evaluates the synergy of the disciplines, assessing the contribution of the representatives of each discipline to the achievement of the project objectives.* |
| **1.2** | Consideration: scientific quality of the chosen research strategy and methodological approaches, and relevance to the objectives |
| **1.3** | Consideration: capacity of the project to generate new knowledge or technological insights |
| **1.4** | Consideration: contribution of the cooperation partners (if any), their scientific capacity, the quality of the cooperation envisaged |
| **2** | **Criterion: Impact of project results** | Maximum 5 points |
| **2.1** | Consideration: expected transfer of acquired knowledge and skills to further activities and scientific capacity development | *The expert must explain their grade, taking into account the fulfilment of the criterion in general and the fulfilment of the considerations for each criterion.*  *1 Information specific to the criterion is provided in Chapter 2 ‘Impact’ of Part B ‘Description of the Project’ of the project proposal but,* ***in evaluating the criterion, the project proposal must be taken into account as a whole.***  *2 Results and their expected impact, including the planned transfer of results in further activities and development of scientific capacity, possibilities for further development in research (for example, preparation of new research projects, involvement in international cooperation networks) is evaluated in accordance with the specific nature of the science sector or sectors and the specific features of the project and the project applicant, and partners of the project (if any).*  *3 The expert evaluates the plans described in the project proposal for the identification of the parties involved, use of appropriate forms of cooperation, and transfer of the knowledge acquired in the project (for example, in the form of recommendations, guidelines, preparation of prototypes etc.). There is evaluation of the cooperation of the project applicant with national and local government institutions, non-governmental organisations, and businesses.*  *4 The expert evaluates how successfully students and doctoral candidates were involved in the project, as compared to the overall workload of the members of the scientific team. Information about the workload of the scientific team of the project, including students and doctoral candidates, is provided in Chapter 2 ‘Scientific Team’ of Part A of the project proposal.*  *5 Sustainability of the project results is assessed in relation to the expected scientific publications and the dissemination of the project results in scientific conferences. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring the sustainability of results, following the principles of Open Access, Open Data, FAIR - findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable - as well as to the choice of the project applicant for data deposition. An evaluation of the conformity of the planned scientific results and scope to the topic, budget, and duration of the project takes place. Information about the distribution of the project results can be found in Sub-chapter 2.1 ‘Scientific results and technological findings of the project, the plan for their distribution’ of Part B ‘Description of the Project’ of the project proposal.*  *6 The expert evaluates whether the project will make a contribution to public awareness and involvement, in order to ensure the transfer of knowledge created in the project through the involvement of the public and promoting its awareness of the knowledge created in the project, and contribution to society in addressing the issues included in the project. One must assess if there is a plan within the scope of the project for including the involved parties in the use of results, the potential of the project in informing the public of the project results and increasing the socio-economic impact of the project results (Sub-chapter 2.2 ‘Socio-economic impact and publicity of results’ of Part B ‘Description of the Project’ of the project proposal)* |
| **2.2** | Considerations: possibilities for developing research, including contributions to drafting new projects for submission to the calls for projects of the European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation ‘Horizon Europe’ and other research and innovation support mechanisms |
| **2.3** | Consideration: the research will generate knowledge important to the relevant sector, development of the national economy and society |
| **2.4** | Consideration: sustainability of the knowledge generated and a qualitative dissemination plan, including scientific publications and public outreach |
| **2.5** | Considerations: the research promotes the strengthening of the scientific capacity of the scientific staff involved in the research, including students |
| **3** | **Criterion: Project possibilities and assurance** | Maximum 5 points |
| **3.1** | Consideration: quality of the research activity plan and its relevance to the goal. The resources provided are adequate and sufficient to achieve the objective. The research aims to ensure efficient use of resources. The planned work steps and tasks are clearly defined, relevant and reliable | [*The expert must explain their grade, taking into account the fulfilment of the criterion in general and the fulfilment of the considerations for each criterion. Information specific to the criterion is provided in Chapter 3 ‘Implementation’ of Part B ‘Description of the Project’ of the project proposal and Part C ‘Curriculum Vitae’ of the project proposal, but,* ***in evaluating the criterion, the project proposal must be taken into account as a whole.***  *The project feasibility, including the prepared plan for the research, planned project management and quality management, information about the data management plant, planned resources, available infrastructure are evaluated in accordance with the specific nature of the science sector or sectors, and the specific nature of the project, the project applicant and partners of the project (if any).*  *Applicant is a scientific institution. It has the possibility to involve cooperation partners – other scientific institutions, if this is necessary to achieve the project's objectives.*  *The expert shall assess the relevance of the scientific qualifications and experience of the project manager and the principal investigators to the achievement of the project objectives and the performance of the tasks envisaged on the basis of the curriculum vitae submitted in Part C 'Curriculum Vitae' of the project application (only the project manager and the principal investigators may submit these).*  *It should be taken into account that the duration of one project is 3 years. The planned implementation of the project is assessed in conjunction with the completed project application in Part A, Chapter 4 "Project budget", which foresees the costs of the project scientific group’s salary, material and technical provision, travel and publication costs. There are no provisions in the open tender for the mutual division of direct costs. The maximum funding amount for one project is EUR 300,000 and the minimum funding amount is EUR 150,000.*  *The project risks identified during the implementation of the project, indicating their degree: low, medium, or high. If there are risks identified as 'medium' or 'high', an explanation for these risks must be specified:*   1. *high risk, if the likelihood and the significance of impact on the implementation of the project or the achievement of its individual results and/or the overall goals are very high;* 2. *medium risk, if the likelihood is low, by its potential impact on the implementation of the project or the achievement of its individual results and/or the overall goals is still significant;* 3. *low risk, if the likelihood and the significance of impact on the implementation of the project or the achievement of its individual results and/or the overall goals are limited;* 4. *no grade if the information is insufficient to provide a full assessment.* |
| **3.2** | Consideration: scientific qualifications of the Project Manager and of the key project implementers, based on the curriculum vitae (CV) submitted |
| **3.3** | Consideration: appropriate research management is provided for, including quality management. The management organisation allows to follow the progress of the research. Potential risks have been assessed and a plan developed to avoid or mitigate them |
| **3.4** | Considerations: research infrastructure is required for the research, including access to the equipment of partners (if applicable); |
| **3.5** | Consideration: the institution carrying out the research and the collaborating partners (if applicable) have the necessary knowledge and expertise |
| **3.6** | Consideration: possible project risks have been identified that could negatively affect the implementation of the project or the achievement of its individual results and/or the overall goals |

## 2.2 Expert consultation meeting

15 In order to ensure that the expert acting as rapporteur produces an objective and well-founded consolidated evaluation score for the project application as part of the group of scientific sectors, the Council may organise a consultative meeting for rapporteurs specific to the group of scientific sectors in accordance with Section 6 of the Regulations (‘consultative meeting’). The consultative meeting has an advisory nature only, intended to provide the rapporteur with as complete a view as possible of the level of preparation of the project applications submitted to the tender within the group of scientific sectors, and the scientific sectors within that group, which would support the rapporteur in the preparation of the consolidated evaluation score for the project application.

The Council may also organise consultative meetings for the field of science of the groups of scientific sectors in question, taking into account the number of project applications submitted in each scientific sector.

Prior to the arrangement of the consultative meeting, project secretaries verify again that the rapporteurs have no conflict of interest with the project applicant, project leader and lead project participant.

16 In order to ensure the successful work of the consultative meeting, the project secretary asks one rapporteur to chair of the consultative meeting. The chair of the consultative meeting is determined taking into account the scientific and management experience of the person in question, in organising the work of the consultative meeting and leading a reasoned consultative discussion among the rapporteurs, for the purpose of providing the rapporteurs with a complete view of the situation with the project applications submitted to the tender in the specific group of science sectors.

17 The rapporteurs from the group of science sectors participates in the consultative meeting.

18 The work of the consultative meeting takes place online, using a video call.

## 2.3 Consolidated assessment of the project application

19 In accordance with the tasks and time limits set out in the expert agreement, the rapporteur prepares the consolidated evaluation score of the project proposal, as per Annex 6 ‘Form for the individual/consolidated evaluation of the project application’ to the Regulations. The rapporteur prepares the consolidated evaluation score of the project proposal by taking into account the individual evaluations of the project proposal provided by both the experts and, prior to its submission to the Council, approves the evaluation in the Information System jointly with the other expert.

20 Within three working days, the project secretary evaluates the compliance of the consolidated evaluation score of the project proposal with the Methodology and approves it in the Information System. If there are deficiencies in the consolidated evaluation score of the project proposal or there is insufficient reasoning provided in relation to the evaluation, the evaluation is returned to the rapporteur, indicating the deficiencies in the project proposal. Within three working days after receiving a notification of a returned evaluation from the Information System via e-mail, the rapporteur revises the consolidated evaluation score of the project proposal and submits it via the Information System for its approval by the project secretary, previously coordinating the evaluation with the other expert.

# 3 Scientific assessment of the mid-term scientific report and final scientific report of the project

## 3.1 Individual evaluation of the mid-term scientific and final scientific report of the project

21 At the mid-term of the project, i.e. 18 months after the start of the project, the applicant files a mid-term scientific report (‘mid-term report’), and within one month after the end of the project, the applicant files a final scientific report (‘final report’). The mid-term report and the final report are subject to scientific review by at least two experts.

22 The project secretary must provide each expert involved with access to the mid-term report and/or final report of the project, and the corresponding project proposal. If the final report is evaluated, the project secretary must additionally provide the expert with access to the mid-term report of the same project.

23 Within three weeks after signing the expert statement and the expert agreement, the expert performs the individual evaluation of the mid-term report and/or final report by filling in Annex 8 ‘Form for the evaluation of the mid-term/final scientific report of the project’ to the Regulations in the Information System, and approving the evaluation in the Information System.

24 The expert evaluates the mid-term report and/or final report according to the following criteria:

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| --- | --- |
| **Individual/consolidated evaluation of the mid-term report/final report** | |
| Project title:  Expert(s): | |
| **1** | **Criterion: Scientific excellence** |
| *The expert evaluate how the scientific team of the project has achieved the objectives laid down in the project proposal by the mid-term stage/conclusion of the project. The basis here is Chapter 1 ‘Scientific Excellence’ of the mid-term report/final report, also taking into account the mid-term report/final report as a whole, as well as the project proposal. Here, the expert provides comments and suggestions on research opportunities after the end of the project in order to achieve scientific excellence.*  *The expert assesses whether the results achieved by the scientific team of the project within the given period demonstrate its high research capacity, and whether the results described are sufficient for improving the knowledge base of the science sector/sectors.* |
| **2** | **Criterion: Impact** |
| *The expert evaluate how the scientific team of the project has achieved the objectives laid down in the project proposal by the mid-term stage/conclusion of the project. The basis here is Chapter 2 ‘Impact’ of the mid-term report/final report, also taking into account the mid-term report/final report as a whole, as well as Part B ‘Description of the project’ of the project proposal. Here the expert adds comments and recommendations in relation to the impact of the project, and the distribution of the knowledge acquired, and the communications activities taking place after the project.*  *The expert evaluates whether the science team has achieved the intended result under Part B of the project proposal. The expert evaluates if the plans described in the project proposal for the identification of the parties involved, use of appropriate forms of cooperation, and transfer of the knowledge acquired in the project (for example, in the form of recommendations, guidelines, preparation of prototypes etc.) were accomplished as planned. There is evaluation of the cooperation of the project applicant with national and local government institutions, non-governmental organisations, and businesses. It is assessed whether the scientific publications submitted are relevant to the project’s subject, purpose and budget, and whether the principles of open data, open access and FAIR have been respected in their preparation. The project participant’s data deposit policy is also assessed.* ***At the same time, it is evaluated whether the impact of the scientific results (publications, participation in conferences, registration of intellectual property) has been achieved in accordance with the planned implementation round specified in the project proposal.***  *It is evaluated whether the project activities pertaining to the public awareness of the project results and increasing the socio-economic impact of the project results has enabled the transfer of knowledge acquired in the project through the involvement of the public and raising public awareness of the role of the project in addressing issues associated with the project.*  *The expert assesses whether international cooperation planned within the scope of the project (including the preparation of new projects, involvement in international cooperation networks, etc.) has taken place to the extent planned within the project, and has contributed to the achievement of the objective set for the project and to building up the capacity of the scientific team of the project.* |
| **3** | **Criterion: Implementation** |
| *The expert evaluate how the scientific team of the project has achieved the objectives laid down in the project proposal by the mid-term stage/conclusion of the project. The basis here is Chapter 3 ‘Implementation’ of the mid-term report/final report, also taking into account the mid-term report/final report as a whole, as well as Part B ‘Description of the project’ of the project proposal. Here the expert must add comments and recommendations for a more successful project.*  *The expert assesses whether the management of the project has been effective, including taking into account the overall progress of the project. The expert assesses the information provided by the project implementer on the development and maintenance of data management plans. It is also evaluated whether the risk plan specified in Sub-chapter 3.3 ‘Project management and risk plan’ of Part B of the project proposal was followed in cases where the risks materialised and whether the solutions of the plan were credible. In addition, the expert evaluates and indicates whether students and doctoral candidates have been sufficiently involved in the project. The total workload of all the students throughout the project must not be less than 3.0 of the full-time equivalent (FTE), considering that each student is employed in the project for at least 0.25 FTE in the respective round of the project.*  *At mid-project stage, the expert assesses whether the project risks identified during the project implementation are likely to negatively affect the achievement of individual project results and/or the overall project goals. A risk can be assessed as:*  *1) high risk, if the likelihood and the significance of impact on the implementation of the project or the achievement of its individual results and/or the overall goals are very high;*  *2) medium risk, if the likelihood is low, by its potential impact on the implementation of the project or the achievement of its individual results and/or the overall goals is still significant;*  *3) low risk, if the likelihood and the significance of impact on the implementation of the project or the achievement of its individual results and/or the overall goals are limited;*  *4) no grade if the information is insufficient to provide a full assessment.* |

25 The expert provides one of the following evaluations for the mid-term report, prescribing:

25.1 to continue the project;

25.2 not to continue the project.

26 The expert provides one of the following evaluations for the final report, stating that:

26.1 the project objective has been achieved;

26.2 the project objective has not been achieved.

## 3.2 Consolidated evaluation of the mid-term report and final report

27 After both the experts have completed and approved their respective individual evaluations in the information system, the project secretary must provide both the experts with access to the individual evaluations prepared by the experts, and reveal to each expert the identity of the other expert.

28 In relation to the consolidated evaluation score of the mid-term report and final report, both experts must agree on the consolidated evaluation score putting together the scores and comments provided in their individual evaluations.

29 The rapporteur must prepare the consolidated mid-term report evaluation or the consolidated evaluation of the final report in accordance with the form provided in Annex 8 to the Regulations, taking into account the individual assessments of the two experts, and approve it with the other expert before submitting it to the Council in the information system.

30 If the experts give a ‘Discontinue the project’ rating in their consolidated assessment of the mid-term scientific report or a ‘Project goal not achieved’ rating in the consolidated assessment of the final scientific report, the experts also indicate the percentage of the achievement of the project goal in their assessment.

1. In accordance with Section 44, Paragraph 1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)