Method and procedure for evaluating project proposals in the first stage of the public tender for the Competence Centres programme

2011
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I. General information

The method and procedure for evaluating project proposals is based on Act No. 130/2002 Coll. on the support of research and development from public funds and the amendment to certain related acts (the Act on the support of research and development), as amended (hereinafter referred to as the Act) and Government Decree No 397/2009 Coll. on an information system for research and development and tender documentation for the announced programme published on the website of the Technology Agency CR.

Elements of the evaluation procedure:

**Expert Evaluation Committee (hereinafter EEC)** - evaluates and monitors the technical considerations of the projects in the selection of project proposals for support during the implementation and completion of projects; in the framework of the evaluation process of the public tendering it becomes involved in the Competence Centres programme in the second stage;

**Office of TA CR** - provides administration of the evaluation procedure and subsequent monitoring of project implementation;

**Committee for receiving project proposals (formal control)** - provides assessment of the tender proposal conditions for receipt of projects in both stages;

**Control Board (hereinafter CB)** – the controlling body of the TA CR;

**Board of the TA CR** - the highest decision making body of the TA CR;

**Programme Council (hereinafter PC)** - an independent evaluation and decision-making authority in the evaluation process of public tenders for the Competence Centres programme;

**Research Council of TA CR (hereinafter RC)** - conceptual body of the TA CR, it proposes the establishment and focus of committees;
II. Evaluation procedure for project proposals in the first stage of the public tender

1. Evaluation committee for receiving project proposals (formal control)

(1) For receiving project proposals the Grantor shall appoint a Committee from members of the OTA, which will evaluate the fulfilment of conditions of the public tender in research and development for acceptance of project proposals. The conditions for including the project proposals into the first stage of the public tender will be evaluated. The result of the evaluation committee for receiving project proposals for the public tender is a formal control report.

(2) The Committee evaluates compliance with formal conditions based on internal control forms.

(3) Failure to comply with any of these conditions will result in the project proposal being excluded from the public tender (Pursuant to Article 21 of the Act):

a) The project proposal shall be submitted in English. Part of the project proposal will be a brief summary of basic information about the project in Czech (approx. 2-3 standard pages), covering the principles and focus of the project.

b) Project proposals may only be submitted within the tender period, during which project proposals to the first stage of the tender may be submitted. The tender period starts on the 30th of June 2011 and ends on the 10th of August 2011 at 16:30.

c) The form of the project proposal is given by the valid version of the software application for the first stage of the tender available on the Grantor’s website (www.tacr.cz). After sending the software application electronically it is also necessary to send one original copy of a paper version to the address of the Grantor.

d) The project proposal must first be sent electronically, and then it is possible to print a final version and submit the paper form of the final version! The paper form of the proposal submitted to the Grantor must be identical to the electronic project proposal submitted to the Grantor electronically through the information system.

e) Project proposals cannot be sent by data deposit box.

f) Paper form of the project proposal must be delivered to the Grantor by the end of the tender period, (see point b). The complete proposal must be enclosed in one envelope clearly marked “Public Tender - Competence Centres Programme (first stage) - DO NOT OPEN!” and must bear the name and address of the Applicant. All of the sheets must be permanently and firmly attached (bound) in a single unit and tied using a cord or ribbon, whose ends
are sealed with a sticker which will be stamped overlapping the last sheet of the project proposal so that the individual sheets cannot be removed and none can be added (or bound like a book). Only one project proposal may be included per envelope.

g) Any attachments (e.g. power of attorney) must be permanently and firmly attached (bound) into a single unit together with the project proposal (see point f).

h) A project proposal is only considered complete if it contains all of the required information and it is signed by an entity/entities authorized to act on behalf of or for the applicant and other project participants authorized to sign for the organization (according to an attached extract from the Commercial Register, Trade Register, charter, deed). The person authorized to act on behalf of the applicant/other participant shall be a member of the statutory body. In the event that in accordance with the internal regulations of the applicant/other participant more members of a statutory body are needed for further action or this obligation arises from other legislation, the front page of the project must be signed by all of these members. The person authorized to act on behalf of the applicant/other participant is in particular a person acting by proxy. In the event that there is no statutory authorization (e.g. Article 13 paragraph 3 of the Commercial Code) the project proposal must be accompanied by an original power of attorney no older than 90 days, or a certified copy no older than 90 calendar days.

i) In the case of a consortium without legal subjectivity, at least one partner of the consortium must be headquartered in the Czech Republic. In the case of a consortium with legal subjectivity the consortium must be headquartered in the Czech Republic and one of the applicant founders (consortium) must also be based in the Czech Republic.

j) Foreign applicants and all other potential foreign participants in the project/founding applicants must be a legal entity having its registered office in a Member State of the European Union or another State of the European Economic Area or the Swiss Confederation.

(4) If the answer to the final question of the internal control form, “Does the project proposal meet the basic conditions of public tender in research and development for the receipt of project proposals and is further opponent and expert advisory body evaluation recommended?” is “NO”, the project proposal will be excluded from the public tender and will not be further evaluated nor will the preparation of expert opinions be sought.

(5) The resulting formal control report will include in particular the list of received proposals not complying with the conditions and the reasons for their exclusion. The
Grantor (Board of TA CR) shall decide on the receipt of the project to the public tender in research and development.

(6) The Office of TA CR then sends project managers of the consortia, whose project proposal was excluded on the grounds that the conditions for acceptance of the project were not fulfilled, a notification letter that their project proposal has been excluded from the tender.

2. Evaluation of project proposals by opponents

2.1. Selection of opponents by lots

(7) Applicants have the opportunity in the project proposal to state the names of three potential opponents which they do not wish to evaluate their project proposal.

(8) Each project proposal will be evaluated by two Czech and two foreign opponents. For each project proposal the Office of TA CR will draw lots for (at least) 8 Czech and (at least) 8 foreign opponents using a computer program, according to their expertise based on CEP\textsuperscript{1} categories. After performing a formal check the Office of TA CR will contact the first 2 Czech and 2 foreign opponents drawn to request whether they will accept or reject the performance of the evaluation.

(9) The opponent will accept or reject the performance of the evaluation of the project proposal to the Office of TA CR within 3 calendar days. If the Office of TA CR does not receive this within the specified period, the Office of TA CR shall regard the opponent as rejecting the request and the Office of TA CR may send a request for the provision of services to the next Czech/foreign opponent drawn.

(10) If the opponent refuses to elaborate the evaluation the Office of TA CR shall ask the next Czech/foreign opponent drawn. If all of the eight opponents refuse to elaborate the evaluation, the Office of TA CR shall repeat the draw.

(11) Opponents will not be included in the draw if they have already been approached regarding elaboration of the project, have refused to provide an evaluation, or applicants stated in their application that they do not wish them to perform the evaluation. Opponents who are employees of one of the participants of the evaluated project proposal are also excluded from the draw. Opponents are drawn so that two employees of the same employer do not evaluate the same project proposal.

(12) If no match is found between the opponent's and the project's expertise or if all the opponents refuse to perform the evaluation or they fail to reply within the deadline and there are no more suitable opponents in the database, the EEC shall propose,\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1} CEP is part (data fields) of the information system of research and development, which collects information on research and development projects supported by public funds under the Act No. 130/2002 Coll. on the support of research and development from public funds and amending some related Acts (Act on the support of research, and development), as amended.
based on their expertise, a minimum of 4 suitable opponents (domestic or foreign by relevance). The proposed opponents must be approved by the PC by an absolute majority of its members (per-rolam). The Office of TA CR shall enter the approved opponents into the database, draw the necessary opponents and request them to perform the evaluation.

(13) The information system will match up projects with opponents based on primary and secondary categories of CEP.

(14) Opponents are kept in the database under an identification code. Participants in the evaluation process only know the ID of the opponent and not their identity.

2.2. Conditions for eliminating an opponent from the evaluation

(15) The opponent must refuse to perform the evaluation in the case that:
   a) the themes addressed in the project do not correspond to their competence;
   b) they will be unable to perform the evaluation within the specified deadline and to the required quality;
   c) they are prejudice against the project proposal or the applicant or other project participants;
   d) they are employed by the applicant or other project participants;
   e) they perform work in the same governmental department.

(16) Opponents, who have refused to perform the evaluation in accordance with paragraph (15) will be replaced by a replacement drawn from the waiting list.

(17) Opponents evaluating project proposals must not be a member of the PC or the EEC.

(18) The opponent must justify their refusal to perform the project evaluation.

(19) If, during the evaluation of the project, it is revealed that the evaluation is prepared by an opponent who did not refuse to perform the evaluation, but they meet one or more of the conditions set out in paragraph (15) and (17), the Grantor or Programme Evaluation Body will disregard the evaluation, the opponent will not be paid, and the Grantor will ensure a new opponent evaluation is prepared.

2.3. Database of opponents

(20) An opponent may be removed from the database by a decision of the Board of TA CR if:
   a) they repeatedly fail to comply with the deadline for the performance of evaluations;
   b) they provide expertise in a quality insufficient for further evaluation of the project or in the opinion of the PC they are fundamentally wrong in their evaluation;
   c) They are prejudiced against the project proposal, and they do not provide a warning of this fact when performing the evaluation.
(21) When registering to the database each opponent selects a specialist category. The Office of TA CR, by agreement, may include an opponent into another category.

2.4. Procedure of evaluating a project proposal by an opponent

(22) The opponent must prepare the evaluation within the stipulated deadline and in a sufficient quality for further evaluation of the project.

(23) The opponent shall have access to an electronic version of their assigned project proposals. They are automatically informed of the allocation of a new project proposal to be evaluated by a summary report sent to their e-mail address.

(24) Each of the opponents performs an evaluation, which will evaluate the project proposal according to set evaluation criteria and they will assign it a score to which they will give written reasons.

(25) The evaluation will be elaborated in English.

(26) A maximum number of points that can be assigned to the given evaluation criteria and threshold points of the evaluation criteria are specified. Failure to reach the threshold number of points, even for a single point criterion, shall be a reason for the proposed project to not be recommended for advancement to the second stage of the tender, regardless of the overall high score of the project. If the opponent indicates failure of one or more binary criteria, it cannot recommend the proposal to advance to the second stage of the tender.

(27) In the conclusion of the evaluation the opponent shall state whether the project proposal is recommended to advance to the second stage of tender or not, and justify their decision properly.

(28) The opponents shall receive payment for performing the evaluation; the amount shall be set for the given program by the Board of TA CR.

2.5. Delivery of the opponent evaluations

(29) Within 21 days of expressing their consent to elaborate the evaluation, the opponent shall fill an electronic report form which is available from the Grantor’s website and deliver a signed evaluation which is identical to the electronic form in writing by post or in person to the address of the Grantor. A week before the deadline the opponent will receive an email (if they have yet to submit the evaluation report) with a reminder of the obligation to deliver the evaluation or they will be notified by phone.

(30) The Office of TA CR shall check the completeness and formal correctness of the evaluation. The opponent’s evaluation will not be editable. In the case of formal shortcomings the Office of TA CR has the opportunity to return the evaluation to the opponent for completion. The opponent shall finalize the evaluation and return it to the Office of TA CR within 3 calendar days.
2.6. Opponent’s statement on the summary evaluation report

(31) After the summary evaluation report for the given project proposal is processed by a member of the PC (see section 3.1) the summary evaluation report and the opponents’ evaluations will be submitted in electronic form to all four opponents of the project proposal for comment.

(32) The opponent will receive an e-mail message inviting them to comment on the summary evaluation report within 3 calendar days from receipt of the report. Comments on the summary evaluation report will be produced in electronic form; the opponent deliver a signed statement which will be identical to the electronic form in writing by post or in person to the address of the Grantor.

(33) The opponent shall state whether or not they agree with the wording of the summary evaluation report. If they disagree or they agree to an amendment to the wording of the summary evaluation report, they shall formulate their opinion on each commented point using the electronic form.

3. Evaluation in the Programme Council (PC)

3.1. Summary evaluation report

(34) After processing the opponents’ evaluations and approving their formal correctness and the suitability of their content, the Office of TA CR shall transmit all four project proposal evaluations to the selected member of the PC to elaborate the summary evaluation report.

(35) The Office of TA CR draws a member of the PC to the project proposal based on their specialization. The Office of TA CR also ensures a relative balance of proposals allocated to individual members of the PC.

(36) A PC member has the opportunity to decline to process the evaluation. However, they must communicate this fact to the Office of TA CR within 5 calendar days, who will subsequently ask another member of the PC to produce the summary evaluation report.

(37) The member of the PC’s task will be to produce the summary evaluation report, summarizing the content of all of the opponent’s evaluations of the project proposal. In the conclusion they shall recommend to the PC whether the project proposal should advance to the second stage of the tender or not. The member of the PC shall properly justify their recommendation. Recommendations for the PC must be based on the opinions of the opponents.

(38) The summary evaluation report will be written in English.

(39) In the event of a conflict between the opinions of the opponents, the member of the PC shall summarize the opponents’ arguments. In the event of a conflict between the opponents’ final opinions (2 opponents recommend the project to advance to the
second stage of the tender and 2 do not) the recommendation of the member of the
PC shall be considered as being decisive; however, the project must be discussed by
the PC.

(40) In the summary evaluation report, the points allocated to the given criteria by the
opponents shall be given an arithmetic average for each criterion.

(41) The member of the PC shall be obliged to prepare the summary evaluation report
within 10 calendar days.

(42) Subsequently, they shall send the final evaluation report through the Office of TA CR,
together with all of the evaluations back to opponents who have evaluated the project
proposal. On the basis of the opinions of the other opponents, the opponent shall
state whether they agree or not with the content of the summary evaluation report
prepared by the member of the PC within 3 days. If they do not agree, they shall
indicate the specific reasons and suggest the new wording of the point with which
they disagree.

(43) The member of the PC shall not process the proposed amendment any further; the
project proposal will be discussed by the PC which will decide on which version it will
commit to.

3.2. Meetings of the Programme Council and final evaluation report

(44) The Office of TA CR shall continuously transmit (available in the system) project
proposals which already have a summary evaluation report to the members of the
PC. The Programme Council will be notified on the accessibility of each project
(evaluation) electronically (by email).

(45) The PC will have at their disposal for the meeting the summary evaluation report, the
opponents’ evaluations and the rankings of the project proposals according to their
final scores.

(46) The Office of TA CR shall divide the project proposals into three categories based on
the evaluations:

A. Projects consensually evaluated by the opponents and a member of the PC
with the conclusion that they are **not recommend** to advance to the second
stage of the tender, indicating the final decision of a member of the PC,

B. Projects consensually evaluated by the opponents and a member of the PC
with the conclusion that they are **recommend** to advance to the second stage
of the tender,

C. Projects to be discussed because:
   i. not all of opponents agreed in their final recommendations
   ii. some of the opponents disagree with the summary evaluation report,
iii. the opponents’ evaluations significantly differ by more than 20 points between the extreme and the closest value,
iv. the opponents’ evaluations significantly differ in their binary criteria,
v. it is considered as being appropriate.

(47) Each member of the PC shall be entitled to suggest transferring a specific project proposal or proposals from category A and category B to category C. This shall be justified in writing prior to the meeting of the PC. The suggestion and the name of the member of the PC who made it shall be entered into the minutes of the PC. The suggestion can also be made under exceptional circumstances during the meeting of the PC itself.

(48) For the PC meeting the projects are divided into the above-mentioned categories. Within each category, the projects will be ranked according to the average points awarded by the opponents.

(49) The result of the RC meeting will be a ranking of project proposals and a final evaluation report, which is part of the project proposal protocol and will be written in English.

(50) In the protocol for the project proposal the PC shall either confirm the content of the summary evaluation report or state their reasons for the decision in which they recommend or do not recommend the proposal advances to the second stage of the tender. They shall specifically state the results of voting on the project proposal in the minutes of the meeting and the protocol on the project proposal.

(51) In the event that any of the opponents disagree with the content of the summary evaluation report, the Council shall decide on its final wording.

(52) The PC may alter the project proposal in valid cases, if this decision is justified in writing (in detail and objectively) in the minutes of the meeting.

(53) The PC shall vote on the outcome of the evaluation and on the content of the protocol from the evaluation of the project proposal. The protocol of the project proposal must specifically mention the results of the vote.

(54) At the end of the meeting, each member of the PC present shall sign the approved recommendation of the ranking of projects made in writing. This ranking is an integral part of the protocol from the PC meeting and divides the project proposals into:
   a) a list and ranking of project proposals recommended for advancement to the second stage of the tender,
   b) a list and ranking of project not proposals recommended for advancement to the second stage tender.

(55) The PC transfers the resulting lists together with the final evaluation reports and minutes of meetings of the PC to the Board of the TA CR for approval.
(56) The PC will recommend that project proposals whose aggregate amount of required funding for the first year of the project is twice the volume of funds allocated to the ongoing public tender in the research, development and innovation program Competence Centers shall advance to the second stage of the tender.

4. Approval in the Board of the TA CR

(57) The Board of TA CR decides on the selection of project proposals advancing to the second stage of the tender.

(58) The Board has the right in exceptional cases to decide differently from the recommendation of the PC, and they shall justify their decision in writing in a protocol published by the Office of TA CR on the website of TA CR.

(59) The Office of TA CR ensures that the evaluation results will be published on the Internet. Each project will have their code, the applicant and other participants, the project name and outcome of the evaluation (whether it progresses/does not progress to the second stage of the tender).

5. After announcing the results of the first stage

(60) The Office of TA CR will send a letter to all of the applicants notifying them whether the project has advanced to the second stage of the tender or not.

(61) The Office of TA CR will invite the project managers of successful applicants to complete the project proposal for the second stage according to the specifications and the electronic application form for the second stage of the tender.

(62) The project manager shall also receive the final evaluation report on the advancing project proposal as a further basis for the completion of the project proposal for the second stage of the tender. Unsuccessful applicants will provided with the final evaluation report on request.

(63) The decision of the Grantor cannot be appealed against. The applicant/other participants may file a complaint against the Grantor’s project proposal evaluation procedure to the Control Board of TA CR.