

EVALUATION PROCESS

Annes No. 2 to the Call documentation – Evaluation process
for the 3rd call under the SIGMA programme
Sub-Objective 1: Support for the Commercialisation of R&D&I+

Ref. No.: TACR/10-9/2023

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Introductory information

This annex to the call documentation contains all information that you will need for the evaluation of project proposals submitted to this call. All documents related to the launch of this call, information on the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic (hereinafter referred to as “TA CR”), applicable legislation and on the terminology used can be found on the [TA CR website](#) or directly in the ISTA information system.

The conditions of this call under the SIGMA programme (sub-objective 1) are given in the [call documentation](#) or in other documents published on the day of the launch of the call.

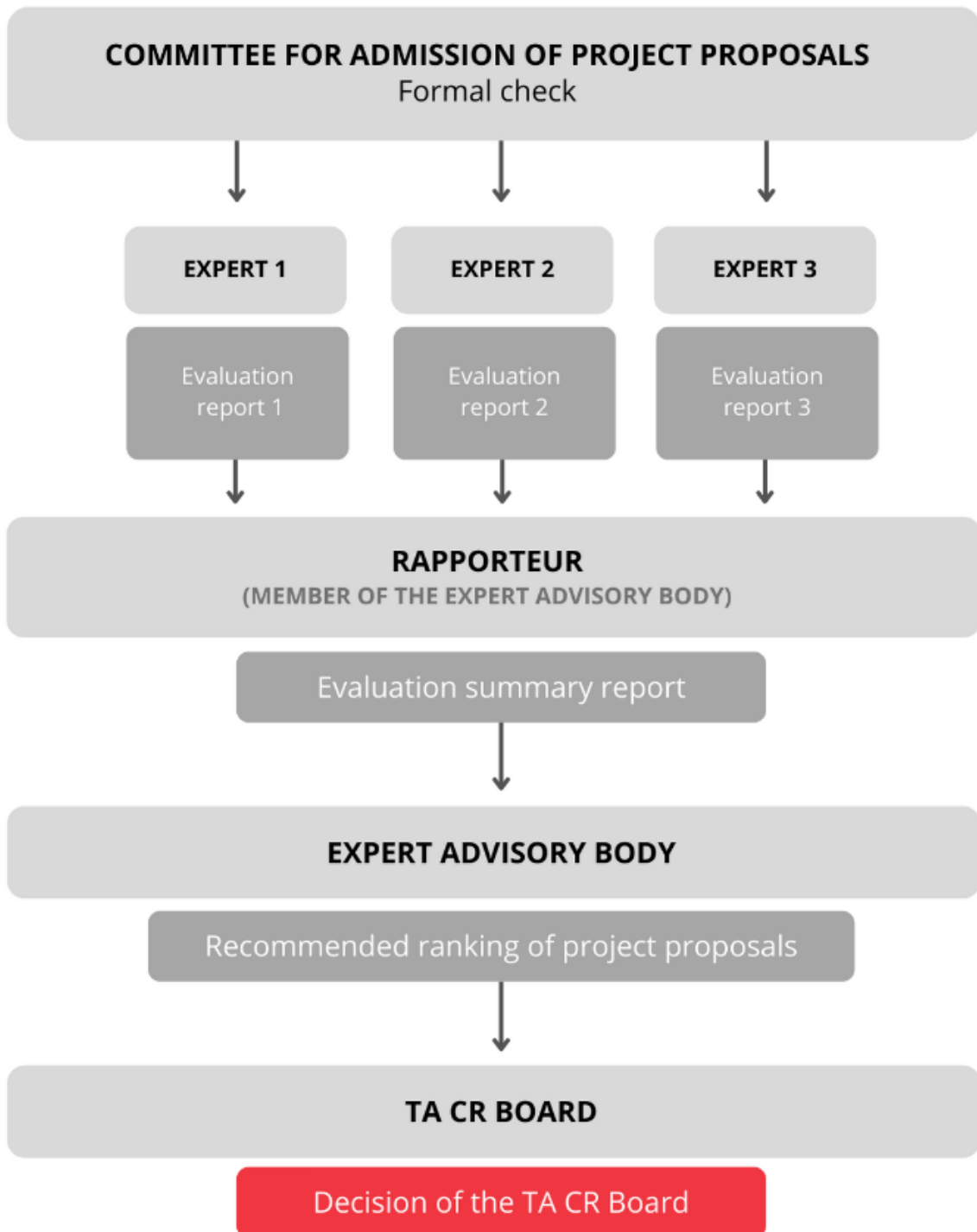
In case of divergence between the Czech version and the English translation of this document, the Czech version shall prevail.

Please note that after the evaluation process, all evaluation reports will be made available in an anonymous version to the applicants of the relevant project proposals.

Evaluation process

Each project proposal must be evaluated as follows:

1. **Committee for admission of project proposals** – will check the formalities of the project proposal and the eligibility of all applicants. Project proposals that have met all the conditions of the call will be evaluated in the following evaluation stages.
2. **Experts** – each project proposal is evaluated independently by three experts according to the evaluation criteria. Each expert will study the project proposal and draw up an evaluation report.
3. **Rapporteur** – will study the project proposal, the evaluation reports of individual experts and will draw up an evaluation summary report (hereinafter referred to as the “ESR”).
4. **Expert Advisory Body** – will prepare a final opinion on each project proposal and propose a preliminary ranking of project proposals for the TA CR Board.
5. **TA CR Board** – will use as a basis the opinion and ranking proposed by the Expert Advisory Body and will decide on the granting of funding to selected project proposals.



1. Experts

To ensure impartiality and objectivity, the TA CR Office will assign through the ISTA information system to each project proposal three experts who are not biased (they are not employees of the same organization or have no other connection to the main applicant or individual researchers).

The expert is informed by e-mail about the assignment of the project proposal. The expert is then obliged to confirm within **three working days** the acceptance of the project proposal for evaluation.

If the evaluator accepts the evaluation, they will have **five working days** to draw up the evaluation report. The preparation of the evaluation report within the 3rd call of SIGMA should not take more than **two hours**. If the comments on the individual criteria are too brief and do not correspond with the scored criterion in question or the awarded number of points, the evaluation report may be returned to the expert for completion. The expert then has **three calendar days** for this completion of the evaluation report. Please note that these deadlines may be shortened in exceptional cases.

For each project proposal, the expert:

- evaluate the **factual part** (according to set evaluation criteria):
 - whether the **binary criterion** was met and write text justification;
 - each criterion is evaluated using a score and the awarded score is accompanied by a written justification;
- summarise **the positives and the negatives** in conclusion of their evaluation report (a system of bullet points is suitable for better clarity and orientation in the text);
- draw up a **final evaluation** of the project proposal with a final opinion to recommend it for funding or not.

The expert **cannot** recommend a project proposal for funding if:

- any of the scored criteria was scored **2 points** or less and/or
- the binary criterion has not been met and/or
- the total awarded points is **less than 9**.

Comments on individual scored criteria must clearly correspond to the awarded score. The experts must ensure that the **awarded points and the written comments are consistent** (coherence of the evaluation). If the expert awards the **full number of points**, then the comments should contain the positives of the project proposal. If the evaluator reduces the number of points, he must state the specific negatives so that the list of shortcomings corresponds to the reduced score.

In the justification of their opinion, experts will clearly summarize their views on the project proposal. In the event of a **positive opinion**, they will state the main positives of the project proposal and other reasons relevant for its funding. Even a positive opinion can contain negatives, which should, however, be reflected in the awarded score. On the other hand, in the case of a **negative opinion**, they will state all the arguments why the project proposal should not be recommended for funding.

The expert bears full personal responsibility not only for meeting the deadlines and for good quality of the evaluation, but also for any potential damage. This may arise, for example, as a result of a breach of the conditions of confidentiality or protection of confidential information

or due to a misuse of personal data. The information provided in the project proposal, to which the evaluators have access during the evaluation, is strictly confidential and must not be shared with anyone.

2. Rapporteur

The rapporteur will draw up the **evaluation summary report** in which they will express opinion on the evaluation of individual experts, will summarise the positives and negatives of the project proposal and will state whether they recommend the project proposal for funding or not

If the rapporteur accepts the evaluation, they will have **five working days** to draw up the ESR. If the comments on the individual criteria are too brief and do not correspond with the scored criterion in question or the awarded number of points, the report may be returned for completion. The rapporteur then has **three calendar days** for this completion of the ESR. Please note that these deadlines may be shortened in exceptional cases.

SECTIONS OF EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT:

Comments on the binary criterion

The rapporteur comments on the binary criterion if:

- they have doubts about the fulfilment of the binary criterion (arguments should be provided why they marked the criterion as not met or why, despite doubts, they leaned towards the evaluation "met"); or
- any of the experts marked the binary criterion as not met.

Comments on differences in individual experts

In this box, the rapporteur will comment on differences in the evaluation of individual criteria by individual experts. Comments need to be provided in every case when the experts differ by two and more points of the available scale. Rapporteur also comments on any discrepancy in the final opinions of individual experts and the total awarded score. However, at their discretion, the rapporteur may also mention any other discrepancies considered significant for the overall evaluation (the experts, for example, may have awarded very similar scores, while having major differences in the related comments and arguments).

Positives and negatives of the project proposal and its summary

In this part of the ESR, the rapporteur summarizes positives and negatives of the project proposal. For this summary, they can use the arguments given in the evaluations of individual experts. Positives and negatives of a project proposal should clearly reflect the project proposal relative to the evaluation criteria.

Rapporteur's recommendation of the project proposal for funding

In this box, the rapporteur will state whether they recommend the project proposal for funding or not.

The rapporteur **cannot** recommend a project proposal for funding if:

- any of the scored criteria was scored **2 points or less** and/or

- the binary criterion has **not been met** and/or
- the total awarded points is **less than 27**.

If the rapporteur is not in line with the expert opinions in evaluation report, this must be supported by arguments in the field called ***Justification of the rapporteur's opinion on the provision of funding***. If the rapporteur takes a contrary opinion to all experts who have recommended the project proposal for support, the rapporteur must justify the opposite opinion in the field *Justification of the rapporteur's negative opinion*.

Final justification of project proposal evaluation (not available to applicants)

This is a draft of the final opinion serving as a basis for deliberations of the Expert Advisory Body. The rapporteur writes this justification on behalf of the Expert Advisory Body, in the third person singular.

Subsequently, the rapporteur will state the main positives and negatives of the project proposal from which it must be clear why the project proposal is or is not recommended for funding.

At the end of this justification, the rapporteur may propose a reduction in costs and / or an adjustment of the score according to the conditions set for the Expert Advisory Body. Any proposed changes must be clearly described and carefully justified.

An adjustment of the score, the rapporteur proposes ideally in bullet points according to the order of score criteria.

***example:** The Expert Advisory Body recommends to decrease/increase the total sum of points by X points, in the following scored criteria:*

- *decrease/increase by X points in scored criterion no. X in the expert no. X due to...*
- *decrease/increase by X points in scored criterion no. X in the expert no. X due to...*

Evaluation of the quality of experts' reports (not available to applicants)

Furthermore, the rapporteur assesses the quality of the expert's opinions on the project proposals, and mark them for:

- **coherence** – consistency of the score and verbal comments;
- **credibility** – professional level and the quality of evaluation.

These marks (and their justification) are the feedback to experts and at the same time a basis for assessing the work of experts by TA CR. Therefore, this part of the ESR also needs to be given due consideration. In the event that the rapporteur could not rely on any of the expert evaluation report, it is necessary to rathe this opinion by a mark of three or four. The rapporteur may also use the option of returning the expert evaluation report to be reworked (hodnotitele@tacr.cz).

THE RAPPORTEUR IN REALIZATION

The rapporteur, who prepared the ESR for a project proposal that is subsequently funded, automatically becomes the rapporteur for this project during its realization. Once a year, the rapporteur prepares an opinion on the project interim report, will express their views on possible changes and may be asked to cooperate in a check, monitoring visit or an evaluation of the given project.

Rapporteur may be also asked to cooperate in screening of projects for the purpose of evaluating their suitability for 2nd round of EIC Accelerator of the European Commission (see details in Call documentation).

3. Expert Advisory Body

When evaluating a project proposal, the Expert Advisory Body uses as a basis the individual evaluation reports and the ESR.

In its opinion, the Expert Advisory Body may propose:

- **change of score** awarded to the project proposal by a maximum of **10 points**. The score awarded by the Expert Advisory Body may not exceed the maximum possible score of **45 points**;

Any change in score must be **duly justified** (by mentioning a particular criterion, evaluation report, number of points and arguments why in the view of the Expert Advisory Body a score was incorrectly awarded);

- **reduction of the costs** of the whole project proposal (only total costs of the main applicant may be reduced, but not individual cost categories).

It is not possible, for instance, to propose a reduction of costs for a **single cost category** (e.g. personnel costs by 20 %). It is only possible to propose a reduction of the total costs of the project proposal. The proposal to reduce costs must be duly justified, for example by overestimated personnel costs, and by providing specific reasons why and where they are overestimated.

In its opinion, the Expert Advisory Body may diverge from the rapporteur's opinion. In such a case, the divergence must be duly justified.

The Expert Advisory Body **cannot** recommend a project proposal for funding if:

- any of the scored criteria was scored **2 points or less** and/or
- the binary criterion has **not been met** and/or
- the total awarded points is **less than 27**.

In the event that a member of the Expert Advisory Body suspects duplication with another project proposal according to the conditions set out in the call documentation, they will inform the administrator of collective bodies who will ensure verification before the meeting of the TA CR Board.

The output from the meeting of the Expert Advisory Body is a ranking list of all evaluated project proposals.

4. TA CR Board

Based on the recommendation of the Expert Advisory Body, the TA CR Board will decide which project proposals will be funded and which will not.

The output from the meeting of the TA CR Board is a ranking list of all evaluated project proposals. In the event that project proposals receive the same score and are at the limit of available funds, the TA CR Board will determine the final ranking according to the number of points obtained in the scored criteria No. 1 and No. 2.

5. Evaluation criteria

The evaluation under the call shall use **1 binary criterion** and **3 scored criteria**.

An annex to each application for funding is the **Project proposal** which contains a presentation of the proposed project and thus serves as the main basis for evaluation. The length of the Project proposal **may not exceed ten pages** (including the front page). In the event that the project proposal is longer, the evaluators should not take the excess pages into account in their evaluation.

Each project proposal includes among others a **video** in which applicants present the uniqueness of their project proposal in three minutes. The video serves to provide a comprehensive overview and description of the project proposal, however it is not subject to evaluation (it does not fall under any evaluation criterion). Nevertheless, the video is a mandatory part of the project proposal and could help the evaluators to get acquainted with the uniqueness of the product or service, find out what market (s) it should focus on and who is part of the project team. Therefore, we recommend that you watch it before starting the evaluation.

Binary criterion

If the binary criterion **is not met, the project proposal cannot be recommended for funding** regardless of the number of points that the project proposal receives in the evaluation.

1. Compliance with the programme and the sub-objective 1 (YES/NO)

Evaluate whether the project proposal is **in compliance with the programme and the sub-objective 1**

*Sub-Objective 1 is focused on supporting innovative solutions (products, services, etc.). The call for proposals is not focused on a particular sector or field. The objective of each project proposal is to draw up a **feasibility study** in order to verify the technological and economic viability of a disruptive innovation. The product or service should have an exploitation potential not only in the Czech environment, but should be also competitive on the international market. The uniqueness, impact and implementation of the product or service will be evaluated. The objective of the project proposal is not to develop technical and scientific knowledge, but to verify and confirm the hypothesis in terms of clients interest in the innovation and the readiness of the product, technology or service for commercial exploitation. Increased emphasis is placed on the groundbreaking nature of the solution and the experience or skills of key people in the research team.*

The exact focus is stated in the chapter 3.1 Focus of the call for proposals in the Call documentation.

If the condition is met, the binary criterion is met. If the condition is not met, the project proposal does not meet this binary criterion and cannot be recommended for funding.

Relevant parts of the project proposal: ISTA -> 3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> Objectives of the project and relevance to the programme

Scored criteria

The maximum number of points that can be awarded by one expert is **15 points**. The project proposal can get from all experts a total of **45 points**.

The expert will evaluate each scored criterion using the following scale:

Score	CORRESPONDING VERBAL DESCRIPTION
5	Excellent: the project proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion
4	Very good: the project proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present
3	Good: the project proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present
2	Fair: the project proposal addresses the aspects of the criterion sufficiently, but with significant shortcomings
1	Poor: the criterion is inadequately addressed by the project proposal or there are serious and substantial shortcomings
0	The project proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information

1. Excellence
(0; 1; 2; 3; 4; 5 points)

Evaluate whether

- the objectives of the project proposal, the business plan and market opportunities are clearly described
- product or service (for which a feasibility study will be created) is competitive, realistic and has the potential for quality progression
- the innovation has a high degree of novelty - compared to existing products, services and business models - with the potential to create or significantly transform markets
- the timing is right for this innovation in terms of market, user, societal or scientific of technological trends and developments

T A Č R

- the main applicant has a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) on the scale 4-5 and is able to shift to at least TRL 6-7 during the realization.

The product, technology or service should have commercial potential not only in the Czech environment, but it is expected to have a potential to expand and compete also on the international market.

At the time of submitting the project proposal, the product, technology, or service should:

- be ready for practical use or entry to markets;
- have a clearly specified target group, final customer or marketing channel;
- be at a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of at least 4 - technology validated in lab

The technology is expected to shift from TRL 4 – TRL 5 to TRL 6 – TRL 7 during the course of the project. An applicant who is at TRL 4 must shift to at least TRL 6. An applicant who is at TRL 5 must shift to at least TRL 6.

Relevant parts of the project proposal: PROJECT PROPOSAL -> 1. Excellence

ISTA -> 3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> Objectives of the project and relevance to the programme

2. Impact (0; 1; 2; 3; 4; 5 points)

Evaluate whether

- end-user needs are properly identified and described
- the planned feasibility study will lead to the verification of the R&D results in terms of their exploitation potential or preparation for their commercial use
- the plan for product commercialization and IPR protection is appropriately designed, and the economic or other benefits of the project proposal are described
- the applicant has demonstrated knowledge of the relevant market, target users, competing solutions and has a realistic idea how to exploit the product or service. The main applicant's business strategy is described in terms of benefits (market opportunities, employment, turnover, return on investment, etc.)
- the innovation has scale up potential, including the potential to develop new markets and impact on the growth of the company
- the innovation should achieve positive broader societal, economic, environmental or climate impacts

Relevant parts of the project proposal: PROJECT PROPOSAL -> 2. Impact

ISTA -> 5. OUTPUTS/RESULTS

3. Implementation
(0; 1; 2; 3; 4; 5 points)

Evaluate whether

- the submitted financial plan and work schedule is realistic
- the project team is capable to handle the planned steps, bring the results into practice, has sufficient organizational, technical, and business competencies and experience (e.g. product launch)
- the submitted financial plan is in line with the work description and schedule
- the team has a plan to acquire other critical competencies which are currently missing, including adequate representation of women and men

Relevant parts of the project proposal: PROJECT PROPOSAL 3. Implementation

ISTA -> 4. PROJECT TEAM

ISTA -> 6. FINANCIAL PLAN