

EVALUATION PROCESS

Annex No. 2 to the Call documentation – Evaluation process
for the 9th call under the SIGMA programme
Sub-Objective 1: Support for the Commercialisation of R&D&I+

Ref. No.: TACR/8-36/2024

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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.

General information on the evaluation process (instructions for experts, deadlines, terms, course of the evaluation, definition of bias) is formulated in the [General guide for evaluators](#). The evaluation process will happen in English.

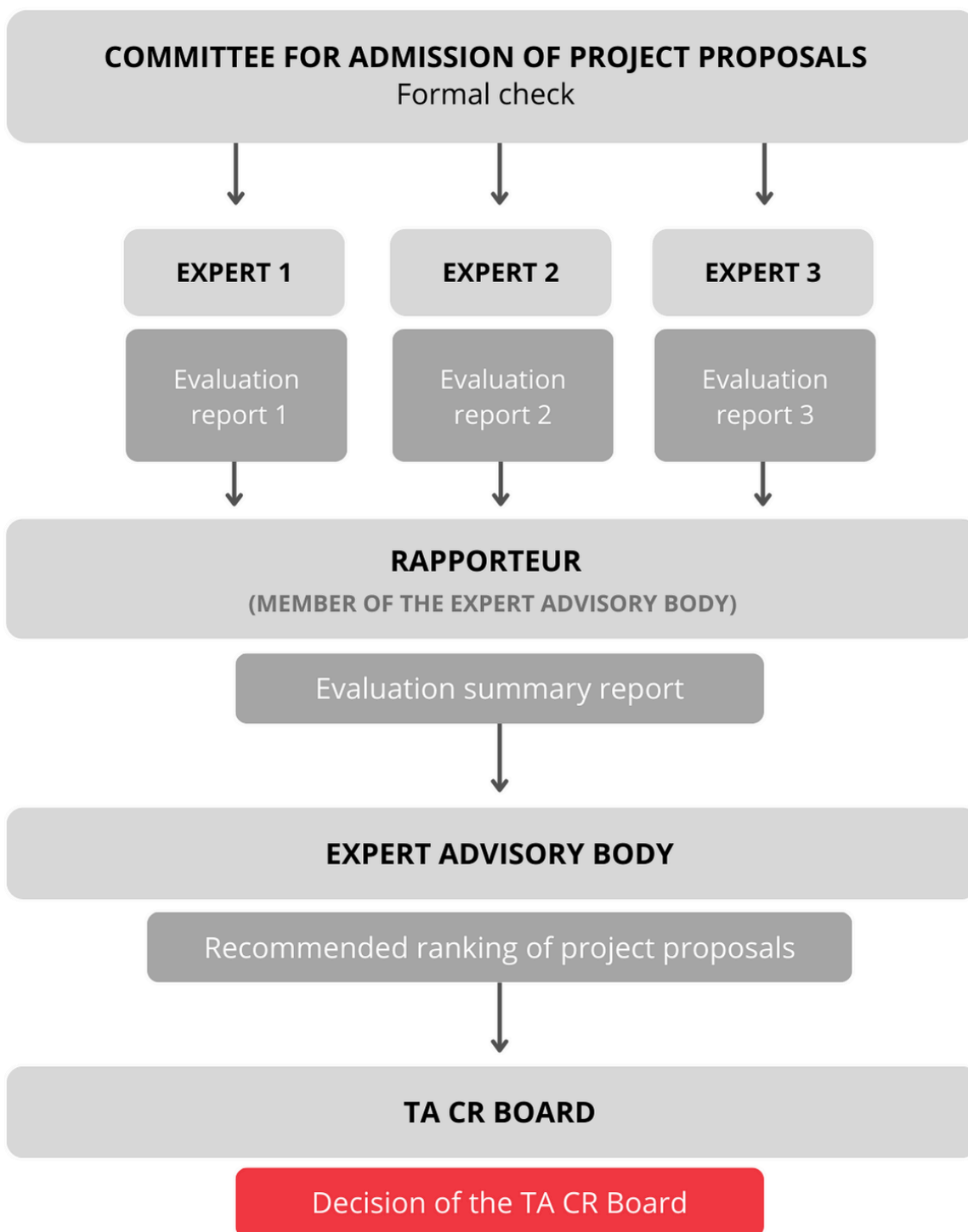
In case of divergence between the Czech version and the English translation of this document, the Czech version shall prevail.

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

For each project proposal, the expert:

- evaluates the **factual part** (according to set evaluation criteria):
 - whether the **binary criterion** was met and writes text justification;
 - each criterion is evaluated using a score and the awarded score is accompanied by a written justification;
- summarizes **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);
- draws up a **final evaluation** of the project proposal with a final opinion to recommend it for funding or not.

The total number of points which can be awarded by an individual expert, is **15**. The project proposal may, therefore, be awarded up to **45** points.

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**.

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**, 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, correspond to 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.

2. Rapporteur

The rapporteur will draw up the **ESR** in which they will express an opinion on the evaluation of individual experts, will summarize the positives and negatives of the project proposal and will state whether they recommend the project proposal for funding or not. Furthermore, the rapporteur will address the overall point evaluation and the adequacy of a financial plan.

SECTIONS OF EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT:

Comments on the binary criterion

The rapporteur comments on the binary criterion if:

- they have doubts about the fulfillment 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. At any point, only comments involving the specific and factually-driven argumentation are allowed.

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. 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

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 the 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 in the event that all experts recommended the project proposal for funding***.

Final justification of the 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.

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

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.

Example: The Expert Advisory Body recommends to decrease/increase the total sum of points by X points, namely:

- decrease/increase the score of criterion no. X by X points by the expert no. X due to...
- decrease/increase the score of criterion no. X by X points by 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 proposal, and mark them for their:

- **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 a certain expert evaluation report, it is necessary to rate this opinion by a **mark of three or four**. The rapporteur may also use the option of returning the expert evaluation report to be revised (hodnotitele@tacrcz).

THE RAPPORTEUR IN IMPLEMENTATION

The rapporteur who provided the ESR for a project proposal that is subsequently funded, automatically becomes the rapporteur for this project during its implementation. Once a year, the rapporteur prepares an opinion on the project interim/final 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. Regarding the rapporteur's duties during the implementation phase, the [General guide for evaluators](#) provides further and more detailed information.

Rapporteur may be also asked to cooperate in screening of projects for the purpose of evaluating their suitability for 2nd round of EIC Accelerator under Horizon Europe through the so-called plug-in mechanism (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 diverge from the rapporteur's opinion. In such a case, the divergence must be duly justified.

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 %).

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. Another example would be unjustifiably high personal traveling costs without mentioning a specific conference in the project proposal, or without a clear link to the planned output/result.

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.

Each project proposal includes, among others, a **video**. The video serves to provide a comprehensive overview and description of the project proposal and could help the evaluators to get acquainted quickly with the project proposal. The video is a part of the evaluation under the scored criterion No. 1.

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 the commercialization of breakthrough innovative solutions (products, technologies, services, etc.) that will contribute to the expansion, growth and development of enterprises. The call is not focused on a particular sector or field. The objective of each project proposal is to draw up a **feasibility study** (in English) in order to verify the technological and economic viability of a disruptive innovation. The objective of the project proposal is not to develop technical and scientific knowledge, but to verify and confirm the hypothesis in terms of potential consumer 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 project 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**. If any scored criterion is evaluated by less than 2 points, the project proposal cannot be recommended to funding (even if the binary criterion is met and the overall evaluation by the expert surpasses 9 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
- the product, technology 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 and to contribute to the company's growth
- the timing is right for this innovation in terms of market, user, societal, scientific or technological trends and developments
- the product, technology or service is at least at the level of laboratory verification; at the end of the project, the technology will be at a level of demonstration in a relevant environment
- the video is prepared according to the instructions of the call documentation

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 in the international market.

*Each project proposal includes a **video** in which members of the project team present their project proposal. The video does not have to be professionally produced, but its content must be consistent with the project proposal. In particular, the video must clearly present what makes the product, technology or service unique, what is the motivation of the applicants, which market(s) and target groups to be addressed and who is part of the project team. Should the evaluator consider the video to be insufficient, he/she will reduce the score in this criterion by 1 point (this is not a reason for not recommending the project proposal for support though).*

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, technology 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 a 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
- the gender dimension of research/innovation is adequately addressed, i.e. possibilities and barriers to the use of the solution by different groups of the population with regard to their gender (or other potentially disadvantageous characteristics) or the impact of the innovative solution on different groups

*Assessment of the **gender dimension in the content of research/innovation** will evaluate whether the project proposal adequately takes into account the possible gender dimensions of the issue being addressed, i.e. the role of gender differences, which may be relevant in terms of the output/result of the project and the innovative solution being developed.*

The gender dimension should be addressed to the extent that it will lead to similar positive impacts of the product, technology, or service on different gender groups (it is also desirable to take into account other potentially disadvantageous social characteristics). The feasibility study is required to consider different groups. The product, technology, or service must be adapted for different groups in terms of ease of use, impact on quality of life, safety, etc. In principle, it is appropriate to consider the possible gender dimension whenever people are the objects of research, users of the product, technology, or service, or persons potentially affected by them.

The evaluator will first assess whether it is relevant to address the gender dimension in the proposed innovative solution and in the feasibility study.

- *In the event that the evaluator concludes that the **gender dimension should be addressed**, then the evaluator will assess whether the applicants have sufficiently described how they addressed it with regard to the possible extent of the role of the gender dimension in the proposed solution. If applicants did not address the gender dimension, described it incorrectly (e.g. confused the gender dimension in the content of research/innovation with the balance of the project team), stated it only briefly or vaguely, or based their point of view on unfounded stereotypes, then the evaluator may reduce the evaluation by a maximum of 1 point for this aspect;*
- *In the event that the evaluator concludes that the **gender dimension does not have to be addressed**, and the applicants have adequately justified this situation in the project proposal, then the evaluator may award a full number of points (if the other aspects of the evaluation of this scored criterion are also met). However, if the applicants did not explicitly state that the*

gender dimension is not relevant for the given project proposal, then the evaluator may reduce the evaluation by a maximum of 1 point for this aspect.

If the project proposal reasonably addresses an issue that concerns only one gender or gender group (e.g. the development of menstrual aids), this fact shall not be a reason to lower the score.

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 are realistic and consistent with each other
- 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 project 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