

DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR MARITIME POLICY

Blue Growth Programme

Call nr #4 – Research - Guidelines for Evaluators

THESE GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATORS EXPLAIN HOW TO EVALUATE PROPOSALS IN THE BLUE GROWTH RESEARCH CALL. THE GUIDELINES ARE BASED ON 'GUIDELINE FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMMES' UNDER THE EEA GRANTS 2014-2021.

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Blue Growth Programme will contribute to the overall objective of reducing economic and social disparities and strengthen bilateral relations through funding of different projects within five outcomes under the following three Programme areas: 'Business Development, Innovation and SMEs'; 'Research' and 'Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurships'.

The Programme's goal is to increase value creation and sustainable growth in the Portuguese blue economy. In addition, it has the ambition to increase the research activity and promote education and training in the marine and maritime areas.

The Programme will explore synergies between the business, research and education areas, and will contribute to a sustainable blue growth in Portugal.

The main objective of the Research Call is to enhance the performance of Portuguese research organizations in Blue Growth, including technological development, and promote monitoring and knowledge improvement of marine environmental issues, including natural capital and ecosystems services. It is also an objective of this Call, funding projects aiming at technological development with and promote cooperation between research organizations and business sector.

2. PEER REVIEW PROCESS

2.1. ELIGIBILITY OF PROPOSALS

In order to be eligible for funding, project proposals under the Research Call should address at least one of the following topics :

- a) **Sustainable fisheries, aquaculture and blue biotechnology** to improve added value from fishing products and other marine resources, considering sustainability and circular principles;
- b) Develop and standardize **new methodologies to assess the status** of Portuguese national fishery resources, not evaluated by international scientific fora;
- c) Approaches to develop **integrated ecological-economics fisheries management**.
- d) Improve **aquaculture in open offshore conditions** in Portuguese maritime areas, including bio-economic modelling;

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- e) **Marine natural capital and ecosystem services** in order to fulfill gaps of data and knowledge on new areas with potential natural value for conservation¹ (including economics, human activities pressures, legal regimes or management solutions), with emphasis on deep sea habitats, and/or restoration solutions, namely through seaforestation;
- f) **Social impact of Blue Growth**, concerning sustainable fisheries, aquaculture, namely offshore, marine biotechnology, and local communities, in Portugal;
- g) **Climate change forecasts, climate change impacts** on marine ecosystems services and natural capital, including economic impacts in Portuguese maritime zones, and **climate solutions**, nature marine ecosystem based solutions and blue carbon;
- h) Data analysis and methodologies/tools for multidimensional assessment of **cumulative environmental and socioeconomic impacts to support decision making** on marine spatial planning and/or on localization of maritime activities in the Portuguese maritime zones;
- i) **New technologies for environmental monitoring and maritime surveillance**, development and/or transfer, namely in deep-sea habitats and resources, to improve data and knowledge.

2.2 ELIGIBILITY OF PROJECT PROMOTERS AND PROJECT PARTNERS

Eligible project promoters: Research Organizations, defined in the Community Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (2014/C 198/01), established in Portugal.

Natural persons are not eligible.

Eligible project partners:

Any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organisation established as a legal person either in Portugal, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein or any international organisation or body or agency thereof,

¹ To consider the new areas with potential natural value for conservation see RCM n° 143/2019 (29 August 2019) <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/124283154>

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actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of a project, (in accordance with article 7.2.2 of the EEA Grants 2014-2021 Regulation).

The cooperation in research projects is to be based on equal partnerships between entities involved in research and development in Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and entities involved in research and development in Portugal, with the leading role of the latter.

Participation in the Research Call projects shall be open to participants established in Third Countries (i.e. any country other than Portugal, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein), if such participation is justified in terms of the enhanced contribution made to the aims of the Research Call. However, participants from third countries cannot be supported by the grant.

Eligible consortia

- 1) The proposal must include:
 - at least one Portuguese research organization
 - at least one research organization from Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein²
- 2) The Project Promoter must designate a Principal Investigator – a researcher who provides the scientific lead for the research project on a daily basis and complies with the following criteria:
 - the Principal Investigator must be researcher with at least a doctoral degree in the field related to the project research area;
 - the Principal Investigator (of any nationality) has to be employed full time in the Project Promoter, with a permanent position or with a fixed term contract covering at least the duration of the project;
 - the Principal Investigator cannot be the authorised representative of the Project Promoter;

² In the case of a Donor State partner from Iceland or Liechtenstein, the definition of Research Organisation in the Community Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (2014/C 198/01) applies.

In the case of a Donor State Partner from Norway, the definition of Research Organisation at the Research Council of Norway applies. For list of RCN-approved Research Organisations, criteria and conditions for approval of status see here: <https://www.forskningsradet.no/en/apply-for-funding/who-can-apply-for-funding/research-organisations/approved-research-organisations/> .

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- the involvement of the Principal Investigator must be significant and sufficient for proper implementation of the project;
 - a researcher can be Principal Investigator for only one proposal in the Blue Growth Research Call.
- 3) The consortium may also include:
- Other entities from Portugal
 - Other entities from Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein
 - Entities from Third Countries – but without financial support from this programme.
- 4) It is mandatory to present letters of Commitement by all partners.

Formal criteria for Project Promoters and partners

Grants cannot be awarded to potential participants, who at the time of grant award procedure, are in one or more of the following situations:

- bankrupt, have entered in judicial administration or are under liquidation, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation, convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct,
- not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes,
- the subject of a judgment for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any other illegal activity, subject to a conflict of interests or guilty of misrepresenting information.

Any potential participant who has committed an irregularity in the implementation of any other action under financing provided by the European Union or under financial contributions provided by the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) States in relation to the EEA Agreement may be excluded from the selection procedure at any time, with due regard being given to the principle of proportionality.

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Any proposal that contravenes fundamental ethical principles or which does not fulfil the conditions set out in the Programme Agreement or in the call for proposals shall not be selected.

If it becomes clear before, during or after the evaluation phase that due to the new circumstances one or more of the eligibility criteria have not been fulfilled, the proposal is declared ineligible by the Programme Operator and is withdrawn from any further examination.

2.2. PEER REVIEWS

Before the evaluation process, the Programme Operator briefs the reviewers on the evaluation process and procedures as well as the evaluation criteria to be applied, and the content and expected impacts of the research topics concerned.

In the first stage, each proposal is sent to three reviewers who are asked to work individually, and give scores and comments for each evaluation criterion. The reviewers also indicate if the proposal:

- falls entirely out of scope of the call for proposals; and
- deals with sensitive ethical issues.

Each application will be scored on a scale of **0 to 20 points**, according to the evaluation criteria set out in section 4.

The evaluation criteria allow assessing the applicant's ability to complete the proposed action, namely the:

- **Relevance in relation to the objectives and priorities of the call;**
- **Scientific and/or technical excellence;**
- **Quality and efficiency of the implementation and management, including quality and implementation capacity of the applicants and contribution to capacity and competence building;**
- **Potential impact through the development, dissemination and use of project results.**

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Experts examine the issues to be considered comprising each evaluation criterion and score these on the scale from 0 to 5. Half point scores may be given.

After the individual evaluation of a proposal, the reviewer completes a 'Review Form' confirming their personal views on how well the proposal meets the assessment criteria and the justification for the assessment.

If the proposal is considered to be out of scope by all reviewers, it is considered ineligible and does not pass on to the second stage.

In the second stage (called 'consensus stage') the evaluation progresses to a consensus assessment performed by the three reviewers. Scores and comments of this stage are set out in the consensus report approved by all reviewers. Comments are presented in a way to be suitable for feedback to the applicants.

If applicable, the reviewers also come to a common view on the questions of scope and on ethics, as mentioned under the first stage above.

If during the consensus discussion it is found to be impossible to bring reviewers to a common point of view on any particular aspect of the proposal, the Programme Operator may ask additional experts to examine the proposal.

The outcome of the consensus stage is the consensus report, approved by all the experts. In the case that it is impossible to reach a consensus, the report sets out the majority view of the experts but also records any dissenting views from any particular expert(s).

The Programme Operator will take the necessary steps to assure the quality of the consensus reports, with particular attention given to clarity, consistency, and an appropriate level of detail.

If important changes are necessary, the reports will be referred back to the experts concerned.

2.3. RANKING LISTS

The Programme Operator prepares the preliminary ranking lists based on the international experts' evaluation of the proposals that passed the evaluation thresholds. Due account is taken of the scores received and of any advice from the experts.

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The Programme Committee is granted access to applications and evaluations and presented with the scored lists of proposals the Programme Operator has found eligible, including the suggested financial contribution for each proposal.

The Programme Committee shall review the Programme Operator's preliminary ranking list and on the basis of this, draw up a final ranking list. The justification for modifications will be detailed in the minutes of the meeting of the Programme Committee.

In the case of project proposals which have received the same number of points from the reviewers, the Programme Committee may take into the consideration the geographical and the thematic distribution of the projects, in order to arrive at a balanced portfolio of financed projects.

The Programme Operator then issues individual decisions to award a grant to projects based on the final ranking list approved by the Programme Committee, for those projects for which grants are available. (Guideline for Research Programmes 8.15)

The Programme Operator notifies the applicants about the results of the selection process within reasonable time and publicizes the results. All unsuccessful applicants are provided with a brief description of the reasons for the decision.

A number of proposals may be kept in reserve to allow for eventualities such as the failure of negotiations on projects, the withdrawal of proposals, or the availability of additional budget from other sources.

2.5. ROLE OF PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS

2.5.1. Role of Reviewers

Reviewers are **international experts** being resident and working outside Portugal and Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein. They are working in a personal capacity and in performing the work, do not represent any organisation.

Experts are required to have skills and knowledge appropriate to the areas of activity in which they are asked to assist. They must also have a high level of professional experience in the public or private sector in one or more of the following areas or activities: research in the relevant scientific and technological fields; administration, management or evaluation of projects; use of

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the results of research and technological development projects; technology transfer and innovation; international cooperation in science and technology; development of human resources.

Reviewers are briefed by the Programme Operator on the evaluation procedure before they start the assessment of the proposals. The Programme Operator concludes an 'appointment letter' with each expert. The appointment letter binds the expert to a code of conduct, establishes the essential provisions regarding confidentiality, and specifies in particular, the description of work and conditions of payment and reimbursement of expenses.

Evaluators are requested to:

- Carefully read the 'Description of the call areas' and the present 'Guide for evaluators'.
- Sign in advance a statement on the impartiality and confidentiality.
- Sign in advance a statement of non conflict of interest
- Thoroughly read the assigned proposal.
- Complete and submit a 'Review Form' providing comments and individual scoring of the proposal.
- Complete and submit a 'Consensus Report Form' providing comments and consensus scoring of the proposal assigned to them.

The names of the experts assigned to individual proposals are not made public. However, the Programme Operator shall within two months from publication of the decision to award project grants, publish on the internet the list of experts used for the evaluation of projects in the call.

2.5.2. Role of the Programme Committee

The Programme Committee consists of five persons representing Norway, Iceland, Lichenstein and Portugal – members of the research community and main research users. The Programme Committee supports and advises the Programme Operator in all matters concerning the scientific quality and relevance of the projects and activities funded by the Programme. The tasks of the Programme Committee include:

- a) Providing input to the strategic direction of the programme;
- b) Reviewing and approving the guideline for evaluators in English, the guide for applicants in English and the implementation guide for project promoters and partners in English;



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- c) Approving the selection criteria and the texts for the calls for proposals;
- d) Overseeing and approving the procedures for selection of projects;
- e) Recommending to the Programme Operator which proposals to select for funding and final awarding of grants;
- f) Reviewing progress made towards achieving the objective(s) of the research programme;
- g) Monitoring of the implementation of the research programme by the Programme Operator(s);
- h) Reviewing annual and final project and programme reports;
- i) Proposing revisions of the research programme likely to facilitate the achievement of the programme's objective(s) to the Donor State(s) and Beneficiary State(s);
- j) Liaising with the Programme Operator and, where relevant, any Programme Partners;
- k) Liaising with the Programme Committees in Research Programmes in other Beneficiary States.

2.5.3. Role of Programme Operator staff

The Programme Operator staff will support all involved experts during the evaluation process. They will take care that the Programme rules and procedures are respected. The Programme Operator staff do not provide any information regarding the status of the applications to the applicants while the evaluation procedure is in progress and until the final ranking lists have been approved.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

3.1. CONFIDENTIALITY

All proposals and related data, knowledge and documents communicated to the Programme Operator are treated in confidence. Application documents should therefore be handled with care and treated as confidential before, during and after the evaluation process.

Reviewers, Programme Committee members and observers must not disclose any information concerning application documents or evaluations to outsiders, nor should they use confidential information to their own or any other party's benefit or disadvantage.



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Reviewers, Programme Committee members and observers must not communicate with applicants on topics related to applications. Reviewers and Programme Committee members may not communicate their advice on any proposals (given to the Programme Operator) to the applicants or to any other person. The reviewers will be held personally responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any documents or electronic files sent, and for returning, erasing or destroying all confidential documents or files upon completing the evaluation as instructed. Reviewers and Programme Committee members and observers may not show the contents of proposals or information on applicants to third parties.

Reviewers, Programme Committee members and observers must sign a statement on the confidentiality.

3.2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All persons involved in the review process are required to declare any personal interests according to the following criteria.

3.2.1. Circumstances in which a conflict of interest may exist

A disqualifying conflict of interest exists if a person:

- a. First-degree relationship, marriage, life partnership, domestic partnership;
- b. Personal interest in the application's success or financial interest by persons listed under a.;
- c. Current or planned close scientific cooperation;
- d. Dependent employment relationship or supervisory relationship (e.g. teacher/ student relationship up to and including the postdoctoral phase) extending five years beyond the conclusion of the relationship;
- e. The affiliation or pending transfer to the Principal Contractor or to a Participating Institution;
- f. Researchers who are active in a council or similar supervisory board of the applying institution are excluded from participating in the review and decision-making process for applications originating from this institution;

A potential conflict of interest may exist, even in cases not covered by the clear disqualifying conflicts indicated above, if a person:

- g. Relationships that do not fall under a., other personal ties or conflicts;
- h. Financial interests of persons listed under g.;
- i. Participation in university bodies other than those listed under f., e.g. in scientific advisory committees in the research environment;



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- j. Research cooperation within the last three years, e.g. joint publications;
- k. Preparation of an application or implementation of a project with a closely related research topic (competition);
- l. Participating in an on-going scientific or inter-personal conflict with the applicant(s).

Persons involved in the peer review process must also declare if a conflict of interest appears at any time during the process.

Reviewers, Programme Committee members and observers must sign a statement declare a non conflict of interest.

3.2.2. Inability to perform obligations and termination

If for some reason the reviewers are not able to fulfil their obligations for a given work, the Programme Operator should be informed immediately. The work cannot be delegated to another person without the prior written agreement of the Programme Operator.

4. SELECTION CRITERIA

Reviewers are requested to evaluate the proposals according to the selection criteria specified in the Research Call as follows:

Table 1: Selection Criteria

Selection Criteria	Weighting (W)	Description	Criteria Classification (CC) (points)*
0. Relevance in relation to the objectives and priorities of the call		<p>This criterion is considered an elimination criterion.</p> <p>It should be assessed if the project proposal fits in at least one of the call thematic areas. If the answer is “no”, the project is rejected and there is no need for further evaluation. Please note that answer “no” should be given only in clear-cut cases. If the case is not clear-cut, evaluators must write their comments, evaluate the proposal and discuss it during the consensus stage. If a proposal is considered to be out of scope by all individual experts, it may be considered to be ineligible. Thus,</p>	(YES or NO)

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		a proposal which is not coherent with the scope of the call it is rejected from further evaluation.	
1. Scientific and/or technical excellence	2	<p>Under this criterion it should be assessed if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project topic answering a well-defined problem/question with scientific and/or practical relevance? • Is the project proposal positioning well described with respect to the state of the art or to technological innovation? • Does the project proposal contribute to a significant (clearly identified) progress beyond the state of the art? • Are the objectives, methodologies and technologies of the project appropriate? • Is the project innovative in terms of scientific or technological innovation or prospects of innovation, and challenge? • In the case of proposals for projects in the blue biotechnology and aquaculture sectors: are all the 3 pillars of sustainability taken into consideration and addressed in a adequate manner? This concerns in particular projects handling circularity and bioeconomy concepts, biorefineries and zerowaste solutions and integrated multilayer concepts. 	<p>CC1 Max 5 points *2 =10 total</p>
2. Quality and efficiency of the implementation and management, including quality and implementation capacity of the applicants and contribution to capacity and competence building	1	<p>Evaluation of to what extent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the coordination plan adequate? Does the task schedule comply with the assumed objectives and deliverables? Is the schedule realistic? • Are the resources adequate to the project (existing research infrastructure and requested upgrade/development of the research infrastructure)? Are the requested equipment purchases well justified and relevant? • Are the person-months resources well justified? In particular, is the involvement of PI significant and sufficient for a proper implementation of the project? • Is the financial part well justified and adequate? 	<p>CC2 Max 5 points</p>

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- Are the Principal Investigator (PI) expertise and previous achievements sound and suitably related to the project topic? How well qualified is the PI to conduct the project towards its stated objectives?
- Are the partner research teams leaders well qualified (with respect to their expertise and previous achievements) to conduct the corresponding activities within the project and fulfill the associated tasks?
- Are the partnership and the partner teams' structure correlated with the tasks, within the framework of the technical or scientific objectives? Do the companies involved play an active role in the project (if applicable)?
- Is it clearly demonstrated that the project is developed collaboratively between participating countries/institutions? Is there added value created through this collaboration? Are there complementarities between the partners?
- Is the work plan structured with clearly identified and adequate milestones and deliverables? Are the project tasks adequately defined and assigned to partners? Is the partners' contribution in the project well balanced with respect to their expertise and previous achievements?
- Are the young researchers integrated in the project?
- Are the ethical aspects treated in accordance with standard rules and regulations applicable?

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<p>3. Potential impact through the development, dissemination and use of project results</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>Evaluation of to what extent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the project build the experience and competence of the researchers/organizations involved? • Does the project influence a long-term collaboration among the partners concerned? Are the dedicated actions exploring the potential for further applications to other international calls credible? • Are the dissemination and exploitation of the expected results clearly stated and realistic? • Does the project lead towards distinct improvements of the quality of life, performance and/or efficiency of products, technologies and/or services? • Is the project positioning in the industrial strategy of the project partner companies (if applicable)? Is there a strategy for further valorization of the project results? • Does the project contribute to the Sustainable Development Objectives (ODS) of the United Nations Agenda 2030? 	<p>CC3 Max 5 points</p>
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The provision of false information as well as plagiarism may result in a rejection of the proposal. The Programme Operator reserves the right to pursue further steps according to the respective regulations.

The proposal which contravenes fundamental ethical principles may be excluded at any time from the process of evaluation, selection and award.

4.1. RELEVANCE IN RELATION TO THE OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES OF THE CALL

This criterion is considered an elimination criterion. It should be assessed if the project proposal fits in at least one of the call thematic areas. If the answer is “no”, the project is rejected and there is no need for further evaluation. Please note that answer “no” should be given only in clear-cut cases. If the case is not clear-cut, evaluators must write their comments, evaluate the proposal and discuss it during the consensus stage. If a proposal is considered to be out of scope by all individual experts, it may be considered to be ineligible. Thus, a proposal which is not coherent with the scope of the call it is rejected from further evaluation.

4.2. SCIENTIFIC AND/OR TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

The scientific quality and/or technical excellence of the research is the most important criterion in evaluating the proposal. The following aspects will be evaluated:

- Is the project topic answering a well-defined problem/question with scientific and/or practical relevance?
- Is the project proposal positioning well described with respect to the state of the art or to technological innovation?
- Does the project proposal contribute to a significant (clearly identified) progress beyond the state of the art?
- Are the objectives, methodologies and technologies of the project appropriate?
- Is the project innovative in terms of scientific or technological innovation or prospects of innovation, and challenge?
- In the case of proposals for projects in the blue biotechnology and aquaculture sectors: are all the 3 pillars of sustainability taken into consideration and addressed in a adequate manner? This concerns in particular projects handling circularity and bioeconomy concepts, biorefineries and zerowaste solutions and integrated multilayer concepts.

4.3. QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

The quality and efficiency of the implementation and management, including quality and implementation capacity of the applicants and contribution to capacity and competence building is an important criterion in evaluating the proposal. The following aspects will be evaluated:

- Is the coordination plan adequate? Does the task schedule comply with the assumed objectives and deliverables? Is the schedule realistic?
- Are the resources adequate to the project (existing research infrastructure and requested upgrade/development of the research infrastructure)? Are the requested equipment purchases well justified and relevant?
- Are the person-months resources well justified? In particular, is the involvement of PI significant and sufficient for a proper implementation of the project?

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- Is the financial part well justified and adequate?
- Are the Principal Investigator (PI) expertise and previous achievements sound and suitably related to the project topic? How well qualified is the PI to conduct the project towards its stated objectives?
- Are the partner research teams leaders well qualified (with respect to their expertise and previous achievements) to conduct the corresponding activities within the project and fulfill the associated tasks?
- Are the partnership and the partner teams' structure correlated with the tasks, within the framework of the technical or scientific objectives? Do the companies involved play an active role in the project (if applicable)?
- Is it clearly demonstrated that the project is developed collaboratively between participating countries/institutions? Is there added value created through this collaboration? Are there complementarities between the partners?
- Is the work plan structured with clearly identified and adequate milestones and deliverables? Are the project tasks adequately defined and assigned to partners? Is the partners' contribution in the project well balanced with respect to their expertise and previous achievements?
- Are the young researchers integrated in the project?
- Are the ethical aspects treated in accordance with standard rules and regulations applicable?

Projects should be ambitious and feasible at the same time. The project plan has to be evaluated according to the level of competences of the project team and the efficiency of the work plan.

Moreover, the proposals must make clear why they should be developed cooperatively between participating countries/ institutions and what added value will be created through this collaboration. It is expected that the collaborations developed between Portuguese and Norwegian, Icelandic or entities from the Lichtenstein will deliver significant synergy effects.

The project's budget should reflect the actual contribution made by each party and should be the subject of negotiation between the Project Promoter and the project partners.



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4.4. IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

The potential impact through the development, dissemination and use of project results of research activities is also an important criterion in evaluating the proposal. The following aspects will be taken into account:

- Does the project build the experience and competence of the researchers/organizations involved?
- Does the project influence a long-term collaboration among the partners concerned? Are the dedicated actions exploring the potential for further applications to other international calls credible?
- Are the dissemination and exploitation of the expected results clearly stated and realistic?
- Does the project lead towards distinct improvements of the quality of life, performance and/or efficiency of products, technologies and/or services?
- Is the project positioning in the industrial strategy of the project partner companies (if applicable)? Is there a strategy for further valorization of the project results?
- Does the project contribute to the Sustainable Development Objectives (ODS) of the United Nations Agenda 2030?

Intended long-term application of outcomes - planned strategies for disseminating and using results during and after the project as well as the description of how potential users are to be involved in the project in view of exploitation of the results i.e. exploitation of intellectual property generated, technical innovations, spin-offs, raising of scientific awareness, improvement of quality of life, intended technical, economic, environmental and societal impacts.

5. GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS

This chapter describes the tasks of the reviewers, defined as international, independent experts in a specific subject.

You have been invited to evaluate a research proposal because it is closely related to your field of expertise. Each proposal will be submitted to 3 reviewers.

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Before you may access the proposal, you have to sign a statement on the impartiality and confidentiality and a non conflict of interest.

Please read the following documents that will be sent to you:

- The 'Description of the call areas' explains the call topics,
- The present 'Guide for Evaluators',
- The assigned Proposal.

5.1. REVIEW FORM

You are invited to complete and submit the 'Review Form' in the online system. Please provide a written evaluation and a scoring for each criterion as requested in the form.

The 'Review Form' contains 3 parts:

- Part 1: Ethical considerations
- Part 2: Evaluation of the proposal
- Part 3: Overall assessment

5.1.1. Ethical considerations

Please comment if the proposal reflect and promote the general principles laid down in the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, as well as the gender equality principle laid down in Article 16 of Regulation (EU) 1291/2013. All vacancies for researchers shall be published on the EURAXESS website.

All projects shall reflect principles of research integrity.

Particular attention shall be paid to the principle of proportionality, the right to privacy, the right to the protection of personal data, the right to the physical and mental integrity of a person, the right to non-discrimination and the need to ensure high levels of human health protection.

Research and innovation activities carried out under the Programme shall have an exclusive focus on civil applications.

5.1.2. Evaluation of the proposal

Please carefully read the descriptions of the criteria in chapter 4 'Selection Criteria' and comment concisely on each selection criterion to the best of your abilities, professional skills, knowledge and ethics.

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Please also consult the style recommendations in chapter 6 as it is very important that the review is based on coherent comments or arguments that will subsequently help to formulate a consensus report and help the Programme Operator to reach a decision. It is therefore essential that the Programme Operator receives sufficiently detailed and coherent assessments for each selection criterion. Both individual Review Forms and consensus report will be forwarded to applicants.

5.1.3. Scoring of the proposal

Experts examine the issues to be considered comprising each evaluation criterion. The criterion 0 is evaluated by stating 'yes' or 'no'. For criteria 1-3 scores are given on a scale from 0 to 5. Half points may be given. For each criterion under examination, score values indicate the following assessments:

Table 2: Scoring of the proposal

* Score CC	Explanation
0	The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
1 (poor)	The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
2 (fair)	While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.
3 (good)	The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary.
4 (very good)	The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible
5 (excellent)	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

Top scores should only be awarded to proposals of exceptionally high quality (high international calibre and major scientific impact).



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5.1.4. Overall assessment

Please provide an overall assessment of the proposal and justify your funding recommendation (see Table 3: Funding Recommendation based on the Overall Assessment). Make sure that your final recommendation is coherent with the thresholds established for each selection criterion in section 5 of this 'Guide for Evaluators'.

Indicate the most important strengths and weaknesses of the project proposal and provide any necessary supplementary comments.

Each discrepancy should be reported and described.

Please clearly indicate any modifications to the proposal that are necessary in your opinion according with Table 3.

Table 3: Funding Recommendation based on the Overall Assessment

Funding recommendation	Explanation
Not recommended for funding	<p>Project of too low calibre to warrant funding.</p> <p>Major and essential modifications need to be made to achieve an international standard of quality and efficiency of the proposal, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abolition of large portions of a (or entire) work package (unless project can be conducted well without said work package) or need to add important work packages. • Substantial modification of the proposed methodology. • Additional scientific/ technical expertise required for the project.
Recommended for funding	<p>Project of very good quality.</p> <p>Minor modifications to the project plan may improve the quality and efficiency of the proposal, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget cuts (and resources) suggested because of slight overestimation which do not jeopardise the successful completion of work packages and the project while achieving the full range of proposed results. • Modifications of the work-packages which do not necessitate large changes to the project description. • Minor alterations and considerations that should be accounted for on the level of the methodology.
Strongly recommended for funding	<p>Project of excellent quality that should be funded as proposed.</p>



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5.2. CONSENSUS REPORT FORM

After the individual evaluation of a proposal, the three experts assigned to the proposal proceed to a common evaluation and complete 'Consensus Report Form'.

The 'Consensus Report Form' contains 3 parts:

- Part 1: Ethical considerations
- Part 2: Evaluation of the proposal
- Part 3: Overall assessment

Before drafting the consensus report please consult the style recommendations again in chapter 6

In order to improve the comprehensibility of the funding decisions, the consensus report needs to fulfil additional quality requirements:

- The arguments in the consensus should be based on the arguments provided in the written reviews. Do not only reiterate individual comments by reviewers but clearly state how the significant individual comments of the reviewers lead to the overall conclusion
- Any new positive or negative argument raised (which does not appear within any of the written reviews) needs to be clearly highlighted and justified with evidence
- The report needs to be coherent throughout the text
- Resolve major conflicting arguments stated within different reviews by proposing a justified opinion/solution
- Factual information which has a major influence on the funding decision needs to be checked on validity
- Criticism should be supported with examples
- Indicate possible modifications or recommendations to improve the quality of the project
- Clearly explain the impact of each statement for the overall assessment. The proposed funding decision should be comprehensible and duly justified. The main argument(s) which lead to a positive or negative funding decision need to be unambiguously highlighted.

Please respect these recommendations as the consensus reports will be forwarded to the Projects Promoters and project partners.

6. GUIDELINES FOR WRITING EVALUATIONS

The following style recommendations should guide reviewers during the composition of their evaluations:

- The comments should refer only to each criterion. Strengths and weaknesses shall be listed in bullet points (with hyphens "-").
- The review should comment on all aspects referred to in the criteria.
- The comments must be:
 - Clear and substantial
 - Definitive and final (avoid phrases like: "I/we think that, possibly")
 - Consistent with the score awarded, balancing strengths and weaknesses
 - Each strength and weakness shall be reflected only once
 - Of adequate length
 - Relative to the proposal as it stands
 - Specific to the relevant criterion

The comments must not be:

- A summary of the proposal
- Too short, too long or otherwise inappropriate/incorrect
- Categorical statements, not properly verified
- Assumptions (if the proposal is unclear on important aspects, reflect it in comments and scores)
- Based on the potential of the proposal (the comments must reflect the proposal as it stands)
- Aimed at making recommendation and at providing advice on improving the proposal. They should not describe what the proposal should do, could do, what the experts would like to see etc.
- Referring to the same weakness under different criteria
- Contradicting statements relative to strengths and weaknesses



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- Discriminating and/or offensive
- References to details that could easily be a factual mistake e.g. page numbers, amounts etc.

7. THRESHOLDS AND THE RANKING LISTS

The proposal can receive a total number of 20 points in the evaluation procedure. To be recommended for funding, the proposal must receive at least 14 points and pass all the thresholds on the consensus stage according to the values presented in the table below.

Table 4: Thresholds and weight Criteria

	Thresholds	Weight
0. Relevance	YES	N/A
1. Scientific and/or technical excellence	8	x2
2. Quality and efficiency of the implementation and management	3	x1
3. Impact of the project	3	x1

Based on the evaluation outcomes (consensus reports), the Programme Operator draws up the ranking lists of the proposals submitted under Call to be discussed by the Programme Committee.

8. PROGRAMME COMMITTEE MEETING

The Programme Operator provides the Programme Committee (PC) with the list of ranked projects, individual reviews, consensus reports and evaluated proposals.

The Programme Committee shall review the Programme Operator's preliminary ranking list and on the basis of this, draw up a final ranking list. The PC will examine and compare the consensus reports and confirm consistency of the scores. The PC may decide to change the final score of the proposal received in the consensus report. This right shall be reserved only to cases in which the PC unanimously agrees that there is an unjustified discrepancy between the numerical score and written evaluation of the proposal in the consensus report or unjustified discrepancy between the consensus report and individual reviews.

In such a case the PC awards points for each of the evaluation criteria. The points awarded by the PC for each evaluation criterion cannot exceed the highest and the lowest score given for that



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criterion in the individual reviews of the proposal. The score awarded by the PC is final and is taken into account while deciding upon the final ranking lists. Each such case shall be decided unanimously and justified in writing by the PC.

In the case of project proposals which have received the same number of points from the reviewers, the Programme Committee may take into the consideration the geographical and the thematic distribution of the projects, in order to arrive at a balanced portfolio of financed projects.

The Programme Operator then issues individual decisions to award a grant to projects based on the final ranking list approved by the Programme Committee, for those projects for which grants are available. (Guideline for Research Programmes 8.15).

In case the final ranking list reveals that a small amount of funding prevents the inclusion of another project onto the funded list, the Programme Operator may, acting on a proposal from the Programme Committee, apply minor budget cuts uniformly across all projects, not exceeding 3% of the requested budget.

Applications that have sufficient quality but are not awarded granting because of the limitations in funding set in this call, may be put on a ranked reserve list.