



EVALUATION PROCESS

Annex No. 2 to the Call documentation – Evaluation process
for the 8th call under the SIGMA programme
Sub-Objective 4: Bilateral Cooperation

Ref. No.: TACR/8-4/2024

Table of contents

Introductory information	1
Evaluation process	1
1. Experts	3
2. Rapporteur	3
3. Expert Advisory Body	6
4. TA CR Board	7
5. Evaluation criteria	7
Binary criterion	7
Scored criteria	8

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 4) 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](#).

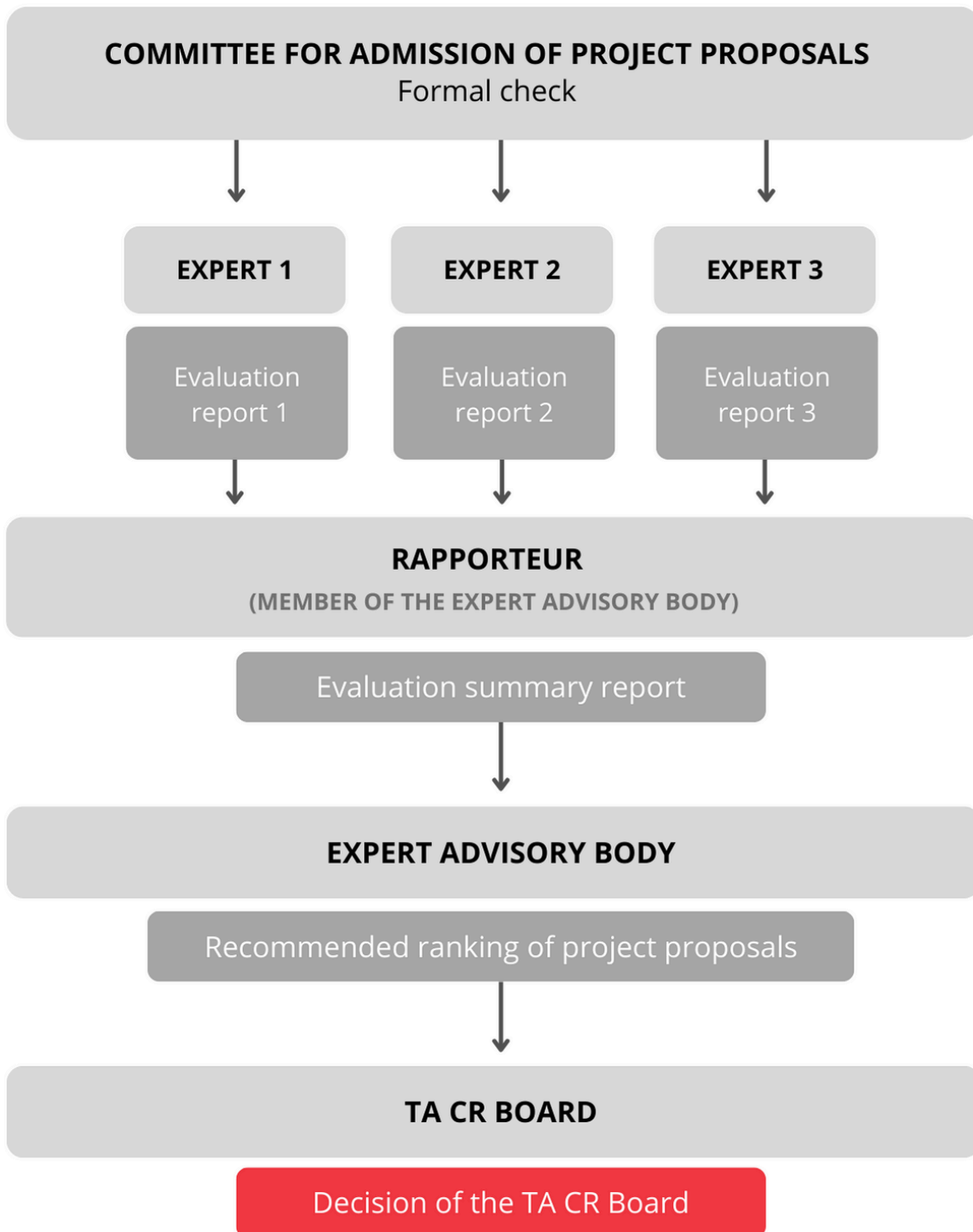
In case of divergence between the Czech version and the English translation of this document, the Czech version shall prevail.

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:

- 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 total number of points which can be awarded by an individual expert, is **90**. The project proposal may, therefore, be awarded up to **270** points.

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

- any of the scored criteria has not been met; therefore, it was scored 0 points and/or
- the binary criterion has not been met and/or
- the total awarded points is less than **50**.

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.

2. Rapporteur

The rapporteur will draw up the **ESR** 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. 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. At any point, the rapporteur is obligated to provide comments based only on a specific and fact-driven argumentation.

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.

Proposal for a point correction

The rapporteur can propose to the Expert Advisory Body an adjustment of the overall point evaluation of the project proposal. The proposal to change the point evaluation can be in the range of **± 50 points**. The total sum of points after correction must not exceed the maximum possible number of 270 points. In the event that, according to the rapporteur’s evaluation, a larger correction of points is needed, the rapporteur shall propose a maximum of 50 points numerically but shall provide verbal justification according to his or her evaluation, and if the Expert Advisory Body agrees, the additional correction shall be submitted to the TA CR Board.

A point correction is proposed by the rapporteur only in the event that there has been a significant error in the evaluation made by one of the experts. Any proposal to change the point evaluation must be duly justified.

Proposals for adjusting the overall point evaluation shall be presented by the rapporteur **in indents** according to the order of scored criteria, by indicating the expert’s opinion, the number of points, and why, according to the rapporteur, the points were incorrectly awarded.

Comments on the financial plan of the project proposal

The rapporteur shall comment on the adequacy of the financial plan. In the event that the rapporteur deems the financial plan to be inadequate, he may propose and justify:

- **a reduction in the total costs or costs of one of the applicants** (the reduction is stated in %). It is not possible to propose a reduction in costs in a single cost category (e.g., personnel costs by 20%), but only a reduction in the total costs of

the project proposal or the total costs of one of the applicants of the project proposal. A proposal for a reduction in costs must be duly justified, e.g. overestimated personnel costs and specific grounds, where and why they are overestimated, or e.g. unreasonably high travel costs without mentioning a specific conference or without a clear link to the planned output/result.

- **an adjustment of the IR/ER ratio** (for all applicants or for one of the applicants).

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 has not been met; therefore, it was scored 0 points and/or
- the binary criterion has not been met and/or
- the project proposal was awarded less than 150 points (in total for all three expert reports, considering, also, the later possible point correction of any of them made by the rapporteur).

If the rapporteur is not in line with the expert opinions in their 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 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.

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:

- **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 reports, 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.

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:

- **a change of score** awarded to the project proposal by a maximum of **50 points**. The score awarded by the Expert Advisory Body may not exceed the maximum possible score of **270 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);

- **a reduction of the costs** of the whole project proposal, or target the reduction of the costs to any of the applicants.

It is not possible, for instance, to propose a reduction of costs for a **single cost category** (e.g. personnel costs by 20 %). The Expert Advisory Body is, therefore, only entitled to propose the reduction of the entire project proposal costs, or the reduction of total costs for a selected applicant.

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.

- **an adjustment of the IR/ED** ratio for any of the applicants.

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

- any of the scored criteria was scored has not been met; therefore, it was scored 0 points and/or
- the binary criterion has not been met and/or
- the project proposal was awarded less than 150 points (in total for all three expert reports, considering, also, the later possible point correction of any of them made by the Expert Advisory Body).

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 outcome of the meeting of the TA CR Board shall be two ranking lists (specifically for each allocation). Both ranking lists shall be compiled as follows:

- the best evaluated project proposal recommended for funding¹ for each partner agency according to the awarded points;
- other project proposals recommended for funding in descending order of points (regardless of the partner agency);
- unsupported project proposals in descending order of points (regardless of the partner agency).

5. Evaluation criteria

The evaluation under the call shall use **1 binary criterion** and **7 scored criteria**.

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 If no project proposal is recommended for funding for the partner organisation, this rule will not be applied, and the project proposals will be ranked only within the unsupported project proposals.

1. R&D&I project (novelty, creativity, research uncertainty, systematicity, transferability and/or reproducibility)
 (YES/NO)

Evaluate whether the submitted proposal is a project of applied research (industrial research, experimental development and innovation) according to the [Frascati Manual](#). Assess if this binary criterion is met, or is not.

The commentary is mandatory, if the rapporteur identifies any of the **five following aspects** as not met:

- novelty
- research uncertainty
- creativity
- systematicity
- transferability and/or reproducibility

The ideal case occurs when applicants described the current state of knowledge in the Czech Republic and abroad (this will be also qualitatively assessed in the scored criterion no. 3) and elucidated how their project proposal contributes to the respective field of research, or what kind of solution the project proposal suggests.

This criterion cannot be considered as fulfilled, if the project proposal:

- *is based on a routine analysis, or on a research service;*
- *is considered necessary for society, yet it cannot be qualified as a research practice;*
- *does not involve the research uncertainty and no risk in achieving its planned outputs/results is apparent.*

If any of the aforementioned five principles was not met, this criterion should be assessed as not fulfilled since the project proposal cannot be considered an R&D&I project.

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> Project content -> Novelty, research uncertainty, creativity, systematicity, reproducibility)

5. OUTPUTS/RESULTS

Scored criteria

A four-step scale with a corresponding verbal description is determined for the evaluation of each scoring criterion. The score differs according to the weight of the given sub-criterion according to the table below. If any scored criterion is evaluated by 0 points from the rapporteur, the project proposal cannot be recommended to funding (even if the binary criterion is met and the overall evaluation by the rapporteur surpasses 50 points).

SCORING SCALE			CORRESPONDING VERBAL DESCRIPTION
18	12	9	met without reservations

12	8	6	met with minor reservations
6	4	3	met with major reservations
0	0	0	not met

1. Fulfillment of call objectives and the objectives of the project proposal and national priorities

(0; 6; 12; 18 points)

Evaluate whether:

- the project proposal is coherent and in line with the focus and objectives of the programme.
- the **objectives of the project proposal** are sufficiently defined, i.e. if the objectives are clearly formulated, comprehensively described, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and traceable in time;
- and to what extent the project proposal is consistent with the selected areas and sub-areas of the **National Priorities for Oriented Research (NPOR)**.

*The call for proposals is focused on **international cooperation** that will ensure the transfer of know-how, access to foreign research capacities, and new markets, etc. Evaluators shall assess the potential benefit of international cooperation. To what extent Czech and foreign applicants actually plan to cooperate with regard to the balance of cooperation. The acquisition of new knowledge and skills is expected for the development of new or substantially improved products, procedures or services leading to a new product, procedure, or service. Access to international knowledge and know-how, foreign research capacities or facilitation of penetration into foreign markets is also important. If you have serious doubts about the relevance of the participation of a foreign partner, this is a reason for not meeting this scored criterion and awarding 0 points.*

*If the project proposal is not in compliance with the **NPOR**, reflect on this fact in your commentary and, correspondingly, in the score evaluation. However, the noncompliance with the NPOR is not a reason for not recommending the project proposal for funding, i.e. for awarding the project proposal 0 points in this criterion.*

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> Objectives of the project and relevance to the programme -> Project objectives in Czech language, Project objectives in English language, Fulfillment of call objectives and the objectives of the project proposal and national priorities

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> International cooperation -> Benefits of international cooperation, Justification of the need for international cooperation with the Foreign partner(s)

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Project definition -> National Priorities for Oriented Research

2. Time efficiency of the project proposal, timetable and suitability of the methods used

(0; 4; 8; 12 points)

Evaluate whether:

- the project proposal's timetable for the entire research activity is adequately estimated and if it sufficiently addresses the temporal requirements of the research;
- the project proposal has established distinct milestones for the implementation stage (which could be utilized for checking the progress of project implementation);
- the proposed timetable is realistic and the description of key activities, temporal milestones, and planned sub-objectives of the project proposal is sufficient;
- described methods are appropriately used to achieve the outputs/results of the project proposal.

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> Project content -> The essence and the timetable of the project proposal

5. OUTPUTS/RESULTS

3. Knowledge of state-of-the-art, project's benefits and uniqueness

(0; 4; 8; 12 points)

Evaluate whether:

- the applicants have demonstrated knowledge of the subject and of the **state-of-the-art** in the Czech Republic and abroad;
- the applicants have indicated the projects on the outputs/results of which the project proposal builds and to which it is a follow-up and whether **they have differentiated themselves from current or completed projects**, indicating the differences and links (according to the conditions set out in the Call Documentation, section 3.5);
- and to what extent the project proposal proposes a **unique** (novel) solution and indicates its (economic, sociopolitical, or other) **benefits** and their positive effect.

To search for related projects, TA CR recommends using the [STARFOS](#) tool for finding funded projects or the Information System for Research, Experimental Development and Innovation ([R&D&IIS](#)).

If the applicants do not indicate relevant similar or related own projects or research plans at the Czech and international level according to the conditions set out in the Call Documentation, section 3.5 Differentiation from own similar projects in which the applicant is or was an investigator (in a role of main applicant, or other project partner), this can be considered within the evaluation as a reason for not recommending the project proposal for funding. Therefore, if this is found, the criterion is to be rated as not met (0 points).

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> Project content -> Current state of knowledge, Delimitation with respect to similar projects and solutions

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> Applicability of outputs/results -> Applicability of outputs/results in practice, the benefits of the project
8. ANNEXES -> Other annexes

4. Relevance and applicability of project outputs/results

(0; 6; 12; 18 points)

Evaluate whether:

- the **result types are appropriately chosen** and their parameters are sufficiently described;
- the planned outputs/results are relevant relative to the project proposal focus and objectives;
- the degree of involvement of individual participants in the activities leads to the **production of these outputs/results**.

*The type and number of planned outputs/results should correspond to the objectives and substance of the project proposal. The suitability and choice of main outputs/results must be assessed in accordance with [Methodology 2017+](#) and with the provider's specification in the form of [MET-12 Specification of the Provider's Requirements for R&D Results](#). In the event that a **result type O - other results** is planned in the project proposal, its description must not correspond to any type of result defined by the methodology (or to such types of results that are not allowed for this call for proposals).*

*Evaluators must check the **mandatory annexes** according to the requirements specified for the individual types of results in the Call Documentation, section 3.7. Annexes must be complete (according to the required details) with a clear substantive link to the output/result, on the prescribed form (if required), confirmed and signed by the responsible person (if required). If any required element is missing, the evaluator must evaluate the criterion as unfulfilled and award 0 points.*

*Part of every project proposal is a mandatory annex of a **market survey**, the aim of which is to describe the commercial potential, expected economic benefits, and the applicability of the outputs/results in the relevant market. The outputs/results of the project proposal must have application or market potential. The outputs/results described in the project proposal must have the potential to successfully penetrate these markets. The project proposal must demonstrate the comparative advantage of the developed solution compared to the existing supply on the relevant market, or with the supply that is expected at the end of the project. If the market research does not sufficiently convince the evaluator of the knowledge of the market, the evaluator may reduce the evaluation for this aspect by a maximum of 6 points (i.e., by one point scale). However, if the evaluator evaluates that the applicants are not able to put their outputs/results into practice and have economic benefits from them, it is necessary to award 0 points for this criterion.*

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> Applicability of outputs/results -> Applicability of outputs/results in practice, the benefits of the project, The ability to implement the results in practice
5. OUTPUTS/RESULTS -> Main outputs/results, Other outputs/results -> Result type, Result description, Access to output/result
8. ANNEXES -> Mandatory annexes -> Market research

5. Project organisation and technical facilities, identification of risks

(0; 3; 6; 9 points)

Evaluate whether:

- the project management and the **cooperation** of the applicants is meaningfully described (arrangement of members' roles and responsibilities for sub-tasks);
- the **applicants** have appropriate technical facilities at its disposal, the pre-existent know-how and other key **competencies**;
- the applicants sufficiently identified the possible risks, assessed the likelihood of their occurrence, proposed a way to address them, estimated their severity and described the preventive steps to eliminate or reduce the risks.

*Assess if and to what extent the project organisation of **Czech as well as foreign** applicants is adequate regarding the subject matter and project proposal's objectives. The documented previous cooperation while conducting the R&D&I project is beneficial in this regard.*

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> Project content -> Technical provision, initial know-how, applicants' dispositions

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> Project content -> Project management

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> Identification of risks

8. ANNEXES -> Mandatory annexes -> Common proposal

6. Project team (composition and expertise)

(0; 3; 6; 9 points)

Evaluate whether:

- the **key members** of the project team have the **necessary experience in dealing with R&D projects and the expertise** for achieving the planned outputs/results;
- the experience of the team members matches with their individual roles in the team, with the type of planned activities and with the degree of proposed participation by each team member.

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

4. PROJECT TEAM

8. ANNEXES -> Other annexes

7. Financial plan, justification of project proposal costs and incentive effect of funding
(0; 3; 6; 9 points)**Evaluate whether:**

- the **total amount of planned costs is adequate and reasonable** for the planned activities and outputs/results in terms of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of their use (the level of expected revenue/economic benefits in relation to the total project costs);
- **individual cost items**, including personnel costs, are appropriately designed and if they are standard for the proposed activity at the given time in the certain territory;
- the incentive effect is sufficiently described and justified, i.e. whether the applicants sufficiently justified that the project proposal would not have been carried out without the state aid, or only to a limited extent.

Considering this criterion, the rapporteur will evaluate the adequacy of each cost category. All planned costs need to be properly and thoroughly justified.

*If applicants have not sufficiently demonstrated the **incentive effect of funding**, it is necessary to consider this criterion as not met, i.e. evaluate it by 0 points. This criterion is identically awarded 0 points when project proposal's planned costs are significantly overestimated (e.g. a cost reduction of more than 25 % would be necessary).*

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

6. FINANCIAL PLAN -> Share of the categories of IR/ED, Costs, Justification of cost items
4. PROJECT TEAM -> Key persons -> Key persons -> Number of FTE during project solving
4. PROJECT TEAM -> Other persons of the applicant or project partner involved in the project solution -> Other persons of the applicant or project partner involved in the project solution -> Number of FTE during project solving
3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION -> Factual focus of the project proposal -> Objectives of the project and relevance to the programme -> The zero variant and the incentive effect