

EVALUATION PROCESS

Annex no. 1 to the Call documentation – Evaluation process
for the 18th call under the SIGMA programme
Sub-Objective 1: Support for the Commercialisation of R&D&I+

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INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

This annex to the call documentation contains all the 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 TA CR shared information system (hereinafter referred to as „SISTA“).

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. The evaluation process is conducted in English.

If any condition or instruction in this document addresses all stages of the evaluation process, a general expression **expert** is used. This designation – as well as other terms (individual expert, rapporteur, investigator, etc.) – is intended to refer to both the masculine and feminine genders.

The expert acts impartially when evaluating project proposals and strives to keep their evaluation free from **unconscious biases or prejudices** related to gender, age, ethnicity, institutional affiliation, or other characteristics of those being evaluated.

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

After the evaluation process, all evaluation reports will be made available in an anonymous version to the applicants of the relevant project proposals in SISTA.

EVALUATION PROCESS

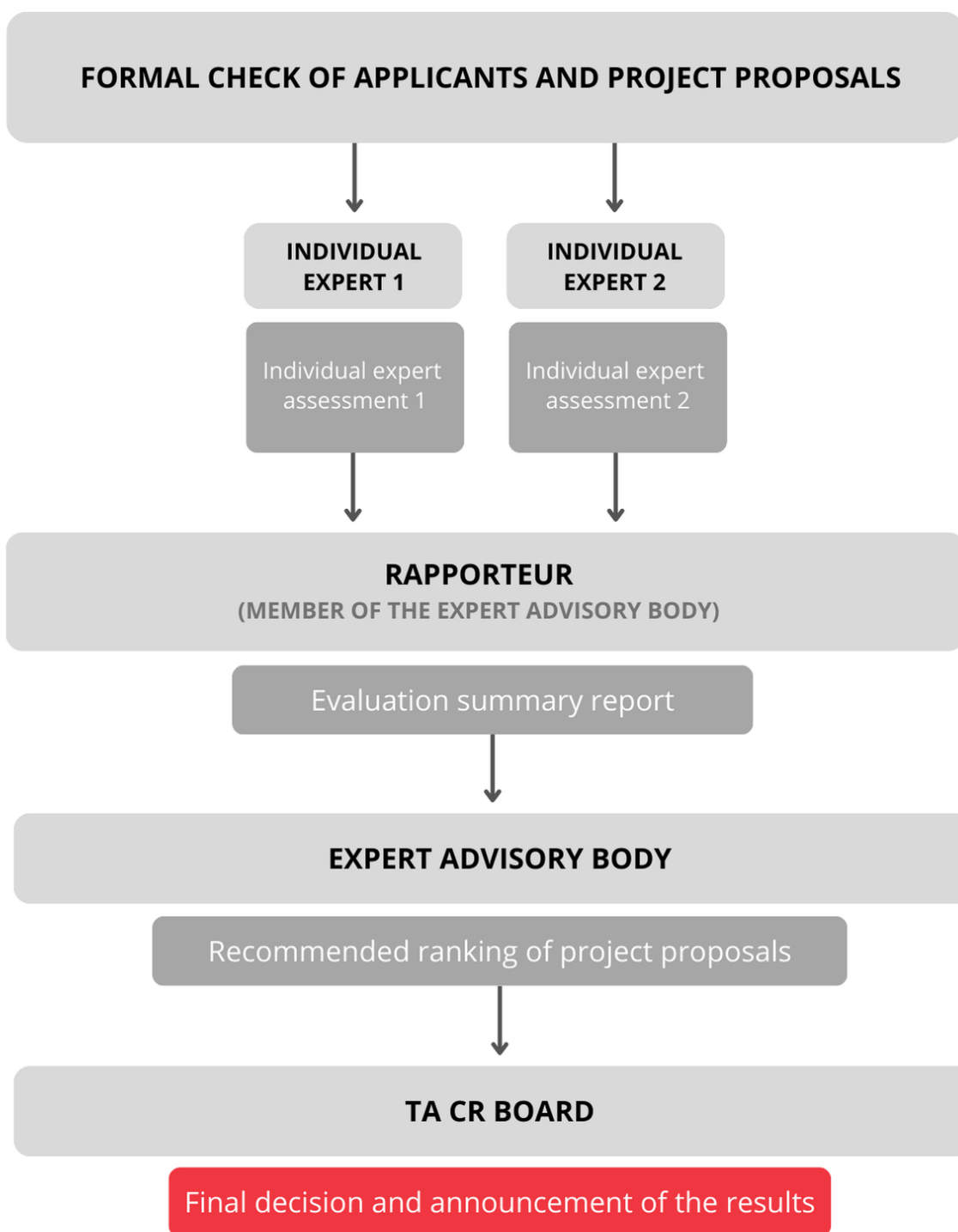
Each project proposal must be evaluated as follows:

- 1. FORMAL CHECK OF APPLICANTS AND PROJECT PROPOSALS** – a 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. INDIVIDUAL EXPERTS** – each project proposal is evaluated independently by two individual experts according to the evaluation criteria. Each individual expert will study the project proposal and draw up an individual expert assessment.
- 3. RAPPORTEUR** – will study the project proposal, the individual expert assessments and will draw up an evaluation summary report (hereinafter referred to as the „ESR“). The rapporteur will conclude their ESR with a proposal of the final statement provided by the Expert Advisory Body.
- 4. EXPERT ADVISORY BODY** – this body is mainly composed of the representatives of Czech government departments and public innovation institutions. The Expert Advisory Body will provide a final statement on each project proposal and propose a preliminary ranking of project proposals for the TA CR Board.

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- 5. TA CR BOARD** – will use as a basis the statement and ranking proposed by the Expert Advisory Body and will decide on the granting of funding to selected project proposals under the conditions of the allocation of funds established for this call for proposals.



1. INDIVIDUAL EXPERTS

For each project proposal, the individual expert:

- evaluates the **SUBSTANTIVE PART** (according to set evaluation criteria) – each criterion shall be evaluated on a score scale, and the awarded score must be accompanied by a written justification;
- summarises **the positives and the negatives** in the conclusion of their individual expert assessment (a system of bullet points is suitable for better clarity and orientation in the text);
- draws up their personal **final statement** on a given project proposal, leading to recommending / not recommending it for funding.

The individual expert **must not** recommend the project proposal for funding if:

- any of the scored criteria has not been met; therefore, it was scored 0 points and/or
- the total number of points awarded is **less than 65**.

The total number of points which can be awarded by an individual expert, is **100**. The project proposal may, therefore, be awarded up to **200** points.

Each individual expert 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 an individual expert reduces the number of points, they must state the specific negative aspects, ensuring that the list of shortcomings corresponds to the overall score awarded to the project proposal.

In the justification of their assessment, individual experts will clearly summarize their views on the project proposal. In the event of a **positive assessment**, they will state the main positives of the project proposal and other reasons relevant for its funding. Even a positive statement may contain negatives, which should, however, be reflected in the awarded score. On the other hand, in the case of a **negative assessment**, they will state all the relevant 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 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.

The rapporteur who draws up the ESR for the eventually funded project proposal, also usually becomes the project's rapporteur in the implementation stage.¹

SECTIONS OF EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING THESE SECTIONS:

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

In this part of the ESR, there is an overview of the individual experts' assessments in each evaluation criterion.

RAPPORTEUR'S COMMENTS

Comments on differences in scored criteria between individual experts and an eventual proposal of the overall score adjustment

In this textbox, the rapporteur will comment on differences in the evaluation of individual scored criteria by individual experts. Comments need to be provided in every case when the experts differ by two and more points on the given scoring scale. Rapporteur also comments on any discrepancy in the final statements 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 assessment (the individual experts, for example, may have awarded very similar scores, while having major differences in the related comments and arguments).

A **point correction** is proposed by the rapporteur only if there has been a significant error in the evaluation made by any individual expert. However, any proposal to change the point evaluation must be duly justified. The rapporteur is entitled to propose a point adjustment even if the assessment provided by the individual experts does not significantly differ (in that case, they may claim what level of the score scale they find corresponding to the quality of the project proposal). Proposals for adjusting the overall point evaluation shall be presented by the rapporteur **in indents** with regard to the order of scored criteria, by indicating the number of points, specifying the individual expert's assessment, and explaining why, according to the rapporteur, the points were incorrectly awarded by the individual expert.

Proposal for a point correction

In this numerical box, the rapporteur states **the exact number** of points proposed as an adjustment of the overall score, according to the justification outlined in the textbox above. The proposal to change the point evaluation may be in the range of **± 40 points**. The proposed adjustment must adhere to the specified ranges for each scored criterion. In the event that, according to the rapporteur's evaluation, a larger correction of points is needed, the rapporteur shall propose a maximum of 40 points numerically in this box, but the verbal comment in the

¹ The rapporteur draws up a statement on the applicants' final report, in which they comment on any eventual changes occurring in the project. The rapporteur may be also asked to cooperate when an administrative and financial inspection, a monitoring visit, or a project evaluation are required for a given project. Eventually, the rapporteur is informed about their duties in more detail during the project implementation.

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).

textbox above may anticipate a need for a higher correction. Any additional corrections may be performed by any of the following evaluation boards.

Positives and negatives of the project proposal

In this part of the ESR, the rapporteur summarizes the positives and negatives of the project proposal (a system of bullet points is suitable for better clarity and orientation in the text). For this summary, they can use the arguments given in the individual experts' assessments. Listed positives and negatives should clearly reflect the quality of the given project proposal with respect to the evaluation criteria as well as to the overall score.

FINAL SUMMARY

Rapporteur's assessment

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

The rapporteur **must not** 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 project proposal was awarded less than 130 points (in total for both individual expert assessments, considering also the later possible point correction of any of them made by the rapporteur).

Justification of the rapporteur's assessment on the provision of funding

In this box, the rapporteur summarizes their assessment of the project proposal. Here, the rapporteur states the main positives and negatives of the project proposal, which must clearly demonstrate why the project proposal is recommended for funding or not.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (not available to applicants)

Draft of the final statement on behalf of the following collective body

This is a draft of the final statement 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.

If the rapporteur proposes any point correction and/or a reduction in the total costs, they will state the proposal on behalf of the Expert Advisory Body at the end of this statement. Any proposed changes must be clearly described and duly 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 to the level of X points due to...*

Evaluation of the quality of individual experts' assessments

Furthermore, the rapporteur assesses the quality of the individual expert assessments of the project proposal. This evaluation serves as the feedback to individual experts and at the same time as a basis for assessing the work of experts by TA CR.

The rapporteur marks the individual expert assessments for:

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

In the event that the rapporteur could **not rely** on any of the individual expert assessments, it is necessary to rate such assessment by a **mark of three or four**.

Moreover, the rapporteur identifies the **positives and negatives** of the individual expert assessments.

The rapporteur may also use the option of returning the individual expert assessment to be revised (by sending a request to expert@tacr.cz).

3. EXPERT ADVISORY BODY

The Expert Advisory Body provides its own final statement on the project proposal. While evaluating the project proposal, the Expert Advisory Body uses as a basis the individual expert assessments and the ESR. In its final statement, the Expert Advisory Body may diverge from the assessment of the rapporteur and individual experts. In such a case, the divergence must be duly justified.

In the final statement, the Expert Advisory Body is entitled to propose:

- **an adjustment of the score** awarded to the project proposal by a maximum of **40 points**. In the event that, according to the Expert Advisory Body's evaluation, a larger correction of points is needed, the TA CR board, a following collective body, is entitled to adjust the score beyond the competence of the Expert Advisory Body. The points awarded to a project proposal by the Expert Advisory Body must adhere to the established scales for each scored criterion.

Any change in score must be **duly justified** – each adjustment of the score proposed by the Expert Advisory Body will be articulated in indents with regard to the order of scored criteria, by indicating the number of points, specifying the individual expert's

assessment, and explaining why, the points were incorrectly awarded by the individual expert.

The Expert Advisory Body is entitled to propose a point adjustment even if the assessment provided by the individual experts does not significantly differ (in that case, they may claim what level of the score scale they find corresponding to the quality of the project proposal).

- **a reduction in the total costs** of the main applicant.

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., by overestimated number of FTEs with regard to the planned activities, or by unreasonably high travel costs without a clear link to the planned output/result.

Furthermore, it is **not possible** to propose a reduction in costs due to high personnel costs if the applicant indicates Average personnel costs per FTE for a given year of up to **CZK 1.6 million**. Any applicant who indicates amounts below the set threshold for this budget item in the project proposal for the individual years of implementation is entitled to provide only a general justification regarding the calculation of these amounts for key investigators and other personnel involved in the project. Amounts justified in this manner do not constitute grounds for cost reduction during the evaluation process; however, they may result in a lower score under the scored criterion no. 7.

If the **Average personnel costs per FTE** exceed the threshold of CZK 1.6 million in any year of implementation, applicants are required to provide a detailed justification for the level of personnel costs in the project proposal. This must be done particularly with regard to the importance of the positions of the personnel involved, the manner and extent of their participation in the planned activities within the project team, and the necessity of their professional competencies for achieving the set objectives and planned outputs/results. If the justification is insufficient, the rapporteur may propose a reduction in costs (specifically for each year in which the applicant exceeds the set threshold), and this may likewise serve as grounds for a lower score.

The Expert Advisory Body **must not** 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 project proposal was awarded less than 130 points (in total for both individual expert assessments, 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 the 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 in descending order of points.

4. TA CR BOARD

The TA CR Board will assess all project proposals. It will then decide (primarily based on the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Body) which project proposals will be funded and which will not.

The outcome of the meeting of the TA CR Board shall be a ranking list. Project proposals will be ranked in descending order by the total number of points.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation under the call shall use **7 scored criteria**.

SCORED CRITERIA

If any scored criterion is evaluated by 0 points from the expert, the project proposal cannot be recommended for funding (even if the evaluation by the individual expert surpasses 65 points).

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:

SCORING SCALE			CORRESPONDING VERBAL DESCRIPTION
18	12	10	met without reservations
12	8	6	met with minor reservations
6	4	3	met with major reservations
0	0	0	not met

Individual aspects of the criteria, which are listed in the bullet points below each scored criterion, cannot be seen as sub-criteria with a fixed point value for the scale.

1. Objectives of the project proposal, their alignment with the focus of the call, and video evaluation

0;4;8;12 points

Evaluate whether:

- the **objectives of the project proposal** are sufficiently defined – each objective must be clearly formulated, comprehensively described, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and traceable in time
- the project proposal is coherent and in line with the focus and objectives of the call (commercialisation of R&D&I+ through creating a feasibility study)
- the video is prepared according to the instructions of the Call documentation

*The call for proposals is focused on the **commercialization of breakthrough innovative solutions** (products, technologies, services, etc.) that will contribute to the expansion, growth, and development of businesses. The call for proposal is not sector-specific. The objective of each project proposal is to create a **feasibility study** (in English) to verify the technological and economic viability of the innovation. Therefore, the project proposal's objective should not be to advance technical and scientific knowledge, but rather to identify and confirm a hypothesis regarding potential users' interest in the innovation and the readiness of the product, technology, or service for market application. Special emphasis is placed on the groundbreaking nature of the solution and the product's ambition to penetrate foreign markets. The exact focus is stated in Chapter 3.1 of the [Call documentation](#).*

If an expert determines that the main applicants' goal is not to create a feasibility study, the project proposal is not in line with the focus of the public competition and must therefore be given 0 points. The expert is obliged to proceed similarly if the project proposal's objectives do not exclusively correspond to the duration and nature of the given feasibility study's implementation, but significantly exceed this scope (e.g., the project proposal includes activities that should be addressed subsequently, as part of the EIC Accelerator).

*Each project proposal must include a **video** summarizing all essential parts of the project. The video does not need to be professionally produced, but its content must be consistent with the project proposal. The video must clearly present what makes the product, technology, or service unique, the applicants' motivation, which market/markets and target groups it aims to address, the key and other members of the project team along with their roles. If an expert evaluates this video as insufficient (e.g., the video does not feature any members of the project team, it does not clearly show the company's facilities, or it lacks essential information about the product's uniqueness), the expert will lower the rating for this criterion based on the severity of the identified shortcomings (i.e., by one or two steps on the scoring scale), however, this is not grounds for not recommending the project proposal for funding. More detailed information on the requirements for the video outline is provided in Chapter 3.2 of the Call documentation.*

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

SUBSTANTIVE PART → Excellence → Objectives and focus of the project proposal

2. Uniqueness and technology readiness level of the innovation

0;6;12;18 points

Evaluate whether:

- the innovation demonstrates a deep-tech character and a high degree of novelty – in comparison to existing products, services, and business models – with the potential to create or significantly transform markets and bring growth to the company
- the product, technology, or service (for which a feasibility study will be created) provides a demonstrable qualitative benefit
- the proposed solution is technologically feasible (viability and practical aspects)
- the innovation is well-timed in relation to the market, users, and socio-scientific and technological trends – this means the innovation addresses correctly identified and described end-user needs, targets a specific problem or societal need, and/or fills a previously untapped market gap
- the product, technology, or service is now 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 uniqueness of a product, technology, or service is expected on an international scale. Applicants must confirm in their project proposal their interest in the EIC Accelerator's plug-in mechanism and must convincingly demonstrate that they meet the requirements for the minimum technology readiness level (TRL) of the innovation. At the time of submitting the project proposal, applicants must demonstrate that the innovation in question is at least at TRL 4 (laboratory verification), specifically by providing supporting documentation (e.g., test reports, development logs, etc.) in the mandatory annex. At the end of the project, the technology level must correspond to at least TRL 5 (validation in a relevant environment) and no higher than TRL 6 (demonstration in a relevant environment). In this regard, applicants must convincingly explain how they will demonstrate compliance with the requirement for at least TRL 5 at the end of the project.

If the project proposal documents the technology readiness level of the innovation in general or vague terms, but it is clear from the information provided and/or the overall structure of the project proposal that the innovation meets the required TRL both at the time of submission and at the end of the project implementation, the expert will reduce the score appropriately with regard to the identified shortcomings. However, if the expert determines that the innovation in question does not meet the minimum technology readiness level requirements, the expert must award 0 points for this criterion and thus mark this scored criterion as not met.

The expert follows a similar procedure when assessing the uniqueness and deep-tech nature of a given innovation (for more detailed information on the definition of deep-tech technologies, see Chapter 3.1 of the [Call documentation](#)). If applicants demonstrate these aspects vaguely or insufficiently convincingly in their project proposal, but the overall structure of the proposal and the description of the innovation clearly indicate a high degree of novelty and deep-tech character, the expert will reduce the score appropriately with regard to the identified shortcomings. However, if the proposed solution does not meet the requirements for uniqueness and/or completely lacks a deep-tech character, the project proposal is unsuitable for this public call. In such a case, this criterion must be marked as not met, i.e., 0 points must be awarded.

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

SUBSTANTIVE PART → Excellence → Innovation uniqueness and technology readiness level

PROJECT ANNEXES → Proof of TRL 4 achievement

3. Market knowledge and competitiveness of the innovation

0;6;12;18 points

Evaluate:

- knowledge of both the target users of the innovation and the key parameters of the relevant market or markets to date at the international level
- the marketability of the product, technology, or service – the main applicant should be commercially competitive against existing market players (or those in its segment) in the given field
- the innovation's potential for expansion and scaling, including its potential to develop new markets
- the main applicant's business strategy in terms of potential economic benefits (market opportunities, employment, turnover, market share, return on investment, etc.) and the expected growth of these indicators or other significant positive impacts on the company's operations

In the project proposal, applicants must demonstrate a comparative advantage of the presented solution compared to the existing offerings on the relevant market, or to those expected at the project's completion. They must also show the potential for application by end-users whose needs the innovation fulfills. If the provided information does not sufficiently convince the expert of these facts, they must reflect this by reducing the score according to the severity of the identified shortcomings.

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

SUBSTANTIVE PART → Impact of the project → Outputs/results

SUBSTANTIVE PART → Impact of the project → Expected Impacts → Market knowledge (Users/Market/Company); Competition analysis

4. Commercialization, risks for market application of the innovation, and IPR protection

0;6;12;18 points

Evaluate:

- the suitability and clarity of the proposed commercialization plan for the innovation, specifically regarding the exploitation and dissemination of project results, considering the specifics of the given sector and its associated market at a local, international, and/or global level
- the adequacy of the approach to intellectual property rights protection, including associated legal aspects related to the innovation and its commercial market application (e.g., distribution of intellectual property rights, nature and conditions of licensing,

contractual relationships, regulations, and legislation), and the methods for addressing these issues through a strategy of planned activities and individual measures

- the identification of relevant risks and barriers that could complicate the market entry of the final product due to the nature of the innovation, as well as the logic of the presented steps to eliminate or mitigate them

A necessary condition for a project implementation and the creation of a feasibility study to commercialize a given innovation is that the applicants are the decisive owners or users of the key know-how on which the specific product or service is based. Applicants are also required to declare in the project proposal if the need to obtain additional certification for the innovation plays a crucial role in the commercialization process, and clearly present the steps that will lead to this certification. In the event of a generic or insufficient description of these aspects, the expert is entitled to adequately reduce the score. However, if the expert determines that the description of these issues is completely lacking and/or that it represents an absolutely fundamental obstacle to the successful commercialization of the service/product and its resolution is not satisfactorily explained in the project proposal, this is a reason to award 0 points.

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

SUBSTANTIVE PART → Impact of the project → Expected Impacts → Dissemination and exploitation of results; Marketability risks; Intellectual Property, knowledge protection and regulatory issues

5. Project's benefits and gender dimension of research/innovation

0;4;8;12 points

Evaluate:

- the extent of the innovation's positive social, economic, environmental, or climate impact
- whether 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 the applicants are capable of putting outputs/results into practice

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 expert 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 4 points 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 4 points 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:

SUBSTANTIVE PART → Impact of the project → Expected Impacts → Benefits of the project

SUBSTANTIVE PART → Impact of the project → Gender dimension in research content

**6. Project organisation, technical facilities, and expertise of the project team
(competences, experience, and composition)**

0;4;8;12 points

Evaluate:

- the project team's ability to handle the planned steps and apply the outputs/results in practice, along with their organizational, technical, and business competencies and experience (e.g., with launching products on the market)
- whether the project team plans to acquire additional key competencies that it currently lacks, including adequate representation of women and men
- the adequacy of project management, cooperation setup, and the distribution of roles and responsibilities in relation to achieving the planned outcome of a feasibility study
- whether the main applicant possesses the appropriate technical facilities and other necessary prerequisites for carrying out the project

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

PROJECT TEAM

SUBSTANTIVE PART → Project management → Organisation and technical support of the project

7. Timetable and budget

0;3;6;10 points

Evaluate:

- the description and realism of the planned activities
- the mutual consistency of the work schedule and the budget

Relevant parts of the project proposal:

SUBSTANTIVE PART → Project management → Work plan

APPLICANTS → Applicant → Budget