



# PROGRAMME RESEARCH AND INNOVATION - APPLIED RESEARCH

## GUIDE FOR EVALUATORS CALL 2024

These guidelines for evaluators explain how to evaluate proposals in the Call 2024 of the Programme *Research and Innovation - Applied Research*. The guidelines are based on the *Regulation on the implementation of the second Swiss Contribution to selected member states of the European Union to reduce economic and social disparities within the European Union*.

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Background Information .....	2
2. Evaluation Process.....	2
2.1. Formal (eligibility) assessment .....	2
2.2. Scientific Peer review .....	3
2.3. Ranking List.....	4
3. Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest .....	5
3.1. Confidentiality .....	5
3.2. Conflict of Interest.....	6
4. Selection Criteria .....	7
4.1. Relevance .....	7
4.2. Scientific and/or technical excellence .....	8
4.3. Quality and Efficiency of the implementation and management .....	8
4.4. Impact of the project.....	8
5. Guidelines for Reviewers.....	9
5.1. Review Form .....	9
5.2. Consensus Report Form .....	12
6. Guidelines for Writing Evaluations.....	14

Further call information, forms and guidelines are available on:

<https://www.gov.pl/web/ncbr/ii-edycja-szwajcarsko-polskiego-programu-wspolpracy>

<https://www.gov.pl/web/ncbr-en/2nd-edition-of-the-swiss-polish-cooperation-programme>



## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Programme Research and Innovation, Applied Research* is part of the second Swiss Contribution to selected European Union Member States to reduce economic and social disparities in the European Union by supporting applied research, which is the basis for innovation. Thus strengthening sustainable development through the implementation of research results in industry and the economy.

The *Programme* will also develop and strengthen mutual relations between Poland and Switzerland through cooperation in bilateral research projects.

The outcome of the project is expected to be an expansion of cooperation links between private and R&D institutions, leading to an increase in their capacity and capability to form other consortia in the future and to increase their credibility as reliable cooperation partners.

## 2. EVALUATION PROCESS

### 2.1. FORMAL (ELIGIBILITY) ASSESSMENT

To be formally accepted, proposal must meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

1. Receipt of proposal by the *Programme Operator* before the deadline established in the call and in compliance with p. 2.9 of *Guide For Applicants Call 2024*;
2. Fulfilment of conditions related to:
  - a) composition of the project consortium as defined in *Guide For Applicants Call 2024*, p. 2.2,
  - b) *Programme Component Operator* and *Programme Component Partners* eligibility as defined in *Guide For Applicants Call 2024*, p. 2.3 and 2.4,
  - c) minimum and maximum amount of funding quota as defined in *Guide For Applicants, Call 2024*, p. 2.8.1,
  - d) minimum and maximum project duration and final cost eligibility date as defined in *Guide For Applicants Call 2024*, p. 2.8.1,
  - e) types of activities as defined in *Guide For Applicants Call 2024*, p. 2.8.1,
  - f) currency as defined in *Guide For Applicants Call 2024*, p. 2.8.2,
  - g) cost categories as defined in *Guide For Applicants Call 2024*, p. 2.8.4,
  - h) intensity of state aid as defined in *Guide For Applicants Call 2024*, p. 2.8.5,
3. Confirmation that *Programme Component Operator* and *Programme Component Partners*:
  - a) comply with the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities and the principle of equality between women and men, as defined in *Guide For Applicants Call 2024* p. 2.1.4;
  - b) comply with all other requirements defined in *Guide For Applicants Call 2024*, p. 2.1.5;
4. Completeness of the proposal as required in the Proposal Manual;
5. Accordance with the scope of the call as stipulated in *Guide For Applicants Call 2024* p.2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 - the content of the proposal must be in line with the issues raised in the above-mentioned points; a proposal will only be deemed ineligible on grounds of 'scope' in clear-cut cases.

Formal (eligibility) assessment is carried out by the PO staff in close cooperation with the *Swiss Programme Partner*. The detailed information is provided in p. 3.2 of *Guide For Applicants Call 2024*.



If it becomes clear before, during or after the selection process 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. SCIENTIFIC PEER REVIEW

### 2.2.1. Reviewers

Proposals that will pass the formal (eligibility) assessment are sent by the *Programme Operator* to scientific peer review.

The scientific peer review is carried out by reviewers who are international experts being residents and working outside Poland and Switzerland. 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 the relevant scientific and technological fields and in one or more of the following areas or activities: administration, management or evaluation of projects; use of the results of research and technological development projects; technology transfer and innovation; international cooperation in science and technology; development of human resources.

The Programme Operator cooperates only with reviewers who have decided to conclude the Framework Cooperation Agreement. This is a standard agreement that the PO (National Centre for Research and Development) signs with external experts. It regulates the general rules of cooperation with the PO as an institution.

The PO, on the basis of the information gathered in the database of experts in its possession, pre-selects reviewers, corresponding with the field of a given proposal. Then experts on the basis of titles, keywords, etc. determine the readiness to evaluate individual proposals. On this basis, the PO assigns specific proposals to specific reviewers.

Reviewers are informed by the *Programme Operator* about the evaluation procedure, as well as the evaluation criteria to be applied and the content and expected impact of the call before they start evaluating proposals. Selected reviewers receive the orders to provide the reviews. Each order binds the reviewer to a code of conduct, establishes the essential provisions regarding confidentiality and specifies in particular, the description of work and conditions of payment. The names of the experts assigned to individual proposals are not made public.

### 2.2.2. Individual review stage

In the first stage, each proposal is sent to **three international reviewers** who are asked to carefully read this Guide, sign in advance a statement on impartiality and confidentiality and thoroughly read the assigned project proposal.

Each reviewer works individually and gives 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.

The result of the individual evaluation of a proposal is a completed *review form* confirming individual reading and assessment of reviewer.



### 2.2.3. Consensus report stage

If the proposal is considered to be out of scope by at least two reviewers, it is considered ineligible and does not pass on to the consensus report stage.

If the proposal is considered out of scope by only one reviewer, it goes to the consensus report stage and the issue raised is discussed further with the other reviewers.

The consensus report stage is performed together by all three reviewers. Scores and comments of this stage will be set out in the consensus report. Comments should be 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 individual evaluation stage above.

If in the course of the assessment the reviewers are unable to reach a common position, i.e. each reviewer has a different opinion, their three opinions should be included in the consensus report form. The decision on the final score in such a case is made by the Selection Committee.

If in the course of the evaluation one of the reviewers has an opinion different from the others, the report sets out the majority view of the reviewers but also records any dissenting views from any particular reviewer.

If the *Program Operator* finds that the *review form* and/or *consensus report* have not been prepared in accordance with the requirements in this Guide for Evaluators, the Program Operator may send them back for correction. This is to ensure the quality of reviews prepared by international reviewers.

**The PO does not interfere with the substantive content of the reviews prepared by the reviewers.**

## 2.3. RANKING LIST

### 2.3.1. Role of the Selection Committee

The Programme Operator prepares the preliminary ranking list based on the international reviewers' assessment of the proposals that passed the evaluation thresholds defined in Chapter 5.1.3. Due account is taken of the scores received and of any advice from the reviewers. A suggested funding amount (based on experts' recommendation) is determined for each of these proposals. Then the list is discussed by the Selection Committee (SC), composed of independent foreign experts selected in cooperation with Swiss Programme Partner and includes experts who have not participated in the peer-review evaluation process and are not citizens of Poland or Switzerland. The tasks of the *Selection Committee* include:

- deciding on the final score for the proposal if the consensus has not been reached during peer review evaluation;
- deciding on the order of equally scored proposals in the case of insufficient funds to finance them all;
- deciding on the necessary modifications to the proposal indicated in consensus reports (i.e. budget cuts);
- deciding on the total number of proposals recommended for funding taking into account the overall quality of the evaluated proposals and indicative call budget;
- recommending the list of proposals for funding to the SM SC.



Within the groups of equally scored proposals, the criteria for ranking are as follows (based on consensus reports):

- 1) Proposals are prioritised according to the funding recommendation based on the overall assessment (Recommended for funding -> Inclined to fund -> Inclined not to fund).
- 2) Proposals are prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the criterion Scientific and/or technical excellence.
- 3) Proposals are prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the criterion Impact of the project.
- 4) Proposals are prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the criterion Quality and efficiency of the implementation and the management.

In case the above criteria do not allow to rank the proposals in the list, SC makes a decision on the basis of discussion.

The SC is not entitled to change the final scores received by the proposals in the consensus report.

### 2.3.2. Role of the SM Steering Committee

The Programme Operator provides the Support Measure Steering Committee (SM SC) with the ranking list prepared by the SC to take the final decision on proposals to be funded, taking into consideration the financial resources available. The SM SC has the authority to verify the compliance of the selection process with the Regulations, call documentation and the Programme objectives and requirements. No scientific discussion takes place during the meeting of the SM SC. SM SC in justified cases may amend the ranking list of the projects. The justification for the amendment shall be included in the minutes of the SM SC. Finally, the SM SC approves the final ranking list and forwards it to the Programme Operator for further processing.

### 2.3.3. Role of the Programme Operator

After the ranking list has been approved by the SM SC the *Programme Operator* issues individual decisions to fund projects based on the final ranking list -.

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.

No reserve list is created in Call 2024. Unsuccessful applicants will be able to reapply for funding in the next call under the *Programme*.

## 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. Project proposal therefore are handled with care and are treated as confidential before, during and after the evaluation process.

*Reviewers, Selection Committee members, SM Steering Committee members* and observers must not:

- disclose any information concerning project proposals/application documents or evaluations to third parties, nor should they use confidential information to their own or any other party's benefit or disadvantage;



- communicate with applicants on topics related to project proposals;
- communicate their advice on any proposals (given to the *Programme Operator*) to the applicants or to any other person;
- show the content of proposals or information on applicants to third parties.

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.

## 3.2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All persons involved in the peer review process are required to declare any personal conflict of interest according to the following criteria. The declaration is in the form of a written statement and is made before the work begins.

### 3.2.1. Circumstances in which a conflict of interest may exist

A disqualifying conflict of interest exists if a person:

- took part in the preparation of the project proposal
- remains in such personal relationship with the applicant that could raise doubts as to his/her impartiality
- is related to the applicant through marriage, family relationship and affinity up to the second degree
- is or has been linked with the applicant: by means of adoption, custody or guardianship
- remains in such a legal relationship with the applicant which could result in the outcome of the case affecting his or her rights or obligations
- is in any other situation that may affect his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially.

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

- remained in the three years preceding the date of submitting the statement, in a business relationship or in any other form of cooperation with the applicant, in particular:
  - was linked with the applicant through an employment relationship,
  - provided services for the applicant based on relations under the civil law, which could raise doubts as to impartiality,
  - was a member of the management and supervisory bodies of the applicant,
  - was a partner, shareholder or stockholder of the applicant.
- is in any other situation that could cast doubt on his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party.

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



### 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 call documentation.

Detailed descriptions of the criteria are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Selection Criteria of the Call 2024**

Criteria	Description
1. Relevance in relation to the objective and priorities of the Programme	Coherence with the call objectives and relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Scientific and/or technical excellence	Innovativeness of idea
	Appropriateness of approach
3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation and management, including quality and implementation capacity of the applicants and contribution to capacity and competence building	Competence and expertise of project team
	Feasibility and efficiency of project plan
4. The potential impact through the development, dissemination and use of project results	Contribution to capacity and competence building
	Intended short-term outcomes
	Intended long-term application of outcomes

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.

### 4.1. RELEVANCE

This criterion is considered as an elimination criterion. The project proposal needs to be coherent with the call objective (p. 2.1.1 of the *Guide For Applicants Call 2024*) and in line with and in support of the Sustainable Development Goals. Projects that objectively counter the SDGs shall be rejected (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>).

If the answer to this criterion is "no", the expert should provide justification. The project is rejected and there is no further evaluation. Please note that the answer "no" should only be given in unambiguous cases. If the case is not clear, the expert writes his/her comments, evaluates the proposal and leaves it for further evaluation at the consensus report stage.



## 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 weight for this criterion is 3.** The following aspects will be evaluated:

- Innovativeness of idea - originality of project idea, state-of-the-art knowledge of literature and references, ambition and challenge to address scientific or technological problems of current interest and their relevance to an international level of expertise, possibility of implementation of project results and their commercialization.
- Appropriateness of approach - methods proposed have to be sound, rigorous, state-of-the-art and appropriate to the proposed investigation, proposed goals are to be achieved using a methodology/approach presenting the level of risk that is inherent to a challenging research project.

## 4.3. QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

The quality and efficiency of the implementation and management is an important criterion in evaluating the proposal. The weight for this criterion is 1. The following aspects will be evaluated:

- Competence and expertise of project team - Principal Investigator's knowledge and experience in the field of research and his/her general qualifications to lead the project, relevance and strengths of partners (including resources and infrastructure), quality of previous work of the researchers involved and the level of previous and current (financial) support in the field, results of previous projects.
- Feasibility and efficiency of the project plan - schedule and milestones, compatible with resources, either available or requested, appropriateness of human resources (number of personnel and their qualifications) per partner, appropriateness of budget with respect to planned work, plans for commercialisation.

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.

**Actual collaboration with private sector partners (enterprises) that are members of the project consortium is required.**

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 collaboration developed between Polish and Swiss entities will deliver significant synergy effects. Participation in the project consortium of non-Polish and non-Swiss entities is allowed, but their share in the total eligible costs of the project may not exceed 10%. These entities are not eligible for funding. The project's budget should reflect the actual contribution made by each party and should be the subject of negotiation between the *Programme Component Operator* and the *Programme Component Partners*. It is expected that the eligible costs claimed by the Swiss entities participating in the project shall normally not exceed 40% of the total eligible costs of Polish and Swiss entities.

## 4.4. IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

The potential impact of research activities is an important criterion in evaluating the proposal. The weight for this criterion is 1. The following aspects will be taken into account:





- Contribution to capacity and competence building - how the project will build the experience and competence of the researchers/organisations involved, how the project will influence a long-term collaboration among the partners concerned, how the acquired competence and capacity will be used in the future projects/programmes (European, international, etc.).
- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the project proposal, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions to the project.
- Intended short-term outcomes - mentoring, doctoral or post-doc training, ambition and balance of acquisition of expertise, actual research work and dissemination of results, dissemination of the research results among the wider public, foreseen number of publications.
- Intended long-term application of outcomes - planned strategies for disseminating (including Open Access) and using results during and after the project implementation 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, commercialisation, 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.

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

Before starting the review, it is necessary to become familiar with the content of call documentation and the assigned project 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 and gender balance considerations
- Part 2: Evaluation of the proposal
- Part 3: Overall assessment

#### 5.1.1. Ethical and gender balance considerations

Please comment on whether the information provided in Part III Objectives and justification point 5 Ethics Issues Table Checklist is consistent with the research planned in the proposal.



Please refer to the Article 18 and Article 19 of HE framework Programme Regulation 2021/695<sup>1</sup>:

In the next step, please address the ethical aspects raised. In particular, please assess whether the ethical issues raised are a rationale for not funding the project.

Assess whether proposal promotes the gender equality principle as a cross-cutting priority (laid down in) HE framework Programme Regulation 2021/695. The information is provided in Part III Objectives and justification point 6 Gender Equality Issues.

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

### 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.

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 other bodies to reach a decision. It is therefore essential that the Programme Operator receives sufficiently detailed and coherent assessments for each selection criterion. If the PO finds that the review has not been prepared in accordance with the requirements contained in this Guide, the PO may request the reviewer to correct the review. Both individual *review forms* and *consensus report* will be sent to each individual applicant along with the call results.

### 5.1.3. Scoring of the proposal

Experts examine the issues comprising each evaluation criterion. The criterion 1 (Relevance) is evaluated by stating 'yes' or 'no'. If the answer is "no" the project is rejected and there is no further evaluation.

For criteria 2-4 (Scientific and/or technical excellence, Quality and efficiency of the implementation and management, Impact) 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	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.

<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj>



<b>2 (fair)</b>	While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.
<b>3 (good)</b>	The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary.
<b>4 (very good)</b>	The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible.
<b>5 (excellent)</b>	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).

The proposal can receive a total number of 25 points in the evaluation procedure. To be recommended for funding, the proposal must receive at least 15 points and pass all the thresholds on the consensus stage according to the values presented in the table below.

**Table 3: Thresholds and weight**

Criteria	Thresholds	Weight
<b>1. Relevance</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>2. Scientific and/or technical excellence</b>	<b>3/5</b>	<b>x3</b>
<b>3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation and management</b>	<b>3/5</b>	<b>x1</b>
<b>4. Impact of the project</b>	<b>3/5</b>	<b>x1</b>

#### 5.1.4. Overall assessment

Please provide an overall assessment of the proposal and **justify your funding recommendation** (see Table 4: Funding Recommendation based on the Overall Assessment). Make sure that your final recommendation is coherent with the thresholds established for each selection criterion in paragraph 7 of this *Guide for Evaluators*.

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

The assessment should also consider the compliance of planned research with the research categories (**industrial research and experimental development**<sup>2</sup>). Each discrepancy should be reported and described.

Please clearly indicate any **modifications** to the proposal that are necessary in your opinion (i.e. **budget cuts**).

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<sup>2</sup> As defined in the Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty.



**Table 4: Funding Recommendation based on the Overall Assessment on the individual review stage**

Funding recommendation	Explanation
<b>Not recommended for funding</b>	<p>Project of too low calibre to warrant funding. 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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Substantial modification of the proposed methodology needed.</li> <li>• Additional scientific/ technical expertise required for the project.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommended for funding</b>	<p>Project of very good quality. Minor modifications to the project plan may improve the quality and efficiency of the proposal, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Modifications of the work-packages which do not necessitate large changes to the project description.</li> <li>• Minor alterations and considerations that should be accounted for on the level of the methodology.</li> </ul>
<b>Strongly recommended for funding</b>	<p>Project of excellent quality that should be funded as proposed.</p>

## 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 and gender balance 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 individual 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 individual 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 recommendation should be comprehensible and duly justified. The main argument(s) which lead to a positive or negative funding recommendation need to be unambiguously highlighted.

Please respect these requirements since the *consensus reports* will be sent to each individual applicant along with the call results.

### 5.2.1. Ethical and gender equality considerations

Please provide a common opinion based on the guidelines indicated in section 5.1.1.

### 5.2.2. Evaluation of the proposal

Before providing a written evaluation and rating for each criterion as requested in the form please read again the descriptions of the criteria in Chapter 4 *Selection Criteria* carefully.

Please also consult the style recommendations in chapter 6.

Write a **short assessment and justify your statements** for each criterion:

- Based on strengths and weaknesses of the proposal.
- Resolving conflicting assessments of the reviewers.

If the PO finds that the *consensus report* has not been prepared in accordance with the requirements contained in this Guide, the PO may request the reviewer to correct the *consensus report*.

### 5.2.3. Scoring of the proposal

All criteria should be scored as indicated in section 5.1.3. Please be informed that scores given during the consensus stage do not necessarily have to reflect individual scores given during first stage of the peer review process.

### 5.2.4. Overall assessment

Please provide an overall assessment of the proposal without repeating detailed comments provided already in the preceding sections and unmistakably **justify your funding recommendation**. Select your funding recommendation in 'Part 3: Overall assessment' (see Table 5: Funding Recommendation based on the Overall Assessment). Make sure that your funding recommendation is coherent with the thresholds established for each selection criterion in paragraph 7 of this *Peer Review Guidelines*.

Indicate the most important **strengths and weaknesses** of the project proposal and provide any necessary supplementary comments. Please clearly indicate any **modifications** to the proposal that are necessary in your opinion.



**Table 5: Funding Recommendation based on the Overall Assessment on the consensus report stage**

Funding recommendation	Explanation
<b>Not recommended for funding</b>	<p>Project of too low calibre to warrant funding. Major and essential modifications need to be made to achieve an international standard of quality and efficiency of the proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Substantial modification of the proposed methodology.</li> <li>• Additional scientific/ technical expertise required for the project.</li> </ul>
<b>Inclined not to fund</b>	<p>Project of good to very good quality. Minor modifications to the project plan may improve the quality and efficiency of the proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget cuts (and resources) necessary 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Inclined to fund</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modifications of the work-packages which do not necessitate large changes to the project description.</li> <li>• Minor alterations and considerations that should be accounted for on the level of the methodology.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommended for funding</b>	Project of excellent quality that should be funded as proposed.

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