Norway
grants

PROGRAMME 'APPLIED RESEARCH'

GUIDE FOR EVALUATORS
SGS CALL

These guidelines for evaluators explain how to evaluate proposals in the SGS Call of the Programme 'Applied Research'. The guidelines are based on 'Guideline for Research Programmes' under the Norway Grants 2014-2021.

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Further call information, forms and guidelines are available on:

https://www.ncbr.gov.pl/norwaygrants/pl

https://www.ncbr.gov.pl/en/norwaygrants/en

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Programme 'Applied Research' has been established under the priority sector Innovation, Research, Education and Competitiveness. The objective of the Programme is enhanced research-based knowledge development.

The aim of the Programme is to prepare Project Promoters, project partners and researchers for further research cooperation within the European Framework Programmes for research and technological development and demonstration activities and also for cooperation within other European programmes and initiatives. The Programme contributes to the development of the European Research Area.

2. PEER REVIEW PROCESS

2.1. ELIGIBILITY OF PROPOSALS

In order to be retained, the proposals must fulfil all of the following eligibility criteria:

1. receipt of proposal by the Programme Operator before the deadline date and time established in the call and in compliance with p. 2.5;
2. fulfilment of conditions related to:
    a) Project Promoter eligibility as defined in 'Guide For Applicants SGS Call', p. 2.2,
    b) minimum and maximum amount of grant assistance as defined in 'Guide For Applicants SGS Call', p. 2.4.1,
    c) maximum project duration and final cost eligibility date as defined in 'Guide For Applicants SGS Call', p. 2.4.1,
    d) types of activities as defined in 'Guide For Applicants SGS Call', p. 2.4.1,
    e) currency as defined in 'Guide For Applicants SGS Call', p. 2.4.3,
    f) cost categories as defined in 'Guide For Applicants SGS Call', p. 2.4.5,
    g) intensity of state aid as defined in 'Guide For Applicants SGS Call', p. 2.4.6;
    h) featuring as Principal Investigator in no more than one proposal, as defined in p. 2.3
3. confirmation that Project Promoter:
    a) complies with the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities and the principle of equality between women and men,
    b) is not excluded from the possibility of receiving funding as defined in 'Guide For Applicants SGS Call', p. 2.1;
4. completeness of the proposal as required in the 'Proposal Manual';
5. accordance with the scope of the call as stipulated in point 2.4.2 of the 'Guide For Applicants SGS Call'- the content of the proposal must fall within the fields of science and technology defined for the call; a proposal will only be deemed ineligible on grounds of 'scope' in clear-cut cases.

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

2.2. PEER REVIEWS

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

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

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

After the individual evaluation of a proposal, the reviewer completes a '**Review Form**' confirming their individual reading and assessment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.3. PANEL REVIEW

Following the eligibility check and depending on the number and topics of proposals received, the Programme Operator in consultation with the Programme Committee and Donor Program Partner, decides whether it is appropriate to include a panel review within the selection procedure. All stakeholders will be promptly notified of the decision to adopt a panel procedure and of the procedure to be followed.

The panel may comprise international experts involved at the consensus step, new experts, or a mixture of the two.

For a part of a call it may be possible to arrange for all the experts to examine all the proposals, and carry out their final review at the same time as they prepare the consensus reports. These experts are thus considered to constitute the panel.

The main task of the panel is to examine and compare the consensus reports in a given area, to check on the consistency of the marks and comments applied during the consensus discussions and, where necessary, propose a new set of marks or revision of comments.

The outcome of the panel review is a '**Panel Report**' recording, containing:

- An 'Evaluation Summary Report' (ESR) for each proposal, including comments and scores where relevant, any ethical issues and any security considerations are reported; ESR will be forwarded to applicants.

- A list of proposals passing all thresholds, along with a final score for each proposal passing the thresholds and the panel recommendations for priority order;

- A list of evaluated proposals having failed one or more thresholds;

- A list of any proposals having been found ineligible during the evaluation;

- A summary of any other recommendations of the panel.

The ESR agreed by the panel experts may include recommendations for further improvements to a proposal that is already highly rated.

2.4. RANKING LISTS

The Programme Operator prepares two preliminary ranking lists – one for proposals where the Principal Investigator fits the criteria of Young Researcher, as defined in p. 2.3 of the "SGS Call Guide for Applicants" and the other for proposals, where the Principal Investigator cannot be defined as "Young Researcher" – based on the international experts' evaluation of the proposals that passed the evaluation thresholds. Due account is taken of the scores received and of any advice from the experts. It will also take account of the available budget, the strategic objectives of the Programme, as well as the overall balance of proposals to be funded. A suggested grant amount is determined for each of these proposals.

The Programme Committee is granted access to applications and evaluations and presented with the scored lists of proposals the Programme Operator has found eligible, including the suggested financial contribution for each proposal. If an expert-panel evaluation procedure is used, the Programme Committee is presented with the ranking lists prepared by the panel(s).

The Programme Committee reviews the ranked lists of projects. The Programme Committee may modify the ranking of the projects in justified cases in accordance with Chapter 8. The justification for modifications will be detailed in the minutes of the meeting of the Programme Committee. The Programme Committee decides on division of funds between two abovementioned lists. The mode of deciding upon the final ranking lists is also described in Chapter 8. The Chair of the Programme Committee submits the minutes and the lists of recommended projects, together with the reserve lists and the lists of rejected project applications and the reason for their rejection to the Programme Operator. The final ranking lists are approved by the Programme Committee.

The Programme Operator verifies that the selection process has been conducted in accordance with the Regulation and the Guideline for Research Programmes and that the grant award recommendation of the Programme Committee complies with the rules and objectives of the Programme. The Programme Operator then issues individual decisions to award a grant to projects based on the final ranking lists approved by the Programme Committee

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

The Programme Operator publicizes the results and notifies the applicants about the results of the selection process within reasonable time. All applicants are informed in writing of the Programme Operator's decision. A number of proposals may be kept in reserve to allow for eventualities such as the failure of negotiations on projects, the withdrawal of proposals, or the availability of additional budget from other sources.

2.5. ROLE OF PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS

2.5.1. Role of Reviewers

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

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

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

Evaluators are requested to:
- Carefully read point 2.4.2 of the "SGS Call Guide for Applicants" and the present 'Guide for evaluators'.
- Sign in advance a statement on the impartiality and confidentiality.
- Thoroughly read the assigned proposal.
- Complete and submit a 'Review Form' providing comments and individual scoring of the proposal.
- Complete and submit a 'Consensus Report Form' providing comments and consensus scoring of the proposal assigned to them.

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

2.5.2. Role of the Programme Committee

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

a) Providing input to the strategic direction of the Programme;
b) Reviewing and approving the guideline for evaluators in English, the guide for applicants in English and the implementation guide for project promoters in English;
c) Approving the selection criteria and the texts for the calls for proposals;
d) Overseeing and approving the procedures for selection of projects;
e) Discussion of the ranking lists and recommending to the Programme Operator which proposals to select for funding and final awarding of grants;
f) Reviewing progress made towards achieving the objectives of the research Programme;
g) Monitoring of the implementation of the research programme by the Programme Operator;
h) Reviewing annual and final project and Programme reports;
i) Proposing revisions of the research programme likely to facilitate the achievement of the Programme's objectives to the Donor State and Beneficiary State;
j) Liaising with the Programme Operator and Donor Programme Partner; and
k) Liaising with the Programme Committees in Research Programmes in other Beneficiary States.

2.5.3. Role of Programme Operator staff

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

3. CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

3.1. CONFIDENTIALITY

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

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

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

3.2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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

3.2.1. Circumstances in which a conflict of interest may exist

A disqualifying conflict of interest exists if a person:
- took a personal part in the preparation of the application
- 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 compromises 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.

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4. SELECTION CRITERIA

Reviewers are requested to evaluate the proposals according to the selection criteria specified in 'Guideline for Research Programmes'.

The criteria are shown in the following table:

Table 1: Selection Criteria of the SGS Call

Criteria	Description

1. Relevance in relation to the objective and priorities of the research Programme	Consistency with the Small Grants Scheme objectives (scientific career advancement in technical sciences, clearly applied character). Coherence with the selected fields of science and technology of the call. In particular, this encompasses:
	
	2. Engineering and technology
	  2.1. Civil engineering
	  2.2. Electrical engineering, Electronic engineering, Information engineering
	  2.3. Mechanical engineering
	  2.4. Chemical engineering (plants, products); Chemical process engineering;
	  2.5. Materials engineering
	  2.6. Medical engineering
	  2.7. Environmental engineering
	  2.8. Environmental biotechnology
	  2.9. Industrial biotechnology
	  2.10. Nano-technology
	  2.11. Other engineering and technologies

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 applicant and contribution to capacity and competence building	Competence and expertise of the applicant
	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.

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

4.1. RELEVANCE

This criterion is considered an elimination criterion. The project proposal should be assessed if it fits the Small Grants Scheme objectives, i.e. concerns scientific career advancement in technical sciences, falls within fields of science and technology specified in point 2.4.2 of the "SGS Call Guide for Applicants", and has a clearly applied character. If the answer is 'no', write your comments. The project is rejected and there is no need for further evaluation. Please note that answer 'no' should be given only in clear-cut cases. If your case is not clear-cut, write your comments, evaluate the proposal and leave it for the consensus assessment 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 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
- Appropriateness of approach - methods proposed have to be sound, rigorous, state-of-the-art and appropriate to the proposed investigation, proposed goals are 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 following aspects will be evaluated:

- Competence and expertise of the applicant - Principal Investigator's knowledge and experience in the field of research and her general qualifications to lead the project, relevance and strengths of Project Promoter (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), appropriateness of budget with respect to planned work.

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.

4.4. IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

The potential impact of research activities is an important criterion in evaluating the proposal. Please note that it is allowed to conduct the research either in research organisation or enterprise. In any case, the most important aim of the Programme is that the research conducted in frame of the project has positive impact on the future scientific career of the Principal Investigator. 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 Principal Investigator involved, how the project can make the Principal Investigator more successful in their long-term scientific career whether within or outside academia, how the acquired competence and capacity will be used in the future scientific projects/programmes (European, international, etc.)
- Intended short-term outcomes - 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 and using results during and after the project as well as the description of how potential users are to be involved in the project in view of exploitation of the results i.e. exploitation of intellectual property generated, technical innovations, spin-offs, raising of scientific awareness, improvement of quality of life, intended technical, economic, environmental and societal impacts.

5. GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS

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

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

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

Please read the following documents that will be sent to you:
- The 'SGS Call Guide for Applicants", in particular point 2.4.2, which explains the fields of science and technology of the Call,
- The present 'Guide for Evaluators',
- The assigned Proposal.

5.1. REVIEW FORM

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

The 'Review Form' contains 3 parts:
- Part 1: Ethical considerations
- Part 2: Evaluation of the proposal
- Part 3: Overall assessment

5.1.1. Ethical considerations

Please comment if the proposal gives rise to any ethical issues as described in the Article 19 of Regulation 1291/2013[1]:

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

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

5.1.2. Evaluation of the proposal

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

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

5.1.3. Scoring of the proposal

Experts examine the issues to be considered comprising each evaluation criterion. The criterion 1 is evaluated by stating 'yes' or 'no'. For criteria 2-4 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.
2 (fair)	While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.
3 (good)	The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary.
4 (very good)	The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible.

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[1] REGULATION (EU) No 1291/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2013 establishing Horizon 2020 - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) and repealing Decision No 1982/2006/EC.

| 5 (excellent) | The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor. |

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

5.1.4. Overall assessment

Please provide an overall assessment of the proposal and **justify your funding recommendation** (see Table 3: Funding Recommendation based on the Overall Assessment). Make sure that you 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 (basic research, industrial research and experimental development[2]). 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).

Table 3: Funding Recommendation based on the Overall Assessment

Funding recommendation	Explanation
Not recommended for funding	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. - Abolition of large portions of a (or entire) work package (unless project can be conducted well without said work package) or need to add important work packages. - Substantial modification of the proposed methodology. - Additional scientific/ technical expertise required for the project.

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[2] 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.

Recommended for funding	Project of very good quality. Minor modifications to the project plan may improve the quality and efficiency of the proposal, e.g. - Budget cuts (and resources) suggested because of slight overestimation which do not jeopardise the successful completion of work packages and the project while achieving the full range of proposed results. - Modifications of the work-packages which do not necessitate large changes to the project description. - Minor alterations and considerations that should be accounted for on the level of the methodology.
Strongly recommended for funding	Project of excellent quality that should be funded as proposed.

5.2. CONSENSUS REPORT FORM

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

The '**Consensus Report Form**' contains 3 parts:
- Part 1: Ethical considerations
- Part 2: Evaluation of the proposal
- Part 3: Overall assessment

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

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

Please respect these recommendations as the consensus reports will be forwarded to the Project Promoters.

5.2.1. Ethical considerations

Please comment if the proposal gives rise to any ethical issues as described in the Article 19 of Regulation 1291/2013[3]:

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

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

5.2.2. Evaluation of the proposal

Please carefully read the descriptions of the criteria in chapter 4 'Selection Criteria' again before providing a written evaluation and a rating for each criterion as requested in the form.

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.

5.2.3. Scoring of the proposal

Experts examine the issues to be considered comprising each evaluation criterion. The criterion 1 is evaluated by stating 'yes' or 'no'. For criteria 2-4 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 4: 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.
2 (fair)	While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.
3 (good)	The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary.
4 (very good)	The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible.
5 (excellent)	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

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[3] REGULATION (EU) No 1291/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2013 establishing Horizon 2020 - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) and repealing Decision No 1982/2006/EC

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

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 unmistakeably **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

Funding recommendation	Explanation
Not recommended for funding	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: • Abolition of large portions of a (or entire) work package (unless project can be conducted well without said work package) or need to add important work packages. • Substantial modification of the proposed methodology. • Additional scientific/ technical expertise required for the project.
Inclined not to fund	Project of good to very good quality. Minor modifications to the project plan may improve the quality and efficiency of the proposal: • 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. • Modifications of the work-packages which do not necessitate large changes to the project description. • Minor alterations and considerations that should be accounted for on the level of the methodology.
Inclined to fund	
Recommended for funding	Project of excellent quality that should be funded as proposed.

6. GUIDELINES FOR WRITING EVALUATIONS

The following style recommendations[4] 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:
  o Specific to the relevant criterion
  o Clear and substantial
  o Definitive and final (avoid phrases like: "I/we think that, possibly")
  o Consistent with the score awarded, balancing strengths and weaknesses
  o Each strength and weakness shall be reflected only once
  o Of adequate length
  o Relative to the proposal as it stands
- The comments must not be:
  o A summary of the proposal
  o Too short, too long or otherwise inappropriate/incorrect
  o Categorical statements, not properly verified
  o Assumptions (if the proposal is unclear on important aspects, reflect it in comments and scores)
  o Based on the potential of the proposal (the comments must reflect the proposal as it stands)
  o 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.
  o Referring to the same weakness under different criteria
  o Contradicting statements relative to strengths and weaknesses
  o Discriminating and/or offensive
  o References to details that could easily be a factual mistake e.g. page numbers, amounts etc.

7. THRESHOLDS AND THE RANKING LISTS

The proposal can receive a total number of 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 6: Thresholds and weight

Criteria	Thresholds	Weight

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[4] Inspired by 'Manual for Evaluators; Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions', 2019

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

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

8. PROGRAMME COMMITTEE MEETING

Prior to the meeting, the Programme Operator staff will provide the Programme Committee (PC) members with the ranking lists, individual reviews, consensus reports and evaluated proposals.

While discussing the ranking lists and making recommendation for funding, the Committee takes into consideration the overall quality of the evaluated proposals, indicative budget of the Programme and number of proposals to be funded. At this point the Programme Committee decides on division of funds between two preliminary ranking lists – one for proposals where the Principal Investigator fits the criteria of Young Researcher, as defined in p. 2.3 of the "SGS Call Guide for Applicants" and the other for proposals, where the Principal Investigator cannot be defined as "Young Researcher".

The PC will also examine and compare the consensus reports and confirm consistency of the scores. Ultimately, the task of such meeting is to decide about the final ranking order of the proposals on the basis of the total consensus scores assigned to the projects. Within the groups of equally scored proposals, the criteria for ranking are applied in the following order:

1) proposals are prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the criterion Scientific and/or technical excellence,

2) proposals are prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the criterion Impact of the project,

3) proposals are prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the criterion Quality and efficiency of the implementation and the management.

Notwithstanding the above, the PC may decide to change the final score of the proposal received in the consensus report. This right shall be reserved only to cases in which the PC unanimously agrees that there is an unjustified discrepancy between the numerical score and written evaluation of the proposal in the consensus report or unjustified discrepancy between the consensus report and individual reviews.

In such a case the PC awards points for each of the evaluation criteria. The points awarded by the PC for each evaluation criterion cannot exceed the highest and the lowest score given for that criterion in the individual reviews of the proposal. The score awarded by the PC is final and is taken into account while deciding upon the final ranking lists. The weights presented in Table 6: Thresholds and weight are applied.

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Each such case shall be decided unanimously and justified in writing by the PC.

Finally, the PC will approve the ranking lists and recommend the proposals for funding to the Programme Operator.