



# EXPERT EVALUATORS BRIEFING

Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic  
Component 9



GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC





# CALL: Fellowships for excellent researchers R2-R4

[https://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=875&Itemid=715&lang=sk](https://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=875&Itemid=715&lang=sk)

**This presentation contains the information necessary for expert evaluation in the call  
Fellowships for excellent researchers R2-R4**

# CONTENT

**General information**

**Guiding principles and Code of Conduct**

**Individual evaluation**

**Quality standards for evaluation reports**

**Evaluation criteria**

**Budget information**

**Mandate contract and remuneration**

**Useful documents and links**



# | General information |

# Terms

## Intermediary

**Research Agency** - an entity performing parts of the executor's tasks on the basis of a special contract. According to the contract concluded with the executor, the Research Agency is responsible for the implementation of the call in which project applications, on evaluation of which this presentation is focused, were submitted.

## Executor

Organizational unit of the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic - **VAIA**. The executor is responsible for the implementation of the selected part of the RRP. VAIA is responsible for the implementation of Component 9 of the Recovery and Resilience Plan.

## Project assessment manager (PM)

Employee of the Research Agency who is a contact person for evaluator.

## eGRANT

An online system used for the project application evaluation.

# Terms

## Evaluator

A person who, based on and in accordance with the terms of the contract with the Research Agency and the instructions of the Research agency, expertly assesses the submitted project applications.

## Co-evaluator

An evaluator that is participating in an evaluation proces with other evaluators.

## Individual evaluation report (IER)

Official document containing individual evaluation and evaluators' score of application. It contains scores for each criterion within the three sections of application: „Excellence“, „Impact“, „Implementation“.

## Project

Detailed plan of activities with a clearly defined goal, financial plan and technical aspects of implementation presented in the form of a Project application.

## Project application

Project proposal that is submitted by an applicant and is subject of evaluation by an evaluator. Project application consits of project description and a budget. Synonym of the term Project proposal.

# Terms

## Deliverables

Tangible or intangible direct output of an activity within the project (e.g. product, report, study, etc.), which is created directly during the duration of the project or at its end. Outputs are defined by the applicant, each work package must have at least one output defined. Mandatory outputs are defined within the call.

## Milestones

Control point during the implementation of the project. A milestone can indicate the completion of a significant project deliverable or an activity that is an important intermediate step in the completion of the deliverable or outcome. Milestones are defined by the applicant.

## Monitored data

Data that will be reported within project reporting and monitoring. The selection of monitored data is either left to the applicants (while we recommend including the largest possible spectrum of the offered possibilities) or there are predefined monitored data that must be included in the project. Monitored data must be expressed quantitatively for the entire duration of the project.

## Outcomes

Expected effects of the project that will contribute to changing the existing state. The results of the project should bring a change that will take place during or shortly after the end of the project.

# Component 9 of the RRP of the Slovak Republic

- RRP of the Slovak Republic consists of 18 components.
- Allocation of the Component 9 is more than 600 million EUR

## Component 9 – More efficient governance and strengthening RDI

- **Executor of the Component 9** – Government Office of the Slovak Republic (VAIA – Research and Innovation Authority)
- **Intermediary:**
  - Research Agency
- **Executor and intermediary are responsible for calls within the Component 9 and respective expert evaluation processes.**





# | **Guiding principles and Code of Conduct** |

# Guiding principles of the evaluator

- Code of conduct which is an integral part of mandate contract is available here: [https://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=875&Itemid=715&lang=sk](https://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=875&Itemid=715&lang=sk)

## ! Binding document for evaluator - Code of Conduct

- Experts are required to perform the assessment to the highest professional standards and within agreed deadline.
- Experts have to read the whole project application carefully before completing the evaluation.

### Independence

You are evaluating in your personal capacity, **you represent neither your employer, nor your country.**

### Accuracy

You make your judgment against the official evaluation criteria in the call and based on the data in the project application and nothing else.

### Impartiality

**You must treat all applications equally and evaluate them impartially** on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicant.

### Objectivity

**You evaluate each project as submitted,** not its potential if certain changes were to be made.

### Consistency

You apply the **same standards and assessment to all projects.**

### Punctuality

You deliver agreed **outputs (evaluation reports) on time.**

# Conflict of interest

- Declaration on exclusion of conflict of interest is available here: [https://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=875&Itemid=715&lang=sk](https://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=875&Itemid=715&lang=sk)

- Conflict of interest includes situations where impartial and objective performance of duties may be influenced, disrupted, or endangered, especially due to family or emotional reasons, political or state affiliation, economic interest, or any other direct or indirect personal interest.



**The evaluator is obliged to immediately inform the Research Agency of any conflict of interest identified during the performance of the order, including competition with another project application evaluated under the same call, in which the evaluator may have a conflict of interest.**

- If it is discovered during the evaluation that the evaluator knowingly concealed an existing conflict of interest, he/she will be immediately excluded from the evaluation without the possibility of reimbursement of evaluation-related costs.

# Confidentiality

- **The evaluator is obliged to maintain confidentiality regarding all information and documents**, in any form (e.g. printed, electronic), that were made available to him in writing or orally in connection with the performance of the contract. This obligation continues during the validity of the contractual relationship and after its termination.
- In case project applications are made available to the evaluator electronically and he/she works in his/her own or other suitable premises, he/she is **personally responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all documents and electronic files and for returning, deleting, or destroying all confidential documents and files after the evaluation is completed.**



# | Individual evaluation |

# General information about the call

- **The objectives of the call:**
  - ✓ **Support basic and applied research** carried out in Slovakia by **excellent Slovak and foreign researchers** in the career stages from R2 to R4.
  - ✓ Support researchers during the implementation of their projects in form of a **contribution to salary costs** and **funds for their research** within research organizations in Slovakia.
  - ✓ Attract foreign top researchers, and **to prevent the brain drain** of domestic top researchers abroad
- The call consists of 3 types of support according to the career stage of the supported researcher:
  - ✓ Researcher R2 Fellowship
  - ✓ Researcher R3 Fellowship
  - ✓ Researcher R4 Fellowship
- The results of the implementation of the project must be specific deliverables, which must be achievable during the project implementation period.
- There must be milestones during the whole project implementation period, which must be clearly defined, appropriate, realistic and achievable in relation to the proposed activities.

# Evaluation of project application

- Shortened English version of the call with annexes relevant for evaluators available here: [https://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=875&Itemid=715&lang=sk](https://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=875&Itemid=715&lang=sk)
- Evaluator evaluates project application which consists of a project description (maximum 30 pages)
- **Before starting the evaluation, evaluator familiarise with the following documents:**
- **Call (Shortened English version for evaluators)**
- **Annex no. 6 of the project application – Project description (template with the predefined structure)**

**Note:** Shortened English version of the documents for applicant are available on this link: <https://vaia.gov.sk/en/2023/08/16/fellowships-for-excellent-researchers-r2-r4/>

Documents for applicant can contain more information necessary for the preparation of the project application, for evaluator the Shortened English version for evaluators is intended.

# Evaluation criteria

- Evaluation scores are awarded for the criterion, and not for the different aspects in each criterion.
- You provide a score in the range from 0-5 to each criterion based on your comments.
- Maximum score for a project application is 15 (3 criteria/ max. 5 points each).
- 0.5 scores are possible.
- Scores must pass the individual threshold (minimum 3 points in each criterion) **AND** the overall threshold (minimum 10 points) to be eligible for funding.



# Evaluation modality

**Individual evaluation by 3 international evaluators**



**3 individual evaluations**



**Average of the individual scores in each criterion** (the average of scores of each criterion is calculated from the evaluations of the evaluators according to which the given criterion met the conditions (scored at least 3 points)).



**Ranking of projects** according to their score.

# Individual evaluation

Read the application and evaluate it against the evaluation criteria. Do not discuss it with anybody else!

Complete Individual evaluation report (IER) and send it to egrant system

Wait for the feedback from PM:

If the EIR does not address all aspects or has some shortcomings, you will be approached by PM to update it.

If the IER is complete in all aspects PM confirms its acceptance.

**Note:** Individual evaluation report of each evaluator will be sent to applicant after the end of the evaluation process.

# General information about evaluation

- **Main communication tool will be eGRANT** (phone communication/other online communication tools can be used as a complementary tool for communication upon agreement). Access to the online system together with instructions for log in will be sent to the evaluator after signing the contract.
- **In case of questions/doubts contact us at email [odborne.hodnoteniePOO@vyskumnaagentura.sk](mailto:odborne.hodnoteniePOO@vyskumnaagentura.sk) !**  
**Always contact [odborne.hodnoteniePOO@vyskumnaagentura.sk](mailto:odborne.hodnoteniePOO@vyskumnaagentura.sk) if you cannot fulfill your obligations!**
- To ensure independence, we do not disclose the name of the evaluators of a specific project application.
- The summary list of all evaluators (without identification with concrete project application) may be published.
- Evaluators are selected from the European Commission's database and are from different EU countries.



# Quality standards for evaluation reports

# Quality standards for evaluation reports

## The basic quality principles:

- ✓ Evaluation report must be **fair, accurate, clear and complete, addressing all the criteria and aspects.**
- ✓ Evaluators cannot assume information that is not explicitly provided.
- ✓ The **comments must reflect the scores and give reasons for scores.**
- ✓ Evaluation report should be complete but avoid additional elements – **comments must address all aspects (sub-criteria), but only these.**
- ✓ Information relevant for a specific award criterion may appear in different parts of the application and experts must take all of it into account when scoring the award criterion.
- ✓ The evaluation of one criterion should NOT influence the evaluation of another criterion. In particular, **the same shortcomings should not be referred to under different criteria** (no double penalisation).
- ✓ At the end of the assessment, experts give overall comments on the application as a whole. In the comments, experts must provide a thorough analysis of the application highlighting its relative strengths and weaknesses.

# Quality standards for evaluation reports

Comments must reflect the assessment of the criteria in the frame of what is requested in the call.

Avoid factual mistakes. Whenever factual statements are made, they should be explicitly verified.

Comments should be precise and definite.

Comments must not be discriminatory, offending or inappropriate.

Comments should consist of clear, concise and complete sentences.

Comments must not be based on assumptions and should not suggest ignorance or doubt.

Comments must not contain recommendations or suggestions to improve the project.

The comment for a criterion, taken as a whole, must be consistent with the meaning of the score that is awarded for that criterion.

# Quality standards for evaluation reports – HOW (NOT) TO

## DO NOT

- **Avoid self-declaration of insufficient expertise, or non-confidence in the application!** (e.g., I do not understand, I am not certain etc...)
- **Avoid intensely emotional language** (e.g. verbs as: believe, think, like, agree, doubt, etc.)!
- Avoid making broad generalization (be careful in using the words like all, always, must, never, and every)!
- **Avoid ambiguous phrases!**
- Avoid reference to the applicant's age, nationality, gender, personal matters or any comments that may reveal your identity!
- Avoid exclusive language suggesting that particular race, gender or age group are gifted in a particular area!
- **Avoid too short comments!** (e.g. The application does not fulfil evaluation criterion 1.”)
- Avoid incomplete sentences or abbreviations!
- Avoid unnecessary comment, which does not add valuable advice; avoid comparison with other applications!
- **Avoid comments that give a description or a summary of the application!**
- **Avoid any reference or comparison with previous evaluations!**
- Avoid referring to marks in the comments!
- Explain shortcomings, but do not make recommendations!

## DO

- **If you do not feel comfortable with an evaluation, just DECLINE the task!**
- In case of any doubt please contact PM!
- **Use inclusive language!** Preferably use **gender-neutral language wherever possible.**
- **Use grammatically correct, complete, clear sentences** with no jargon!
- **Write full sentences (no bullet points)!**
- Provide polite comments and justifications!
- **Use dispassionate, analytical and unambiguous language!**
- **Critical comments should be constructive.**
- Replace vague expressions with explicit language: your comments will be clearer and more meaningful

# Time framework for delivery of reports

## Individual evaluation report

**Fellowships for excellent researchers R2-R4 (30 pages)**

- 10 calendar days from receiving documents for evaluation by evaluator
- If multiple requests have been allocated to the evaluator at the same time, the delivery time may be changed according to mutual agreement





# | Evaluation criteria |

# Evaluation criteria

## 3 EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Evaluated project description must have the predefined structure – it will **always** consist of the three criteria:

1. **Excellence**
2. **Impact**
3. **Implementation.**

These criteria will be further divided into evaluation aspects. Further information on evaluation aspects for this call are in the next slides.

**The evaluator takes into account only first 30 pages of the project description. If the project description has more pages, all the additional pages will not be taken into account by**

If the application does not have the predefined structure (all 3 mandatory parts – excellence, impact, implementation) the evaluator will reflect on that in an evaluation score – s/he will give 0 points for the missing criterion.

# Excellence

- ✓ **The quality and adequacy of the proposed objectives of the project.**
- ✓ **Relevance of the problems/needs** at which the project is aimed.
- ✓ The project goes beyond the currently available technical solutions, procedures, products, etc. (“**beyond the state of the art**”).
- ✓ **Appropriateness, timeliness, and relevance of the proposed methodology** to the objectives of the project.
- ✓ The quality and adequacy of the **researcher’s professional experience, expertise, competences, and skills and**
- ✓ **The quality and adequacy of the host organization** in relation to the project and the researcher.
- ✓ The quality and adequacy of **the conditions that the host organization will ensure and provide to the researcher**
- ✓ **The quality of two-way knowledge transfer** between the researcher and the host organization.

# Impact

- ✓ **The credibility of the proposed procedures**, the likelihood that the project will achieve the expected results and will have the expected impact.
- ✓ **The assumption of a positive impact on the further career of the researcher**, the assumption of a positive impact on the applicant/host organisation.
- ✓ **The significance of the expected impact** – on the given area of knowledge and the scientific community, on the economy, on society, on the environment.
- ✓ **Adequacy of expected results and impacts** of the project – qualitative and quantitative.
- ✓ **The appropriateness and quality of the proposed measures to maximise the results and impact** of the project.
- ✓ **The quality of the proposed IPR management strategy** for project results (if relevant).

# Implementation

- ✓ **Quality and efficiency of the project plan, feasibility of planned activities**
- ✓ **The coherence and logic of the work packages and the adequacy of the allocated resources, the adequacy of the proposed milestones and deliverables.**
- ✓ **Estimation of implementation risks, quality of proposed measures.**
- ✓ **Capacities (personnel, professional, technical, infrastructure, other) of the applicant/host organisation.**

# Interpretation of scores

0	<b>Unsatisfactory project.</b> The project in the given criterion achieves a very low quality and solves a problem of little or no importance. In the qualitative assessment of individual aspects of the criterion, the project shows fundamental deficiencies. Project application and project quality is insufficient in the given criterion or the evaluation criterion cannot be evaluated due to incomplete information.
1	<b>Poor project.</b> The project in the given criterion achieves low quality and solves a problem of low importance. In the qualitative assessment of the individual aspects of the criterion, the project shows fundamental deficiencies and needs substantial modification or improvement.
2	<b>Below average project.</b> In the given criterion, project achieves lower quality and solves a problem of medium importance and contains a few important elements that could be improved. In the qualitative assessment of individual aspects of the criterion, the project shows several shortcomings.
3	<b>Good project.</b> In the given criterion project achieves good quality, solves an important problem and contains several important elements that could be improved. In the qualitative assessment of individual aspects of the criterion, it shows several shortcomings.
4	<b>Very good project.</b> Project in the given criterion achieves high quality, solves a problem of high importance and significance. In the qualitative assessment of individual aspects of the criterion, project shows only minor shortcomings.
5	<b>Excellent project.</b> Project achieves excellent quality in the given criterion, it solves a problem of very high importance and significance. In the qualitative assessment of individual aspects of the criterion, the project shows no or only marginal deficiencies.

# Additional questions

You can find additional question in the IER regarding following aspects:

## Is the researcher's category R2/R3/R4 classified correctly?

You respond yes or no whether selected category of researcher corresponds to his/her level of career and expertise according to European framework for research careers - <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/europe/career-development/training-researchers/research-profiles-descriptors>

## Does the declared type of research correspond to the proposed project activities?

You respond yes or no whether declared type of research (independent, fundamental, industrial) correspond to the proposed project activities.



**Budget information**  
(for informational purpose only)



# State aid (for informational purpose only)

## Funding rate of projects:

- **100 % of costs for applicants not considered an undertaking** (according to the individual state aid test)
- **25% - 100% of costs for applicants considered an undertaking** (according to the individual state aid test). Funding rate (aid intensity) depends on **the size category of the applicant** (micro, small, medium or large enterprise) and the **type of research** (fundamental, industrial, experimental).
- For applicants that are considered an undertaking, state aid is provided under the State aid scheme.
- **Verification whether applicant is an undertaking and whether the conditions resulting from the state aid scheme are met will be carried out by PM, evaluators do not assess this aspect, only indicates the correctness of the type of research in Individual evaluation report (section D. Additional questions).**

# Eligible costs (for informational purpose only)

- ✓ Simplified cost options in the form of **unit costs** will apply to:
  - **contribution to the researcher's salary costs;**
  - **contribution to research costs**
- ✓ Simplified cost options in the form of **flat rate** will apply to:
  - **contribution to the indirect costs – as 15 % of eligible direct staff costs.**
- ✓ Proof of expenditures actually incurred shall apply to:
  - **expenditure of the research team of an excellent researcher falling under the type of support:**
    - Researcher R3 Fellowship; or
    - Researcher R4 Fellowship

## Eligible costs (for informational purpose only)

### Type of support – Researcher's Career Stage

Total eligible costs	R2	R3	R4
Contribution to salary costs*	4 243 €/month	4 823 €/month	5 396 €/month
Contribution to research costs*	1 300 €/month	1 300 €/month	1 300 €/month
Contribution to indirect costs**	max. 636 €/month	max. 1 023 €/month	max. 1 484 €/month
Contribution to research team***	—	max. 2 000 €/month	max. 4 500 €/month
<b>TOTAL MAX. EUR</b>	<b>6 179 €/month</b>	<b>9 146 €/month</b>	<b>12 680€/month</b>

\* unit cost for the type of support, at 100 % of the researcher's work and when conducting independent research by a non-companies or basic research by company

\*\* maximum amount/limit – the actual amount of the contribution will be determined by the researcher's engagement, the actual and proven expenditure of the research team and the research carried out by the applicant

\*\*\* maximum amount/limit



# **| Mandate contract and remuneration |**

- **Remuneration will be paid based on the Mandate contract that will be signed with each evaluator.**
- Evaluator can evaluate several applications (also in different calls) within one Mandate contract.
- The actual remuneration will be calculated based on the tasks carried out and according to **Methodology for the remuneration of experts.**
- Remuneration is determined depending on the complexity of the project application and the difficulty of its evaluation - parameters such as the amount claimed in the project application, the complexity of the project activities, schedule, work packages, the complexity of the project budget, the number of partners in the project, the maximum number of pages of the project application, etc. are taken into account.
- **Evaluation outputs must be delivered on time** and in the corresponding quality for remuneration to be paid.

- Model mandate contract is available here:

[https://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=875&Itemid=715&lang=sk](https://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=875&Itemid=715&lang=sk)

- Methodology for evaluator remuneration is available here:

[https://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=875&Itemid=715&lang=sk](https://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=875&Itemid=715&lang=sk)

- The remuneration shall be paid to the bank account of the Mandatary, upon receipt of the evaluation and confirmation of the fulfilment of the Order by the Mandator.

**Note:** The contract does not constitute an employment agreement. Any payment received on the basis of the Mandate contract is not exempted from national taxes and you are obliged to ensure compliance with your domestic legislation on taxes and social.

## Methodology for the remuneration of experts

- Each project application and work task within the expert evaluation process has a different time requirement.
- Each work task was assigned a number of work units that correspond to the normal working time required to perform the given task.
- **The unit rate for performing a work task is bindingly set at EUR 45/work unit.**
- 10 work units correspond to 1 working day, which represents a reward of EUR 450.

## Classification of calls according to its scope

Type of a project according to its scope	Scope of the project application	Call
Large-scale project	30 pages of project description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Fellowships for excellent researchers R2-R4</b></li></ul>

Preparation for evaluation			
Task difficulty	Total sum for the work task (EUR)	Output	Notes
Preparation for evaluation - reading the evaluation materials	135	Familiarization with the principles of evaluation, familiarization with the content of the call.	In case the evaluator evaluates several projects in one call, this task will be rewarded only once.
			In case the evaluator evaluates in several calls within one investment, this work task will be remunerated for each call separately.
			The payment of this reward is conditional on the preparation and delivery of at least one evaluation output.
Individual evaluation			
Task difficulty	Total sum for the work task (EUR)	Output	Deadline
Large-scale project	270	Individual evaluation report	10 calendar days from the delivery of the documents for evaluation

## Calculation of remuneration of evaluator

### Calculation of remuneration of evaluation of large-scale project:

- Preparation for evaluation - reading the evaluation materials – 3 units – 135 EUR
- Delivering individual evaluation - 6 units – 270 EUR

# Useful documents and links

- European framework for research careers (definition of categories R1-R4)- <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/europe/career-development/training-researchers/research-profiles-descriptors>
- General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) - [https://competition-policy.ec.europa.eu/state-aid/legislation/regulations\\_en](https://competition-policy.ec.europa.eu/state-aid/legislation/regulations_en)