Guide for procedure for evaluation and selection of applications for the operation “Support for applied research in smart specialisation growth areas”

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, RESPONSIBILITY

The objective of the guide is to provide a guide for the procedures for evaluation and selection of applications for support submitted within the framework of operation 4.2.3 “Research and development programme in smart specialisation growth areas” of measure 4.2 “Increasing local socio-economic impact of R&DI system and smart specialisation for development of growth areas” of priority axis 4 “Growth-capable entrepreneurship and research and development supporting it” of the “Operational Programme for Cohesion Policy Funds 2014-2020” for members of the steering committee and experts.

The applications shall be evaluated by the measure steering committee (hereinafter the steering committee).

The steering committee shall follow in its work:

- the conditions for granting support as set out in Regulation No. 40 of the Minister of Education and Research of 21 August 2015 on the conditions of the operation “Support for Applied Research in Smart Specialisation Growth Areas” (hereinafter the operation);
- the rules of procedure of the steering committee of the operation “Support for applied research in smart specialisation growth areas” for the evaluation of applications;
- this guide.

The persons responsible for the fulfilment of the guide are the head of the Structural Support Unit of the Archimedes Foundation (hereinafter the implementing body), the deputy head in the field of support and members of the steering committee.

DESCRIPTION OF OPERATION

1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1. An application shall be submitted on the application form approved by the implementing body electronically through the Estonian Research System within the term specified upon announcement of the call for applications. The processing of applications shall be organised by the Archimedes Foundation.

1.2. The implementing body shall register the submitted applications in the electronic document management system and confirm their arrival. Before evaluation of applications, the implementing body shall verify the compliance of the applicant, partner (if necessary) and application with the requirements, by following § 4 of Government of the Republic Regulation “Requirements and Conditions for Applying for and Processing of Applications for Structural Assistance of Period 2014-2020 for Establishment of Regulation on Conditions for Granting Support” and conditions for granting support for the operation “Support for applied research in smart specialisation growth areas” and the existence of mandatory additional documents and shall
fill in the “Technical checklist of application for support for the operation ‘Support for applied research in smart specialisation growth areas’”. If the application contains any inaccuracies, the implementing body shall inform the applicant thereof immediately, by granting up to 10 working days for the elimination of the shortcomings. If the shortcomings are not eliminated within the aforesaid term, the implementing body shall terminate the processing of the application.

1.3. An applicant and partner and application shall not be declared to be in compliance with the requirements if at least one of the following circumstances exists:

1.3.1. the application is not in compliance with the requirements provided for in § 11 of Regulation No. 40 of the Minister of Education and Research of 21 August 2015 “Support for Applied Research in Smart Specialisation Growth Areas” and the applicant has not eliminated the shortcomings in the application within the set term;

1.3.2. the applicant or partner does not make it possible to carry out the verification provided for in subsection 21 (7) of the Structural Assistance Act in the registered office of the applicant or partner and in the location of implementation of the planned operations;

1.3.3. the public R&D institution has a holding or membership in the applicant or partner or is a significant financier of the applicant or partner.

1.4. Upon declaring the applicant, partner and application to be not in compliance with the requirements, the implementing body shall make a decision, in accordance with subsections 8 (2) and (5) of the Regulation on Applying for and Processing of Applications for Structural Assistance of Period 2014-2020, to reject the application without substantial evaluation of the application.

1.5. A decision to approve an application shall be made in respect of applications that have been declared to be compliant pursuant to subsection 8 (1) of the Regulation on Applying for and Processing of Applications for Structural Assistance of Period 2014-2020 no later than on the last working day of the month preceding the meeting of the steering committee and are subject to approval on the basis of the evaluation result of the steering committee.

1.6. Support may be applied for on a current basis or by calls. Applying for support shall be announced by the implementing body on the proposal of the Ministry of Education and Research (hereinafter the implementing authority). Applying for support shall end when the budget has run out or on the proposal of the measure steering committee. The implementing body may, on the proposal of the smart specialisation steering committee or the measure steering committee, organise targeted calls for applications. The need for the organisation of calls for applications shall be decided by the implementing authority on the proposal of the measure steering committee.

2. ORGANISATION OF EVALUATION

2.1. Applications shall be evaluated by the steering committee formed by the Estonian Research Council on the proposal of the implementing authority. The organisation of the work of the steering committee upon evaluation of applications shall be regulated by the document “Rules of procedure of steering committee of operation ‘Support for applied research in smart specialisation growth areas’ for evaluation of applications” approved by the implementing body. The organisation of work of the steering committee in other areas within the competence of the steering committee shall be regulated by the Estonian Research Council.
2.2. In order to evaluate the applications that have been declared to be in compliance with the requirements, the steering committee shall involve experts, incl.:

2.2.1. at least two independent experts of the area who provide evaluation of an application in accordance with the aspect of its economic impact and efficiency as well as scientific substantiation and feasibility; and

2.2.2. at least one independent expert who provides evaluation of an application in accordance with its impact on the achievement of the objectives of the measure and on its horizontal themes.

2.3. The steering committee shall appoint a rapporteur for each application.

2.4. In order to make it possible to carry out evaluation, the implementing body shall organise, after the applicant and application have been declared to be compliant, making the applications available to the members of the steering committee and the experts appointed by the steering committee and approved by the implementing body.

2.5. Before evaluation, the members of the steering committee and experts shall sign a declaration of independence and confidentiality.

2.6. In the case of applying on a current basis, the applications shall be evaluated and approved or their rejection shall be decided in regular meetings of the steering committee that are generally held once a month.

2.7. In a meeting, the applications subject to evaluating shall include those that have been declared to be in compliance with the requirements no later than on the last working day of the month preceding the evaluation meeting and that have been evaluated by experts no later than 5 working days before the meeting of the steering committee takes place. In the case of applying by calls, the steering committee shall decide the time of the meeting for the evaluation of the applications of the call.
### 3. DESCRIPTION OF EVALUATION CRITERIA

3.1. Applications shall be evaluated on the basis of the following evaluation criteria (hereinafter the criteria) in terms of sub-criteria. The criteria and sub-criteria and their weights are set out in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion and its weight</th>
<th>Description of the criterion</th>
<th>Weight of the sub-criterion out of the criterion</th>
<th>Evaluation scale of the sub-criterion</th>
<th>Criterion threshold</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Impact of the project on the achievement of the objectives of the measure: 30%</td>
<td>The project contributes to the cooperation between public R&amp;D institutions and establishments; the support has been aimed at applied research or experimental development to be carried out in the interests of an establishment operating in Estonia; the support helps increase the motivation and readiness of Estonian public R&amp;D institutions for carrying out applied research and experimental development projects necessary for entrepreneurship in growth areas; the support helps foster knowledge transfer between establishments and Estonian public R&amp;D institutions;</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>5: The project contributes directly to the cooperation between public R&amp;D institutions and establishments, helps increase, to a significant extent, the readiness of R&amp;D institutions for carrying out applied research, and directly fosters knowledge transfer. 4: An evaluation between 3 and 5. 3: The project contributes, to a minor extent, to the cooperation between public R&amp;D institutions and establishments, helps increase, to a minor extent, the readiness of R&amp;D institutions for carrying out applied research, and fosters, to a minor extent, knowledge transfer. 2: An evaluation between 1 and 3. 1: The project does not contribute to the cooperation between public R&amp;D institutions and establishments, does not help increase the readiness of R&amp;D institutions for carrying out applied research, and does not foster knowledge transfer.</td>
<td>3.0 points</td>
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The area to be supported within the project matches smart specialisation growth areas.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transfer</th>
<th>50%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5: The project contributes directly to the development of smart specialisation growth areas.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4: An evaluation between 3 and 5.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3: The project contributes, to a minor extent, to the development of smart specialisation growth areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2: An evaluation between 1 and 3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1: The project does not contribute to the development of smart specialisation growth areas.</td>
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2. Economic impact and efficiency of the project: 30%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliance with the needs of the applicant and partners; relevance of the business plan</th>
<th>40%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5: The necessity of the project has been substantiated very well – there is a problem, bottleneck or unused development potential. The objectives of the project and the forecasts of the financial indicators set out in the business plan are very clear, real and ambitious and the achievement thereof at the end of the project is very likely, taking into account the capability of the applicant and the preparation of the project.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: An evaluation between 3 and 5.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3: The objectives of the project and the forecasts of the financial indicators set out in the business plan are in some respects described unclearly, but the achievement thereof at the end of the project is likely. The applicant has taken into account most of the circumstances upon drawing up the forecasts and analyses.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5 points</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Capability of the applicant and partners to implement the business plan</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</table>
| 2: An evaluation between 1 and 3.  
1: The objectives of the project and the forecasts of the financial indicators set out in the business plan are unrealistic and the achievement thereof at the end of the project is not likely. The premises set out and the forecasts based on these are unrealistic. |
| 5: The applicant and partners, if any, have very good potential and capability to implement the project. The application has clearly set out the contribution and responsibility of the applicant and partners, if any, for successful joint implementation of the project. The financial capability of the applicant and partners, if any, of the project for sustainable implementation of the project and for the achievement of the objectives and results of the project is excellent. |
| 4: An evaluation between 3 and 5.  
3: The applicant and partners, if any, have the potential and capability to implement the project. The application sets out the contribution and responsibility of the applicant and partners, if any, for successful joint implementation of the project; the financial capability of the applicant and partners, if any, for sustainable implementation of the project and for the achievement of the objectives and results of the project is good. |
| 3: The applicant and partners, if any, have the potential and capability to implement the project. The application sets out the contribution and responsibility of the applicant and partners, if any, for successful joint implementation of the project; the financial capability of the applicant and partners, if any, for sustainable implementation of the project and for the achievement of the objectives and results of the project is good. |
| Substantiation of the project budget | 30% | 5: The project budget is transparent, optimal and cost-effective for the implementation of the planned operations.  
4: An evaluation between 3 and 5.  
3: The project budget is reasonable, but not sufficiently transparent and cost-effective.  
2: An evaluation between 1 and 3.  
1: The costs planned for project operations are not optimal and cost-effective and do not make it possible to achieve the results of the project. |
| 3. Substantiation and feasibility of the project: 30% | Quality and methods of the development plan | 30% | 5: The establishment of the objective of the project has been substantiated very well – there is a clearly defined problem, bottleneck or unused development potential. The development plan has been thought over in its entirety, is in | 2.5 points |
compliance with the needs of the customer in full and its objectives and the methods for the achievement thereof are realistic and actually achievable, taking into account the capability of the applicant and the preparation of the project.

4: An evaluation between 3 and 5.

3: The objectives of the project and the methods of the achievement thereof are realistic, but unclear in some respects. The development plan is in part in compliance with the needs of the customer and its objectives and the methods for the achievement thereof are generally realistic and probably achievable, taking into account the capability of the applicant and the preparation of the project.

2: An evaluation between 1 and 3.

1: The objectives of the project and the methods of the achievement thereof are unrealistic. The development plan is not in compliance with the needs of the customer and the achievement of the objectives thereof by the end of the project is not likely, taking into account the capability of the applicant and the preparation of the project.

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<tr>
<th>Level and experience of the persons who carry out the research</th>
<th>30%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5: The research group is extremely capable, motivated and has skills to ensure the implementation of the objectives of the</td>
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development plan in full as well as sustainability. The members of the research group have implemented projects at least in the same volume with the project, incl. important operations on the international level, in the same area within the last five years. The head of the research group has earlier experience in promoting cooperation between enterprises and/or other organisations. The team formed for the implementation of the project is capable and competent.

4: An evaluation between 3 and 5.

3: The research group is capable, motivated, but does not have all the skills to ensure the implementation of the objectives of the project as well as sustainability. The members of the research group have implemented projects in the same area within the last five years. The capability of the implementation of the project by the team formed for the implementation of the project is not guaranteed in full.

2: An evaluation between 1 and 3.

1: The research group does not have the capability, motivation or skills to ensure the implementation of the objectives of the project as well as sustainability. The research group does not have experience in implementing
Realistic nature of the operations to be carried out and of the schedule for achieving the objective

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5: All the operations included in the action plan form a whole, are necessary, substantiated and ensure the achievement of the objectives of the project. The timely implementation of the project is very likely.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4: An evaluation between 3 and 5.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3: The action plan includes operations in sufficient volume; the operations are related to one another. The relevance and substantiation of some operations from the point of view of achieving the objectives of the project are questionable or some operations are missing. The likelihood of the achievement of the objectives of the project and the timely implementation of the project is likely.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2: An evaluation between 1 and 3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: The operations included in the action plan are not sufficient for achieving the objectives of the project. Some operations are superfluous, i.e. not necessary for achieving the objectives of the project or some operations are missing. The timely implementation of the project is not likely.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

projects in the same area, the team formed is inadequate and/or the knowledge and skills of the project team are insufficient for the implementation of the projects.
| 4. Impact of the project on horizontal themes: 10% | Relatedness to the Estonian economy | 80% | 5: The applicant and partners have an excellent potential and capability to influence the developments of the sector and the Estonian economy as a whole.  
4: An evaluation between 3 and 5.  
3: The applicant and partners have a certain potential and capability to influence the developments of the sector and the Estonian economy as a whole.  
2: An evaluation between 1 and 3.  
1: The applicant and partners do not have potential and capability to influence the developments of the sector and the Estonian economy as a whole. |
| Relatedness to regional development, environmental protection, development of the civil society, gender equality and ensuring equal opportunities, common public governance, promotion of information society, if this is appropriate arising from the content of the application | 20% | 5: The application has a positive connection with horizontal themes if this is appropriate arising from the content of the application.  
3: The application has a neutral connection with horizontal themes.  
1: The application has a negative connection with horizontal themes if this is appropriate arising from the content of the application. |
3.2. Applications shall be evaluated on a scale of 1 (non-satisfactory) to 5 (excellent) points. Grades in terms of sub-criteria may be given at intervals of 0.5 points. The values of the numerical scale shall be as follows:

1) “non-satisfactory” (1),
2) “satisfactory” (2),
3) “good” (3),
4) “very good” (4),
5) “excellent” (5).

2.3 The total scores of the criteria and applications shall be calculated with two decimal points’ accuracy.

4. EVALUATION

4.1. Stage I of evaluation

4.1.1. In stage I of the evaluation, individual evaluation of applications shall take place.
4.1.2. The applications shall be evaluated by at least two independent experts of the area who provide evaluation of an application in accordance with the aspects of its economic impact and efficiency (criterion 2) as well as scientific substantiation and feasibility (criterion 3) and at least one independent expert who provides its evaluation of the application and makes a proposal to the steering committee for the provision of evaluation in accordance with its impact on the achievement of the objectives of the measure (criterion 1) and on its horizontal themes (criterion 4).
4.1.3. The experts who evaluate an application shall fill in an evaluation form in the Estonian Research Portal in respect of each application evaluated by them.

4.2. Stage II of evaluation

4.2.1. In stage II of the evaluation, a meeting of the steering committee shall be held.
4.2.2. In a meeting of the steering committee, the rapporteurs shall provide an overview of the applications evaluated the evaluations and grades given to them by experts and make a proposal for the total score of the application.
4.2.3. In respect of criteria 2 and 3, the steering committee shall use as a basis the average total scores given to the criteria by the experts. The steering committee shall decide on the grades of criteria 1 and 4 at a meeting on the basis of a proposal of the expert who evaluated criteria 1 and 4.
4.2.4. If necessary, the steering committee may, in justified cases, change the grade of criteria 2 and 3 by up to 0.5 points provided that the points given by at least one expert exceed in the case of criteria 2 and 3 the threshold.
4.2.5. If the grade of criterion 1 is below 3.0 points or the grade of criteria 2 to 4 is below 2.5 points, the steering committee shall make a proposal to the implementing body for rejecting the application and the application shall not be evaluated any further.
4.2.6. The average grades evolved on the basis of the grades of sub-criteria of each criterion shall be multiplied by the weight of the respective criterion, as a result of which the respective weighted grade shall evolve for each criterion. In order to form a total score, the weighted grades of all criteria shall be added up.

4.3 Making financing proposal
4.3.1. The steering committee shall make to the implementing body a summary proposal based on the total score of the applications and an evaluation report about each application with a motivated proposal to either approve the application in the requested volume, approve the application in smaller volume than that applied for or reject the application. The steering committee may thereby make a proposal to establish additional conditions for projects.

4.3.2. The steering committee shall make, if necessary, a motivated proposal for holding negotiations with applicants over more detailed conditions for financing. The steering committee may make a proposal to the implementing body for calling applicants to negotiations over the size of the support and the content of the application.

4.3.3. As a result of the negotiations, the evaluation results of an application shall not change. After negotiations, an applicant shall have to modify their application, if necessary. The compliance of the modifications made with the content of the negotiations shall be verified by the steering committee that shall thereafter submit to the implementing body a financing proposal in respect of the applications.

4.3.4. The implementing body may make a decision to approve an application in part or with a condition only upon the consent of the applicant.

4.3.5. If the applicant does not agree to approval of the application in a smaller volume or with secondary conditions, the implementing body shall make a decision to reject the application.

REFERENCES

1) Rules of procedure of evaluation committee of operation “Support for applied research in smart specialisation growth areas”
2) Application form of operation “Support for applied research in smart specialisation growth areas”
3) Technical checklist of application for the operation “Support for applied research in smart specialisation growth areas”
4) Evaluation form of application for the operation “Support for applied research in smart specialisation growth areas”
5) Evaluation form of application for the operation “Support for applied research in smart specialisation growth areas”
6) Declaration of independence and confidentiality
7) Regulation No. 40 of the Minister of Education and Research of 21 August 2015 “Support for Applied Research in Smart Specialisation Growth Areas”