



RESEARCH
& INNOVATION
FOUNDATION



**THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FOUNDATION
PROGRAMMES
FOR RESEARCH, TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND
INNOVATION
“RESTART 2016 – 2020”**

GUIDE FOR EVALUATORS
(Two-stage Evaluation)

PROPOSAL DETAILS

PILLAR	I. SMART GROWTH
PROGRAMME	RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES
CALL IDENTIFIER	STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE/1222



**Co-funded by
the European Union**



Republic of Cyprus

GUIDELINES AND GENERAL INFORMATION FOR EVALUATORS

1. The Proposal, which the Evaluator is called upon to evaluate, was submitted under the **“Strategic Research Infrastructure” Call for Proposals** of the Research and Innovation Foundation¹ **Programmes for Research, Technological Development and Innovation “RESTART 2016-2020”**.
2. The objectives of the above mentioned Programme and all necessary definitions and procedures are described in:
 - the relevant **Call for Proposals**, and
 - the **Work Programme (relevant Programme description in Section II/Pillar I)**.
3. Before producing the Evaluation Report, Evaluators are expected to study the relevant Proposal thoroughly. This consists of:
 - Proposal Part A – General Information & Budget,
 - Proposal Part B – Technical Annex
 - Annex I – Curricula Vitae (optional), and
 - Annex II – Call Specific Information (Letters of Support AND Open Access Policy - obligatory)
4. The Evaluation Procedure for the **“Strategic Research Infrastructure” Call for Proposals** is carried out in two (2) Stages:
 - In Stage I of the Evaluation Procedure each proposal is evaluated remotely by **two (2) Experts**, specializing on the subject of the proposal and having a good understanding of the relevant business environment. Proposals securing a score that equals or exceeds the set threshold qualify for Stage II.
 - Stage II Evaluation is carried out by five (5) Scientific Evaluation Committees (SEC), one for each Thematic Priority.
5. In **Stage I** of the Evaluation Procedure, each Evaluator fills his / her own Evaluation Report Form, which consists of 3 Parts. In Part I, the Evaluator should provide a fully justified assessment on whether:
 - (i) the Proposal is compatible with the objectives of the selected Programme, and
 - (ii) the Proposal is compatible with the objectives of the specific Call of Proposals, and

- (iii) the Proposal's proposed types of research are compatible with the proposed Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) and those allowed by the Call for Proposals.
- (iv) the Proposal is compatible with the selected Thematic Priority, and
- (v) the Proposal is compatible with the definition of the 'Research Infrastructures' as per article 2 (91) of GBER (*please see Call for Proposals*)
- (vi) the Proposal is compatible with the «Do No Significant Harm» Principle.

The Evaluator should not proceed with the scientific evaluation of the 3 criteria should a Proposal fail the compatibility assessment, in any of the above compatibility criteria.

6. The Evaluation of all Research and Innovation Proposals submitted to the RIF, under the RESTART 2016-2020 Programmes, is based on the following criteria:

- Excellence,
- Added Value and Benefit, and
- Implementation.

The content of the criteria is specified in each Call for Proposals so that it expresses each Programme's philosophy and aims, and differences pertaining to the interpretation, analysis and specialisation of each criterion and its weight over the total evaluation score. The description of each criterion is **available in Part I of the present document**. Evaluators are kindly requested to **read thoroughly the description of each Criterion** before assigning their scores.

The Evaluator should provide a score on each of the 3 evaluation criteria (assigning marks between 0,00 and 5,00 with an accuracy of 0,25 marks) as well as relevant comments and detailed justification. It is noted that each criterion carries a different weight, as shown on the respective part of the Evaluation Report Form.

The **Evaluation Score** will be automatically calculated (in the relevant Table in Part III) by adding the scores assigned to each of the three criteria following the application of the relevant weights.

7. The table below provides an interpretation of the scores and should be applied for the evaluation of all Proposals:

Score	Evaluation Interpretation
0	The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
< 0,99	The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
1,00 – 1,99	The proposal addresses the criterion to a limited degree and there are significant weaknesses.
2,00 – 2,99	The proposal addresses the criterion partly and a number of shortcomings/weaknesses are observed.

3,00 – 3,99	The proposal addresses the criterion quite sufficiently but a small number of shortcomings/weaknesses are observed.
4,00 – 5,00	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

8. The **Final Evaluation Score** for each Proposal will be equal to the **average** of the Evaluation Scores assigned by the two independent Evaluators. In case the difference between the scores of the two evaluations is **more than 3,00 marks**, then the Proposal will be sent for evaluation to a third Evaluator and the Final Evaluation Score will be determined as the average of the two closest evaluation scores. If the scores of the two evaluations are both lower than 12,00/15,00, then the proposal shall be considered ineligible and shall not be forwarded to a third evaluator, even the difference between them is more than 3,00 marks.
9. The Proposals that secure a **Final Evaluation Score** of at least 13.00/15.00, qualify to Stage II of the Evaluation.
10. **Comments provided by the Evaluators should be written in a manner that would justify and explain the specific score provided for each criterion.** Each sub-criterion should be evaluated only under the relevant criterion. **Proposals should be judged on merit and scored as they were submitted**, rather than on their potential if certain changes were to be made. If significant shortcomings are identified (including in budget issues such as size, structure, allocation, aid intensity etc.), this must be reflected by awarding a lower score for the criterion concerned. **No recommendations for improving Proposals should be provided.**
11. Please note that:
 - Proposal Part B – Technical Annex has a max page limit of 30 pages. Any excess pages must be disregarded and not taken into consideration when carrying out the evaluation.
 - Annexes should only include the information described in the Call for Proposals (e.g. Annex I should only include Curricula Vitae (optional) and Annex II should only include Letters of Support (optional) and Open Access Policy (obligatory)).. Any extra information that might be included must be disregarded and not taken into consideration when carrying out the evaluation.
 - If any inconsistencies between Part A and Part B are observed, Part A should be the one considered as valid for evaluation purposes.
12. In Part II of the Evaluation Report, Evaluators are asked to provide supplementary comments (but no scores) with regards to:
 - the need for an Ethics Review for the Proposal under evaluation,

- any potential negative impacts and/or risks to the environment stemming from the implementation of the proposed activities or the delivery of the Project's expected results/products, and
- the degree to which the Proposal under evaluation is gender balanced.

13. A positive reply to the first question would mean that the Proposal should **undergo an Ethics Review** before a funding decision can be reached, whereas a positive reply to the second question should be **mirrored in the comments and scores** provided for individual criteria, if applicable.

14. Information relevant to both the evaluation criteria and the issues for which supplementary comments are requested (please refer to point 12 above) can be found throughout the Proposal and, thus, Evaluators are advised to study the Proposal thoroughly before starting their work. Please note that, for each criterion/supplementary issue, the most appropriate sections of the Proposal where the relevant information can be found, are indicated in Part I and Part II of this document.

15. In **Stage II** of the Evaluation Procedure, project team members of those Proposals that have qualified from Stage I, will be asked to present their Proposals to the relevant Scientific Evaluation Committee (SEC) (according to the selected Thematic Priority). It is noted that, the members of the SECs will not been involved in Stage I of the Evaluation Procedure.

16. The Members of the Committee will then have the opportunity to request clarifications and discuss the content of each Proposal among themselves as well as with the Project Team. The objective of each Committee is to judge each Proposal on its own merit, **based on the same evaluation criteria and weights used in Stage I**, and reach a consensual decision and funding recommendation as follows:

- i. Proposal recommended for funding,
- ii. Proposal not recommended for funding.

The committee will have allocated time for calibration. The committee will need to ensure that at the end of the evaluation period, the committed budget does not exceed the call allocated budget. The SEC may determine that one or more Proposals are indeed not eligible for funding (despite being deemed eligible following Stage I).

External Observers will be invited and may be involved in all Committee sessions.

17. Following the completion of each Stage of the Evaluation Procedure, and in the context of transparency, the RIF will provide all applicants with their respective Evaluation Reports (without disclosing Stage I Evaluators' identification) and publicly announce the official results. The Committee's decision is final and without the possibility for a redress procedure.

PART I – EVALUATION

COMPATIBILITY WITH THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The following should be considered in the assessment of this criterion:

- Compatibility with the Objectives of the Programme.
- Compatibility with the Objectives of the Call for Proposals.
- Compatibility of the proposed types of research with the proposed Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) and those allowed by the Call for Proposals. *(It is required that at least two of the following types of research exist in the proposal: basic research, applied research, experimental development, allowed TRLs 1-8)*
- Compatibility with the selected priority area *(As selected in the beginning of Part B, just before Section B1)*
- Compatibility with the definition of 'Research Infrastructures' as per Article 2 (91) of GBER *(please find the definition in the Call for Proposals)*
- Compatibility with the «Do No Significant Harm» principle as per Article 17 of Regulation (EU) No 2020/852² on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment (EU Taxonomy Regulation). The proposed methodology must not include or support activities that could cause significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives of the Taxonomy Regulation.

Please note that a proposal should be deemed incompatible if it fails to fulfill any of the abovementioned compatibility criteria.

The relevant information can be found in:

1. Section "General Profile of the Project Proposal" in "Proposal Part A – General Information and Budget", and
2. Sections B1, B3 and B5 in "Proposal Part B – Technical Annex".

*As selected in "Proposal Part A – General Information and Budget" and analysed in "Proposal Part B – Technical Annex".

* RIF would like to draw the Evaluators' and Rapporteur's attention to the Programme's requirement that Projects activities the majority of which must fall within Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 1-8 in compliance with the relevant definitions adopted by the EU. Within this context, the Evaluators and Rapporteurs for each Proposal should provide a fully justified assessment on whether the Proposal is compatible with the proposed TRLs.

The Technology Readiness Levels adopted by the EU are the following:

TRL 1 - basic principles observed,

TRL 2 - technology concept formulated,

TRL 3 - experimental proof of concept,

TRL 4 - technology validated in lab,

TRL 5 - technology validated in relevant environment,

TRL 6 - technology demonstrated in relevant environment,

TRL 7 - system prototype demonstration in operational environment,

TRL 8 - system complete and qualified,

TRL 9 - actual system proven in operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies).

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020R0852&from=EN>

1. EXCELLENCE (30%)

The following should be considered in the assessment of this criterion:

- Quality of Project Objectives.
 - Contribution of the project objectives and their implementation towards the specific sector to which the project is applied.
 - Correlation of the scientific project objectives to the proposed infrastructure to be developed and acquired.
- Degree of Project Innovation and Originality in relation to the existing knowledge (state-of-the-art) at international level.
- Soundness, credibility and feasibility of the proposed concept.

The relevant information can be found in Sections B1, 2 & 4 in “Proposal Part B – Technical Annex”.

2. ADDED VALUE AND BENEFIT (40%)

The following should be considered in the assessment of this criterion:

- Scientific and/or technological and/or social and/or economic impact at national level and measures to maximize it.
 - Satisfactory justification of the need and importance of acquiring this infrastructure for the Cypriot research and innovation ecosystem including the potential of extensive use and access to it.
 - Contribution towards the sustainable development of the specific sector as well as the Cyprus economy in general.
 - Contribution of the project towards the development of the research human capital.
 - Potential attraction of future research funds (e.g. Horizon Europe).
- Effectiveness of the proposed measures for the exploitation (including management of Intellectual Property Rights) and dissemination of results for achieving maximum Project visibility.
- Facilitation of access of the infrastructures/equipment to be acquired by other research teams/ organizations.
 - Interest of the ecosystem in the proposed Research Infrastructure and provision of access.

The relevant information can be found in Sections B3 & 4 in “Proposal Part B – Technical Annex”.

3. IMPLEMENTATION (30%)

The following should be considered in the assessment of this criterion:

- The technical validity and completeness of the proposed equipment to achieve the results of the project.
- Completeness and appropriateness of the Work Packages' content, the allocation of the various activities, the timetable and the budget*.
 - Relevance of the proposed budget (including the research infrastructure cost) to the content and the actual needs of the proposed project.
- Effectiveness of the proposed methodology for the implementation of the deliverables.
- Completeness, quality and capacity of the Consortium (at the level of organizations and/or persons) for the implementation of the Project Proposal and achievement of the proposed objectives.
 - Adequacy of the Host Organisation (operating regulations, institutional framework, financial capacity, etc.) and its staff to support the utilization and maintenance of the infrastructure that will be acquired immediately and over time.
 - Effective collaboration between the consortium members
 - Competence and experience of the participating organizations (Host Organization and Partner Organizations) to implement research and innovation projects, especially in the proposed project scientific field.
 - Adequacy of the research team: Research merits of the Project Coordinator (e.g. publications, invited lectures, awards and prizes, secured research funding) as well as of the other researchers.
 - Justification of the need for the participation of the Foreign Research Organisations for the implementation of the project (where applicable).
- Quality of the proposed open access plan and proposed implementation timeline.
- Suitability and adequacy of the proposed coordination and management activities, including identification and handling of potential risks.
 - Completeness and reliability of the Contingency Plan for the project implementation.

The relevant information can be found in:

1. ["Project Budget Overview"](#) and ["Aid Intensity" Tables](#) in "Proposal Part A – General Information and Budget",
2. [Sections B4-6](#) in "Proposal Part B – Technical Annex", and
3. [Annex I – Curricula Vitae](#)
4. [Annex II – Open Access Policy](#).

*Including a validation of the selected distribution of proposed types of research activities per Partner (as per budget distribution), available in "Proposal Part A – General Information and Budget".

Important Note:

- The Consortium is presented in "Proposal Part A – General Information and Budget" and is analysed in Section B5 "Consortium and Resources to be Committed" in "Proposal Part B – Technical Annex". If any inconsistencies between Part A and Part B are observed, Part A should be the one considered as valid for evaluation purposes.

PART II - SUPPLEMENTARY COMMENTS

QUESTION
<p><i>Do you believe that any part of the Proposal under evaluation (e.g. methodology, Work Packages and activities, expected results, products etc.) requires to undergo an Ethics Review (e.g. a bioethical assessment by the Cyprus National Bioethics Committee)?</i></p> <p><i>The relevant information can be found in <u>Sections B3 and B5</u> in “Proposal Part B – Technical Annex”.</i></p>
<p><i>Do you believe that the implementation of the proposed activities or the delivery of the expected results/products could have any potential negative impacts and/or pose risks to the environment?</i></p> <p><i>Please note that Project activities <u>must</u> comply with the «No Significant Harm Principle», as described on p.6 of the present document.</i></p> <p><i>The relevant information can be found in <u>Sections B3 and B5</u> in “Proposal Part B – Technical Annex”.</i></p>
<p><i>Do you believe that gender or sex is a determinant factor in the Proposal under evaluation, and if yes, do you believe that a gender/sex dimension has been sufficiently and appropriately integrated into the research content (e.g. in the proposed methodology)?</i></p> <p><i>The relevant information can be found in <u>Sections B3 and B4</u> in “Proposal Part B – Technical Annex”.</i></p>

***Note:**

The RIF recognizes that evaluators play a critical role in ensuring excellence in the funded research and, therefore, acknowledges the importance of integrating in the proposals gender and/or sex analysis. Please take a minute to consult the following informative videos (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hlceez1Dx5E>) that have been developed by the Canadian Institute for Gender and Health to guide evaluators when assessing Health-related proposals. The information provided in the videos may also apply when assessing proposals in other thematic areas.