



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	II. SUSTAINABLE RTDI SYSTEM
PROGRAMME	DEVELOPMENT AND COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION OF INTERNATIONALLY COMPETITIVE INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES BY ESTABLISHED ENTERPRISES
CALL IDENTIFIER	INNOVATE/1221



**Funded by the
European Union**
NextGenerationEU



Republic of Cyprus

GUIDELINES AND GENERAL INFORMATION FOR EVALUATORS

1. The Proposal, which the Evaluator is called upon to evaluate, was submitted under the **“Development and Commercial Exploitation of Internationally Competitive Innovative Products and Services by Established Enterprises (INNOVATE)” Programme** 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 II)**.
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, and
 - Annex I – Curricula Vitae.
4. The Evaluation Procedure for the **“INNOVATE” Programme** 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 an **Independent Evaluation Committee**, comprising Experts with a business background and involves face-to-face meetings with Project Team Members (pitching).
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 the Proposal is **compatible with**:
 - (i) the objectives of the selected Programme, and
 - (ii) the objectives of the specific Call of Proposals, and
 - (iii) the proposed Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs), and
 - (iv) the «Do No Significant Harm» Principle.

¹ Since April 2019, the **Research Promotion Foundation** has been renamed to the **Research and Innovation Foundation** in order to reflect its expanded role as the executive arm of the new National Research and Innovation Governance System.

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.

It is noted that, **Evaluation Criteria are different to the ones used by the EIC Accelerator Programme**.

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 best ranked applications according to their **Final Evaluation Score**, starting with the highest scoring proposal and in descending order requesting an aggregated financial support equal to the double of the Call budget available, and provided that they secure a **Final Evaluation Score** of at least 12.00/15.00, 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.** 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 25 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). Any extra information that might be included must be disregarded and not taken into consideration when carrying out the evaluation.
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 an Independent Evaluation Committee, comprising **Experts** with a business background. It is noted that, these experts have 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 (excellent investment opportunity),
 - ii. Proposal not recommended for funding (not worth the investment).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.

External Observers will 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 type(s)* of research and/or innovation activities with those allowed by the Programme/Call for Proposals.*
- *Compatibility with the proposed Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) (This specific Programme/Call for Proposals addresses activities that fall within Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs**) TRL > 6).*
- *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.*

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’ attention to the element of this Programme, which requires that Projects must fall within Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) > 6 in compliance with the relevant definitions adopted by the EU. Within this context, the Evaluators 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.**

The project proposal refers to the adoption of a business idea with high degree of novelty and prospects of rapid growth, from an existing enterprise aiming to develop and promote competitive innovative products or services with a potential for penetration into the international market. Emphasis is placed on the degree of maturity of proposed ideas and existing technology (where applicable) in order to enable entry into the international market in the shortest time possible.

- **Degree of Innovation and Originality of the Idea in relation to the existing knowledge (state-of- the-art) at international level.**

Evaluation of the innovation is based on existing knowledge, practice and technology at international level (state-of-the-art). It is evaluated whether the idea refers to a product / service with a high degree of novelty, significantly different in comparison with existing or competing solutions and international practice and is based on factors such as the quality / functionality of the product / service, the cost, the degree of ease of use, etc. Furthermore, the degree of innovation with regards to issues related to tackling climate change, the environment, gender dimension and any other social aspects are taken into account.

Emphasis should be placed on the clear identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the product / service as well as opportunities and threats for successful introduction to the existing market or the successful creation of a new market.

- **Soundness, credibility and feasibility of the proposed idea.**

The soundness, credibility and feasibility of the proposed idea for the development of new products or services are evaluated. Emphasis is placed on the existence of a realistic description of the current stage of development of the idea and of the maturity of the technology (where applicable), in relation to the expectations of the Call. Furthermore, the existence of a clear and realistic description of the planned actions for the transfer of the innovation to the market is evaluated. The following are also evaluated:

- *The degree of understanding of both the risks and the opportunities related to the market introduction of the innovation from both technical and commercial points of view.*
- *The documentation of the technological and financial sustainability of the innovation.*
- *Whether the objectives of the proposed project, as well as the proposed approach and activities are consistent with the expected benefit of the innovation.*
- *The definition of an appropriate form of the results as well as the success criteria.*

During the evaluation it is taken into account that the high degree of novelty of an idea comes with a high chance of failure of the business proposal. Respectively, in case of success the investment may result in a high reward.

The relevant information can be found in [Section B1](#) in "Proposal Part B – Technical Annex".

2. ADDED VALUE AND BENEFIT (35%)

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

- **Scientific and/or technological and/or social and/or economic impact and measures to maximize it.**

The economic, social and other impact that will emerge through the implementation of the proposed project is evaluated, especially in relation to the following:

- *The development of a viable and profitable business with rapid growth rates (and business scalability) addressing the international market.*
- *Strengthening the competitiveness and export activity of the company.*
- *The company's potential to attract private investment funds (to the extent required).*
- *The expected contribution in increasing job opportunities.*
- *To meet a specific need and/or improve the consumer's experience and quality of life (cost savings, efficiency gains, product / service quality and reliability, etc.).*
- *The ability to provide solutions to existing social, environmental and other challenges.*
- *The degree of contribution to the Cypriot economy (e.g. contribution to growth, reinforcement of other industries in various ways, cost of loss if not realized, quantitative benefit to be gained).*

Particular emphasis is given to the following elements that should be included in the description of the project proposal:

- *Convincing description of the existence of substantial demand for the innovation (including willingness of end users to buy the product / service).*
- *The total expected market size (existing or new market), its expected growth rate and the market share that the business is targeting.*
- **Effectiveness of the proposed measures for the management of Intellectual Property Rights.**

The strategy for the protection and safeguarding of intellectual property rights, which are necessary for the implementation of the business plan of the company in order to achieve the maximum added value and benefit through the project, is evaluated. In particular, the following are evaluated:

- *The suitability of the measures taken to ensure the unobstructed commercial exploitation ("freedom to operate").*
- *The suitability and reliability of the knowledge protection strategy in order to ensure*

the “freedom to operate”, including ownership of intellectual property rights, any pending patent applications, as well as issues related to license exploitation.

- *The response to any requirements for compatibility with national, European and international laws and/or standards.*

The relevant information can be found in [Section B2](#) in “Proposal Part B – Technical Annex”.

3. IMPLEMENTATION (35%)

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

- ***Completeness and appropriateness of the Work Packages’ content, the allocation of the various activities, the timetable and the budget.***

The completeness, reliability and appropriateness of the content of the project proposal, including the appropriateness of the timetable and the proposed budget, are evaluated. Particular emphasis is placed on the completeness and reliability of the following elements that should be included in the description of the project proposal in order to substantiate the potential to achieve the added value and benefit:

- *Reliable description of targeted users or customers of the innovation, how their needs have been addressed and the reasons why they will want to use or buy the product / service compared to already available products / services.*
- *Realistic and reliable analysis of market conditions and factors that affect the market, including analysis of competitors and competitive offerings, and key market stakeholders.*
- *Realistic and reliable analysis of market entry strategy for the innovation and the way in which the innovation has the potential to achieve rapid growth-rates.*

- ***Effectiveness of the proposed methodology for the implementation of the Project Proposal.***

The effectiveness of the proposed methodology for the implementation of the project proposal is evaluated. Particular emphasis is given to the following:

- *The adoption of internationally-established methodologies for the development of innovative products / services that enhance the potential for the successful market penetration of their products and services and minimize the risk involved and the required penetration time.*
- *The degree of involvement of potential users in the development / validation process of products / services.*
- *The inclusion of a suitable Go-To-Market strategy.*

- ***Completeness, quality and capacity of the Consortium (at the level of organisations and/or persons) for the implementation of the Project Proposal and achievement of***

the proposed objectives.

The team involved in the implementation of the project proposal is assessed, with particular emphasis on the following:

- *The availability of appropriate and complementary knowledge and skills among team members for both the technical / scientific part, as well as the financial part and the business environment.*
- *Having very good knowledge of the market which their products / services are targeting.*
- *The existence of leadership and management skills within the team, as well as the commitment shown by the team to implement the proposed project.*

The capacity (including infrastructure/facilities/equipment, financial and human resources) and contribution of the Partner Organisations (in the case of a Consortium) to the implementation of the proposed project and the achievement of its objectives, as well as the need to involve third parties (e.g. subcontractors) to provide skills / technical knowledge that is not available within the team, is evaluated. At the same time, the team's potential to secure private funds to cover the required own contribution for the project is taken into account.

- ***Suitability and adequacy of the proposed coordination and management activities, including identification and handling of potential risks (Contingency Plan).***

In particular, the coordination and management activities of the proposed project are evaluated. The completeness and reliability of the Contingency Plan for the management of any risks and deviations in the implementation of the proposed project are also evaluated. Among other, emphasis is placed on the following:

- *The feasibility of adopting a Minimum Viable Product approach for market entry, with the aim of testing the market and implementing any necessary adjustments.*
- *The development of alternative scenarios as well as the possibility of pivoting during the implementation of the project.*

The relevant information can be found in:

1. ***"Project Budget Overview" in "Proposal Part A – General Information and Budget",***
2. ***Sections B3-4 in "Proposal Part B – Technical Annex", and***
3. ***Annex I – Curricula Vitae.***

Important Note: The Consortium is presented in "Proposal Part A – General Information and Budget" and is analysed in Section B4 "Consortium and Resources to be Committed" in "Proposal Part B – Technical Annex". If any inconsistencies between Part A and Part B are observed with regards to the proposed participating organisations, 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 Sections B3 and B5 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 Sections B3 and B5 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 Sections B3 and B4 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.