EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021
Baltic Research Programme
Guidelines for Applicants

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1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE BALTIC RESEARCH PROGRAMME AND THE FIRST CALL IN 2018

The terms and conditions of the "Guidelines for Applicants" have been developed on the basis of the "Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021" adopted by the EEA Financial Mechanism Committee pursuant to Article 10.5 of Protocol 38c to the EEA Agreement on 8 September 2016 and confirmed by the Standing Committee of the EFTA States on 23 September 2016 (hereafter "the Regulation"). The **"Guideline for Research Programmes"** constitutes the framework for the "Guidelines for Applicants" by determining the rules for the establishment and implementation of programmes falling under the Programme Area „Research".

The Baltic Research Programme is composed by Programme Operators in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania through their Ministries for Education and Research, as well as their implementing agencies for research in close cooperation with the Research Council of Norway. The Estonian Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Research Council are responsible for the implementation of the first call for proposals, provided with financing through the MoU between Estonia and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The objectives of the Baltic Research Programme will be ensured through the joint Programme Committee, with scientific experts from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Norway.

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF BALTIC RESEARCH PROGRAMME

There are two main objectives of the EEA Grants; namely to reduce social and economic disparities in Europe and to strengthen bilateral cooperation of the targeted countries and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

The main goal of the Baltic Research Programme is to **enhance research-based knowledge development in the Baltic States through research cooperation with Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein**. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are all targeted in the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), which is the first macro-regional strategy in Europe, approved by the European Council in 2009. The aim is to enable the Baltic Sea region to achieve a sustainable environment and an optimal economic and social development. This is the framework within which the Baltic Research Programme relates. The EEA Grants provide instruments for the realisation of the joint Baltic research cooperation aimed at approaching important challenges. As such, the Baltic Research Programme represents a true innovation, implemented in cooperation with Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

The Programme is designed, through competitive and open calls for proposals for research projects, to ensure the quality and high level of research. The first call is operated by Estonian Research Council and the next ones will come in Latvia and in Lithuania.

The Programme shall strengthen multilateral relations with the aim of stimulating long-term cooperation, capacity and competence-building, and shall provide a step for future collaborative research projects on EU and regional level. An important objective of the Programme is to strengthen human resources in research through the facilitation of international relations and involving PhD students and postdocs in the projects.

The aim of the Programme is to foster the exchange of scientific knowledge between Norwegian, Icelandic, Liechtenstein's (hereafter Donor States) and Baltic States' researchers

and to establish advanced collaborative research between research institutions in donor states and Baltic States.

The Programme will be implemented through joint research projects, enabling research teams to bring together complementary skills, knowledge, and resources to jointly address specific research problems.

The Programme shall contribute to strengthen existing and create new long-term scientific relations between Baltic and Donor States' research institutions and research teams.

Some examples of expected results of the Baltic Research Programme:

- Internationally refereed joint publications published in the best journals of respective areas as part of the projects: in a joint capacity minimum 2 Baltic States with least 1 Donor State (Norway, Iceland and/or Liechtenstein);
- New scientific methods acquired/training in relation to the scientific methods as part of the project, developing scientific methodology;
- Active involvement of PhD students and postdocs in the project;
- Preparation of joint applications to be submitted for further funding (e.g. EU framework programmes);
- Close cooperation between the partners involved in project from Baltic States and Donor States with the aim for building sustainable cooperation for future activities;
- Knowledge transfer, sharing experiences and best practices.

The Programme is open to the projects

- with or without additional funding from other sources;
- with different kind of and number of project partners involved;
- with already established cooperation with the project partner(s) to be involved as well as projects with the aim of establishing and building up new partnerships;
- with or without a link to other programmes.

Please note that these conditions (pre-existing collaboration, pre-existing publications, extra funding, etc.) will not place any project automatically in a more favourable position compared to others in the evaluation process. No additional points will be awarded based on these aspects.

Please note that applications with partners from the other two Baltic States, in addition to the Donor State partner(s) can apply for higher grant and can, based on proposed collaboration plan, awarded up to 0.5 extra points by Programme Committee evaluating the Project.

The project may be additionally financed from other sources and/or be a part of another project. In that case, the budget for the activities under the project financed by Baltic Research Programme must be clearly separated from the other activities and financial sources, and have clear aims and focus, and deliver concrete results which will be independently evaluated.

Please note that there must be no double financing of any part of the project by any other source of funds.

1.2. AREAS AND TOPICS OF THE CALL

Proposals for collaborative research projects are invited in all areas of fundamental and applied sciences. **In 2018, priority is given to applications addressing the following challenges in the Baltic region**:

- Public health; translational medicine; health technologies
- Migration; social inclusion
- Regional cyber security; public security
- Environmentally friendly solutions
- Regional economic development; employment; labour market regulations and social policy
- More effective use of resources

Please note that the proposals' relevance to these challenges is also evaluated by the Programme Committee and can be awarded up to 0.5 additional points.

1.3. ALLOCATION FOR PROJECTS

Overall allocation for the 2018 call	6 000 000 EUR
Minimum amount of project grant	300 000 EUR
Maximum amount of project grant (for applications with a partner from either Latvia or Lithuania, as well as Donor State partner(s)	800 000 EUR
Maximum amount of project grant (for applications with partners from both Latvia and Lithuania, as well as Donor State partner(s)	1 000 000 EUR

1.4. TYPES OF RESEARCH AND PROJECTS

Type of research: fundamental and/or applied research

Type of projects: joint research collaboration projects involving at least one Estonian partner (Project Promoter) and one partner from other Baltic States and one Norwegian and/or Icelandic and/or Liechtenstein´s partner (Project Partners) (see section 1.5.3).

Activities promoting measures to increase mobility of researchers and PhD students and postdocs participating in the research projects are encouraged in order to facilitate cooperation between the partners and to provide a good platform for future cooperation.

1.5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1.5.1. Minimum number of partners

A mandatory criterion for the projects is the involvement of:

- at least one project partner from at least one of the Baltic States (Latvia and/ or Lithuania);
- at least one project partner from Norway and/or Iceland and/or Liechtenstein (donor project partner).

1.5.2. Eligibility criteria for Project Promoters

Eligible applicants are positively evaluated research and development institutions established in Estonia. List of evaluated institutions is provided in the Estonian Research Information System (ETIS) www.etis.ee. The application is submitted to ETIS by an Estonian research and development institution (project promoter).

The research team consists of a principal investigator (researcher in charge) and a research staff (main participants, including PhD students, and other participants).

Eligibility criteria for the principal investigator (researcher in charge):
- must be an experienced researcher/project leader with doctoral degree of Estonia or an equivalent academic degree

Please note that the evaluators will pay particular attention to the qualification and performance of principal investigator (PI) as well as gender when evaluating the gender balance aspect.

Eligibility criteria for main participants:
- a main participant of the project is a person who participates in the substantial performance of the project. The main participant of the project shall have at least the master's degree or the respective qualification.

1.5.3. Eligibility criteria for project partners

- **Project partners have to be research organisations**, as defined in the EU Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2014/C 198/01): *'research and knowledge dissemination organisation' or 'research organisation' means an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual collaborative entities), irrespective of its legal status (organised under public or private law) or way of financing, whose primary goal is to independently conduct fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or to widely disseminate the results of such activities by way of teaching, publication or knowledge transfer. Where such entity also pursues economic activities, the financing, the costs and the revenues of those economic activities must be accounted for separately. Undertakings that can exert a decisive influence upon such an entity, for example in the quality of shareholders or members, may not enjoy a preferential access to the results generated by it.'*[1]

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[1] http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/modernisation/rdi_framework_en.pdf , Ref section 1.3.ee on p.11

Information about the project partner institution(s) (name and their role in the project) has to be provided in the application.

- **Project partner(s) from Norway and/or Iceland and/or Liechtenstein** should be listed under „Project partners in Norway, Iceland and/or Liechtenstein" in the application form (official name of the institution in English is mandatory). Norwegian entities included in the Research Council of Norway List of Research Organisations,[2] are eligible in this call. Other Norwegian partners may consult the Research Council of Norway to verify their eligibility status. Icelandic partners should consult RANNIS.
- **Project partner(s) from other Baltic States** should be listed under „Project partners in Latvia and/or Lithuania" in the application form (official name of the institution in English is mandatory). Latvian partners may consult the State Education Development Agency and Lithuanian partners the Research Council of Lithuania to verify their eligibility status.
- **Entities established in countries outside the Baltic States or Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein (third countries)** can participate as additional project partners. Project costs will not be covered for third country partners from the project grant, except for travel costs for participants from their institution. Indicative estimation of travel costs for them has to be provided in the application. Additional project partner(s) should be listed under "Additional project partners (3rd countries)" in the application form (official name of the institution in English is mandatory).
- **Project partner(s) from Estonia** should be positively evaluated research and development institutions established in Estonia and listed under "Project partners in Estonia".
- Each project partner has to provide **a letter of intent** confirming their participation in the project which will be submitted to the application form by project promoter.
- **Please note** that adding project partners during the project is not allowed.

1.5.4. Involving external scientific experts

In justified cases, the external scientific experts outside the project partner(s) institution(s) whose involvement in the research project is important and necessary may be involved in the project.

Preliminary information about and the justification for involving expert(s) in the project has to be provided in the application with the indicative estimation of travel costs for them. External scientific expert(s) should be listed under "External scientific expert(s)" in the application form.

1.6. ELIGIBLE DURATION OF PROJECTS

Minimum eligible duration of the projects is **36 months**.

Maximum eligible duration of the projects is **48 months**.

The end of the programme period of eligibility of expenditures in the projects is **30 April 2024**.

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[2] Research Council of Norway Definition and specification of the concept "research organisation" with list of verfied institutions:
https://www.forskningsradet.no/servlet/Satellite?cid=1253981763130&pagename=VedleggPointer&target=_blank

1.7. BUDGET

1.7.1. Eligible costs

Personnel costs

- The cost of staff assigned to the project (including personnel costs for postdocs and PhD students), comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided that this corresponds to the project promoter's and project partner's usual policy on remuneration.

Subcontracting

- Generally, only additional or complementary tasks (for example translation, costs of analyses, etc.) could be subcontracted to the third parties. Core project research tasks may not be subcontracted.

- The need for a subcontract must be detailed and justified under "Budget justification" in the application form. The subcontractor is neither a project participant nor a signatory to the project contract or the consortium agreement.

- **Please note** that subcontracting is limited with 15% of total project budget.

Travel costs

- Travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project, provided that they are in line with the project promoter's and project partner's usual practices on travel costs and do not exceed the relevant national scales.

- Travel costs should be limited to the necessity of the project. Any conference presentation or related published paper must acknowledge the support of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021.

- As a general rule, the travel cost should be calculated on the basis of economy class travel on public transport.

- Travel costs for students, partners from third countries and external scientific experts involved in the project will be indicated under "Other costs".

- **Please note** that no other than travel costs for partners from third countries and external scientific experts will be covered from the project grant.

Other costs

- Costs of consumables, supplies and services, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project; maintenance and using costs of equipment.
- Costs for laboratory animals
- Costs for publishing and disseminating project results
- Costs of scientific forums (organising or participating in)
- Reimbursement of travel costs to the PhD students and postdocs who do not have employment contract, external scientific experts, and partners from third countries.
- All other costs which are clearly required for the implementation of the project and respectively identifiable (e.g. costs of any financial services).

- **Please note** that Baltic Research Programme is not foreseen for acquisition of equipment.

Institutional overheads
- Institutional overheads to cover the research institution's infrastructure costs with flat rate of 25% of total direct eligible costs, excluding direct eligible costs for subcontracting.
- Norwegian research institutes can use the same calculation as they do when reporting to the RCN per 2019, including personnel costs and indirect costs. Other direct costs (e.g. travel costs) are budgeted separately. The Norwegian research institutes can use the hourly rate at any time approved by the RCN.

Please note that the evaluators will pay attention to the composition of budget. Expenditures must be proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project. They must be used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective(s) of the project and its expected outcome(s), in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Please note that the non-recoverable VAT (value added tax) is an eligible project cost.

1.7.2. Division of budget among the partners
Division of the budget among the partners will be a matter of agreement between the partners to be submitted to the Estonian Research Council before the signing of the project contract. Costs listed under section 1.7.1. are eligible costs for project promoter and project partner(s). The distribution of the budget among partners should be adapted to the project activities and ensure that all partners will be actively involved in the project tasks.

1.7.3. Budgetary flexibility
During the course of the project, budgetary flexibility is foreseen in order to enable an appropriate project management. Reallocation of funds among the budget headings can be made once a year by informing the Estonian Research Council (ETAG) in advance.

If the reallocation of funds does not exceed 10% of the total budget, any new addendum to the existing contract will not be issued. For reallocation of funds above 10% of the total budget, a written permission from ETAG must be obtained and a new addendum to the contract will be signed. This request must be fully substantiated and justified. If the request is deemed unfunded, the Project Promoter will be advised in writing. The balance of partners should be ensured.

1.7.4. Information about additional support for mobility
It is possible to apply for additional funding from the EEA Scholarship Programme activities (implemented by Foundation Archimedes) for degree students and staff mobility related to the research cooperation projects. Further information about the programme, conditions and calls can be found on http://eeagrants.archimedes.ee/. The Scholarship Programme will offer possibilities to apply for an additional support if there is a wish or need for including more student and staff mobility into the projects.

When a research project gets funded, it is not automatically entitled to mobility grants for its research staff, or students, but have to compete with other candidates.

Please note that there should be no double-financing (mobility financed from the research project and from the Scholarship Programme activities).

1.7.5. Payment model

- Project funds will be transferred into the bank account of the Project Promoter (legal body) specified in the Project contract.
- Payments to Project Promoters will be made in the form of advanced payments, interim payments and final payment. The Project Promoters will have an opportunity to apply for an advance payment of up to 60% in the application submitted. At least 10% of the grant shall be withheld until the completion report has been positively evaluated and approved.
- Project Promoters will transfer funds to Project Partners in a timely manner according to the contract.
- The payment model will be specified in the Project contract.

1.7.6. Co-financing requirements

- Grants from the programme may be up to 100% of total eligible project costs, provided all applicable National and EU rules on State Aid are complied with.
- Any remaining costs of the project shall be provided or obtained by the Project Promoter and the project partners, according to their respective shares of the project budget. Co-financing cannot be in-kind.

2. HOW TO APPLY

2.1. The project promoter and the project partners

- Applications are submitted electronically via Estonian Research Information System (hereinafter referred to as the ETIS) by Estonian research and development institutions (by Project Promoters).
- The Project Promoter has the main responsibility for initiating, preparing and submitting the application, taking care of the administrative and management tasks of the project, and ensuring the active involvement of the Project Partner(s) in the preparation of the application and in implementation of the project. Project Partners have to discuss and define further the role of the project coordinator according to their needs.
- Project Partners should take an active part in the preparation of the project proposal, submit to the necessary information and agree with the Project Promoter on their respective roles and contributions. The Project Promoter should inform all partners about the final version of the project proposal prior to submission.

2.2. Application Form

Application Form has the following sheets:

- Application
- Project Promoter
- Partners
- Scientific rationale
- Budget
- Additional information
- Submit

2.2.1. Application

Please submit the following information:
- Project title in Estonian and in English
- Researcher in charge
- Host institution in Estonia (Project Promoter)
- Planned start and end of the project
- Total budget
  - Will appear automatically after providing information under the "Budget"
- Does the application address some of the challenges set for this call?
  - Possible to select multiple choice
- Impact of the project on selected challenge(s)
  - Maximum length is 2000 characters (incl. spaces)
- Field of research
- Summary in Estonian
  - Please write a concise summary in a popular science format describing the objectives of the Project for non-specialist audience. If the application will be approved, this summary will be made public.
  - Maximum length is 2000 characters (incl. spaces)
- Summary in English
  - Please write a concise summary in a popular science format describing the objectives of the Project for non-specialist audience. If the application will be approved, this summary will be made public.
  - Maximum length is 2000 characters (incl. spaces)

Meeting the ethical requirements:
- Confirmation of adherence to the requirements of research ethics
- Is the ethics committee decision mandatory?
  - Please select yes/no
- Ethics committee licence
  - Please insert file (max 3 MB)
- Does the project necessitate compliance with the Nagoya Protocol?
  - Please select yes/no
- Compliance with the Nagoya Protocol
  - Please insert file (max 3 MB)

Please note that if the applicant obtains the permit after the submission deadline, it shall be submitted to the Estonian Research Council before the project starts.

2.2.2. Project Promoter

Please submit the following information (in English):

Estonian principal investigator and senior research staff:
- Person (name of principal investigator)
- Degree (start and end date of PhD studies)
- Current position(s)
- CV
  - Possible to browse from ETIS
  - Please add ResearcherID and/or ORCID

- Participation of senior research staff
  - Please describe their role and distribution of tasks. Please describe how you intend to provide for a gender balance in the project implementation.
  - Maximum length is 3000 characters (incl. spaces)
- Postdocs involved in the project
  - Please describe the expected contribution of postdocs in the performance of the project and in which way the subject(s) of the dissertation(s) are related to the grant project. The topic of the dissertation, the name and academic degree of the supervisor shall also be specified. Please describe how you intend to provide for a gender balance in the project implementation.
  - Maximum length is 3000 characters (incl. spaces)

PhD students involved in the project:
- Possible to browse from ETIS
- Please describe the expected contribution of PhD students in the performance of the project and in which way the subject(s) of the dissertation(s) are related to the grant project. The topic of the dissertation, the name and academic degree of the supervisor, the time of admittance to the degree studies and expected time of graduation shall also be specified. Please describe how you intend to provide for a gender balance in the project implementation.
- Maximum length is 3000 characters (incl. spaces)

Please note that master students do not belong to the main participants and they are not listed in the administrative form of application in ETIS under "Principal investigator and research staff" (no CVs required), but in case of project funding they should be listed (by name) in the Project Contract.

2.2.3. Partners
Please submit the following information (in English):

International cooperation
- Comments on international cooperation
  - Please submit information about international cooperation carried out within the project. Please describe the role of project partner(s). How will the partnership contribute to the achievement of the project goals? What is the project partner's technical/professional contribution to the project? Are wider effects of the partnership expected?
  - Maximum length is 5000 characters, incl. spaces

Project partners in Norway, Iceland and/or Liechtenstein
- Name of institution (mandatory in English)
- Confirmation letter
  - Please insert pdf file
- Name and CV of principal investigator
  - Please add ResearcherID and/or ORCID
- Please insert pdf file Comments

- Please describe the role of donor project partner(s) in the project. What will the partnership achieve? What is the project partner's technical/professional contribution to the project? Are wider effects of the partnership expected? Please describe the research staff and their responsibilities.
- Maximum length is 3000 characters, incl. spaces

Project partners in Latvia and/or Lithuania
- Name of institution (mandatory in English)
- Confirmation letter
  - Please insert pdf file
- Name and CV of principal investigator
  - Please add ResearcherID and/or ORCID
  - Please insert pdf file
- Comments
  - Please describe the role of project partner(s) in the project. How will the partnership contribute to the achievement of the project goals? What is the project partner's technical/ professional contribution to the project? Are wider effects of the partnership expected? Please describe the research staff and their responsibilities.
  - Maximum length is 3000 characters, incl. spaces

Additional project partners (third countries)
If applicable, please submit the following information about additional project partners (third countries):
- Name of institution (mandatory in English)
- Confirmation letter
  - Please insert pdf file
- Name and CV of principal investigator
  - Please add the ResearcherID or ORCID
  - Please insert pdf file
- Comments
  - Please describe the role of additional project partner(s) in the project. How will the partnership contribute to the achievement of the project goals? What is the project partner's technical/professional contribution to the project? Are wider effects of the partnership expected? Please describe the research staff and their responsibilities.
  - Maximum length is 3000 characters, incl. spaces

Project partners in Estonia

If applicable, please submit the following information about project partners in Estonia:
- Name of institution (mandatory in English)
- Confirmation letter
  - Please insert pdf file
- Name and CV of principal investigator
  - Please add the ResearcherID or ORCID
  - Please insert pdf file
- Comments

- Please describe the role of additional Estonian project partner(s) in the project. How will the partnership contribute to the achievement of the project goals? What is the project partner's technical/professional contribution to the project? Are wider effects of the partnership expected? Please describe the research staff and their responsibilities.
- Maximum length is 3000 characters, incl. spaces

External scientific expert(s)

If applicable, please submit the following information about involving external scientific expert(s) in the project:

- Name and full affiliation of scientific experts
- Comments
  - Please describe the role of external scientific expert(s) in the project. How will the partnership contribute to the achievement of the project goals? What is the expert's technical/ professional contribution to the project?
  - Maximum length is 3000 characters, incl. spaces

2.2.4. Scientific rationale
Please provide the following information (in English):

- General theoretical background of the project along with references to the hitherto work, here and/ or elsewhere; the connection of the project with the research of the same direction of the applicant and other researchers;

- The main objectives and working hypotheses of the project;

- Research methods, equipment and apparatus to be used, incl. existence or absence thereof;

- Forecast on internationally refereed (Baltic-Donor States in a joint capacity) publications published as part of the project;

- The Expected significance of the project with respect to the science, national and regional economy, social sphere, culture, etc.;

- The expected time schedule of the research by years;

- The list of references, charts and schemes;
  - Please submit in pdf, only.

2.2.5. Budget

Eligible costs (see also 1.7.1 and Annex I):

- Personnel costs (the cost of staff assigned to the project)
- Travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project
- Subcontracting costs (no more than 15% of total budget project)
- Other costs (consumables)
- Institutional overhead (flat rate of 25% of total direct eligible costs, excluding direct eligible costs for subcontracting)

Costs are eligible if they are justified, necessary and appropriate, and directly related to the project.

For project promoter and each project partner a separate budget should be planned and prepared in accordance with their accounting principles and usual internal rules.

Costs should be stated in EUR.

Please note that no other than only travel costs for partners from third countries as well as for scientific experts will be covered from the project grant.

Please note that the donor partners' research institutions may, as an alternative to an institutional overhead flat rate of 25 %, use unit costs set on the basis of hourly rates related to "cost of staff" and "indirect costs", approved by the Research Council of Norway for each individual research institute.

These unit costs can form part of the grant awarded to research institutes from donor programme partners participating in projects falling under Programme Area "Research", provided that:

- That entity does not claim any further staff costs or indirect costs for its participation in the project;
- The RCN confirms to the relevant Programme Operator that the hourly rate has been approved for the specific entity in the framework of a funding scheme operated in donor states for a similar type of project. The RCN is Donor Programme Partner in all programmes including Programme Area "Research"; and
- That any other costs claimed by that entity (e.g. travel costs) follow the general rules on eligibility of expenditure contained in the legal framework of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021.

Budget justification

- The financial background of the project should include a justification and calculations for the funding applied for and the intended expenses by budget lines during the whole project
    - Budget justification should be made by project years and by project promoter and project partner(s)
    - Maximum length is 5000 characters, incl. spaces

2.2.6. Additional information

Please provide any other information related to the application.

- Oppose reviewers
    - If you would like to oppose some reviewers from reviewing your application, please enter up to 3 names and give an explanation.
    - This information is not binding for the Programme Operator.

2.2.7. Submit

To submit the application, a responsible person (the Administrator) nominated by the host institution has to approve the application in ETIS.

3. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

3.1. Rules and procedures for submission of proposals

- The proposal must be written in English (summary and title also in Estonian).
- The grant application shall be submitted electronically via the ETIS (www.etis.ee) from 15.10.2018 to 31.01.2019.
- To submit an application via the ETIS, the applicant must be registered as a user of the system and follow the instructions given in the ETIS.
- The basis of the realisation of the grant project is a legal person (hereinafter referred to as the Institution).
- Proposals are presented via the ETIS to the responsible persons nominated by the Institutions. Responsible persons shall approve the application electronically via the ETIS.

3.2. About the ETIS

- Each application has a unique identification code (assigned by ETIS) which will remain the same throughout the duration of the grant.
- Any technical issues about using ETIS can be resolved by contacting technical support etis@etag.ee. Their contact details are also available on the opening page of the ETIS as well as the application's webpage.

3.3. Call closure deadline

The deadline of submitting the grant applications for projects is 31.01.2019 at 16.00 (EET). The application shall be deemed submitted, if it is approved by the Institution.

3.4. Correcting or revising a proposal

Once the call has closed correcting or revising a proposal is not applicable.

3.5. Withdrawing a proposal

Applications can be withdrawn any time prior the approval by the Institution.

4. CHECK LIST

In order to be evaluated, proposals must be:
1) submitted via the online application form in ETIS before the submission deadline;
2) submitted by an eligible Project Promoter;
3) completed following the prescribed format;
4) approved by the Institution.

Make sure that your proposal fulfils the eligibility criteria of the call (see also 5.1).

Respect the length limitations set for the application form.
Enter the requested information on the submission site as soon as possible.
Leave for your institution enough time to approve and sign the application electronically via ETIS.

5. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

5.1. Eligibility check

Proposals must fulfil all of the eligibility criteria if they are to be retained for evaluation.

The following eligibility criteria apply to all proposals submitted under a call:

- The planned requested funding of the programme grant should be no less than 300 000 EUR and no more than 800 000 EUR, when having partners from either Latvia or Lithuania, in addition to partners from Norway and/ or Iceland and/ or Liechtenstein. If there are partners from both Latvia and Lithuania, total requested funding should not exceed 1 000 000 EUR.
- Project implementation period fits the period 36 – 48 months.
- Eligible costs in the project correspond to the list of eligible expenditure and eligible activities and do not exceed the limits set.
- Cooperation with at least one research team/ research institution from Latvia and/ or Lithuania, in addition to at least one research institution from Norway and/ or Iceland and/ or Liechtenstein (donor project partner);
- Eligible project promoters and project partners are public or private research and development institutions, as defined in the EU Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2014/C 198/01);
- Receipt of proposal before the deadline date and time established in the call;
- Completeness of the form and presence of all requested files.

Please note that the completeness of the information contained in the proposal will be for the experts to evaluate; the eligibility checks only apply to the presence of the appropriate parts of the proposal. If it becomes clear that one or more of the eligibility criteria have not been fulfilled, the proposal is declared ineligible and withdrawn from any further examination.

If a proposal fails to meet the requirements, then the applicant will be notified of that within ten working days after the due date for submission of applications. Applications and all relevant documentation will be maintained in the databases of ETIS and in the Estonian Research Council.

5.2. Evaluation of submitted proposals

Detailed description of the evaluation process is provided in the „Guidelines for Evaluators".

5.2.1. Evaluation by the individual international experts

Eligible proposals are submitted to independent international external peer evaluation. All proposals shall be evaluated by three independent experts with a doctoral degree or an equivalent academic degree. Based on the three evaluations a consensus report for each proposal will be written. Consensus report will be available for the applicants (without the experts' names).

The experts are invited to review the quality of the submitted proposals based on three core evaluation criteria:

1) Scientific and/or technical excellence (score 0-5, threshold 3.5):
- sound concept, and quality of objectives
- progress beyond the state-of-the-art
- quality and effectiveness of the scientific methodology and associated work plan
- innovation and new approaches

2) Quality and efficiency of the implementation and the management, added value from the international cooperation (score 0-5, threshold 4)**:**
- appropriateness of the Project Promoter and project partners participating in the project
- expected gender balance in the project (Project Promoter)
- appropriateness of the work plan
- appropriate allocation and justification of the resources to be committed (personnel, travel, subcontracting and other costs)
- appropriateness of research environment for the proposed research
- researcher training
- strengths of consortium complementarity of skills
- international cooperation beyond the project, quality and sustainability of forward looking cooperation between the partners

3) Potential impact through the development, dissemination and use of project results (score 0-5, threshold 3.5):
- relevance of the proposal in relation to the objectives of the Programme and challenges of the call
- impact from the project to research-based knowledge development in the Baltic region
- potential of the research topic to be internationally relevant
- take up and use of the project results by end-users including the clarity, appropriateness and efficiency of the planned knowledge transfer measures

Experts examine the issues to be considered comprising each evaluation criterion, and score these on a grading scale from 0 to 5. Half point scores may be given. Maximum total score can be 15 (threshold 11). Score values indicate the following assessments:

0   The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

1   **Poor**. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2   **Fair**. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3   **Good**. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

4   **Very Good**. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5   **Excellent**. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Based on the independent expert evaluations a single ranking list is prepared to be submitted to the Programme Committee.

5.2.2. Evaluation by the Programme Committee

According to the Guideline for Research Programmes, the Programme Committee shall provide input to the strategic direction of the Baltic Research Programme. The Programme Committee shall recommend to the Programme Operator which proposals to select for funding and final awarding of grants. The Programme Committee evaluates the proposals based on the ranking list submitted by the Programme Operator based on the evaluation scores, and according to the proposals' relevance to the call. The Programme Committee shall contribute to the achievement of the objectives given in the Programme Agreement, implemented through the call.

Where necessary, the Programme Committee shall rank the proposals having passed the applicable thresholds through giving additional points, according to:

- their contribution to the achievement of policy objectives and challenges specified in the call (0.5 additional points)
- potential added value from the perspective of Baltic regional cooperation and bilateral cooperation with donor state partners (0.5 additional points)

The Programme Committee may also propose adjustments to the ranking of proposals in as far as needed to ensure the consistency of given scores to written evaluation.

5.2.3. Selection criteria applied for equally scored proposals

Within the groups of equally scored proposals, the criteria for ranking are applied in the following order:

1) proposals are prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the criterion „Scientific excellence";
2) proposals are prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the criterion „Quality and efficiency of the implementation and the management, added value from the international cooperation", paying special attention to quality and sustainability of cooperation;
3) proposals addressing the challenges listed in the call;
4) proposals having a good gender balance (project promoter), are considered to have the priority.

5.3. Selection Process

The Programme Operator in cooperation with the Programme Committee will make its final decision to support or not support the applications on the basis of the ranking list proposed by the experts' and the Programme Committee's final evaluation.

The applicants will be notified of the results of evaluation of applications within two weeks after the final decision of the Programme Committee (tentatively by 25 May 2019). Each applicant will receive a notice regarding the decision. The applicant can read the evaluation report of his/her proposal in ETIS.

All materials relating to the evaluation of application will be confidential until the adoption of financing decisions. Projects to be financed will be disclosed in ETIS.

5.4. Negotiation and award process

The Project Promoters of proposals that have not been rejected, and for which funding is available, are invited to begin negotiations.

In addition to any issues raised in the evaluation summary report, the applicants may receive requests for further administrative, legal, technical and financial information necessary for the preparation of a project contract. Changes, possibly including modifications to the budget may be requested. All requested changes shall be justified.

With regard to each grant a trilateral Project contract between the Estonian Research Council, Project Promoter and the principal investigator will be concluded for the term of the grant.

The Project contract will establish mutual rights, obligations and liabilities of the parties.

Project Promoter shall also sign a partnership agreement with the project partner(s).

6. TENTATIVE TIMETABLE AND SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR THIS CALL

- Launching and matchmaking event in Tallinn: 25.10.2018

- Open call for proposals: 25.10.2018

- End of the open call: 31.01.2019

- Planned start of the selection period: February 2019

- Planned end of the selection period: May 2019

- Planned start of the projects: September 2019

- Start-up seminar for the Project Promoters: October 2019

- Planned end of the projects: 30.04.2024

- Final conference (organised by Lithuanian programme operator): 2024

7. FURTHER INFORMATION AND HELP

- Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Grants 2014-2021
  https://eeagrants.org/Results-data/Documents/Legal-documents/Regulations-with-annexes/EEA-Grants-2014-2021

- Guideline for Research Programmes
  https://eeagrants.org/Results-data/Documents/Legal-documents/Guidelines-mandates-and-strategy/EEA-and-Norway-Grants-2014-2021/Guideline-for-Research-Programmes2

The questions and queries concerning the call for proposals should be directed to:

- Ms Katrin Piller, Estonian Research Council, katrin.piller@etag.ee , + 372 7317 382 (daily from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm (ET).

Annex I Budget calculations

	Personnel costs *(staff assigned to the project)*	Travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project	Subcontracting*	Other costs	Total direct costs	Overhead **/***	Total budget with overhead
Partner 1							
Partner 2							
Partner n							
Total							

* Subcontracting cost will be no more than 15% of the project budget from the Programme.

** Indirect eligible costs (overhead) shall be determined by applying a flat rate of 25% of the total direct eligible costs, excluding direct eligible costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the beneficiary, as well as financial support to third parties.
*** According to the Research Council of Norway's (RCN) procedure for "Payroll and indirect costs", the Norwegian Research Institutes calculate the payroll and indirect costs together, as hourly rates for the staff participating in a project. These hourly rates are considered unit costs in the meaning of Article 8.4.1 (b) on the Regulation. In such cases, indirect costs may not be claimed as a separate category.
Norwegian research institutes can use the same calculation as they do when reporting to the RCN per 2019, including personnel costs and indirect costs. Other direct costs (e.g. travel costs) are budgeted separately.
The Norwegian research institutes can use the hourly rate at any time approved by the RCN.