The following is a translation from Estonian. In case of disputes, the Estonian text shall prevail.

Guidelines for Evaluating Target Grant Applications in 2020

1. Scope

1.1. This directive establishes the evaluation criteria and the principles for evaluating and compiling the ranking lists of the applications submitted according to the "Conditions and Procedure for Target Grants in 2020".

1.2. The Estonian Research Council (hereinafter *Council*) is entitled to make well-considered decisions and consult experts where necessary in relation to matters not covered by this directive.

2. Evaluation of Applications

2.1. Each application will be given justified evaluations and scores by at least two independent reviewers.

2.2. Although non-binding, the Expert Panel shall rely on the evaluations and scores given by the reviewers.

2.3. The Expert Panel will submit the combined evaluations given to each application to the Evaluation Committee and compile a ranking list in each thematic area as well as a cross-thematic ranking list.

2.4. The Evaluation Committee is responsible for giving each application its final evaluation and score, and will also approve the cross-thematic ranking list of the applications. Although non-binding in justified cases, the Evaluation Committee shall rely on the combined evaluations given by the Expert Panel, the position of the application in the cross-thematic ranking list, and on the outcomes of the hearing (if applicable).

2.5. The applications of equal standing will be ranked by the Evaluation Committee according to the principles described in clause 4.3.

3. Evaluation criteria and rating scale

3.1. Evaluation criteria

The following guiding questions are to be used for evaluating target grant applications and for justifying the opinions and ratings:

	Criterion	Guiding questions	Rating scale
1.	**TRL at the beginning of the project**	1.1. Is the technology readiness level (TRL) of the outcomes of the previous research on which the idea for this project is based on at least 3 and not higher than 5? **NB!** The applications in which the TRL is evaluated as being lower or higher do not qualify for funding. Other comments on Criterion 1.	from 1 to 2

2. Topicality	2.1. How topical are the objectives of the project in 2020 in the context of hindering the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and other similar viruses as well as in preventing and solving the problems caused by viruses?	from 1 to 5
	2.2. To what extent could the outcomes of the project limit the spread of the virus(es) and/or reduce infection rates and/or reduce fatalities and/or directly mitigate the negative impact of the spread of the virus and/or shape socio-economic/political decisions based on data analysis, etc. in the foreseeable future?	
	2.3. How pertinent and feasible are the envisaged follow-up activities necessary for the application of the outcomes, considering that the topicality may be lost over time?	
	Other comments on Criterion 2.	
3. Applicability	3.1. How clearly and realistically have the possibilities, ways, and areas of the application of the outcomes been defined?	from 1 to 5
	3.2. How specifically have the potential implementing bodies (e.g., representatives of enterprises and/or the public sector), who are interested in the outcomes and have the capacity to apply the outcomes (relatively) directly and within a short period of time, been defined?	
	3.3. Have the potential implementing bodies of the outcomes been included in the project (if applicable)?	
	3.4. What is the expected timeframe of actually applying the outcomes of the project (immediate, short, medium, long)?	
	Other comments on Criterion 3.	
4. Feasibility	4.1. How realistic is the achievement of the expected outcomes (incl. the TRL of the outcomes) described in the application, considering the TRL of the outcomes of the previous research on which the idea for this project is based on?	from 1 to 5
	4.2. How realistic is the achievement of the outcomes, considering the composition and expertise of the research team, and the distribution of their tasks (the members of the research team have led or participated in the research projects on which the idea for this project is based on, representatives of various fields and implementing bodies are part of the research team (if applicable), etc.)?	
	4.3. How realistic is the achievement of the outcomes, considering the work plan, chosen methods, planned activities, risk management plan, expected timeframe, the availability of the necessary	

		infrastructure, and other resources (e.g., co-funding instruments provided by the partner(s), etc.)? Other comments on Criterion 4.	
5.	Innovation potential	5.1. How clearly and appropriately has it been explained how this project and the expected outcomes are distinctive compared to the previous research and similar research conducted by other researchers, and how this project and the expected outcomes will be innovative? 5.2. Will new technologies and/or digital solutions be developed and/or produced as a result of this project? 5.3. Have innovative developments in the area of applicability been defined among the outcomes of the project? 5.4. What is the expected timeframe of the realisation of the innovation potential (immediate, short, medium, long)? Other comments on Criterion 5.	from 1 to 5
6.	Potential impact	6.1. To what extent do the outcomes of the project contribute to hindering the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and other similar viruses as well as to preventing and solving the problems caused by viruses? 6.2. How large is the volume of direct beneficiaries estimated to be? 6.3. How large is the (socio-)economic impact of the project estimated to be? 6.4. What is the expected timeframe of the potential impact to manifest itself (immediate, short, medium, long)? Other comments on Criterion 6.	from 1 to 5
7.	Research ethics and data management	7.1. Have the aspects of research ethics and potential ethical risks which may arise during the implementation of the project been sufficiently, carefully, and properly assessed in the application? 7.2. Has a clear and relevant action plan for adhering to the principles of research ethics been described in the application, incl. if it is necessary to obtain a licence from a specific ethics committee for the implementation of the project? 7.3. Have data management issues, incl. data storage and back-up, data protection, and data ownership questions been sufficiently, carefully, and properly described in the application, incl. will the data be made public (according to the principles of open science), and how will the data be shared and made public in SARS-CoV-2 data portals?	from 1 to 2

	7.4. Is it apparent from the application that industrial property issues have been solved and preliminary agreements have been reached? Other comments on Criterion 7.	
8. Justification of the grant type (small or large, experimental or non-experimental)	8.1. How clearly has the chosen grant type been justified? 8.2. How relevant and realistic is the estimation of the costs against the objectives of the project? Other comments on Criterion 8.	from 1 to 2

3.1. Rating procedure

3.1.1. A differentiated nine-point rating scale is used for evaluating criteria 2–6:
- Outstanding (5);
- Very good-outstanding (4.5);
- Very good (4);
- Good-very good (3.5);
- Good (3);
- Satisfactory-good (2.5);
- Satisfactory (2);
- Unsatisfactory-satisfactory (1.5);
- Unsatisfactory (1).

3.1.2. A differentiated three-point rating scale is used for evaluating criteria 1, 7, and 8:
- Appropriate (2);
- Partially appropriate (1.5);
- Inappropriate (1).

3.1.3. The final score of the application can range from 8 to 31 points.

3.1.4. Interpretation of ratings for criteria 2–6:
- Unsatisfactory (1) – the application addresses many of the aspects of the evaluation criteria inadequately and/or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- Satisfactory (2) – the application addresses most of the aspects of the evaluation criteria in very general terms and there are significant weaknesses. Major revision and clarification would be needed to significantly improve the application.
- Good (3) – the application addresses most of the relevant aspects of the evaluation criteria well, but a number of shortcomings are present. Several aspects of the project could be elaborated on more thoroughly and more clearly. A sound research project with some issues to be considered.
- Very good (4) – the application addresses all relevant aspects of the evaluation criteria very well and only a small number of shortcomings are present. Minor revision and clarification would be suggested. A strong research project worthy of funding.
- Outstanding (5) – the application is very well elaborated and superior in both content and presentation. All aspects of the evaluation criteria have been met at an excellent level and the originality as well as the scientific soundness of the application is exemplary. A very promising project at the forefront of research and worthy of funding.

3.1.5. Interpretation of ratings for criteria 1, 7, and 8:
- Inappropriate (1) – there are serious inherent weaknesses (adding a comment is obligatory).
- Partially appropriate (1.5) – there are some weaknesses (adding a comment is obligatory).
- Appropriate (2) – There are no weaknesses.

3.2. Threshold

3.2.1. The threshold for criteria 2–6 is 3 points (good). The threshold for criteria 1 and 7 is 2 points (appropriate). The threshold for criterion 8 is 1.5 points (partially appropriate).

3.2.2. If an application receives less points than the threshold in at least one criterion, it does not qualify for funding.

4. Overall assessment and the final score of the application

This section will be filled in by the Evaluation Committee.

4.1. The final score for the application is a sum of justified assessment scores for all criteria given by the Evaluation Committee. In the overall assessment the main arguments underlying the scores as well as the main strengths and weaknesses will be pointed out by the Evaluation Committee.

4.2. Based on the final scores and on the position of the applications in the cross-thematic ranking list, the Evaluation Committee will compile a ranking list for all applications.

4.3. If the budget for target grants is too small for approving all the applications which have passed the threshold described in clause 4.2., then the procedure shall be as follows:

4.3.1. the applications will be approved in the order they appear in the cross-thematic ranking list;

4.3.2. the applications of equal standing will be ranked according to the scores received during the evaluation process in the very order of the evaluation criteria;

4.3.3. the applications which sustain equal standing after the ranking procedure described in 4.3.2. will be prioritised according to the inclusion of the representatives of the implementing bodies of the outcomes (if applicable);

4.3.4. the applications which sustain equal standing after the ranking procedure described in 4.3.3. will be prioritised according to the underrepresented gender among the applicants whose applications rank above the applications of equal standing;

4.3.5. the ranking of the applications which sustain equal standing after the ranking procedure described in 4.3.4. will be decided by lot in accordance with the conditions established by the Council.