EXPERTS' EXPERIENCE IN THE EVALUATION OF LATVIAN COUNCIL OF SCIENCE RESEARCH PROJECT APPLICATIONS, 2023

Latvian Council of Science, 2024

Summary

At the end of 2023, the Latvian Council of Science (LCS) conducted a survey of invited foreign experts to find out their opinion on the scientific evaluation process of projects organised by the Latvian Council of Science and the possibilities to improve it. 331 replies were received. The review analyses aspects of the expertise such as the administrative process, the information system, the evaluation process and the use of experts. Overall, the experts have a positive view of their experience with the LCS, noting the work with the NZDIS electronic project submission and evaluation platform as the weakest, and the high professionalism of the LCS staff as the strongest.

Objective and tasks of the

The scientific evaluation of the Latvian Science Council's (LCS) research projects is carried out by appropriately selected foreign experts. The selection of qualified experts is an important step in the scientific evaluation process, ensuring the quality of the process. The selection of experts is regulated by the "Guidelines and Basic Principles of the Latvian Council of Science for the Selection of Foreign Experts for the Application Tenders of Research Projects (approved by the LCS Order No. 1-13/41 of 24 May 2022):

https://www.lzp.gov.lv/lv/starptautiska-zinatniska-ekspertize

From 6 December 2023 to 12 January 2024, the Research Expertise Unit of the LCS, in collaboration with the PPAN Unit, carried out a survey of foreign experts. The **objective** of the meeting was to find out the opinion of the invited foreign experts on the scientific evaluation process of projects organised by the Latvian Council of Science and the possibilities to improve it.

The **tasks** of the research were:

- to explore the experts' experience of working with the LCS during the project appraisal process, including various aspects of the process: appraisal criteria, time constraints, level of remuneration, working with the information system and working with LCS staff;
- inviting experts to share good practices in scientific evaluation of projects abroad;
- to collect and assess recommendations from experts to improve the evaluation of LCS projects, which could be implemented in the future.

The survey was created in the environment VisiDati.lv and tested in October and November 2023. On 6 December 2023, a survey link was sent to 610 foreign experts via email. On 20 December 2023, a follow-up email was sent to the experts with a link asking them to complete the questionnaire if they had not already done so. **331 completed questionnaires** were received.

The survey asked respondents to indicate three demographic characteristics (gender, age, nationality) and to answer or comment on 12 questions and statements.

The results of the survey analysis are structured as follows: the methodology used is described at the outset, potential risks and limitations of the analysis are discussed, followed by a summary of demographic characteristics, data analysis of statistical questions, analysis of jurisdictional questions, analysis of open-ended questions, and finally a section of conclusions and recommendations.

Methodology and risks

The questionnaire sent to the experts was analysed in the course of the study and consisted of three demographic indicators, seven statistical questions (three closed, three semi-open and one open), three Likert scale questions and two open questions. Quantitative data is used to describe general trends (descriptive statistics). The qualitative data (respondents' comments) were initially cleaned and grouped, coded and grouped into thematic clusters, where the similarities and differences were examined, so that the analysis could offer both a summarising view and highlight individual comments and recommendations. (questionnaire is available in Annex 1)

The analysis identified a number of limitations and risks. Initially, it was important to make sure that the questionnaires received did not represent systematic anomalies, this was done by looking at

demographic and statistical indicators, identifying and excluding duplication of comments. Challenges were also posed by language that was not always clear, grammatical and punctuation errors, technical inaccuracies such as unfinished comments. Qualitative analysis should always be alert to the challenges of possible subjective perspectives, misunderstandings and some inaccuracies in language and cultural understanding.

The formulation of the questions in the questionnaire proved to be inaccurate in one case, which in turn is a good starting point for future surveys. Also, some of the questions asked (e.g. on the information system used by the respondents' institutions) did not provide the expected insight. However, the information gathered provides a fairly good insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the LCS project appraisal process, pointing to possible scenarios and the way forward.
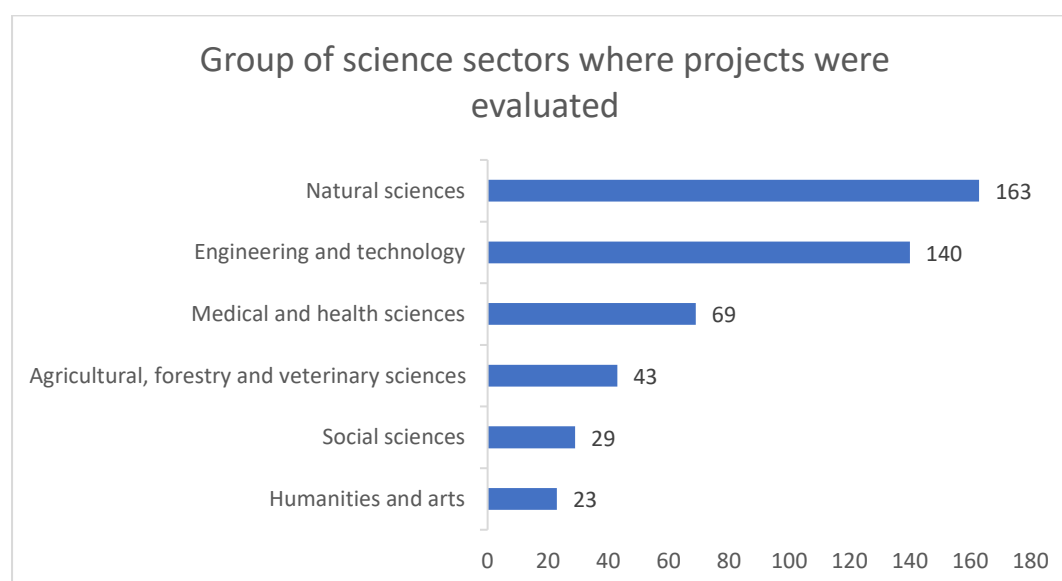
Results

A total of 331 respondents completed the survey, 241 men and 90 women with an average age of 50.7 years.

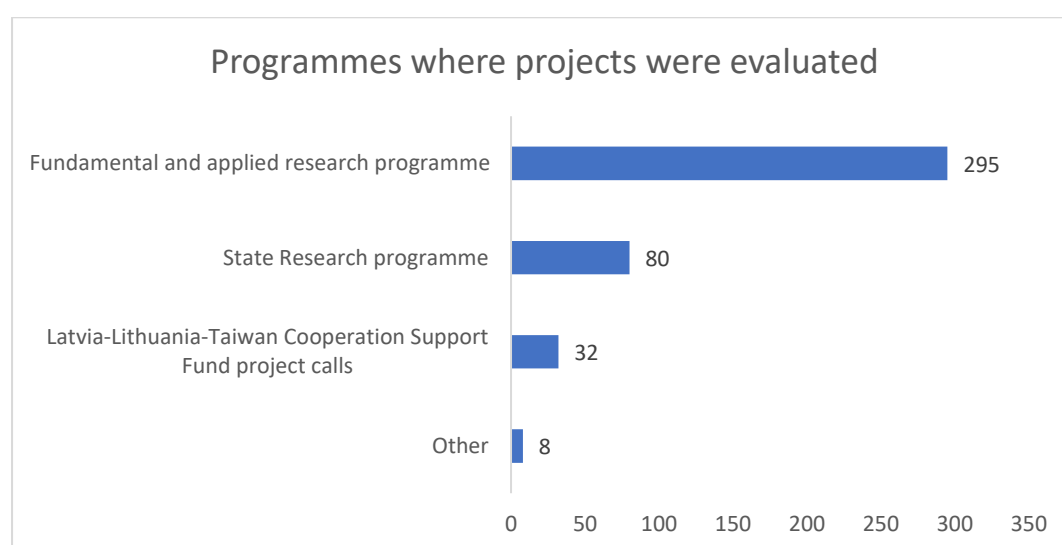| Number of respondents	331
Men	241
Women	90
Average age	50.7 years

Respondents represented 39 different countries (34 with one country of representation and five with two countries of representation).

Four questions asked about the respondents' previous form of cooperation with the LCS in statistical terms. In the first question, respondents indicated the group of disciplines within which they had carried out their scientific evaluation. As respondents could tick more than one discipline group in which they evaluated projects, 467 individual responses were received. The highest number of projects were evaluated in the Natural Sciences group, and the lowest in the Humanities and Arts group, which also corresponds to the proportional distribution of the research project applications submitted across the science groups.

Group of science sectors where projects were evaluated

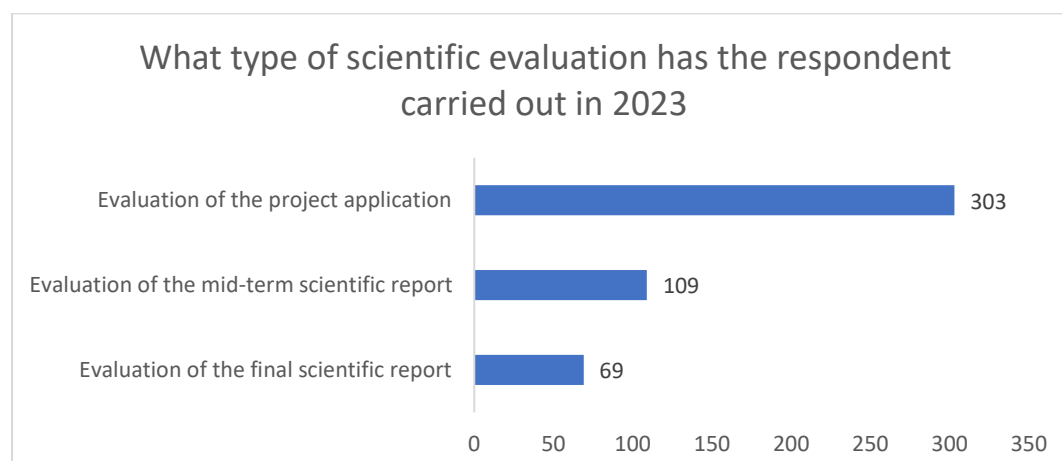| Science sector	Value
Natural sciences	163
Engineering and technology	140
Medical and health sciences	69
Agricultural, forestry and veterinary sciences	43
Social sciences	29
Humanities and arts	23

The majority of respondents - 218 - evaluated projects in one science sector group, 93 respondents in two, 17 respondents in three and three respondents in four science sector groups. It should be noted that project submissions are often interdisciplinary, thus allowing for the possibility that two science sector groups may have been selected by the respondent for the evaluation of a single project, but it can be concluded that experts from the Natural Sciences and Engineering and Technology sector groups participated more actively in the survey than experts from other sector groups.

Question 3 of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the type of project call or programme in which the scientific evaluation was carried out. There were 415 individual responses, as respondents could tick more than one answer according to their experience. The majority of respondents - 295 - participated in the evaluation of FLPP project applications, 80 - in the evaluation of National Research Programme projects, 32 - in the evaluation of Latvia-Lithuania-Taiwan Cooperation Support Fund projects, and 8 respondents indicated their participation in the evaluation of projects from other calls.

Other programmes and calls that respondents have participated in evaluating include the Postdoctoral Programme and the Latvia-Ukraine Cooperation Programme. 39 respondents participated in the evaluation of three programmes, 57 in the evaluation of two programmes, and the majority - 235 respondents - in the evaluation of one programme.
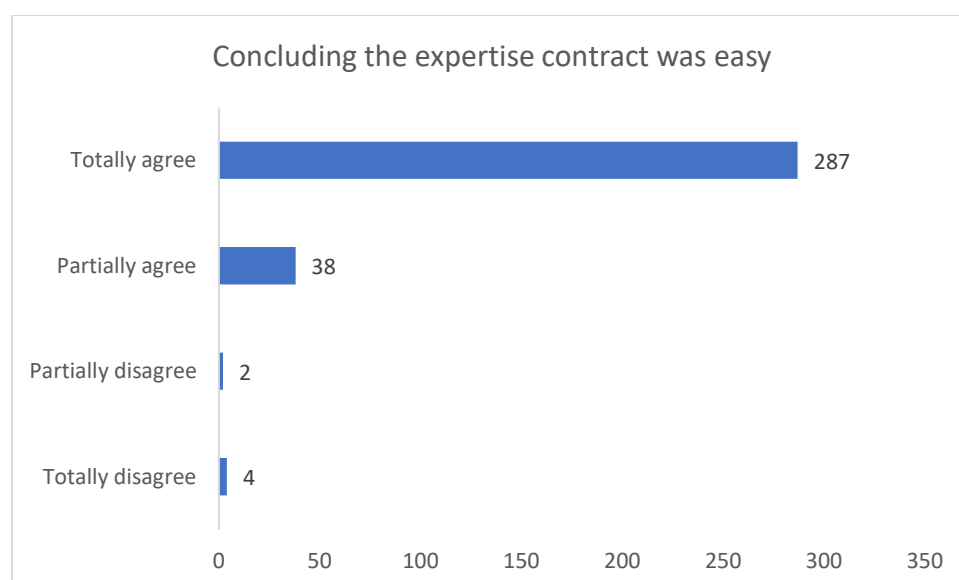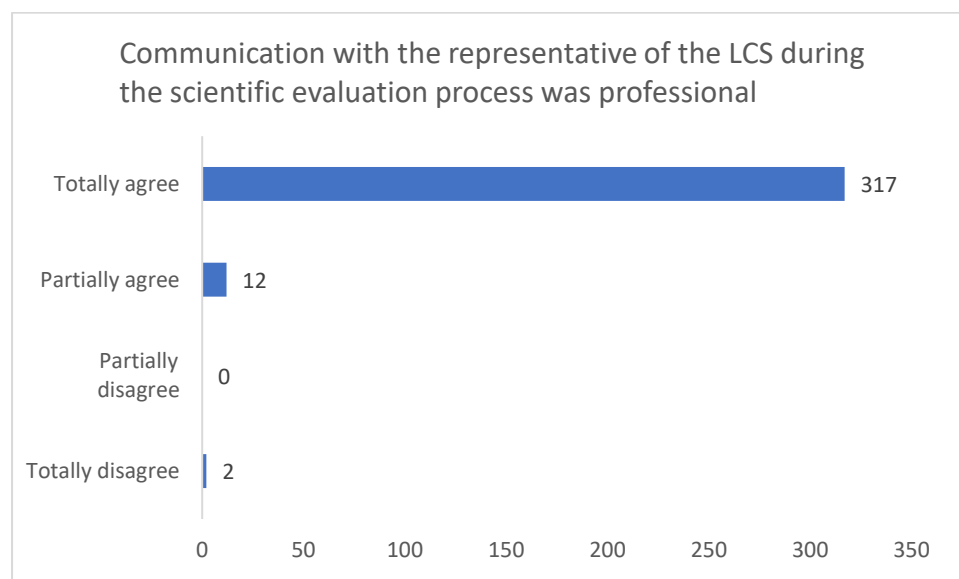
Question 3 of the survey asks respondents to indicate the type of scientific evaluation (project application, mid-term or final scientific report) they have carried out in 2023.
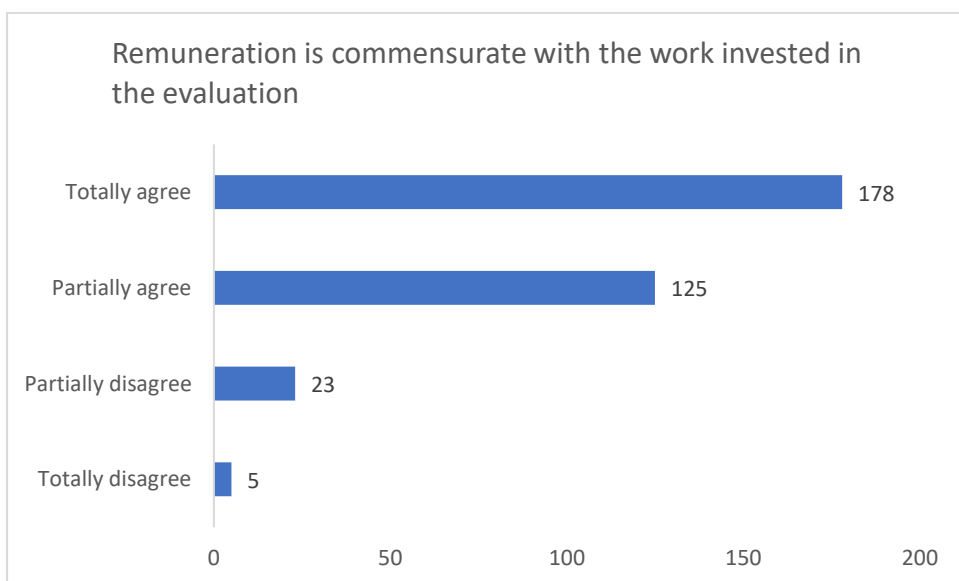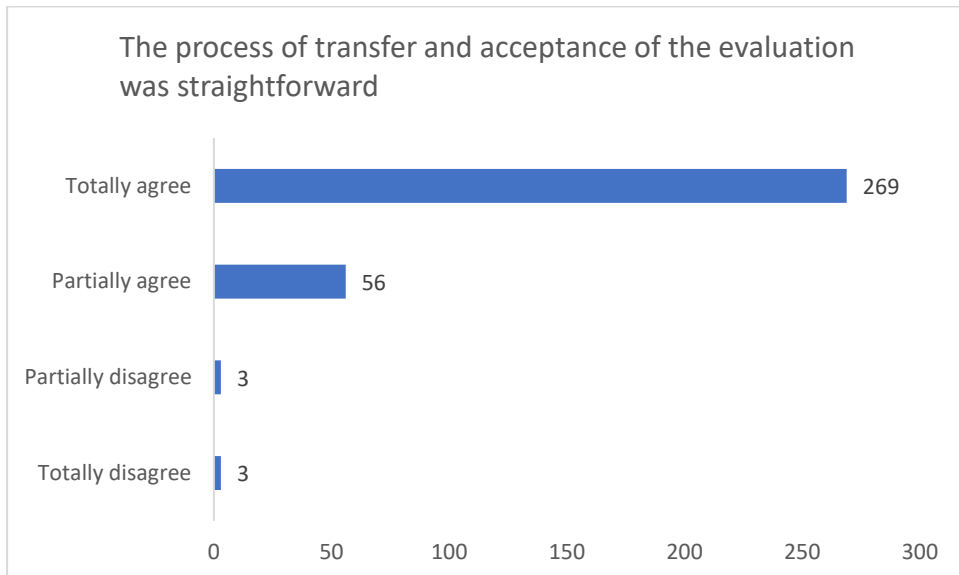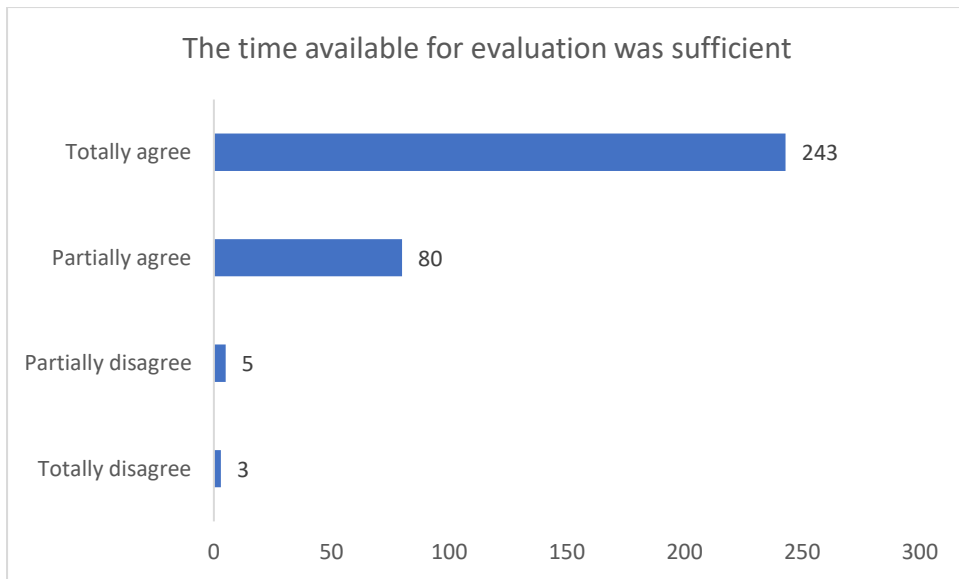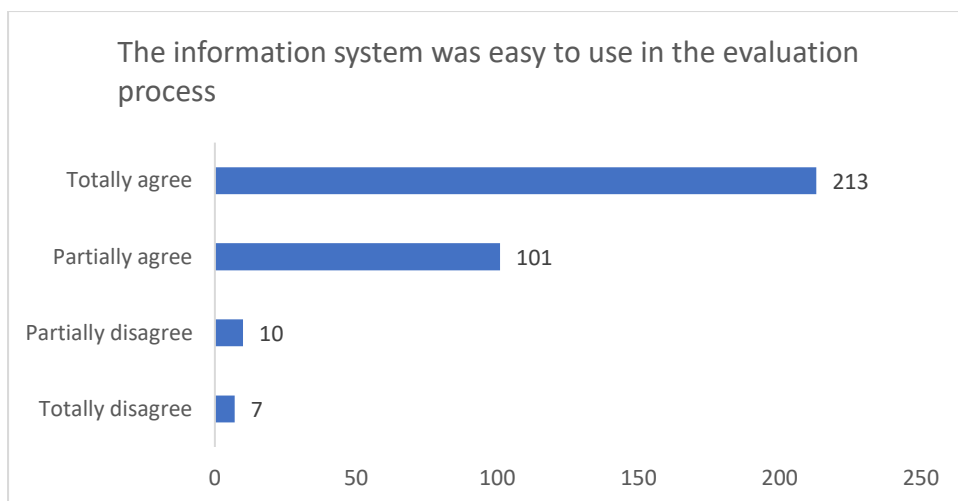
48 respondents have completed all three stages of the evaluation, 52 have completed two stages and 321 have completed one of the three stages of evaluation.

Question 4 of the questionnaire asks respondents to indicate the approximate number of projects to be evaluated in 2023. In conclusion, this question has been asked inaccurately in the survey: respondents have included in their answers all the projects evaluated in calls for proposals in other countries, have described their experience over a longer period of time, which makes it impossible to obtain statistically meaningful data in this respect, and therefore the answers to this question are not used in the analysis.

Question 5 of the survey asked respondents to rate six statements on a Likert scale, using four categories (totally agree, partly agree, partly disagree, totally disagree).

Communication with the representative of the LCS during the scientific evaluation process was professional

Category	Value
Totally agree	317
Partially agree	12
Partially disagree	0
Totally disagree	2

Concluding the expertise contract was easy

Category	Value
Totally agree	287
Partially agree	38
Partially disagree	2
Totally disagree	4

The time available for evaluation was sufficient

Response	Value
Totally agree	243
Partially agree	80
Partially disagree	5
Totally disagree	3

The process of transfer and acceptance of the evaluation was straightforward

Response	Value
Totally agree	269
Partially agree	56
Partially disagree	3
Totally disagree	3

Remuneration is commensurate with the work invested in the evaluation

Response	Value
Totally agree	178
Partially agree	125
Partially disagree	23
Totally disagree	5

The information system was easy to use in the evaluation process

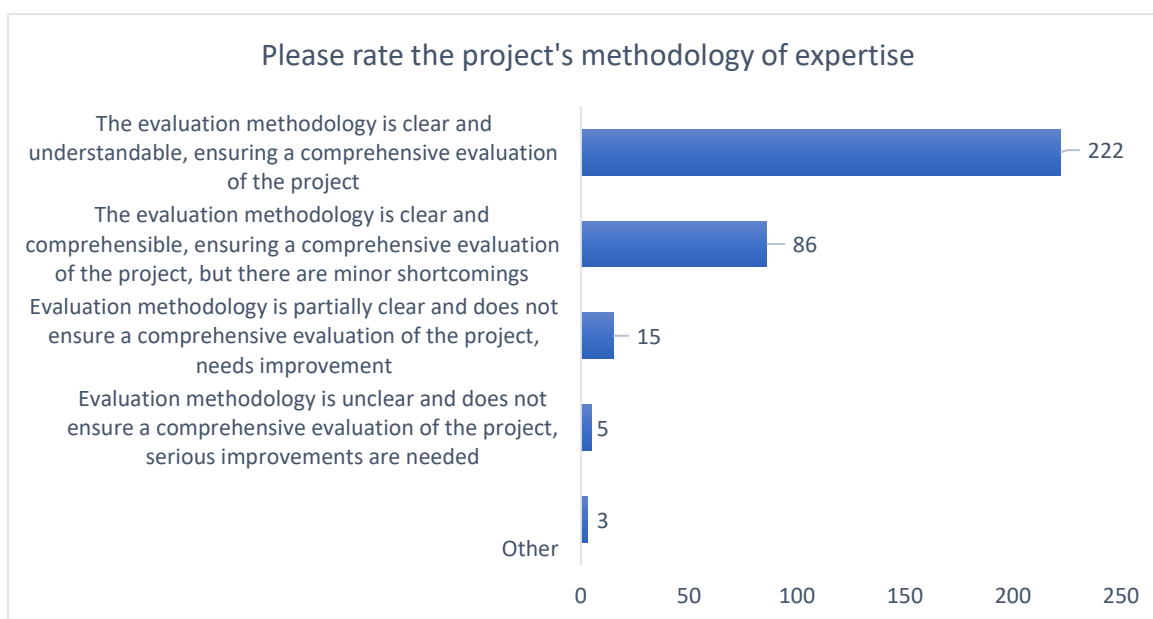|	
Totally agree	213
Partially agree	101
Partially disagree	10
Totally disagree	7

The statement "Communication with the representative of the LCS during the scientific evaluation process was professional" received the highest level of agreement (317 *totally agree*, 95.8%; 12 *partially agree*, 3.6%; two *totally disagree*, 0.6%). It can be concluded that the staff of the LCS who work with foreign experts do so responsibly and to a high standard. This is also confirmed by the analysis of the results of the follow-up survey (see analysis of questions 6 and 12), so staff are seen as a strong resource for the LCS and their work is seen as a strength in the assessment of foreign experts in the project appraisal process.
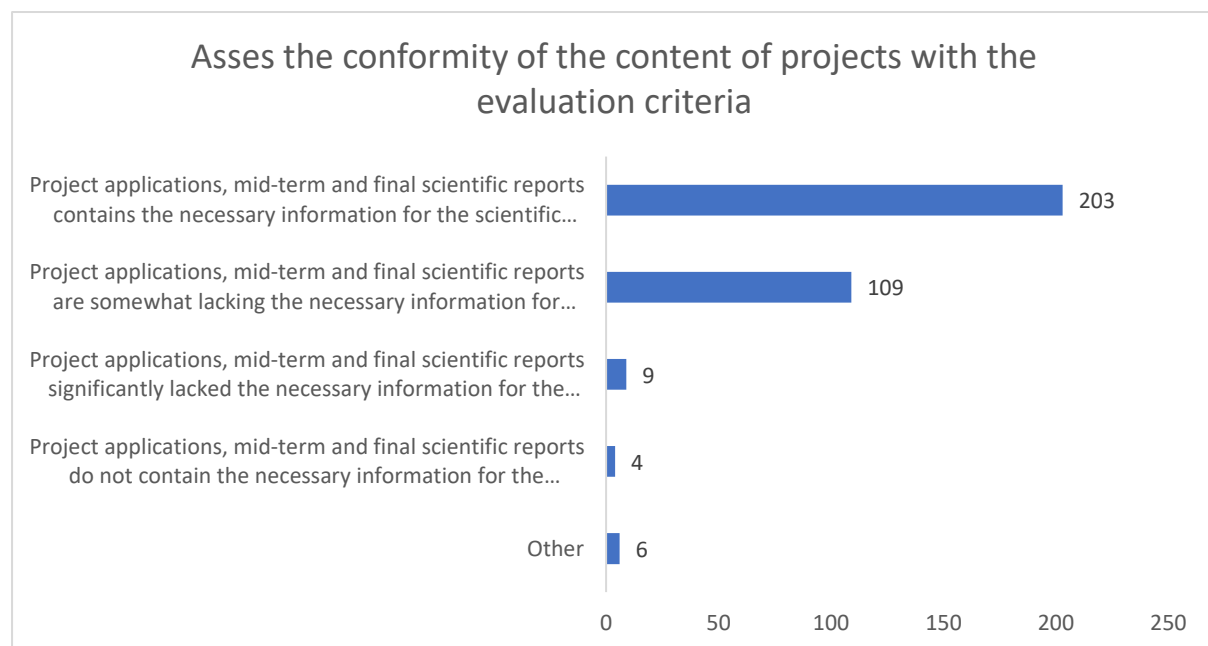
The other statements were also mostly positively evaluated by the respondents: the contracting process was fully positively evaluated by 287 experts (86.7%), the evaluation results submission - handover process was positively evaluated by 269 experts (81.3%), the time allocated for the evaluation by 243 experts (73.4%) and the quality of the information system by 213 experts (64.4%). The smallest number, but more than half, of experts totally agree with the statement "The remuneration received for evaluation work is adequate. 178 experts (53.8%) totally agree, 125 experts (37.8%) partially agree, 23 experts (6.9%) partially disagree and 5 experts (1.5%) totally disagree.

Question 7 of the survey asks respondents to rate the Project's scientific evaluation methodology on a scale of 1 to 4, with a choice of "other" and an opportunity to comment.

Please rate the project's methodology of expertise

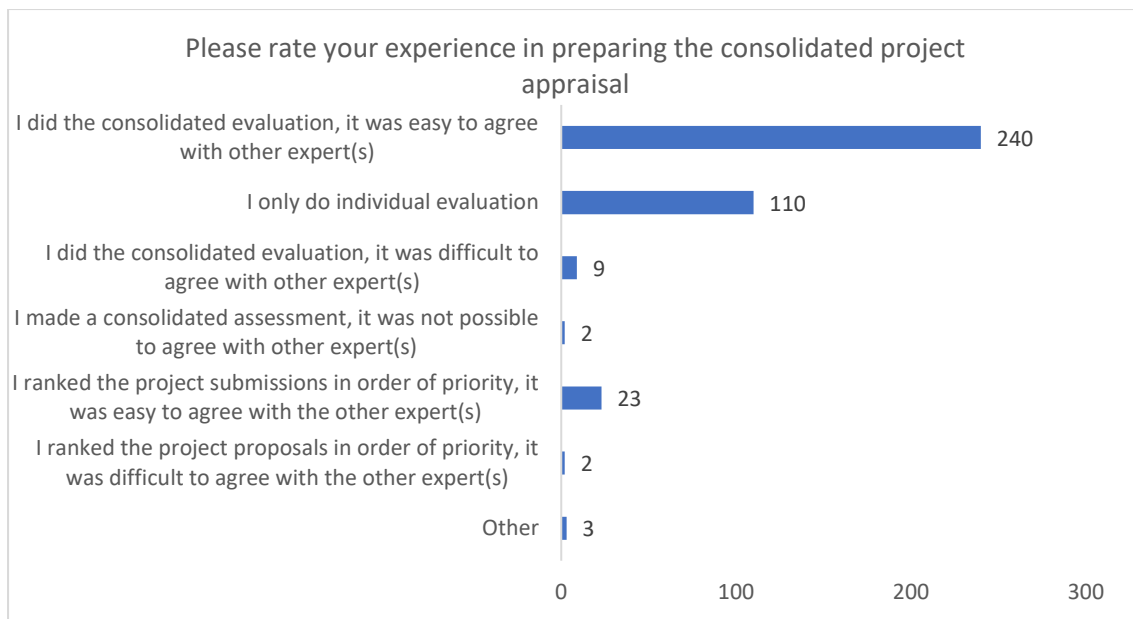|	
The evaluation methodology is clear and understandable, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the project	222
The evaluation methodology is clear and comprehensible, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the project, but there are minor shortcomings	86
Evaluation methodology is partially clear and does not ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the project, needs improvement	15
Evaluation methodology is unclear and does not ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the project, serious improvements are needed	5
Other	3

The majority of respondents consider the project appraisal methodology to be fully adequate (222 experts, 67.1%) or adequate but in need of some improvement (86 experts, 26%), but the accompanying comments do not provide information on the improvements needed, so this aspect should be further explored in future surveys in order to get a clearer picture of the scope for improving the expert-examination methodology.

Question 8 of the survey asked respondents to rate the conformity of the content of projects with the evaluation criteria on a Likert scale from 1 to 4 with the option to answer "Other" and provide comments.

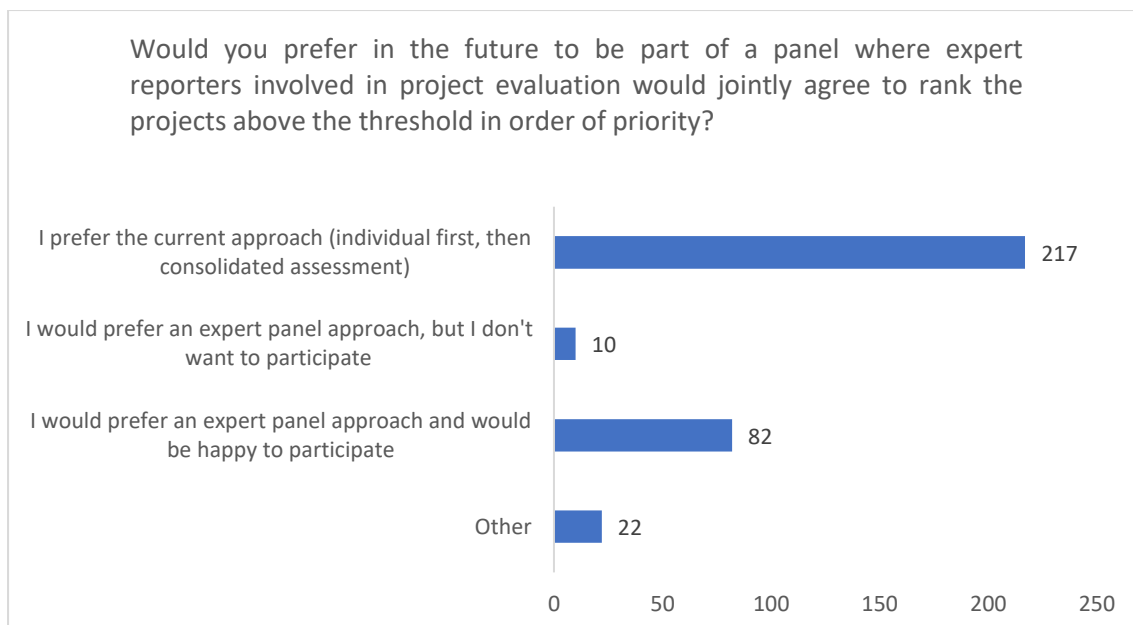Asses the conformity of the content of projects with the evaluation criteria

Out of 331 responses, 203 respondents (61.3%) note that project applications contain all the information necessary to evaluate and give an opinion on the project, while 109 responses (32.9%) indicated that the information was mostly sufficient, but that there were some shortcomings. The comments on this question unfortunately do not provide insight into the type of information that could help to assess project applications more qualitatively, so experts could be asked to explain this aspect more in future surveys.

Question 9 of the questionnaire provides information on the experience of the experts in preparing the consolidated assessment of the project application. Respondents were given the opportunity to provide multiple answers, thus evaluating each individual experience. 389 separate replies were received.

Please rate your experience in preparing the consolidated project appraisal

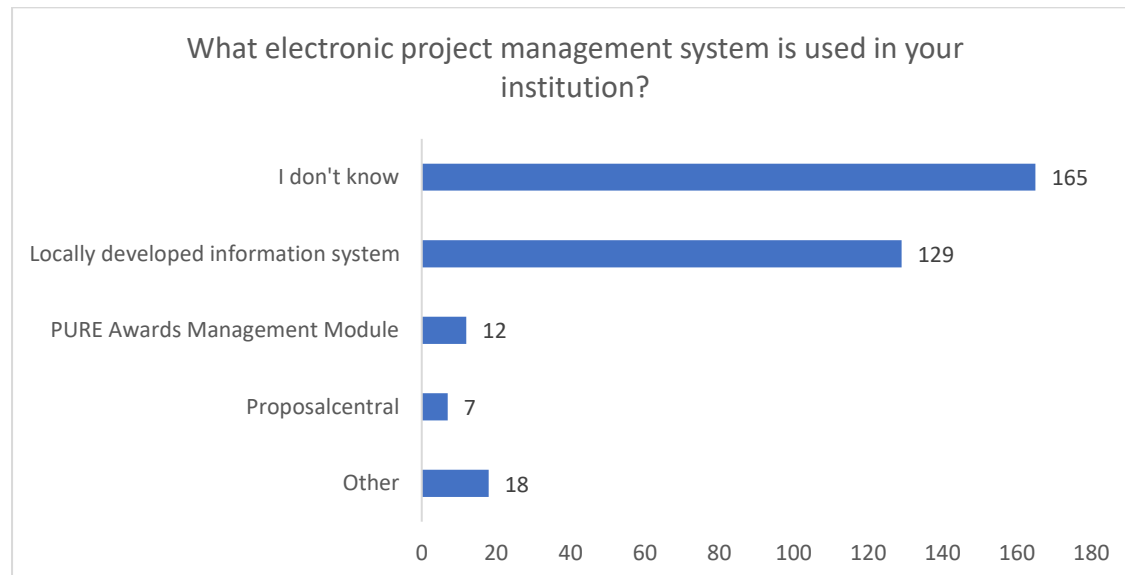| Response	Value
I did the consolidated evaluation, it was easy to agree with other expert(s)	240
I only do individual evaluation	110
I did the consolidated evaluation, it was difficult to agree with other expert(s)	9
I made a consolidated assessment, it was not possible to agree with other expert(s)	2
I ranked the project submissions in order of priority, it was easy to agree with the other expert(s)	23
I ranked the project proposals in order of priority, it was difficult to agree with the other expert(s)	2
Other	3

110 respondents had only carried out individual evaluations, while 240 responses confirmed respondents' positive experience (easy to negotiate with other expert(s)) in carrying out consolidated evaluations. In 9 cases it was difficult, and in two cases impossible, to agree with the others on a consolidated assessment. In its turn, projects were ranked in a priori order in 25 cases, most of which had a positive experience (23 responses), but in two cases it was difficult to agree on the ranking. There were also 3 "other" responses. Proportionally, there is a clear pattern of largely positive experiences of experts working together to agree on a consolidated assessment for projects.

Question 10 of the questionnaire asks respondents to give their views on the project evaluation system. The question is semi-statistical, assessing respondents' attitudes towards different evaluation systems as well as their attitudes towards participation in them. Respondents were presented with three statements providing an opportunity to measure attitudes, as well as an opportunity to tick "Other" and provide a comment.

Would you prefer in the future to be part of a panel where expert reporters involved in project evaluation would jointly agree to rank the projects above the threshold in order of priority?

Response	Value
I prefer the current approach (individual first, then consolidated assessment)	217
I would prefer an expert panel approach, but I don't want to participate	10
I would prefer an expert panel approach and would be happy to participate	82
Other	22

217 respondents (65.6%) would prefer the current evaluation system, while 82 respondents (24.8%) would prefer a panel discussion and would be willing to participate. 22 respondents chose "other" and commented. Of these, 15 comments note that they would be willing to participate in an evaluation process of both approaches (current evaluation and panel discussions), saying that each approach has its pros and cons.

Question 11 of the survey asks respondents to indicate the project management system used in their institution.

Respondents' answers listed several electronic systems for project submission and evaluation, but almost half of the respondents (165 answers, 49.8%) did not know which system was used in the research institutions they represented. Several respondents also note that an electronic system for project evaluation is not used in their institution.

Two survey questions were open-ended, seeking comments, suggestions and objections on cooperation with the LCS in the scientific evaluation process.
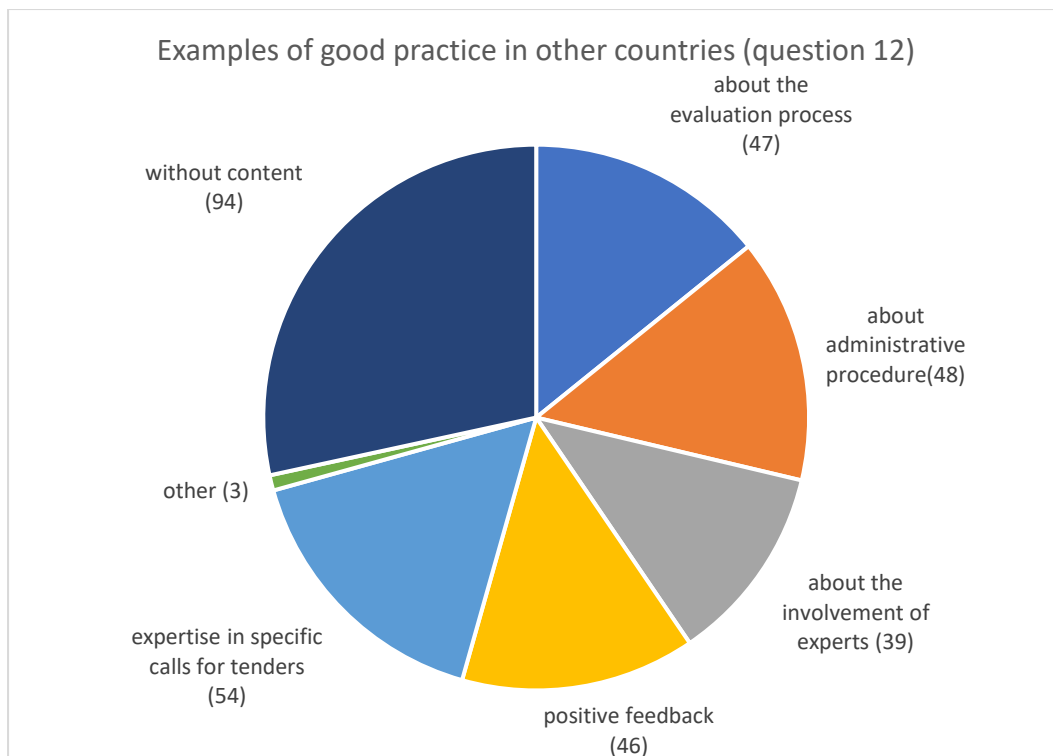
In question 6 of the survey, we asked respondents to provide additional information about their experience of working with the LCS, as well as to further explain their position in response to question 5 of the survey (see above). Although question 6 was optional, 211 responses were received (67.8% of all respondents). They have been analysed using a qualitative approach, initially divided into the five groups identified in the data coding:

1) positive comments on cooperation with the LCS without specific recommendations (148 comments);
2) positive feedback on cooperation, accompanied by a suggestion for process changes or a comment on a problematic step in the process (28 comments);
3) suggestions for improving the process or a comment on a part of the process with which there were problems (26 comments)
4) other comments not related to the evaluation process in the LCS (2 comments);
5) non-analysable comments that do not contain information that could be considered as an assessment (7 comments).

Experts' experience with the LCS (Question 6)

- other (2)
- without information(7)
- recommendation (26)
- positive feedback and recommendation(28)
- positive comments(148)

Question 12 was an open-ended question, asking respondents to identify good practices in project evaluation in other countries that could be adapted or partially implemented in the scientific evaluation process of LCS projects. This question was mandatory, resulting in 331 comments, divided into seven groups:

1) comments on improving, changing or recommending the evaluation process (47 comments);
2) comments on the administrative process of scientific evaluation of LCS, which are in line with those made in question 6 and therefore analysed together (48 comments);
3) comments and suggestions for recruiting new experts (39 comments)
4) comments expressing satisfaction with the LCS process without further recommendations or clarification (46 comments);
5) specific calls for proposals in which the experts have experience as evaluators, without recommendations or comparisons with the evaluation experience of the LCS (54 comments);
6) other comments (3 comments)
7) comments *without content* (characters, "none" "no comments", etc.) (94 comments).

Examples of good practice in other countries (question 12)

- about the evaluation process (47)
- about administrative procedure (48)
- about the involvement of experts (39)
- positive feedback (46)
- expertise in specific calls for tenders (54)
- other (3)
- without content (94)

The analysis is then carried out by looking at the most relevant aspects identified during the initial data processing. Aspects covered include respondents' experiences and comments on the current scientific evaluation process in the LCS, changes to or recommendations for improving the evaluation system, and the recruitment of new experts.

Analysing the experts' comments directly related to the project evaluation process, several aspects of the evaluation process can be identified that have caused difficulties for the experts and/or could be improved by the LCS: **information system** and problems or challenges related thereto, **administrative process, remuneration, time** for project evaluation and scheduling, **other** comments. This part of the analysis combines the comments on question 6 of the survey and the comments on question 12 on experiences and recommendations in the current evaluation process (comment group 2). To exclude overlaps, comments from the same respondent were compared and matched (three such matches were found). It should also be noted that the positive comments on cooperation with the LCS (question 6, comment group 1) often give an implicit indication of the difficulties during this process.

Information system

In comments related to the information systems used by the LCS to evaluate projects, respondents point to the system's operational errors, lack of clarity and lack of clear instructions in English. Several respondents note the need to use English throughout the process of working with the system, pointing out that the use of Latvian does not make the system easy to work with and understand. It should be noted that it is often mentioned in the comments that the LCS staff were quick to help to solve problems, but in the long term this aspect should be improved by addressing the shortcomings of the electronic system and by making all guidance and descriptions available not only in Latvian, but also in English.

Another aspect mentioned by respondents is the need to make the system more user-friendly, with several comments noting that it was working with the system that slowed down the project evaluation

process. There is also a recommendation to provide clearer instructions on all the necessary actions to be carried out in the system, for example by indicating which step of the process is being carried out.

Respondents also repeatedly recommend the creation of an automated system to send out notifications, which would allow them to know in good time about the possibility of taking further action in the evaluation process, noting that although email communication works well enough, too much time is wasted in the process. Respondents found it difficult to enter the necessary information into the system, noting that they had to do it several times before it worked, or even that working with the system took more time than evaluating the projects themselves, which is the main task of an expert.

At the same time, the experts consider that it would be useful to have all communication (e.g. communication on the consolidated evaluation of a project) in an electronic system, which would make the evaluation process fully transparent and also more user-friendly. Unfortunately, the existing information system does not provide such possibilities, but a new electronic project submission and evaluation system could take this recommendation into account.

Administrative process

In the administrative process related to the conclusion of contracts, respondents recommend signing contracts electronically rather than on paper, or finding a way to sign contracts in an information system.

Comments also mentioned the need to review the tax payment system (as in some cases double taxation has arisen), the complexity of the contract, faster payment and an overall reduction in the bureaucratic burden. Experts note that in their experience participation in other calls for proposals is less administratively demanding, and that in calls for proposals of the LCS the initial sign-up of an expert in the system could be easier, which would facilitate and speed up the whole evaluation process.

Time available for evaluation

An aspect of the project appraisal process that emerges as room for improvement in respondents' comments, and which is in line with the abovementioned, is the time taken for evaluation. Improving the system and easing the administrative process could allow experts to devote more time to the direct project evaluation process. Several comments note that other experts have missed deadlines, which has made it difficult to produce a consolidated assessment, and call on the LCS to set stricter deadlines throughout the entire evaluation process. However, it should be noted that there are not many such comments, which suggests that over all the time allocated to project appraisal is quite adequate and that the situations encountered are probably more individual than systemic. An aspect that appears in several comments is the need to inform experts in good time about the progress of calls for proposals whenever possible, e. g. several respondents encourage to send out the information on the timetable at the beginning of the year to make it easier to calculate and plan time for evaluation. During 2023 the evaluation of the call for proposals of the FLPP took place during the summer period, which was also mentioned in several experts' comments as an aspect that should be known in advance. This was a good time for universities to submit projects to the call for proposals of the FLPP, as they already knew the results in autumn and could plan their 2024 budget accordingly. The LCS already informs long-standing experts about the launch of the call for proposals of the FLPP, but it would not always be appropriate to inform them comprehensively, given that it is impossible to

predict in advance of the call for proposals which topics projects will be submitted on and, consequently, which experts will be called upon to carry out the evaluation.

Remuneration

In several comments, experts call on the LCS to increase the remuneration for project evaluation, which demonstrates the need to follow remuneration trends elsewhere, while showing no significant dissatisfaction with the LCS remuneration for research project evaluation. Looking at the respondents' answers to the statement under question 5 of the survey - "The remuneration received for the evaluation work is adequate" (178 experts (53.8%) totally agree, 125 experts (37.8%) partially agree, 23 experts (6.9%) partially disagree and five experts (1.5%) totally disagree), we can conclude that the issue of adequacy of remuneration cannot be overlooked. At the same time, there are also comments praising the payment arrangements for the evaluation of LCS projects, which is not always the case in their experience elsewhere, so it can be concluded that this aspect of the expert's work is largely viewed positively. It should be noted that the payment arrangements for the evaluation of LCS projects follow the EC Horizon Europe expert remuneration arrangements for science projects (*Methodology for expert fees for remote evaluation and ethics review*" https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/experts_manual/methodology-for-expert-fees_en.pdf)

Other comments

Experts also made other types of comments and suggestions, noting that a seminar or meeting prior to the evaluation of projects would be desirable, where experts would be introduced to the overall objectives and objectives of the programmes and calls for proposals, and several experts expressed a wish to receive information on the official results of the calls for proposals to see how their evaluated projects fared in the overall context of the calls. One respondent expressed a wish to evaluate more than one project, which would allow for comparisons between projects and could be useful.

Evaluation process

Recommendations to change or complement the project evaluation system repeatedly stress the need for meetings and discussions with other experts and the inclusion of the panel as another step in the LCS evaluation process. For example, it is suggested to set up a panel of 5-10 experts, where all participants read a set of projects and then discuss them, or an option where each expert reads the projects most relevant to their expertise and then evaluates them together in a panel discussion. The experts also write about the possibility of organising a meeting at the end of the evaluation to discuss together projects that show a willingness to share experiences and gain a comparative perspective.

There is also a suggestion for a multi-stage discussion, where the best projects are selected in the first stage and then evaluated again in more defined groups, resulting in a final ranking. The need for a dashboard is particularly emphasised for calls for proposals where more funding is awarded. Experts note that the panel discussion, by sharing experiences and discussing different aspects of project applications, could "smooth" decisions, thus making the evaluation process more transparent and objective.

As another option for a broader discussion on the project, several respondents suggest more experts (e. g. three) for each project, or a model where two experts' assessments are consolidated by a third, a reporter.

The analysis of the comments suggests that the two-stage evaluation system is a common practice among respondents, both in terms of comparing their experience with other competitions and in terms of describing the best possible option for the evaluation process.

Several respondents suggest an evaluation system where applicants initially submit a "short" version of their project, and then the authors of the most interesting and highly ranked applications are invited to prepare a full-length project proposal. This option would both make the work of the applicants easier, allowing them to "test" some new, unusual ideas, and, given the smaller number of full-scale projects, give the experts the opportunity to devote even more attention to the evaluation of each project and make it easier to compare them when drawing up the final list of winners. Again, experts call for creating panels to evaluate projects.

Another aspect that experts note as essential to achieve the most objective assessment is clearer conditions, "statistics" of previous evaluations of experts, which would allow the identification of the so-called "kind" and "strict" experts, which in turn can serve as an opportunity to improve the evaluation criteria system. The experts' responses suggest that using as standardised evaluation criteria, terms and notations as possible, as well as outside help: a "quality control" of the evaluation (one expert says this would be very useful because "*we don't see our own mistakes*") before submitting the final version, the possibility of submitting the evaluation for checking and then improving it or correcting any shortcomings, could lead to the most objective evaluations possible.

Several comments also refer to the possibility for the applicant to provide feedback or to respond to the expert's initial assessment, i.e. to introduce some element of dialogue in the evaluation between the applicant and the evaluator.

However, the experts stress the need to make the evaluation criteria as clear as possible, to take into account possible cultural differences in the way of expression and to provide precise guidelines for the evaluation. These recommendations are written in a more general form, which suggests that the LCS is quite successful in this respect, but mentioning it in the comments should be taken into account as a reminder of the need for continuous development of clearer and more precise evaluation criteria. A number of comments also make practical suggestions, such as a transparent table of evaluation criteria or a meeting with experts before the evaluation process to clarify the terms and standards of the evaluation criteria.

Engaging experts

In order to attract experts for the work, the respondents recommend using the EU expert database, which is already used for attracting experts to the LCS, to create a database of experts by collecting information on their areas of expertise and quality of cooperation, which is already done in the LCS, to invite universities to make internal applications for experts, to create the possibility for experts to log in to the database themselves, which unfortunately is not technically possible at present, and to invite experts to recommend colleagues, active researchers, who could perform well in the evaluation work. It is also repeatedly suggested to offer some non-monetary bonuses to existing experts - to issue certificates of cooperation (currently LCS issues such certificates if requested, so it might be necessary to inform experts about this possibility again), to offer some opportunities for further training, networking, other types of cooperation.

One expert writes that an interesting experience could be a working group meeting in Latvia to talk and discuss the current system of scientific evaluation of projects and possible scenarios and visions for its development.

Conclusions and recommendations

From 6 December 2023 to 12 January 2024, the ZEN Unit of the LCS in collaboration with the PPAN Unit conducted a survey of foreign experts with the aim to find out the opinion of invited foreign experts on the scientific evaluation process of projects organised by the Latvian Council of Science and the possibilities to improve it. The questionnaire consisted of three demographic indicators, seven statistical questions (three closed, three semi-open and one open), three Likert scale questions and two open questions. A total of 610 e-mails were sent out inviting people to complete the questionnaire, resulting in 331 experts completing the questionnaire.

The results of the survey reveal a largely positive experience of experts working with the LCS, with the professionalism of the staff noted as the strongest aspect and the work with an electronic project submission platform as the weakest. It should be noted that it is the staff factor that appears as a solution to various weaker stages of the evaluation process, i.e. in the questionnaire responses, respondents note that it is the staff that helps to solve difficulties and shortcomings caused by NZDIS and the electronic project submission and review platform, provides all the necessary information quickly and qualitatively and explains some technically unsolved aspects (for example, the fact that some information in the electronic system is only in Latvian, which causes confusion for experts)

Aspects such as the administrative process, the time spent on evaluation and the remuneration for evaluating projects were mostly considered adequate in the experts' experience, with some comments and suggestions for improvement.

The experts are open to complementing the evaluation process with the creation of an expert panel, they have both described their experience of participating in the activity form, noting the potential benefits, and noted their willingness to participate.

In order to attract experts to assess the projects of the LCS, respondents suggested using the EU database of experts, creating an internal database of experts (both of these activities are already being carried out by the LCS staff), and in the future, the possibility for an expert to apply for a position by registering in the LCS database of experts. At the moment, the LCS does not have the capacity to create such a database, but this could be considered in the future.

The process of scientific evaluation of projects by foreign experts is an essential part of the activities of the Latvian Council of Science, therefore the survey of experts provides important information both on the current situation, receiving feedback from experts and providing an opportunity to assess their experience, and on the directions in which the evaluation process can be improved in the future, in order to achieve an increasingly complete and more valid evaluation of research projects.