**Annex 7**

to the National Research Programme

“Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia” 2023-2025

Regulation of the open tender for project applications

**Examination methodology**

**(for the project application, the project final scientific report)**

Contents

[Ievads 1](#_Toc40026353)

[1. Lietotie termini 4](#_Toc40026354)

[2. Projekta pieteikuma zinātniskā ekspertīze 5](#_Toc40026355)

[2.1. Projekta pieteikuma individuālais vērtējums 5](#_Toc40026356)

[2.2. Projekta pieteikuma konsolidētais vērtējums 9](#_Toc40026357)

[3. Projekta noslēguma zinātniskā pārskata zinātniskā ekspertīze 9](#_Toc40026358)

[3.1. Projekta noslēguma zinātniskā pārskata individuālais vērtējums 10](#_Toc40026359)

[3.2. Projekta noslēguma zinātniskā pārskata konsolidētais vērtējums 11](#_Toc40026360)

3.3. Projekta noslēguma zinātniskā pārskata mērķa vērtējums………………………………………12

# Introduction

“Examination methodology” (the methodology) has been developed in accordance with the Cabinet Regulation No. 560 of 4 August 2018 “Procedures for the Implementation of National Research Programme Projects” (the Cabinet Regulation), Cabinet Order No. 462 of 9 August 2023 “On the National Research Programme “Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025”” (the Cabinet Order) and, having regard to the Regulation (the Regulation) of the open tender (the tender) of the National Research Programme “Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025” approved by the Implementation and Monitoring Commission of the National Research Programme “Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025” on 12 June 2024.

The methodology has been developed for the international experts who assess the tender project application and the final scientific report of the project.

* According to Section 35(1) of the Law on Scientific Activity, a national research programme is a state commission to carry out scientific research in a specific economic, educational, cultural or other sector of national priority, with the aim of promoting the development of that sector.

The target audience of the methodology is the project applicants (the project applicant) of the third open tender (the tender) of the National Research Programme “Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025” (the programme), who prepare project applications and the necessary documentation for submission within the framework of the tender.

As a state commission, the programme is a policy implementation mechanism that identifies and researches issues of importance for Latvia’s sustainability and development, which need to be the focus of the work of Latvian scientific institutions, and identifies relevant scientific research tasks to address them. In the light of the above, the programme creates favourable conditions for achieving Latvia’s sustainable development goals.

The programme will involve the strongest scientific groups with the best scientists representing the sectors of natural sciences, engineering sciences and technology, and agriculture, forest and veterinary science cooperating to achieve the project objective.

The programme was developed by the Ministry of Agriculture (- the ministry), and it is financed by the Ministry of Education and Science. State budget funds in the total amount of 4,000,000 euro have been assigned for the implementation of the programme, and the period of implementation will run from 2023 to 2025. The maximum funding of the project to be implemented within the framework of the programme is 3,840,000  *euros*.

The tender will finance two projects for the sub-programmes referred to in point 10 of the Regulation, with the following maximum funding:

5.1. Implementation of the sub-programme's objectives under paragraph 6 of the Cabinet Order, will amount to EUR 2,040,000 (two million forty thousand euro);

5.2. Implementation of the sub-programme's objectives under paragraph 7 of the Cabinet Order - EUR 1,800,000 (one million eight hundred thousand *euro*).

According to the Cabinet Order, the overarching objective of the programme is to use natural resources sustainably and rationally, increasing their added value in a changing environment.

The overarching objective is to be achieved through the implementation of two sub-programmes:

1. "Sustainable use of agricultural, including fisheries, resources for the production of safe, quality and healthy food in Latvia", which aims to increase the knowledge base on technologies for the sustainable use of agricultural resources in the production and processing of high-quality food sources, and the control of raw materials and products in Latvia to provide consumers with healthy and safe food products of local origin, promoting the growth and competitiveness of the agriculture and food sectors;
2. “Innovative forest management and new forest services, products and technologies for Latvia's growth”, which aims to ensure sustainability of forestry and rational use of Latvia's forest resources to produce globally competitive products while preserving biodiversity and social importance of forests for future generations.

Each sub-programme has a number of tasks to be carried out in order to achieve the overarching objective of the programme and the objectives of the sub-programmes:

1) for the sub-programme *"Sustainable use of agricultural, including fisheries, resources for the production of safe, quality and healthy food in Latvia"*, following thematic objectives and sub-objectives are provided for:

a) Development of sustainable, quality and competitive agricultural production in an environmentally friendly agricultural sector:

* to analyse the impact of reduced synthetic plant protection products load on the productivity and yield quality of the most widely cultivated crop, winter wheat, by comparing and testing more environmentally friendly technology modules in an integrated cropping system in different regions of LV;
* to study the technological elements of the cultivation of economically important fruit trees, bush fruits and vegetables, including smart solutions to reduce the use of synthetic plant protection products;
* to investigate new or little-studied pathogens of crops and horticultural plants in relation to changes in climate and cultivation technologies.

b) The social and economic aspect of the European Green Deal on Latvian agriculture and rural space, as well as the creation of new knowledge for the development of a sustainable bioeconomy and rural space:

* to propose solutions for the development of a sustainable and viable agricultural sector under different scenarios for achieving the objectives of the Green Deal, by:
* an assessment of the farming practices most relevant to the implementation of the Green Deal challenges in Latvia, assessing both the practices already in place and the additional measures needed to achieve the Green Deal objectives, and their impact on farm incomes, production, trading, competitiveness, employment and rural space;
* an assessment of the distribution of costs and investment burdens between stakeholders (farmers, consumers, public measures, EU funds) for the most appropriate management practices identified to achieve the objectives of the Green Deal;

- an assessment of Latvia's strengths and weaknesses compared to other EU Member States in achieving the Green Deal objectives most directly related to agriculture.

c) Development of new knowledge, approaches and methods to promote circulation of safe and quality food and animal feedingstuffs, as well as to improve animal health, welfare and protection and to reduce risks to public health and the environment, in accordance with the 'one health' principle, while promoting the development of technological solutions and new products for the production of high quality and competitive foodstuffs:

* to analyse the link between the development of antimicrobial resistance and the use of antibiotics in cattle and pig sheds, to study the spread of the most important infectious agents to expand existing knowledge and find new solutions to reduce the threat caused by resistance;
* to collect food consumption data of the Latvian population (age group 19-64 years) on industrially produced and home-produced alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, with a particular focus on beverages with added herbs or their products, food supplements, as well as products specific to Latvia - teas, smoked fish and meat. To promote safe food chain and to contribute to the reduction of risks to public health, conduct an exposure assessment of the potential hazards in the above product groups. To compare and evaluate the consumption data and exposure assessment results with those of previous Latvian research publications;
* to generate new knowledge for a sustainable food system (and the processing of by-products of food production into high-value products that comply with food regulations, preserving biologically active compounds) and the use of environmentally friendly and recyclable packaging materials in food.

d) Implementation of integrated approach to ensure sustainable exploitation of inland waters for fisheries productivity and high quality ecosystem services:

* development of an integrated stock assessment method for economically valuable lake fish stock using data from recreational, commercial and scientific fishing data (fishing gear, hydroacoustic measurements and electrofishing);
* risk-benefit analysis of contamination and nutritional value of economically valuable fish as a food product.

2) The following thematic tasks and sub-tasks are provided for the sub-programme *“Innovative forest management and new forest services, products and technologies for Latvia's growth”*:

a) development of forest management practices improving forest productivity and capacity to play a long-term climate change mitigation role, enhancing the integration of biodiversity values and facilitating the production of a range of forest ecosystem products and services in a changing environment:

* impact of pine stand restoration and management methods on genetic diversity. Increasing the adaptation capacity of pine forests through forest breeding methods;
* cause-effect relationships between changes in the productivity and area of pine forest stands. Recommendations for more nature-friendly pine forest management techniques. Recommendations for the establishment of pine forest stands in areas to be reclaimed. Interactions and effects of different tree growth improvement measures on the productivity and quality of pine stands;
* clarification of the impact of biotic risk factors on the health of pine forest ecosystems and forest stand, and recommendations for increasing the vitality of pine forests;
* recommendations for ensuring a favourable protection status for protected species in commercial pine forests. Impact of forestry on the environment - a quantitative assessment of the impacts of the pine forest management cycle.

b) analysis and development of recommendations on the socio-economic aspects, including public benefits, for the development of multi-purpose forest management, new forest services, products and technologies:

* estimation of the long-term socio-economic impacts of scenarios of restrictions on the management of commercial pine forests, based on long-term projections and scientific data.

c) the development of a circular forest bio-economy and the development of innovative technologies and products for using local forest resources to produce competitive and sustainable products, promoting rational use of wood and developing wood construction in line with the Green Deal:

* the technologies and products to expand the use of wood-based materials in construction in line with the European Green Deal;
* biorefining technologies for complex use of forest resources to produce higher value-added products;
* use of wood processing and residues to produce polymer composites and insulation materials;
* original solutions for innovative products based on logging side streams, wood working and processing residues and non-wood materials;
* increasing the efficiency and accuracy of the use of wood resources, smart technology solutions.

# 1. Definitions of terms

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| **No.** | **Term** | **Meaning** |
| **1.** | **Scientific group** | Scientific staff and scientific technical staff (persons who have the necessary technical knowledge and experience in one or several fields and who, under the supervision of scientists, participate in scientific activities by carrying out technical tasks. Scientific technical staff includes engineers, technicians, laboratory technicians, technologists, operators involved in the implementation of the project. The scientific group includes the project manager, principal investigators (if required) and the project implementers. |
| **2.** | **Scientific staff** | Leading researchers, researchers, scientific assistants, academic staff and students. |
| **3.** | **Project applicant** | The project applicant is a scientific institution registered in the Register of Scientific Institutions of the Republic of Latvia (body governed by public or private law) or an institution of higher education that meets the definition of a research organisation. The project applicant is responsible for the truthfulness of the information provided in the project application, the implementation of the project and the achievement of project results in general. |
| **4.** | **Project cooperation partner - scientific institution** | A scientific institution registered in the Register of Scientific Institutions of the Republic of Latvia (body governed by public or private law) or an institution of higher education that meets the definition of a research organisation, participating in the project with its own staff or research infrastructure. |
| **5.** | **Project cooperation partner - public institution** | A public institution which is required to carry out scientific activities by an external legal enactment, its by-law or articles of association, and is engaged in the implementation of the project with property, intellectual property, funding or human resources in its possession or ownership |
| **6.** | **Project manager** | The scientist who manages the project and ensures its implementation. The project manager plans and supervises the execution of the project tasks, is responsible for the activities of his/her own and those of other persons involved in the project in accordance with the tasks set out in the project, scientific ethical norms, timely preparation and submission of documentation describing the scientific progress of the project in accordance with the procedure provided for in the Cabinet Regulation. The project manager is registered in the National Scientific Activity Information System (the Information System). |
| **7.** | **Principal investigators** | The scientists who implement the project or sub-project and are responsible for the implementation of its parts. |
| **8.** | **Project implementers** | Members of the scientific group who carry out individual scientific tasks in the implementation of the project and are responsible for carrying out relevant parts of it. |
| **9.** | **Students of the institution of higher education** | A student involved in the project scientific group is a bachelor student, a student of professional study programmes, a master student (masters), a medical resident and a PhD student. Students of the institution of higher education must be involved in the project according to the provisions of points 22-25 of the Regulation. |
| **10.** | **Project contact person** | A natural person who is registered in the information system, fills in information on the project application, uploads its annexes, as well as, where necessary, maintains contact with the staff of the Latvian Council of Science (the council) (the project contact person may also be the project manager) and the staff of the Ministry of Education and Science during the project submission and implementation. The project applicant indicates the project contact person in Chapter 1 “General information” of Part A of the project application. If the project has cooperation partners, their contact persons are likewise indicated. The contact person and the project manager can be the same person. |

# 2. Scientific examination of the project application

1. The council organises the scientific assessment process of all the project applications submitted under the tender.

2. If the project application complies with the criteria for administrative evaluation, the council, on the basis of point 37 of the Regulation, involve two or more suitably qualified experts to carry out the scientific examination of the project application.

3. Before accessing the project application in the information system, the expert:

3.1. declares that he/she has no conflict of interest and undertakes to respect the requirements of confidentiality by signing and sending to the council, by electronic mail, Annex 5 to the Regulation, “Declaration of absence of conflict of interest and maintenance of confidentiality” (the expert's declaration);

3.2. enters into a contract with the council - Annex 6 to the Regulation, “Service contract for scientific evaluation” (the service contract).

4. The council, upon receipt of the expert’s declaration and the conclusion of the service contract, gives the expert access to the project application and all necessary information in the information system to assess the project application.

5. The expert assesses the project application by applying his/her professional qualifications and experience in the relevant scientific field and by justifying his/her rating with scientific evidence.

6. The expert cooperates with the council during the examination and complies with the instructions given by the council pertaining to the performance of the examination in accordance with the Regulation and the examination contract.

7. According to point 45 of the Regulation, the expert is only authorised to evaluate 20 pages of a project application, with up to three additional pages, if acknowledgements of social partners, letters of recommendation on cooperation and other documents are attached.

2.1. Individual assessment of the project application

8. In the information system, the expert completes and approves the individual evaluation of the project application (the individual evaluation), prepared in accordance with Annex 8 “Project application examination individual/consolidated assessment form” to the Regulation within two calendar weeks from the date of conclusion of the service contract and receipt of access to the project application and all necessary information unless a different deadline is specified in the expert agreement.

9. In the individual assessment, the expert evaluates each criterion and provides a score taking into account the considerations set out in Clause 13 of the methodology.

10. The expert evaluates the criteria and assigns a score from 1 to 5 for each criterion, where:

10.1. With distinction – 5 points (excellent project proposal, meets or exceeds the highest standards in the relevant scientific field, any shortcomings in the project proposal are minor);

10.2. Good – 4 points (good project proposal, fulfils the requirements of the criterion in the relevant scientific field, but there are some shortcomings);

10.3. Satisfactory – 3 points (satisfactory project application, generally fulfils the requirements of the criterion in the relevant scientific field, with some shortcomings that will make it difficult to implement the project and achieve high results);

10.4. Weak – 2 points (weak project proposal, partial or only general compliance with the requirements of the criterion in the relevant scientific field, identifiable shortcomings that make it difficult to successfully implement the project and achieve its objectives);

10.5. Unsatisfactory – 1 point (unsatisfactory project application, does not meet the requirements of the relevant scientific field for the criterion, and the information provided is insufficient for the assessment under the criterion, and there are significant shortcomings that make the implementation of the project and the achievement of the objectives questionable);

10.6. if the project application's score in a given criterion exceeds the requirements of the previous lowest score but does not fully meet the requirements of the next highest score, the score may also be supplemented by a half point, i.e. 0.5.

11. The expert provides a reasoned justification for the evaluation points of each scientific criterion, indicating the advantages and disadvantages of the application. The expert explains in the justification the score awarded, using his/her professional qualifications and experience in the relevant scientific field.

12. Within three calendar days from the date of receipt of the individual assessment, without questioning the expert's field of competence, the council assesses the compliance of the individual assessment with the considerations referred to in paragraphs 27, 28 and 29 of the Cabinet Regulation, as well as with the methodology, consults the commission whether the assessment justification is sufficient and clear, where necessary, returning the individual assessment to the expert for specification/revision/improvement, justifying the reasons for the return. In the event of such a return, the expert specifies, revises and approves the individual evaluation in the information system within three calendar days of the date of receipt of the notification by the council, sent by electronic mail, of the return of the individual evaluation of the expert.

13. The expert complete the individual assessment in the information system (see Annex 8 “Project application examination individual/consolidated assessment form” to the Regulation) according to the following criteria and considerations:

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| **Individual/consolidated examination of the project application** | | | |
| Project title:  Expert(s): | | | |
| **1.** | **Criterion: Scientific quality of the project** | | Maximum 5 points |
| **1.1.** | Consideration: scientific quality, reliability, and novelty of the research | *The expert justifies the score given by indicating the advantages and deficiencies, taking into account the fulfilment of the criterion as a whole and of each criterion consideration.*  *1. Specific information for the criterion is given in Chapter 1 “Scientific excellence” of the project application, as well as in sub-chapters 2.4 “Scientific results of the project and ensuring their availability” and 3.1 “Project applicant and scientific group”, but it is the project application as a whole that should be taken into account when assessing the criterion.*  *2. The scientific excellence of the project, including the chosen research strategy and methodological solutions, the ability to generate new knowledge or technological insights, as well as the ability to build and develop an interdisciplinary and inclusive team of internationally competitive scientists using research methods and technologies that are recognised among scientists worldwide, shall be assessed according to the specificities of the relevant scientific field or fields and the project, as well as the specificities of the institutions of the applicant and the project cooperation partners (if any).*  *3. The evaluation considers the sub-programme and its thematic objectives chosen by the project applicant (in accordance with paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Cabinet Order) and the horizontal objectives of the programme, the results (in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Cabinet Order) and their feasibility, and assesses whether the project application is adequate to achieve the overarching objective and objectives of the programme in accordance with the thematic area of the project and the envisaged timeframe for its implementation. The expert provides a reasoned opinion on the relevance of the project application to the relevant sub-programme described in this methodology and to each of the objectives and sub-objectives set out therein.*  *4. Assesses the overall potential of the project to develop the knowledge base in the sciences of agriculture and forestry, and the field of fishery to develop national research and innovation systems that address societal challenges.* | |
| **1.2.** | Consideration: scientific quality of the chosen research strategy and methodological approaches, and relevance to the objectives |
| **1.3.** | Consideration: contribution of the project to the overarching objective and objective of the programme and ability to generate new knowledge or technological insights |
| **1.4.** | Consideration: contribution of the cooperation partners (if any), their scientific capacity, planned quality of the cooperation |
| **2.** | **Criterion: Impact of project results** | | Maximum 5 points |
| **2.1.** | expected transfer of acquired knowledge and skills to further activities and scientific capacity development | *The expert justifies the score given by indicating the advantages and deficiencies, taking into account fulfilment of the criterion as a whole and of its sub-criteria. Criteria-specific information is given in Chapter 2 "Impact" of the project application, but the assessment of the criterion must take into account the project application as a whole.*  *The results and their expected impact, including the planned transfer of results into further activities and scientific capacity development, the possibilities for further development of research shall be assessed according to the specificities of the scientific field or fields concerned and of the project, as well as the specificities of the institution of the applicant and the specificities of the institutions of the project cooperation partners (if any).*  *The expert shall assess how effectively the project engages students and young scientists in relation to the overall workload of the scientific group, including a plan for engaging students and building the capacity of the scientific group within the framework of the project. Information on the workload of the project scientific group, including students, can be found in Chapter 3 "Project Budget" of Part A "General Information" of the project application.*  *The sustainability of the project results is assessed in relation to the expected scientific publications and the dissemination of the project results in scientific conferences. Information on the dissemination of the project results can be found in the project application description, subsection 2.5 "Scientific results of the project and making them accessible". Particular attention should be paid to ensuring the sustainability of results, following the principles of Open Access, Open Data, FAIR - findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable - as well as to the choice of the project applicant for data deposition.*  *The potential of the project to raise public awareness of the project results and to increase the socio-economic impact of the project results should be taken into account (sub-chapters 2.2-2.5 of description of the project application). Assesses whether the plans described in the project application for applying and transferring the results of the research to end-users are adequate and feasible. Assesses the collaboration of the project applicant with other scientific institutions, as well as with public institutions, NGOs and business persons.*  *The expert likewise assesses the feasibility of the project-specific results and the feasibility of the selected sub-programme and its relevant objectives and sub-objectives as defined in point 10 of the Regulation. The results of the programme: the results of the project's research and recommendations to policy makers have contributed to the sustainable and rational use of natural resources, increasing their added value in a changing environment, including:*   1. increased knowledge base on technologies for sustainable use of agricultural resources in the production, processing quality food raw materials, as well as control of raw materials and products in Latvia to provide consumers with healthy and safe food products of local origin, promote the growth and competitiveness of the agriculture and food sectors; 2. promoting the sustainability of forestry and the rational use of Latvia's forest resources to produce globally competitive products, while preserving biodiversity and the social importance of forests for future generations. | |
| **2.2.** | opportunities for research development, including contributions to the preparation of new projects for submission to competitions under the European Union Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation Horizon Europe and other research and innovation support programmes and technology initiatives |
| **2.3.** | the research will lead to knowledge important to the relevant sector, and development of the national economy and society |
| **2.4.** | sustainability of the knowledge generated and a qualitative dissemination plan, including scientific publications and public outreach |
| **2.5.** | implementation of the research contributes to strengthening the scientific capacities of the research staff, including students |
| **3.** | **Criterion: Project implementation options and assurance** | | Maximum 5 points |
| **3.1.** | quality of the research activity plan and its relevance to the objective. The resources provided are adequate and sufficient to achieve the objective. The research aims to ensure efficient use of resources. The planned work steps and tasks are clearly defined, relevant and reliable | *The expert justifies the score given by indicating the advantages and deficiencies, taking into account fulfilment of the criterion as a whole and of its sub-criteria. Specific information for the criterion is given in Chapter 3 “Implementation” of the project application and in Part C “Curriculum Vitae” of the project application, but the assessment of the criterion must take into account the project application as a whole.*  *Feasibility of the project, including the research work plan prepared, the envisaged management and quality control of the research, information provided on the data management plan, the resources envisaged, available infrastructure, shall be assessed according to the specificities of the sector or sectors of the science concerned and of the project, as well as the specificities of the applicant and the collaborating partners (if any). The expert justifies, in a reasoned manner, whether the resources indicated in the project application are sufficient to achieve the objectives and sub-objectives of the selected sub-programme.*  *The expert assesses the relevance of the scientific qualifications and experience of the project manager and the principal investigators to the achievement of the project objectives and the performance of the tasks envisaged on the basis of the curriculum vitae submitted in Part C “Curriculum Vitae” of the project application, paying special attention to the topic of the publications, their relevance to the topic being studied in the project.*  *The planned implementation of the project is assessed in relation to the completed project application in Part A "General information", Section 3 "Project budget", which foresees the costs of the project team's salary, material and technical support, travel and publication costs.* | |
| **3.2.** | scientific qualifications of the project manager and of the key project implementers, based on the curriculum vitae submitted |
| **3.3.** | appropriate research management, including quality management is provided for. The management organisation allows to follow the progress of the research. Potential risks have been assessed and a plan developed to avoid or mitigate them |
| **3.4.** | the research infrastructure required for the research is available, including access to cooperation partners’ equipment (if applicable) |
| **3.5.** | the institution carrying out the research and the cooperation partners (if applicable) have the necessary knowledge and expertise |

## 2.2. Consolidated assessment of the project application

14. Once the experts have completed and confirmed their individual assessment in the information system, the council gives each expert access to the individual assessment completed by the other experts and discloses the identity of the other experts to each expert.

15. One of the experts completes the consolidated assessment in accordance with Annex 8 to the Regulation, “Project application examination individual/consolidated assessment form”, in the information system, following the conditions under clauses 6 to 13 of the methodology. All the experts, except in the case of an additional expert as referred to in clause 44, shall validate the consolidated evaluation in the information system within two weeks of the validation of the last individual evaluation in the information system.

16. The consolidated evaluation is the agreement between all the experts, except in the case of involvement of an additional expert as referred to in point 44 of the Regulation, on the final evaluation of the project application, so that the expert preparing the consolidated evaluation consults other experts on:

16.1. score of each criterion;

16.2. justification for the scores of each criterion, compiled from the justifications provided by all the experts in their individual assessments.

17. The council examines the consolidated assessment referred to in clause 15 of the methodology once it has been confirmed in the information system. If the council finds any inconsistencies with the methodology or the tender Regulation, it has the right to return the consolidated assessment to the experts for revision and confirmation.

18. In the event of a return of the consolidated assessment, the experts must revise and agree on the consolidated assessment within three calendar days, validating it in the information system in accordance with clauses 15 to 16 of this methodology.

# 3. Scientific examination of the final scientific report of the project

19. Before accessing the final scientific report in the information system, the expert declares that he/she has no conflict of interest and undertakes to respect the confidentiality requirements by signing and sending the council the expert declaration and by concluding a contract with the council.

20. The council, upon receipt of the expert declaration, gives the expert access to the final scientific report of the project and to all the information necessary for its assessment.

21. The council provides each expert with access to the final scientific report and to the application for the same project.

22. The expert evaluates the final scientific report of the project using his/her knowledge of the relevant scientific field and arguing his/her opinion with scientific reasons.

## 3.1. Individual assessment of the final scientific report of the project

23. Within two weeks from the date of conclusion of the contract with the council, the expert carries out an individual assessment of the scientific report by completing Annex 10 “Individual/consolidated assessment form for the final scientific report of the project” to the Regulation in the information system and confirming it therein.

24. This project does not foresee the submission of a mid-term report.

25. The expert gives the final scientific report one of two scores:

25.1. the project has achieved its objective;

25.2. the project has not achieved its objective.

26. The expert assesses the final scientific report of the project against the following criteria:

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| **Individual/consolidated assessment of the final scientific report of the project** | | |
| Project title:  Expert(s): | | |
| **1.** | **Criterion: Scientific quality of the project** | |
| *The expert assesses how the project’s scientific group has achieved the objectives of the project application by the moment of delivery of the final report. Basically, Chapter 1 “Scientific excellence” of the final report is taken into account, while linking it to the final report as a whole and to the project application. Here, the expert gives an assessment and suggestions on whether the project implementer together with cooperation partners (if applicable) has fully achieved the project's goal and fulfilled the tasks in the highest scientific quality, as well as on research opportunities after the conclusion of the relevant project to achieve scientific excellence. The comments and assessment take into account the thematic objectives of the selected sub-programme and the planned results of the project, as well as evaluate whether the project is progressing towards the achievement of the programme’s overarching objective and the objectives.*  *The expert assesses whether the performance of the scientific group of the project demonstrates its high research capacity and whether the results described are appropriate for the supplementing of the knowledge base of the sector(s) of the science.* | |
| **2.** | **Criterion: Impact of project results** | |
| *The expert assesses how the project’s scientific group has achieved the objectives of the project application by the moment of delivery of the final report. Basically, Chapter 2 “Impact” of the final report is taken into account, while linking it to the final report as a whole and to the project application. In this field, the expert provides an assessment and suggestions on whether the project implementer, in collaboration with cooperation partners (if applicable), has achieved the intended impact and ensured the dissemination of the acquired knowledge to the scientific community and communication to society at large, or plans to carry out the dissemination after the end of the project.*  *The expert assesses whether the project has resulted in a more internationally competitive field of natural sciences, engineering and technology, and agriculture, forestry and veterinary sciences sector and the scientific community, and whether its capacity has been improved.*  *The expert assesses how the project implementer has selected the project’s target groups, whether their opinions have been sought in a quality way and whether the activities have been effective for information of the public. Likewise assesses cooperation with policy-makers, public authorities, NGOs and businesses (e.g., making recommendations, participating in policy planning, etc.).*  *The expert assesses and comments on the implementation of the plan to make the project results and scientific knowledge available both in Latvia and internationally (including by publishing the results in open access journals and depositing newly generated research data in research data repositories according to the principles of "as open as possible" and FAIR - findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable.*  *The expert also assesses the project implementer’s capacity-building activities for students and the scientific group, as well as the progress of the student involvement plan.*  *The expert assesses progress towards the programme objective, the selected sub-programme and its thematic objectives and sub-objectives (point 10 of the Regulation). Goal of the programme – the results of the project's research and recommendations to policy makers have contributed to the sustainable and rational use of natural resources, increasing their added value in a changing environment, including:*  *1) sub-programme No. 1 - knowledge base has been supplemented on technologies for sustainable use of agricultural resources in the production and processing of high-quality food sources, and the control of raw materials and products in Latvia to provide consumers with healthy and safe food products of local origin, to promote the growth and competitiveness of the agricultural and food sectors;*  *2) sub-programme No. 2 - the sustainability of forestry and the rational use of Latvia's forest resources has been promoted to produce products that are competitive in the global market, while preserving biodiversity and the social importance of forests for future generations.* | |
| **3.** | **Criterion: Project implementation options and assurance** | |
| *The expert assesses how the project’s scientific group has achieved the objectives of the project application by the moment of delivery of the final report of the project. Basically, Chapter 3 “Implementation” of the final report is taken into account, while linking it to the final report and the project application as a whole. In this field, the expert provides comments and suggestions to adjust the work plan or research opportunities after the end of the relevant project.*  *The expert assesses whether the management of the project has been effective, including taking into account the overall progress of the project. The expert assesses the information provided by the project implementer on the development and maintenance of data management plans. Whether the risk plan stated in the Project Description, sub-chapter 3.3 "Project Management and Risk Plan", has been implemented in cases where the risks materialised, and whether the solutions are credible.*  *In addition, the expert assesses and indicates whether the project has sufficiently involved students and PhD candidates by the specified stage. Students must be involved with a total workload of at least 1.0 FTE on average during the implementation of the project.* | |
| **Project assessment at the end** | | |
| **Project objective has been achieved.**  *The project objective has been achieved – overall score as a percentage is 85% – 100% and more/*  **Project objective has not been achieved,**  **objective rating as a percentage.**  *The project objective has not been achieved, it does not correspond partially - overall rating as a percentage is 25%-84%*  *The project objective has not been achieved, it does not correspond at all - overall rating as a percentage is 0%-24%* | | *The expert provides a target rating as a percentage in the overall rating of the final scientific report of the project according to the rating scale set out in clause 30 of the methodology.* |

## 3.2. Consolidated evaluation of the final scientific report of the project

27. Once the experts have completed and validated their individual evaluation for the final scientific report of the project in the information system, the council provides experts with access to the individual evaluation completed by the other experts, as well as discloses the other experts' identity to each expert.

28. In the information system, one of the experts completes the consolidated evaluation following Annex 10 “Individual/consolidated assessment form for the final scientific report of the project”, having regard to the conditions set out in clauses 24 to 26 of the methodology, and all the experts confirm it in the information system within one week.

29. In the consolidated evaluation, the experts agree on a single score for the final scientific report of the project and summarise the comments made in the individual assessments.

**3.3.** **Assessment of the objective of the final scientific report**

30. In the consolidated evaluation in the final report, the experts agree on a consolidated evaluation in per cent, which has the following meaning:

The project objective has been achieved – overall score as a percentage is 85% – 100% and more. The score is given if the project has been carried out with good or excellent scientific quality and has met or exceeded the expected objectives and scientific results. Where there is non-performance or other minor shortcomings, but the existing scientific results are of good scientific quality, e.g. the scientific articles are published in high quality journals, so that these shortcomings have not affected the achievement of the objective.

Th project objective has not been achieved, does not correspond partially - overall score as a percentage is 25% - 84%. The score is awarded if the project has been carried out with sufficient scientific merit, the planned results of the project have been partially achieved, which has affected the overall achievement of the project objectives.

The project objective has not been achieved, does not correspond fully - overall percentage score 0% - 24%. The score is awarded if the project has been carried out with insufficient scientific quality, the planned results have been entirely or almost entirely not achieved, and the overall objective of the project has therefore not been achieved, or has been achieved to an insufficient extent.

31. Taking into account clause 21 of the methodology, the council calculates the refundable part of the funding as follows:

31.1. if the percentage of the Experts' objective rating referred to in Sub-clause 2.20 of the Contract is 60% to 65%, a flat rate of 5% applies;

31.2. if the percentage of the Experts' objective rating referred to in Sub-clause 2.20 of the Contract is between 50% and 59%, a flat rate of 10% applies;

31.3. if the percentage of the Experts' objective rating referred to in Sub-clause 2.20 of the Contract is below 50%, a flat rate of 25% applies.