APPROVED

by the National Research Programme

"Development of research identified in the

 Biodiversity Priority Actions Programme"

 Implementation and Monitoring Commission

(established by the

 Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development

28 March 2024

Order No. 1-2/45)

16.07.2024 Decision No. 1

**Regulations for the open call for proposals of the National Research Programme “Development of research identified in the Biodiversity Priority Actions Programme”**

**I. General issues**

1 The state research programme "Development of research identified in the Biodiversity Priority Actions Programme" regulations for the open call for proposals (hereinafter – the Regulations) determine the procedure for the Latvian Council of Science (hereinafter – the Council) to organise and implement the state research programme "Development of research identified in the Biodiversity Priority Actions Programme" (hereinafter – the Programme) call for proposals (hereinafter – the Call for Proposals) to submit project applications (hereinafter – Project Application) on the basis of Cabinet Regulation No. 560 of 4 September 2018 "Procedures for the Implementation of State Research Programmes” (hereinafter – the Cabinet Regulation) and in compliance with the Cabinet Order of 2 April 2024 No. 252 "On the National Research Programme "Development of research identified in the Biodiversity Priority Actions Programme" (hereinafter referred to as the Cabinet Order).

2 These Regulations have been prepared on the basis of Paragraph 16 of the Cabinet Regulation on objectives of the Programme stated in Paragraph 6 of the Cabinet Order.

3 The total state budget funding available for the Tender under the Programme is EUR 1,800,000 (one million eight hundred thousand euros) (hereinafter – the total funding of the Tender). Of which EUR 126,000 (one hundred and twenty-six thousand euros) are intended to cover administrative costs (7%). The total funding of the Tender is to be used in conformity with paragraph 36 of the Cabinet Regulation:

3.1 to finance projects;

3.2 to implement the measures under paragraph 37 of the Cabinet Regulation.

4 The project implementation period is 27 months from the date of entry into force of a project implementation agreement (hereinafter – the Project Agreement). Within the framework of the project agreement, the project implementation period may be extended for the time and in accordance with the procedures laid down in paragraph 39 of the Cabinet Regulation. A project shall be financed over a period of at least 6 (six) months.

5 The call for proposals will finance 3 (three) projects, with a total amount of EUR 1,674,000 (one million six hundred and seventy-four thousand euro) available for the tasks set out in paragraph 6 of the Cabinet Order, including the indicative project funding:

5.1 For the task under Sub-paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 of the Cabinet Order – EUR 1,097,400 (one million ninety-seven thousand four hundred *euro)*;

5.2 For the task under Sub-paragraph 6.3 of the Cabinet Order – 167,400 euro (one hundred and sixty-seven thousand four hundred euro);

5.3 For the task under Sub-paragraph 6.4 of the Cabinet Order - 409,200 euro (four hundred nine thousand and two hundred euro).

6 The applicant shall submit a project application in line with the following conditions: 6.1 submit one project application for the tasks under points 6.1 and 6.2 of the Cabinet Order:

6.1.1 the project application shall also provide for the fulfilment of the sub-tasks set out in points 10.2.1, 10.2.2, 10.2.3, 10.2.4, 10.2.5 and 10.2.6 of these Regulations, which are described in more detail in Annex 12 to these Regulations;

6.1.2 the results set out in paragraphs 8.1, 8.3 and 8.4 of the Cabinet Order must be achieved during project implementation.

6.2 submit one project application for the task set out in paragraph 6.3 of the Cabinet Order:

6.2.1 the project application shall also provide for the implementation of the sub-tasks set out in paragraphs 10.3.1, 10.3.2 and 10.3.3 of these Regulations;

6.2.2 results set out in paragraphs 8.1, 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4 of the Cabinet Order shall be achieved during the implementation of the project.

6.3. on the task set out in paragraph 6.4 of the Cabinet Order submit one project application:

6.3.1 the project application shall also include the sub-tasks set out in paragraphs 10.4.1, 10.4.2 and 10.4.3 of these Regulations;

6.3.2 results set out in paragraphs 81, 8.3 and 8.4 of the Cabinet Order shall be achieved during the implementation of the project.

6.4 for the programme objectives set out in paragraph 6 of the Cabinet Order, the applicant must implement the common (horizontal) objectives set out in paragraph 7 of the Cabinet Order during project implementation.

7 The Council launches the Tender following the procedure under paragraph 17 of the Cabinet Regulation and administers, supports, monitors and controls the implementation of the project under the project agreement in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Cabinet Regulation.

8 A project applicant who complies with the provisions of Paragraphs 2.12 and 9.1 of the Cabinet Regulation (hereinafter - the applicant) shall draft a project application in accordance with Annex 1 “Project Application” to the regulations (hereinafter - the project application). The deadline for submitting a project application is up to 30 calendar days from the day of the call for proposals (hereinafter – the deadline for submission of project applications).

9 The Council states in the call for tenders:

9.1 the name of the tender;

 9.2 the total funding of the tender;

 9.3 the deadline for the submission of project applications;

 9.4 a website containing the information needed to submit project applications.

10 In order to achieve the objectives of the Programme, in accordance with paragraph 6 of the Cabinet Order, the following Programme tasks and sub-tasks have been identified and are described in more detail in Annex 12 to these Regulations;

10.1 to ensure the increase of the knowledge base for the determination of nature conservation measures included in Latvian and European Union (hereinafter – EU) planning documents and laws and regulations, for the assessment of socio-economic factors and climate change impacts on species of EU importance and biotopes of EU importance whose conservation status is assessed as unfavourable (sub-paragraph 6.1 of the Cabinet Order);

10.2 to increase the knowledge base on species ecology, threats and distribution for species and biotopes of EU importance for which no assessment of conservation status is known (paragraph 6.2 of the Cabinet Order):

10.2.1 to use an assessment methodology consistent with that used for the Habitats Directive Report 2013-2018;

10.2.2 to ensure that the necessary data are collected and that scientifically sound recommendations are made for terrestrial habitat types with unfavourable conservation status and unknown conservation status, in accordance with the information on the assessment of the conservation status of habitats in the Annex to the Habitats Directive Report;

10.2.3 to ensure that the necessary data are collected and scientifically sound recommendations are made for terrestrial species whose conservation status is assessed as unfavourable and whose conservation status is unknown, in accordance with the information on the assessment of the conservation status of species in the Annex to the Habitats Directive Report;

10.2.4 to use an assessment methodology consistent with that used for the Birds Directive Report 2013-2018;

10.2.5 to ensure that the necessary data is collected and scientifically sound recommendations are made for bird species for which 1) short-term trends are "declining", "uncertain", "no data", 2) long-term trends are the three above, 3) species for which Natura 2000 sites are to be established, as indicated in the Annex to the Birds Directive Report;

10.2.6 to carry out an assessment of the impact of the conservation regime, management, socio-economic and climate change on the conservation status of Annex I, II and IV habitats and species of the Habitats Directive in Latvia (priority – species with unfavourable conservation status);

10.3 to develop scientifically sound proposals for optimal spatial connectivity of species and habitats of EU importance, including specially protected nature territories, micro-reserves and habitats and species habitats existing outside the network of protected nature territories in a single network of nature territories (paragraph 6.3 of the Cabinet Order):

10.3.1 following the habitat connectivity approach, identify/designate areas where the concentration of natural values is highest and make proposals on the way forward for the protection of these areas;

10.3.2 using spatial analysis tools and existing grassland connectivity data, identify sites for strengthening the Natura 2000 network and developing protected areas. (Habitat connectivity model for the whole country, including outside protected areas, which will highlight grasslands and forests, taking into account the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030);

10.3.3 to include proposals for the creation of new protected areas, improved compensation mechanisms, improved management conditions and the introduction of voluntary protection schemes, taking into account property rights;

10.4. provide research on habitat dynamics as affected by different management practices and climate variability, provide an assessment of ecosystem services and values in order to prioritise conservation planning in a cost-effective manner, and develop and validate an economic model for biodiversity sustainability, conservation and restoration (catalogue offsetting measures, assess the degree of mitigation and offsetting) (paragraph 6.4 of the Cabinet Order):

10.4.1 to develop a number of alternative scenarios, taking into account future projections and strategic settings in policy planning documents, in order to find an optimal balance between climate change mitigation and nature conservation objectives, promoting sustainable territorial development. To include land-use related measures in scenarios (e.g, land management and infrastructure development, including for renewable energy)

10.4.2 to establish a balanced set of measures that reconcile the scenarios for achieving the objectives set out in paragraph 10.4.1 of the Regulations, adapting to climate change and promoting sustainable economic activity, while also ensuring the conservation of nature for future generations.

10.4.3 predict climate change impacts on ecosystems, habitats and species of EU importance in Latvia: multi-faceted impact analysis and adaptation options.

**II. Conditions of participation of the project applicant and cooperation partner in the project**

11 In order to certify the applicant’s compliance with Paragraphs 2.12 and 9.1 of the Cabinet Regulation, the applicant shall upload through the National Scientific Activity Information System (hereinafter - information system) Part D of the project application, “Applicant’s certification”, filled in and signed with a secure electronic signature, and bearing a time stamp (hereinafter - applicant’s certification), to the information system. If it is not possible to provide a secure electronic signature with a time stamp, the project applicant shall proceed in accordance with Paragraph 18 of Annex 2 to the Regulations "Methodology for the preparation and submission of the project application, the mid-term scientific report and the final scientific report" (hereinafter referred to as the "Submission Methodology") .

12 The project partner complies with the provisions of Paragraph 2.18 of the Cabinet Regulation. The project applicant shall engage project partners in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 9.3 of the Cabinet Regulation. In order to certify the cooperation within the project, the project applicant shall ensure that the project partner signs project application Part E "Certification of the project partner – scientific institution" (hereinafter referred to as "Certification of the project partner – scientific institution") or Part F "Certification of the project partner – public institution" (hereinafter referred to as "Certification of the project partner – public institution"), with a secure electronic signature bearing a time stamp which the project applicant shall attach to the project application. If a secure electronic signature cannot be provided, the project partner shall proceed in accordance with point 22 or 26 of the Submission Methodology.

 13 In order to certify the conformity of the project applicant or the project partner - scientific institution with the provisions of Sub-paragraph 2.12 of the Cabinet Regulation, the head of the scientific institution concerned shall submit the financial management and accounting policy of the scientific institution and the financial turnover report (Part G of the project application “Financial turnover report form”) for 2021 - 2023. If the scientific institution has private investors, it must provide a free-form declaration that the results of the research related to the project application will not be used for commercial purposes. The documents referred to in this Paragraph are attached as an annex to the project applicant’s certification and to the certification of the project cooperation partner – scientific institution, in accordance with sub-chapters 3.2 and 3.3 of the submission methodology.

14 The documents referred to in Section 13 of the regulations shall not be provided by the applicant or project collaboration partner which has been recognised as meeting the definition of a research organisation for open call for proposals of 2024 for basic and applied research projects[[1]](#footnote-1) and open calls for proposals of 2024 for state research programmes.

15 Within the framework of the project implementation, the project partner may be eligible for funding from the indirect eligible costs allocated to the project in proportion to the share of direct eligible costs allocated to the project partner, subject to the provisions of Paragraph 14.2 of the Cabinet Regulation.

16 If the project partner is involved in the implementation of the project, including with human resources of its own, they will participate in the implementation of the project as principal contractors or project implementers (which may include students in accordance with Section 44(1) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions). Information on the involvement of the project partner in the implementation of the project with its own human resources shall be indicated in Part A “General information” of the project application, Chapter 2 "Scientific Group".

**III. Conditions of the Scientific Group for the Participation** **in the Project**

17 The project applicant shall form a scientific group for the implementation of the project, in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 2.22. of the Cabinet Regulation.

18 In the project application, the project manager, the main project contractors and project contractors must comply with that laid down in Paragraphs 2.13., 2.14. and 2.15. of the Cabinet Regulation. The remuneration of the staff of the research group involved in the execution of the project shall be determined in accordance with the remuneration policy and rates of remuneration of the project applicant and of the project collaborating partner (if any).

19 A scientist may only be named as a project manager in one project application per tender. If a scientist is listed as a project manager in more than one project application under the tender, the council contacts all the project applicants concerned and ask them to indicate, within one working day, for which project application the scientist is the project manager and in what capacity the scientist will be in the other project applications (if applicable).

20 The workload in full-time equivalent (FTE) of one person, being the project manager, the main project contractor and project contractor, other than the student, shall be planned in such a way that the workload indicated in a single project application, as well as in the case of project implementation, does not exceed 1,0 FTE.

21 For the students – promoters included in the scientific groups under the project application and in the case of project implementation, the total average workload of all students over the duration of the project is at least 2.0 FTE.

22 The project application, as well as the project implementation, requires that each student is occupied by the project for at least 0.25 FTE on average during the project implementation.

23 If a student completes a level of studies during the project period and starts the next level of study within four months at the latest, his/her involvement in the project during the four-month period shall be deemed to be in conformity with that laid down in Paragraphs 21 and 22 of the Regulations regarding engagement of the student in the project implementation.

24 If a doctoral student successfully completes the doctoral study programme and defends his/her doctoral thesis during the project implementation period, his/her involvement in the project shall henceforth be deemed to be in conformity with that laid down in Paragraphs 21 and 22 of the regulations regarding engagement of the student in the project implementation.

**IV. Activities and costs to be supported**

25 The applicant shall complete Part H of the project application “Non-economic activities”, which provides information on the conformity of the activities planned in the project application with Paragraph 2.2 of the Cabinet Regulation.

26 The Project Applicant shall include the information on the direct eligible cost items of the project in Part A, Chapter 3 “Budget” of the project application in conformity with Paragraph 14.1 of the Cabinet Regulation.

27 Indirect eligible costs which are not directly related to the achievement of the project results but support and ensure appropriate conditions for the implementation of the activities to be supported under the project and for the achievement of the results, are planned as a single cost item, applying a flat rate of indirect costs of up to 15 (fifteen) per cent of the total amount of direct eligible costs under sub-paragraph 14.1 of the Cabinet Regulation, except for direct eligible costs under sub-paragraph 14.1.6 of the Cabinet Regulation incurred in relation to the costs of external services (including work under work-performance contracts). Within two weeks from the date of signing the Agreement on the implementation of the project, the project applicant and the cooperation partner(s) (if any) must develop and approve internal procedures for the use and control of the indirect eligible costs of the project, which the Council is entitled to request and the project applicant presents it to the Council. If the project applicant involves a cooperation partner(s), the indirect eligible costs of the project are divided between the project applicant and the cooperation partner(s) in proportion to the division of the direct eligible costs of the project between the project applicant and the project cooperation partner(s). During the project implementation, the project applicant does not provide information and supporting documents on the use of indirect eligible costs when preparing and submitting the financial report under sub-paragraph 44.1 of the Cabinet Regulation.

**V. Procedure for the preparation and submission of the project application**

 28 The project application shall be completed and submitted to the Council in electronic form in the Information System within the deadline for the submission of project applications.

29 The applicant shall complete and submit the project application in accordance with the submission methodology.

 30 In order to certify the Project Application as a whole, the Project Applicant shall sign Part D of the Project Application “Project Applicant’s Confirmation” using a secure electronic signature with a time stamp.

**VI. Administrative assessment of project applications**

31 The administrative assessment of Project Applications shall be carried out by the Council according to Annex 3 to the Regulations “Methodology for the assessment of the conformity of the project application with the administrative assessment criteria”, assessing the conformity of the project application with the administrative criteria laid down in Paragraph 19 of the Cabinet Regulation and the additional administrative criteria laid down in Sub-paragraph 32.3 of the Regulations within two calendar weeks from the deadline for the submission of project applications.

 32 The project application is assessed according to the following administrative assessment criteria:

32.1 The administrative criteria set out in Sub-paragraphs 19.1 and 19.2 of the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulations, which may be supplemented (hereinafter referred to as the supplementary administrative criteria);

32.2 The administrative criteria set out in Sub-paragraphs 19.3, 19.4, 19.5, 19.6, 19.7 and 19.8 of the Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation, which are not to be supplemented (hereinafter - non-complementary administrative criteria);

32.3 for additional administrative criteria which cannot be supplemented:

32.3.1 cover all the common (horizontal) objectives of the programme as defined in Paragraph 7 of the Cabinet Order;

32.3.2 Cover all the results set out in Paragraph 8 of the Cabinet Order to be achieved during the Programme implementation.

32.3.2.1 for the task set out in Sub-paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 of the Cabinet Order, the project applicant shall provide for the achievement of results set out in Sub-paragraphs 8.1, 8.3 and 8.4 of the Cabinet Order.

32.3.2.2 For the task set out in Sub-paragraph 6.3 of the Cabinet Order, the project applicant shall provide for achievement of results set out in Sub-paragraphs 8.1, 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4 of the Cabinet Order.

32.3.2.3. for the task set out in Sub-paragraph 6.4 of the Cabinet Order, the project applicant shall provide for achievement of results set out in Sub-paragraphs 8.1, 8.3 and 8.4 of the Cabinet Order.

33 The Council, taking into account the results of the administrative assessment of the project application, shall complete the form set out in Annex 4 to the Regulations “Administrative Assessment Criteria Form”, taking into account Paragraph 20 of the Cabinet Regulation.

34 If the project application fails to comply with any of the following:

34.1 supplementable administrative criteria, the Council requests the applicant to update the project application by sending a letter to the applicant's official e-mail address. The project applicant submits the updated project application within two working days since the date of sending the Council's letter, by sending a letter to the Council's official e-mail address: pasts@lzp.gov.lv;

34.2 non-supplementable administrative criteria or if the project application does not comply with any of the supplementable administrative criteria that has not been met after the submission of the updated project application, the council, after the completion of the administrative assessment, sends the Programme Implementation and Monitoring Commission (hereinafter – the Commission) a list of project applications evaluated against the administrative criteria which do not comply with the administrative criteria under the Regulations, together with the reasons for each instance of non-compliance. The Commission evaluates the list and, following sub-paragraph 8.3.2 of the Cabinet Regulation, decides whether to reject the project application.

**VII. Scientific assessment of the project application**

35 The Council shall, in accordance with provisions of Chapter III of the Cabinet Regulation, organise the scientific expert examination of project applications (hereinafter – Expert Examination).

36 For the assessment of the project application, the Council shall, in accordance with Paragraph 7.5 of the Cabinet Regulation, select and engage two or more scientific experts (hereinafter – the expert) who meet the requirements set out in Paragraphs 23 and 24 of the Cabinet Regulation in order to qualify for the assessment of programme tasks set out in Paragraph 6 of the Cabinet Order. An expert may carry out the assessment of several project applications according to his/her scientific qualifications and experience.

37 The Council shall ensure that the expert who has agreed to carry out the assessment of the project application signs and submits to the Council the documents referred to in Annex 5 to the Regulations “Confirmation of absence of conflict of interest and respect of confidentiality” by uploading them into the Information System.

38 The Council shall enter into a contract for carrying out the expert assessment with each expert using the form in Annex 6 of the Regulations "Service Contract on the Scientific Assessment" (hereinafter referred to as the "Service Contract"). The service contract may be adjusted during the contracting process in conformity with the content of the project application and the specificities of the examination.

39 The expert assesses the project application following paragraph 26 of the Cabinet Regulation.

39.1 the scientific quality of the project in accordance with considerations set out in Paragraph 27 of the Cabinet Regulation;

39.2 the impact of the project results in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 28 of the Cabinet Regulation;

39.3 the feasibility of the project and the safeguards in accordance with Cabinet Regulation Paragraph 29 of the Cabinet Regulation;

40 Within two calendar weeks from the date of conclusion of the expert assessment agreement, each expert shall assess the project application by completing the individual project application expert-examination form (hereinafter – the individual expert assessment) in the information system, in accordance with Annex 8 to the regulations “Individual/consolidated assessment form for the expert-examination of the project application” in accordance with Annex 7 to the regulations “Methodology for carrying out the expert-examination (for the project application, mid-term/closing scientific report of the project)” (hereinafter - the Methodology for carrying out the expert-examination).

41 After receipt of the individual experts assessments on all project applications in the Information System, the Council shall, via online video conference (real-time video and audio transmission) organise and implement within five working days an expert panel discussion for the experts responsible for the preparation of the consolidated expert evaluation of the project applications, setting up an expert panel (hereinafter referred to as – the panel) on tasks set for the programme by Sub-paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 of the Cabinet Order, task of the programme set by the Sub-paragraph 6.3, and the panel for the task of the programme set by the Sub-paragraph 6.4.

42 If only one project application is submitted for the tasks set in Sub-paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 of the Cabinet Order, Sub-paragraph 6.3 of the Cabinet Order or Sub-paragraph 6.4 of the Cabinet Order, the Council shall not organise a panel on that project application and the examination of such project application shall be carried out in accordance with the procedure set out in Paragraph 25 of the Cabinet Regulation.

43 Within three working days of the conclusion of the panel, the expert responsible for the preparation of the expert consolidated assessment of the project application concerned, taking into account the individual expert assessments of the project application concerned, shall complete the consolidated expert assessment form for that project application (hereinafter – the consolidated expert assessment) in the Information System, having regard to Annex 8 to the Regulations “Individual/consolidated assessment form for the examination of the project application”, and within three working days agree it with the other experts involved in the expert-examination of the relevant project application who have individually assessed the project application and submit it to the information system. If the experts are unable to agree on a consolidated assessment due to a difference of opinion, the experts inform the council thereon. In this case, the Council engages an additional expert (hereinafter – the additional expert) who at first, carries out an individual assessment of the project application concerned following the time limit and procedures under paragraph 40 of the Regulations, submitting the expert’s individual evaluation, and thereafter, the additional expert consults the original experts' individual assessments. The additional expert prepares a consolidated assessment within the two calendar weeks, by agreeing with the expert or experts whose expert's individual evaluation gives a total score closer to the total score given by the additional expert in their individual assessment. The additional expert, following coordination with the other expert or experts, submits the consolidated assessment in the information system.

44 The expert is only allowed to assess 20 pages of the project application, with up to three additional pages if there are supporting documents from the social partners, letters of recommendation on cooperation, etc.

**VIII. Decision to grant funding or reject a project application**

45 On the basis of the consolidated expert assessments submitted in the Information System, the Council shall, within three working days, calculate in the Information System the consolidated score for each project application (hereinafter referred to as the consolidated score) using the following formula,$K= \left(3A × 0,3\right)+\left(3B × 0,5\right)+\left(3C × 0,2\right), $ where:

45.1 K - the consolidated mark;

45.2 A – ratio of the scientific criterion (scientific quality of the project) referred to in Paragraph 26.1 of the Cabinet Regulation is 30% of the consolidated mark (K);

 45.3 B – ratio of the scientific criterion (impact of project results) referred to in Paragraph 26.2 of the Cabinet Regulation is 50% of the consolidated mark (K);

 45.4 C – ratio of the scientific criterion (feasibility of the project implementation and provisions) referred to in Paragraph 26.3 of the Cabinet Regulation is 20% of the consolidated score (K).

46 The quality threshold for the consolidated peer review referred to in Paragraph 45 of the regulations for the criterion laid down in Paragraph 26.1. of the Cabinet Regulation (scientific quality of the project), at least three points for the criterion laid down in Paragraph 26.2. of the Cabinet Regulation (impact of the project results), at least three points for the criterion laid down in Paragraph 26.3. of the Cabinet Regulation (feasibility and support) and at least ten points for all scientific criteria laid down in Paragraph 26 of the Cabinet Regulation in total.

47 The Council sends the commission:

47.1 the list of the project application examination within five working days of the date of submission of the experts' consolidated mark of all project applications to the information system and application of the formula in point 45 of the Regulation. In this list, project applications are ranked in priority order according to the mark obtained in the consolidated evaluation in the programme task set out in Sub-paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 of the Cabinet Order, in the programme task set out in Sub-paragraph 6.3 of the Cabinet Order and in the programme task set out in Sub-paragraph 6.4 of the Cabinet Order (hereinafter – the list of project applications), as set out in Paragraph 32 of the Cabinet Order.

47.2 A summary of the recommendations made by the experts in their consolidated evaluations for each project application (hereinafter referred to as "the experts’ recommendations").

 48 Within one week of the submission of the overall list of project applications and receipt of the expert recommendations, following Paragraph 33.1 of the Cabinet Regulation, the Commission takes a decision specified in sub-paragraph 8.3.1 of the Cabinet Regulation on each project application included in the overall list of project applications, considering the funding available for the tender specified in the Regulation and following sub-paragraph 8.3.2 of the Cabinet Regulation, the commission decides whether to reject the project applications. The Council sends the decisions made by the Commission to the project applicants.

**IX. Entering into a project agreement and financing**

49 The Council shall, within 10 calendar days from the date of entry into force, as per Paragraph 8.3.1 of the Cabinet Regulation, of the decision on granting the funding for the implementation of the project shall conclude a project agreement with the applicant for the project (hereinafter referred to as the “project implementer”) using Annex 9 to the Regulations “Agreement on the Implementation of the project of the National Research Programme “Development of research identified in the Biodiversity Priority Actions Programme””. If the Commission has decided on the necessity and substantiation of implementing the experts’ recommendations, the Council includes the recommendations in the preparation of the project agreement. The wording of the project agreement may be adjusted during the project preparation process to reflect the specific content of the project.

50 Project costs are eligible as of the date when the Commission has adopted the decision on granting financing for project implementation set out in Sub-paragraph 8.3.1 of the Cabinet Regulation. On the basis of Paragraph 61 of the Cabinet Regulation, the Council requires the project implementer to reimburse the funding received under the project.

51 Subject to a minimum project financing period of 6 months, the amount of the advance payment per project financing period shall be specified in the project agreement. If the project implementer needs to extend the project implementation period on the basis of paragraph 39 of the Cabinet Regulation, it may be extended by up to one year for the consolidation and publication of results without additional funding, for which the project implementer submits a substantiated application to the council at least three calendar months before the end of the project period on the need for the extension and Annex 6 “Results consolidation plan” to the project agreement.

52 Where a project involves a project cooperation partner, the project implementer concludes a cooperation agreement setting out the financial conditions, the arrangements for settling disputes and for non-disclosure of confidential information, the rules governing the entry into force, duration, termination, a detailed cooperation plan and budget, taking into account the project application, as well as the rules on intellectual property rights. The cooperation agreement shall be submitted by the Project Implementer to the Council within two calendar weeks of the date of mutual signing of the project agreement. The Project Implementer is responsible for transferring the advance and final instalments of the project to the project partners within the time limits and in accordance with the procedures laid down in the cooperation agreements.

**X. Submission and Assessment of the Mid-term and Final Scientific Report of the Project**

53 The project implementer shall submit to the Council, through the Information System, the mid-term scientific report of the project within one month from the date on which half of the project implementation period has elapsed; and the final scientific report of the project within one month of the end date of the project as laid down in the project agreement. Where the duration of the project has been extended in accordance with Paragraph 51 of the Regulation, the project implementer shall submit the final scientific report within one month of the expiry of the extension period in the information system.

54 The Council shall ensure that experts who meet the requirements laid down in Paragraphs 23 and 24 of the Cabinet Regulation are involved in the assessment of the project’s mid-term scientific report and final scientific report of the project in accordance with the procedure laid down in Paragraph 46 of the Cabinet Regulation.

55 The Council:

55.1 shall ensure that the mid-term scientific report or the final scientific report of the project is assessed by at least two experts within two months in accordance with the procedure laid down in Paragraph 46 of the Cabinet Regulation, by filling out Annex 10 to the Regulations “Project mid-term/individual/consolidated assessment form for the final scientific report” in accordance with the methodology for carrying out the expert assessment. If the experts cannot agree on a consolidated assessment of the mid-term scientific report or the final scientific report of the project, the Council shall engage another expert who shall assess the mid-term scientific report or the final scientific report of the project and, taking into account the contributions of the experts previously engaged, i.e. the individual assessments of the mid-term scientific report and the final scientific report of the project,prepare and submit in the information system a consolidated assessment of the mid-term scientific report and/or of the final scientific report of the project, subject to prior coordination with the other experts who have provided individual assessments of the mid-term scientific report and of the final scientific report of the project;

55.2. shall summarise the recommendations included in the consolidated expert assessment of the mid-term scientific report or the final scientific report of the project and submit them for consideration by the Commission, which shall decide, within its terms of reference, on the necessity and feasibility of implementing those recommendations in the execution of the project concerned, instructing the Council to amend the project agreement accordingly, if necessary.

**XI. Mid-term and final report of the council on the implementation of the programme**

 56 The Council shall, in accordance with Paragraph 7.6 and Paragraph 50 of the Cabinet Regulation, prepare the mid-term or final report of the Council on the implementation of the programme (hereinafter – the Council’s report) within four months of the completion of the evaluation of mid-term scientific reports or final scientific reports of all projects of the Programme.

 57 The content of the Council report includes:

57.1 statistics on funded projects (human resources involved, MSc/PhD theses defended);

57.2 The results achieved and their description in line with the programme’s objective and tasks in conformity with the Cabinet Order;

57.3 a description of the scientific cooperation (for example, at international level, consortia, planned applications to international research and innovation programmes of the European Union, including Horizon Europe);

57.4 Socio-economic impact of project results (measures implemented at mid-term, concrete measures implemented at closure in line with the common (horizontal) objectives of the programme);

 57.5 information on the publication of project results in open access, as well as in repositories suitable for depositing research data (using FAIR - *Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable[[2]](#footnote-2)* principles);

57.6 other information as decided by the Commission.

**XII. Information and publicity requirements**

58 The project implementer undertakes to publish the project information (including on the project implementation, scientific group, activities and achieved results) on the project implementer’s website and undertakes to ensure that this information is maintained and updated according to the achieved project results for at least five years from the date of signing of the certificate of acceptance-delivery on project execution as laid down in sub-paragraph 59.1.2 of the Cabinet Regulation, which is an annex to the project agreement.

59 The project implementer shall, in the manner and within the deadlines set in the project agreement, ensure the following:

59.1. providing information to the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development on policy recommendations and other project results;

59.2 providing information to other ministries on suggestions to implement policy;

59.3 closely cooperate with line ministries in communicating and distributing project results;

59.4 provide information about the implementation of the project financed under the tender to the Council, which conducts the communication and public information activities on the implementation of the project financed under the call for proposals. The Council compiles this information and makes it available to the public. The Project Implementer shall cooperate with the Council and participate in public information and communication activities organised by the Council, including preparation of information on the project and its results in joint seminars on the progress of project implementation.

60 To promote the visibility of the project, the project implementer uses the common graphic identity of the state research programmes[[3]](#footnote-3) as a basis and may additionally create a visual identity mark describing the project and including an abbreviation of the project name, which is consistent with the common graphic identity of the state research programmes. If the project’s established visual identity is used, it shall be used only in conjunction with the common graphic identity (or programme logo) of the state research programmes.

61 The project implementer and project collaboration partners (if applicable) shall refer to the name of the programme, the source of funding and the project number when carrying out public information activities, publishing scientific articles and other project results, when participating in conferences or otherwise presenting project results and activities, or shall use the project's visual identity mark referred to in Paragraph 60 of the Regulations. "The Guidelines for publicity activities under FLPP and VPP projects" (approved by Council Order No. 13 from 14 April 2021) are available here: <https://www.lzp.gov.lv/lv/media/25/download?attachment>.

**XIII. Closing issues**

62 Questions regarding the preparation and submission of the project application shall be sent to the following e-mail address no later than two working days before the deadline for submission of the project application: vpp@lzp.gov.lv. Answers to questions sent by a project applicant are sent electronically, frequently asked questions and answers are published on the Council's website [www.lzp.gov.lv](http://www.lzp.gov.lv). Other questions about the implementation of the programme should also be sent to the e-mail address provided.

63 Information on project applications approved by the commission is published on the websites: [www.izm.gov.lv](http://www.izm.gov.lv) and [www.lzp.gov.lv](http://www.lzp.gov.lv).

Coordinated with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development.

**Annexes**

**Annex 1** “Project application”;

**Annex 2** “Methodology for the Preparation and Submission of the Project Application, the Mid-term Scientific Report, and the Final Scientific Report;

**Annex 3** “Methodology for the Assessment of the Conformity of a Project Application with the Administrative Assessment Criteria”;

**Annex 4** “Administrative conformity assessment criteria form”;

**Annex 5** “Declaration of absence of conflict of interest and maintenance of confidentiality”;

**Appendix 6** “Service contract for scientific evaluation”;

**Annex 7**”Methodology for Carrying out the Expert -examination (Project application, Mid-term/Final Scientific Report)";

**Annex 8** “Project application examination individual/consolidated assessment form”;

**Annex 9** Agreement on the Implementation of the National Research Programme “Development of research identified in the Biodiversity Priority Actions Programme””:

Annex 9.1 "Part A of the Project Application and Part B of the Project Application";

Annex 9.2 “Breakdown of Funding”;

Annex 9.3 “Recommendations for the Project Implementation”;

Annex 9.4 “Calculation of the Value of Project Results as a Percentage of the Total Project Cost”;

Annex 9.5 “Certificate of Acceptance-Transfer on the Implementation of the Project of the National Research Programme”

Annex 9.6 “Plan for the Consolidation of Results”;

Annex 9.7 “Financial Statement for the Implementation of the Project of National Research Programme of 20\_\_\_”;

Annex 9.8 “Changes to the Contractual Amount up to 30% for a Project of the National Research Programme”;

Annex 9.9 “Changes in the Scientific Group of a Project of the National Research Programme Exceeding 20%”;

Annex 9.10 “Mid-term/Final Scientific Report Form of a Project”;

Annex 9.11 “List of Results”;

Annex 9.12 “Content Report”;

Annex 9.13 “List of the Scientific Group”.

Annex 9.14 “Changes in the Scientific Group for the project of the National Research Programme (project manager – principal contractor)”;

**Annex 10** “Individual/Consolidated Assessment Form of a Mid-term/Final Scientific Report of the Project”.

**Annex 11** “Establishing, Maintaining and Implementing a Plan for Research Data Management”.

**Annex 12** “Work Tasks of the Research Application for Performance of Tasks Set by Paragraph 6 of the Cabinet Regulation No. 252 of 2 April 2024 “On the National Research Programme "Development of Research Identified in the Biodiversity Priority Actions Programme''"

1. For more information, see here <https://www.lzp.gov.lv/lv/fundamentalo-un-lietisko-petijumu-projektu-2023-gada-atklatais-konkurss> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.lzp.gov.lv/lv/media/105/download?attachment> (see the introductory section of this page for the rest of the materials: <https://www.lzp.gov.lv/lv/valsts-petijumu-programma-vpp>) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)