



Ministry of
Education, Science
and Innovation

PROGRAMME OF COOPERATION WITH THE SCIENTIFIC DIASPORA 2025

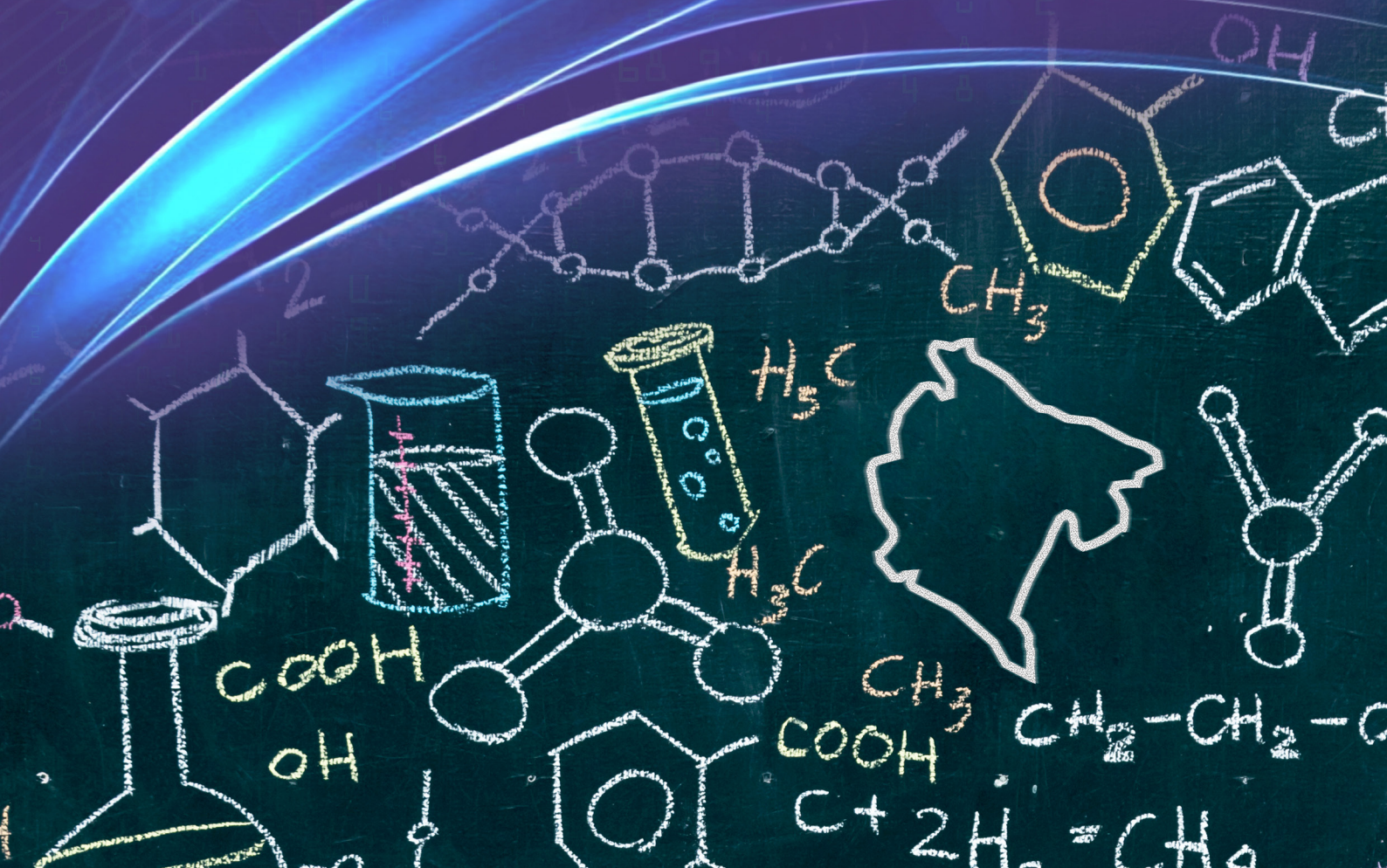




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INTRODUCTION

Basis for the Adoption of the Programme

At the beginning of July 2024, the Government of Montenegro adopted the *Strategy for Scientific Research Activities of Montenegro 2024–2028*¹ with the Action Plan for the period 2024–2025, which represents the most important sectoral strategic document in the field of science and research.

The Strategy defines three strategic goals, the second of which refers to *Strengthening of the human resources and institutional capacities in the field of science and research*. In order to achieve this strategic goal, among others, *Operational Goal 2.1: Support to hiring young researchers* has been identified, within which *Activity 2.1.4: Preparatory activity on the Programme for Cooperation with the Scientific Diaspora* is envisaged. The main aim of this activity is to strengthen connections with the scientific diaspora, which will enable higher-quality research, foster cooperation with international partners, and encourage the diaspora to become more actively involved in research in Montenegro.

In addition to the mandatory partners from scientific research institutions abroad, this programme also enables partnerships with scientific research institutions and the business sector in Montenegro, intending to create new commercial knowledge.

The Strategy has also defined *the priorities of scientific research activities*, namely:

- Sustainable agriculture and the food value chain;
- Energy and sustainable environment;
- Sustainable and health tourism;
- Science, education and culture;
- Medicine and health;
- Socio-political and socio-economic challenges of Montenegrin society;
- New materials, technologies, products and services;
- Natural disaster risk management;
- Information and communication technologies.

In the Work Programme of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation for 2025², within the Area of Science and Innovation, section 3. Other Activities, the implementation of the Programme/Call for Support of Cooperation with the Scientific Diaspora has been planned for the third/fourth quarter of 2025.

In the part concerning the legal framework for scientific research activities, the basis for the adoption of the Research Grants Programme for Promoting Excellence has been established in the *Law on Scientific Research Activities* (*“Official Gazette of Montenegro”*, No. 51/25)³, as follows:

- Article 11 stipulates that the funds from the state budget assigned for the financing or co-financing of scientific research activities shall be allocated on the basis of a public call announced by the Ministry.
- Article 43 stipulates that the scientific research activity may be funded and/or co-funded from the state budget, local self-government units, financial resources of scientific research institutions, donations, and other sources in accordance with the Law, as well as through national and international programmes and projects implemented in Montenegro.
Financing/co-financing of scientific research activity from the state budget shall include the granting of funds for:

1 <https://www.gov.me/clanak/strategija-naucnoistrzivacke-djelatnosti-2024-2028>

2 <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/c72856e6-27ca-47d4-91d0-7a5afc296971>

3 <https://www.sluzbenilist.me/propisi/2730B46C-EC20-4151-A2D9-890889700B9A>

- national or international scientific research programmes and projects implemented by scientific research institutions; and
- other activities of scientists and researchers that promote scientific research work and are important for the conduct of scientific research activity.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, at the proposal of the Council for Scientific Research Activities, has nominated the **Programme of Cooperation with the Scientific Diaspora** for adoption.

Rationale for the Adoption of the Programme

In the contemporary environment of global competitiveness and the need for multidisciplinary approaches, international mobility and cooperation represent key mechanisms for strengthening the research capacities of Montenegrin scientists and the innovation community. A special role in this process is played by the Montenegrin scientific diaspora, which, through its experience gained at prestigious international institutions, its access to modern technologies, and involvement in global research networks, can significantly contribute to the enhancement of national knowledge, skills, and research infrastructure. In recent years, the diaspora has demonstrated a strong interest in joint projects and the transfer of knowledge and technologies, thereby confirming its key role as a bridge between Montenegro and the European, as well as the global, research area. The Programme of Cooperation with the Scientific Diaspora is aimed at strengthening the capacities of universities, research centres, and small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as establishing sustainable links with Montenegrin researchers at prestigious international institutions.

The inclusion of young researchers in projects with scientists from the diaspora is also encouraged, providing mentorship, knowledge exchange, and the development of new research competences. The focus is on improving the career paths of young researchers at the doctoral and postdoctoral level, with the support of leading national and international mentors, thereby strengthening Montenegro's research capacities in the long term.

Grants under the Programme of Scientific Cooperation also include the co-financing of applied research, cooperation with the business sector, and activities with potential for commercial application, thus fostering the development of innovations, patents, and other results that contribute to strengthening the Montenegrin economy.

In the long run, the Programme will strengthen Montenegro's integration into the European Research Area, increase the international competitiveness of national institutions, enable more efficient use of EU funds, and enhance the competitiveness of the business sector through the transfer of knowledge and technologies from the scientific sector. The networking of scientists from the diaspora and from Montenegro provides the basis for the sustainable development of science, research, and innovation, while also opening opportunities for the return of scientists and researchers to their home country.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME OF SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION

I Subject and Objectives of the Programme

The Programme of Cooperation with the Scientific Diaspora is aimed at awarding non-repayable funds in the form of grants that support excellent collaborative projects between licensed scientific research institutions in Montenegro, the scientific diaspora, their affiliated institutions abroad, as well as other international and national partners. In this way, we seek to enable the effective transfer of knowledge, methodologies, technologies, and innovations into Montenegro's scientific research and innovation community, while at the same time strengthening international cooperation and connecting Montenegrin scientists and innovators with global networks of science and innovation.

In the long term, the objectives of the Programme, expected to be achieved within five years after the completion of the projects, are as follows:

- Strengthening the capacities of licensed scientific research institutions to conduct top-level research through the transfer of knowledge, methodologies, and technologies from prestigious institutions abroad;
- Career development of young researchers;
- Enhancement of international cooperation through an increased number of joint research projects and greater visibility of Montenegrin scientific research institutions;
- Creation of high-quality projects ready for further development and commercialisation;
- Strengthening the capacity to absorb EU funds.
-

The results expected immediately after the completion of the projects are as follows:

- A higher number of employees engaged in research and development activities;
- Strengthened knowledge and skills required for research and development activities;
- Improved access to and optimal use of scientific research equipment;
- Enhancement and expansion of international mobility activities;
- Increased collaborative research activities between national and international scientific research institutions.

II Priority Research Areas

The Programme is based on the priorities of scientific research activities defined by the Strategy for Scientific Research Activities of Montenegro 2024–2028, which are as follows:

1. Sustainable agriculture and the food value chain;
2. Energy and sustainable environment;
3. Sustainable and health tourism;
4. Science, education and culture;
5. Medicine and health;
6. Socio-political and socio-economic challenges of Montenegrin society;
7. New materials, technologies, products and services;
8. Natural disaster risk management;
9. Information and communication technologies.

This means that the subject of the projects submitted under the Programme of Cooperation with the Scientific Diaspora must fall within one of the above-mentioned priorities of scientific research activities.

III Financial Framework of the Programme

The total value of the 2025 Programme of Cooperation with the Scientific Diaspora amounts to €1,100,000.00 for the period 2025–2027, while for 2025, an amount of €520,000.00 has been planned for the co-financing of the first year of research under the approved projects within this Programme, i.e. the accompanying Call.

The funds of €520,000.00 for 2025 have been approved by the *Law on the Budget of Montenegro for 2025*⁴, namely: Org. code 40701 – Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, Programme 19 040 Development of Science and Technology, Subprogramme 19 040 001 Scientific Research Activities, Activity 19 040 001 003 New Programmes and Calls for Science and Research, 431-9 Other Transfers to Institutions.

Grants for the implementation of projects shall be awarded for a period of two (2) years. For implementing and financing this Programme, the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation shall announce a **Call for financing projects of cooperation with the scientific diaspora**⁵.

IV Eligibility Criteria – Applicant and Partners

IV1 Applicant

The applicant must be a licensed scientific research institution with its registered seat in Montenegro, in accordance with the Law on Scientific Research Activities (“Official Gazette of Montenegro”, No. 51/25)⁶.

Additionally, depending on the type of institution, the following conditions must be met:

a) If the applicant is a research institution from Montenegro, it must qualify as:

a “research and knowledge-dissemination organisation” or a “research organisation”, meaning an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer offices, innovation intermediaries, natural persons, or virtual collaborative entities focused on research), regardless of its legal status (organisation under public or private law) or method of financing, whose primary goal is to carry out fundamental research, industrial research, or experimental development independently, or to disseminate the results of these activities to the wider public through teaching, publications, or knowledge transfer, in accordance with the EU Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (2022/C 414/01), Chapter 1.3, point 16 (ff)⁷.

b) If the applicant is a business entity, it must:

- be registered in the Central Register of Business Entities of Montenegro;
- have its registered seat in the territory of Montenegro;
- have fulfilled all obligations regarding regular payment of taxes and contributions;
- not be subject to pre-bankruptcy, bankruptcy, or liquidation proceedings, nor have suspended regular business activities, in accordance with national regulations; and
- not qualify as an undertaking in difficulty according to the financial statements for the previous year (2024).

4 <https://www.sluzbenilist.me/propisi/3B74EDB7-095E-4176-9B7C-2777D6C50FA8>

5 In accordance with Article 11 of the Law on Scientific Research Activities (“Official Gazette of Montenegro”, No. 51/25)

6 <https://www.sluzbenilist.me/propisi/2730B46C-EC20-4151-A2D9-890889700B9A?page=1>

7 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XC1028\(03\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XC1028(03))

IV2 Required Partner

The applicant shall be required to implement the project in cooperation with a partner institution outside Montenegro where the scientist from the diaspora is employed or engaged.

Partner institutions based outside Montenegro may include universities, research institutes, or virtual collaborative entities focused on research, regardless of their legal status (organisations under public or private law), as well as business entities whose activities include research and development.

The Montenegrin scientific diaspora consists of natural persons living and working abroad who belong to one of the following categories:

- persons who were born, educated, or employed in Montenegro and are currently engaged in scientific research activities abroad;
- citizens of Montenegro who temporarily or permanently reside abroad and are engaged in scientific research activities;
- persons of Montenegrin origin, regardless of their citizenship, who maintain family, cultural, or professional ties with Montenegro and are currently engaged in scientific research activities abroad.

Affiliation with the Montenegrin scientific diaspora shall be proven by appropriate documentation, such as birth certificates, certificates of education or employment in Montenegro, proof of Montenegrin citizenship or origin, documentation of engagement abroad, or other relevant evidence as determined by the Ministry through the Call. The project leader from Montenegro shall submit the application to the Call, while partnership with at least one scientist from the diaspora shall be required. Within the project, this scientist assumes the role of Coordinator from the diaspora.

IV3 Other Partners

The applicant may also have other partners in the project, who may be:

- a. other scientific research institutions from Montenegro or abroad; or
- b. business entities with their registered seat in Montenegro.

Eligible partners referred to in point IV3, if they are scientific research institutions from Montenegro, must be licensed in accordance with the *Law on Scientific Research Activities* ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 51/25). They must also meet the same additional requirement as the Applicant referred to in point IV1a.

Eligible partners referred to in point IV3, if they are scientific research institutions from abroad, may include universities, research institutes, or virtual collaborative entities focused on research, regardless of their legal status (organisations under public or private law), as well as business entities whose activities include research and development.

The grants awarded to applicants referred to in point IV1a and partners referred to in point IV3a do not constitute State aid, provided that they are research and knowledge-dissemination organisations ("research organisations") and do not meet the conditions for being considered an undertaking. These conditions do not depend on their legal status, i.e. whether they are established under public or private law, nor on their economic nature, i.e. whether or not they seek to generate profit. What is decisive for not meeting the conditions of the definition of an undertaking is the fact that the economic activities consisting of the offering of products or services on a given market do not exceed 20% of the organisation's overall annual capacity. In cases where a research organisation carries out both economic and non-economic activities, public funding of the non-economic activities shall not fall under Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, provided that the two types of activities, their costs, funding, and revenues can be clearly separated to effectively avoid

cross-subsidisation of the economic activity. The applicant referred to in point IV1a and the partners referred to in point IV3a shall be obliged to study the *Guidelines for Beneficiaries regarding the application of State aid rules* and compliance with the main provisions, and to confirm this by means of the Applicant's/Partner's Declaration (Declaration on Non-economic Activities).

The grants awarded to applicants referred to in point IV1b and to other partners that are also business entities constitute de minimis aid within the meaning of the Law on State Aid Control ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 012/18)⁸.

V Financial Conditions and Project Duration

The value of a project may range **from €90,000.00 to €120,000.00 for a period of two (2) research years.**

The total value of an individual project includes:

- the grant funds to be awarded to the individual project by the Ministry, covering part of the eligible project costs, and
- the funds of the Applicant/partner for the co-financing of the remaining value of the eligible costs.

In accordance with the Rulebook on the Conditions for Approving and the Manner of Using Funds from the State Budget for the Financing or Co-financing of Scientific Research Activities, the allocation of funds includes a balanced distribution of (co-)financing for each field of science: natural sciences, engineering and technology, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, social sciences, and humanities and the arts. This distribution aims to ensure the balanced development of all fields of science, in line with the strategic commitments of Montenegro and the priorities defined by the Strategy for Scientific Research Activities 2024–2028.

When drawing up the final evaluation ranking list, funds shall be awarded to projects in all fields of science, under the following conditions:

- financing shall be granted only to projects that have achieved the minimum final score set by the Programme;
- in each field of science, at least one project shall be financed, provided it achieves the minimum final score set by the Programme;
- if in a particular field no applications meet the minimum quality criteria, the funds allocated for that field shall be reallocated to projects from other fields, according to their order on the evaluation ranking list.

V1 Co-financing by the Applicant/Partner

The Applicant shall be obliged to secure co-financing from its own funds, the funds of partner institutions, or external financing (all sources that do not constitute public national or international funding). The Programme sets co-financing by the Ministry at up to 90% of the total project value (up to €120,000.00), while the Applicant shall be obliged to provide at least 10% of the project value as co-financing from its own funds, the funds of partner institutions, or external financing.

Project co-financing must be provided exclusively in cash and may come from several institutions (the Applicant, project partners, donors, etc.). Co-financing funds may be used only for eligible costs under this Programme, which are necessary for the implementation and achievement of the project objectives.

8 <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/c44499b7-4a41-4758-a8db-ea55d5358c3a>

V2 Double Funding

The principle of the avoidance of double funding implies that double funding of the same costs from the state budget, European Union programmes, international sources, or other providers of State aid must be avoided. Applicants must not request or be beneficiaries of funds from the state budget, European Union programmes, international sources, or other providers of State aid for costs that shall be reimbursed under the submitted project and for the co-financing of the approved project.

VI Number of Applications per Applicant

The Applicant may submit multiple project proposals, with the proviso that the same costs must not be financed twice for an individual grant beneficiary from the state budget, EU programmes, or international sources.

VII Eligible Project Activities

The funds allocated under the Programme shall be used to cover part of the eligible project costs, which must include:

- a. research activities within the project;
- b. strengthening the capacities of scientific research institutions;
- c. procurement of research equipment and materials;
- d. short-term mobility of researchers, which includes activities related to mobility and networking, and may cover: participation in conferences, fieldwork in Montenegro aimed at collecting materials and data related to the research, stays at research organisations abroad, participation in seminars, and all types of training that contribute to the professional development of researchers, enhancing their research competences and contributing to the achievement of the general and specific objectives of the project, etc.
- e. medium-term researcher mobility, which includes activities related to mobility and networking, i.e. research stays at the partner institution abroad lasting from 1 to 3 months, contributing to the achievement of the general and specific objectives of the project; and
- f. supporting consultancy services, which include services necessary for achieving the project objectives, i.e. for the transfer of knowledge, such as expert advice in knowledge and skills not possessed by the project team. This may, for example, relate to the analysis of scientific results, consultancy on the commercialisation of scientific results, etc.

VIII Ineligible Project Activities

The funds allocated under the Programme may not be used for:

- the purchase of used equipment;
- the purchase of passenger, freight, and commercial vehicles;
- the rental of equipment, tools, and materials;
- any type of construction works;
- the purchase of real estate;
- cash withdrawals from the project account.

All other activities not listed in point VIII of the Programme shall be also considered ineligible.

IX Eligible Costs

- **Direct Costs**
- a. **Costs of procurement of equipment** that is exclusively related to the research proposed in the project. These costs may also include specific IT equipment and software solutions if they are necessary for carrying out the proposed research. The costs related to the procurement of equipment (delivery, installation, calibration, and training for use provided by the equipment supplier) are also eligible. The category *equipment* includes items whose unit value exceeds €300.00, excluding VAT. The Applicant must ensure that the equipment is truly necessary for the implementation of the project and must justify that the project could not be carried out without it. Only the Applicant has the right to procure equipment valued above €1,500.00.
The total amount of equipment procurement costs must not exceed 40% of the total project value.
- b. **Costs of using equipment at another institution, according to the valid price list of that institution, if necessary for the implementation of the project.** The right to use equipment at another institution shall be granted to the Applicant and other partners from Montenegro.
The total amount of costs for using equipment at another institution must not exceed 30% of the total project value.
- c. **Costs of consumables for the project refer to materials and devices whose unit value is less than €300.00 excluding VAT.** The right to procure consumables shall be granted to the Applicant, the partner institution abroad that is the required partner, and other partners.
The total amount of consumables costs must not exceed 25% of the total project value.
- d. **Research staff costs refer to newly employed staff working on the implementation of the project, as well as to supplementary work/fees for existing employees.** The right to research staff costs shall be granted only to the Applicant. These costs cover newly employed staff with whom the Applicant shall conclude an employment contract, and are recognised as “Gross 2”, i.e. the annual salary together with mandatory social security contributions⁹. For existing employees, supplementary work/fees are allowed, which may be financed up to a maximum of 30% of the “Gross 2” salary¹⁰.
The total amount of research staff costs must not exceed 25% of the total project value for projects that do not foresee new employment, or 40% of the total project value for projects that provide for new employment.
- e. **Costs of short-term mobility related to the implementation of the project,** which include daily allowances (exclusively for short-term travel), accommodation costs, and travel expenses. The right to short-term mobility costs shall be granted to the Applicant, the partner institution abroad that is the required partner, and other partners.
- f. **Costs of medium-term mobility related to the implementation of the project,** which include accommodation costs, travel expenses, health insurance costs, and a monthly allowance for personal expenses not exceeding €800 per month. The right to medium-term mobility costs shall be granted to the Applicant and other partners from Montenegro.
The total amount of mobility costs under points e. and f. must not exceed 30% of the total project value.
- g. **Costs of supporting consultancy services** refer to those services for which the project team does not possess the expertise, but which are necessary for the implementation of the project. Such costs may include the preparation and analysis of scientific results, consultancy on the commercialisation of scientific results, etc. The right to the supporting consultancy service costs shall be granted to the Applicant.
The total amount of supporting consultancy service costs must not exceed 15% of the total project value.

⁹ Other salary supplements, such as jubilee awards, annual leave allowances, etc., are not eligible for co-financing under the Programme.

¹⁰ Gross salary (Gross 1) includes the net salary, personal income tax, and mandatory social security contributions from the salary paid by the employer on behalf of the employee. However, these are not all fiscal obligations borne by the employer, as there are also surtaxes and the employer's contributions, which, when added to “Gross 1”, constitute the so-called “Gross 2”.

- h. **Dissemination costs**, which include publication costs of scientific papers, proofreading, conference fees, and the costs of organising workshops/conferences/lectures related to the subject of the proposed project. The right to dissemination costs shall be granted to the Applicant and other partners from Montenegro.
The total amount of dissemination costs must not exceed 15% of the total project value.
- i. VAT on eligible costs for which the Applicant/partner cannot obtain reimbursement.

- Indirect Costs

Indirect costs incurred as a result of project implementation by the Applicant may amount to up to 10% of the total project value. The right to indirect costs shall be granted exclusively to the Applicant.

Indirect costs incurred during project implementation shall not be subject to justification in the Financial Report and may include:

- costs of premises maintenance (statutory periodic inspections, replacement of used materials and components, periodic and extraordinary works and repairs);
- utility costs, including heating/cooling, electricity, water, waste disposal, etc.;
- costs related to the procurement of equipment, such as customs and administrative charges, freight forwarding, storage, and handling costs, etc.; and
- costs of minor equipment.

X Ineligible Costs

Ineligible costs are considered to be all costs that cannot be counted as eligible costs.

XI Eligibility Criteria for the Principal Investigator (PI) and the Project (Research) Team

Criteria for the Principal Investigator (PI):

- *a person holding a scientific or equivalent academic title, in accordance with the Law;*
- *has an employment contract or another form of contractual cooperation with the institution that is the Applicant, for a period at least equal to the project implementation period.*

The research and management capacities of the Principal Investigator (PI) shall be assessed by the evaluators based on the information provided in the CV, relating to the number and quality of scientific publications, the number and quality of projects in which he/she has participated as PI or collaborator, scientific and research awards, activities related to the protection and use of intellectual property, international cooperation, and cooperation with the business sector.

The Principal Investigator (PI) may be registered as PI of only one project under the Programme of Cooperation with the Scientific Diaspora within the same Call.

Criteria for the Coordinator from the Diaspora:

- *has obtained a PhD degree at least three years prior to the deadline for submission of applications to the Call;*
- *has an employment contract or another form of contractual cooperation with the institution that is the required partner, for a period at least equal to the project implementation period.*

The Coordinator from the Diaspora may be registered as Coordinator of only one project under the Programme of Cooperation with the Scientific Diaspora within the same Call.

Minimum requirements for a member of the project (research) team:

- *has a completed higher education degree with at least 240 ECTS credits.*

XII Ethical Issues

If the project proposal involves any ethical issue, the Applicant shall be obliged to provide approval from the Ethics Committee (if applicable) and/or submit other relevant evidence regarding the manner of addressing the ethical issue.

XIII Contents of the Application

The project application should include:

- α. A signed and stamped/electronically signed Application Form of the Applicant;
- β. The project Financial Plan;
- χ. CVs of the The Principal Investigator; the Coordinator from the diaspora; and key members of the project team (researchers in the research team) – up to five members;
- δ. A Statement on secured financial contribution for the project implementation from own sources (the Applicant and/or partners providing co-financing funds);
- ε. A Statement of the required partner on participation in the project and their contribution, confirming the acceptance of all responsibilities arising from and in connection with providing support to the proposed research, including the acceptance of and support to collaborators from Montenegro in accordance with the proposed plan.
- φ. Statements of other partners on their participation in the implementation of the project (where applicable), whereby the legal entities involved declare that they accept all responsibilities arising from and in connection with the provision of support to the proposed research;
- γ. Statement of the Applicant on the accuracy of the data provided, avoidance of double funding, and acceptance of the terms of the Call, signed and stamped by the authorised representative;
- η. Statement of the Applicant and partners with a registered seat in Montenegro on the performance of non-economic activities, signed by the authorised representative – applicable only to those entities which meet the requirements of being licensed research organizations in accordance with the Law on Scientific Research Activities (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 51/25) and of being “research and knowledge dissemination organizations” in accordance with the EU Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (2022/C 414/01), Chapter 1.3, point 16 (ff), and Commission Regulation (EU) No. 651/2014, Article 2, point 83¹¹; and
- ι. Statement on the non-recoverability of VAT, signed by the representative of the organization (Applicant and/or partners).

Statements under items d), g), and h) must be certified by a notary.

In addition, the partner from the business sector – a company with its registered seat in Montenegro, shall be required to submit the following:

- A copy of the Extract from the Central Register of Business Entities;
- Financial statements for the previous year (2024);
- A certificate of settled tax obligations or an appropriate document on the rescheduling of tax debt; and
- A certificate or confirmation that no bankruptcy or liquidation proceedings have been initiated or are being conducted against the company.

XIV Grant Award Procedure

XIV1 Application Procedure

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation shall launch a Call for Proposals for the co-financing of projects in cooperation with the scientific diaspora.

¹¹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2014.187.01.0001.01.ENG#:~:text=COMMISSION%20REGULATION%20%28EU%29%20No%20651%2F2014%20of%2017%20June,of%20Articles%20107%20and%20108%20of%20the%20Treaty

The Call shall remain open for a minimum of 45 days.

The assessment of project applications shall involve the following steps:

- a. Administrative check of project applications;
- b. Evaluation of project applications against the award criteria; and
- c. Acceptance/rejection of projects for co-financing.

XIV2 Administrative Check of Project Applications

The administrative check of project applications submitted under the Call shall be carried out by the Ministry.

Administrative criteria:

- α) All required documentation referred to in Section XIII has been submitted;
- β) The documentation is duly signed and stamped/ electronically signed by the authorised persons;
- χ) The application content has been completed using the prescribed templates, which form an integral part of this Programme;
- δ) The applicant must be a licensed research organisation in accordance with the Law on Scientific Research Activities (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 51/25);
- ε) The applicant must comply with the definition of a “research and knowledge dissemination organisation” in accordance with the EU Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2022/C 414/01), Chapter 1.3, point 16 (ff), and/or Commission Regulation (EU) No. 651/2014, Article 2, point 83, and/or must be registered in the Central Register of Business Entities of Montenegro;
- φ) Montenegrin partners that are research organisations must be licensed research institutions in accordance with the Law on Scientific Research Activities (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 51/25), and must comply with the definition of a “research and knowledge dissemination organisation” in line with the EU Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2022/C 414/01), Chapter 1.3, point 16 (ff), and/or Commission Regulation (EU) No. 651/2014, Article 2, point 83, or must be registered in the Central Register of Business Entities of Montenegro;
- γ) The economic activities, consisting of the offering of products or services on a given market, of the Applicant and Montenegrin partners that meet the definition of a “research and knowledge dissemination organisation” shall not exceed 20% of the overall annual capacity of the research organisation;
- η) The Applicant or partners that are enterprises are registered in the Central Register of Business Entities of Montenegro, have fulfilled all obligations regarding the regular payment of taxes and contributions; are not subject to pre-bankruptcy, bankruptcy or liquidation proceedings; have not suspended regular business activities, etc., in accordance with national legislation; and are not undertakings in difficulty according to the financial statements for the previous year (2024);
- ι) The application has been submitted in the manner and within the deadline specified in the Call;
- φ) According to the Financial Plan, the amount of grant funding requested from the Ministry is not less than EUR 90,000.00 and not more than EUR 120,000.00;
- κ) The project duration is two (2) years;
- λ) The project is in line with the priorities of scientific research activities set out in the Strategy for Scientific Research Activities of Montenegro 2024–2028, with the Action Plan for the period 2024–2025.

Only applications that meet the administrative criteria shall be admitted to the evaluation against the award criteria.

XIV3 Evaluation of Project Applications against the Award Criteria

Following the receipt of project applications, each application shall be reviewed by three evaluators, who are international experts in the relevant field of research to which the project relates.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation shall, together with the documentation for the Call, prepare a Declaration of Conflict of Interest for evaluators, as well as the Procedure for conducting the project evaluation process. In addition, the Ministry shall launch an international Call for Expressions of Interest for evaluators of applications submitted under the Call.

Evaluation criteria for project applications are:

1. Scientific quality, originality and feasibility of the proposed research, taking into account the three sub-criteria:

1.1. Does the proposed research represent an important contribution in the field of science to which the research topic belongs?

This criterion assesses the contribution of the proposed research to the development of the respective scientific field. Does the proposed research contribute to the generation of new knowledge, and what is its potential to produce results relevant for future research? What is the scientific quality of the research? Does the proposed research demonstrate a novel approach to the research topic?

- 1) The proposed research is of key importance for the relevant scientific field. It demonstrates research quality and originality, with the potential to significantly advance the understanding of the proposed topic;
- 2) The proposed research can be considered relevant, but does not represent a significant breakthrough within the respective field of research;
- 3) The proposed research has limited importance within the respective field of research and does not stand out in comparison with existing studies on the proposed topic;
- 4) The proposed research is of no relevance within the respective field of research and does not stand out in comparison with existing studies on the proposed topic; and
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

1.2. Are the objectives, purpose and expected results of the proposed research clearly defined and well justified?

This criterion assesses whether the objectives, purpose and expected results of the proposed research are clearly defined and well justified. Can it be objectively measured whether the proposed objectives and expected results of the research will be achieved? Are the proposed objectives and expected results realistic and achievable?

- 1) The objectives, purpose and expected results of the project are exceptionally clearly defined and well justified;
- 2) The objectives, purpose and expected results of the project are mostly clearly defined and well justified, but in one segment, they are not sufficiently defined and justified;
- 3) The objectives, purpose and expected results of the project are clearly defined and well justified in part of the proposal, but in several segments they are not sufficiently defined and justified;
- 4) The objectives, purpose and expected results of the project are not clearly defined or well justified; and
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

1.3. Feasibility of the proposed research

This criterion assesses whether the proposed research is feasible in terms of the suggested research methods, work plan, financial plan, composition of the research team, and whether it can be implemented within the proposed timeframe.

- 1) The proposed research is fully feasible;
- 2) The proposed research is feasible, but there is one segment whose feasibility is uncertain;
- 3) Part of the proposed research is feasible, while in several segments, feasibility is uncertain;
- 4) The proposed research is not feasible; and
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

2. Research and managerial qualities of the Principal Investigator, the Coordinator from the diaspora, and the project (research) team, taking into account the three sub-criteria

2.1. Research qualities of the Principal Investigator

This criterion assesses the past research achievements of the Principal Investigator based on the quality and number of scientific publications; the quality and number of projects in which the Principal Investigator has participated as a leader or collaborator; scientific and research awards; activities related to the protection and use of intellectual property; international cooperation; and cooperation with the business sector.

- 1) The Principal Investigator has achieved significant research results during their career;
- 2) The Principal Investigator has achieved very good research results during their career;
- 3) The Principal Investigator has achieved certain research results during their career;
- 4) The Principal Investigator has achieved minimal research results during their career; and
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

2.2. Managerial qualities of the Principal Investigator

This criterion assesses the managerial qualities of the Principal Investigator based on their experience in supervising postgraduate students and participation in research projects in the capacity of leader or collaborator.

- 1) The past achievements demonstrate excellent managerial qualities of the Principal Investigator;
- 2) The past achievements demonstrate very good managerial qualities of the Principal Investigator;
- 3) The past achievements demonstrate good managerial qualities of the Principal Investigator;
- 4) The past achievements demonstrate minimal managerial qualities of the Principal Investigator; and
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

2.3. Research qualities of the Coordinator from the diaspora

This criterion assesses the past research achievements of the Coordinator from the diaspora, based on the quality and number of scientific publications; the quality and number of projects in which the Coordinator from the diaspora has participated as a leader or collaborator; scientific and research awards; activities related to the protection and use of intellectual property; international cooperation; and cooperation with the business sector.

- 1) The Coordinator from the diaspora has achieved significant research results during their career;
- 2) The Coordinator from the diaspora has achieved very good research results during their career;
- 3) The Coordinator from the diaspora has achieved certain research results during their career;
- 4) The Coordinator from the diaspora has achieved minimal research results during their career; and
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

2.4. Research capacity and quality of the project (research) team

This criterion assesses the quality of the research team, i.e. whether the structure and competences of all team members are adequate for the implementation of the project.

- 1) The structure and competences of all team members are excellent;
- 2) The majority of the team has adequate competences and the overall team structure is very good;
- 3) Part of the team has adequate competences and the overall team structure is satisfactory;
- 4) The structure and competences of all team members are minimal; and
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

3. Potential of the proposed research to strengthen research capacities in Montenegro through knowledge, skills and technology transfer, infrastructure improvement and career development of researchers, taking into account the two sub-criteria

3.1. Potential of the proposed research for knowledge, skills and technology transfer and for infrastructure improvement

This criterion assesses to what extent the proposed research may contribute to the transfer of knowledge, skills and technologies from the foreign partner organisation to the Applicant and partner institutions in Montenegro, including the transfer and development of new methods, protocols or technologies, as well as the improvement of research infrastructure in terms of equipment modernisation, introduction of new platforms and tools, and mentoring and capacity building of researchers for working with advanced equipment and technologies.

- 1) The proposed research enables an exceptional and systematic transfer of at least one, and often several, components: knowledge, skills and technologies; development of new methods, protocols and/or technologies; and/or a significant improvement of research infrastructure.
- 2) The proposed research enables a substantial transfer of at least one component: knowledge, skills and/or technologies; development of new methods, protocols and/or technologies; and/or improvement of research infrastructure.
- 3) The proposed research enables a partial transfer of at least one component: knowledge, skills and/or technologies; development of new methods, protocols and/or technologies; and/or minor improvements in research infrastructure.
- 4) The proposed research enables a minimal transfer of at least one component: knowledge, skills and/or technologies; development of methods, protocols and/or technologies; and/or limited improvements of research infrastructure.
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

3.2. Potential of the proposed research for the career development of young researchers

This criterion assesses the potential of the proposed research to contribute to the career development of early-stage researchers, including doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers, through the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, relevant international experience and the development of innovations. Special emphasis is placed on the involvement of researchers from the diaspora as mentors, enabling knowledge transfer and additional international networking.

- 1) The proposed research makes a significant contribution to the career development of young researchers.
- 2) The proposed research makes a major contribution to the career development of young researchers.
- 3) The proposed research contributes to the career development of young researchers to some extent.
- 4) The proposed research has no significant potential for the career development of young researchers.
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

4. Sustainability potential of the proposed research, taking into account the two sub-criteria

4.1. Potential of the proposed research to achieve excellent scientific results and to ensure further sustainability of research through funding from competitive sources

This criterion assesses to what extent the proposed research can deliver excellent scientific results, foster international cooperation, generate new knowledge and skills, and thereby contribute to attracting international funding from programmes such as various European Union research and innovation programmes or similar funding sources.

- 1) The proposed research has excellent potential to attract international funding;
- 2) The proposed research has very good potential to attract international funding;
- 3) The proposed research has good potential to attract international funding;
- 4) The proposed research has no potential to attract international funding;
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

4.2. Potential of the proposed research to generate new knowledge with commercial application

The criterion assesses whether the proposed research may contribute to the generation of new knowledge applicable in the economic sector, innovations, commercial applications, patents, spin-offs, and other forms of protection and exploitation of intellectual property.

- 1) The proposed research will significantly contribute to the development of knowledge with potential for commercial use;
- 2) The proposed research will largely contribute to the development of knowledge with potential for commercial use;
- 3) The proposed research will, to some extent, contribute to the development of knowledge with potential for commercial use;
- 4) The proposed research has no potential to contribute to the development of knowledge for commercial use;
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

5. Financial plan of the proposed project, taking into account the two sub-criteria

5.1. Feasibility and justification of the financial plan

The criterion assesses to what extent the planned costs are clearly justified, proportionate to the project objectives and activities, and in line with the rules on eligible costs. Particular attention is given to transparency in the justification of costs, including human resources, research equipment, materials, mobility, and other project items.

- 1) The financial plan is detailed, feasible and fully justified; all costs are clearly linked to the project objectives.
- 2) The financial plan is largely feasible and justified, with minor shortcomings in the justification of certain items.
- 3) The financial plan is partially feasible and justified; the justification of certain costs is not entirely clear or is incomplete.
- 4) The financial plan is neither feasible nor justified; there is a significant discrepancy between the planned costs and the project objectives.
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

5.2. Efficiency and sustainability of the financial plan

The criterion assesses the potential of the financial plan to ensure efficient use of resources and to contribute to the long-term sustainability of the research results. Particular emphasis is placed on co-financing plans, diversification of funding sources, cost-effectiveness, and the possibility of continuing the research after the end of the funding period through the involvement of other sources.

- 1) The financial plan is efficient, ensures maximum value for money, and clearly foresees sustainability beyond the project's duration.
- 2) The financial plan is very good, provides for efficient use of resources and partially ensures the sustainability of the research.
- 3) The financial plan is moderately efficient; the sustainability of the research after the end of the funding period is not sufficiently elaborated.
- 4) The financial plan is not efficient and does not foresee the sustainability of the research after the end of the project.
- 5) The available documentation does not provide sufficient information for a sound evaluation of this criterion.

Evaluators assess the individual sub-criteria that make up each evaluation criterion, and each sub-criterion is scored on a five-point scale (from 1 to 5). The score for each criterion is calculated as the average of the scores given for its individual sub-criteria.

The scores of the evaluators for each evaluation criterion are of equal weight; therefore, the average score is calculated. Evaluators shall also provide, alongside each score, a written comment formulated in a way that gives applicants clear and constructive feedback.

The final score (K) is calculated according to the following formula:

$$K = 0.20I + 0.20II + 0.20III + 0.20IV + 0.20V$$

where I, II, III, IV and V represent the average scores from the three evaluators for the corresponding criterion, and **K** is the final score of the project proposal. The final score is calculated and rounded to two decimal places.

In order for a project proposal to be co-financed, it must **achieve a final score (K) of at least 4.00**.

XIV4 Acceptance/Rejection of Projects for Co-financing

Based on the final score (K) of the submitted projects, a final ranking list is established. Applicants shall be contacted by Ministry officials in the order of the ranking list and in line with the available budget, after which the conditions for project implementation shall be agreed. The selected applicants shall be required to submit the following additional documentation:

1. Documentation related to the calculation of salaries/fees:
 - 1.1. For newly employed staff: a draft contract (unsigned), as well as the document based on which the salary has been determined
 - 1.2. For existing employees: payroll slips for the three months preceding the date of publication of the Call.
1. A valid offer for costs exceeding €6,000.00, except for the costs referred to in point 1;
2. A cooperation/consortium agreement between the Applicant and all partner institutions involved in the implementation of the project, regulating mutual rights and obligations. This agreement shall define: the roles of the partners in the project, duration of the partnership, existing and newly created intellectual property, as well as know-how that may be generated during the implementation of the project, mutual arrangements regarding transfer of funds, data confidentiality, reporting, and retention of project documentation;
3. A provisional procurement plan; and
4. A declaration form for de minimis aid (for the Applicant and project partners performing economic activities).

If the evaluators provided comments relating to the improvement of the project proposal and amendments to the Financial Plan, the Ministry shall contact the Applicants to submit revised project proposals and Financial Plans in line with these comments.

Upon the conclusion of negotiations, Decisions on the acceptance or rejection of projects for co-financing shall be issued.

With the Applicants whose projects have been accepted for co-financing by Decision, the Ministry shall proceed to sign a Contract, which defines the mutual rights and obligations between the Applicant (Beneficiary) and the Funding Authority (the Ministry).

The list of beneficiaries with whom a Contract has been signed shall be published on the Ministry's website.

The following information shall be published:

- Name of the Beneficiary;
- Names of the partner institutions;
- Title of the project;
- Amount of the grant awarded to the project, as well as the amount of the Beneficiary's own co-financing; and
- A short description of the project.

The Beneficiary shall be required to hold appropriate documentation justifying each eligible and accepted project cost, with the exception of indirect costs.



2. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION WITHIN THE PROGRAMME OF SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION

Within the Programme of Cooperation with the Scientific Diaspora, the Beneficiary shall submit an Annual Report on the implementation of the project, together with Financial Reports, which also include Work Plans for the following period, using the template prescribed by the Ministry.

Upon completion of the project within the Programme, the Beneficiary shall submit to the Ministry a Final Report on the implementation of the project, together with a Financial Report, using the template prescribed by the Ministry.

The procedure for the evaluation of the Annual and Final Reports on project implementation, together with the Financial Plan, shall be specified in detail in the Contract and in the Programme Monitoring Guidelines.

The Ministry shall carry out monitoring of project implementation within the Programme, which includes verification of the level of implementation of activities defined in the approved project proposal, verification of the implementation of the Financial Plan, as well as dissemination of results and promotion of project activities.

3. REPORTING AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME

The Ministry shall prepare, on an annual basis, a report on the implementation of the Programme of Cooperation with the Scientific Diaspora, which shall form an integral part of the Ministry's Annual Report, adopted by the Government of Montenegro. Upon completion of the Programme, the Ministry shall carry out an external evaluation of the Programme. The financial resources required for the evaluation shall be provided from the national budget and planned promptly in the budget for the year in which the obligation arises.



**Ministry of
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