**Request for Expressions of Interest (EoI) for Evaluators of the applications for**

 **the Call for awarding research grants for promoting excellence**

**Background**

The Government of Montenegro adopted the [Strategy for Scientific Research Activity of Montenegro 2024-2028 with the Action Plan for 2024-2025](https://www.gov.me/en/documents/e0c75f8f-f975-4e6f-a6fb-0ba0a336f9c5) (hereinafter: Strategy) which is the most significant sectoral strategic document in the field of science and research.

The Strategy identifies three strategic objectives, the second of which pertains to *Strengthening Human Resources and Institutional Capacities in the Field of Science and Research*. To achieve this strategic objective, one of the key operational objectives is Operational Objective 2.2: *Support for Enhancing Scientific Research*. Under this objective, Activity 2.2.2 involves *the allocation of research grants for excellence aimed at strengthening human and institutional capacities*.

Under this Activity, the Government of Montenegro adopted the [Research grants program for promoting excellence 2024](https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/3cf84295-bd50-4ab2-a776-db1ed57c19c8). In accordance with the article 13 of the Law on Scientific Research Activity and with the aforementioned Programme, the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation announces a Call for Proposals for awarding research grants for promoting excellence.

In line with the article 12 of the Law on Scientific Research Activity and the Programme, the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation publishes the Call for Expressions of Interest (EoI) for Evaluators of the applications for the Call for Proposals for awarding research grants for promoting excellence.

**Subject and objectives of the Research grants program for promoting excellence**

The program focuses on providing non-refundable grants to support research excellence, interdisciplinarity, national and international networking, and collaboration with industry. The program is structured around the priority research areas outlined in the Strategy, including:

*I. Sustainable agriculture and food value chain;*

*II. Energy and sustainable environment;*

*III. Sustainable and health tourism;*

*IV. Science, education and culture;*

*V. Medicine and health;*

*VI. Socio-political and socio-economic challenges of Montenegrin society;*

*VII. New materials, technologies, products and services;*

*VIII. Natural disaster risk management; and*

*IX. Information and communication technologies.*

**The Programme’s objectives** are to enhance the capacities of research institutions/teams in Montenegro to strengthen quality and sustainable partnerships at the national and international levels and to promote excellence, thereby contributing to the development of a knowledge-based society and the competitiveness of Montenegrin science on the international stage. Another aim of the Call is to contribute to the creation of knowledge with commercial potential, with the goal of boosting the competitiveness of the economy through knowledge transfer from the research sector.

**Conditions for the Request for EoI**

As stated in the Program, all applications undergo a clearly defined evaluation process.

The evaluation process begins with an administrative check of applications for research grants. After the administrative review, all applications that meet the requirements established by this program will be forwarded for evaluation by international experts in the specific field of research to which the project belongs.

The evaluation process is conducted by three international evaluators, who are tasked with assessing a specific application closely related to their area of expertise and submitting individual evaluation reports in a standardized form prepared and provided by the Ministry.

The international evaluator is expected to provide technical assistance to the Ministry in the form of scientific verification and evaluation of the research grant application for funding, ensuring it meets the eligibility and administrative compliance criteria in accordance with the Program’s evaluation standards.

The individual evaluator should evaluate grant applications based on four criteria:

**1. Scientific Quality, Originality, and Feasibility of the Proposed Research, evaluated based on three distinct sub-criteria:**

* Does the proposed research make a significant contribution to the field of science to which it belongs?
* Are the goals, purpose, and expected outcomes of the proposed research clearly defined and justified?
* Feasibility of the proposed research.

**2. Research and Managerial Qualities of the Project Leader and the Project (Research) Team, evaluated based on three distinct sub-criteria:**

* Research Qualities of the Project Leader/Manager.
* Managerial Qualities of the Project Leader.
* Research Capacity and Quality of the Project (Research) Team.

**3. Potential of the Proposed Research for Forming a Research Team Capable of Conducting Outstanding Research, evaluated based on two distinct sub-criteria:**

* Quality of the Partnership between the Applicant and Partners.
* Potential of the Proposed Research for the Career Development of Early-Stage Researchers.

**4. Potential Sustainability of the Proposed Research, evaluated based on two distinct subcriteria:**

* Potential of the Proposed Research for Achieving Outstanding Scientific Results and Ensuring Future Sustainability through Competitive Funding Sources.
* Potential of the Proposed Research for Generating New Knowledge with Commercial Applications

**Required qualification and criteria for selection of the evaluator:**

- Doctoral Degree: Candidates must hold a doctoral degree in a relevant field.

- Experience in evaluation: Proven experience in participating in and/or evaluating research programs and projects is required.

- Research accomplishments: Candidates must demonstrate a strong record of research achievements within the past 5 years in the specific research area relevant to the project proposal. This includes, but is not limited to, publications in peer-reviewed journals, monographs, book chapters, presentations, editorial work, reviews, awards, patents, and participation in research projects.

English language proficiency: Fluency in English is essential.

Assessors assess the individual sub-criteria that make up each evaluation criterion, rating each sub-criterion on a scale from one to five – 1 - 5. The score for each criterion is calculated as the average of the scores for the individual sub-criteria. Assessors are expected to provide comments alongside each score in a format that offers clear feedback to the applicants.

The final score (K) is determined based on the following formula:

**K= 0,30I+0,20II+0,30III+0,20IV**

where I, II, III, and IV are the average scores assigned by three assessors for the respective criterion, and K is the final score of the project application. The final score is rounded to two decimal places.

For a project application to qualify for co-funding, it must achieve a final score **(K) of at least 4.00**.

Note: Evaluators may be of any nationality. Evaluator identities will remain confidential.

**Engagement of the evaluators**

The Ministry will issue a Decision appointing an evaluator.

A Declaration of Impartiality (i.e. no conflict of interest) and a Declaration of Confidentiality are mandatory for all evaluators.

**Submission of the EoI**

Interested candidates must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the evaluation services (CV, list of references of similar assignments performed, experience in similar conditions etc.)

Expressions of interest must be delivered by December 20, 2024, on the following e-mail address: marica.melovic@mpni.gov.me.

Additional information is available upon request at the same email address.

The application evaluations are expected to be carried out during the first quarter of 2025, when the availability of evaluators is required.