



EN

RESEARCH FUND FOR COAL AND STEEL (RFCS)

Research Programme Information Package

Part 1 – Introduction and objectives

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1 RFCS Research Programme Information Package

The Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS) is a funding programme of the European Union intended to support research and innovation in the sectors related to coal and steel. This Information Package provides all necessary guidance and information to potential applicants. It is composed of four parts.

This Part 1 (Introduction and objectives of the RFCS Research Programme) provides overall information on the structure, budget and policy priorities of RFCS and its Research Programme.

Part 2 (Calls for proposal) presents yearly Calls and their structure, budget and annual priorities, and specific admissibility and eligibility conditions should there be any.

Part 3 (General Provisions) explains the general rules applicable to the Research Programme, including inter alia:

- general admissibility and general eligibility conditions, the definition of eligible activities;
- criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion;
- award criteria;
- legal and financial set-up of the grant agreements.

Part 4 (Guide for Applicants and Manual of evaluation and selection of proposals) explains the submission process and provides information to enable applicants to submit a valid proposal; it provides the mandatory documents for submission; and it explains the evaluation process and the decision process in the selection of proposals to be funded.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to also consult the [RFCS legal basis](#), the EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual, and the new RFCS Model Grant Agreement 2021.

The RFCS legal basis sets the legal ground for the Research Programme and provides an overview of the legal architecture for its implementation (e.g. the role of Advisory Committee, project monitoring, etc.).

The ‘EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual’ outlines the procedures to register and submit applications online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal and practical recommendations on preparing the application.

The General Model Grant Agreement for the RFCS - Multi & Mono 2021 (MGA) contains the rules applicable to all grants awarded under the Research Programme; it is therefore highly relevant for the preparation of proposals.

2 Policy objectives

The [European Green Deal Communication](#)¹, presented by the European Commission in December 2019, is the European growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use.

Within the European Green Deal objectives, applicants to the RFCS Calls should consider the following elements when preparing their proposals:

- Energy-intensive industries, such as steel [...] are indispensable to Europe’s economy, as they supply several key value chains. **The decarbonisation and modernisation of this sector is essential.**
- The Commission will support **clean steel breakthrough technologies** leading to a zero-carbon steel making process by 2030.
- A power sector must be developed that is based largely on renewable sources, complemented by the **rapid phasing out of coal.**
- The EU should also **reinforce current initiatives** [...] on cross-cutting climate and environment issues. This may include ending global fossil fuel subsidies in line with its G20 commitments, [...] phasing out all new coal plant construction, and action to reduce methane emissions
- Focus on the **regions and sectors that are most affected** by the transition because they depend on fossil fuels or carbon-intensive processes
- **Protect people and workers** most vulnerable to the transition, providing access to re-skilling programmes, jobs in new economic sectors

The European Commission issued further relevant Communications on policy priorities such as a New Industrial Strategy for Europe², Just Transition Mechanism³ and the Sustainable European Investment Plan⁴.

The latest (2011-2017) Monitoring and Assessment of the RFCS Research Programme report, highlights the major future challenges for the European coal and steel industry – (i) to cut

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy_en, as updated by the Communication “Updating the 2020 New Industrial Strategy: Building a stronger Single Market for Europe’s recovery”, COM(2021) 350.

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1588582651667&uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0021>

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1579099555315&uri=COM:2021:22:FIN>

greenhouse gas emissions, (ii) to make sustainable use of energy and resources, and (iii) to develop new competitive, high-performance products and processes⁵.

The Research Programme is consistent with the political, scientific, and technological objectives of the Union, and complements the activities carried out in the Member States and within the existing Union Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities ('Horizon Europe').

The European Commission encourages complementarity, synergies and sequencing among research programmes and supports the exchange of information between projects financed under different instruments. To this regard, the Research Programme is complementary to national and other European financial instruments for research and innovation, including Horizon Europe, ESIF, ERDF, the Innovation Fund and LIFE.

3 Research Objectives

The RFCS Research Programme has the following research objectives, for the Coal and Steel sectors respectively:⁶

Coal

1. Supporting the just transition of the coal sector and regions;
2. Improving health and safety;
3. Minimising the environmental impacts of coal mines in transition.

Steel

4. New, sustainable and low-carbon steelmaking and finishing processes;
5. Advanced steel grades and applications;
6. Conservation of resources, protection of the environment and circular economy;
7. Management of work force and working conditions.

Within these research objectives, the Research Programme provides for a bottom-up approach, leaving applicants free to submit proposals in any relevant area, according to the terms set down in this Information Package. Each proposal shall include an assessment of anticipated industrial, economic, social and environmental benefits (Article 26 of Council Decision 2008/376/EC "Content of proposals").

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/research-fund-coal-and-steel-monitoring-and-assessment-report_en

⁶ Definitions of RFCS Research Programme objectives for Coal and Steel are given in Art 1 of Commission proposal (COM(2020)320) for a COUNCIL DECISION amending Decision 2008/376/EC on the adoption of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel and on the multiannual technical guidelines for this programme.

4 Calls for proposals

The following call(s) will fund projects that meet the policy objectives and the research objectives of the Research Programme:

Call	Indicative Annual Budget (EUR million) ⁷	Deadline(s)
RFCS Annual Call	40	September 202x
Clean Steel Partnership Call	52	To be determined
Coal Regions in Transition Call	19	To be determined
Overall indicative annual budget	111	

⁷ The budgets presented are included in the Commission Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION Amending Decision 2003/76/EC establishing the measures necessary for the implementation of the Protocol, annexed to the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the financial consequences of the expiry of the ECSC Treaty and on the Research Fund for Coal and Steel COM(2020)319 and Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION Amending Decision 2003/77/EC establishing the measures necessary for the implementation of the Protocol, annexed to the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the financial consequences of the expiry of the ECSC Treaty and on the Research Fund for Coal and Steel COM(2020)321.

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RESEARCH FUND FOR COAL AND STEEL

Research Programme Information Package

Part 2 – Calls for proposals

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1 Calls for proposals

1.1 RFCS Annual Call 2021 - RFCS-2021

The following Call under the RFCS Research Programme should contribute the policy and research objectives of RFCS, as they are stated in Part 1.

Call	Deadline(s)
RFCS Annual Call 2021	22 September 2021 17:00:00 Brussels local time

1.2 Indicative Call timetable

Evaluation Session Remote	4 October – 18 November 2021
Meeting of the Coal Advisory Group (CAG)	7 December 2021
Meeting of the Steel Advisory Group (SAG)	8 December 2021
Meeting of the COSCO	21 January 2022
Commission Decision	
Notification of evaluation results to applicants	February 2022
Grant Agreement signature for projects retained for funding	before 15 June 2022

1.3 Structure of the Call

Eligible activity ¹	Percentage of total budget	EU contribution rate
RFCS-01-2021-RPJ - RFCS-2021 Coal Research Projects	27.2 %	60%
RFCS-01-2021-PDP - RFCS-2021 Coal Pilot and Demonstration Projects		50%
RFCS-01-2021-AM - RFCS-2021 Coal Accompanying Measures		100%
RFCS-02-2021-RPJ - RFCS-2021 Steel Research Projects	72.8%	60%

¹ Chapter III, Section 2 « Eligible activities » of Decision 2008/376/EC amendments in force.

RFCS-02-2021-PDP - RFCS-2021 Steel Pilot and Demonstration Projects		50%
RFCS-02-2021-AM - RFCS-2021 Steel Accompanying Measures		100%

1.4 Conditions relating to the Call

General conditions applicable to all RFCS Calls are provided in Part 3 – General Provisions. Specific conditions applicable to the present Call are listed below.

1.4.1 Evaluation procedure

Single-stage submission procedure.

1.4.2 Admissibility and eligibility

Consortia funded under *Pilot and Demonstration Projects* and *Research Projects* actions in both sectors (Coal and Steel) require the participation of at least one beneficiary from the respective industry. Specific conditions on Admissibility and Eligibility are described in Part 3 of the Information Package, "General Provisions".

1.4.3 Annual Priorities 2021

0.5 bonus points will be granted to proposals that address the annual priority relevant in their sector (coal or steel). Proposals should indicate clearly if and how they addresses the annual priority.

Coal Annual Priority 2021

Proposals addressing emerging and innovative technologies supporting coal regions in transition, contributing to the objectives of the European Green Deal.

Proposals should address the repurposing of end-of-life coal-related assets and infrastructure at coal mines and/or coal power plants through the application of emerging and innovative technologies in one or more of the following areas: renewable energy, large-scale energy storage, CO₂ use and storage, GHG removals, sector coupling, circular economy and enhanced soil and land/water remediation/restoration.

In addressing the priority, proposals should include an economic assessment (including CAPEX, OPEX, cash flows and expected financial outcomes) to determine their likely commercial viability, employment impact and economic added value.

In addition, projects are encouraged to address socio-economic research that relates to the just transition, e.g. by addressing the training and re-skilling of workers of the coal sector, as well as other forms of support to the economic, social and environmental transition of coal regions in transition.

Projects are also encouraged to address research that stimulates new economic activities and employment opportunities in the coal regions in transition identified by the European Commission under its Coal Regions in Transition initiative.

Steel Annual Priority 2021

There is no annual priority for Steel.

1.4.4 Duration of the action

Research projects and *Pilot and Demonstration projects* are expected to run for 36 or 42 months, while *Accompanying Measures* are expected to run for 18 or 24 months.

The recommended start date of the projects is 1 July of the calendar year following the year of the submission of the proposal.

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RESEARCH FUND FOR COAL AND STEEL

Research Programme Information Package

Part 3 – General Conditions

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This Part sets out the General Conditions applicable to calls and activities funded under the Research Programme of the RFCS.

1 Submission

All proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funders & Tenders Portal electronic submission system (accessible via the topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Proposals must be **complete** and contain all parts and mandatory annexes and supporting documents.

The application form will have two parts (see Part 4 - Guide for Applicants and Manual for the Evaluation and Selection of proposals for more details):

- **Part A** (to be filled in directly online) contains administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator and beneficiaries and affiliated entities), the summarised budget for the proposal and call-specific questions;
- **Part B** (template to be downloaded from the Portal submission system, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded as a PDF in the system) contains the technical description of the project.

Annexes and supporting documents will be directly available in the submission system and must be uploaded as PDF files (or other formats allowed by the system).

Proposals should be designed to stay as close as possible to the award criteria. The application form will help to achieve this.

When submitting the proposal, the coordinator will have to confirm that they have the mandate to act for all applicants. Moreover, they will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that all participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc.). Before signing the grant, each participant will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour. Proposals not complying with these requirements will be rejected.

Applicants may be asked at a later stage for further documents (for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc.).

2 Admissibility

2.1 General admissibility

Applications must be submitted before the call deadline.

Applications must be submitted electronically via the Funding & Tenders Portal electronic submission system (accessible via the RFCS topics pages in the [Funding & Tenders Search](#) section). Paper submissions or via any other means are NOT possible.

Applications must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the electronic submission system. The structure and presentation must correspond to the instructions given in the forms.

Applications must be complete and contain all parts and mandatory Annexes and supporting documents (see Part 4 – Manual and Guide).

Applications must be readable, accessible and printable.

2.2 Page limits

In addition to the above admissibility conditions, page limits will apply to parts of applications. The page limits, and sections subject to limits, will be clearly shown in the application templates in the Funding & Tenders Portal electronic submission system.

The page limit is distributed across the application forms as follows:

- a maximum of 1 page *per participant* in Form B1.1 (“Participants description”);
- a maximum of 16 pages in Form B1;
- a maximum of 35 pages in Form B2;
- a maximum of 2 pages in Form B4 Annex.

If an application exceeds the limits, there will be an automatic warning and invitation to resubmit a version that conforms to these limits. After the call deadline, excess pages will be automatically made invisible, and will not be taken into consideration by the evaluators.

3 Eligibility

3.1 Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones described in the Call conditions.

Across the whole RFCS, the following activities may be eligible for grants.

Research projects (RPJ) — Research projects shall be intended to cover investigative or experimental work with the aim of acquiring further knowledge to facilitate the attainment of specific practical objectives such as the creation or development of new products, production processes or services.

Pilot and Demonstration projects (PDP)

Pilot projects shall be characterised by the construction, operation and development of an installation or a significant part of an installation on an appropriate scale and using suitably large components with a view to examining the potential for putting theoretical or laboratory results into practice and/or increasing the reliability of the technical and economic data needed to progress to demonstration stage, and in certain cases to industrial and/or commercial stage.

Demonstration projects shall be characterised by the construction and/or operation of an industrial-scale installation or a significant part of an industrial-scale installation with the aim of bringing together all the technical and economic data in order to proceed with the industrial and/or commercial exploitation of the technology at minimum risk.

Pilot and Demonstration projects aim to bridge the gap between Research and Innovation.

Accompanying measures (AM) — accompanying measures shall relate to the promotion of the use of knowledge gained or to the organisation of dedicated workshops or conferences in connection with projects or priorities of the research programme.

Prizes – Only applicable to activities to be funded under the Call for the Clean Steel Partnership.

3.2 Consortium composition

Different criteria apply to the composition of consortia for different types of activities.

For *Research Projects*, at least **three**, for *Pilot and Demonstration projects* and for *Accompanying Measures* at least **two**, legal entities that are independent¹ from each other and established in at least two different EU Member States, must participate in the project as direct *beneficiaries* (see below 3.5 – Modalities of participation).

3.3 Entities eligible to participate

Any undertaking, public body, research organization or higher or secondary education establishment, or other legal entity are eligible to participate.

‘Legal entity’ means any natural or legal person created and recognized as such under national law, EU law or international law, which has legal personality and which may, acting in its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations, or an entity without legal personality.

3.4 Financial conditions of participation

Eligible entities established in different countries are eligible to participate at different conditions. Specifically:

Member States

Eligible entities established within the territory of a Member State may participate in the Research Programme and apply for financial assistance, provided that they intend to carry out an RTD activity or can substantially contribute to such an activity.

Candidate countries

Eligible entities established in candidate countries shall be entitled to participate without receiving any financial contribution under the Research Programme, unless otherwise

¹ Two legal entities shall be regarded as independent of each other where neither is under the direct or indirect control of the other or under the same direct or indirect control as the other. For this purpose, control may, in particular, take either of the following forms:

(a) the direct or indirect holding of more than 50 % of the nominal value of the issued share capital in the legal entity concerned, or of a majority of the voting rights of the shareholders or associates of that entity;

(b) the direct or indirect holding, in fact or in law, of decision-making powers in the legal entity concerned.

The following relationships between legal entities shall not in themselves be deemed to constitute controlling relationships:

(a) the same public investment corporation, institutional investor or venture-capital company has a direct or indirect holding of more than 50 % of the nominal value of the issued share capital or a majority of voting rights of the shareholders or associates;

(b) the legal entities concerned are owned or supervised by the same public body.

provided under the relevant European Agreements and their additional Protocols, and in the decisions of the various Association Councils.

Third countries

Eligible entities established in third countries shall be entitled to participate on the basis of individual projects without receiving any financial contribution under the Research Programme, provided that such participation is in the European Union's interest.

3.5 Modalities of participation

Eligible entities from *Member States* may participate either as beneficiaries or as third parties, according to one of the modalities, defined in the General Model Grant Agreement for the RFCS - Multi & Mono 2021 (MGA): affiliated entities, subcontractors and third parties giving in-kind contributions to the action.

Eligible entities from *Candidate countries* may participate as beneficiaries / affiliated entities / subcontractors (if it is provided that they can receive funding) or as third parties giving in-kind contributions to the action.

Eligible entities from *Third Countries* can participate in the action as 'associated partners' and as 'third parties giving in-kind contributions to the action'.²

Entities performing a substantial part of the work (i.e. action tasks) should be beneficiaries, and not third parties.

The part of the action delivered by all third parties must be set out in the description of the action and their costs, if eligible, must be included in the estimated budget for the action.

3.6 Affiliated entities

Affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary³ which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations to the beneficiaries, but which do not sign the Grant Agreement and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves) are allowed, if they fulfil the eligibility conditions.

'Affiliated entity'

² Articles 9.1 and 9.2, RFCS MGA 2021.

³ Article 187, EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

1. [a) entities forming the sole beneficiary in accordance with paragraph 2;

(b) entities that satisfy the eligibility criteria and that do not fall within one of the situations referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141(1) e.g. fraud cases and that have a link with the beneficiary, in particular a legal or capital link, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation. Section 2 of Chapter 2 of Title V shall apply also to affiliated entities.

2. Where several entities satisfy the criteria for being awarded a grant and together form one entity, that entity may be treated as the sole beneficiary, including where the entity is specifically established for the purpose of implementing the action to be financed by the grant.

3. Unless otherwise provided in the call for proposals, entities affiliated to a beneficiary may participate in the implementation of the action, provided that both of the following conditions are fulfilled: (a) the entities concerned are identified in the Grant Agreement; (b) the entities concerned abide by the rules applicable to the beneficiary under the Grant Agreement with regard to: (i) eligibility of costs or conditions triggering the payment; (ii) rights of checks and audits by the Commission, OLAF, the EPPO and the Court of Auditors. Costs incurred by such entities may be accepted as eligible costs actually incurred or may be covered by lump sums, unit costs and flat-rate financing]

- under the direct or indirect control of the beneficiary or
- under the same direct or indirect control as the beneficiary or
- directly or indirectly controlling the beneficiary.

‘Control’ may take any of the following forms:

(a) the direct or indirect holding of more than 50% of the nominal value of the issued share capital in the legal entity concerned, or of a majority of the voting rights of the shareholders or associates of that entity;

(b) the direct or indirect holding, in fact or in law, of decision-making powers in the legal entity concerned.

However, the following relationships between legal entities shall not in themselves constitute controlling relationships:

(a) the same public investment corporation, institutional investor or venture-capital company has a direct or indirect holding of more than 50% of the nominal value of the issued share capital or a majority of voting rights of the shareholders or associates;

(b) the legal entities concerned are owned or supervised by the same public body.

Affiliated entities cover not only the case of parent companies or holdings and their daughter companies or subsidiaries and vice-versa, but also the case of affiliates between themselves (e.g. entities controlled by the same entity).

3.7 Subcontracting

Subcontracting may cover only a limited part of the action.⁴ The beneficiaries must award the subcontracts ensuring the best value for money or, if appropriate, the lowest price. In doing so, they must avoid any conflict of interests.

Characteristics of subcontracting:

- Based on ‘business conditions’; this means that the subcontractor charges a price, which usually includes a profit (this distinguishes it from ‘linked third parties’).
- Subcontractor works without the direct supervision of the beneficiary and is not hierarchically subordinate to the beneficiary (this distinguishes it from action tasks implemented by in-house consultants)
- Subcontractor's motivation is pecuniary, not the research work itself. The subcontractor is paid by the beneficiary in exchange for its work
- Responsibility towards the EU/Euratom for the subcontracted work lies fully with the beneficiary.
- The beneficiary remains responsible for all its rights and obligations under the Grant Agreement, including the tasks carried out by a subcontractor.
- Subcontracts should in particular foresee that intellectual property generated by a subcontractor reverts to the beneficiary (so that it can meet its obligations towards the other beneficiaries in the GA and respect the other obligations of the GA).
- Subcontractors have no rights or obligations towards the REA or to other beneficiaries (it has no contractual relation with them).

The beneficiaries must ensure that the subcontractors comply with certain obligations, including:

- avoiding conflicts of interest,
-

⁴ MGA Article 6.2 Subcontracting costs, p. 25.

- maintaining confidentiality,
- promoting the action and give visibility to the EU funding,
- guarantee liability for damages.

In order to be able to fulfil these obligations, best practice is for beneficiaries to impose contractual arrangements on the third parties.

Another obligation is the compliance with national procurement rules when choosing the subcontractor. Beneficiaries that are ‘contracting authorities’ or ‘contracting entities’ (within the meaning of the EU public procurement Directives 2014/23/EC, 2014/24/EC and 2014/25/EC) must moreover comply with the applicable national law on public procurement. These rules normally provide for a special procurement procedure for the types of contracts they cover.

Other provisions:

- Subcontracting between beneficiaries is NOT allowed in the same Grant Agreement. All beneficiaries contribute to and are interested in the action; if one beneficiary needs the services of another in order to perform its part of the work it is the second beneficiary who should declare the costs for that work;
- Subcontracting to affiliates is NOT allowed, unless they have a framework contract or the affiliate is their usual provider, and the subcontract is priced at market conditions. Otherwise, these affiliates may work in the action, but they must be identified as linked third parties and declare their own costs;
- Coordination tasks of the coordinator cannot be subcontracted (e.g. monitor of the implementation of the action, intermediary for communication, review of reports, submission of deliverables, distribution of funds);
- For existing framework contracts or subcontracts the name of the subcontractor should be indicated (because it is known). Moreover, these (sub) contracts must have complied with best value-for-money and absence of conflict of interests at the time of their award.

For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

4 Financial capacity, operational capacity and exclusion

4.1 Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

A financial capacity check will be done on the basis of the documents uploaded in the [Participant Register](#) during the grant preparation stage (e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc.). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for the coordinator if the requested grant amount is equal to or greater than EUR 500 000, except for:

- public bodies (entities established as a public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations; and
- cases where the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000 (low- value grant).

If needed, it may also be done for the other applicants, including affiliated entities. If the financial capacity is structurally guaranteed by another legal entity, the financial capacity of that legal entity will be verified.

If the granting authority considers that the financial capacity is not satisfactory, they may require:

- further information;
- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility of affiliated entities (see Annex G); and
- prefinancing paid in instalments;

or

- propose no prefinancing;
- request that the applicant concerned is replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

For more information, see [Rules on Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

4.2 Operational capacity

Applicants must have the know-how, qualifications and resources to successfully implement their tasks in the project and contribute their share (including, when appropriate, sufficient experience in EU/transnational projects of comparable size).

An assessment of operational capacity will be carried out during the evaluation of the award criterion ‘Quality and efficiency of the implementation’. It will be based on the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including their operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain the necessary competence and experience by the time the tasks are implemented.

If the evaluation of this award criterion leads to a score above the applicable threshold, then the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Additional supporting documents may be requested if they are needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant.

Public bodies and Member State organizations are exempted from the operational capacity check.

4.3 Exclusion

Applicants that are subject to EU administrative sanctions (i.e. exclusion)^{5 6} or are in one of the following exclusion situations¹⁶ that bar them from receiving EU grants can NOT participate:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant’s debts);
- they are in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant’s debts);
- they are guilty of grave professional misconduct (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);

⁵ See Article 136 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⁶ See Articles 136 and 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

- they are guilty of fraud, corruption, having links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- they have shown significant deficiencies in complying with their main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- they are guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decisionmaking or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant); or
- they have created under a different jurisdiction an entity with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if⁷:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information; or
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

⁷ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

5 Award criteria

5.1 Criteria

If admissible and eligible, the proposals will be evaluated and ranked against the following award criteria, depending on the eligible activity: 'Excellence', 'Impact' and 'Quality and Efficiency of the implementation'. The following aspects will be taken into account, to the extent that the proposed work corresponds to the description in the Programme.

Excellence	Impact	Quality and efficiency of the implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity and pertinence of the project’s objectives, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state of the art. • Extent to which they match the themes, priorities and objectives of the Call and of the Research Programme; • Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project. • Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall. • Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

5.2 Scores and weighting

Evaluation scores will be awarded for each of these criteria. Each criterion will be scored out of 5. Final scores will be awarded with increments of 0.25 points. The threshold for individual criteria will be 3. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three individual scores, will be 10.

For annual RFCS calls, additional bonus point(s) may be granted to proposals that address the annual priority in the relevant topic (see Part 2 - Calls).

Eligible proposals in the order of merit within the limits of the available call budget for Coal and for Steel will be funded. Other eligible proposals will be placed on a reserve list. Further information on the evaluation process and related guidance at the application stage is found in Part 4 - Guide for Applicants and Manual for the Evaluation and Selection of proposals.

6 Procedure

6.1 Evaluation procedure and ranking – single-stage submission procedure

Proposals will be checked for formal requirements (admissibility and eligibility) and then evaluated for each sector/objectives separately by an evaluation committee composed of independent external experts for award criteria (see Part 4 - Guide for Applicants and Manual for the Evaluation and Selection of proposals) and then ranked according to their final score.

For proposals with the same score within a single budget envelope a method to establish the priority order will be determined.

- 1) Proposals will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the criterion ‘Impact’.
- 2) When these scores are equal, priority will be based on scores for ‘Excellence’ and lastly ‘Quality’.
- 3) In case of a tie of for two or more proposals with equal total score (i.e. if they have exactly the same scores under each criterion):
 - i. the proposal with the highest percentage of participants of private for profit organisations will be ranked first.
 - ii. the proposal with the highest percentage of budget assigned in the proposal to private for profit organisations will be ranked first.

Starting from the top of the relevant ranking list, funding will be allocated to proposals that have passed all evaluation thresholds according to the requested EU contribution, until the available budget for the current call and for corresponding sector is assigned in such a way that the next eligible proposal in the ranking list cannot be funded.

At the end of the evaluation process, an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) will be produced by the REA, with indication and justification of scores for each criterion. The ESR will be sent to applicants in due time to inform.

In case of failure at any of the stages of the procedure, please see the provision in Chapter 7 below.

6.2 Decision Process prior to Grant Agreement signature

A Grant Agreement can only be signed by the REA on one side and the legal representative of the coordinating organisation on the other side:

- after presentation of the results to the Advisory Groups;

- after approval of the ranking list by the Coal and Steel Committee (COSCO) of Member States representatives if there are actions where the estimated amount of the EU contribution is equal to or more than EUR 0,6 million (Article 41(a) of Decision 2008/376/EC);
- after the relevant Award Decision is adopted by the European Commission.

6.3 Invitation to Grant Agreement Preparation and process up to Signature

If a proposal is in the MAIN list of proposals to be funded, the consortium will be invited to enter in the Grant Agreement Preparation phase in view to sign a Grant Agreement with the REA.

Neither placement on the MAIN list nor invitation to the Grant Agreement preparation stage constitute a formal commitment that the REA will fund the project.

After the adoption of the formal Award Decision on the proposals which can receive funding various legal checks are required before the grant can be awarded, such as legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, among others. Only signature of Grant Agreement by the REA constitutes a commitment to funding.

6.4 Indicative timetable for evaluation and for the signature of the Grant Agreement

Unless otherwise stated in the specific call conditions, the timing for evaluation and grant preparation is as follows:

- information on the outcome of the evaluation: around 6 months from the deadline for submission;
- indicative date for the signing of Grant Agreements : around 9 months from the deadline for submission.

7 Review procedure and redress mechanisms

7.1 Failed submission

If applicants think that the submission of their proposal has failed due to a fault in the Electronic Submission System, the coordinator may file a complaint through the IT Helpdesk on the Funding & Tenders Portal, explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal with the time stamp prior to the call deadline and, if available, evidence of the failure/problem.

Complaints must be filed within four days of the cut-off date, if not they will not be taken into account.

In order for a complaint to be upheld, the IT audit trail (application SEP Submission log files and access log files of the EC IT-systems involved) must show that there was a technical problem at the EC side which prevented the coordinator from submitting (or resubmitting) the proposal.

Complainants will be notified about the outcome of the treatment of their complaint as soon as possible and at latest within 30 days following the reception of the complaint. In exceptional and justified cases, if a decision cannot be reached in this term, they will receive a holding reply.

If, based on the evidence, it is determined that the complaint is founded, the proposal will be considered as correctly submitted and will be evaluated. The proposal will be evaluated on the basis of the PDF files provided by the complainant (in the last version before the call deadline) OR if the complainant cannot justifiably provide this, of the last version stored in the IT system. The version must be determined via the 'PDF files attributes' showing the date and time of creation and last modification.

7.2 Rejection further to the eligibility and admissibility check

If a proposal has been declared inadmissible or ineligible and is therefore not retained for evaluation, the REA will inform the coordinator of the proposal, explaining the reasons for rejection.

If a coordinator considers that their proposal complies with the rules on admissibility and eligibility, they may file a complaint to challenge the rejection decision.

The complaint must be filed within 30 days of the reception of the rejection letter by the REA, using the functional mailbox address given in Part 4 – Guide and Manual.

If, based on the evidence, it is determined that the complaint is founded, following the recommendations of the Admissibility and Eligibility Review Committee if needed, the REA will accept the proposal, send it for evaluation and notify the complainant.

7.3 Rejection further to the evaluation by independent experts

At the end of the evaluation, coordinators will be informed of the outcome of the evaluation for their proposal. They receive a copy of the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR), which includes the comments and scores of the evaluators. If a coordinator considers that the evaluation of their proposal was not carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Financial Regulation and/or of the procedures set in the present RFCS Research Programme Information Package, they may file a complaint to request an Evaluation Review procedure. The Evaluation Review covers only the procedural aspects of the evaluation and does not call into question the judgment of the evaluators. Therefore it does not cover the evaluators' assessments of the quality of the proposal.

In order for a complaint to be eligible, it must be filed by the coordinator within 30 days from the date on which they were informed of the evaluation result. The complaint must flag any shortcomings in the evaluation procedure, be related to the evaluation of a specific proposal and be based on the information contained in the ESR, possibly with reference, as the case may be, to the conditions of the call for proposals, the evaluation rules etc. concerned.

If, based on the evidence, the Evaluation Review determines that the complaint is founded, and following a recommendation of the Evaluation Review Committee, the proposal will be sent to full or partial re-evaluation. Re-evaluations will be based on the proposal as it was originally submitted in accordance with the conditions and requirements of the Call to which it was submitted (no additional information is admissible). The score of the re-evaluation will be the final score for the proposal (it can also be lower than the one awarded originally).

The complainant cannot request a second Evaluation Review.

The Evaluation Review will normally have no impact on the proposals originally selected, nor on the time-to-grant of those proposals.

8 Other conditions

Several conditions included in the MGA and its Annexes have direct relevance at the application stage and during the life of the grant. Attention is drawn to the following provisions. However, applicants and beneficiaries are strongly advised to also consult the MGA conditions before they submit an application.

8.1 Ethics

The action must be carried out in line with the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles.

Specific ethics rules are set out in Annex 5 of the MGA.

8.2 Gender mainstreaming

Beneficiaries must take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in implementing the action and, where applicable, in line with their gender equality plan. They must aim to achieve, to the extent possible, a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including at supervisory and managerial level.

8.3 Technology Readiness Levels

Where Call conditions require a specific Technology Readiness Level (TRL), the following definitions apply, unless otherwise specified:

TRL 1 — Basic principles observed

TRL 2 — Technology concept formulated

TRL 3 — Experimental proof of concept

TRL 4 — Technology validated in a lab

TRL 5 — Technology validated in a relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL 6 — Technology demonstrated in a relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL 7 — System prototype demonstration in an operational environment

TRL 8 — System complete and qualified

TRL 9 — Actual system proven in an operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies, or in space)

8.4 Dissemination and exploitation

In addition to the provisions in the MGA, the following specific provisions in the MGA will apply to all grants awarded under this work programme:

- Comprehensive Overview of the project (State of the Art, problem, proposed approach and expected outcome) submitted within 6 months from the starting date of the action;
- Public publishable report submitted together with the last periodic report, which will be shared with the Technical Groups and should be updated (if needed) by applicants following Technical Groups recommendations via the Funding & Tenders Portal Continuous Reporting tool.
- Beneficiaries must provide (digital or physical) access to data or other results needed to validate the conclusions of scientific publications, to the extent that their legitimate interests or constraints are safeguarded (and unless they already provided their open access at publication).

8.5 Proper implementation of the action

(Article 11 MGA).

8.6 Conflict of interest

(Article 12 MGA).

8.7 Confidentiality and security (EU-classified information)

(Article 13 and Annex 5 MGA).

8.8 Data protection

(Article 15 MGA).

8.9 Intellectual Property Rights, results, access rights and rights of use

(Article 16 and Annex 5 MGA).

In addition to the standard provisions, the following specific provisions will apply to all grants awarded under the Research Programme:

If requested by the granting authority, beneficiaries must grant non-exclusive licences to their results - for a limited period of time specified in the request and on fair and reasonable conditions - to legal entities that need the results to address a public emergency. These legal entities must commit to rapidly and broadly exploiting the resulting products and services on fair and reasonable conditions. This provision will apply up to 10 years after the end of the action.

Unless stated otherwise in the specific call conditions, beneficiaries must, up to 4 years after the end of the action, inform the granting authority if the results could reasonably be expected to contribute to European or international standards.

The granting authority may, up to 10 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results.

9 Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreement

The Grant Agreement will set out the framework for the grant and its terms and conditions, particularly concerning deliverables, reporting and payments. The applicable model with the complete text of the provisions is available on the RFCS page, together with the call documentation.

9.1 Starting date and project duration

The project's starting date and duration in months will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (Data Sheet, point 1). Normally, the starting date will be after the grant has been signed. More guidance on suggested duration and start dates is found in Part 2 – Calls for proposals and in Part 4 – Guide and Manual.

A starting date before grant signature (therefore retroactive) can be agreed exceptionally for duly justified reasons.

Extensions will be possible only exceptionally, for duly justified reasons and upon prior agreement of the granting authority.

9.2 Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the grant management system in the Portal and are reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.⁸

9.3 Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc.) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and article 5*).

The project budget is provided in EUR. The amount of the grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

9.4 Eligible costs

'Eligible costs' are costs that meet the following criteria:

- (a) for actual costs:

⁸ Also see Data Sheet, point 4.

- (i) they must be actually incurred by the beneficiary;
 - (ii) they must be incurred within the duration of the project with the exception of costs relating to the submission of the periodic report for the last reporting period and the final report;
 - (iii) they must be indicated in the estimated budget for the action;
 - (iv) they must be incurred in connection with the action according to the description of the action and must be necessary for its implementation;
 - (v) they must be identifiable and verifiable, in particular recorded in the beneficiary's accounts in accordance with the accounting standards applicable in the country where the beneficiary is established and with the beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices;
 - (vi) they must comply with the applicable national law on taxes, labour and social security, and
 - (vii) they must be reasonable, justified and must comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency;
- (b) for unit costs (direct personnel costs of owners of small and medium sized enterprises who are working on the action and who do not receive a salary and for beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary)
- (i) they must be declared under one of the budget categories set out in Article 6.2 and Annex 2:
 - (ii) the units must:
 - be actually used or produced by the beneficiary in the period set out in Article 4 (with the exception of units relating to the submission of the final periodic report, which may be used or produced afterwards; see Article 21 MGA)
 - be necessary for the implementation of the action and
 - (iii) the number of units must be identifiable and verifiable, in particular supported by records and documentation (see Article 20 MGA).
- (c) for flat-rate costs:
- (i) they must be calculated by applying the flat-rate set out in the estimated budget for the action, and
 - (ii) the costs (actual costs or unit costs) to which the flat-rate is applied must comply with the conditions for eligibility set out there.

9.5 Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

Eligible costs shall be broken down into the following four categories:

- Direct personnel costs (staff costs);
- Direct costs of subcontracting;
- Other direct costs;
- Indirect costs.

‘Direct costs’ are costs that are directly linked to the action implementation and can therefore be attributed to it directly. They must not include any indirect costs.

‘Indirect costs’ are costs that are not directly linked to the action implementation and therefore cannot be attributed directly to it.

9.5.1 Direct personnel costs (Staff Costs)

Types of direct personnel costs:

A.1 Personnel costs are eligible, if they are related to personnel working for the beneficiary under an employment contract (or equivalent appointing act) and assigned to the action (**‘costs for employees (or equivalent)’**). They must be limited to salaries (including during parental leave), social security contributions, taxes and other costs included in the **remuneration**, if they arise from national law or the employment contract (or equivalent appointing act).

They may also include additional remuneration for personnel assigned to the action (including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of their nature), if:

- (a) it is part of the beneficiary’s usual remuneration practices and is paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required;
- (b) the criteria used to calculate the supplementary payments are objective and generally applied by the beneficiary, regardless of the source of funding used.

A.2 The costs for natural persons working under a direct contract with the beneficiary other than an employment contract or seconded by a third party against payment are eligible personnel costs, if:

- (a) the person works under the beneficiary’s instructions and, unless otherwise agreed with the beneficiary, on the beneficiary’s premises;
- (b) the result of the work carried out belongs to the beneficiary, and
- (c) the costs are not significantly different from those for personnel performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary.

A.3 (not applicable to the RFCS Research Programme)

A.4 Costs of owners of beneficiaries that are small and medium-sized enterprises ('SME owners'), who are working on the action and who do not receive a salary are eligible personnel costs, if they correspond to the amount per unit set out in the estimated budget for the action multiplied by the number of actual days worked on the action.

A.5 Costs of 'beneficiaries that are natural persons' not receiving a salary are eligible personnel costs, if they correspond to the amount per unit set out in the estimated budget for the action multiplied by the number of actual days worked on the action.

9.5.1.1 Calculation of personnel costs

Personnel costs must be calculated by the beneficiaries as follows:

([daily rate for the person] *multiplied by* [number of day-equivalents worked on the action (rounded up or down to the nearest half-day)])

The daily rate must be calculated as:

[annual personnel costs for the person divided by 215]

The number of day-equivalents declared for a person must be identifiable and verifiable.

The total number of day-equivalents declared in EU grants, for a person for a year, cannot be higher than 215.

The 'daily rate' is one of the following:

- (a) for personnel costs of SME owners or beneficiaries that are natural persons declared on the basis of **unit costs**, the daily rate is the daily rate set out in the estimated budget for the action (see A.4 and A.5 above).
- (b) for personnel costs declared as actual costs: the daily rate is the amount calculated as follows:

[actual annual personnel costs for the person] divided by [number of annual productive days]

The beneficiaries must use the annual personnel costs and the number of annual productive days for each financial year covered by the reporting period concerned. If a financial year is not closed at the end of the reporting period, the beneficiaries must use the daily rate of the last closed financial year available.

For the 'number of annual productive days', the beneficiaries may choose one of the following:

- (i) 'fixed number of days': 215 days for persons working full time (or corresponding pro-rata for persons not working full time);

- (ii) ‘individual annual productive days’: the total number of days worked by the person in the year for the beneficiary, calculated as follows:

[annual workable days of the person (according to the employment contract, applicable collective labour agreement or national law)] plus [overtime worked] minus [absences (such as sick leave and special leave)]

‘Annual workable days’ means the period during which the personnel must be working, at the employer’s disposal and carrying out his/her activity or duties under the employment contract, applicable collective labour agreement or national working time legislation.

If the contract (or applicable collective labour agreement or national working time legislation) does not allow to determine the annual workable days, this option cannot be used;

- (iii) ‘standard annual productive days’: the standard number of annual days generally applied by the beneficiary for its personnel in accordance with its usual cost accounting practices. This number must be at least 90% of the ‘standard annual workable days’.

If there is no applicable reference for the standard annual workable days, this option cannot be used.

For all options, the actual time spent on parental leave by a person assigned to the action may be deducted from the number of annual productive days.

As an alternative, beneficiaries may calculate the daily rate per month, as follows:

[actual monthly personnel costs for the person] divided by [number of annual productive days / 12]

using the personnel costs for each month and (one twelfth of) the annual productive days calculated according to either option (i) or (iii) above, i.e.:

- fixed number of days or
- standard annual productive days.

Time spent on parental leave may not be deducted when calculating the daily rate per month. However, beneficiaries may declare personnel costs incurred in periods of parental leave in proportion to the time the person worked on the action in that financial year.

If parts of a basic remuneration are generated over a period longer than a month, the beneficiaries may include only the share which is generated in the month (irrespective of the amount actually paid for that month).

Each beneficiary must use only one option (per full financial year or per month) for each full financial year.

9.5.1.2 Records for days worked for the action

The beneficiaries must show the actual days worked, with reliable time records (i.e. time-sheets) either on paper or in a computer-based time recording system.

Time records must be dated and signed at least monthly by the person working for the action and his/her supervisor.

If the time-recording system is computer-based, the signatures may be electronic (i.e. linking the electronic identity data (e.g. a password and user name) to the electronic validation data, with a documented and secure process for managing user rights and an auditable log of all electronic transactions).

Time records should include:

- the title and number of the action, as specified in the GA;
- the beneficiary's full name, as specified in the GA;
- the full name, date and signature of the person working for the action;
- the number of days worked for the action in the period covered by the time record;
- the supervisor's full name and signature;
- a reference to the action tasks or work package described in Annex 1, to easily verify that the work carried out matches the work assigned and the person-months reported to the action;
- a brief description of the activities carried out, to understand and show what work was carried out.

Information included in timesheets must match records of annual and sick leave taken, and work-related travel.

As an exception, for persons working exclusively on the action, there is no need to keep time records, if the beneficiary signs a declaration confirming that the persons concerned have worked exclusively on the action.

A template for time-sheets is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/other_eu_prog/common/tpl/report/eu-grants-time-sheet_en.docx

This template is not mandatory; beneficiaries may use their own model, provided that it fulfils the minimum conditions and it contains at least the information detailed above.

9.5.2 Other direct costs

9.5.2.1 Equipment

The depreciation costs of equipment (new or second-hand) as recorded in the beneficiary's accounts are eligible, if they are

- purchased specifically for the action or before the action starts but not fully depreciated, and
- purchased under a procedure ensuring the best value for money or, if appropriate, the lowest price and avoiding any conflict of interests, and
- written off in accordance with international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual accounting practices.

The costs of renting or leasing equipment are also eligible, if they do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar equipment and do not include any financing fees.

Only the portion of the costs that corresponds to the rate of actual use for the action during the action duration can be taken into account.

9.5.2.2 Other good, works and services⁹

Purchases of other goods, works and services must be calculated on the basis of the costs actually incurred by the beneficiary, and be directly related to the implementation of the project ("operating costs"). Such costs, including related duties, taxes and charges such as non-deductible value added tax (VAT)¹⁰ are eligible if the other goods, works and services are purchased specifically for the action.

They shall be limited to: raw materials; consumables; energy; transportation of raw materials, consumables, equipment, products, feedstock or fuel; the maintenance, repair, alteration and transformation of existing equipment; IT and other specific services; the rental of equipment; analysis and tests; dedicated workshop organisation; certificate on financial statements and bank guarantee; protection of knowledge and assistance from third parties.

The beneficiaries must make such purchases ensuring the best value for money or, if appropriate, the lowest price. In doing so, they must avoid any conflict of interests.

⁹ See Art. 34 of [Decision 2008/376/EC](#) and MGA Art. 6.2.C3.

¹⁰ Value added tax (VAT) is eligible as direct cost only if it is non recoverable according to Art. 126(3)(c) of the Financial Regulation.

9.5.3 Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are eligible, if they are declared, at a flat-rate of 35% of the eligible direct personnel costs.¹¹

9.5.4 Ineligible Costs

Some costs may be ineligible according to Art. 6.3 MGA.

9.6 Reporting & payment arrangements

The reporting and payment arrangements are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and Articles 21 and 22 MGA*).

After signature, the consortium will normally receive prefinancing to start work on the project. This is 40% of the average EU funding per reporting period (i.e. maximum grant amount/number of periods); exceptionally, there may be less or no prefinancing.

The MGA also foresees the possibility of one or more interim payments and of one payment of the balance at the end of the project. If applicable, interim payments are linked to a periodic report, depending on the duration of the project.

In case the REA estimates, on the basis of a detailed analysis, that the financial capacity of a participant presents a financial risk for the EU, it may ask for one or several bank guarantees to cover the prefinancing.

The total amount of pre-financing and interim payments will not exceed 90% of the maximum grant amount.

All payments will be made to the coordinator, who will transfer the relevant budget quotas to the individual beneficiaries without any unjustified delay.

At the end of the project, the consortium will submit a report on the basis of which the final grant amount will be calculated. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiaries concerned (or the coordinator) will be asked to pay back the difference ('Recovery').

¹¹ See Art. 35 of [Decision 2008/376/EC](#) and the RFCS MGA.

9.7 Other provisions

9.7.1.1 Certificates

Depending on the size of the grant amount and on the type of beneficiaries, beneficiaries may be required to submit a certificate on the financial statements. The thresholds for this certificate are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and article 24*).

9.7.1.2 Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries is that of individual financial responsibility. Each beneficiary is solely liable for their own debt (and the debt of other beneficiaries/its affiliated entities, if any) (*Data Sheet point 4.4 and article 22*).

9.7.1.3 Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement provides for the measures that may be taken in case of breach of contract (and other violations of law).



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RESEARCH FUND FOR COAL AND STEEL

Research Programme Information Package

Part 4 – Guide and Manual

Part 4.1 – Manual for Evaluation and Selection of the proposals

DISCLAIMER

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1 Preparing a proposal

1.1 How to address the Objectives of the RFCS

Proposals submitted to the RFCS Research Programme on coal and steel research must address the objectives listed in the Information Package Part 1 – Introduction and Policy Objectives.

The RFCS provides for a bottom-up approach, leaving applicants free to submit a proposal in any relevant area, according to the terms set down in this Information Package.

Each proposal shall include an assessment of anticipated industrial, economic, social and environmental benefits, as is required by Article 26 of the Decision 2008/376/EC “Content of proposals”.

1.2 How to address the Annual Priorities

Some RFCS Calls include annual priorities. It is not mandatory for a proposal to address them. However, bonus points will be granted to proposals that address the annual priority relevant in a sector (coal or steel) as described in Information Package Part 2 – Calls for Proposals. Proposals should indicate clearly if and how they addresses the annual priorities.

1.3 Eligible Activities

Applications can be submitted for the following types of Activities: Research Projects, Pilot Projects, Demonstration Projects, Accompanying Measures, Prize.

These types of Activities are explained in the Part 3 – General Conditions. Please refer to Part 3 and to the legal basis for formal definitions. A summary of RFCS co-funding, recommended duration and budget and eligibility criteria is provided below per type of activity for guidance only:

Type of Activity	Description	RFCS co-funding	Duration	Budget	Consortium
Research projects	Investigative or experimental work	≤60%	No specific requirement (indicative duration is 36 or 42 months)	No specific requirement (recommended total budget is between 1.5 and 2.5 M€)	Minimum three independent legal entities established in at least two different EU Member States
Pilot & Demonstration projects	Construction and/or operation of an installation at pilot or demonstration scale	≤50%	No specific requirement (indicative duration is 36 or 42 months)	No specific requirement (recommended total budget is between 3 and 4 M€)	Minimum two independent legal entities established in at least two different EU Member States

Accompanying measures	Dissemination or promotion of knowledge gained	≤ 100 %	No specific requirement (indicative duration is 18 months)	No specific requirement (recommended total budget is between 0.2 and 0.6 M€)	Minimum two independent legal entities established in at least two different EU Member States
Prize	The conditions for prizes will be indicated in the relevant RFCS Call for proposals contributing to the European Partnerships				

1.3.1 Research Projects

Research projects proposals should demonstrate the ability to solve specific scientific or technical problems, as well as demonstrate the economic and/or scientific technological impact of the results.

The preliminary investigation on the state-of-the-art and literature review should not be part of the project, but should be completed prior to submission and described in the proposal.

1.3.2 Pilot and Demonstration Projects

Pilot and Demonstration projects are aiming to bridge the gap between Research and Innovation, considered as activities directly aiming to produce plans and arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services, possibly including prototyping, testing, demonstrating, piloting, large-scale product validation and market replication.

No significant research efforts should be included in Pilot and Demonstration projects, as they should focus on the construction and validation of a ready-designed unit. The preliminary investigation on the state-of-the-art and literature review should not be part of the project, but should be completed prior to submission and described in the proposal.

Alongside being evaluated for ‘Innovation’, according to the definition above, Pilot and Demonstration projects will be also evaluated for their potential to provide a step forward in the technology readiness level (TRL) of the proposed application. To this purpose, the definitions of TRL in the Information Package Part 3 – General conditions apply.

1.3.3 Accompanying Measures

Accompanying measures may include dissemination, standardisation, awareness-raising and communication, networking, coordination or support services, policy dialogues and mutual learning

exercises and studies. It also includes the valorisation of research results having a direct impact in one of the following areas and excluding any kind of research activity:

- valorisation of results that have a direct and immediate potential application at industrial level;
- the improvement of environmental, product quality and safety standards in and around the workplace are of particular importance;
- contribution to the assessment or enhancement of European or international technical regulations and standards¹;
- exploitation of new or alternative market possibilities of products and processes related to the coal or steel sector.

1.3.4 Prize

Certain types of EU funding can be granted as a prize in order to promote innovation or to reward achievements and excellence. Prizes are awarded in accordance with the principles of transparency and equal treatment. They cannot be awarded directly without a contest. Prizes are given directly by the REA. The winner of a contest will receive cash, publicity coverage or promotion as a reward.

1.4 Project Duration

Most Research, Pilot and Demonstration projects are expected to run for 36 or 42 months, while Accompanying Measures should have a duration of 18 or 24 months. When deciding about project duration, applicants should consider the following.

The proposed scheduling must be credible and should be in line with the work to be carried out; unrealistic project duration is considered as a weakness at proposal evaluation.

Possible delays occurring during the execution of the work should be taken into account; a too tight project scheduling may compromise the ability of the consortium to effectively recover from difficult situations.

Once the Grant Agreement is signed, project extensions will be granted only in very exceptional and well-motivated circumstances.

If duly justified, a consortium can apply for a temporary suspension of the project, until the negative events affecting the execution of the project have been fully overcome.

Therefore, when planning project duration, applicants are encouraged to make themselves familiar with the rules concerning extension and suspension of projects. Please refer to the General Provisions of the General Model Grant Agreement for the RFCS - Multi & Mono 2021 (MGA) and the Annotated

¹ To know more about European Standardisation and the standards making process please visit the website of the CEN (European Committee for Standardisation) and CENELEC (European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation) bodies at <http://www.cencenelec.eu/Pages/default.aspx>

Model Grant Agreement of Horizon Europe applicable by analogy where provisions are the same.
These documents can be accessed from the Funding & Tenders Portal:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/Portal/screen/how-to-participate/reference-documents>

1.5 Recommended start date

Grant agreements with applicants are signed after a maximum period of nine months from the final date for submission of complete proposals. The starting date shall be agreed during the Grant Agreement preparation and in any case shall be set no earlier than the signature of the Grant Agreement.

For the RFCS Annual Call specifically (see Part 2), recommended start date of the projects is on 1 July of the calendar year following the year of the submission of the proposal.

This allows a best match between the reporting periods given in the Grant Agreement and the RFCS project monitoring scheme.

A different start date can be proposed and discussed with the REA on a case-by-case basis; however, in principle proposals should not propose a starting date preceding the date of signature of the Grant Agreement.

It is highly recommended that proposals foresee sufficient time for the preparation of the final report at the end of the project (including a readable, understandable and concise publishable summary).

1.6 Project Budget

Recommended budgets for different eligible activities are specified in Part 2 – Calls for Proposals. Nonetheless, this does not exclude submission and selection of proposals foreseeing different amounts.

2 Rules for submission of proposals

The project proposals for the RFCS programme have to be prepared and submitted electronically on the Funding & Tenders Portal, which is the common platform centralising the funding opportunities offered by the European Commission, Executive Agencies and other EU bodies:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

No paper submissions will be accepted, nor by e-mail or in any other form.

The Funding & Tenders Portal offers to applicants the possibility to create and edit a proposal for any open call, to monitor the status of their submitted proposals and to enrol as an expert for the evaluation of proposals.

Proposals submitted after the cut-off date will not be retained by the electronic submission system.

Please do not delay submission until the final deadline to reduce the risks leaving insufficient time to solve a potential IT incompatibility issue.

Before starting the submission, applicants should become familiar with all documents, guidelines and forms made available on the page of the Funding & Tenders Portal for RFCS Research Programme Calls. EC user manuals on the submission of proposals are available at the following links:

[Online Manual - Online Manual - Funding Tenders Opportunities \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Submission Tool User Manual.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

These documents provide an exhaustive overview and a step-by-step guide of the submission process, which applies for the most part also to the submission of proposals to the RFCS programme.

PLEASE NOTE: Proposals submitted to the RFCS Annual Call (see Part 2 – Calls for Proposals) should indicate the Technical Group which will be monitoring the project in case of successful signature of the Grant Agreement with the REA. The Technical Group should be in line with the subject of the proposal; if this is not the case, the REA will re-assign proposals to a Technical Group different from the one indicated by applicants. Only successful applicants will be informed about this re-assignment.

2.1 Scope of the Technical Groups²

Coal Technical Groups

TGK1 Post-mining issues, safe and productive coal mining operations

TGK2 Environmental, technical and economic issues related to coal treatment and use

Steel technical groups

TGA1 Iron- and steelmaking

TGA2 Downstream steel processing

TGA3 Conception of steel products

TGA4 Steel applications and solutions for existing and new markets

TGA5 Steel factories - smart and human

2.2 Explanation of the Topics structure of the annual calls

The dedicated pages of the calls for the RFCS programme can be found from the panel of the "Search Funding & Tenders " on the Funding & Tenders Opportunities Portal.

The annual active call of the RFCS for year XXXX can be found under the name "RFCS-XXXX".

When accessing the page of the RFCS-XXXX call, the relevant Topic (combination of sector, coal or steel, and type of eligible activity) has to be selected.

For instance, in the case of the Annual Calls, the topics will look as following:

- RFCS-01-XXXX Coal Accompanying Measures
- RFCS-01-XXXX Coal Research Projects
- RFCS-01-XXXX Coal Pilot and Demonstration Projects
- RFCS-02-XXXX Steel Accompanying Measures
- RFCS-02-XXXX Steel Research Projects
- RFCS-02-XXXX Steel Pilot and Demonstration Projects

In the Topics pages, on the Submission Service panel, the user will have direct access to the Funding & Tenders Portal Submission Service (referred to in this Information Package as Funding & Tenders Portal and available under the tab Submission Service in the topics pages at the opening of the call), which is the electronic environment that allows editing and submitting the proposals.

² Should you need more information on the areas converted by the TGs, please consult Annex I

2.3 Explanation of the RFCS Application Forms (expected content of Proposal)

The table below gives a summary of all RFCS application forms, followed by an explanation of the individual forms.

	Form Parts	Forms details	Applies to	Format	Responsible
Part A (Administrative Forms)	General information		all proposals	Single on-line form	Project Coordinator
	Administrative data of participating organisations	One set of administrative data per participant			Each participant for his/her own organisation or the Project Coordinator on behalf of participants
	Budget for the proposal				
Part B and Annexes	B1 Proposal Description			To be uploaded as single pdf file (max. 16 pages , max. 10 MB) Template available in Funding & Tenders Portal	Project Coordinator
	B1.1 Participants Description			To be uploaded as single pdf file (maximum 1 page per participant and affiliated entity, justification of subcontracting , max 10 MB) Template available in Funding & Tenders Portal	
	B2 Technical Annex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Objectives Work packages description Bar chart 		To be uploaded as single pdf file (maximum 35 pages , max. 20MB) Template available in Funding & Tenders Portal	
	B3 Budget Breakdown		Bar chart	Template available in Funding & Tenders Portal To be uploaded as single pdf file including all B3 forms for the proposal (no page limit, max 10MB)	
	B4 Resubmission details			Template available in Funding & Tenders Portal To be uploaded as single pdf file (max. 2 pages , max. 10MB)	
	ESR Copy of the Previous ESR			only re-submitted proposals Upload as single pdf file (max 10 MB)	

Part A (Administrative Forms)

The Administrative Forms (referred to in the following as Part A) appear as a single online pdf file with editable fields automatically created by the submission system. These forms can be accessed by clicking on the “edit forms” button and are composed of three different sections:

The first section of Part A (General Information) provides an overview of the proposal and is initially partly filled by the system with the information given by the Project Coordinator at Steps 3 and 4. The Project Coordinator must enter at this stage the full title of the proposal, its duration (in months), starting date, abstract, research objective (refer to the order of objectives in the RFCS legal basis for codes used in the dropdown list), technical group (refer to Annex I to this Part 4 of the Information Package for details on the scopes of the different technical groups of the RFCS programme) and identification of resubmitted proposals. This part is complemented by specific declarations to be made by the Project Coordinator.

The second section of Part A (Administrative data of participating organisations) has to be filled in with additional information and contact details of each participant, including information on dependencies with other participants (to this goal, please refer to the definition of "independent legal entities" given in the footnote).³

This part can be filled in either by each participant for his/her own organisation or by the Project Coordinator on behalf of the participants.

The third section of Part A (Budget for the proposal) has to be filled in by the Project Coordinator and should give an overview of the costs foreseen by each participant and its affiliated entities per cost category.

Such costs should correspond exactly to the amounts reported in Forms B3 (the budget breakdown in Part B) by each participant under the different cost categories.

The following commands appear at the top of each page of Part A.

Table of contents. This link brings back to the Table of Contents on the first page of the proposal; additionally a 'Go To' drop down menu is available to quickly jump to any section of the Part A form.

³ Two legal entities shall be regarded as independent of each other where neither is under the direct or indirect control of the other or under the same direct or indirect control as the other. For this purpose, control may, in particular, take either of the following forms:

- (a) the direct or indirect holding of more than 50 % of the nominal value of the issued share capital in the legal entity concerned, or of a majority of the voting rights of the shareholders or associates of that entity;
- (b) the direct or indirect holding, in fact or in law, of decision- making powers in the legal entity concerned.

The following relationships between legal entities shall not in themselves be deemed to constitute controlling relationships:

- (a) the same public investment corporation, institutional investor or venture-capital company has a direct or indirect holding of more than 50 % of the nominal value of the issued share capital or a majority of voting rights of the shareholders or associates;
- (b) the legal entities concerned are owned or supervised by the same public body.

Validate Form. At any stage of the proposal preparation process, the "Validate form" feature checks if mandatory information is still missing. The check will be carried out on all forms in Part A regardless of the page from which the validation has been launched, and will redirect the user to a page with a list of warnings (validation results).

The presence of some of the warnings will not block the submission of the proposal, but may affect the eligibility of the proposal and/or the outcome of the evaluation due to missing information.

Save and Close: every time the forms in Part A are modified, the modifications must be saved by clicking on “Save and close” otherwise they will be lost. This will also close the editable pdf interface. The action saves the entire Part A regardless of the page from which the “Save and close” has been launched.

Part B

Part B is the core part of the proposal as it includes the description of the state-of-the-art, the work plan, the operational capacity of the consortium, the budgetary aspects, and any other element that the applicants may consider useful in view of the evaluation of their proposal.

Applicants are recommended to give the highest consideration to this part. In case the proposal is successful at the evaluation and the consortium will be invited to enter in the Grant Agreement preparation phase in view to sign a Grant Agreement with the REA, most of the information provided in Part B will become contractual obligations. No possibility will be given during the preparation of the Grant Agreement to modify substantial elements of the proposal, such as the planned work, the deliverables, the composition of the consortium⁴, the nature and extent of the claimed costs etc., except for obvious clerical errors.⁵

Therefore the proposal will be evaluated as submitted and, if important information is missing or not convincing, or shortcomings are found, this will result in a low scoring of the proposal. Applicants are advised to become familiar already at this stage with the RFCS award criteria.

Part B consists of a set of pdf files (the so-called Forms B) that will have to be uploaded by the Project Coordinator and should follow the given format. The templates of these forms are available for download from the Funding & Tenders Portal submission platform (under "download templates").

These templates are MS Word and Excel documents and must be converted to pdf before uploading (the Funding & Tenders Portal will not accept files with extension different from pdf).

⁴ A change in the consortium may be exceptionally accepted in duly justified cases, provided the content and the quality of the proposal does not change, or in case of a partner failing in regard to legal and financial viability. In this case the consortium has to propose a solution, either to attribute the tasks to other members of the consortium or to replace the participant with a new organisation, after approval by the REA on a case by case analysis.

⁵ E.g. omission to submit evidence or information on a non-substantial element of the proposal, see Art 151 of the Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) N° 66/2012.

The forms in Part B should be filled in preferably in English as this will be the working language during the evaluation. If these forms are written in a language other than English, please include an English version of the proposal's abstract in the Technical Annex (Form B2). Note that, in any case, the online submission forms for Part A and the templates for Part B are only available in English.

Required forms

- For every proposal, a minimum of 4 PDF files must be uploaded: Forms B1, B1.1, B2 and B3. When submitting the proposal, an error message is displayed if any of these files is missing and the submission will not be allowed.
- If the proposal is re-submitted this year after it has not been retained for funding by the RFCS in a previous evaluation, two additional pdf files must be uploaded: Forms B4 and the most recent ESR.

Also note that there are page limitations for Form B1 (max. 16 pages), Form B1.1 (max. 1 page per participant, affiliated entity and justification of subcontracting), Form B2 (max. 35 pages) and B4 (max 2 pages). When validating the proposal, the submission system will generate an automatic warning when the page count exceeds the maximum, but this will not prevent the submission. **Excess pages will be automatically made invisible, and will not be taken into consideration by the evaluators. It is therefore the responsibility of the applicants to ensure that the said limits are respected.**

Form B1

Form B1 (Proposal Description) should contain:

- A proposal summary (maximum 100 words)
- A list of ongoing and closed projects (RFCS, ECSC, FP, etc.), international literature, patents etc. of major relevance to the objectives of the proposal, and a clear indication of the proposal's added value to what has been already achieved to date at both European and worldwide level. Any mention of information that is not yet part of the public domain (i.e. reference to projects whose final report is not yet public) should allow the reader to reach an exhaustive understanding of the relevant findings.
- A description of the project, with indication of its main aspects, the global approach of the research and a brief overview of the work plan, as well as any other element that the applicants consider useful for a proper evaluation of the proposal. The description should be concise and structured in order to facilitate an easy understanding of all the main aspects and issues at stake.

Required format for Form B1:

- the given template should be used
- (file B1_Proposal_Description.docx available in Funding & Tenders Portal under "download templates");
- it has to be uploaded to Funding & Tenders Portal as single pdf file, max file size is 10 MB;
- the document must not exceed 16 pages in total; the minimum font size allowed is 11 points.

- In order for the proposal to be admissible, it is the responsibility of the applicants to ensure that the said page limit is **respected**.

Form B1.1 (Participants Description)

Form B1.1 should contain:

- A description of the individual partners of the consortium, highlighting their operational capacity (in terms of e.g., experience, skills, facilities, staff, resources) to carry out the proposed action.
- The affiliated entities and the actions of subcontractors should also be described and justified here.

Required format for Form B1.1:

- the given template should be used
- (file B1.1_Partners_Description.docx available in Funding & Tenders Portal under "download templates",);
- it has to be uploaded to Funding & Tenders Portal as single pdf file, max file size is 10 MB;
- the document should contain maximum 1 page per participant, affiliated entity and justification of subcontracting; the minimum font size allowed is 11 points.

Form B2 (Technical Annex)

Form B2 describes the work plan for the execution of the proposed action. If the proposal is retained for funding, it will become an Annex to the Grant Agreement and will define the contractual technical obligations of the participants. It includes the following sub-forms:

- Should be explained the objectives of the whole project, in max 1 page;
- An objective is a specific result that a person or system aims to accomplish within a time frame and with the available resources. Objectives, however, need to be embedded into a broader strategic context, linked to the problem perceived and the logic of intervention that defines how to overcome the problems identified. The more specific the objectives⁶ are, the easier it is to evaluate the extent to which the action has generated its intended effects. Objectives are no activities; suitable activities lead to the achievement of the objectives of the action. Objectives are identifiable goals towards which all project activities should be

⁶ SMART objectives are:
SPECIFIC – states exactly what you need to achieve, what needs to be done
MEASURABLE – includes a quality or quantity measure
ATTAINABLE/ACHIEVABLE – feasible with the available resources
REALISTIC – can be challenging but realistic in delivering on the overall, strategic goals of the initiative, and
TIME BOUND – with a clear end date or timescale (TIMELY – what will happen by when).

directed. Objectives are the specific targets against which project performance can be measured.

- For each work package, it should explain the objectives, the activities to be carried out in order to achieve these objectives, as well as the responsibilities and overall commitment (in terms of Person-Months) of the participants. The responsibility for each deliverable should be also clearly identified, as well as the interdependencies of tasks and work packages. Contributions from subcontractors and affiliated entities should be described.
- Deliverables are defined as additional outputs (e.g. information, special report, a technical diagram, a brochure, list, a software milestone or other building block of the action) that must be produced at a given moment during the action (normally not at the same time as the periodic/final reports) reflecting results of work of technical nature. Should be avoided such contents of deliverables as meeting minutes or a list of other deliverables. Public deliverables should use an understandable language and should be comprehensive but concise.
- The following reports, which are mandatory and have to be submitted via the Funding & Tenders Portal (reporting module), should not be classified as deliverables, as they constitute contractual obligations:
 - Periodic Reports (one per Reporting Period);
 - Publishable summary.

These reports are related to payments.

Annual Reports (reports corresponding to the calendar years in which the Periodic reports are not due) are **not** requested, contrary to past practice.

The comprehensive overview of the project (State of the Art, problem, proposed approach and outcome) **should constitute a separate mandatory deliverable** with an indicative delivery date **not later than Month 6** from the project starting date.

The comprehensive overview will form the reference basis for the project monitoring in the first months from its start.

A Publishable Report should constitute a **separate mandatory public deliverable** for the end of the project.

The publishable report should be used for dissemination and exploitation.

The entire publishable report should typically not exceed 70 pages in total (including appendices), with a lean core report ideally of maximum 50 pages.

The structure and the content of a publishable report are recommended as described below:

- a) Cover page
- b) Table of contents
- c) An executive summary of maximum 2 pages, highlighting the main subjects, project objectives, results obtained and their usefulness and conclusions, possible applications and patents in a comprehensive albeit concise manner
- d) Challenges and solutions.

This section covers the research approach, a description of the experimental work performed on a task per task basis, highlighting the main results achieved

A simple compilation of individual reports produced by partners shall not be accepted.

The section shall contain the following:

- 1) **Objectives of the project**
- 2) **Description of the problems addressed**
- 3) **Description of activities and discussion**, highlighting any innovation made
- 4) **Results, conclusions, lessons learnt and (policy) recommendations** indicating the achievements made.
- 5) **Exploitation and impact of the research results**

This section should address issues related to the exploitation of the results, notably:

- ✓ Actual applications;
- ✓ Technical and economic potential for the use of the results;
- ✓ Any possible patent filing;
- ✓ Publications / conference presentations resulting from the project;
- ✓ Any other aspects concerning the dissemination of results.

- e) List of figures
- f) List of tables
- g) List of acronyms and abbreviations
- h) Full list of references
- i) Appendices (where suitable)

Bar chart: should indicate the scheduling for each task in each work package and the commitment (in terms of Person-Months) of each participant, subcontractor and affiliated entity.

Required format for B2:

- the given template should be used (file B2_Technical_Annex.docx available in Funding & Tenders Portal under "download templates". The information provided should strictly follow the format given, without attaching any additional documents in whatever form (e.g. additional annexes, appendices, supporting letters etc.).
- All the sections (objectives, work packages, bar chart) should be bundled consecutively into one single pdf file to be uploaded to Funding & Tenders Portal as Form B2; max file size is 20 MB.
- Form B2 has a formal page limit of at most 35 pages; the minimum font size allowed is 11 points.

Form B3

Budget breakdown for each direct participant in the proposal. The form allows participants to claim costs classified in the categories explained in Part 3 – Budget categories and cost eligibility rules. Footnotes are given in the form to guide applicants.

- Costs incurred by affiliated entities have to be claimed by indicating the name of the linked third party in the last column on the right (while, for costs incurred directly by the participant, the cells in this column should be left empty).
- Direct costs for subcontracting can be claimed by the participants or by its affiliated entities, as relevant.
- The template provided on the Funding & Tenders Portal is a MS Excel file with an empty sample of the form. Applicants will need to generate additional copies of this form in order to cover all participants in the proposal.
- In order to allow for a full compatibility with the central IT systems, the following settings are used in the Excel template for rounding numbers with decimal places: the totals A (direct personnel costs), B (direct costs of subcontracting), C1 (equipment) and C2 (operating costs or “other goods, works and services”); the totals D (indirect costs), E (total estimated eligible costs) and the total revenue are calculated with a precision of 2 decimal places.

When converting the Excel file in pdf format, make sure that this operation is extended to all Forms B3 that you have created (i.e., to all participants) and check that the resulting pdf file is readable and clearly conveys the intended information. In particular check that the text inserted in the cells is always well visible; hidden text will be lost in the conversion to pdf and will not be taken into account for the evaluation. For an optimal conversion into pdf, do not modify the width and the number of the columns in Form B3 (whereas it is always possible to add new rows, if more space is needed, and extend the length of each Form B3 even beyond the 2 pages of the template).

Required format for Forms B3:

- the given template should be used (file B3_Budget_Breakdown2021.xlsx available in Funding & Tenders Portal under "download templates").
- One form B3 is requested for each direct participant in the proposal.
- It has to be uploaded to Funding & Tenders Portal as a single pdf file, which includes all forms B3 for the proposal. The same order of participants should be used as they appear in Part A.
- maximum file size is 10 MB.
- there is no page limit for this form.

Form B4 Resubmission details

Form B4 applies only to resubmitted proposals. If it is declared in Form A1 that the proposal has been already submitted to the RFCS programme for evaluation in previous years, the proposal will be classified as "resubmitted" and the following two additional documents are requested: Forms B4 and the most recent ESR.

Form B4 should explicitly summarise any changes made against the previous submission.

- Required format for B4:
- the given template should be used (file B4_Resubmission_Details.docx available in Funding & Tenders Portal under "*download templates*").
- it has to be uploaded to Funding & Tenders Portal as a single pdf file; max file size is 10 MB.
- it must not exceed 2 pages; the minimum font size allowed is 11 points. In order for the proposal to be admissible, it is the responsibility of the applicants **to ensure that the said page limit is respected.**

Note that a resubmitted proposal is subject to a new independent evaluation exercise that does not necessarily imply that it will receive equal or higher score than the previous submission.

Previous ESR Previous Evaluation Summary Report - ESR

Previous ESR applies only to resubmitted proposals. This corresponds to ESR that the applicants have received from the European Commission or the REA following the most recent evaluation of the proposal submitted to the RFCS programme. The Project Coordinator is requested to upload the PDF file received from the European Commission.

There is no page limit for this form.

It has to be uploaded to Funding & Tenders Portal as a single PDF file; max file size is 10 MB.

2.4 Relevant procedures after proposal submission and before evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated as submitted. Changes in the proposal are no longer possible after the cut-off date and any additional documentation provided by the applicants after this date will be disregarded. Exception make cases when the REA expressly asks the applicants to provide information to clarify any obvious clerical errors on their part. The authorising officer responsible may correct obvious clerical errors in application documents after confirmation of the intended correction by the participant. Where a participant fails to submit evidence or to make statements, the evaluation committee or, where appropriate, the authorising officer responsible shall, except in duly justified cases, ask the participant to provide the missing information or to clarify supporting documents. Such information, clarification or confirmation shall not substantially change application documents.⁷

In addition, the REA may re-allocate a proposal to a different topic, if the choice made by the applicants does not appear in accordance with the definitions of the topic. In this case, the applicant will be informed and asked to expressly agree with the proposed re-allocation.

If the coordinator wants to withdraw a proposal after the closure of the call, they should inform the REA through the RFCS functional mailbox indicated in Section 3.1. If an applicant has submitted the same proposal more than once, the REA may ask them to withdraw the duplicates.

⁷ Article 151 “Clarification and correction of application documents” of the Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046

3 Information and assistance

3.1 Helpdesks

All necessary documents, templates, links and informative material for proposals submission and evaluation are available on the pages of the RFCS calls hosted on the Funding & Tenders Portal:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-search>

For additional information concerning the RFCS program check our new webpage:

[Research Fund for Coal and Steel \(RFCS\) | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

You may also wish to contact the Funding & Tenders Portal's IT Helpdesk for general IT issues and questions such as forgotten passwords, access rights and roles, guidance on the steps for submission of proposals, etc.:

[Helpdesk & Support Services \(europa.eu\)](#)

If this does not resolve your query, please contact the REA RFCS helpdesk:

rea-rfcs@ec.europa.eu

3.2 Supporting Documents

When preparing the proposals, applicants may also wish to refer to the following supporting documents:

- the full list of projects (completed and on-going) funded by the RFCS programme (2003-2019):

[RFCS funded projects | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

(For completed projects, the link to the final report published on EU Bookshop is also given.)

- a selection of RFCS success stories:

[Coal & steel | Research and Innovation \(europa.eu\)](#)

The published reports of finalised RFCS projects are available from the EU bookshop, which is the portal of the Publications Office of the European Union:

<http://bookshop.europa.eu>

3.3 Confidentiality and Personal Data Protection

Proposals and any related information, data, and documents will be treated confidentially by the Commission, Research Executive Agency and by the independent experts acting as evaluators and observers. All proposals will be archived under secure conditions.

Personal data will be processed in accordance to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC and according to the 'notifications of the processing operations' to the Data Protection Officer (DPO) of the Commission (publicly accessible in the DPO register).

EN

RESEARCH FUND FOR COAL AND STEEL

Research Programme Information Package

Part 4 – Guide and Manual

Part 4.1 – Manual for the evaluation and selection of proposals

DISCLAIMER

This draft has not been adopted or endorsed by the European Commission. Any views expressed are the preliminary views of the Commission services and may not in any circumstances be regarded as stating an official position of the Commission. The information transmitted is intended only for the Member State or entity to which it is addressed for discussions and may contain confidential and/or privileged material.

This Manual explains the procedures applicable to the evaluation and selection of proposals submitted to the RFCS programme.

4 General principles

The evaluation of proposals will be carried out in steps under the responsibility of the European Research Executive Agency (REA). The REA ensures the confidential, fair and equitable evaluation as well as a proper planning, coordination and monitoring of the overall evaluation exercise.

The evaluation of proposals is carried out with the assistance of independent external experts acting as evaluators and as observers.

4.1 Independent external experts acting as evaluators

For the appointment of evaluators, the REA works with the database of independent experts established to provide experts to research and innovation EC programmes (registration in this database is possible via the [Funding & Tenders Portal](#) of the European Commission, in the section dedicated to "[Work as an Expert](#)"). In order to populate this database, the REA publishes specific Calls for expressions of interest periodically.

Evaluators are appointed in their personal capacity and do not represent any specific organisation or interest.

Appointed evaluators should have appropriate **skills** and **knowledge** to the technical field for which they are selected

Evaluators must also have a high level of professional experience in the public and/or in the private sector related to: research in relevant scientific and technological fields; administration, management or evaluation of projects; dissemination and use of the results of research and technological development projects, technology transfer and innovation; international cooperation in science and technology; development of human capital. Evaluators must have appropriate language and communication skills.

In addition, the pool of evaluators is selected considering the following criteria:

- Appropriate balance between academic and industrial expertise
- Appropriate gender balance
- Balanced distribution of geographical origin
- A minimum of 25% of new experts⁸

While there is no overall limit to the participation of individual experts as evaluators, experts are allowed a maximum of three consecutive evaluations.

⁸ A "new expert" is defined here as an expert who has not participated in the previous three RFCS evaluations.

Taking into account the number of proposals to be evaluated, the REA establishes and publishes the yearly list of evaluators and a reserve list based on the criteria described above. However, the names of the experts assigned to each specific proposal are not made public.

4.2 Independent external experts acting as observers

A maximum of two observers are appointed to give advice on the conduct and fairness of all steps of the evaluation, on the ways in which evaluators apply the evaluation criteria, and on the ways in which the evaluation process could be improved.

The observer also verifies that the procedures set out in the *RFCS Research Programme Information Package* and in this Manual are correctly applied. During the execution of their tasks, observers must not express any views on the proposals under evaluation or on the experts' opinions on the proposals.

Observers are appointed in their personal capacity and do not represent any specific organisation or interest. They apply their professional skills, knowledge and ethics to the best of their abilities, in accordance with the guidelines and time schedule provided by the REA.

Observers report their findings in writing to the REA, which summarises them in a report which is then presented to the relevant Advisory Groups and to the COSCO, at the respective annual plenary meetings (see later).

4.3 Code of conduct

Upon signature of the contract of appointment, evaluators and observers alike commit to comply with the **Code of Conduct for Evaluators**⁹, which binds them to perform their duties without any conflict of interest and to the necessary confidentiality of the information handled during the evaluation.

Accordingly, evaluators must not disclose to third parties details on the proposals, on the experts assigned to examine proposals, or on the discussions which take place within the evaluation panels.

Moreover, they cannot act as evaluators for a given proposal if they have a conflict of interest with this proposal, according to the definition of conflict of interest given in the Code of Conduct.

Specifically, evaluators cannot be members of the RFCS advisory groups assisting the Commission in the implementation of the RFCS programme.

5 The evaluation process

Proposals are submitted according to the modalities described in the *Guide to Applicants*.

⁹ The Code of Conduct is part of the general model contract for independent experts assisting the Commission, available on the Funding & Tenders Portal at the link: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/experts_manual/h2020-experts-mono-contract_en.pdf
Experts are recommended to regularly check this link for updates of the model contract and the annexed code of conduct.

5.1 Briefing of evaluators

Evaluators receive all information required to carry out their duties.

At the beginning of the remote evaluation phase, experts receive a briefing document which includes the necessary information on the evaluation exercise as well as guidelines and recommendations for the smooth and effective execution of their tasks. In addition, they receive other fundamental documents such as the RFCS Information Package, the Synopsis of RFCS projects, the guidelines on the use of the on-line evaluation platform (SEP). Evaluators asked by the REA to act as rapporteurs will receive additional specific guidance on how to best carry out this task.

Then, an oral briefing is organised by the REA to explain how work will be organized, how consensus meetings will be carried out, to remind experts of their duties and obligations, to give practical information on the evaluation premises and its surroundings, and any other information deemed necessary to guarantee a transparent, effective and high-quality central evaluation session.

5.2 Check of Proposals admissibility and eligibility

After the call deadline, the REA verifies that proposals meet the admissibility and eligibility criteria given in the relevant Call. If a proposal is inadmissible or ineligible, it will not be evaluated. In this case, the REA informs the applicants, explaining the reasons for the decision and how to appeal.

A proposal may be declared ineligible/inadmissible also at a later stage of the evaluation process, should evidence arise of non-compliance with the eligibility and admissibility criteria. The fact that a proposal is evaluated in such circumstances does not constitute proof of its admissibility or eligibility.

The project coordinator may be asked to provide missing information if obvious clerical errors are found (e.g. omission to submit evidence or information on a non-substantial element of the proposal).

If the additional information provided by the coordinator on behalf of the applicants would substantially change the proposal (for example affecting its admissibility and eligibility or the evaluation outcome), it will not be taken into account.

5.3 Individual Evaluation

Each proposal is evaluated by at least three evaluators. This number can be increased in particular cases, for example if additional expertise appears necessary for specific topics.

Evaluators receive access to the SEP online system, where they can access the proposals that they are asked to evaluate. If evaluators find that they have a conflict of interest with a given proposal, or do not feel fully knowledgeable on the topic, they can decline the task and report this to the REA, which will assign a different evaluator to the proposal.

During the remote evaluation, an expert must not have any contact with other experts evaluating the same proposals and must not know their names.

For each proposal, evaluators fill in the Individual Evaluation Report (IER) with comments for each evaluation criterion (see Part 3 – General provisions), using a standard evaluation form. A copy of the evaluation forms is provided in Annex 7.2 to this document, which are identical to the templates available on the Participant Portal.

Evaluators assess proposals as they were submitted, without giving recommendations on how to improve them and without evaluating their potential should certain changes be made. If important information is missing and/or specific claims are not supported, or shortcomings/weaknesses are found, evaluators shall score the proposal lower accordingly to the severity of the shortcomings.

Based on the written comments, experts score the proposal on each evaluation criterion on a scale from 0 to 5 points (with increments of 0.25 points), according to the following definitions:

- 0** The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information (unless the result of an ‘obvious clerical error’).

- 1 Poor.** The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- 2 Average.** The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
- 3 Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
- 4 Very Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
- 5 Excellent.** The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Annual priorities: evaluators can grant a bonus expressed in decimals of points to proposals that address the annual priority in the relevant topic, if this is stated in the specific conditions of a Call (see Part 2 - Calls).

Resubmitted proposals: proposals that are eligible for resubmission are re-evaluated independently from the scoring obtained in the previous evaluation/s. However, resubmitted proposals must include a copy of the previous Evaluation Summary Report and an explanation (Form B4) on how the applicant has addressed the shortcomings identified therein in the revised proposal.

Thresholds: for every evaluation criterion of all types of activity, there is a minimum threshold per criterion and an overall threshold under which a proposal will not be eligible for funding. These are clearly indicated in Part 3 – General Provisions, unless it is otherwise stated in the specific conditions of a Call (see Part 2 – Calls for Proposals).

5.4 Consensus meetings

Evaluators are convened at consensus meetings to discuss the quality of the proposal of their competence, and to address any open issues and divergences as identified in the draft consensus report.

REA officials chair the consensus meetings and act as moderators, ensuring that the consensus report faithfully reflects the evaluators' views and the consensus reached. If necessary, he/she assists the rapporteur to summarise the comments of the evaluators in the consensus report.

The independent observer may also be present.

The objective of the consensus meetings is to reach a fair consensus and generate a full and consistent final evaluation, represented by a comprehensive, concise and clear final consensus report.

If the evaluators cannot reach a consensus, the REA services may ask one or more additional evaluators to examine the proposal. In this case, the REA official suspends the meeting to give sufficient time to the new expert(s) to read the proposal and form their own view. A new consensus meeting is then convened at a suitable time and the new expert is invited to participate and contribute to the discussion.

5.5 Consensus Report

The REA selects one of the evaluators to act as Rapporteur for each proposal, tasked to summarize into a Consensus Report the comments made by all evaluators at the consensus meeting. The rapporteur-selected can decline this task, explaining to the REA the reason for the refusal.

The Consensus Report uses the same template as the Individual Evaluation Reports, with comments and grades by criterion. The report should reflect the views of all experts and highlight possible divergence, to serve as a basis for discussion at the central evaluation session.

Once all evaluators agree with the text and scores of the consensus report, they give formal approval individually.

5.6 Panel review meeting

After the consensus phase a panel of experts:

- reach an agreement on the scores and comments for all proposals within a sector, checking consistency across the evaluations;
- if necessary, propose a new set of marks or revise comments, and resolve cases where evaluators were unable to agree;
- rank the proposals having a qualifying score and give a priority order for proposals with the same score.

The panel may comprise experts from consensus groups, new experts, or a combination of the two. There may be one panel covering the whole call or several panels covering different parts of the call. Each panel will be responsible for one or more ranked lists, as defined by the indicative budget and call conditions set out in the Research Programme for RFCS.

5.7 Quality Control

A REA official verifies the quality of the report, including the consistency between the comments and the scores for each criterion and the quality and clarity of the text.

In case of problems (for example inconsistencies between scores and comments, ambiguous comments, etc.), the consensus report is rejected and the rapporteur is asked to revise it alongside the comments of the REA's official. This task can be carried out by rapporteurs either in Brussels or remotely. The revised consensus report is submitted to other evaluators for their approval and then once again submitted to Quality Control, for approval.

6 Selection of proposals to be funded

6.1 Advisory Group Plenary meetings

The Coal and Steel Advisory Groups are two independent technical advisory groups established by Decision 2008/376/EC which regulates the RFCS. Their role is to advise the Commission on specific coal- and steel-related RTD aspects.

The European Commission organises a plenary meeting of each Advisory Group where REA, in charge of the evaluation, presents the ranking lists and the evaluation exercise. The findings and recommendations of the observer(s) to the central evaluation session are also presented and discussed.

Members of the Advisory Groups shall inform the Commission of any potential conflicts of interests which could be considered prejudicial to their independence. Advisory Group members shall not disclose information received during the fulfilment of their tasks. Advisory Group members are required to sign, at the time of their appointment, a declaration regarding conflict of interest and a confidentiality declaration valid throughout their appointment. The Commission may adopt supplementary measures to ensure confidentiality, as necessary.

6.2 COSCO Committee

After the presentation of the evaluation results to Advisory Groups, the European Commission organises a plenary meeting with the COSCO programme committee, composed of Member States representatives. At the meeting, COSCO approves by qualified majority (in accordance with Article 5(1) of Regulation (EU) No 182/2011) the draft Commission Implementing Decision on the granting of financial aid to successful proposals and the rejection of unsuccessful proposals.

At the beginning of each meeting, COSCO attendants shall inform the Commission of any conflict of interest with regard to one or more items on the agenda. In the event of such a conflict of interest, the person concerned shall, at the request of the chair, withdraw from the meeting whilst the relevant items are being dealt with. In addition, attendants are requested to respect confidentiality obligations concerning the discussion at the meeting and the documents received.

6.3 Ranking lists

After the evaluation, the proposals will be ranked in final lists. The lists will be prepared as follows:

- proposals over all evaluation thresholds will be ranked according to the total score;
- in case of equal total score, a cascade mechanism applies (see Part 3 – General Provisions).

Starting from the top of the list, funding will be allocated according to the requested EU contribution, until the budget of the RFCS call is fully assigned (see the Information Pack Part 2 – Call for Proposals for the relevant amounts).

Each final list will therefore comprise:

- the main list of proposals for which there is sufficient funding;
- the reserve list of proposals that can be funded only in case proposals in the main list are withdrawn, excluded or if extra funding becomes available;
- the list of proposals that didn't pass one or more evaluation thresholds;
- the list of inadmissible and/or ineligible proposals.

Within six months of the deadline for submission of proposals, the REA will inform applicants about the evaluation outcome and give indications on how to appeal if the proposal has not been selected for funding.

6.4 Commission Decision

Following the approval by the COSCO Committee of the draft implementing act (Commission Decision) setting out the proposals that will be funded, both successful and unsuccessful applicants are notified of the result of their proposal.

At this point, starts the Grant Agreement preparation phase for the successful applicants. Signature of the Grant Agreement normally takes place within 3 months from the notification of the evaluation results to the applicants.

The European Commission shall adopt the implementing act (Commission Decision) setting out the proposals that will be funded.

7 Annexes

7.1 Annex I : Scope of the Technical Groups

Coal Technical Groups – TGK

TGK1 POST-MINING ISSUES, SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE COAL MINING OPERATIONS

- Highly efficient, largely automated excavation and mining technologies
- Health and safety in coal mining operations
- Upgrading coal deposits; (enhanced) coal bed methane, underground coal gasification
- Support technologies and services, transport systems and monitoring & process control systems
- Reduction of the environmental impact of mining
- Post-mining environmental issues and land rehabilitation, including energy projects
- Waste management

TGK2 ENVIRONMENTAL, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES RELATED TO COAL TREATMENT AND USE

- Clean and efficient coal technologies
- Zero-emission and high-efficiency power generation
- Coal gasification and conversion
- Integration of the coal chain from mining to the final products (electricity, heat, hydrogen, coke, syngas)
- Co-combustion of coal with solid waste or biomass
- Reduction of the environmental impact of installations using coal and lignite
- CO₂ capture and storage (CCS)
- Other energy and non-energy uses of coal
- Chemical processing of CO₂ captured from combustion or gasification processes and used to produce fuels, petrochemicals and plastics (CCU)

Steel Technical Groups – TGA

TGA1 IRON- AND STEELMAKING

- Ore agglomeration, sintering and pelletising processes
- Physico-chemical metallurgy of liquid steel related to primary/secondary steelmaking and to slag formation
- Optimised sustainable iron- and steelmaking processes and operations (BF, EAF, DRI ...),
- New and improved processes for sustainable iron and steel production (hydrogen, electrolysis...)
- New and improved technologies for scrap classification, preparation and recycling for integration in iron- and steelmaking
- Recovery and valorisation of by-products (solids, liquids, gases)
- Instrumentation, modelling, control and optimisation of iron and steelmaking processes
- Reduction of emissions (including CO₂), energy consumption and improvement of the environmental impact in iron- and steelmaking processes
- Energy, water and material flow management in iron and steelmaking processes, including recovery of waste heat
- Restoration of steelworks sites

TGA2 DOWNSTREAM STEEL PROCESSING

- Chemistry and physics of solidification & precipitation related to casting processes
- Continuous casting, ingot casting and near net shape casting techniques with or without direct rolling for flat and long products
- Heat treatment technology, including reheating furnaces, and thermal treatments
- Hot and cold rolling
- Reliability of production processes and maintenance of production lines
- Surface engineering, chemical treatments, finishing and coating technologies
- Instrumentation, modelling, control and optimisation of downstream steel production processes
- Reduction of emissions, energy consumption and improvement of the environmental impact in downstream processes
- Energy, water and material flow management in downstream processing

TGA3 CONCEPTION OF STEEL PRODUCTS

- Phase transformation, precipitation, re-crystallisation, microstructure & texture and ageing
- Predictive simulation models on microstructures & mechanical properties
- Development of steel with improved properties at low and high temperatures such as strength and toughness, corrosion, fatigue, wear, creep and resistance against fracture
- Steel products with improved physical properties including electro-magnetic behaviour
- Innovative steel grades for demanding applications
- Coating development and coated steel products with appropriate surface characteristics (corrosion protection, damage control, other aspects)
- Standardisation of testing and evaluation methods

TGA4 STEEL APPLICATIONS AND SOLUTIONS FOR EXISTING AND NEW MARKETS

- Technologies relating to the transformation of steel products: cutting, forming, welding and other assembling technologies of steel products (and other materials)
- Structural safety and design methods, in particular with regard to resistance to fire and earthquakes
- Design of assembled structures to facilitate the easy recovery of steel scrap and its re-conversion into usable steels and techniques for recycling
- Steel-containing composites and sandwich structures
- Prolonging service life of steel based assemblies
- Innovative steel applications for emerging markets
- Innovative steel solutions for automobiles, packaging and home appliances
- Innovative steel solutions for building, construction, energy production and industry
- Life cycle assessment of sustainable steel applications

TGA5 STEEL FACTORIES - SMART AND HUMAN

- Analytical and measurement techniques related to steelmaking/steel processing (quality control), work place (human impact) and to environment (external impact)
- Instrumentation, control and automation with focus on artificial intelligence and information technologies
- Decision support systems (Big Data, data analytics, interpretation and use)
- Knowledge management systems and knowledge handling
- Cyber security of steel production processes
- Social aspects of new automation or IT systems
- Working conditions and quality of life at the work place, ergonomic methods, reduction of occupational exposure (emissions, noise, ...)
- Control and protection of the environment in and around the workplace

7.2 Annex II : Evaluation forms

Research Projects

1. Excellence

- Extent to which they match the themes, priorities and objectives of the Call and of the Research Programme;

1.1 Does the proposal address at least one of the research objectives of the RFCS programme, related to the European Green Deal Communication's elements listed in the Introduction chapter of the RFCS Information Package, and includes an assessment of anticipated industrial, economic, social and environmental benefits, as per article 26 of Decision 2008/376/EC (Y/N)? Please justify.

- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state of the art.

1.2 To what extent do the applicants demonstrate their knowledge of the international state-of-the-art?

1.3 Does the proposal have an appropriate level of innovative value?

- Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches.

1.4 Are the proposed methods and techniques clearly described?

1.5 Is the scientific and technical feasibility of the proposed work convincingly addressed?

2. Impact

- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project.

2.1 Are there relevant and substantial expected benefits for the related European sector?

2.2 Are there relevant and substantial industrial Coal/Steel sector participation?

2.3 Do the expected results offer the perspective of a wider and general use in the European Union beyond a specific application, product and/or company?

- Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

2.4 Do the expected results address climate change or environment-related challenges and/or bring other important benefits for society?

2.5 Are aspects of dissemination and (if applicable) standardisation convincingly addressed?

3. Quality

- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.

3.1 Are the Work Packages and claimed financial resources clearly described, well defined and appropriate?

3.2 Is the overall scheduling suitable for achieving the project objectives?

3.3 Is the interaction of the partners and tasks clearly defined and appropriate?

- Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

3.4 Do the individual partners have the necessary operational capacity to carry out the proposed action

Pilot and Demonstration Projects

1. Excellence

- Extent to which they match the themes, priorities and objectives of the Call and of the Research Programme.

1.1 Does the proposal address at least one of the research objectives of the RFCS programme, relate to the European Green Deal Communication's elements listed in the Introduction chapter of the RFCS Information Package, and includes an assessment of anticipated industrial, economic, social and environmental benefits, as per Art. 26 of Decision 2008/376/EC (Y/N)? Please justify.

- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state of the art.

1.2 Does the proposal rely on well-established scientific and technical results obtained in former research projects or by any other means?

1.3 Does the proposal have an appropriate level of innovative value?

- Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches.

1.4 Are the proposed methods and techniques clearly described?

1.5 Is the scientific and technical feasibility of the proposed work convincingly addressed and risks well mitigated?

2. Impact

- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project.

2.1 Are there relevant and substantial expected benefits for the related European sector?

2.2 Are there relevant and substantial industrial Coal/Steel sector participation?

2.3 Do the expected results offer the perspective of a wider and general use in the European Union beyond a specific application, product and/or company?

- Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

2.4 Do the expected results address climate change or environment-related challenges and/or bring other important benefits for society?

2.5 Will the project provide a step forward in the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) beyond TRL 6 of the proposed application?

2.6 Are economic issues adequately addressed and is the further demonstration or deployment of the proposed technology credible?

3. Quality

- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.

3.1 Are the Work Packages and claimed financial resources clearly described, well defined and

appropriate?

3.2 Is the overall scheduling suitable for achieving the project objectives?

3.3 Is the interaction of the partners and tasks clearly defined and appropriate?

- Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

3.4 Do the individual partners have the necessary operational capacity to carry out the proposed action?

Accompanying Measures

1. Excellence

- Extent to which they match the themes, priorities and objectives of the Call and of the Research Programme.

1.1 Does the proposal address at least one of the research objectives of the RFCS programme, related to the European Green Deal Communication's elements listed in the Introduction chapter of the RFCS Information Package, and includes an assessment of anticipated industrial, economic, social and environmental benefits, as per article 26 of Decision 2008/376/EC (Y/N)? Please justify.

- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state of the art.

1.2 Is the proposal in line with the role of accompanying measures and does it disseminate new information?

- Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches.

1.3 Does it effectively address the appropriate audience in the field concerned?

2. Impact

- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project.

2.1 Does the proposal demonstrate a strategic importance for the European coal/steel industry?

2.2. Do the applicants indicate clear and quantitative objectives? Are they credible?

- Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

2.3 Does the proposal indicate how the intended accompanying measure could have a direct impact e.g. on EU regulations and standards, on potential application at industrial level, on exploitation of new market opportunities, on climate change or environment-related challenges and/or bring other important benefits for society?

3. Quality

- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.

3.1 Are the Work Packages and claimed financial resources clearly described, well defined and appropriate?

3.2 Is the overall scheduling suitable for achieving the project objectives?

- Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

3.3 Is the consortium well balanced?

3.4 Do the individual partners have the necessary operational capacity to carry out the proposed action?