



**Call for Proposals**

**Cooperation Programme with Croatian Scientists  
in Diaspora 'RESEARCH COOPERABILITY'**

Call Identifier: PZS-2019-02

*The Project is co-financed by the European Union from the European Social Fund, under the Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020, specific objective 10.II.3. "Improving the environment for Croatian researchers" of the Operational Programme.*

*The implementation of this Call is based on the experiences of the Unity through Knowledge Fund. This Call has been prepared in line with the general regulations of the Croatian Science Foundation. You are accepting its terms by submitting your application. The terms referring to masculine gender are neutral and refer to persons of both genders.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Croatian Science Foundation (hereinafter: CSF) is publishing the Call for Proposals for the "Research Cooperability Programme", Programme for Cooperation with Croatian Scientists in Diaspora (further below: Research Cooperability Programme), whereby the cooperation between scientists from Croatia and scientists of Croatian origin (Croatian citizenship or nationality) living and working abroad will enable the transfer of knowledge, attract investments primarily to the science and technology system of the Republic of Croatia and indirectly to the business sector. The cooperation between scientists from Croatia and scientists from diaspora (with Croatian citizenship or nationality) enhances their networking, while putting a special focus on the development of young scientists' careers as well as of their competences for participating in calls for applications to European and international organizations.

In order to ensure permanent cooperation of Croatian scientists, public scientific institutions and universities with the Croatian scientific diaspora, the CSF is publishing the Call for Research Cooperability Programme, which will finance a new generation of young researchers within the European Social Fund (hereinafter: ESF) within the Operational Programme "Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020". The Research Cooperability Programme Call will support research projects which should be implemented by 31 May 2023 at the latest, as well as the full time employment of at least two young researchers per project, of which at least one is a PhD student, while others can be PhD or postdoctoral students in the early stages of their career development. A PhD student should be employed no later than 9 months after the start of the project. At least 38 researchers in early stage of career development will be employed through the Research Cooperability Programme.

## 2. ABOUT THE UNITY THROUGH KNOWLEDGE FUND

This Call is based on the experiences of the Unity through Knowledge Fund (hereinafter: UKF)<sup>1</sup>. The mission of the UKF is to unite scientific and expert potential in Croatia and diaspora. In order to achieve this task, UKF strives towards achieving the following three goals:

1. fostering internationally competitive research,
2. fostering research that creates new values in the Croatian economy, and
3. supporting projects which enhance the development of research infrastructure in Croatia.

The contribution of diaspora to the career development of young researchers in Croatia as well as to the potential for knowledge and technology transfer is of particular importance.

## 3. LEGAL BASIS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Below is given the overview of some of the most important documents regulating the grant award procedures of the CSF and the ESF in the Republic of Croatia:

- [Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education](#) (Official Gazette No. 123/03, 198/03, 105/04, 174/04, 02/07, 46/07, 45/09, 63/11, 94/13, 139/13, 101/14),
- [Act on the Croatian Science Foundation](#) (Official Gazette No. 117/01, 46/09, 92/10 and 78/12),

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<sup>1</sup> Croatian Science Foundation took over the implementation of the Unity through Knowledge Fund by concluding the Agreement on the Transfer of the Unity through Knowledge Fund on 19 February 2014.

- [Statute of the Croatian Science Foundation.](#)
- [Regulation on the Terms and Conditions and the Grant Award Procedure for the Achievement of the Foundations's Purpose](#): defining the conditions and rules governing the award and use of CSF funds,
- [Code of Ethics of the Croatian Science Foundation](#): providing an insight into the principles of morale and professional ethics as guidelines for professional work and public activities of all persons involved in the CSF activities,
- [Regulation \(EU\) No. 1303/2013](#) of the European parliament and Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013) (Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013),
- [Regulation \(EU\) No. 1304/2013](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 (Regulation on ESF),
- [Regulation on the Eligibility of Expenditure Funded through the European Social Fund](#) (Official Gazette No. 149/14 and 14/16 and 74/16),
- [Guidelines on the Remuneration of Salaries and Work-related Expenditures Funded through the European Social Fund in the Republic of Croatia 2014-2020](#) (Version 1.2, August 2017),
- [Public Procurement Act](#) (Official Gazette No. 90/11, 83/13, 143/13, 13/14 and 120/16),
- [State Aid aAct](#) (Official Gazette No. 47/14, OG 69/17),
- [Labour Act](#) (Official Gazette No. 93/14),
- [Partnership Agreement between the European Commission and Croatia on Funding through the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020](#),
- [Operative Programme Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020](#),
- [Strategy for Education, Science and Technology](#) (Official Gazette No. 124/14),
- [Europa 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth](#),
- [Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Science and Education for 2017-2019](#).

#### **4. ABOUT THE RESEARCH COOPERABILITY PROGRAMME**

This Call is financed by the ESF within the specific goal 10.ii.3. *Improving the environment for Croatian researchers* of the Operational Programme "Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020", and from the State budget of the Republic of Croatia. Therefore, besides the CSF's and UKF's regulations, the Call is also based on the implementation procedures of projects financed by the ESF.

The Research Cooperability Programme funds research projects to be implemented in the Republic of Croatia which contribute to the achievement of the Research Cooperability Programme's goals and include cooperation with the Croatian diaspora of scientists and experts.

The goal is to attract prospective scientific research to Croatian organizations together with their accompanying knowledge, technology and scientific results.

Total allocation of funds for the projects within the Research Cooperability Programme amounts to HRK **42,500,000.00**. **A single project can be supported to a minimum of HRK 1,000,000.00 HRK and a maximum of HRK 2,200,000.00.**

**The proposed projects should last for a minimum of 3 years and should end no later than 31 May 2023. The planned start of the projects is September/October 2019.**

The final amount of the awarded funds per project in this Call will depend on the results of the evaluation procedure and financial negotiations.

## 5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

### 5.1. APPLICANT

- the researcher responsible for scientific research and project management;
- an active researcher (must hold a PhD, have experience in project management, an active research group, which shall be evident from the list of achievements of the Project Leader and the research group members, relevant publications and/or patents within the research field of the proposed project) with internationally recognized achievements and proven successful mentoring of young researchers;
- permanently employed at a public university or public research institute in the Republic of Croatia or other organizations that perform scientific activity and are registered in the Register of Scientific Organizations of the Ministry of Science and Education, meeting the minimum conditions prescribed by the Regulation on the Terms and Conditions for Issuing a Permit to Perform Scientific Activity, Terms and Conditions for Re-accreditation of Scientific Organizations and the Content of the Permit (OG 83/10);
- regular members of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts may submit a project proposal;
- a single applicant may submit only one project proposal per this Call.

At the time of opening the Call, the Applicant may be a Project Leader, Project Co-leader or Collaborator<sup>2</sup> on no more than one UKF or CSF project in progress.

In addition, the Applicant may be a Project Leader on projects financed by the CSF or UKF finishing by 31 August 2019, and projects financed through the Partnership in Research Call, STRUNA, Young Researchers' Career Development Project – Training of New Doctoral Students, Support to Research and Development in the Field of Climate Change, Support to Researchers for Applying to the ERC Programmes.

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'Collaborator' also refers to team members on projects funded by the UIP-2017-05 Call.

## Applicant´s organization support

The support of the scientific organization where the Applicant is employed is mandatory. Therefore, the CSF will support project proposals with clearly defined support of the scientific organization in which the proposed project will be implemented (adequate space, existing scientific infrastructure, equipment that will be made available to the Project Leader, administrative support, etc.).

## 5.2. CO-LEADER OF THE PROJECT

Co-leader of the project is a scientist holding Croatian citizenship or nationality living and working abroad (curriculum vitae, the certificate of Croatian citizenship or nationality as well as a certificate of employment should be submitted as evidence). Citizenship or nationality shall be proven by documents as stated [here](#). Co-leader of the project proposal shall be evaluated based on the criteria stated in the **Individual Evaluation Form**, published within the Call.

The project needs to be implemented in cooperation with the foreign scientific organization employing the Project Co-leader. For this purpose, the Applicant must submit a Letter of Commitment (**PZS-2019 Letter of commitment Co-leader organization form**), signed by the authorized person of the foreign scientific organization.

## 5.3. PARTNERS

Partner organizations can be included in the implementation of project activities. Organizations that can be Partners on the project are:

- a public scientific organization registered in the Register of Scientific Organizations of the Ministry of Science and Education,
- public and private higher education institutions registered in the Register of Higher Education Institutions of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia pursuant to the Act on the Amendment of the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (Official Gazette No. 123/03, 198/03, 105/04, 174/04, 02/07, 46/07, 45/09, 63/11, 94/13, 139/13, 101/14, 60/15),
- organizations established according to the Act on Institutions (Official Gazette No. 076/1993),
- civil society organizations (societies, art organizations, non-profit organizations).

Each partner organization must include at least one representative, i.e. a person in charge of the implementation of activities in accordance with the Work Plan of the proposed project.

## 5.4. ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

For Collaborators and Co-leaders, the following rule shall apply: the researcher can

simultaneously be a Project Leader and/or Collaborator on a maximum of two CSF projects. For the current Call, the abovementioned rule does not apply for those researchers that are Project Leaders and/or collaborators on projects finishing by 31 August 2019, Partnership in Research projects, STRUNA, Young Researchers' Career Development Project – Training of New Doctoral Students, Support to Research and Development in the Field of Climate Change, Support to Researchers for Applying to the ERC Programmes.

**NOTE:** Before submitting the application, Project Leader (Applicant) and Co-leader as well as each Collaborator and representative of the partner organization need to register in the [EPP system](#) by using their active e-mail address as their user name. After filling out all obligatory data under "My profile" (\*) and saving each card, a user identification number (user ID) will appear within the window "Personal data" in the first line. Co-leader, collaborators and partner organizations' representatives shall send their user IDs to the Project Leader, who can then register them on the project within the EPP system.

## **5.5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION AND PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS**

**The Applicant's organization and partner organizations have to fulfill the following additional conditions:**

- a) shall be registered as a legal person in the Republic of Croatia,
- b) shall have sufficient financial, expert and implementation/administration capacities for project implementation,
- c) shall have settled all tax and other payments toward the State according to the official records of the Tax Administration; in exceptional cases, the organizations will not be rejected in case of approved delay of payment or exclusion from payment pursuant to a special regulation,
- d) shall not be in the process of termination/liquidation,
- e) shall not be in the process of pre-trade settlement, bankruptcy proceedings, enforced collection procedures or liquidation,
- f) has not violated the provisions on the usage of funds from the ESF and other public sources.

**Organizations not eligible for participation in this Call with whom a Grant Agreement shall not be concluded:**

- a) if an organization or a person authorized by law for representing an organization has been convicted by final judgment in case of the following criminal offences:
  - fraud, giving and receiving bribe, abuses of the public procurement procedure, tax or customs evasion, subsidy fraud, money laundering, abuse of office and power, unlawful favourable treatment or
  - association for the purpose of committing criminal offences, misuse of state duty, unlawful intervention;
- b) if false information has been provided when presenting the evidence in accordance with the items stated above or any other false information has been provided to the authorities;

- c) if he or she was found guilty of providing false information to the authorities in the Republic of Croatia;
- d) if he or she has attempted to obtain confidential information or influence the evaluators or the CSF during the current or previous Calls for project proposals;
- e) if he or she is in a conflict of interest with the grant awarding procedure in question - in accordance with the Law on the Prevention of Conflict of Interest (Official Gazette No. 48/13, 57/15) and Article 52 of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom 1605/2002 (OJ L 298/1 of 26.10.2012).

**Declaration of the Applicant organization (PZS-2019\_Izjava Organizacije Podnositelja form)** and the **Declaration of each Partner organization (PZS-2019\_Izjava Partner)** shall be signed for the purposes of verifying the abovementioned circumstances. The declarations need to be signed and stamped by the persons authorized by law.

In addition, for the purposes of determining the circumstances of non-existence of debt, it is necessary to enclose the **Tax Administration Certificate on the Status of Public Debt** for the Applicant's organization as well as for each partner organization from which it is visible that there is no public debt. The certificate must not be older than 30 days as on the day of submission and must be verified by the Tax Administration. In exceptional cases, the Applicant's organization and partner organization will not be administratively rejected in case where, in accordance with a special regulation, the payment was not allowed or if delay of payment has been approved.

## 5.6. PROJECT APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY

The project application must include the following letters of commitment:

1. *PZS-2019\_Letter of commitment\_Applicant organization* (organization responsible for the implementation of the project) accepting to administer the proposed research project, including: the management of funds, administrative and technical support and available resources/facilities, employment of new researchers (at least two scientists, one of which should be a doctoral student and the others doctoral students or postdoctoral researchers), providing technical and other support according to the proposed plan.

The Applicant's organization should accept all responsibilities originating from and connected to supporting the proposed research project.

2. *PZS-2019\_Letter of commitment\_Partner*, for each partner organization.
3. *PZS-2019\_Letter of commitment\_Co-leader organization*, i.e. letter from the organization from abroad which employs the Co-leader, in which they provide support to the proposed research project and accept all responsibilities connected to the proposed research project including support to the Croatian collaborators according to the proposed plan, and commit to support and allow the Co-leader's engagement on the proposed project for the whole duration of the project.

## 5.7. ELIGIBLE FIELDS

According to the Ordinance on Scientific and Artistic Areas, Fields and Branches (Official Gazette No. 118/2009), applications from all scientific areas are eligible.

## 6. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF PROJECT FUNDING

This Call is financed by the ESF (85%), within the the Operational Programme "Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020", Specific objective 10.ii.3: "Improving the environment for Croatian researchers" and by the State budget (15%).

Applicants to the Call may not propose activities of the projects for which they have already received funding from other public sources, i.e. the activities may not be double-financed.

Project budget is an assessment of costs necessary for the implementation of planned project activities. The amounts in the budget need to be realistic, cost efficient and necessary for the realisation of expected outcomes and based on market prices. Planned project costs have to be aligned with the Regulation on Eligibility of Expenditure Funded through the European Social Fund (Official Gazette No. 149/14 and 14/16 and 74/16).

Single grant can be in the range from HRK 1,000,000.00 HRK to 2,200,000.00 HRK.

### 6.1. ELIGIBLE COSTS

Within each project, direct and indirect costs of the project are eligible in accordance with the Guidelines on Remuneration of Salaries and Work-related Expenditures Funded through the European Social Fund in the Republic of Croatia 2014-2020.

**Direct costs** are the costs that can be directly attributed to the implementation and achievement of one or more project goals, i.e. directly connected with project activities.

Direct costs that can be planned are:

1. Personnel costs for the salaries of newly employed young researchers (doctoral students and/or post-doctoral researchers which participate in project implementation/project activities) based on an employment contract, which include: gross salary, taxes and surtaxes, compulsory contributions from salaries, transportation costs according to the Ordinance on Income Tax (Official Gazette No. 1/17); material rights (Christmas and holiday bonuses). Amounts shall be equal to the salaries of doctoral students and/or post-doctoral researchers financed by the CSF under previous Calls, i.e. they should be aligned with the Regulation on Job Titles and Job Complexity in Civil Services.

The Applicant shall plan personnel costs in the Financial Plan, subcategory a. *Personnel costs for the salaries of newly employed.*

**Note:** *Direct personnel costs do not include: travel costs (apart from the commuting costs of employees as an addition to the salary as covered by legal regulations), accomodation costs, service contracts with legal persons; service contracts with natural persons signed under public*



*procurement procedures; materials required by the project staff for the implementation of project activities;*

2. Costs related to the purchase of research equipment;<sup>3</sup>
3. Consumables necessary for the implementation of project activities.
4. Travel related to project activities (scientific conferences and lectures).
5. Short-term mobility (up to 6 months) for newly employed doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers travelling to a foreign scientific institution with which project co-operation has been realized, i.e. on which the Project Co-leader is employed.
6. External supporting consulting services and expertise necessary for the realization of the projects' goals (services related to ICT and similar consulting services necessary for supporting the implementation of project activities and for which the team members lack competence).
7. Costs related to promotional activities aimed at increasing the visibility of project activities and financing from EU sources (leaflets, brochures, dissemination activities and similar) and publication costs.

**Indirect costs** are operational costs for which it is difficult to determine the exact amount that can be connected with a particular project activity, such as: cleaning costs, telephone, internet, water or electricity costs, office space rental, postage, accounting, etc.

Indirect costs shall be calculated by applying a fixed rate of 5% of the eligible direct costs of staff employed on the basis of an employment contract and need to be planned in the Financial Plan under category *h. Indirect costs*.

**Note:** *After the financial eligibility check, the amount of indirect project costs, as calculated by applying the 5% fixed rate shall be adjusted to the final amount of eligible direct personnel costs, whereby the total eligible costs under the grant may not exceed the requested amount.*

*During periodic evaluation, additional documents for the indirect costs calculated using the fixed percentage rate will not be checked. Every decrease in direct personnel costs declared ineligible following checks by the CSF will proportionately influence the amount of indirect costs calculated by applying the fixed amount. The 5% rate shall be applied only to the incurred direct personnel costs within a single reporting period.*

*Single costs for office supplies, single overhead charges (e.g. heating/cooling, electricity, water, waste disposal, telecommunication and similar) and costs of office maintenance (periodic review as regulated by law, replacement of worn-out parts and elements, periodic and exceptional work and repairs) are not eligible.*

**Costs covered from the Research Cooperability Programme need to be in direct correlation with the goals and objectives of the project and may not be covered, partially or in full, from other sources, i.e. activities may not be double-financed. In case of double financing, the CSF will apply corrective measures in line with the ESF procedures.**

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<sup>3</sup> Capital goods and major investments shall not be considered eligible costs.

## 6.2. INELIGIBLE COSTS

- direct personnel cost exceeding 50% of eligible costs,
- purchase of equipment and consumables exceeding 40% of the total eligible costs,
- external supporting consulting and expert services exceeding 15% of total eligible costs,
- travel costs and short-term mobility costs exceeding 20% of total eligible costs,
- expenses of incoming/outgoing long-term mobility (longer than 6 months),
- costs of accomodation for long-term stay (more than 6 months),
- indirect costs exceeding 5% of direct personnel cost,
- value added tax, which can be refunded to the Applicant´s Organization or to the Partner (refundable VAT),
- costs of main facilities - offices, buildings, installations,
- costs of furniture,
- purchase of used equipment,
- depreciation costs,
- costs for ICT equipment, such as printer, photocopier, telephone and copy services,
- laptop or desktop computer,
- construction work,
- project representation costs including **catering services**, space and audiovisual equipment rental and similar,
- costs of attorney and legal counseling, audit services,
- domestic and foreign subscription to expert and scientific printed or electronic journals and databases,
- webpage or ICT systems development and maintenance costs,
- administrative, technical and similar services which the Applicant or Partner are expected to provide for, regular operating cost of the organization,
- the costs of dissertation printing,
- the costs of publishing scientific and professional books or publishing scientific journals and journals for popularization of science, i.e. scientific or professional books according to the following classification: monographs; high school textbook; reference work (encyclopedia, lexicon, dictionary, grammar, spelling, manual, historical review, classical work from the history of science / culture, archival materia,l etc.); collection of papers from a scientific conference; collection of works by one or more authors: work for the promotion of science (scientific-popular book),
- translations (from classical or non-existent language to Croatian, from Croatian to another language or from other languages to Croatian) and to edited editions of previously published text and proofreading,
- additional income costs paid for performed work within the project based on a temporary service contract to employees of the Applicant's and/or Partner's organization, on a payroll pursuant to an employment contract,
- costs of sub-contracting (procument of goods, services and works) of Applicant´s organization and/or Partners,
- incentives and bonuses for employed project staff,
- bank charges for opening and administering the account, charges for financial transfers and other financial fees, cost of guarantees issued by a bank or other financial institution,
- fines and financial penalties and expenditure on legal disputes and litigation,
- costs of guarantees issued by a bank or other financial institution,
- cost of solemnisation of debenture,
- activities eligible for funding under ERDF.

## 7. AWARD PROCEDURE AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation and award procedure will consist of several stages:

**STAGE I: Administrative check:** a procedure whereby compliance of the project proposal is checked against the administrative criteria, the Applicant's, Co-leader's and Partner's eligibility criteria and the project duration, based on the form PZS-2019\_Protocol for Administrative Check.

**Application shall be deemed complete only if it contains the following obligatory documents:**

1. *PZS-2019\_Application Form* – in English and Croatian, signed by the Applicant of the project proposal and signed and stamped by their legal representative.
2. *PZS-2019\_Administrative Form* - in English and Croatian, signed by the Applicant and the legal representative of the Applicant's organization and stamped.
3. *PZS-2019\_Financial plan*, in English and Croatian.
4. *PZS-2019\_Work plan*, in English and Croatian.
5. *PZS-2019\_CV Form\_Project Applicant* in English and Croatian.
6. *PZS-2019\_CV Form\_Co-leader*, in English.
7. Copies of the following supporting documents for proving the eligibility of the Applicant's **organization and each partner organization**: the *Tax Administration Certificate on the Status of Public Debt*, in Croatian, showing the absence of public debt, not older than the date of publication of the Call. Project applications that do not fulfill this criterion will be rejected, therefore it is necessary to obtain this certificate in time. In exceptional cases, the organization will not be administratively rejected in case of approved exclusion from or postponement of payment pursuant to a special regulation.  
  
CSF will check the registration in the following electronic databases, as appropriate:
  - Register of Scientific Organizations of the Ministry of Science and Education, in case of scientific organizations;
  - Court Register of the Ministry of Justice, in case of organizations funded pursuant to the Act on Institutions (OG No. 76/1993) and for companies.
8. Copy of the *PZS-2019\_Declaration of Applicant organization*, in Croatian, (signed and certified by the authorized person).
9. Copy of *PZS-2019\_Declaration of Partner*, for each partner organization, signed and certified by the authorized person.
10. Copy of *PZS-2019\_Letter of commitment\_Applicant organization*, in English and Croatian, i.e. a written commitment of the Applicant's organization, accepting the proposed research and committing to its administration (signed and certified by the authorized person).

11. Copy of *PZS-2019\_Letter of commitment\_Partner*, in English and Croatian, i.e. a written commitment of all Partner organizations to participate in the project implementation and acceptance of conditions (signed and certified by the authorized person).
12. Copy of *PZS-2019\_Letter of commitment\_Co-leader organization*, in English, i.e. a letter of intent of the organization from abroad where the Co-leader is employed, showing support to the proposed research (signed by the authorized person and stamped, if applicable).
13. Copy of certificate of citizenship or nationality of the Co-leader.
14. Copy of certificate of employment of the Co-leader.

The Application needs to contain all completed documentation. Please read the guidelines for filling out the forms, which can be found in the document *PZS-2019\_Guide for Applicants*, as well as all available forms and evaluation criteria. The abovementioned documents can be found on the CSF's webpages.

*Protocol for the Administrative Check of Proposals* has been published on the CSF's webpage, accompanying the Call.

The Applicants will be notified by electronic mail that their application has been received. By submitting a project proposal, the applicants accept, if requested so by the CSF, to provide basic information about the research, which will be used to evaluate the impact of this programme.

Deadline for the application is **28. 2. 2019, by 13:00 (CET) at the latest**. The applications may be submitted through the Electronic Application and Assessment System (EPP) only, available at the CSF's webpages, and can also be accessed here: [EPP system](#).

**Note: subsequent supplements and changes to the application are not possible. Incomplete applications and applications not submitted on time will be excluded from the evaluation process, so please carefully double check the submitted documentation.** If some elements of the application documentation have administrative omissions or mistakes (such as a missing stamp or signature) or if it is necessary to provide additional explanations, the Project Leader will be notified thereof and subsequent change/amendment shall be allowed within a reasonable deadline. If the requested explanation or amendment is not delivered within the given deadline, the application will be considered incomplete and will not be evaluated.

After the administrative check, the CSF shall notify the applicants about the status of their project proposal by electronic mail.

If the application fulfills all the administrative criteria, it will enter the next stage of the evaluation process - Quality Assessment.

## **STAGE II: Quality assessment of the project proposal and financial eligibility check**

Project proposals that meet the administrative criteria will be forwarded to the members of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is responsible for the management, coordination and successful implementation of the Research Cooperability Programme and for proposing the project proposals that are to be financed. The Steering Committee is also responsible for overseeing the evaluation process and assessing the compliance of the project proposals with the

Research Cooperability Programme's goals as well as for overseeing the implementation of the financed projects.

Based on the scientific fields and areas of the submitted applications, the Steering Committee recommends to the CSF Management Board the members of the evaluation panels. Evaluation panels are composed of Croatian scientists and are nominated by the CSF's Management Board.

The panels shall be established per scientific fields or a group of fields and depending on the submitted applications, an interdisciplinary panel can also be established. The panels will be established taking into account the provisions regarding the prevention of conflict of interest. Each panel is composed of at least three members, which are not remunerated for their work.

The evaluation panels propose peer reviewers.

### **Peer review**

Evaluation of the project proposal shall be carried out according to the pre-established criteria in the *Individual Evaluation Form*, available within the Call.

The Reviewers evaluate the individual aspects of the project proposal, each aspect being evaluated on a five-digit scale (from 1 to 5). The maximum number of points that can be obtained is 65. The reviewers are expected to add a comment to the rating, which will provide applicants with a clear feedback.

At the end of the form, the reviewer gives one of the following final recommendations on the project proposal:

A - I propose the project proposal for funding in its present form.

B - I propose the project proposal for funding with minor changes.

C - The project proposal requires significant changes. I do not propose the project proposal for funding.

If the project proposal receives less than 45 points, it may not be given the B recommendation, i.e. it may not be proposed for funding with minor changes. If the project proposal receives less than 55 points, it may not be given the A recommendation, i.e. it may not be proposed for funding without changes.

For each project proposal sent for peer review, two reviews need to be provided. The reviews are sent to the applicants upon completion of the entire evaluation procedure, while keeping the reviewer's identity confidential.

If the reviewer, having read the project proposal, estimates that he does not have the expertise to evaluate the project proposal, or is in a conflict of interest according to the criteria set by the CSF in the Regulation on the Prevention of Conflict of Interest in the Evaluation Procedure, he should notify the CSF thereof without delay.

Reviewers have no possibility of communicating with each other and exchanging information.

### **Final evaluation**

During the final evaluation, the evaluation panels will assess only those project proposals for which two positive reviews have been received, and for the projects with negative reviews they will give explanations as to why the project is not recommended for financing. The evaluation

panels read all reviews, assess the project proposals' work and financial plans, and discuss ethical issues, support of the organization and the accompanying documentation. When evaluating the Financial Plan, evaluation panel members must assess whether all of the items that the Applicant has proposed are realistic, absolutely necessary and justified by the actual needs of the project. During the eligibility assessment of the expenditures from the Financial Plan, it shall also be assessed whether the conditions for financing a particular project proposal are met, determining the lowest and highest amount of eligible costs.

The evaluation panel also assesses the quality of reviews provided by the reviewers. If the evaluation panel finds that the review has not been adequately filled in (for example, the review has not been completed in full, no comments on ratings have been provided, the comments are not in line with the ratings, the review has not been written in accordance with the principles of scientific integrity, it is incorrect, etc.), i.e. the review is not adequate for a proper evaluation, an annulment of the review will be requested as well as a new review. The request for annulment shall be made by consensus of the evaluation panel and in writing, accompanied by an explanation, i.e. clarification as to why the review is not considered adequate.

After the peer review, the evaluation panels shall determine whether each project proposal meets the set criteria and decide whether to recommend it for funding. For each project proposal, the evaluation panel completes the final evaluation form *PZS-2019\_Form-Panel\_final evaluation*, explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the project proposal, in particular regarding the importance and scientific quality of the project proposal, the Project Leader and other criteria and conditions of this Call, including the Financial Plan. At the end of the form, the evaluation panel gives a final opinion on the project proposal, i.e. the recommendation:

A – The project proposal has fulfilled the established criteria or requires minor adjustments and is recommended for financing.

B - The project proposal has not fulfilled the established criteria or needs adjustments; therefore we do not recommend the project proposal for financing in its present form.

As this evaluation step relies on peer review, minor adjustments are related to the adjustments that were suggested and explained by the reviewers. Additionally, the evaluation panels comment on the Financial Plan with regard to the eligible costs and the appropriateness of the budgeted amount, and the need for the Work Plan to be further clarified or elaborated (technical adjustments) before contracting.

For project proposals that received two positive reviews and have been rejected by the panel nevertheless, a detailed written explanation needs to be provided by the panel and approved by the Steering Committee and subsequently by the CSF's Management Board.

Project proposals that have received a negative review may not be rated "A" nor be positively evaluated by the panel. The panel will prepare a statement of reasons for not forwarding the project proposal for further evaluation procedure.

Based on the available funds and the total value of the submitted proposals, the percentage of the project proposals to be financed will be calculated and applied on the level of each panel.

All project proposals that received two positive reviews and were given an A rating by the panel shall be ranked on a list based on the scores received in the peer review.

**Additional criteria**

In the case that several project proposals obtained the same number of points and the available funds are not sufficient for forwarding all project proposals to the negotiation phase, an additional ranking of the applications with the same number of points shall be made, according to the following additional criteria:

1. Significance and originality of the proposed research in the context of its research area (Criterion 1.a from the *Individual Evaluation Form*).
2. Potential of the project for the development of young researchers' careers, (Criterion 2.a from the *Individual Evaluation Form*).
3. Whether the project will enable strengthening and development of the research group, research theme and knowledge transfer/ development of methodology or scientific infrastructure (Criterion 2.b from the *Individual Evaluation Form*).

A project proposal that received the highest number of points for the first additional criterion (*significance and originality of the proposed research*) shall be ranked as the first among the project proposals with the same number of points. If several project proposals received the same number of points for this criterion, an additional criterion (criterion 2 - *potential of the project for the development of young researchers' careers*) shall be applied, and the project proposal with the highest grade shall be ranked as the first among the project proposals with the same number of points. If several project proposals received the same number of points on this additional criterion 2, additional criterion 3 shall be applied (*whether the project will enable strengthening and development of research group, research theme and knowledge transfer/ development of methodology or scientific infrastructure*) and the project proposal with the highest number of points shall be ranked as the first among the project proposals with the same number of points.

The ranking lists will be sent to the Steering Committee, which shall oversee the quality of the evaluation process and estimate the compliance of the project proposals with the goals of the Research Cooperability Programme. The Steering Committee may not change the rankings of the projects, as determined by the evaluation panels, but may require additional explanation from the panels.

The Steering Committee is required to notify the CSF's Management Board if there is suspicion that the evaluation procedure has not been conducted in accordance with the rules of the CSF.

**Conflict of interest**

During the evaluation process, conflict of interest has to be taken into account for all participants in the evaluation process, including for all members of the Steering Committee. If it has been established that an evaluation panel member or member of the Steering Committee is in a conflict of interest in relation to a particular project proposal, he will be excluded from participating in the discussion and decision-making process for that particular project proposal. In that case, the member will be asked to leave the room during the discussion on project financing and may not comment on the evaluation results or provide project information that might affect the evaluation panel's or the Steering Committee's decision.

**STAGE III: Decision on opening negotiations on the work and financial plans (for projects that were successfully evaluated).**

Based on the evaluation results and recommendations of the Steering Committee, the CSF's

Management Board decides on opening negotiations on the work and financial plans, which includes scientific, legal or financial aspects of the project proposal, considering the opinions of peer reviewers, panels and the Steering Committee.

## 8. EVALUATION CRITERIA

All submitted project proposals shall be evaluated in line with the criteria listed in the *Individual Evaluation Form*. The project proposal has to address all the points stated in these criteria with measurable and verifiable information.

After the completion of the negotiations, the Steering Committee will make lists of project proposals recommended for funding and a list of project proposals that will not be funded, and after signing the Grant Agreement with the Applicant's organizations, it will publish the names of the projects which have been selected for funding. The ranking lists shall be based on the scores given in the peer review and they may not be modified; only the project proposals that have not successfully finished the negotiations shall be removed from the lists.

## 9. MONITORING AND REPORTING ON THE INDICATORS

During the implementation of the project, the Applicants and their Organizations are required to collect data and report to the CSF on the common output and result indicators for which there is an obligation for all projects financed within the ESF, as defined in Annex I to Regulation (EU) 1304/2013, on the appropriate forms and in accordance with the instruction that will be provided by the CSF.

## 10. STATE AID

The support provided under this Call is not subject to the reporting requirements of the Commission referred to in Article 108 (3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Consolidated Version, SL C 115/47, 9.5.2008), since, in accordance with the EU rules on State Aid, this is not considered state aid or *de minimis* support.

**Note:** All applicants are required to publish all the results of project activities on publicly available websites upon completion of the project, the details of which will be defined in the Grant Agreement.

## 11. REVENUES FROM PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The projects must not generate revenue from project activities. It is not allowed to charge participation in the project activities to target groups (doctoral students / postdoctoral researchers). If a certain income is generated during the implementation of the project, the total amount of the grant will be reduced by the amount of the revenue generated based on the final



report submitted.

## 12. COMPLAINTS

Applicants who consider themselves mistreated during the award procedure have the right to file a complaint to the following e-mail address: znanstvena.suradnja@hrzz.hr.

Applicants may file a complaint within 8 working days following receipt of the notification of the status of their project proposal.

The burden of proving these facts is borne by the Applicant.

An acceptable complaint must contain:

- information about the Applicant (name, address, PIN),
- Call title, project proposal title and application number,
- reasons for the complaint,
- signature of the authorized person of the Applicant,
- where applicable, the power of attorney to submit a complaint.

The CSF shall decide on the complaint within 30 working days from the date of receipt of the complaint and shall inform the applicants in writing. The decision on the complaint shall be made by the CSF's Management Board.

## 13. INFORMATION AND VISIBILITY

Grant beneficiaries (applicants, their organizations, partner organizations, etc.) must ensure the visibility of funding by the European Union in accordance with the User Instructions listed in the document ["\*Informiranje, komunikaciju i vidljivost projekata financiranih iz strukturnih fondova i Kohezijskog fonda u financijskom razdoblju 2014. – 2020.\*"](#)

Grant beneficiaries are obliged to take all necessary steps to promote the fact that the EU is co-financing the project and that the project is implemented under the Operational Programme "Efficient Human Resources" 2014-2020.

In each announcement of the achievements that are the result of the work of the Project Leader, Co-leader, as well as the collaborators of the project funded by the CSF through this Programme (e.g. publications in journals, presentations at conferences, presentations, etc.), the support of the CSF and the ESF must be highlighted. This implies the use of the CSF logo and ESF visibility elements and the written recognition of the CSF and the ESF in the Croatian language:

*„Rad XY financiran/sufinanciran je iz Programa ‚Znanstvena suradnja‘ Hrvatske zaklade za znanost, a koji je financirala Europska unija iz Europskog socijalnog fonda u sklopu Operativnog programa Učinkoviti ljudski potencijali 2014.-2020.“*

or translated into English:

*"The work XY has been fully supported/supported in part by the "Research Cooperability Programme" of the Croatian Science Foundation funded by the European Union from the*

*European Social Fund under the Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020.*

Also, all published materials (including those on webpages) resulting from the work of the scientists involved, other than scientific articles published in scientific, technical or professional journals, should include the CSF logo and ESF visibility elements and the following statement in the Croatian language:

*„Mišljenja, nalazi i zaključci ili preporuke navedene u ovom materijalu isključiva su odgovornost autora i ne odražavaju nužno stajališta Hrvatske zaklade za znanost, Ministarstva znanosti i obrazovanja i Europske komisije.“*

Or translated into English:

*“Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Croatian Science Foundation, Ministry of Science and Education and European Commission.”*

To download the CSF logo click [here](#), and to download ESF visibility elements click [here](#).

## **14. OTHER INFORMATION**

For the purpose of promoting and clarifying the Call, information workshops will be held. The dates of the information workshops will be published on the CSF's website.

Questions related to the Call shall be sent solely to the e-mail address [znanstvena.suradnja@hrzz.hr](mailto:znanstvena.suradnja@hrzz.hr).

All questions received via e-mail as well as the responses to them will be posted on the CSF website. Inquiries may be sent no later than 7 days before the Call submission deadline, and the responses will be published no later than 3 days before the submission deadline.