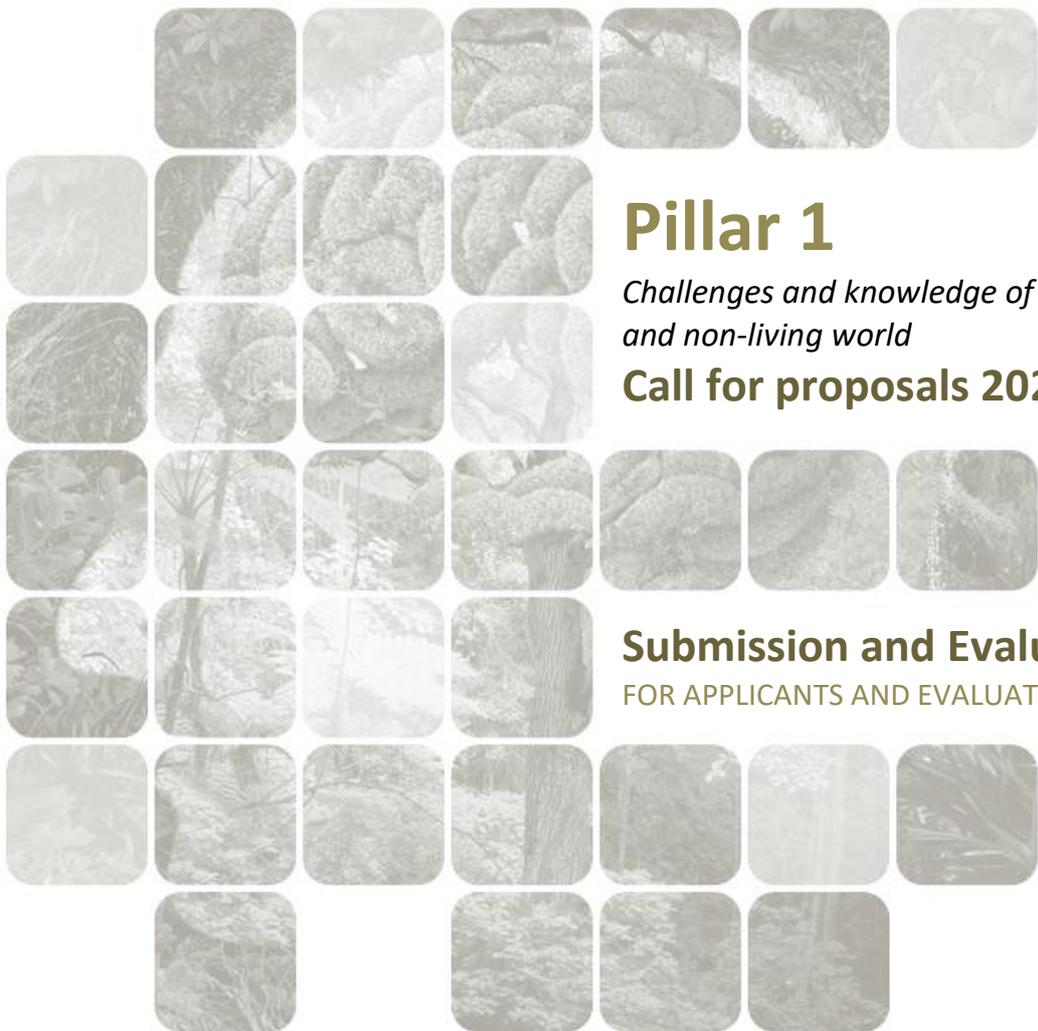


BRAIN-be 2.0

BELGIAN RESEARCH ACTION THROUGH INTERDISCIPLINARY NETWORKS

PHASE 2 - 2018-2023



Pillar 1

*Challenges and knowledge of the living
and non-living world*

Call for proposals 2022-2023

Submission and Evaluation Guidelines

FOR APPLICANTS AND EVALUATORS



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SUMMARY OF THIS DOCUMENT

For applicants

Within Pillar 2, applicants can submit thematic interdisciplinary projects (projects that responds to one or more priorities developed in the call text) and/or bottom-up projects (projects that responds to strategic priorities of the FSI).

In both cases, submission must be done via the online submission platform of the BRAIN-be 2.0 programme.

For a thematic interdisciplinary project, a pre-proposal must be submitted beforehand (deadline: 9 November 2021). This pre-proposal offers a raw outline of what the full project will be. It will be evaluated and only the best ranked pre-proposals will be given a chance to further be developed into a full proposal (deadline submission: 1 February 2022). The cut-off line is three times the available budget for the thematic interdisciplinary projects (6,8 M€). This extra-step is a novelty in the BRAIN-be evaluation procedure.

For a bottom-up project, an Expression of Interest must be submitted beforehand (deadline: 9 November 2021). Eols are understood as an early stage of reflexion on the project. They do not constitute a step in the evaluation process; they will be used by BELSPO to seek foreign experts for the evaluation of the research proposals, and by FSIs to make a pre-selection in view of introducing Full proposals (deadline 1 February 2022).

Another novelty in the evaluation procedure is the possibility for applicants to respond in writing to questions from remote experts in preparation of the panel meeting (rebuttal stage).

The programme allows applicants to seek scientific innovation and go beyond the state of the art and/or to develop new tools and methodologies or to stay within the state of the art using existing methods to produce relevant data and results for Belgium. The evaluation is made sensitive to the pathway chosen by the applicant.

For evaluators

There are two types of evaluators:

- those who evaluate a few number of full proposals within the narrow angle of their discipline; these are called *remote*. They evaluate projects remotely, unaware of the work of their peers for the same project(s).
- *Panel members*, who adopt an embracing (helicopter) view on all projects to provide BELSPO with a Funding proposal. While there is no interaction between remote evaluators, interaction between panel members over all projects to be discussed is paramount. It is the same panel who will evaluate the pre- and full proposals. This ensures internal coherence along the evaluation process.

The guiding principle of the evaluation is scientific excellence. Excellence cannot be narrowed down to scientific innovation, since this programme allows for projects that do not per se seek innovation in their topic or in their methodology, but rather seek to produce valuable and missing results for Belgian decision-makers and/or other stakeholders.

For the thematic interdisciplinary projects, the evaluation steps are the following: in a first step, pre-proposals are evaluated by the panel members. Each panel member will be tasked with a number of projects and he/she will fuel the discussion in the plenary panel session. A ranking is produced by the panel: the best pre-proposals that exhaust 3 times the budget for the thematic project will be offered the chance to develop a full proposal. The panel members are also tasked to finalise the consensus evaluation reports of the pre-proposals.

In a second stage, full proposals are evaluated remotely and independently by 4 "remote evaluators". These can address questions to applicants who have the possibility to respond (rebuttal stage).

In a third stage, each panel member is attributed the full proposals he/she was assigned to in the pre-proposal evaluation phase. He/she will take note of the 4 individual remote evaluations and the rebuttal for these proposals to compose a draft consensus evaluation report to be discussed in panel. A final ranking of proposals is produced by the panel along with the finalised consensus evaluation reports.

It is important to note that panel members and remote evaluators do not assign scores to each evaluation item. We have stepped away from this subjective system and replaced it by an evaluation matrix in which, for each criterion, evaluators are asked to adhere to an appreciation (sentence) that captures best the way the project is positioned against each criterion.

In a final step, the Advisory Committee of Pillar 1 (a permanent advisory body) will oversee the evaluation process and provide advice on the panel Funding scenario. This funding scenario is communicated to the secretary of state in charge of Science Policy for approval. Upon this approval, research contracts are concluded with the selected teams.

For the bottom-up projects, the same steps apply: each project is assigned to a panel member who drafts a final evaluation report after discussion in panel. Proposals are ranked per co-funded priority in a funding scenario. The budget dedicated to the bottom-up projects is such that all can be selected if there is a match with a positively evaluated team.

The following pages provide detailed information for applicants and evaluators on all of these issues briefly summarised here.

FOREWORD

This document addresses the submission and evaluation procedure for PILLAR 1.

This guide is intended both for BRAIN-be 2.0 Applicants and Evaluators.

TRANSPARENCY is the principle and philosophy behind these guidelines. Their aim is to provide coherent, readily, and simple information.

Please note that all project proposals, including Expressions of Interest and Pre-proposals, **MUST be submitted** via the online **SUBMISSION platform** using the templates provided within it.

No proposal or evaluation will be accepted if sent by other means (email, postal service, in hand...).

Access to the online submission and evaluation platform via the link:

<https://brain-be.belspo.be>

Detailed guidelines explaining the technical issues related to the online submission and evaluation procedure can be found on the **BRAIN-be website** via the link:

https://www.belspo.be/belspo/brain2-be/call_open_en.stm

AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

BRAIN-be 2.0 WEBSITE

The following documents are available on the **BRAIN-be 2.0 website**:

https://www.belspo.be/belspo/brain2-be/call_open_en.stm

- Information file: general information on the programme and the call
- Evaluators eligibility: eligibility rules of proposed experts for the evaluation of the proposal
- Submission and evaluation guidelines Pillar 1 (the present document): overview proposal content and corresponding evaluation criteria for the promoters and evaluators
- Submission and evaluation guidelines Pillar 2
- Submission and evaluation guidelines Pillar 3
- Pre-view of documents available in the Submission Platform
- Evaluation matrix: overview detailed evaluation ratings
- Budget rules: overview proposal's budget rules for different project partners
- Platform submission guidelines: information on the use of the platform for submission
- Institution Request Form
- Strategic Committee members: Pillars 1, 2 and 3
- FAQ

BRAIN-be 2.0 SUBMISSION PLATFORM

- Pre-proposals are introduced by filling out fields directly in the **BRAIN-be 2.0 online SUBMISSION platform**. There are no other extra documents to complete.
- Full proposals have both ad-hoc fields to be directly filled out in the platform and documents that need to be downloaded, completed, and uploaded to the **BRAIN-be 2.0 online SUBMISSION platform**.

The following documents for Full proposals are available within the **BRAIN-be 2.0 online SUBMISSION platform**: <https://brain-be.belspo.be/home/brain-be.asp>

Applicants must Log In to the platform in order to access them. These documents (templates) must be used compulsorily unless otherwise stated:

- Proposal description (Word file)
- Gantt chart (Excel file)
- Ethics form (Word file)
- Cash or in-kind commitment letter (from institutions/organisations which are not partners of the project) – non mandatory, only if applicable (Word file)
- Data management plan form (Word file)
- Follow-up committee letter of intent – non mandatory (Word file)

PART I: PROCEDURE

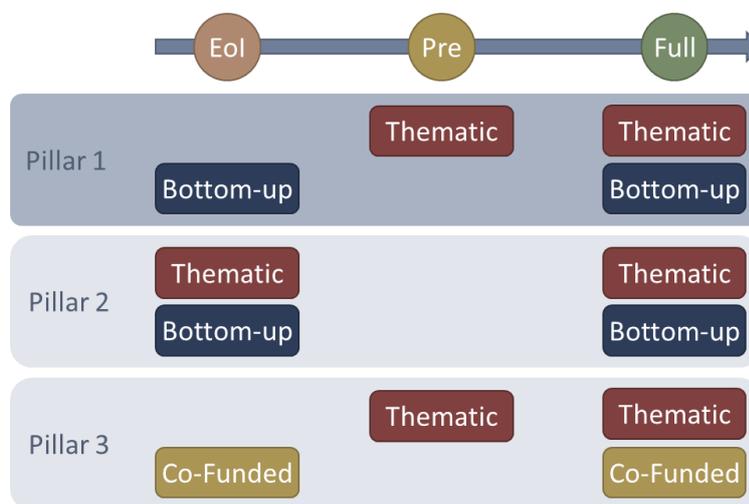
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PROJECTS FOR THE DIFFERENT PILLARS

The BRAIN-be 2.0 programme finances different types of project (Thematic, Bottom-up or Co-Funded), implemented within its 3 Pillars as follows:

- **Pillar 1:** Thematic and Bottom-up projects.
- **Pillar 2:** Thematic and Bottom-up projects.
- **Pillar 3:** Thematic and Co-Funded projects.

The submission and evaluation procedure depends on the project type and the Pillar, as shown in the figure below. Overall, each proposal is submitted in two steps: (i) Expression of Interest or Pre-proposal, and (ii) Full Proposal. Because of the two options in step (i), the evaluation procedure follows different paths.

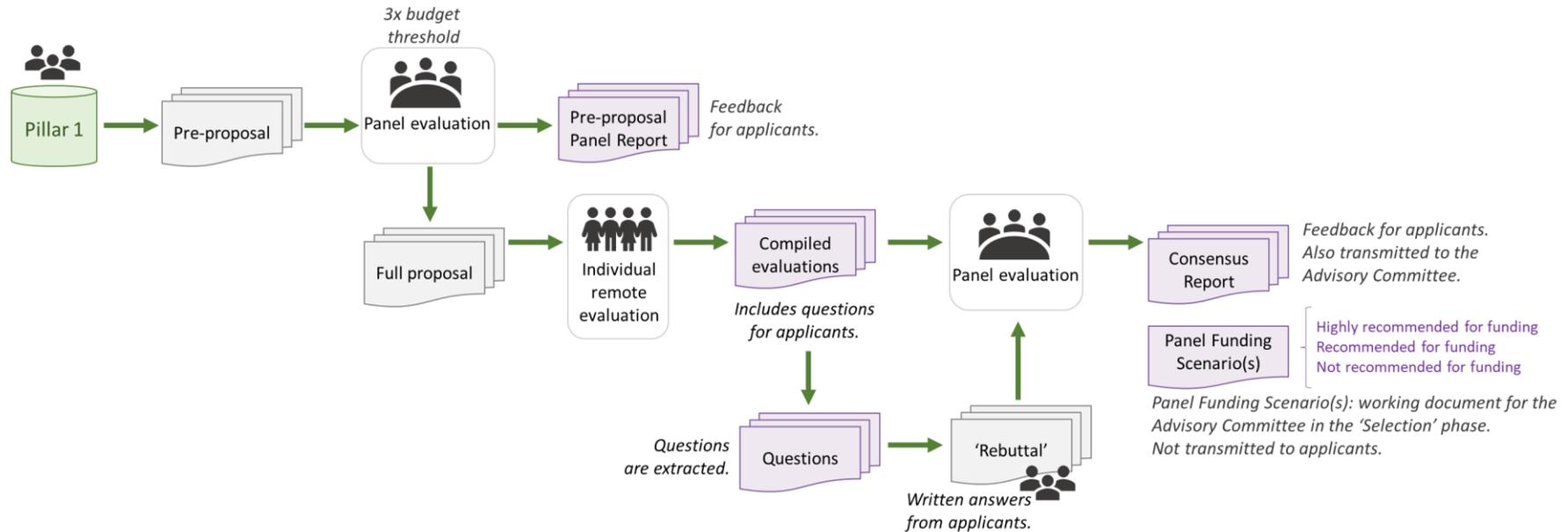


1.2. OVERVIEW OF THE SUBMISSION-EVALUATION PROCEDURE IN PILLAR 1

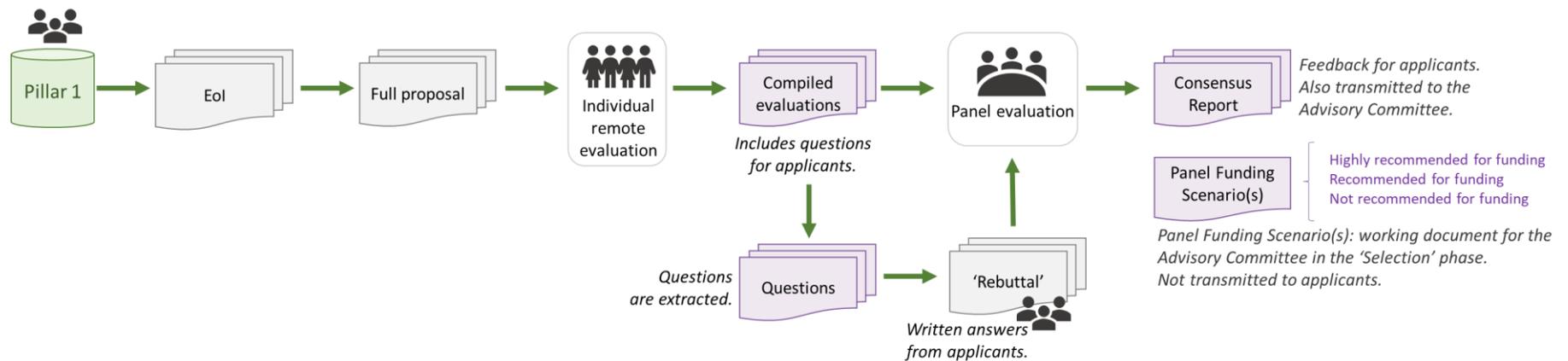
Below you will find the general schemas of the submission and evaluation procedure for PILLAR 1, which will be detailed in the subsequent sections.

PHASE 1 & 2: SUBMISSION (PHASE 1) & SCIENTIFIC PEER-REVIEWED EVALUATION (PHASE 2)

Thematic proposals

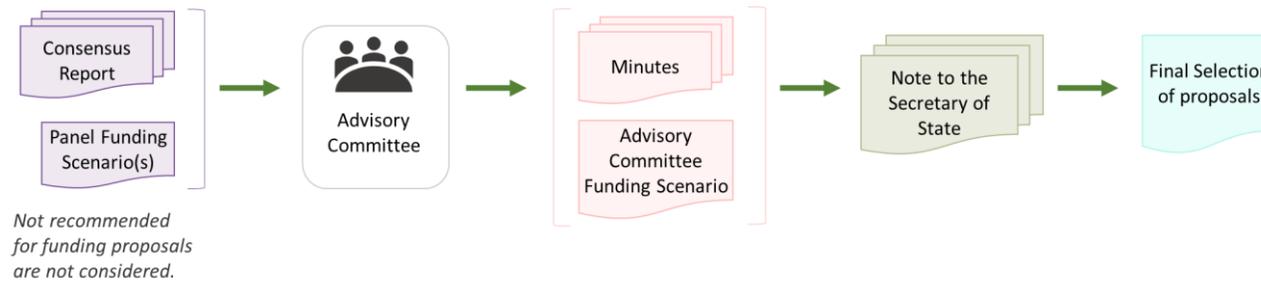


Bottom-up proposals



PHASE 3: PROPOSAL SELECTION BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PHASE 3A) & FINAL SELECTION BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE (PHASE 3B)

Thematic and Bottom-up proposals



2. THEMATIC PROPOSALS

PHASE 1: Submission	Pre-proposal	i. Pre-proposal submission
	Full-proposal	ii. Full proposal submission
PHASE 2: Scientific peer-reviewed evaluation	Pre-proposal	i. Remote panel evaluation
	Full-proposal	ii. Individual remote evaluation
		iii. 'Rebuttal' (answer to questions from individual evaluators)
		iv. Preparation of the panel meeting
		v. Physical panel meeting (or remote, depending on sanitary conditions)
PHASE 3: Selection of proposals	Full-proposal	i. Selection of proposals by Advisory Committee
		ii. Final selection of proposals by Secretary of State

2.1. PHASE 1: SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

2.1.1. PRE-PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

**Deadline for Pre-proposals:
Tuesday 9 November 2021 @14h00**

Applicants must **send Pre-proposals via the online BRAIN-be 2.0 SUBMISSION Platform**. If the Pre-proposal does not comply with the submission rules, is not complete or has not been submitted in time, it will not be considered for evaluation, and the subsequent full proposal will not be accepted.

The Pre-proposal will focus on the scientific aspects and impact of the proposal. It will contain:

- The title and acronym of the project
- The name and contact details of the project partner(s)
- The topic of the call, duration, and budget range of the project
- A summary of the project
- A short description of the project including: (a) scope, (b) objectives, state of the art, methodology and expected results, and (c) impact.
- The name and contact details of 4-6 scientific experts capable of assessing the proposal. See also document 'Evaluators eligibility'.
- The name and contact details of 2 non-grata scientific experts that will be excluded from the evaluation of the proposal (optional).
- 6 keywords

The acronym and content of the pre-proposal description must remain the same as the full proposal. Changes in the project partnership (changes in participating institute(s), including the coordination role) can only be accepted after the explicit approval of BELSPO.

2.1.2. FULL PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

**Deadline for Full proposals:
Tuesday 1 February 2022 @14h00**

As a result of the Pre-proposal evaluation, all applicants will be informed whether they have been selected to submit a Full Proposal or not.

Applicants **must submit the Full proposal via the online BRAIN-be 2.0 SUBMISSION Platform**. Only those applicants having received a positive pre-proposal evaluation will have access to the submission platform.

If the Full proposal does not comply with the submission rules, is not complete or has not been submitted in time, it will not be considered for evaluation.

The Full proposal will contain ([see section Available Documents](#)):

- The title, acronym and summary of the project
- The name and contact details of the project partner(s)
- The topic of the call, and the duration of the project
- The proposal description
- GANTT chart
- Budget table
- Data management plan form
- Ethics form
- Contribution commitment letter – optional
- Follow-up committee letter of intent – optional

The content of the Full proposal cannot vary from that of the Pre-proposal. Changes in the project partnership (changes in participating institute(s), including the coordination role) can only be accepted after the explicit approval of BELSPO. Acronym and keywords must also remain the same.

2.2. PHASE 2: EVALUATION PROCEDURE

The selection of proposals is based on an international peer-review evaluation that guarantees scientific excellence and the alignment of the projects with federal priorities, including the research strategies of one or more FSIs. The procedure, organised by BELSPO, develops as follows.

- Pre-proposal evaluation:
 - i. **Remote panel evaluation**
- Full proposal evaluation:
 - ii. **Individual remote written evaluation**
 - iii. **'Rebuttal'** (*answer to questions from individual evaluators*)
 - iv. **Preparation of the panel meeting**
 - v. **Physical panel meeting** (*a remote meeting will be held if sanitary conditions do not allow for a physical gathering*)

Evaluation criteria are described in [Part II: Criteria](#).

2.2.1. PRE-PROPOSAL EVALUATION: REMOTE PANEL

Each Pre-proposal will be examined by a panel, the same who will assess the Full proposals. The panel will be composed by independent experts, generalists in the thematic priority, and specialists in impact. BELSPO is responsible for composing this panel.

The panel will be organised in a virtual manner. Panel members will assess the Pre-proposals and rank them. They will review the scope, objectives, state of the art, methodology and expected results, as well as the impact of the project.

Each member of the Panel will be tasked to evaluate a number of projects. He/she will draft a draft consensus report for each of these pre-proposals. These reports will be made available to the other panel members for discussion in preparation of the panel meeting and during the panel meeting itself. Pre-proposal consensus reports will be finalised during the panel meeting.

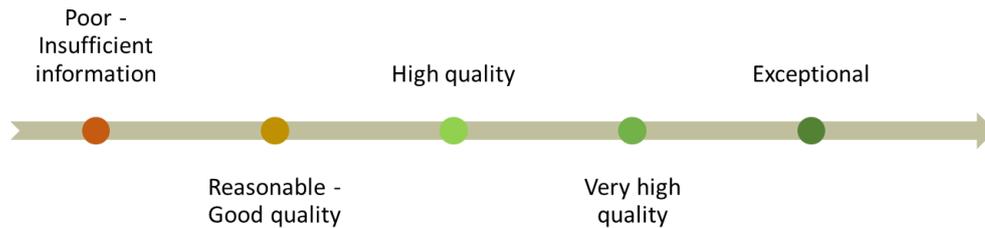
The panel discussion will lead to a ranking of the proposals and to the finalisation of the pre-proposal consensus reports, incorporating the panel discussions.

The cut-off line of pre-proposals that will be invited to go forward and be further developed into a full proposal is set at three times the available budget. Proposals underneath this threshold will not evolve into a Full proposal.

The 3-time budget threshold will be calculated based on the estimated budget reported in the pre-proposals, specified in the following size categories: small (<500 000€), medium (500 000€ to 750 000€) and large (>750 000€). The maximum eligible budget is around 1M€.

The consensus reports of the pre-proposals will be anonymised and made available to applicants.

The evaluation criteria are detailed in **PART II** of this document. Evaluators will assess these aspects of the proposal using the scale given in the document **Evaluation Matrix**.



Pre-proposal panel evaluation criteria: [PART II - PRE-PREPOSALS EVALUATION](#)
Evaluation Matrix: https://www.belspo.be/belspo/brain2-be/call_open_en.stm

Criteria will be weighted as follows:

THEMATIC PRE-PROPOSALS	CRITERIA WEIGHT ¹
Objectives, State of the Art, Methodology and Expected results	50%
Impact	50%

2.2.2. FULL PROPOSAL EVALUATION: INDIVIDUAL REMOTE WRITTEN EVALUATION

For each Full proposal, an individual written evaluation will be performed by a set of 4 international (non-Belgian) independent experts having an adequate combined expertise to evaluate the research proposal. BELSPO is responsible for composing this remote 'written evaluation team' with experts from BELSPO's own database and experts suggested by the applicants.

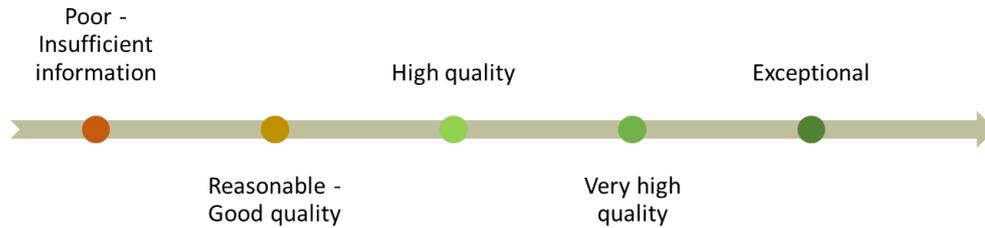
The written evaluation takes place remotely, via the **online BRAIN-be 2.0 EVALUATION Platform**, based on an evaluation form. During this assessment, the experts will only have access to the proposals they will evaluate. They will not know who the other 3 reviewers are for that proposal, nor will they have access to each other's evaluations.

Each reviewer will assess the proposal and provide comments considering a variety of (sub)criteria, namely in the following categories:

- In/out of scope
- Scientific quality
- Quality and efficiency of the implementation
- Impact

¹ In/out of scope serves only to discard proposals that are not within the scope of the Call and will not be counted as criterion for the 'scientific ranking'.

The individual evaluation criteria are detailed in **PART II** of this document. Evaluators will assess these aspects of the proposal using the scale given in the document **Evaluation Matrix**.



Individual evaluation criteria: [PART II - FULL PROPOSALS INDIVIDUAL REMOTE EVALUATION Evaluation Matrix](#): https://www.belspo.be/belspo/brain2-be/call_open_en.stm.

Besides assessing the Full proposals, remote experts will produce questions in view of clarifying aspects of the proposal. These questions will be gathered by BELSPO, made anonymous, and transmitted to the applicants.



The individual evaluations are **neither communicated to the Advisory Committees** of the programme, **nor to the applicants**.

2.2.3. FULL PROPOSAL EVALUATION: 'REBUTTAL'

Applicants will provide written answers for the questions posed by the 4 individual remote evaluators, which will be joined to their individual evaluations, and transmitted to the panel members.

2.2.4. FULL PROPOSAL EVALUATION: PREPARATION OF THE PANEL MEETING

BELSPO will compile the individual evaluations for each proposal together with the answers provided by the applicants and transmit them to the Panel.

Each panel member will be tasked to prepare a draft consensus report for the full proposals he/she evaluated in the pre-proposal stage. The same process of the pre-proposal panel is repeated here: the draft consensus reports will be made available to the panel members, to eventually readjust and to fuel the discussion in the plenary session.

in preparation of the panel meeting, BELSPO will:

1. Translate the appreciations given to each sub-criterion in the draft consensus into numeric scores (from 1 for "poor-insufficient" to 5 for "outstanding")
2. Add the scores of the sub-criteria to obtain a total for each criterion
3. Add these scores over the three categories: Science quality/implementation/impact
4. Performing a weighted sum of the criteria in the following way:

THEMATIC PROPOSALS	CRITERIA WEIGHT ²
Scientific quality	50%
Quality and efficiency of the implementation	20%
Impact	30%

Each proposal has consequently one single overall score. Therefore, proposals can be ranked arithmetically. This ranking serves as input to the discussion in the panel. The outcome of this discussion is a finalised ranking (**Panel Funding Scenario**).

2.2.5. FULL PROPOSAL EVALUATION: PHYSICAL PANEL MEETING

If sanitary conditions allow, BELSPO will organise a **physical Panel meeting**. Otherwise, virtual panels will be held.

The Panel will be composed of experts having the broadest possible expertise on the subjects addressed in the Call within the dedicated Pillar. These will have not participated to the remote evaluation in the Call³, but will be the same who evaluated the **Pre-proposals**. The number of experts in the Panel will depend on the topics and expertise that need to be covered.

Prior to the meeting, each panel member will have access to:

- the **Full proposals and respective Pre-proposals and Pre-proposal consensus reports**
- the **Compiled individual evaluations**
- the **answers to the questions** posed by the Individual remote evaluators for each proposal
- the pre-drafted **Consensus Report**
- the pre-drafted **Panel Funding Scenario** (a document ranking the proposals according to their score)

All these documents will be available via the **online BRAIN-be 2.0 EVALUATION Platform**.

² In/out of scope serves only to discard proposals that are not within the scope of the Call and will not be counted as criterion for the 'scientific ranking'.

³ In case of need and as a last resource BELSPO may call upon Panel members to perform remote evaluations, in the same way that if some Panel member finds him/herself unable to attend, we may invite a remote expert to the Panel.

During the meeting, the panel member who has pre-drafted the Consensus Report will present each proposal, followed by a discussion. Panel members will reach an agreement regarding the position of the proposal in the **Panel Funding Scenario** and the content of the **Consensus Report**, based on the documents provided.

PANEL FUNDING SCENARIO

The **Panel Funding Scenario**, based on the pre-drafted document which ranks the proposals according to their score, will classify all proposals according to the individual evaluation criteria, and considering the panel evaluation criteria (see also [PART II - FULL PROPOSALS PANEL EVALUATION](#)):

- Budget availability
- Complementarities and/or overlaps between proposals
- The coverage of the thematic priorities of the Call
- The coherence of the proposals with the strategic objectives (scope) of the Pillar
- The coherence of the proposals with the philosophy of Thematic projects
- The coverage in terms of participating research institutions⁴
- Critical mass

Factoring in the panel evaluation criteria, the panel may produce one or more rankings, which will be proposed as **Panel Funding Scenario(s)** to the Advisory Committee. The **Panel Funding Scenario(s)** will be accompanied by a **Panel Report** explaining the ranking.

The **Panel Funding Scenario(s)** will classify the proposals into:

- Highly recommended for funding
- Recommended for funding
- Not recommended for funding

The Panel may list the proposals by order of preference for funding or put them in alphabetic order within each category.

CONSENSUS REPORT

The **Consensus Report** will consist of appreciations and comments for the different (sub)criteria. It will be based on the information extracted from the Compiled remote evaluations, pre-drafted by one of the panel members, and the discussions held in the panel meeting.

At this stage, the **Consensus Report** is definitive. It will not be modified in the subsequent steps of the evaluation, and it will be used as feedback for the applicants once the final selection of proposals has been made.

⁴ Priority will be given to proposals in which one or more FSIs are involved. In addition, preference will be given to proposals composed of partners from different communities and/or that cover the Belgian territory.

For the sake of transparency and to provide the opportunity to improve their proposal(s) in the future, **applicants will receive an anonymised version of their Consensus Report(s)**

2.3. PHASE 3: SELECTION OF PROPOSALS

2.3.1. SELECTION OF PROPOSALS FORMULATED BY THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The **Advisory Committee** is composed of foreign and national experts. A balance is sought between the national experts of the FSIs, of Belgian universities/research institutes, and Federal departments.

Each **Advisory Committee** will receive the following documents:

- **Summary of the proposals**
- **Panel Funding Scenarios(s)**
- **Panel Report** explaining the Panel Funding Scenario(s)
- **Consensus Report** of each proposal

Based on these documents, each Advisory Committee will perform a strategic selection of the proposals based on the criteria and rules explained hereunder, delivering an **Advisory Committee Funding Scenario**.

The following aspects will be considered, in relation to the federal priorities and/or FSIs' competences and domains of expertise, when formulating an **Advisory Committee Funding Scenario** to be transmitted to the **Secretary of State**:

- Alignment of the proposal with the priorities of the call for proposals
- Added value of the proposal
- Contribution of the proposal to creating a critical mass
- Coverage in terms of participating research institutions⁴

The Advisory Committee will formulate an **Advisory Committee Funding Scenario** considering the following rules:

- In NO case will proposals deemed 'out of scope' be considered
- In NO case will proposals deemed 'not recommended for funding' be considered
- In NO case will proposals deemed 'highly recommended for funding' be put aside (unless the Advisory Committee believes the proposal falls outside federal competences / FSIs' expertise)

2.3.2. FINAL SELECTION OF PROPOSALS FORMULATED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The decision on the final selection of proposals to be funded is made by the **Secretary of State** in charge of the **Federal Science Policy** based on the **Advisory Committee Funding Scenario**.

3. BOTTOM-UP PROPOSALS

PHASE 1: Submission	Eol	i. Expression of interest submission
	Full-proposal	ii. Full proposal submission
PHASE 2: Scientific peer-reviewed evaluation	Full-proposal	i. Individual remote evaluation
		ii. 'Rebuttal' (answer to questions from individual evaluators)
		iii. Preparation of the panel meeting
		iv. Physical panel meeting (or remote, depending on sanitary conditions)
PHASE 3: Selection of proposals	Full-proposal	i. Selection of proposals by Advisory Committee
		ii. Final selection of proposals by Secretary of State

3.1. PHASE 1: SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

3.1.1. EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

**Deadline for Expressions of Interest:
Tuesday 9 November 2021 @14h00**

Prior to submitting a Bottom-up proposal, applicants **must first submit an Expression of Interest (Eol) via the online BRAIN-be 2.0 SUBMISSION Platform**. If the Eol does not comply with the submission rules, is not complete or has not been submitted in time, it will be impossible to submit a Full proposal. Eols do not constitute a step in the evaluation process; they will be used by BELSPO to seek foreign experts for the evaluation of the research proposals.

The Eol will contain:

- The title and acronym of the project
- The duration, and estimated budget of the project
- A brief description of the intended project
- The name and contact details of the foreseen partner(s)
- The name and contact details of 4-6 scientific experts capable of assessing the proposal. See also document 'Evaluators eligibility'.
- The name and contact details of 2 non-grata scientific experts that will be excluded from the evaluation of the proposal (optional).
- 6 keywords

The description of the project is understood as an early stage of reflexion. The content of the description in the Full proposal may vary from that of the EoI to some extent. However, it cannot diverge to the point that the expertise mobilised for the evaluation of the proposal will become irrelevant. Changes concerning the partners (including the coordinator) are accepted. Acronym and keywords must remain the same.

3.1.2. FULL PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

**Deadline for Full proposals:
Tuesday 1 February 2022 @14h00**

Applicants **must submit the Full Proposal via the online BRAIN-be 2.0 SUBMISSION Platform.**

If the Full Proposal does not comply with the submission rules, is not complete or has not been submitted in time, it will not be considered for evaluation.

The proposal will contain ([see section Available Documents](#)):

- The title, acronym, duration and summary of the project
- The name and contact details of the project partner(s)
- The proposal description
- GANTT chart
- Budget table
- Data management plan form
- Ethics form
- Contribution commitment letter – optional
- Follow-up committee letter of intent – optional

The content of the description in the Full proposal may vary from that of the EoI to some extent. However, it cannot diverge to the point that the expertise mobilised for the evaluation of the proposal will become irrelevant. Changes concerning the partners (including the coordinator) are accepted. Acronym and keywords must also remain the same.

3.2. PHASE 2: EVALUATION PROCEDURE

The selection of proposals is based on an international peer-review evaluation that guarantees scientific excellence and the alignment of the projects with federal priorities, including the research strategies of one or more FSIs. The procedure, organised by BELSPO, develops as follows.

- Full proposal evaluation:
 - i. **Individual remote written evaluation**
 - ii. **'Rebuttal'** (*answer to questions from individual evaluators*)

iii. **Preparation of the panel meeting**

iv. **Physical panel meeting** (*a remote meeting will be held if sanitary conditions do not allow for a physical gathering*)

Evaluation criteria are described in [Part II: Criteria](#).

3.2.1. FULL PROPOSAL EVALUATION: INDIVIDUAL REMOTE WRITTEN EVALUATION

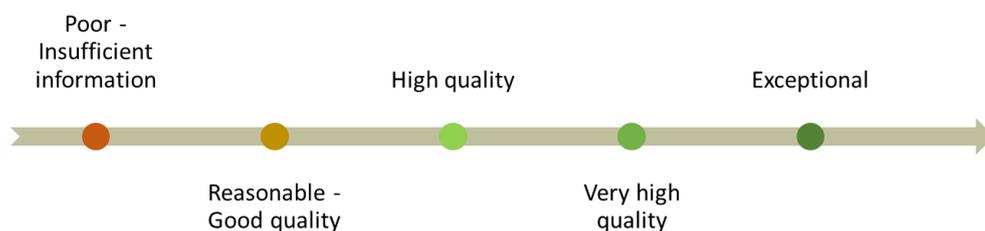
For each Full proposal, an individual written evaluation will be performed by a set of 4 international (non-Belgian) independent experts having an adequate combined expertise to evaluate the research proposal. BELSPO is responsible for composing this remote 'written evaluation team' with experts from BELSPO's own database and experts suggested by the applicants.

The written evaluation takes place remotely, via the **online BRAIN-be 2.0 EVALUATION Platform**, based on an evaluation form. During this assessment, the experts will only have access to the proposals they will evaluate. They will not know who the other 3 reviewers are for that proposal, nor will they have access to each other's evaluations.

Each reviewer will assess the proposal and provide comments considering a variety of (sub)criteria, namely in the following categories:

- In/out of scope
- Scientific quality
- Quality and efficiency of the implementation
- Impact

The individual evaluation criteria are detailed in **PART II** of this document. Evaluators will assess these aspects of the proposal using the scale given in the **Evaluation Matrix** document.



Individual evaluation criteria: [PART II - FULL PROPOSALS INDIVIDUAL REMOTE EVALUATION](#)
Evaluation Matrix: https://www.belspo.be/belspo/brain2-be/call_open_en.stm.

Besides assessing the Full proposals, remote experts will produce questions in view of clarifying aspects of the proposal. These questions will be gathered by BELSPO, made anonymous, and transmitted to the applicants.



The individual evaluations are **neither communicated to the Advisory Committees** of the programme, **nor to the applicants**.

3.2.2. FULL PROPOSAL EVALUATION: 'REBUTTAL'

Applicants will provide written answers for the questions posed by the 4 individual remote evaluators, which will be joined to their individual evaluations, and transmitted to the panel.

3.2.3. FULL PROPOSAL EVALUATION: PREPARATION OF THE PANEL MEETING

BELSPO will compile the individual evaluations for each proposal together with the answers provided by the applicants and transmit them to the Panel. A pre-draft of the **Consensus Report** will be elaborated by one of the panel members, based on the **Compiled individual evaluations**. This member will present the proposal during the panel meeting.

BELSPO will:

1. Translate the appreciations given to each sub-criterion in the draft consensus into numeric scores (from 1 for "poor-insufficient" to 5 for "outstanding")
2. Add the scores of the sub-criteria to obtain a total for each criterion
3. Add these scores over the three categories: Science quality/implementation/impact
4. Perform a weighted sum of the criteria in the following way:

BOTTOM-UP PROPOSALS	CRITERIA WEIGHT ⁵
Scientific quality	50%
Quality and efficiency of the implementation	25%
Impact	25%

According to the scores obtained, the proposals will be ranked in a list (pre-draft of the **Panel Funding Scenario**). This list will serve as a base for the Panel discussion.

⁵ In/out of scope serves only to discard proposals that are not within the scope of the Call, and will not be counted as criterion for the 'scientific ranking'.

3.2.4. FULL PROPOSAL EVALUATION: PHYSICAL PANEL MEETING

If sanitary conditions allow, BELSPO will organise a **physical Panel meeting**. Otherwise, virtual panels will be held.

The Panel will be composed of experts having the broadest possible expertise on the subjects addressed in the Call. These will have not participated to the remote evaluation in the Call⁶. The number of experts in the Panel will depend on the topics and expertise that need to be covered.

Prior to the meeting, each panel member will have access to:

- the **Full proposals**
- the **Compiled individual evaluations**
- the **answers to the questions** posed by the Individual evaluators for each proposal
- the pre-drafted **Consensus Report**
- the pre-drafted **Panel Funding Scenario** (a document ranking the proposals according to their score)

All these documents will be available via the **online BRAIN-be 2.0 EVALUATION Platform**.

During the meeting, the panel member who has pre-drafted the Consensus Report will present each proposal and a discussion will follow. Panel members will reach an agreement regarding the position of the proposal in the **Panel Funding Scenario** and the content of the **Consensus Report**, based on the documents provided.

PANEL FUNDING SCENARIO

The **Panel Funding Scenario**, based on the pre-drafted document which ranks the proposals according to their score, will classify all proposals according to the individual evaluation criteria, and considering the panel evaluation criteria (see also [PART II - FULL PROPOSALS PANEL EVALUATION](#)):

- Budget availability
- Complementarities and/or overlaps between proposals
- The coherence of the proposals with the strategic objectives (scope) of the Pillar
- The coherence of the proposals with the philosophy of Bottom-up projects
- The coverage in terms of participating research institutions⁷
- Critical mass

⁶ In case of need and as a last resource BELSPO may call upon Panel members to perform remote evaluations, in the same way that if some Panel member finds him/herself unable to attend, we may invite a remote expert to the Panel.

⁷ Priority will be given to proposals in which one or more FSIs are involved. In addition, preference will be given to proposals composed of partners from different communities and/or that cover the Belgian territory.

Factoring in the panel evaluation criteria, the panel may produce one or more rankings, which will be proposed as **Panel Funding Scenario(s)** to the Advisory Committee. The **Panel Funding Scenario(s)** will be accompanied by a **Panel Report** explaining the ranking.

The **Panel Funding Scenario(s)** will classify the proposals into:

- Highly recommended for funding
- Recommended for funding
- Not recommended for funding

The Panel may list the proposals within each category by order of preference for funding or put them in alphabetic order within each category.

CONSENSUS REPORT

The **Consensus Report** will consist of appreciations and comments for the different (sub)criteria. It will be based on the information extracted from the Compiled evaluations, pre-drafted by one of the panel members, and the discussions held in the panel meeting.

At this stage, the **Consensus Report** is definitive. It will not be modified in the subsequent steps of the evaluation, and it will be used as feedback for the applicants once the final selection of proposals has been made.

For the sake of transparency and to provide the opportunity to improve their proposal(s) in the future, **applicants will receive an anonymised version of their Consensus Report(s)**

3.3. PHASE 3: SELECTION OF PROPOSALS

3.3.1. SELECTION OF PROPOSALS FORMULATED BY THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The **Advisory Committee** is composed of foreign and national experts. A balance is sought between the national experts of the FSIs, of Belgian universities/research institutes, and Federal departments.

Each **Advisory Committee** will receive the following documents:

- **Summary of the proposals**
- **Panel Funding Scenarios(s)**
- **Panel Report** explaining the Panel Funding Scenario(s)
- **Consensus Report** of each proposal

Based on these documents, the Advisory Committee will perform a strategic selection of the proposals based on the criteria and rules explained hereunder, delivering an **Advisory Committee Funding Scenario**.

The following aspects will be considered, in relation to the federal priorities and/or FSIs' competences and domains of expertise, when formulating an **Advisory Committee Funding Scenario** to be transmitted to the **Secretary of State**:

- Alignment of the proposal with the priorities of the call for proposals
- Added value of the proposal
- Contribution of the proposal to creating a critical mass
- Coverage in terms of participating research institutions⁴

The Advisory Committee will formulate an **Advisory Committee Funding Scenario** considering the following rules:

- In NO case will proposals deemed 'out of scope' be considered
- In NO case will proposals deemed 'not recommended for funding' be considered
- In NO case will proposals deemed 'highly recommended for funding' be put aside (unless the Advisory Committee believes the proposal falls outside federal competences / FSIs' expertise)

3.3.2. FINAL SELECTION OF PROPOSALS FORMULATED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The decision on the final selection of proposals to be funded is made by the **Secretary of State** in charge of the **Federal Science Policy** based on the **Advisory Committee Funding Scenario**.

PART II: CRITERIA

EVALUATION CRITERIA - MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

The **Information File** serves too as the basis for evaluating and selecting the proposals. It is available on the **BRAIN-be 2.0 website**: https://www.belspo.be/belspo/brain2-be/call_open_en.stm

The following aspects need to be taken into consideration by applicants and evaluators:

- The projects need to align with the research priorities of the Call and/or scope of the chosen Pillar providing FSIs or federal administrations with valuable results or scientific developments.
- Projects can range from innovative in terms of topics (filling a gap in current knowledge) or in design (using novel techniques/methods) to projects that fill a research gap at Belgian level (catching up on the international state of the art) using well-established methods (reproducing results obtained elsewhere).
- The thematic projects are introduced by interdisciplinary networks who:
 - Seek to integrate disciplines and approaches, covering the Belgian territory, its population and institutions when relevant,
 - Develop new expertise and competences in Belgium or within Belgian scientific institutions, seeking international relevance when appropriate.
- Bottom-up projects are small sized, introduced by a FSI alone or in partnership with one or more research institutions to support the scientific potential of FSI in their specific areas of expertise and/or missions.
- Projects need to put emphasis on the sharing and impact of results, inside and outside academic fora, engaging with non-academic stakeholders at all stages of the project when pertinent.
- Projects must be embedded in institutional strategies to ensure their maintenance / follow-up after the end of the project term.
- Gender should be seriously considered as a transversal dimension throughout the project, from the sex balance in networks to the inclusion of gender in the content of the project and dissemination of results when appropriate. A gender check list is available for applicants and evaluators to keep track of this dimension throughout the entire proposal.
- Ethical issues should be taken into account if applicable, including ways to deal with these using appropriate channels. A specific ethics form must be completed by the applicants.

PRE-PROPOSALS (only for thematic proposals): submission content for applicants versus evaluation criteria for panel evaluators

These guidelines consist of two columns, describing the required submission content and the criteria for the evaluation of project proposals.

- If you are an **APPLICANT**, you will find the submission content guidelines on the **LEFT**
- If you are an **EVALUATOR**, you will find the evaluation criteria guidelines on the **RIGHT**



- Applicants are required to fill in the corresponding sections of the proposal
- The different sections can be found as online fields and downloadable templates within the online Submission Platform
- Texts must be comprehensive, to the point, and focused on the specific criteria

- Evaluators are required to mark the specified criteria
- Specific comments must be provided for each selection criteria
- The comments must be comprehensive, to the point and focused on specific positive and/or negative aspects explaining/justifying the attributed appreciation
- The comments must avoid summarising the research proposal content

Information detail

 To be filled in online

Title of the proposal

Acronym of the proposal

Topic of the call

Duration of the project

Choice between 2, 3 or 4 years.

Foreseen budget

Choice between:

- Small: < 500 000€
- Medium: 500 000€ - 750 000€
- Large: < 750 000€

Summary

Keywords

Note: This section does not require an evaluation, but the duration of the project and the foreseen budget must be considered in the evaluation of the other parts.

<p>1. Scope (max 0.5 pages)</p> <p>To be filled in online</p> <p>Explain how the project addresses research priorities and/or sub-priorities developed in the call text.</p>	<p>1. Scope</p> <p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Pre-proposal</p> <p>IN / OUT of scope evaluation</p> <p>Please indicate whether the project proposal is in scope, partially out of scope or totally out of scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IN SCOPE: The project is clearly in line with the philosophy of the call, which intends to inform federal decision making and support the Belgian government to fulfill national and international (environmental) commitments and addresses clearly one or more specific research priorities. PARTIALLY OUT OF SCOPE: The core of the project is only loosely and artificially connected to the philosophy of the call, and therefore might result in outputs that only respond partially and unsatisfactorily to the knowledge and output need of the call for proposals. OUT OF SCOPE: The project fails to fit in the call for proposals. <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you consider the proposal as 'OUT of scope', your evaluation ends here. If you consider the proposal 'IN scope' OR 'partially OUT of scope', you must complete the rest of the evaluation. Proposals 'partially OUT of scope' may only continue for a full proposal based upon the agreement of the Panel, who may impose adequate adjustments to be implemented in the full proposal for it to be 'IN scope'.
<p>2. Objectives, State of the Art, Methodology and Expected results (max 2 pages)</p> <p>To be filled in online</p> <p>2.1. Objectives vs. State of the Art</p> <p>Develop your research objectives and the societal/political challenges (environmental, local, sectorial...) that the project wants to tackle, by relating them to the main features of the current state of the art. A strategy will be provided by the applicants describing the position of their research within the Belgian climate related context and how their proposal fills identified gaps in knowledge, ensures relevance, applicability and timeliness of the research</p>	<p>2. Objectives, State of the Art, Methodology and Expected results</p> <p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Pre-proposal</p> <p>2.1. Objectives vs. State of the Art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the objectives clear and relevant in relation to the societal/political challenges the project wishes to tackle? Do the objectives consider the scientific state of the art in this domain? Is the research timely, relevant and feasible?

2.2. Methodology	2.2. Methodology
Describe the general methodological approach to reach the project objectives in a general way (do not go into details).	Is the methodological approach well suited to meet the project objectives and challenges?
2.3. Expected results	2.3. Expected results
List the expected results and explain how they might contribute to the research priorities as developed in the call.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the expected results in line with the fixed project objectives? • Do the expected results contribute to the research priorities as developed in the call?
2.4. N/A	2.4. Overall scientific assessment
Note: This point is only for evaluators.	How would you rate the proposal and proposed methodological approach...? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in terms of its feasibility • in terms of its capacity to meet the objectives
3. Impact (max 1 page)	3. Impact (max 1 page)
<p>🌐 To be filled in online</p> Provide the pathway to impact, to the appropriate range of stakeholders: from scientific communities to societal decision-making actors with a view to generate change. Who are the stakeholders? when and how would you plan to involve them?	<p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Pre-proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the different stakeholders clearly identified? Are they appropriate and are they expected to add value, to reach societal/political impact? • Is the timing to include the stakeholders alongside the project appropriate? • Are the pathways to involve the stakeholders well thought out?

FULL PROPOSALS (thematic & bottom-up): submission content for applicants versus evaluation criteria for individual remote evaluators

These guidelines consist of two columns, describing the required submission content and the criteria for the evaluation of project proposals.

- If you are an **APPLICANT**, you will find the submission content guidelines on the **LEFT**
- If you are an **EVALUATOR**, you will find the evaluation criteria guidelines on the **RIGHT**

SUBMISSION CONTENT GUIDELINES FOR THE APPLICANTS	EVALUATION CRITERIA GUIDELINES FOR THE EVALUATORS
↓	↓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants are required to fill in the corresponding sections of the proposal • The different sections can be found as online fields and downloadable templates within the online Submission Platform • Texts must be comprehensive, to the point, and focused on the specific criteria • Gender should be seriously considered as a transversal dimension throughout the project, from the sex balance in networks to the inclusion of gender in the content of the project and dissemination of results when appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluators are required to mark the specified criteria • Specific comments must be provided for each selection criteria • The comments must be comprehensive, to the point and focused on specific positive and/or negative aspects explaining/justifying the attributed appreciation • The comments must avoid summarising the research proposal content • Gender is evaluated as a transversal dimension throughout the project from the sex balance in networks to the inclusion of gender in the content of the project and dissemination of results when appropriate

Information detail	
<p> To be filled in online</p> <p>Title of the proposal (ONLINE) Acronym of the proposal (ONLINE) Topic of the call - for thematic proposals (ONLINE) Duration of the project (ONLINE) Proposal summary (ONLINE) Briefly describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The context and motivation of the project • Expected results and how these will impact science, economy, civil society, culture/heritage, public policy or services, environment and/or on quality of life • Brief explanation of how the project will be carried out <p>Keywords (ONLINE)</p>	<p>Note: This section does not require an evaluation.</p>

<h2>1. Scope (max 0.5 pages)</h2> <p>Proposal description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Thematic proposals, explain how the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answers to one or more research priorities of the Call Incorporates interdisciplinary For Bottom-Up proposals, explain how the project aligns with the scope of the Pillar. <p>Note: Interdisciplinarity can be at the level of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilised scientific disciplines And / or the integration of methodological approaches And / or the various ways to apprehend the research questions 	<h2>1. Scope</h2> <p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents > Proposal description</p> <h3>IN / OUT of scope evaluation</h3> <p>Please indicate whether the project proposal is in scope, partially out of scope or totally out of scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Thematic proposals: Compliance with the research priorities of the Call For Bottom-up proposals: Compliance with the scope of the Pillar <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you consider the proposal as 'OUT of scope', your evaluation ends here. If you consider the proposal 'IN scope' OR 'partially OUT of scope', you must complete the rest of the evaluation. Proposals 'partially OUT of scope' may only be financed based upon the agreement of the Panel, who may impose adequate adjustments for it to be 'IN scope'. 									
<h2>2. Impact overview</h2> <h3>2.1 Position of the project in terms of impact</h3> <p>Proposal description</p> <p>Your proposal will be evaluated in accordance to how you position your project in terms of impact. This will allow showing the difference between Thematic and Bottom-up projects, and their position regarding the state of the art, so that evaluators will take it into account. Locate your project in the following 2 tables:</p> <p>TABLE I: Position of the project regarding the state of the art (linked to Point 3.1.1) Please put 'x' in the cells which are relevant to your project; filling out multiple lines is allowed. The meaning of the 'x' is explained within the table.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Positioning of the project regarding the state of the art...</th> <th>Within</th> <th>Beyond / Innovative</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>...in terms of topic</td> <td><i>Catching up (in Belgium) on an existing body of international evidence</i></td> <td><i>Exploring a gap in international research</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>...in terms of methodology</td> <td><i>Reproducing an existing methodology</i></td> <td><i>Exploring new methodology</i></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>[→ Continues next page]</p>	Positioning of the project regarding the state of the art...	Within	Beyond / Innovative	...in terms of topic	<i>Catching up (in Belgium) on an existing body of international evidence</i>	<i>Exploring a gap in international research</i>	...in terms of methodology	<i>Reproducing an existing methodology</i>	<i>Exploring new methodology</i>	<h2>2. Impact overview</h2> <p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents > Proposal description</p> <p>This section does not require an evaluation here. It is a visual explanation of how applicants locate their project in terms of impact (Point 2.1), followed by a brief explanation (Point 2.2). Note that BRAIN-be 2.0 projects do not necessarily seek innovation. Please take this into account while assessing the proposal.</p> <p>TABLE I: Position of the project regarding the state of the art (linked to Point 3.1.1) Applicants must put 'x' in the cells relevant to their project; the meaning of the 'x' is explained within the table. Note that projects including FSI(s) must also complete the table underneath.</p> <p>TABLE II: Position of the project in terms of the foreseen impact of the project (linked to Point 5.1) Applicants must put 'x' in the cells relevant to their project; the meaning of the 'x' is explained within the table. They may fill out multiple lines.</p> <p>Note: Impact in Table II is to be understood in terms of the 'accent' of the project, methodology and output, and the target public of the project.</p>
Positioning of the project regarding the state of the art...	Within	Beyond / Innovative								
...in terms of topic	<i>Catching up (in Belgium) on an existing body of international evidence</i>	<i>Exploring a gap in international research</i>								
...in terms of methodology	<i>Reproducing an existing methodology</i>	<i>Exploring new methodology</i>								

Projects including FSI(s) must also complete the following table:

Position of the project regarding...	Within	Beyond / Innovative
strategic scientific objectives of the FSI(s)	<i>Filling a gap in knowledge regarding the priorities of the FSI</i>	<i>Beyond the current priorities of the FSI, in preparation for future priorities</i>

TABLE II: Position of the project in terms of its foreseen impact (linked to Point 5.1)

Please put "x" in the cells which are relevant to your project; filling out multiple lines is allowed.

Targeted impact in the domain(s) of...	Not relevant	Minor	Moderate	Strong	Major
Scientific knowledge, future capacities, and skills					
Economy					
Civil society					
Culture and Heritage					
Policy and public services					
Environment, Health and quality of life					
Collection management and conservation					

2.2 Motivation of the project position with respect to its impact (max. 0.5 pages)

Proposal description

Briefly state the position of your project with respect to **Point 2.1**, **Table I** and **Table II**.

- E.g. "our project aims at implementing results already produced elsewhere than Belgium (hence we are "within the state of the art in terms of topic"). This will imply some level of innovation in producing new data for Belgium (hence "beyond the state of the art in terms of approach"). The core impact of the project is to provide decision-makers with a well-founded set of results that can be compared with experiences in Europe. We plan additional feedback to other societal actors (NGOs, etc.)."
- E.g. "our project aims at pursuing strategic scientific objectives of our FSI to open new scientific collections to users in the most suited forms. This might imply some level of innovation, at a small scale; due to the complexity of this collection. The impact of the project is mainly in terms of heritage and culture, while we will also focus on environmental aspect attached to the content of this collection"

3. Research description	3. Scientific quality
3.1 Objectives and state of the art (max. 3 pages without references)	3.1 Objectives and state of the art
📄 Proposal description	BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents > 📄 Proposal description
3.1.1. Research objectives and state of the art	3.1.1. Research objectives and state of the art
<p>Explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim of the project and break it down in research objectives • The state of current knowledge at national and international level on your topic • The position of the project within the state of the art and, if applicable, the strategic scientific objectives of the FSI (Point 2.1, Table I) • Describe the opportunities for (new) national and/or international collaborations • Include relevant publications (A reference section must be provided!) 	<p>a. Research objectives Are the research objectives clear and coherent?</p> <p>b. Knowledge of the state of the art Does the proposal provide an accurate overview of the state of the art?</p> <p>c. Position of the project with respect to the state of the art How is the project positioned in relation to the state of the art (Point 2.1, Table I)?</p>
3.1.2. Scientific risk of the project in relation to its objectives	3.1.2. Scientific risk of the project in relation to its objectives
<p>State the possible major risks that the ideas on which your project is based might not be verified (excluding caveats in implementation; this will be treated in Point 4.2.3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List and argument the risk(s) or lack thereof (Point 2.1, Table I) • Provide some 'fall-back' options, or explain the absence thereof 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well are the scientific risks evaluated by the applicants? • Do they provide an adequate 'fall-back' plan, if needed?
3.2 Methodology (max. 10 pages)	3.2 Coherence between research objectives and methodology
📄 Proposal description 📄 Ethics form	BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents > > 📄 Proposal description & 📄 Ethics form
3.2.1. Methodological approach	3.2.1. Methodological approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the overall methodological approach of your project (Point 2.1, Table I) • Explain why your proposal is original and innovative in terms of methodology OR why you are not seeking originality and innovation methodology 	<p>Evaluate the approach undertaken. Assess the awareness of ethical issues of the project and ways to deal with these using appropriate channels (Ethics form). Not all projects need to be original or innovative, but the approach undertaken must be adequately explained (Point 2.1, Table I)</p> <p>→ <i>E.g. A non-original project can be deemed 'excellent' even if it is not innovative, provided there is adequate argumentation.</i></p>

3.2.2. Translation of the research objectives into appropriate and well-described methodology	3.2.2. Translation of the research methodology into appropriate and well-described methodology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate your research objectives into a methodology (used methods, techniques, systems and/or way of working) to achieve the results, taking into account the different disciplines mobilized regarding the project approach as described above (point 3.2.1) • Describe the kind, scope, availability, and possible cost of the datasets needed for the project. In case new data needs to be gathered, describe, and justify its necessity, added value and methodology* • Detail the results your approach will enable to gather (expected outcomes) <p>Data: Concerning the use of existing data/samples or the collection of new data/samples, proposal submitters should take the following guidelines into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whenever possible, the partners should make use of existing data(bases)/collections/samples to meet the needs of their research. For this, they must check beforehand whether these are accessible, at what cost, and how much time it will take to acquire, merge, use... them. • If the proposal requires collecting new data/samples (e.g. via a survey), the team must justify and argument why this particular form of data/sample collection is required and preferable to existing databases/collections. The partners must estimate the budget required for this data/sample collection, as well as possible delays in their acquisition. • If the project needs earth observation data, please contact the STEREO team (Pieter ROTTIERS, Tel.: +32 (0)2 238 35 83, pieter.rottiers@belspo.be). Some of these images can be downloaded free of charge and there's even the possibility to purchase new acquisitions at bottom prices. A justified request must however be submitted. Instructions for image acquisition and the form to be completed can be found at https://eo.belspo.be/en/stereo-iii-project-management - under data acquisition. <p>Note: If, after the start of the research, it appears that due to partner negligence or insufficient knowledge of the field, the data(bases)/collections/samples will not be available in time, this may constitute a reason for BELSPO to cancel the contract. It is recommended the submitters line-up alternatives in order to carry out the project in case the foreseen data/samples are not available.</p>	<p>Assess the chosen methodology (considering the different disciplines mobilized) and the articulation of the objectives-methodology-expected outcomes.</p>

<p>3.2.3. Gender aspects</p> <p>Gender should be seriously considered in the content of the project and dissemination of results when appropriate/relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the research involves humans as research objects, explain how the relevance of gender to the research topic is analysed. • Explain how the methodology ensures that (possible) gender differences will be investigated; that sex/gender differentiated data will be collected and analysed throughout the research project. • Explain how gender issues will be handled? • Elaborate how possible differentiated outcomes and impacts of the research on women and men have been considered. • Explain how questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, etc. have been designed to unravel potentially relevant sex and/or gender differences in your data. • Explain how you make sure the groups involved in the project (e.g. samples, testing groups) are gender-balanced and that data will be analysed according to the sex variable. • 	<p>3.2.3. Gender aspects</p> <p>Assess how the project considers aspects and/or issues related to gender/sex in the proposed research.</p>
<p>3.2.4. Ethic aspects</p> <p>Fill in the ethical issues' checklist and complete if necessary, the required documents, including the approval of the ethics committee of reference for the researchers responsible for this collection is requested (institutions, universities...).</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Explain the absence of ethical issues within the proposal.</p> <p>When conducting surveys, interviews, or focus groups where personal information is gathered and stored, data storage, protection, and other relevant issues must be explained in the data management plan.</p>	<p>3.2.4. Ethic aspects</p> <p>Asses the awareness of ethical issues of the project and ways to deal with these using appropriate channels.</p>

4. Implementation	4. Quality and efficiency of the implementation
4.1 Network	4.1 Quality of the network
📄 Proposal description	BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents > 📄 Proposal description
4.1.1. Individual quality of the partners (max. 3 pages / partner)	4.1.1. Individual quality of the partners
<p>Provide a short description of expertise and skills for each partner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their professional background • Maximum 5 top publications relevant for the proposal (clearly indicate the international peer reviewed publications) • A list of the research projects carried out over the past five years in the field under consideration or related areas (specify the duration of the work and funding source). • A list of their (inter)national contacts and the (inter)national networks to which they belong within the context of the proposal. • The scientific quality, management, synthesis, and communication skills of the coordinator. • If possible, include web links for all the information above. 	<p>Assess the scientific quality and expertise of the individual partners within the frame of the project. Competence regarding project management and coordination of work packages should be considered, including management, synthesis and communication skills of the coordinator.</p>
4.1.2. Adequacy and added value of the partnership in addressing the topic – only if applicable* (max. 1.5 pages)	4.1.2. Adequacy and added value of the partnership in addressing the topic – only if applicable* (max. 1.5 pages)
<p>Argument the motivation of choosing this network in addressing the topic of the proposal. The different dimensions of the added value in a partnership be (non-exhaustive list):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complementarity of expertise among partners • Complementarity of disciplines and way of working (multi, inter) to properly cover the project objectives • Coverage of the Belgian territory, its population, and institutions (whenever relevant) • Development of new expertise and competences (new techniques, knowledge, way of working...) in Belgium or within Belgian Scientific Institutions • Integration of the contributions • If applicable: Added value of the contribution of the international research partners and/or academic, non-academic experts, commercial subcontractors... <p>*Note: Bottom-up projects may be introduced by one or more institutions. In the case of having one institution, the added value of the partnership must not be explained.</p>	<p>This part evaluates the adequacy of the partnership as reasoned by the applicants in relation to the project objectives, including gender aspects and/or issues.</p>

<p>4.1.3. Gender (max. 0.5 pages)</p> <p>The gender balance should be seriously considered in the research team(s) and (if applicable) the network. Hereunder are some questions to help the applicants to ensure the gender aspect is considered in their proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there equal opportunities for women and men to participate to the research project? • Are there mechanisms in place to manage and monitor gender equality aspects? 	<p>4.1.3. Gender</p> <p>Assess the gender aspects and/or issues in the research team(s) and (if applicable) the network.</p>
<p>4.2 Detailed description of the work plan</p>	<p>4.2 Adequacy of the work plan</p>
<p>4.2.1. Detailed description of the work plan (max. 0.5 pages / work package)</p>	<p>4.2.1. Relation of the work packages to the proposal theme(s) and aim(s)</p>
<p>📄 Proposal description</p> <p>Please provide a description of the project in terms of work packages, tasks, and deliverables in accordance with the GANTT chart (see Point 4.2.2). Refer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and title of Work Package, Work Package leader (financed, non-financed) • Number, title and timing of tasks, task leader, participants to the task (financed, non-financed, subcontractors...) • Timing of deliverables • Number of person-months for each task • Means, tools, procedures, techniques to carry out the tasks <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work plan must be detailed to the level of work packages (WP) and tasks (Tasks). The definition of subtasks is not possible. • Compulsory work packages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination, project management and reporting - Data management - Valorisation / Dissemination / Exploitation • Work packages or tasks necessary for the implementation of the project but not financed by BELSPO must also be described and added to the GANTT chart. • The WP valorisation will be detailed in Point 5.3. • In the project phase, (one of) the Belgian project partner(s) must ensure the follow-up of the tasks carried out by the African research partner(s) and will also be responsible for the flow of information to and from the African research partner(s). It is therefore requested to clearly indicate in the work plan which Belgian partner will be responsible for the link with the African research partner. 	<p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents > 📄 Proposal description</p> <p>Notwithstanding work intensity and duration of tasks and WP, assess the way the breakdown of the work plan in work packages and tasks enables the realization of the project.</p> <p>Note: The WP valorisation is not evaluated here, but later in Point 5.3.</p>

<p>4.2.2. Work planning and time schedule: GANTT chart</p> <p>GANTT Chart</p> <p>Complete BELSPO's GANTT chart in accordance with the description of the detailed work plan, tasks and deliverables above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work intensity of each partner within each task (expressed in person-month [PM]) • Include for each partner the person-months funded by the BRAIN-be 2.0 project and the person-months funded by other sources (see notes). <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners include: financed, non-financed and subcontractors. • 1 Person-month [PM] = 1 full-time equivalent [FTE] or 2 half-time equivalents over 1 month... • Other sources of financing may include: salary payment by institutions other than BELSPO and/or via other projects, voluntary contributions... If a given task requires 7 person-months, and 6 months will be financed by the BRAIN-be 2.0 project, the 7th month must appear under 'other sources of financing'. • Compulsory work packages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination, project management and reporting - Data management - Valorisation / Dissemination / Exploitation 	<p>4.2.2. Work planning and time schedule: GANTT chart</p> <p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents > GANTT Chart</p> <p>Is the work planning (time schedule, duration and person-power effort per task) appropriate and feasible to run the project? Is it well-distributed among partners in function of their expertise? (horizontal lecture of the GANTT chart, not going into detail for each partner, with recommendations regarding the length and pertinence of the activities within the calendar)</p> <p>If the proposal is deemed 'reasonable' or 'good', please describe the necessary/possible improvements within the comments.</p> <p>Note:</p> <p>The online submission platform automatically checks the specific rules for the budget repartition in terms of staff, operating costs, overheads, equipment, subcontracting and African research partners – thus, there is no need to check the compliance with the financial rules.</p>
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<p>4.2.3. Implementation risk management</p>	<p>4.2.3. Implementation risk management</p>																																											
<p>Proposal description</p> <p>Number, identify and explain the main incurring risks that could delay or hinder the project and the contingency plans foreseen to deal with them. (max. 1.5 pages) Locate the number of each risk in terms of its likelihood of occurrence and impact on the project within Table III.</p> <p>Table III: Risk likelihood vs. impact.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" rowspan="2"></th> <th colspan="5">IMPACT</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Negligible</th> <th>Minor</th> <th>Moderate</th> <th>Significant</th> <th>Severe</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <th rowspan="5">LIKELIHOOD</th> <th>Very likely</th> <td style="background-color: #90EE90;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFFF00;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFDAB9;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FF0000;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FF0000;"></td> </tr> <tr> <th>Likely</th> <td style="background-color: #008000;"></td> <td style="background-color: #90EE90;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFFF00;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFDAB9;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FF0000;"></td> </tr> <tr> <th>Possible</th> <td style="background-color: #008000;"></td> <td style="background-color: #90EE90;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFFF00;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFDAB9;">1, 3</td> <td style="background-color: #FFDAB9;"></td> </tr> <tr> <th>Unlikely</th> <td style="background-color: #008000;"></td> <td style="background-color: #90EE90;"></td> <td style="background-color: #90EE90;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFFF00;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFDAB9;">2</td> </tr> <tr> <th>Very Unlikely</th> <td style="background-color: #008000;"></td> <td style="background-color: #008000;"></td> <td style="background-color: #90EE90;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFFF00;"></td> <td style="background-color: #FFFF00;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>→ E.g:</p> <p><i>Risk 1: Online survey input insufficient</i> <i>Risk 2: Fieldwork postponed for one year</i> <i>Risk 3: ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low Low-Medium Medium Medium-High Severe 			IMPACT					Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Significant	Severe	LIKELIHOOD	Very likely						Likely						Possible				1, 3		Unlikely					2	Very Unlikely						<p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents > Proposal description</p> <p>Assess the implementation risk management and contingency plans.</p>
			IMPACT																																									
		Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Significant	Severe																																						
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	Possible				1, 3																																							
	Unlikely					2																																						
	Very Unlikely																																											
<p>4.2.4. N/A</p>	<p>4.2.4. Workload intensity in relation to the work packages</p>																																											
<p>GANTT Chart</p> <p>Note: Information already provided, in the GANTT chart (Point 4.2.2).</p>	<p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents > GANTT Chart</p> <p>Provide an overall assessment of the requested level of person-power of each partner throughout the work packages and tasks (vertical lecture of the GANTT chart, with recommendations regarding the intensity of their activities and pertinence of participation in them).</p>																																											

<p>4.3 Budget</p> <p>To be filled in online, except:  Antarctica form</p> <p>ONLINE BUDGET TABLE - Please consult the BUDGET RULES file on the BRAIN-be website: (https://www.belspo.be/belspo/brain2-be/call_open_en.stm)</p> <p>Fill in the online budget table, and complete the Antactica form if necessary.</p> <p>Note: In addition to the financing of the project, BELSPO pays for the real expenses of the researchers of Belgian Institutions employed by the project for taking part in field work campaigns in Antarctica. These campaigns - if any – must be integrated and explained in the detailed description of the tasks and timetable.</p>	<p>4.3 Budget assessment</p> <p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Partners Table & Budget BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents >  Antarctica form</p> <p>Is the budget realistic, well-balanced among partners (if applicable), and in line with the objectives and expected outcomes of the project? If the project asks for an Antarctica campaign budget, please take this into account in the evaluation.</p> <p>Note: The online submission platform automatically checks the specific rules for the budget repartition in terms of staff, operating costs, overheads, equipment, subcontracting and African research partners – thus, there is no need to check the compliance with the financial rules.</p>
<p>4.4 Data management plan</p> <p>Data management form</p> <p>Data Management Plans (DMPs) are a key element of good data management. As the data collected within the framework of the proposed research must be available to other users for other purposes, the proposal must clearly indicate when and in what format the data will be made accessible, specifying which categories of users are likely to benefit from access to the data.</p> <p>Using the Data Management Plan form, develop a Data Management Plan (DMP), in which is specified what data will be open, detailing what data the project will generate, whether and how it will be exploited or made accessible for verification and re-use, and how it will be curated and preserved.</p> <p>Note:</p> <p>a. What is understood as research data?</p> <p>Research data are the evidence that underpin the answer to research questions and can be used to validate findings. Data can be quantitative information or qualitative statements collected by researchers in the course of their work by experimentation, observation, modelling, interview or other methods, or information derived from existing evidence.</p> <p>For the purpose of BELSPO's data management policy, research data also includes digital information extracted from physical objects such as scientific and archaeological collections, physical arts works or biobanks.</p>	<p>4.4 Data management plan, and availability of generated data after the research is finalised</p> <p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents >  Data management form</p> <p>Assess the quality of the data management plan and availability of the generated data (see Data Management form)</p>

Software is not included in the definition. BELSPO recognizes that software (algorithms, scripts and codes developed by researchers in the course of their work) may be necessary to access and interpret data. In such cases, the data management plan needs to address how information about such items will be made available.

b. Why is a data management plan necessary?

Data Management Plans document and sustain your research project by explaining how it deals with copyright / open access requirements and ethical issues, and describe the plan for acquisition, long-term data preservation and sharing modes. They contribute to increasing the impact and visibility of your research data and ensure that the way you are handling data complies with the Open Data principle applied by BELSPO.

c. What is expected from the data management plan?

The Data Management Plan (DMP) should describe how you as a researcher deal with the collected data before, during and after the project. It is a key element of a good data management. As part of making research data findable, accessible, interoperable and re-usable (FAIR), the DMP shall include information on:

- how the data will be collected,
- the type, size and format of the generated data,
- when, where and in what format the data will be made accessible
- how the data will be curated and preserved for ulterior use (including after the end of the project).

It will clearly specify which categories of users are likely to benefit from access to the data. The DPM must also contain information regarding the legal and ethical aspects of data. In this respect, researchers shall use to the maximum existing platforms having the highest standard of preservation, curation, deposit and reuse Take into account that for marine related research see researchers must transfer a copy of the analysis and measurement data and/or metadata to the BMDC (the Belgian Marine Data Centre) (see IV.3 Data, results, intellectual ownership and open access).

5. Impact

Note: The positioning of the project in terms of the state of the art and the strategic scientific objectives of the FSI has already been explained in **Point 2.1, Table I** and **Point 2.2**.

Note: Information concerning the positioning of the project in terms of its foreseen impact has been signaled in **Point 2.1, Table II**.

5. Impact

The positioning of the project regarding the state of the art and the strategic objectives of the FSI is explained in **Point 2.1, Table I** and **Point 2.2** and does not need to be evaluated here. The Impact table required to judge this section can be found in **point 2.1, Table II**.

<p>5.1 Potential impact of the project (in light of the expected outcomes) (max. 1.5 pages)</p> <p>Proposal description</p> <p>Explain and justify in detail the position of the project regarding its expected impact in accordance to Point 2.1, Table II.</p>	<p>5.1 Potential impact of the project (in light of the expected outcomes)</p> <p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents > Proposal description</p> <p>Assess the potential impact as described in the proposal in Point 2.1, Table II.</p>
<p>5.2 Follow-up committee (max. 2 pages)</p> <p>Proposal description Follow-up committee letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specify the functioning and role (informed, consulted, involved in research) of the follow-up committee Provide a motivated list of possible committee members with their role and profiles. Describe the gender balance in the composition of the committee <p>Members can confirm their interest and possible contribution to the committee via the completion of a Follow-up Committee letter of intent (see template) - non-compulsory</p> <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each project is accompanied by a follow-up committee. The objective of this committee is to provide an active follow-up of the project and to assist in the valorization of the research, via exchange and provision of data and information, giving advice, suggesting means of valorization, etc. The follow-up committee is composed of potential users of the results, such as representatives of public authorities at national, regional, European, or international level, social actors, scientists, industrial actors, etc. The members of the follow-up committee are non-funded. The final composition of the follow-up committee will be defined in collaboration with BELSPO. 	<p>5.2 Follow-up committee</p> <p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents > Proposal description & Follow-up committee letter</p> <p>Assess the coherence of the composition of the follow-up committee, its proposed role (informed, consulted, involved) and functioning (number of meetings, method of information exchange, etc.) with the foreseen impact of the project. Evaluate the involvement of non-scientific stakeholders in the early stages of the project (co-creation of results) – where appropriate. Take into account gender balance.</p> <p>Note:</p> <p>Bear in mind that the set-up of a follow-up committee composed of possible users of the project results is compulsory. However, letters of intent from this committee are not mandatory.</p>
<p>5.3 Valorisation plans (max 3 pages)</p> <p>Proposal description</p> <p>Explain the plans to maximize the impact of the project (science <u>and other</u>). Explain the concrete plans of valorisation, dissemination and exploitation of the research and research results to scientific and non-scientific audiences, in accordance to the WP valorisation and GANTT chart (point 4.2.2), and the expected impact (point 2.1, Table II and point 5.1). The target groups of these valorisation proposals must be explicitly described.</p>	<p>5.3 Valorisation plans</p> <p>BRAIN-be 2.0 online Platform > Research Proposal > Documents > Proposal description</p> <p>Assess the capacity of promoting results and knowledge and enabling publication and exploitation of data; the adequacy of the targeted audiences, the appropriateness of communication tools and approaches, ...</p>

FULL PROPOSALS (thematic & bottom-up): evaluation criteria for panel evaluators

These guidelines describe the criteria for the evaluation of project proposals at the stage of the PANEL.

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE PRIOR TO THE PANEL MEETING	DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE DURING THE PANEL MEETING
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information File• Submission and Evaluation guidelines (this document)• Budget Rules• Scientific ranking of the proposals (from the marks given by individual evaluators)• Submitted project proposals (remotely evaluated), including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Compulsory</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">- General information- Proposal description- Gantt chart- Budget table- Data management plan- Ethics form<i>Optional</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">- Follow-up committee letter of intent- Cash or in-kind commitment letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proposals and pre-drafted consensus reports• Proposal ranking from which to elaborate the funding scenario (spread sheets):<ul style="list-style-type: none">- For Thematic proposals- For Bottom-up proposals• Document (template) to explain the funding scenario(s) proposed during the Panel meeting• Recapitulative tables with classification of projects:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- By thematic priority- By institution- ...• Any other type of information provided by BELSPO that would help the evaluation Panel to develop (a) funding scenario(s). (E.g. previous BRAIN-be projects with potential synergies with 2020 Call applications...)

Please note that different criteria may apply for Thematic proposals and Bottom-up proposals.

PANEL EVALUATION CRITERIA GUIDELINES FOR THEMATIC AND BOTTOM-UP PROPOSALS



The funding scenario(s) produced during the Panel meeting must be accompanied by a document explaining the choices made in terms of the following criteria and the suggestions/recommendations made by the remote evaluators within the consensus report. Thematic proposals and Bottom-up proposals will be treated separately.

Available Call budget

Project budget versus Call budget

Coverage in terms of the scope of the Call

- **Thematic projects:** Coverage in terms of the different thematic priorities, and Call subjects
- **Bottom-Up projects:** Coverage in terms of the scope of the Pillars, and research subjects

Coverage in terms of participation

- **Thematic projects:** Coverage in terms of institutions, number and distribution of partners
- **Bottom-Up projects:** Coverage in terms of institutions

Critical mass

Coverage in terms of synergy compared to previous financed subjects within the frame of BRAIN-be

Adjustments, recommendations

- **Thematic projects:**
 - Adjustments/recommendations in terms of partnership, follow-up committee, workplan, ...
 - Adjustments of budget (either suggested by the remote evaluators or in view of the ensemble of proposals)
- **Bottom-Up projects:**
 - Adjustments/recommendations in term of follow-up committee, workplan, ...
 - Adjustments of budget (either suggested by the remote evaluators or in view of the ensemble of proposals)