

Guide for evaluators

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First Call for Proposals of the KAPPA Programme (CZ RESEARCH Programme EEA and Norway Grants 2014–2021)

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1 INTRODUCTION

About TA CR...

The Technology Agency of the Czech Republic (TA CR) was established in 2009. While in the past, the support of applied research used to be dispersed amongst a large number of providers, today it is mainly concentrated in TA CR. TA CR develops new tools to support closer cooperation between the academic and the business sector. All projects that TA CR supports shall end up with practical and usable results. Support of research and development is realized through thematic or branch-oriented programmes. The KAPPA Programme is historically the first programme not funded from national sources.

About the KAPPA Programme...

KAPPA Programme for industrial research, experimental development and innovation (Programme) is financed by EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-21 (EEA and Norway Grants) and implemented in cooperation with the Research Council of Norway (RCN).

The objective of the Programme is to enhance research-based knowledge development through international collaboration in applied research and innovation. Applied research includes industrial research, experimental development, or a combination thereof. The Programme shall support capacity building in applied research, including supporting the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), social sciences, humanities and arts research, and careers of female researchers and early stage researchers.

The Call for Proposals is focused on two objectives:

- international cooperation of entities from Czechia with partners from Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein (also referred to as the “Donor States”) in applied research and
- connecting research organisations with the application sphere (enterprises and other entities).

The Call for Proposals is open to project proposals within all disciplines and topics of research, development and innovation.

The Call for Proposals includes a Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) component from Norway Grants.

Budget summary

TOTAL 32 523 529 €	EEA Grants	Norway Grants	CCS projects (from Norway Grants)
Grants	15 177 647 €	17 345 882 €	5 203 764 €

The Programme is implemented on the basis of the signed Memoranda of Understanding on the implementation of the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021, and the Programme Agreement. The framework of the Programme was approved by the Czech Government in May 2018¹.

The full text of all the relevant documents for this Call for Proposals is published at kappa.tacr.cz/en. Evaluators should in particular familiarise themselves with the information to applicants contained in:

Open Call

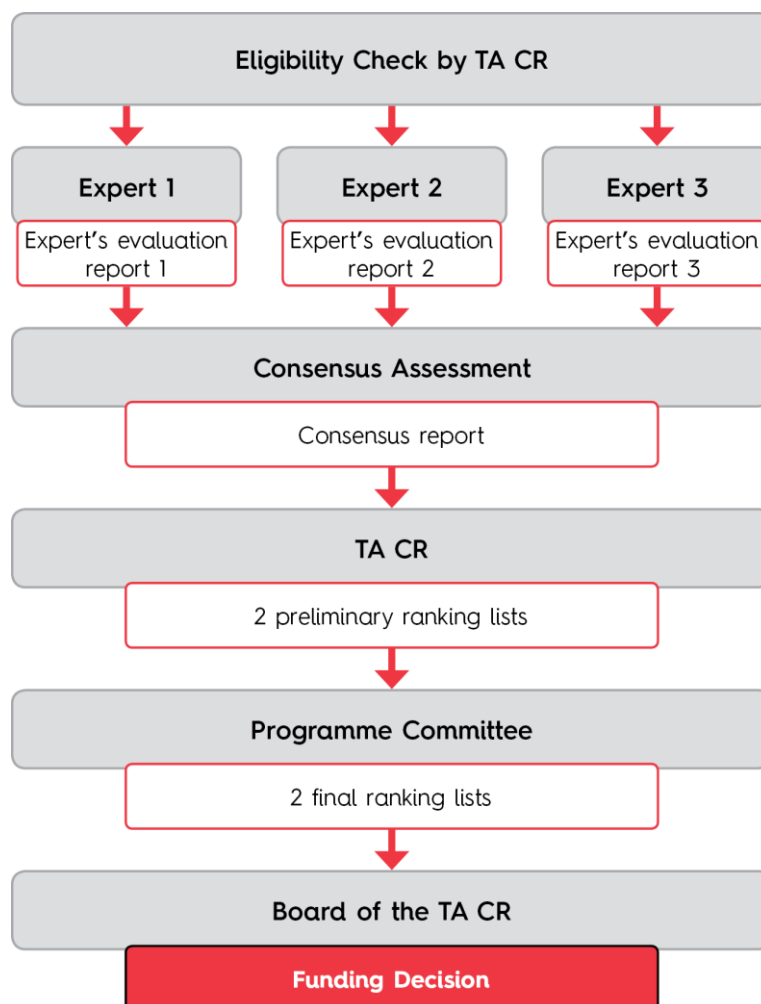
Guide for Applicants

Basic Programme Parameters

SUPPORTED AREAS	Not restricted with the exception of part of the funding towards projects focused on carbon capture and storage (CCS).
MAXIMUM FUNDING INTENSITY	96 %
CO-FINANCING	At least one of the entities (applicant or project partners) shall have a minimum share of 20 % of the total eligible project costs and contribute its own resources to the project: its aid intensity shall not exceed 80 %.
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD	min. 2 years
APPLICANTS AND PROJECT PARTNERS	The applicant must be established in Czechia. All projects shall include partnerships between Czech and Donor State(s) entities (Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein).

¹by the Government Resolution No. 308 on 16th May 2018

The Evaluation Process of the Call for Proposals



1. **Eligibility check by TA CR** – review of administrative and eligibility criteria. Project proposals that pass the check are passed on to the next stage of evaluation.
2. **Individual evaluation by Experts** – each project proposal is evaluated individually by three international experts, who evaluate and score the project proposals according to the criteria stated in this document (chapter Individual evaluation of project proposals), and formulate their recommendation whether the project should be founded or not.
3. **Consensus Assessment** – done together by all three experts evaluating the same project proposal. The goal of the Consensus Assessment is to reach and represent a common view on the project proposal.
4. **Finalisation of documents for the Programme Committee** – TA CR will prepare preliminary ranking lists and make all relevant documents accessible for the Programme Committee.
5. **Programme Committee** – the Programme Committee shall meet to review the TA CR preliminary ranking lists and draw up final ranking lists.
6. **TA CR Board** – makes the funding decisions based on ranking lists from the Programme Committee.

2 EXPERTS' ROLE

The pool of experts is made of international experts who have expressed their interest in evaluation of the project proposals within the Programme, who completed the mandatory online training and who have concluded the Framework Agreement with TA CR in the information system TA CR (hereinafter "ISTA"; experts can find it after accessing the ISTA account in the section Work activities).

The assignment of experts to project proposals is done in ISTA by TA CR, primarily based on their expertise and impartiality.

An expert is considered to have a conflict of interest in cases of:

- a work relation with any of the researchers involved in the project proposal,
- a close relationship giving rise to doubts about his/her impartiality (e. g. joint research projects, personal or professional relationship),
- her/his involvement in the preparation of the project proposal (application).

More information about possible conflicts of interest can be found in the document "Evaluator's Impartiality towards Projects" which is available on the Programme website in the Relevant Documents.

Important deadlines for experts:

- **3 working days** to accept the evaluation order. The notification about the assignment to a specific project proposal evaluation is sent to the expert by email. The acceptance shall be done in ISTA via accepting the agreement with the document „Confirmation of Accepting Order for Drafting Report in Call for Proposal and Expert's Declaration of Impartiality“. Non acceptance of the evaluation order within this deadline is considered as an expression of disinterest in the evaluation.
- **21 calendar days** to complete the evaluation and fill in the expert evaluation report in ISTA. This deadline begins on the day of accepting the evaluation order.

Evaluation conditions:

- The evaluation is done online in ISTA.
- The expert evaluation report can be submitted only after filling in all of the fields of the evaluation report.
- TA CR can return poor quality expert evaluation reports back to the expert for review and proper completion.
- An anonymized expert evaluation report is sent to the applicant after the evaluation of all project proposals is completed and the final decision taken by the TA CR Board.

Additional conditions for the participation of experts in the evaluation of project proposals are part of the "Framework Agreement" and the "Order for Drafting Report in Public Tender" (Order), both available in ISTA.

Please note that after the finalisation of the evaluation process – decision to award project grants, the list of experts used for the evaluation of projects in the Call for Proposals will be published on the internet. The anonymized expert evaluation report will be made available to the applicant of the relevant project proposal.

Evaluation principles

The evaluation is based on the following principles²:

- **Excellence** – Projects selected for funding must demonstrate a high level of quality in the context of the topics and criteria set out in the Call for Proposal.
- **Transparency** – Funding decision must be based on clearly described rules and procedures, and applicants and project partners should receive adequate feedback on the outcome of the evaluation of their proposals.
- **Confidentiality** – All proposals and related data, knowledge and documents communicated to TA CR are treated in confidence.
- **Efficiency and speed** – Evaluation, award and contract preparation should be as rapid as possible, commensurate with maintaining the quality of the evaluation, and respecting the legal framework.
- **Ethical and security considerations** – Any proposal which contravenes fundamental ethical principles may be excluded at any time during the process of evaluation, selection and award.
- **Fairness and impartiality** – All proposals submitted under the Call for Proposals are treated equally. They are evaluated impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants and project partners. None of the applicants or project partners may contact or influence any persons involved in the evaluation of the project proposals with the intention of influencing the evaluation process of any project proposals. If the applicant or project partner is urged into doing so or learn of such activities, they are obligated to inform TA CR of such an event immediately.

Individual evaluation of project proposals

Before the expert starts the evaluation, he/she needs to:

- conclude a Framework Agreement and to complete online training as mentioned above, including becoming familiar with this Guideline for Evaluators;
- study the materials of the first Call for Proposals in the KAPPA Programme (Open call, Guide for applicants);
- decide whether expert can and will accept the evaluation order for the project proposal assigned to him/her in ISTA. Experts will find it after logging in to ISTA in the section Work activities;
- accept the Order and Declaration of Impartiality.

² defined by the Guideline for Research Programmes.

Project proposal evaluation:

- The evaluation template is available in ISTA in an online form.
- The evaluation is carried out through four evaluation criteria described in the next section. Of these four criteria, the first one (Scope) is binary YES / NO.
- For the other three criteria expert will award points by using the scale below. The score is based on the scoring criteria of the Horizon 2020 programme:

Number of points	Verbal evaluation
0	The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
2	Poor – The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
4	Fair – While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.
6	Good – The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary.
8	Very good – The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible.
10	Excellent – The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

- Expert can use all whole numbers as scores (odd numbers correspond to 0,5 points in the Horizon 2020 scale).
- The score the expert will give to each of the criteria must be well explained in the text!
- The minimum threshold for each of the scored evaluation criteria is 6 points and the minimum overall threshold is 20 points. If the project proposal does not meet all thresholds, even if the expert' answer is NO on the first binary criterion, the expert cannot recommend the project proposal for funding. In these cases, however, the expert shall complete all the parts of the evaluation of the proposal.
- After evaluating all the criteria, the expert will provide his/her opinion on recommending the project proposal for funding or not (YES/NO) with justification.
- In order to ease the expert's orientation in the proposals, for each evaluation criterion, this guide indicates which parts of the project proposal (application form) primarily contain relevant information for evaluating that criterion. However, the project needs to be evaluated as a whole including the attachment(s), so when evaluating individual criteria, the expert shall use information from any other part of the project proposal if it is related to that criterion.

The criteria and the structure of an expert evaluation report

Evaluation criteria:

1. Scope – Relevance in relation to the objective and priorities of the Call for Proposals (YES/NO)

Assess whether it is valid: The project proposal is in line with the objective of the Call for Proposal i.e. to enhance research-based knowledge development through international collaboration in applied research and innovation.

Help for evaluation: The objective(s) of the project proposal should be defined in a clear and comprehensible manner.

The content of the proposal must involve applied research (it includes industrial research, experimental development, or a combination thereof). If the project is focused on basic research, it is not in line with the focus of this call and hence not eligible for funding.

For the definitions of basic and applied research, see the Frascati Manual and the definition given in Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 (Regulation).

In case of identification of a major non-compliance with the focus of the Call for Proposal, this shall be clearly described and the criterion assessed as not fulfilled. Note that in this case it is not possible to recommend the project proposal for funding.

A project proposal should be deemed ineligible on grounds of 'scope' only in clear-cut cases.

Relevant parts of the project proposal are mainly:

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Even if expert evaluates the first criterion 1 as NO – not fulfilled or assigns a score below the threshold to any of the other evaluation criteria, the expert will fill in the entire evaluation report form. That is, experts shall complete the evaluation and give points to all scoring criteria and add relevant verbal comments.

2. Scientific and/or technical excellence (max. 10 points)

Assess the extent to which the following applies: The originality, novelty and concept of the project are adequate and sufficiently described in relation to the current state of knowledge in the given area. Proposed work is beyond the state of the art and demonstrates innovation potential (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches, new products, services or business and organisational models).

Applicants and project partners have proven knowledge of the research area and current state of knowledge, have an overview of the causes of the problem, existing solutions and related projects. Applicants and project partners have identified similar projects that they are currently involved in or have participated in. Interdisciplinary approaches are duly taken into account in the project proposal.

The proposed methodology is credible, effective and quality and the project concept is reliable and adequate. The results are sufficiently specific and relevant to the objectives of the project.

Help for evaluation: The focus of the project should be ambitious and well specified in relation to the current state of knowledge and bring an original solution to the current problem. The proposed methods and procedure of the solution should correspond to the given research area, be adequate and credible for achieving the planned project results. Applicants and project partners should define the current state of knowledge in the project proposal.

Relevant parts of the project proposal are mainly:

- 3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION
- 5. PROJECT RESULTS

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation and management, including quality and implementation capacity of the applicants and project partners and contribution to capacity and competence building (max. 10 points)

Assess the extent to which the following applies: Members of the research team have the necessary experience and expertise to achieve the planned results. The structure and added value of the assembled consortium is appropriate and meaningful.

Through their involvement in the research team, the project contributes to the development of female researchers' and early stage researchers' careers.

The consortium has access to the necessary facilities.

The amount of planned costs is justified and adequate to the planned activities and results.

The setting of project management and cooperation of applicants and project partners is well described and adequate.

The project contributes to the development of international networks and competencies of the researchers. The bilateral partnership between Czech entities and partners from Norway/Iceland/Liechtenstein offers clear added value to the project and provides a basis for developing long-term sustainable cooperation.

Applicants and project partners have identified risks and described ways of mitigating and eliminating them. Applicants and project partners have agreed on a clear distribution of rights to the results. The achievement of results is realistic in the set project implementation period.

Help for evaluation: Evaluate project management methods described in the project proposal – project management, roles and responsibilities of researches.

Assess the consortium's technical equipment, know-how and other key assumptions for achieving results.

Evaluate the expert qualification and previous experience of research team members with R&D projects. The experience of the team members corresponds to their role in the research team and the planned activities.

When it comes to assessing the impact of the project on career development for female researchers and early stage researchers, their role in the research team should not be only symbolic, but these researchers should be involved in the research tasks, through which they will gain practical experience necessary for their professional development.

Need of the bilateral cooperation is clearly justified and important for successful solution of the project. The bilateral cooperation is balanced, with activity on both sides and a good communication and integration of activities in the project. It brings synergy into the project that can be used to develop further cooperation after the project ends.

Consider the proposed way of distribution of the applicants and project partners' rights to the results with respect to the proposed activities in the project.

Evaluate whether applicants and project partners have described in detail the critical assumption for meeting the project objectives, identified potential risks sufficiently, assessed the probability of their occurrence, suggested a possible solution, estimated their severity level and described preventive steps to eliminate or reduce risks (prevention plan) in the project proposal.

Relevant parts of the project proposal are mainly:

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION

4. RESEARCH TEAM

5. PROJECT RESULTS

6. FINANCIAL PLAN

4. The potential impact through the development, dissemination and use of project results
(max. 10 points)

Assess the extent to which the following applies: The potential and importance of the benefits and the impact of the project (that would enhance innovation capacity, create new market opportunities, strengthen competitiveness and growth of companies, address issues related to climate change or the environment, or bring other important benefits for society) at national or international level is appropriate, given the project theme.

The planned project outputs will contribute to the expected impacts.

The consortium includes an SME that actively participates in the project and in the application of the project results (either by applying it to its economic activity or by applying its experience in commercializing the results of applied research). For projects where the participation of an SME is not relevant due to the project topic and its nature, there should be another entity involved that can positively affect the application of results. In any case, the proposal clearly describes how the results will be implemented.

The prerequisites and planned measures for dissemination (including management of intellectual property rights), application and exploitation of the project results and the feasibility of their practical application are adequate.

The planned results and the proposed co-operation are a good basis for continuing co-operation between the consortium members in the future (including possible co-operation on projects with public funding).

Help for evaluation: The project proposal should give a clear idea about the project results application and the overall (economic and non-economic) benefit / impact of the project. The method of applying the results should be described in a realistic and adequate way.

The previous experience with the commercialization / applied results of R&D projects, involvement of industrial partners (or other entities, if relevant to the type of project), that can provide relevant assistance in the application of project results, in the project solution etc. should be positively evaluated.

In the case of involvement of SMEs, the active and meaningful role of SMEs in the project should be positively evaluated. This means that the SME that participates in the project and through its economic activity is able to realize the application of the project results in practice, ideally has previous experience in this area.

Relevant parts of the project proposal are mainly:

3. PROJECT INTRODUCTION

5. PROJECT RESULTS

Mandatory attachment: Market Research

Recommendation if to fund the project proposal:

- YES / NO

Final summary of the project proposal evaluation:

- In the final summary, the expert should refer to the principal arguments made to each of the evaluation criteria and give a general overview of the evaluated project proposal.
- If the research carried out within the project proposal includes ethical or security aspects, the expert shall include an opinion whether all the necessary documents have been attached to the project proposal and whether the project proposal reflects the general principles of ethical and safe research.

3 CONSENSUS ASSESSMENT

Once all the experts assigned to the same project proposal complete their evaluation, the Consensus Assessment will begin.

TA CR will notify experts via email. At the same time, the experts will be sent a link to a shared Google Document in which the Consensus Assessment will take place.

In the shared document, the experts will find the template of the Consensus Assessment report and the summary of all three expert evaluation reports as well as the points awarded and commentaries made by all three experts to each of the criteria. If there's a common view of all three experts within the criterion (both the points awarded and the commentaries), the TA CR will insert in the consensus template the joint score and joint commentary. For the other criteria, all three experts shall find a consensus through their discussion.

The written commentaries that experts insert directly in the Google Document will be the primary tool for the discussion of all three experts. If this method of communication proves insufficient to reach a consensus, TA CR will arrange and moderate a conference call of all three experts.

If this does not lead to a common view, the consensus report will set out the majority view of the experts but also record any dissenting views from any particular expert.

The Consensus Assessment phase ends with the agreement of all three experts on scoring and wording of the consensus report. The report has a very similar structure to the expert evaluation report and includes the points awarded, the commentaries for each of the criteria, the ethical and security concerns, if applicable, the final opinion as well as the recommendation to (not) fund the project proposal.

4 TA CR PREPARATION PHASE

TA CR reviews the results of the expert evaluation and the Consensus Assessment. TA CR then makes its own assessment, taking into account the conclusions of the international experts which will focus especially on the budget part of the project proposals (eligibility and appropriate level of budgets requested) and, in the case of the budget of donor project partner in cooperation with RCN. TA CR will further examine the project proposals recommended for funding which had significant disagreement between the experts in the evaluation by three independent international experts and the project proposals with dissenting views in the Consensus Assessment. TA CR also checks if the IR (industrial research) and ED (experimental development) ratios correspond to the nature of the planned activities of the applicants and project partners of all project proposals except project proposals with a consensus not to fund.

Based on results of Consensual Assessments, TA CR shall prepare two preliminary ranking lists: CCS project list for CCS projects and EEA and Norway Grants list for other projects. These ranking lists will be divided into three parts:

- project proposals recommended for funding (including all project proposals with the same score as the last project above the funding limit line),
- project proposals recommended for funding below the limit of available funds and
- project proposals not recommended for funding (falling below the threshold(s) and/or failed on the first criterion (scope)).

5 PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

The Programme Committee (PC) plays the role of the Programme Council, i.e. the expert advisory body to TA CR supporting and advising TA CR in all matters concerning scientific quality and relevance of the projects and activities funded by the Programme.

The PC meeting is on-site and, depending on the number of project proposals accepted for the Call for Proposals, it may take several days. The meeting will take place at TA CR offices. The members of the PC will be informed of the date of the meeting in advance, no later than 10 working days before the meeting and will have access to individual project proposals, and the results of project evaluation at all previous evaluation stages.

The PC shall review the TA CR preliminary ranking lists and on the basis of this, draw up final ranking lists. The justification for modifications shall be detailed in the report on the relevant project proposal and in the minutes of the PC meeting.

The PC may decide to change the final score of the proposal received in the consensus report. This right shall be reserved only to cases in which the PC unanimously agrees that there is an unjustified discrepancy between the numerical score and written evaluation of the proposal in the consensus report or unjustified discrepancy between the consensus report and individual reviews.

In such a case the PC awards points for each of the evaluation criteria. The points awarded by the PC for each evaluation criterion cannot exceed the highest and the lowest score given for that criterion in the individual reports of international experts. The score awarded by the PC is final and is taken into account while deciding upon the final ranking lists.

In the case of project proposals with the same point score near the limit of the relevant call budget, the PC will decide the final order by taking into consideration aspects related to the objective of the programme in this order:

1. potential impact (criterion No. 4),
2. female leadership (the PC will primarily look for female main researchers – principal investigators, or in the absence of such, then for other female researchers in positions of responsibility as key persons),
3. scientific and/or technical excellence (criterion No. 2).

The PC may also determine that the binary criterion (criterion No. 1 Scope – Relevance in relation to the objective of the Call for Proposals) has been evaluated incorrectly by the experts or during the Consensus Assessment and change it to the opposite result, which may result in a change of recommendation whether to award a grant to the project proposal. The PC also may review and, if relevant, adjust the eligible costs of the entire project proposal or of applicant or project partners and review and, if relevant, adjust the ratio of IR/ED of the individual applicant and project partners based on the TA CR suggestion from the preparation phase.

These modifications are based primarily on proposals arising from Consensual Assessments of individual project proposals. As a part of the outcomes of the previous evaluation, the members of the PC will be able to familiarize themselves with the proposed modifications before the meeting. Each project proposals to which any PC member has a comment will be discussed in detail as well as project

proposal where there was a discrepancy between the experts as expressed in the scoring and in the Consensus Assessment.

The justification for all modifications (including those which are consistent with the conclusions of the Consensus Assessments) shall be detailed in the report on the relevant project proposal and in the minutes of the meeting of the PC.

The output of the PC evaluation will be two main ranking lists, EEA and Norway Grants list and CCS project list, with the projects ranked according to the score received and stating whether the project proposals are recommended for funding. Both lists will also include an appropriate number of ranked reserve projects.

6 TA CR BOARD

Following the recommendation of the Programme Committee, the TA CR Board issues individual decisions to award a grant to projects based on the final ranking lists approved by the PC and decides on the allocation of funding to the projects.

The outputs of the TA CR Board meeting are the two main lists, EEA and Norway Grants list and CCS project list, where the projects are ranked according to the score they receive following the PC evaluation and depending on whether the project proposals are recommended for funding. Each of the lists will have a “reserve list” - a number of proposals kept in reserve to allow for eventualities such as the failure of negotiations on projects, the withdrawal of proposals, or budget savings agreed during negotiation.

The selection process will be verified (in line with the Guideline for Research Programmes) by the Supervisory Board of TA CR. The members of the TA CR Supervisory Board will participate in all phases of the selection process as observers. The selection process shall be verified before the final funding decision.

7 CONCLUSION

In the event that you haven't found on the previous pages the answer to any question connected to your role in the evaluation process, or if anything is unclear, please contact TA CR by e-mail sent to **evaluators@tacr.cz**.

We thank you for your willingness to participate in the evaluation of the project proposals submitted in the Call for Proposals and for your contribution to select the best projects that help fulfil the objectives of the KAPPA Programme.

We'll be looking forward to further opportunities of mutual cooperation!