Action B: Assessment criteria

The evaluation procedure will depend on the number of pre-proposals received:
- If less than 110 pre-proposals are received, only an eligibility check of pre-proposals will be performed. Eligible pre-proposals will be invited to submit full proposals.
- If more than 110 pre-proposals are received, an eligibility check and a first step evaluation (peer-review) of pre-proposals will be performed. In that case, proposals will be evaluated by the Evaluation Committee against the following criteria: fit to the scope of the call, novelty of the research and the transnational added value. Only successful pre-proposals will be invited to submit full proposals.

The Evaluation Committee will apply the criteria below to assess the quality of full proposals.
No additional criteria will be used for evaluation and selection.

I.   Criteria for step 1

1. **Fit to the scope of the call (1-5; threshold: 4)**

    Evaluation committee members will assess the relevance of the proposed research against (i) the thematic priorities set forth in the scientific text of the call and (ii) the type of research (here synthesis) to be supported. Any project that does not fit within these thematic priorities and this type of research will not be recommended for funding, regardless of its scientific quality.

2. **Novelty of the research performed (1-5; threshold: 3)**

    Evaluation Committee members will assess the novelty / originality and innovation of the research goals and objectives: to what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original concepts?

3. **Transnational added value (1-5; threshold: 3)**

    Evaluation Committee members will assess the transnational added value to be expected from the collaboration (cf. below for more information)

II.   Criteria for step 2

A- Scientific excellence, including quality of synthesis activities (Score: 1-5)
   a. Fit to thematic priorities and to the type of research intended:
       Evaluation committee members will assess the relevance of the proposed research against (i) the thematic priorities set forth in the scientific text of the call and (ii) the type of research (here synthesis) to be supported. Any project that does not fit within these thematic priorities and this type of research will not be recommended for funding, regardless of its scientific quality.
   b. Scientific quality of the proposed research goals and objectives
   c. Novelty / Originality and innovation of the research goals and objectives
   d. Clarity of the hypothesis, theories and/or research questions
   e. Methods planned for synthesis, including data sets to be used for proposals involving data compilation and analyses
   f. Relation to other projects

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B- Quality and complementarity of the working group (Score: 1-5)
   a. Competence and expertise of the working group members
   b. Complementarity and relevance of skills assembled, balance of career stages)

Level of inter/multi/trans-disciplinarity (*Interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged, but mono- or multi-disciplinary studies are not excluded a priori; the approach must be adequate to address the question posed*)
   c. Transnational added value to be expected from the collaboration (cf. below for more information)

C- Quality and efficiency of the project implementation (Score 1-5)
   a. Quality and efficiency of the management structure and procedures, its organisation and coordination
   b. Level of integration and collaboration intended
   c. Project feasibility and risk management, including demonstration of data availability
   d. Appropriateness of resources and funding requested
   e. Quality of the data management plan

D- Societal and policy relevance and expected project outcomes (Score: 1-5)
   a. Importance of the proposed activities for the dissemination of knowledge and data (including data sharing and dissemination plan towards stakeholders)
   b. Arrangements for knowledge transfer
   c. Expected societal / policy impact, including regarding policy application; importance of the research for solving pressing societal issues related to biodiversity and ecosystem services
   d. Transnational added value expected in term of research outcome and impact

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What is meant by Transnational added value?

Transnational added value is the value resulting from the transnational research project, which is additional to the value that would have resulted from research projects funded at national level. The added value may vary, depending on the type of project, and there can be various answers to this question. These may include: relevance to EU and international policy statements, legislative framework or management plans; added value to national research projects across world by linking expertise and efforts across national teams; bringing about comparisons at the local level between researchers who are not used to work together; standardization of methods, general increase of common knowledge in biodiversity relative to the themes of the call, etc.

III.   Scoring system

Scoring system at step 1

The scientific experts of the EvC will assess the three criteria while the policy/management experts of the EvC will assess the two following criteria (fit to the scope of the call and transnational added value).

For each criterion, a score out of a scale of five will be assigned to each proposal.
The Evaluation Committee has the possibility to use half scores.

Threshold:

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There is no shared interest for proposals with a score lower than 4 for fit to the scope of the call and lower than 3 novelty of the research and transnational added value. These proposals will not be ranked, and not be considered for invitation to step 2.

Final score:
The final score given to a proposal will correspond to an aggregation of the scores given to the three criteria (equal weight for the 3 criteria). The overall score will correspond to a score out of a scale of fifteen points.

The EvC ranks the pre-proposals according to their final score. The EvC can define groups of ex-aequo for pre-proposals with a same final score that it considers of equal quality.

Scoring system at step 2

The overall aim of the ranking system is to allow a transparent ranking that still allow for some flexibility, and to fund as many high-level projects as possible.

The three first criteria (scientific excellence, Quality and complementarity of the working group and quality and efficiency of the implementation) will be assessed by the scientific experts of the EvC and scientific external reviewers, while the fourth criteria "Societal and policy relevance and expected project outcomes impact" will be assessed by the policy/management experts of the EvC and external reviewers.

For each criterion, a score out of a scale of five will be assigned to each proposal.
The Evaluation Committee has the possibility to use half scores.

Threshold:
There is no shared interest for proposals with a score lower than 3.5 for scientific excellence and lower than 3 for the other criteria (i.e. Quality and complementarity of the working group; Quality/efficiency of the project implementation; Societal and policy relevance and expected project outcomes). These proposals will not be ranked, and not be considered for funding.

Weighting system:
The following weighting system will apply for the different criteria:

Criteria	Weight
Scientific excellence	7
Quality and complementarity of the working group	5
Quality/efficiency of the project implementation	3
Societal and policy relevance and expected project outcomes	6

The final score given to a proposal will correspond to an aggregation of the scores given to the three criteria, taking into account their respective weights. The overall mark will be transformed into a score out of 20 points.
The EvC ranks as many projects as possible. However, around the threshold, the EvC can use ex-aequo for proposals with a same final score that it considers of equal quality.

Example:

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If a proposal receives a score of 4 for scientific excellence, 5 for quality and complementarity o the working group; 4 for quality and efficiency of the implementation and 5 for expected impact and stakeholder engagement, the aggregation of the scores taking into account their respective weight will give a score of 95. This score will be transformed into a score out of 20 points, i.e. 18.