

Methodological Guidance for Assessing Compliance of Calls and Projects with Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategy of the Slovak Republic 2021–2027 (SK RIS3 2021+)

Pursuant to Government Resolution of the Slovak Republic No. 460 of 13 July 2022, the competences related to the activities of the Slovak Government Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (hereinafter referred to as the “Council”) were transferred from the Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization **to the Government Office of the Slovak Republic**, including activities arising from the Statute of the Council.

The Council is the body responsible for managing the Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategy of the Slovak Republic 2021–2027 (SK RIS3 2021+). The Government Office of the Slovak Republic carries out the activities arising from the Statute of the Council through the Council Secretariat. **The Secretariat is the executive body that ensures professional and organizational support for the Council’s activities and is responsible for the strategic design of policies in the field of research, development and innovation and coordination of central government bodies in this area. Currently, the tasks of the Secretariat are performed by the Research and Innovation Authority** (hereinafter referred to as “VAIA”), which **is responsible for the management and implementation of SK RIS3 2021+.**

SK RIS3 2021+ is a strategic document that defines the objectives, system of policies, and measures in the fields of research, innovation, and human resources aimed at stimulating structural change in the Slovak economy towards growth based on increasing research and innovation capacity and excellence in segments with the highest competitive potential.

SK RIS3 2021+ is essential for meeting the criteria of the enabling condition under task B.1 of the Government Resolution of the Slovak Republic No. 324 of 3 July 2019, which are a prerequisite for drawing financial resources and implementing part of the activities under Policy Objective 1 within the Slovakia Programme for the 2021–2027 programming period.

Smart specialisation is a concept of innovation policy aimed at supporting national or regional innovation and contributing to growth and prosperity by helping and enabling countries or regions to focus on their strengths. It is based on partnerships between businesses, public entities, and knowledge institutions, and the identified areas are the result of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP).

In ensuring the enforcement of the SK RIS3 2021+ priorities in the new programming period 2021–2027, **the call issuer**, whose call is subject to content compliance with SK RIS3 2021+, **is obliged to ensure that both the project applicant and the expert evaluator have basic information about the method of assessing compliance with SK RIS3 2021+.**

The call issuer shall include a reference to the “Methodological Guidance for Assessing Compliance of Calls and Projects with SK RIS3 2021+” in those parts of the call that refer to the requirement of compliance with the content of SK RIS3 2021+.

ASSESSING COMPLIANCE WITH SK RIS3 2021+:

The assessment of the compliance of projects from calls announced under the Slovakia Programme 2021–2027 with the SK RIS3 2021+ is intended to ensure support for those Priority Areas that have the greatest potential for transformation towards activities with higher added value, while also possessing sufficient research and innovation capacity to drive the transformation of the Slovak Republic.

The content framework of the SK RIS3 2021+ constitutes a basic requirement for drawing funds from the Slovakia Programme within the scope of Policy Objective 1 – Specific Objectives 1.1 and 1.4, as well as the measures that are part of these objectives.

The specific procedures for assessing the compliance of projects with the SK RIS3 2021+ outlined below aim to ensure that financial resources from the Slovakia Programme 2021–2027 are implemented in line with the content focus of the identified smart specialisation priorities in research, development, and innovation in Slovakia. **The methodology for assessing compliance with SK RIS3 2021+ is binding across all 3 levels, with each level representing only a partial aspect of overall compliance.**

Level 1: ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE with the strategic objectives of the SK RIS3 2021+

- **The project applicant** must describe the project's ability to contribute to the fulfilment of the **strategic objectives of the SK RIS3 2021+** (The strategic objectives of SK RIS3 2021+ are included in Chapter 2.2 of the strategy).
- The assessment of compliance with the strategic objectives is adequately justified in relation to the specific objective(s) and the manner in which they will be achieved.
- The description of the project's compliance with the **strategic objectives** of SK RIS3 2021+ is included either as a separate annex to the Application for Non-Repayable Financial Contribution or directly within the application itself (in Section 7 – Project Description).
- **The expert evaluator** follows the same approach as the project applicant when assessing the project's compliance with the **strategic objectives of SK RIS3 2021+**, and their task is to evaluate the relevance of the description in relation to the project's ability to contribute to the fulfilment of the **strategic objectives of SK RIS3 2021+**.
- The expert evaluator assesses the description of compliance with the **strategic objectives of SK RIS3 2021+** based on a separate annex to the Application for Non-Repayable Financial Contribution or directly from the application itself (in Section 7 – Project Description).

Level 2: ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE with the Transformational Goal of the Priority Areas of the Smart Specialisation Domains of SK RIS3 2021+

- **The project applicant** must describe in the project how it will contribute to achieving the **Transformational Goal** within the relevant Priority Area of the Smart Specialisation Domain. (The description of compliance with the **Transformational Goal of the Priority Areas** of the Smart Specialisation Domains of SK RIS3 2021+ must take into account the Priority Area outcomes of the Transformational Goal for the given Priority Area as specified in the Transformation Map of the Priority Area.)
- If the content of the project contributes to fulfilling the Transformational Goals of Priority Areas

in more than one domain, it is necessary to justify the ability to meet the objectives of the other Smart Specialisation Domains as well, taking into account the contribution to achieving the Priority Area outcomes in the additional domain.

- The description of the project's compliance with the **Transformational Goals of the Priority Areas** of the Smart Specialisation Domains of SK RIS3 2021+ is included either as a separate annex to the Application for Non-Repayable Financial Contribution or directly within the application itself (in Section 7 – Project Description).
- **The expert evaluator** follows the same approach as the project applicant when assessing compliance with the Transformational Goals of the Priority Areas of the Smart Specialisation Domains of SK RIS3 2021+. Their task is to evaluate the relevance of the description in relation to the appropriateness of identifying the **priority area and its Transformational Goal** to which the project implementation should contribute, as well as the project's ability to contribute to the Priority Area outcomes as described in the Transformation Map of the Priority Area.
- The expert evaluator assesses the description of compliance with the **Transformational Goals of the Priority Areas** of the Smart Specialisation Domains based on a separate annex to the Application for Non-Repayable Financial Contribution or directly from the application itself (in Section 7 – Project Description).

Level 3: ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE with the Thematic Areas of Project Support within the Smart Specialisation Domains of SK RIS3 2021+

- **The submitted project** must, through its content, cover one of the Thematic Areas of Project Support within the given Priority Area of the Smart Specialisation Domain of SK RIS3 2021+. (**The Thematic Areas of Project Support** are part of the Transformation Maps for each Priority Area listed in the Summary Report from the SK RIS3 2021+)
- **The project applicant** shall indicate which of **the Thematic Areas of Project Support** the content focus of the submitted project falls under.
- The description of the project's compliance with the **Thematic Areas of Project Support** within the given Priority Area of the Smart Specialisation Domain of SK RIS3 2021+ is included either as a separate annex to the Application for Non-Repayable Financial Contribution or directly within the application itself (in Section 7 – Project Description).
- **The expert evaluator** follows the same approach as the project applicant when assessing the project's compliance with the **Thematic Areas of Project Support** within the given Priority Area of the Smart Specialisation Domain of SK RIS3 2021+. Their task is to assess the relevance of the description and the correctness of the identification of the Thematic Area of Support in relation to the project's content focus.
- The expert evaluator assesses the description of compliance with the **Thematic Areas of Project Support** within the given Priority Area of the Smart Specialisation Domain of SK RIS3 2021+ based on a separate annex to the Application for Non-Repayable Financial Contribution or directly from the application itself (in Section 7 – Project Description).

Explanation of selected terms from SK RIS3 2021+ for the proper compliance of projects with SK RIS3 2021+:

- **Specialisation Domains:** represent the main thematic priorities in the field of research, development, and innovation, based on the strengths of the Slovak Republic, considering

available economic, research, and innovation capacities and resources. The Smart Specialisation Domains were identified through the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP), and their aim is to foster the development of areas with the highest transformation potential in terms of the current and future economic structure.

- **Priority Areas of the Smart Specialisation Domains:** represent the thematic framework of priorities (a narrower focus of domain specialisation) for each of the Smart Specialisation Domains, with an emphasis on increasing economic added value and the structural changes needed for the transformation of the given area.
- **The Transformational Goals of Priority Areas** represent the outcome of the Priority Area to be achieved through the implementation of the identified Thematic Areas of Project Support. The Transformational Goal of a Priority Area is based on achieving structural change (transformation) through identified resources, partnership and collaboration perspectives, and key research and innovation topics in the application sectors of the economy.
- **The Transformation Maps of Priority Areas** describe the key elements necessary to achieve the Transformational Goal of the Priority Areas within the Smart Specialisation Domains of SK RIS3 2021+. The fundamental elements of a Transformation Map include a description of the current state of the Priority Area, a more detailed specification of the Thematic Areas of Project Support needed to achieve the transformational objectives, potential funding sources, anticipated collaboration for achieving the outcome, and the outcome of the Priority Areas to be reached through the implementation of investments in line with SK RIS3 2021+.

Online sources for Accessing the Currently Valid Documents:

Slovak version of documents:

Stratégia výskumu a inovácií pre inteligentnú špecializáciu SR 2021-2027 (SK RIS3 2021+): <https://vaia.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Strategia-vyskumu-a-inovacii-pre-inteligentnu-specializaciju.pdf>

Súhrnná správa z procesu EDP k SK RIS3 2021+ SK verzia: <https://vaia.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Suhrnna-sprava-z-procesu-EDP.pdf>

English version of documents:

Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation of the Slovak Republic 2021-2027 (SK RIS3 2021+): <https://vaia.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Research-and-Innovation-Strategy-for-Smart-Specialisation-of-the-Slovak-Republic-2021-2027.pdf>

Summary Report of the EDP to the Strategy SK RIS3 2021+: <https://vaia.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Summary-Report-of-the-EDP-to-the-Strategy.pdf>