



## United Nations Environment Programme

#### **UNEP**/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/2

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Ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution

Second session

Nairobi, 11–15 December 2023

Nairobi, 11–15 December 2023 Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

Preparation of proposals for the establishment of a science-policy panel

## **Background document on operating principles**

#### Note by the secretariat

The annex to the present note contains additional information on operating principles, complementing working document UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3. The ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution may wish to consider the information contained in this document.

<sup>\*</sup> UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/1.

#### Annex\*

## **Information on Operating Principles**

#### I. Introduction

- 1. This document is composed of two parts. The first part of this document is an updated version of a background document that had been circulated in conjunction with a webinar held on 26 April 2023 and a call for written submissions on operating principles. The second part of this document presents a summary of submissions received from Member States and observers, and stakeholders on the operating principles governing the work of the panel as a result of this call.
- 2. Member States, during the resumed first session of the open-ended working group (OEWG 1.2), requested the secretariat of the OEWG to solicit written submissions from Member States and observers, and relevant stakeholders regarding the operating principles governing the work of the panel. This request is in line with UNEA resolution 5/8 which decides that the OEWG will "prepare proposals for science-policy panel to consider the operating principles governing the work of the panel (para. 5j).
- 3. In support of this request, the secretariat convened, on 26 April 2023, a <u>webinar</u> entitled "Developing Operating Principles of the Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution Prevention" with participants from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the International Resource Panel (IRP) and the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process. In advance of the webinar, the secretariat released a <u>background document</u> providing a comparative overview of operating principles of relevant, existing science-policy interfaces (IPCC, IPBES, IRP and GEO).
- 4. At the webinar, the secretariat also launched a <u>call for written submissions</u> from Member States and observers, and stakeholders; these were due to the OEWG secretariat by 6 June 2023. Each of the submissions received have been posted on the OEWG2 <u>website</u>, including 30 submissions from Member States and observers, and 28 submissions from stakeholders.
- 5. This background document complements the consideration of operating principles in UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3.
- 6. This intersessional work on operating principles stemmed from discussions at OEWG1.2. In the contact group on scope and principal functions, delegates "discussed a range of issues to be considered further when developing other elements of the panel, including the delivery of policy-relevant scientific evidence without being policy-prescriptive; the contribution of Indigenous and traditional knowledge; adopting a human-rights approach; covering all forms of pollution, including pollution related to chemicals and waste and pollution released into the air, water (including oceans) and soil; and the promotion of innovation, transparency, inclusivity and complementarity, although there were differing views on the various issues" (report of OEWG1.2, <a href="UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/7">UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/7</a>, para. 80). Further, the "contact group suggested that intersessional work to further inform the discussion on the objective and functions of the new panel could include the development of ...principles" (para. 82 of the report).
- 7. Section II provides a structured comparison of how common elements are addressed by different science-policy interfaces and section III elaborates on the webinar. Section IV presents a summary of submissions received from Member States and observers, and stakeholders as a complement to the analysis of these submissions in UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3.
- 8. The relevant documents consulted in undertaking this intersessional work are included in the annexes to UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3. These are the Principles Governing IPCC Work, the IPBES Operating Principles, the IRP Guiding Principles, and the GEO Operational Principles.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> The annex has not been formally edited.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Principles Governing IPCC Work were first approved in 1998 and last amended in 2013; IPBES Operating Principles were approved in 2012; IRP Guiding Principles were approved in 2016; and GEO Operational Principles were approved in 2022.

## II. Operating principles: Comparison across science-policy interfaces

- 9. Agreement on principles for a science-policy interface is a means of conveying consensus on several overarching priorities, characteristics or values that shape the interface's work and its deliverables. While there are many commonalities across principles of the four science-policy interfaces reviewed, there is nevertheless variation. In addition to variation in which specific principles are being put forward in the four documents of the existing science-policy interfaces (IPCC, IPBES, IRP and the GEO) process, there is also variation as to the specificity of the text (some texts include more details of how to ensure the principle is achieved) and variation in the style and phrasing of the concepts.
- 10. The examples that follow consider three distinct elements commonly included in a principles document. For each, juxtaposing passages from each principle document (and from UNEA resolution 5/8) illustrates the breadth of terminology that can be employed to convey similar priorities. Pertinent terms/phrases have been emphasized in bold to facilitate the side-by-side comparison. Full text of the relevant documents are included in annexes to UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3.

#### A. Example 1: Policy Relevant (and not policy prescriptive)

- 11. Relevance is included as a principle across each of the interfaces reviewed, with most focusing on policy relevance. There is variation however as to whether this is presented as ensuring the interface is not policy prescriptive, or neutral with respect to policy.
  - UNEA resolution 5/8 para.3: Also considers that the panel should be an independent intergovernmental body with a programme of work approved by its member Governments to deliver policy-relevant scientific evidence without being policy prescriptive;
  - IPCC: 2. ... IPCC reports should be **neutral with respect to policy**, although they may need to **deal objectively with** scientific, technical and socio-economic **factors relevant to the application of particular policies**.
  - IPBES: (e) **Provide policy-relevant information, but not policy-prescriptive advice**, mindful of the respective mandates of the multilateral environmental agreements;
  - IRP: (a) **Policy relevance**. The IRP **provides scientific knowledge and science-based policy options in a nonprescriptive manner** responding to requests from its Steering Committee as well as from intergovernmental bodies including the United Nations Environment Assembly, the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and other institutions as deemed relevant and appropriate by the Steering Committee.
  - GEO: to ensure (b) **The relevance (or salience) of GEO** in terms of responding flexibly to the needs of Member States and stakeholders, for example for improving the effectiveness of environmental policy.

#### B. Example 2: Inclusivity/balance of representation

- 12. Inclusivity, and what is to be balanced to achieve inclusive participation, is conveyed through a variety of means. Notably, there is variation as to which specific dimensions of balance/inclusivity are explicitly named in the principles text. Relevant dimensions include: inter/multi-disciplinarity, indigenous and local knowledge, gender, and geographic/regional balance. While these interfaces follow many of the same norms regarding inclusivity and balance of representation, some of the interfaces have opted to limit details in their principles text (details on how to operationalize them are left to other documents).
  - UNEA resolution 5/8: 6(b): Is **interdisciplinary**, ensuring contributions from experts with a broad range of disciplinary expertise; has **inclusive participation**, including **indigenous peoples**; and has **geographical**, **regional and gender balance**.
  - IPCC: 5. The IPCC Bureau, the IPCC Working Group Bureaux and the Bureaux of any Task Forces of the IPCC shall reflect **balanced geographic representation** with due consideration for scientific and technical requirements.
  - IPBES: (d) Recognize and respect the contribution of indigenous and local **knowledge** to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems; (g)

Recognize the unique biodiversity and scientific knowledge thereof within and among regions and the need for the full and effective participation of developing countries and balanced regional representation and participation in its structure and work; (h) Take an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach that incorporates all relevant disciplines, including social and natural sciences; (i) Recognize the need for gender equity in all relevant aspects of its work;

- IRP: (c) Inclusiveness. The IRP aims at striking and maintaining a balanced and diverse composition of the Panel, Steering Committee and Working Groups in terms of expertise, gender, and regional representation.
- GEO: to ensure (d) ... To ensure team compositions that are **balanced with respect to geography, gender and discipline**.

## C. Example 3: Integrity/ objectivity/ independence/ lack of bias (avoiding conflicts of interest):

- 13. As one might expect, each of the science-policy interfaces reviewed for this document emphasize the integrity/objectivity/independence/lack of bias of their work as a means of building credibility and legitimacy. Each of the science-policy interfaces reviewed here have a policy or procedure aimed at avoiding conflicts of interest (these are discussed in detail in UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/6 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/8). Only the IPBES principles explicitly call for employing a process of peer review, even though IPCC, IRP and GEO also employ peer-review.
  - UNEA resolution 5/8para. 3. Also considers that the panel should be an **independent** intergovernmental body with a programme of work approved by its member Governments to deliver policy-relevant scientific evidence without being policy prescriptive; 6(f) Has the **ability to address potential conflicts of interest**
  - IPCC: (2). The role of the IPCC is to assess on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation. IPCC reports should be neutral with respect to policy, although they may need to **deal objectively** with scientific, technical and socio-economic factors relevant to the application of particular policies.
  - IPBES: (b) Be **scientifically independent** and ensure credibility, relevance and legitimacy through peer review of its work and transparency in its decision-making processes;
  - IRP: (d) **Objectivity**. The IRP undertakes critical, **unbiased** studies and assessments of best available science, follows robust methodologies and peer review processes, and ensures open and transparent decision-making processes. (e) **Integrity**. Panel members maintain the integrity of the scientific process and **avert any conflicts of interest**.
  - GEO: to ensure (c) The legitimacy of GEO, as an assessment accepted by Member States and stakeholders as authoritative, **produced through unbiased**, **representative and defensible procedures**.

## II. Webinar on developing operating principles

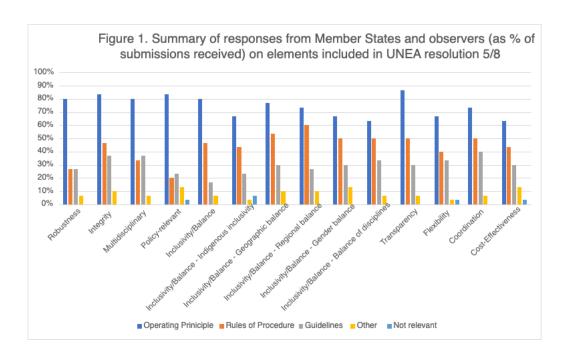
- 14. The <u>webinar on developing operating principles</u>, held on 26 April 2023, was the first in a series of webinars and events launched by the OEWG secretariat and the Geneva Environment Network to build bridges and promote collaboration and knowledge sharing between and among stakeholders, and to raise public awareness about the OEWG preparing proposals for the establishment of the panel.
- 15. Gudi Alkemade, OEWG Chair, Deputy Permanent Representative to UN Environment Programme, Netherlands, welcomed participants to the webinar, expressing hope this webinar will enhance a common understanding of what the operative principles should be, what they are, and what should be addressed in them, as well as how they could be addressed.
- 16. Jacqueline Alvarez, Chief, Chemicals and Health Branch, UNEP, provided an introduction to principles of the IPCC, IPBES, IRP and GEO and an overview of the role operating principles play in science-policy interfaces.

- 17. Ko Barrett, IPCC Vice Chair, Senior Advisor for Climate, United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, highlighted three principles that drive the IPCC's work: being policy-relevant but not policy prescriptive; achieving consensus support for key summary findings as a result of broad review and consultation; and the importance of diversity and inclusion in the IPCC process. She underscored that the IPCC only grows stronger, and the reports only become more robust, with the inclusion of a broad range of scientists and stakeholders.
- 18. Mar Viana, Co-Chair of GEO's Multidisciplinary Expert Scientific Advisory Group (MESAG), Institute of Environmental Assessment & Water Research, Spanish Research Council, noted GEO shares a set of operating principles that are common to many major assessments because it builds on best practices and experience from previous assessments. She noted GEO's main operating principles are that it must be politically legitimate, policy-relevant, and scientifically credible, and underscored that successful assessments are based on legitimacy, saliency, and credibility, noting these are also pillars of GEO.
- 19. Hala Razian, OiC Head of Secretariat, IRP, explained IRP performs the same science-policy function as IPCC and IPBES, except for two key differences: IRP focuses on resources, and IRP does not fit directly into a Convention. She explained IRP's guiding principles are integrated into its objectives. She reviewed the IRPs principles: policy relevance, independence, inclusiveness, objectivity and integrity and briefly discussed how each of them is operationalized in practice.
- 20. Eduardo Brondizio, Co-Chair, Global Assessment, IPBES, presented IPBES' eleven operating principles and discussed how they play out in an assessment, including in its scoping process. He underscored the importance of having a shared understanding of principles, and he highlighted the importance of having the conceptual tools to operationalize principles, highlighting the role of the IPBES Conceptual Framework. He explained principles are always a work in progress and depend on a continuous process to meet the aspirations that many principles represent.
- 21. In the discussion, panellists discussed the role of conflict of interest policies and processes for reaching a science-based consensus in an assessment, the importance of learning from experience and adjusting processes, IPBES' principles for working with indigenous and local knowledge and with knowledge holders. The panellists also discussed capacity building efforts within science-policy interfaces.

# III. Written submissions on operating principles governing the work of the Panel: Summary

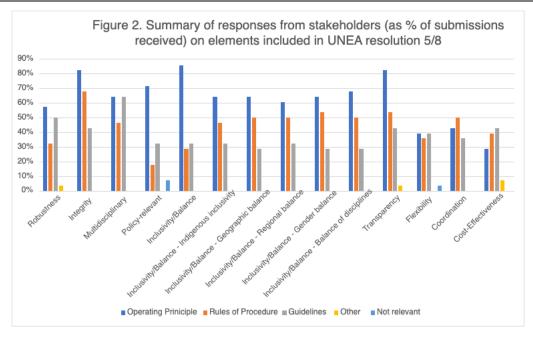
- 22. The submission form distributed on 26 April 2023 solicited submissions according to three main categories (see Appendix I for full text of form as circulated).
  - a) <u>Elements included in UNEA resolution 5/8</u>: Member States and observers, and stakeholders were invited to indicate by clicking on the box(es) under what institutional feature of the panel's governance they believed each of fourteen listed elements should be included. This list of elements was developed on the basis of a review of existing principles and UNEA resolution 5/8. The tabular form provided five choices (these were not mutually exclusive): under operating principles, under rules of procedure, in guidelines, in other relevant documents, or they could indicate the element is "not relevant". In developing this table, some key terms had been grouped together for the purpose of collecting this input in tabular form (recognizing that there is inevitably some overlap across principles). Table 1 in UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3 presents the percentage of submissions favouring inclusion of potential 'principle' elements included in UNEA resolution 5/8 by Member States and observers, by stakeholders, and by all submissions combined.
  - b) <u>Elements that are not included in UNEA resolution 5/8 but may be considered</u>: Member States and observers, and stakeholders were invited to fill out a table with the same choices for four elements not included in the resolution. This list of four elements was developed based on discussions at OEWG 1.2. Respondents were also invited to add additional rows to the table and suggest additional elements (and in that case to fill out the table accordingly for that row). Table 2 in UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3 presents the percentage of submissions favouring inclusion of potential 'principle' elements not included in UNEA resolution 5/8 by Member States and observers, by stakeholders, and by all submissions combined.
  - c) <u>Open-ended written submissions</u>: Member States and observers, and stakeholders were also invited to provide written submissions to complement their tabular responses.

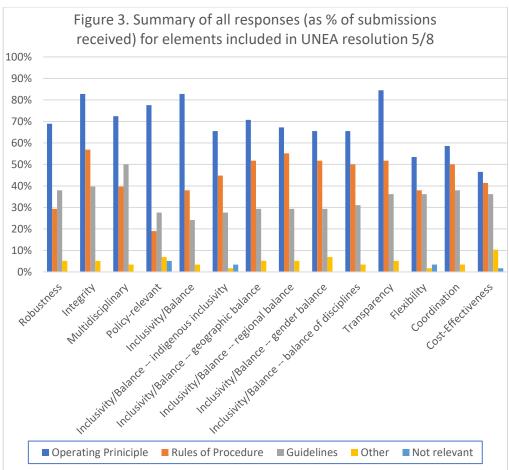
- 23. The secretariat has posted each of the submissions received to the OEWG 2 website. Submissions from 30 Member States and observers<sup>2</sup> and from 28 stakeholder groups<sup>3</sup> are posted on the website as received. Several blank submissions were received, and these have not been counted in the submission totals nor included in the summary that follows.
- 24. The secretariat, under the guidance of the Bureau, did extend the submission window to account for the busy schedule of meetings unfolding during this period. The results discussed in UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3 and below are only representations of those Member States, observers and stakeholders that were able to prepare and submit their views in this time frame.
- 25. For the 14 elements drawn from UNEA resolution 5/8, figures 1, 2 and 3 present the summary of submission responses from, Member States and observers, stakeholder groups, and all respondents combined. These figures point to general support from Member States and observers for including each of these elements under operating principles (left-most blur bar in graphic) more than under other options (or not at all). Among stakeholder responses, the elements related to multidisciplinarity, flexibility and coordination and cost-effectiveness are seen as just as, if not more relevant, for inclusion within guidelines and/or rules of procedure. The proportion of responses pointing to including these elements under rules of procedure and guidelines (second and third bars from left, in orange and grey) point to the need for an element included under principles to be operationalized in other aspects of the panel's governance.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Submissions from the following Member States and observers are posted on the website: Armenia; Argentina; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Canada; Chile; Ecuador; European Union and its Member States; Eritrea; Japan; Kingdom of Bahrain; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Lesotho; Liberia; Madagascar; Norway; Peru; Qatar; Rwanda; Serbia; Sri Lanka; State of Palestine; Switzerland; Syrian Arab Republic; Thailand; United Kingdom; United States of America; and Yemen.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Submissions from the following stakeholders are posted on the website: Association of Uganda Professional Women in Agriculture and Environment (AUPWAE); BAN Toxic; Carbone Guinee; Carpin; CIEL; Comparatively for Tanzania Elites Community Organizers; Children and Youth Major Group (CYMG); ESDO; Greenpeace; ICCA; ILO; Innovea; International Nitrogen Initiative; International Panel on Chemical Pollution (IPCP); International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); INTEV; IPEN; La Grande Puissance de Dieu; MEPA Trust; MSP Institute; Munasi Green Initiative; UNEP-Ozone secretariat; PAN Africa; Royal Society of Chemistry; Ocean Foundation; OHCHR; Union des Amis Socio Culturels d'Action en Développement; and Zero Pollution Alliance.





- 26. Some Member States, observers and stakeholders submitted additional potential operating principles to be considered by adding one or more rows to the second table in the submission form. While there may be a great deal of overlap among those categories (and among these suggested elements), the secretariat has prepared one potential means of organizing those additions according to several broad categories (within each category suggestions are listed alphabetically):
  - (a) Elements related to credibility:
    - Conflict of interest provisions

- Engagement of early scientists and scientists from developing countries
- Evidence based
- Local and regional input
- Procedure for a balance between Global South and Global North scientists
- Risk assessment and evaluation
- Science-based assessments
- Scientific and social recognition according to specific criteria
- Scientific approach
- Scientifically independent
- Strengthen communication and engagement
- Use data and information from all relevant sources, including non-peer reviewed, as appropriate
- (b) Elements related to relevance:
  - Awareness raising
  - Outreach
  - Promotion of evidence-supported nature based solutions
  - Voice raising and women empowering
  - Work programme/prioritization/decision making process
  - Youth involvement
- (c) Elements related to legitimacy:
  - Accountability
  - Categories of assessments
  - Gender perspective
  - Inclusivity
  - Multistakeholderism
  - Participation
  - Procedures for the preparation, review, acceptance, approval, adoption and publication
  - Reporting mechanism
- (d) Elements related to human rights:
  - Human right based approach
  - Human rights
- (e) Elements related to precaution:
  - Precautionary principle and approach
  - Promotion of safety measures
- (f) Elements related to transparency:
  - Collaborative, transparent, accessibility
  - Confidentiality
  - Identification of clear roles and responsibilities
  - Information relating to the health and safety of humans and the environment should not be regarded as confidential
- (g) Elements related to other themes:
  - Capacity building
  - Periodic revision
  - Improved or perfectible products
  - Definitions
  - Terminology
  - Third-party certification body
  - Urgency to act
  - Respect
  - Primacy of reality
  - Paragraph 80 of OEWG1.2 report<sup>4</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The submission from one Member State pasted the following paragraph in the table: "Having agreed on a draft objective, members of the contact group had discussed a range of issues to be considered further when developing other elements of the panel, including the delivery of policy-relevant scientific evidence without being policy-prescriptive; the contribution of Indigenous and traditional knowledge; adopting a human-rights approach; covering all forms of pollution, including pollution related to chemicals and waste and pollution released into the air, water (including oceans) and soil; and the promotion of innovation, transparency, inclusivity and complementarity, although there were differing views on the various issues". At OEWG 1.2 this was referred to as the "parking lot."

27. In their submissions, some Member States, observers and stakeholders also provided written submissions. Some of these written submissions include explanations and elaborations on how they completed the table. Other submissions provide elaboration on items that have been suggested for inclusion in operating principles. A few of the submissions provided complete proposals for operating principles text for the future panel, including by adapting text from the principles documents of IPCC, IPBES, IRP and GEO that had been circulated in an appendix to the background document accompanying the webinar and the call for submissions.

## Appendix I

## Form used to solicit written submissions on operating principles

## Operating Principles Governing the Work of the Panel

#### Request for Written Submissions from Member States and Relevant Stakeholders

Member states, during the resumed first session of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG1.2), requested the Secretariat of the OEWG to solicit written submissions from Member States and relevant stakeholders regarding the operating principles governing the work of the panel.

In support of this request, the Secretariat conducted a webinar (on 26 April 2023) dedicated to the issue of operating principles. In advance of the webinar, the Secretariat released a background document which provides a comparative overview of operating principles of relevant, existing science-policy panels (IPCC, IPBES, IRP and GEO). The recording of the webinar can be found on this website, when available, and the background document is available at this link).

A variety of potential operating principles are presented below, based on the analysis performed for this background document. The following questions in no way attempt to rank or preclude consideration of the operating principles of the future SPP, rather, they draw from the agreed text of Resolution 5/8 and other existing, relevant science-policy bodies, as well as the discussions at the OEWG. You may also suggest relevant potential operating principles that have not been identified yet.

Member States are invited to provide submissions through their respective national focal points (list of focal points available at this link). Non-government stakeholders are invited to submit their submissions on behalf of their organization or group. You are invited to respond to all or some of the questions below. Once complete, please submit this filled document to SPP-CWP@un.org. All submissions will be uploaded online and will inform a working document to be considered at OEWG 2.

#### **Contact information**

What is your name/surname?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What is your country?

Click or tap here to enter text. What is your title?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What is your email address?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Who are you submitting on behalf of? Click or tap here to enter text.

The following elements are included in Resolution 5/8. Please indicate by clicking on the box(es) where you believe these elements should be included (i.e., operating principles, rules of procedure, guidelines, or other relevant documents, or if they are not relevant). Some key terms have been grouped together for the

purpose of this tabular analysis, there is inevitably some overlap across principles.

purpose of this tabular analysis, there is inevita	Operating Principle	Rules of Procedure	Guidelines	Other	Not relevant
CREDIBILITY					
Robustness/Rigour					
Integrity/Objectivity / Independence/Impartiality/ Lack of Bias (avoiding conflicts of interest)					
Interdisciplinary / Multidisciplinary / Balance of disciplines					
RELEVANCE/SALIENCE					
Policy-relevant (and not policy prescriptive)					
LEGITIMACY					
Inclusivity/Balance					
indigenous inclusivity					
geographic balance					
regional balance					
gender balance					
balance of disciplines (see also Credibility/Interdisciplinary)					
CROSS-CUTTING THEMES					
Transparency					
Flexibility					
Coordination (without duplication) / Complementarity					
Cost-Effectiveness					

#### Please provide any relevant comments on your choices above:

Click or tap here to enter text.

The following table includes other elements that may be considered. Please indicate by clicking on the box(es) where you believe these elements should be included (i.e., operating principles, rules of procedure, guidelines, or other relevant documents, or if they are not relevant). It is also possible to add additional

notential operating principles to be considered.

OTHER	Operating Principle	Rules of Procedure	Guidelines	Other	Not relevant
Promotion of innovation					
Comprehensive, holistic, or integrative approach					
Consensus based approach					
Providing accessible outputs					
Others [please add]					

#### Please provide any relevant comments on your choices above:

Click or tap here to enter text.

## Please provide your written submission in the space below:

Click or tap here to enter text.