HORIZON 2020
PROPOSAL EVALUATION

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- More emphasis on innovation
- Cross-cutting issues
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- Confidentiality
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The evaluation procedure in practice

- Individual evaluation, including evaluation criteria and proposal scoring
- Consensus

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A new type of EU R&I programme

New types of calls and proposals

Calls are challenge-based, and therefore more open to innovative proposals

- Calls are less prescriptive - they do not outline the expected solutions to the problem, nor the approach to be taken to solve it
- Calls/topics descriptions allow plenty of scope for applicants to propose innovative solutions of their own choice

There is a greater emphasis on impact, in particular through each call or topic impact statements

- Applicants are asked to explain how their work will contribute to bringing about the described impacts
- During the evaluation, you are asked to assess this potential contribution

There is more emphasis on innovation

- Horizon 2020 supports all stages in the research and innovation chain including non-technological and social innovation and activities closer to the market

Proposals may bring together different disciplines, sectors and actors to tackle specific challenges

- e.g. scientists, industry, SMEs, societal partners, end-users…

Innovation

A balanced approach to research and innovation

- not only limited to the development of new products and services on the basis of scientific and technological breakthroughs
- but also incorporating aspects such as the use of existing technologies in novel applications and continuous improvements
- Calls/topics descriptions allow plenty of scope for applicants to propose innovative solutions of their own choice

Activities closer to the market emphasise the widest possible use of knowledge generated by the supported activities up to the commercial exploitation of that knowledge

There is a particular emphasis on activities operating close to the end-users and the market, such as demonstration, piloting or proof-of-concepty

- can also include support to social innovation, and support to demand side approaches (standardisation, innovation procurement, user-centred measures …) to help accelerate the deployment and diffusion of innovative products and services into the market

The definitions of the terms used are available in the Horizon 2020 Glossary on the Participant Portal

Cross-cutting issues

Cross-cutting issues are fully integrated in the work programme (WP)

- **Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)** are integrated across all Horizon 2020 activities to successfully address European challenges

- **Gender dimension in the content of R&I** - a question on the relevance of sex/gender analysis is included in proposal templates

- The new strategic approach to **international cooperation** consists of a general opening of the WP and targeted activities across all relevant Horizon 2020 parts

    - The approach to providing 'automatic funding' to third country participants is restricted – see list of countries

- **Other cross-cutting issues may also be included in the WP** such as Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) including science education, open access to scientific publications, ethics…; standardisation; climate and sustainable development …

Impact of grant preparation on evaluation

- **No grant negotiation phase!**

  - **The time from submission of a proposal, evaluation and signature of the grant has been reduced to a maximum of 8 months**
  (max. 5 months for evaluation + max. 3 months for grant signature)

- **What does this mean for the evaluation of proposal?**

  - **You evaluate each proposal as submitted**
  not on its potential if certain changes were to be made

  - **If you identify shortcomings (other than minor ones and obvious clerical errors), you must reflect those in a lower score for the relevant criterion**

  - **You explain the shortcomings, but do not make recommendations**
  i.e. do not suggest additional partners, additional work packages, resources cut…

  - **Proposals with significant weaknesses that prevent the project from achieving its objectives or with resources being seriously over-estimated must not receive above-threshold scores**

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Role of independent experts

Role of independent experts

- **As an independent expert, you evaluate proposals submitted in response to a given call**

- **You are responsible for carrying out the evaluation of the proposals yourself**

  - You are not allowed to delegate the work to another person!

- **You must close reports in the electronic system within a given deadline**

  - This is part of your contractual obligations!
  - The allowance/expenses you claim may be reduced or rejected otherwise

- **Significant funding decisions will be made on the basis of your assessment**

Guiding principles

- **Independence**

  - **You are evaluating in a personal capacity**
  - **You represent neither your employer, nor your country!**

- **Impartiality**

  - **You must treat all proposals equally and evaluate them impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants**

- **Objectivity**

  - **You evaluate each proposal as submitted; meaning on its own merit, not its potential if certain changes were to be made**

- **Accuracy**

  - **You make your judgment against the official evaluation criteria and the call or topic the proposal addresses, and nothing else**

- **Consistency**

  - **You apply the same standard of judgment to all proposals**

Confidentiality

You must:

- **Not discuss evaluation matters**, such as the content of proposals, the evaluation results or the opinions of fellow experts, with anyone, including:

    - Other experts or Commission/Agencies staff or any other person (e.g. colleagues, students…) not directly involved in the evaluation of the proposal
    - The sole exception: your fellow experts who are evaluating the same proposal in a consensus group or Panel review

- **Not contact partners in the consortium, sub-contractors or any third parties**

- **Not disclose the names of your fellow experts**

    - The Commission publishes the names of the experts annually - as a group, no link can be made between an expert and a proposal

- **Maintain the confidentiality of documents**, paper or electronic, at all times and wherever you do your evaluation work (on-site or remotely)

    - Return, destroy or delete all confidential documents, paper or electronic, upon completing your work, as instructed

Conflicts of interest (COI) (1)

You have a COI if you:

- were involved in the preparation of the proposal

- stand to benefit directly/indirectly if the proposal is successful

- have a close family/personal relationship with any person representing an applicant legal entity

- are a director/trustee/partner of an applicant or involved in the management of an applicant's organization

- are employed or contracted by an applicant or a named subcontractor

- are a member of an Advisory Group or Programme Committee in an area related to the call in question

- are a National Contact Point or are directly working for the Enterprise Europe Network

Conflicts of interest (COI) (2)

You have a COI if you:

- **Act as a referee in the case of Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions evaluators**

- **In the following situations, the Commission/Agency will decide whether a COI exists**

- **Were employed by an applicant or sub-contractor in the last 3 years**

- **Were involved in a grant agreement/decision, the membership of management structures or a research collaboration with an applicant in the last 3 years**

- **Are in any other situation that casts doubt on your impartiality or that could reasonably appear to do so**

COI conditions are spelled out in your [contract](), and in the Code of Conduct (Annex 1)

Conflicts of interest (COI) (3)

- **You must inform the Commission/Agency as soon as you become aware of a COI**

  - Before the signature of the contract
  - Upon receipt of proposals, or
  - During the course of your work

- **If there is a COI for a certain proposal you cannot evaluate it**

  - Neither individually
  - Nor in the consensus group
  - Nor in the panel review
  - The Commission/Agency will determine if there is a COI on a case-by-case basis and decide the course of action to follow

If you knowingly hide a COI, you will be excluded from the evaluation and your work declared null and void

  - The allowance/expenses you claimed may be reduced, rejected or recovered
  - Your contract may be terminated

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The Evaluation Procedure in Practice

Admissibility and eligibility checks

- **Admissibility is checked by the Commission/Agency:**

  - Readable, accessible and printable
  - Completeness of proposal
  - Presence of all requested forms
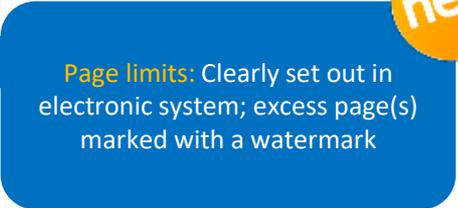
  > **new**
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  > Page limits: Clearly set out in electronic system; excess page(s) marked with a watermark

- **Eligibility checked by the Commission/Agency - however, if you spot an issue relating to eligibility, please inform the Commission/Agency**

  - Minimum number of partners as set out in the call conditions
  - Other criteria may apply on a call-by-call basis as set out in the call conditions

- **"Out of scope" – you need to check if the content of a proposal corresponds, wholly or in part, to the description of the call or topic**

  - A proposal will only be deemed ineligible in clear-cut cases

Evaluation criteria

- **There are two evaluation criteria in the first stage of a two-stage procedure :**

    - Excellence (relevant to the description of the call or topic)
    - Impact
        - Communication activities
        - Research data management where relevant

- **The criteria are adapted to each type of actions, as specified in the WP**

Type of actions

Innovation Action

- **Action primarily consisting of activities directly aiming at producing plans and arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services**

  - For this purpose they may include prototyping, testing, demonstrating, piloting, large-scale product validation and market replication

  - Aiming to validate the technical and economic viability in a (near) operational environment and/or aiming to support the first application/deployment in the market of an innovation that has already been demonstrated but not yet applied/deployed in the market due to market failures/barriers to uptake

  - Projects may include limited research and development activities

Evaluation criteria

Research and Innovation Actions/Innovation Actions

- **For the first stage of a two-stage procedure, only the aspects of the criteria in yellow are evaluated**

Excellence

- Clarity and pertinence of the objectives
- Soundness of the concept, including trans-disciplinary considerations, where relevant
- Extent that proposed work is ambitious, has innovation potential, and is beyond the state of the art (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches)
- Credibility of the proposed approach

Impact

- The expected impacts listed in the work programme under the relevant topic
- Enhancing innovation capacity and integration of new knowledge
- Strengthening the competitiveness and growth of companies by developing innovations meeting the needs of European and global markets; and, where relevant, by delivering such innovations to the markets
- Any other environmental and socially important impacts (not already covered above)
- Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), to communicate the project, and to manage research data where relevant

Implementation

- Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources
- Complementarity of the participants within the consortium (when relevant)
- Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management

Proposal scoring

- **For first stage of a two-stage procedure, you only evaluate the criteria Excellence and (part of) Impact**

  - In the case of **Impact**, only the aspects of the criteria in yellow (previous slide) are considered

  - Default threshold for individual criteria is 4

  - Default overall threshold is 8

Interpretation of the Scores

0 — The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

1 — **Poor**. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 — **Fair**. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3 — **Good**. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

4 — **Very Good**. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5 — **Excellent**. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Evaluation - Process
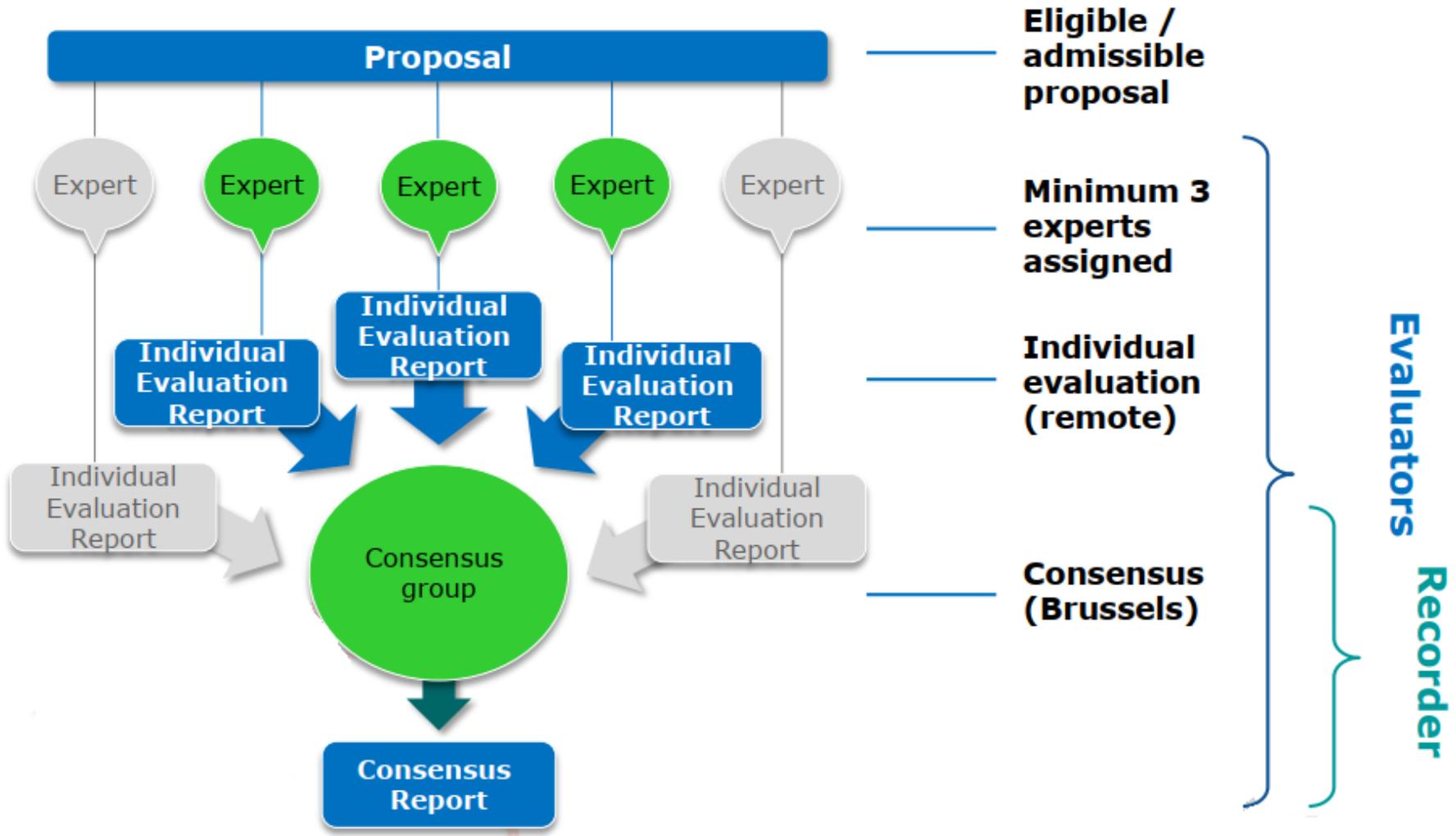
Eligible / admissible proposal

Minimum 3 experts assigned

Individual evaluation (remote)

Consensus (Brussels)

Evaluators

Recorder

Individual evaluation

- **You read the proposal and evaluate it against the evaluation criteria**

  - Without discussing it with anybody else
  - As submitted - not on its potential if certain changes were to be made
  - Do not penalise applicants that did not provide detailed breakdown costs – they are not required

- **You disregard excess pages marked with a watermark**

- **You check to what degree the proposal is relevant to the call or topic**

- **You complete an Individual Evaluation Report (IER)**

  - Give comments and scores for all evaluation criteria (scores must match comments)
  - Explain shortcomings, but do not make recommendations

- **You then sign and submit the form in the electronic system**

If a proposal

- **Is only marginally relevant in terms of its scientific, technological or innovation content relating to the call or topic addressed, you must reflect this in a lower score for the Excellence criterion**

    - No matter how excellent the science!

- **Does not significantly contribute to the expected impacts as specified in the WP for that call or topic, you must reflect this in a lower score for the Impact criterion**

- **If cross-cutting issues are explicitly mentioned in the scope of the call or topic, and not properly addressed (or their non-relevance justified), you must reflect this in a lower score for the relevant criterion**

    - A successful proposal is expected to address them, or convincingly explain why not relevant in a particular case
    - Proposals addressing cross-cutting issues which are not explicitly mentioned in the scope of the call or topic can also be evaluated positively

Consensus report (CR)

- **The rapporteur is responsible for drafting the CR**

  - Including consensus comments and scores
  - In some cases, the rapporteur does not take part in the discussion

- **The quality of the CR is paramount**

  - It often remains unchanged at the panel stage

- **The aim of the CR is to give:**

  - A clear assessment of the proposal based on its merit, with justification
  - Clear feedback on the proposal's weaknesses and strengths

- **Avoid:**

  - Comments not related to the criterion in question
  - Comments that are too short or too long or use inappropriate language
    you should explain what you mean in an adequate length and clear manner
  - Categorical statements that have not been properly verified e.g. "The proposal doesn't mention
    user requirements" – when there is a short reference…
    - Applicants can challenge those through evaluation review procedures
  - Scores that don't match the comments
  - Making recommendations
  - Marking down a proposal for the same critical aspect under two different criteria

Observer(s)

- **Appointed by the Commission/Agency may attend any meetings or monitor remote evaluation, to ensure a high quality evaluation**

- **They check the functioning and running of the overall process**

- **They advise, in their report, on the conduct and fairness of the evaluation sessions and, if necessary, suggest possible improvements**

- **They do not evaluate proposals and, therefore, do not express any opinion on their quality**

- **They may raise any questions -** please give them your full support

Logistics

- **A new electronic system for the evaluation of proposals is available and accessible via your ECAS password**

  - Please make sure you know your ECAS login and password

- **Electronic workflow**

  - The processing of your payment requests is done electronically (no more queues for reimbursement)

Feedback

- **When you get home, you will receive an on-line questionnaire on your experience in this evaluation session**

- **It is important that you complete it as carefully and as promptly as possible**

- **Your feedback helps us maintain and improve the quality of our evaluation process**

Thank you!
Any Questions?