



H2020 Evaluation Experience - 2nd stage

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H2020 Proposal review structure (2-stage calls)

Proposal stage 1 & 2 both have two phases, experts evaluate individually (individual evaluation reports - IERs) followed by an on-line expert group discussion (Consensus Reports – CR)

The stage 2 expert group discussion takes place in Brussels where all experts jointly discuss the proposals and give final scores

Stage 1 (10 pages) has two evaluation criteria:

- **Excellence**
- **Impact**

Stage 2 (70 pages) has one more criterion:

- **Quality and efficiency of the implementation**

Only projects that pass the first stage are invited to hand in full proposals

Proposal scoring

For each criterion, the proposal will be given scores of 0 to 5 (half marks are possible), as follows:

- 5 Excellent** > the proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion; any shortcomings are minor
- 4 Very good** > the proposal addresses the criterion very well but with a small number of shortcomings
- 3 Good** > the proposal addresses the criterion well but with a number of shortcomings
- 2 Fair** > the proposal broadly addresses the criterion but there are significant weaknesses
- 1 Poor** > the criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses
- 0** > the proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information

Proposals will be evaluated on their current state. Incomplete proposals or proposals with an inflated budget are likely to receive a lower score. In order to be considered for funding, the proposal must score above a certain threshold for each criterion, and above an overall threshold.

1 Exceptions
A weighting factor can be foreseen in the work programme/call or in case of two-stage submission. Thresholds may vary according to the work programme.



Threshold for each evaluation criteria is 3. Any weakness automatically kills the proposal!!

Maximum score is 15 without weighting. In SC5 topic call: Impact was weighted 1.5

Minimum score is 9 (without weighting)

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/from-evaluation-to-grant-signature/evaluation-of-proposals/elig_eval_criteria_en.htm

General observations

Time pressure: time allocated for reviewers to read, assess, and draft evaluation reports is approximately 0,7 working days per proposal

Therefore the proposal needs to be written in good English language - **thoroughly edited**. Colloquial language must be avoided

Example: Questions or comments to co-authors should be edited out of the proposal!!

The layout should ensure **good readability**, both of text and figures.

The structure must be **clear and logic**, cross references equally logic and easily understandable (e.g. between methodologies and work structure in WP's)

Poorly written and unlogic proposals stand no chance, even if the research idea is good

Observations/Experiences from 2nd stage

Topics that reviewers are asked to evaluate at 2nd stage:

EXCELLENCE

- Clarity and pertinence of the objectives
- Soundness of the concept and credibility of the proposed methodology
- Beyond state of the art
- Appropriate consideration of interdisciplinary approaches and, where relevant, use of stakeholder knowledge

IMPACT

- The extent to which the outputs of the project would contribute to each of the expected impacts mentioned in the work programme under the relevant topic
- Any substantial impacts not mentioned in the work programme, 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
- Quality of the proposed measures to: 1) exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), and to manage research data where relevant; 2) communicate the project activities to different target audiences

QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, including extent to which the resources assigned to work packages are in line with their objectives and deliverables
- Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management
- Complementarity of the participants and extent to which the consortium as whole brings together the necessary expertise
- Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks, ensuring that all participants have a valid role and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role

Criterion 1 **Excellence**: Clarity and pertinence of the objectives

Are the objectives clearly described (i.e. specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound) and to what extent are they responding to the scope of the call?

Note that the objectives should cover the different aspects of the scope of the call

Proposals should be very clear on their objectives

Ensure that all specific objectives of a call are addressed, otherwise methodologically explain which one's are addressed

Necessary that the proposal sets the scene in the beginning, linking to the challenges in Europe providing the motivation for the objectives.

Cases/projects should link to the call and to impacts.

Very important: The proposal must be embedded into existing policies and ongoing policy developments

Necessary that the proposal explains how the objectives are linked to other ongoing / terminated projects

The objectives need to be measurable and time bound (most proposals miss this!). The problem of lacking measurable indicators is that objectives become promises that are not tied down into actions

Criterion 1 **Excellence**: Soundness of the concept, and credibility of the proposed methodology.

Is the suggested approach pertinent and credible to deliver on the objectives of the proposal?

The concept should be based on a very sound methodology. E.g.: What is the aim of the research and by which methodology have specific aspects been chosen? What is the methodology behind the selection of case studies [if relevant]?

The proposal should be as **specific** as possible on the results, i.e. not **promising** too much that cannot be delivered.

Key performance indicators to verify achievements should be provided

Methodology section should include **details** on methods and approaches in concrete, practical terms.

Very important to describe the integration of WPs verbally and graphically in the methodology section and to spell out how this **integration** in the individual WPs

Criterion 1 **Excellence**: Soundness of the concept, cont. (in the case of site selection, demonstration, replication)

Site selections ought to be based on a clear and transparent methodology and criteria to assist in the selection

Methodology ought to describe how to transfer results – what are the measures, how will they be adapted.

Methodology section should include details on methods and approaches in concrete, practical terms.

Case studies need to be well-described – what is already done, what actions are planned – to the extent possible. The value added of including existing mature sites need to be made very clear.

Very important that the methodology manages to integrate and combine trans-disciplinary approaches. A risk is to add a lot of different approaches from different disciplines and not integrate them.

The methodology should be very clear on *how* the approach will be carried out – otherwise it is a set of promises of ‘we will do...’ not describing ‘*how* we will do’.

Criterion 1 **Excellence:** Beyond state of the art

Extent that the 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)

To what extent does the proposal build on latest achievements, including previous EU/national/other activities?

To what extent will it deliver solutions that can actually be deployed by users to tackle the specific challenge (i.e., have innovation potential)?

What is new and innovative? Not just a refreshment of old methodologies and appliances, but real innovation!

Innovation needs to be very well described – in terms of technology, process, monitoring, valuation, up-scaling etc.

What in the project ensures that innovation will be pushed throughout the project, what enhances innovation?

What structured approaches are implemented to deal with innovation?

Criterion 1 **Excellence**: Appropriate consideration of interdisciplinary approaches and, where relevant, use of stakeholder knowledge

Does the proposal concept appropriately integrate all the relevant disciplines? (to be assessed in particular for social sciences and humanities since SC5-08-2017 is a "social science and humanities" flagged topic (see guidance in here).

Does the proposal envision a robust approach for the co-design and co-deployment of the solutions in a participatory context?

If the end-users/stakeholders are not included in the consortium, how effectively will they be consulted?

Don't underestimate stakeholder involvement!
The more stakeholders and the stronger committed the better.

Make clear distinctions between **stakeholders**, **end-users**, **implementers** and the **private sector** and address each role profoundly

A table outlining the expertise of the partners is a very good idea to show the span of competencies across the consortium

Criterion 2 **Impact**: Contribution to required impacts

The extent to which the outputs of the project would contribute to each of the expected impacts mentioned in the work programme under the relevant topic

Does the proposal contribute to **all** the expected impacts listed?

Note that **several impacts are expected in the call and that all of them should be adequately addressed by the proposal.**

Does the proposal demonstrate **how** the impacts will be achieved and measured?

Ensure that **all** impacts of the call are addressed profoundly and understandable. Provide Key performance indicators (**KPIs**) to measure impacts!

Make profound reference to EU policies and frameworks, how are these addressed by the proposal? Avoid general texts, be specific

Impacts need to be described in details, be measurable and have assigned thresholds

Criterion 2 **Impact**: Other substantial impacts

Any substantial impacts not mentioned in the work programme, 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

Does the proposed work have the potential to enhance innovation capacity beyond the project, in the EU? (i.e., foster the cooperation and exchange between research, business, and the social and economic environment of a region in general, in order to maximize the exploitation of novel ideas and concepts).

If relevant, provide examples for additional impacts.

If these considerations are missing in the proposal do not answer this question with your own assumptions about the potential of the proposal.

If the proposal covers this point ensure to include a separate chapter!

Criterion 2 **Impact**: Exploitation & dissemination

Quality of the proposed measures to: 1) exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), and to manage research data where relevant; 2) communicate the project activities to different target audiences

Applicants are expected to provide a draft dissemination and exploitation plan that is **comprehensive and proportionate** to the scale of the project.

Is the draft plan to disseminate and exploit project results **effective, proportionate** to the scale of the project, **well targeted** and covering the **full range of potential audiences and users** from research, to commercial and society?

How will the results of the project be **exploited beyond its duration**? How does the proposal attempt to **maximize its impact**, e.g. by cooperating with related initiatives, by making the case for further replicability/scaling-up/transferability, including standardised methods and tools, etc.? Are IPR considerations detailed?

How **credible is the exploitation plan** in showing a path to deliver the innovations to the market and why? Is a preliminary business plan also included?

Be sure to have a formulated exploitation strategy along with both dissemination and communication strategies. Show a strategic approach. Use tables to show who is addressed via which media. KPI's!

Provide a detailed table of different audiences and how they are addressed. E.g.: Master Courses in Universities on the research topics

Criterion 3 Quality & efficiency of Implementation:

Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, including extent to which the resources assigned to work packages are in line with their objectives and deliverables

Is the work plan **logic and well interlinked** with **well-defined timing and clearly described outcomes** (deliverables)?

Does the work plan **put into practice** the concept and activities proposed in the previous parts of the proposal?

Does the **planning of resources** (Person/Months, Direct costs and subcontracting) correspond to the effort and outcome of each work package? Please consider the overall "value for money" of the proposal.

Please reflect shortcomings in lower scores (especially those proposals with a significant inflated or cost-inefficient budget should NOT pass the relevant threshold).

Workpackages, workflows, interconnections, milestones, deliverables must be in line with the overall logic of the project

E.g. a workpackage with only one milestone and one deliverable over the entire project time makes little sense, unless justified

Criterion 3 Quality & efficiency of Implementation:

Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management

Are the management structures and procedures clearly identified and relevant?

Is the governance structure suitable for ensuring success and for adapting to emerging challenges and risks?

Are major risks identified and mitigation measures convincingly explained?

Does the proposal demonstrate an understanding of both market and technical problems with the goal of successfully delivering a new or improved product, service or process ("innovation management")?

Make sure to have a clearly formulated and convincing innovation management

Risk and innovation management should be taken very seriously, preferably analyzed in table form

Criterion 3 **Quality & efficiency of Implementation:**

Complementarity of the participants and extent to which the consortium as whole brings together the necessary expertise

Does the consortium bring together the relevant disciplines, actors, geographical coverage to deliver on the scope and expected impacts of the topic?

What is the setup of the consortium?

Who plays which role?

What is the role of stakeholders, end-users and the private sector?

How deeply are they really engaged in the project?

What is the exact role of each sector, and how are external partners integrated into the overall methodology, what is their exact impact?

Criterion 3 Quality & efficiency of Implementation:

Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks, ensuring that all participants have a valid role and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role

Are the tasks and resources well allocated to each beneficiary?

Does each partner have a precise, well described role?

Who performs which tasks, are these allocated appropriately?

Do budget allocations for tasks and partners make sense?

Make sure to have a clearly formulated and convincing innovation management

Important to ensure that WP lead has sufficient Man Months, especially if also task leader

Important to describe the role of partners not from the EU: Most of the reviewed proposals lacked a description of the activities, the relevance and the expected impacts outside EU

Criterion 3 Quality & efficiency of Implementation:

Other questions

Operational capacity:

Based on the information provided in the proposal (partner description), do all the partners in this proposal possess the basic operational capacity to carry out the proposed work?

Check the information on CVs; relevant publications or achievements; relevant previous projects; if necessary, further information from public or otherwise available sources: number of employees etc.

Does each partner have a precise, well described role?

Proposal content corresponds, wholly or in part, to the topic description against which it is submitted, in the relevant work programme part?

Exceptional funding of third country participants/international organisations (consult Annex of Work Programme)

If any beneficiary requesting funding falls under this consideration, is its participation essential?

Aspects to be considered: provides outstanding expertise, access to unique know-how, access to research infrastructure, access to particular geographical environments, possibility to involve key partners in emerging markets, access to data.

Second stage, other observations

If the proposal makes it to the second stage ensure time and human resources to prepare a **sound, logic, readable and concise proposal**.
The competition is so strong that only really well prepared proposals stand a chance

Make sure to analyse to great detail which information is to be provided where in the proposal !!!

E.g. The consortium partners may be explained in detail in an annex, but technical descriptions, e.g. of case studies, not! If such information is provided it will be disregarded by the evaluators!

Finalising the evaluation

In a final step all Consensus Reports (CR) are reviewed once more by the entire team to ensure that wordings and scorings are based on equal criteria throughout all proposals

In this final phase the definite scores are given to each proposal. Depending on the size of the call it is a very demanding task to finally rank the projects, only some of the proposals can get funding. **Minor issues might influence the final verdict**

The final CR is again reviewed in a panel, then the evaluation is closed. The first ranked projects will be informed, the third ranked will be kept on a waiting list.

Conclusions

The review meeting in Brussels is more comprehensive and thorough than the first stage, as the experts have a chance to directly talk to each other.

For some proposals with good ranking in the first phase were suddenly rather weak in 2nd phase

Any information unclear or questionable provided by the proposal will be thoroughly scrutinized by the evaluation team

The range of expertise in the review team is rather large, all aspects of a project are analysed from different angles

Observation: In fact the question is often how strongly proposals shall be "punished" for shortcomings.