Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the Seventh Framework Programme

Evaluator briefing
ICT Call 8
Welcome!

You are here to give a fair, clear and properly-justified opinion on the proposals which you see, and a prioritisation among them.
Your responsibilities

You are:

• **Independent**: you represent yourself, not your employer, not your country.....)

• **Objective**: you evaluate the proposal as written

• **Accurate**: you use the official evaluation criteria only

• **Consistent**: you apply the same standard of judgment to each proposal

• **Incommunicado**: external contacts on evaluation are not permitted during or after the evaluation
You have a Conflict of Interest with a proposal if you:

- stand to benefit directly should the proposal be accepted (e.g. you have been offered a role in the eventual project)
- have a close family relationship with any person in the proposal
- were involved in the preparation of the proposal (e.g. in preparing it, or in a pre-evaluation of it)
- are in any other situation which appears to compromise your ability to evaluate the proposal impartially – for example you are a consultant and the proposer is a client
Your responsibilities

- You already accepted to evaluate the proposals you read at home
- Alert us immediately to any new conflict of interest in which you might find yourself; we will make sure you are not involved in the discussion of that proposal

Please discuss proposals only in the meeting rooms, not in the corridors!
ICT evaluation

Evaluation background
Objectives and Projects

- Normally ICT Calls involve proposals in several different research objectives
- An objective may call for up to seven different types of project:
  - Small and medium scale focused research projects (CP-FP or STREPs)
  - Large scale integrating projects (CP-IP or IPs)
  - Networks of excellence (NoE)
  - Coordination actions (CA)
  - ERA-NET Plus actions (ERA-NET+)
  - Support actions (SA)
  - Combined Collaborative project and Coordination actions (CP-CSA)
• Proposals are evaluated by independent experts.
• Additional experts are employed in a “Recorder” role. They do not evaluate proposals.
• Commission staff are present to manage the evaluation, to protect the confidentiality of the process and to ensure the fairness of the evaluation. They do not evaluate proposals.
• Our Director-General has appointed additional experts as Observers to this evaluation. They receive the fullest cooperation in observing the process. They do not evaluate proposals.
How a proposal is evaluated

Stage 1. Individual readings (Remote)

- Each proposal is read independently by three or more experts and evaluated under three specific criteria
  
  S&T excellence
  Implementation
  Impact

- The experts each prepare an Individual Evaluation Report IER on the proposal
Stage 2. Consensus Group

• The experts who read the proposal meet together to come to a consensus view
• The group prepares a Consensus Report CR

The group is supported by a Commission Moderator and a Proposal recorder

Alternatively, one of the evaluating experts may act as “rapporteur”, replacing the recorder
How a proposal is evaluated

Stage 3. Panel meeting

• Experts within the area meet together as a panel to review the Consensus report of the proposal

(For high-scoring IP and NoE proposals they additionally conduct a hearing with the proposers)

• The panel prepares an Evaluation Summary Report ESR

The panel is supported by a Commission Panel Coordinator and an expert as Panel recorder
Each evaluation criterion is given a score out of five, with explanatory comments. A threshold of 3/5 must be achieved on each criterion. An overall score is calculated for each proposal by simple addition. A threshold of 10/15 must be achieved on the overall score. Different thresholds and a weighting scheme apply to FET Proactive proposals.
The scoring scale

Use the full scale! Half marks may be given

0 - The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information

1 - Poor. The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses

2 - Fair. While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses

3 - Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary

4 - Very good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible

5 - Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor
ICT evaluation

The evaluation process in detail
Stage 1 - Individual readings

- Read over all your proposals first, to familiarise yourself with the layout and contents, and to get an idea of the general standard
- If you discover yourself in an unanticipated conflict of interest, notify the Commission staff. We will re-assign the proposal
- Do not discuss your views on your proposals with the other experts
- Complete and hand in your IER forms
Stage 2 - The Consensus group

- The Consensus group discusses the proposal until a decision is reached on scores and comments to which all agree.
- The Commission Moderator chairs the group, ensures that all voices are heard and all issues discussed – but he/she has no opinion on the proposal.
- The meeting may (exceptionally) close on a majority/minority view.
- The Proposal recorder prepares the Consensus Report (CR).

If the IERs show a strong convergence of negative views, the Moderator may ask the recorder to complete the CR without a formal meeting.
Before the meeting, the Proposal recorder may* prepare a draft Consensus report, based on his reading of your IERs, to start off your discussion.

After the meeting, the recorder completes the first part of a Proposal Minute form (PM), recording the background to your consensus decision.

* If he had time, and if your views were sufficiently close together.
Stage 2 - The Consensus group

If the group detects that the proposal touches upon ethical issue, and they judge the proposal to be above all thresholds, they complete an Ethical Issues Report (EIR). The proposal may be examined on these issues later by specialist reviewers.

Typical ethical issues:
- Research involving children or persons not able to give consent
- Intervention on human beings or non-human primates
- Other animal experimentation
- Processing of genetic information or personal data (e.g. health, sexual lifestyle, ethnicity, political/religious opinion)
- Tracking the location or observation of people without their knowledge
A Consensus meeting for a STREP/CA/SA should normally not exceed an hour and a half.

A Consensus meeting for an IP or NoE should normally not exceed two hours.

The Commission moderator will warn you at “half-time”.

Using a beamer and screen, the Consensus Report form will be ready by the end of the meeting.

Overextending your meeting will impact the amount of time you will be able to spend on other proposals, and also possibly on the Panel meeting.
Stage 2 - The Consensus group

Useful tips

• Agree comments before scores
• Look through to the essentials of the proposal – a weak proposal can be deceptively well written, a strong proposal may be handicapped by language difficulty
• Try to avoid intellectual bias
• Maintain the same standard of judgment for all the proposals you see...
• ...especially for re-submitted proposals
Stage 2 – The Consensus group

Useful tips

- The significant differences are those between 4 and 4½ and between 4½ and 5
- **Evaluate the proposal which the proposer sent us.** Make no additional assumptions, do not read between the lines
- Everyone’s voice must be heard, and all must agree to the final scores and comments
- Remember that nobody knows everything, and other peoples’ point of view are as valid as your own. And there is no shame in learning and changing your mind!
Useful tips

- The Consensus Report gives only the final agreed view of the proposal.
- When a proposal only partially addresses the topic, this will be reflected in the scoring of criterion 1 “Scientific and technical excellence”.
- An above threshold score on criterion 2 “Implementation” means that in your opinion the partners have the operational capacity to carry out the work.
Useful tips

While there are three separate criteria, you are evaluating the proposal as a whole:

Therefore criterion 3 “Impact” reflects the potential impact of this project if it is implemented as it was presented to you in the proposal:

- Poor S&T quality and poor Implementation planning must imply a weak Impact
- However, good S&T quality and good Implementation planning does not guarantee a good Impact; Impact also has to be planned for!
Stage 2 - The Consensus group

Useful tips

In the final “Remarks” box:

• Below threshold proposals – “This proposal scores below the evaluation threshold on the criterion…”
  (No repetition of criterion comments! No additional discussion or gratuitous remarks!)

• High scoring proposals – give recommendations for negotiations
Stage 3 - The Panel meeting

The Panel reviews all the Consensus Reports. They establish a final Evaluation Summary Report for each proposal – based on the CR with any necessary modifications:

- They ensure common standards have been applied
- They may have new knowledge to add
- They settle any majority/minority cases
- They ensure comments are fair, accurate, clear and complete

The Commission Moderator or Proposal recorder also completes the second part of the Proposal Minute form PM recording the background to the Panel decision.
The Hearing stage

IP and NoE proposals judged above threshold after the Consensus group and initial panel review are invited to a Hearing to answer questions devised by the Consensus group and the panel.

Our Call 7 Observers recommended "Questions must be well-drafted, few in quantity but substantial in quality".

- The Hearing is not a re-evaluation, it is a supplement to the evaluation process
- Carefully review IP or NoE proposals around the threshold score. The Hearing is a powerful enquiry tool; it is not an awards ceremony, nor is it an excuse to postpone decisions

Those of you involved in Hearings will receive a more detailed briefing at that time
Above-threshold proposals are listed, per instrument, in order of overall score of their ESR.

The panel prioritises any groups of proposals with tied overall scores.
(Overall scores are unchanged, only the prioritisation is clarified)

Merged lists are prepared for IP+STREP and CA+SA proposals; the panel prioritises any new ties.
Stage 3 - The Panel meeting

ICT Call 8 (excluding FET Proactive)

Prioritising proposals with tied overall scores

Priority is first given to proposals covering topics not otherwise covered by more highly-rated proposals...

• ...within that group proposals are ranked according to their score on criterion 3 (Impact)
• ...then on their score on criterion 1 (Scientific and technical excellence)
• ...if identical on all scores, then on other appropriate characteristics, related to the contribution of the proposal to the European Research Area and/or general objectives mentioned in the Workprogramme (e.g. presence of SMEs, international cooperation, public engagement

Remaining proposals are then prioritised amongst themselves on the same basis as above
Stage 3 - The Panel meeting

Prioritising proposals with tied overall scores

A problem arises if you have two or more proposals covering a topic not otherwise covered by more highly-rated proposals...but it is the same topic!

In this case, elevating any one of them to the top of the group means that the others *ipso facto* no longer cover a topic not otherwise covered by a more highly-rated proposal.

The one to be elevated to the top of the group should be selected by criterion scores as described earlier, then if identical on criterion scores on the basis of other appropriate characteristics judged by the experts.
Stage 3 - The Panel meeting

FET Proactive

Prioritising proposals with tied overall scores

Priority is first given proposals ranked according to their score on criterion 1 (Scientific and technical excellence)

.....then on their score on criterion 3 (Impact)

......then if identical on all scores, on other appropriate characteristics, related to the contribution of the proposal to the European Research Area and/or general objectives mentioned in the Workprogramme
Stage 3 - The Panel meeting

Panels also comment on any work-overlaps in their prioritised lists, with recommendations for handling.

The panel writes a **Panel report**, based on a standard template, containing its lists and supporting commentary.
Stage 3 - The Panel meeting

Useful tips

• The Panel report describes only the final conclusion for each proposal, and in particular it does not describe:
  – The changes made by the Panel to the Consensus group scores
  – The changes made by the Panel as a result of the hearings
Stage 3 - The Panel meeting

Useful tips

• Proposals come from organisations all over the world

Partners in the developing countries are funded by the EC. They need only show – like any other partner - that they have the skills and resources to carry out the tasks assigned to them in the project.

Partners in the developed countries overseas are normally self-funded. If they, exceptionally, request funding, then you should comment in the Panel report on the degree to which they are essential to the project.
ICT evaluation

Writing a good Consensus Report / ESR
CR/ESR Comments

- Comments are confined only to the criterion concerned
- Comments are clear: try to avoid obscure acronyms or technical terms
- Comments are substantial: not hollow statements
- Comments are of adequate length: never just one sentence
- Comments are facts not opinions – “This proposal is...” not “We think that....”
CR/ESR Comments

• Comments describe only the final view of the proposal
• There is no advice concerning the improvement of the proposal for re-submission
• Resources may be discussed, but there is no discussion of whether a proposal should be funded, or by how much
• There is no identification of any evaluator
Finally: Check your work

- Have you written at adequate length
- Do comments match scores (high scores = positive comments, low scores = negative comments) ?
- Have you fully explained this proposal’s strengths and weaknesses?
- If a high-scoring proposal, have you noted any recommendations for negotiations?
- Have you double-checked any matters-of-fact which you have quoted

"If this was my proposal, would I find this report fair, accurate, clear and complete? “
ICT evaluation

Last words
Evaluator etiquette

Please turn off your mobile phone in the building
No photography
The Commission takes a most serious view of:

• the concealment of a conflict of interest
• the leaking of the technical contents of proposals
• the exposure of other evaluators’ identities and opinions

In such cases Commission actions will include dismissal from the evaluation session and voiding of payment, and removal of your name from the FP7 expert database.