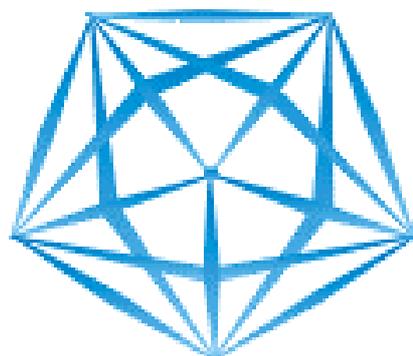




EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION

RESEARCH  
DIRECTORATE  
GENERAL



# RESEARCH TRAINING NETWORKS

**IMPROVING THE HUMAN  
RESEARCH POTENTIAL AND  
THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
KNOWLEDGE BASE  
(1999 – 2002)**

***GUIDE FOR EVALUATORS***  
*Second Call*

*2000 - 2001*

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## **PREFACE**

This guide explains how proposals to the Human Potential Research Training Networks Activity are first received by the Commission Services, second, examined for eligibility, third, evaluated by peer review and finally, formally selected by the Commission. It has been written in conformity with the Manual of Proposal Evaluation Procedures, adopted by the Commission and followed by all programmes under the Fifth Framework Programme of the European Community and the European Atomic Energy Community.

The guide is intended primarily to assist those involved in the evaluation of Human Potential Research Training Networks. It will also be of more general interest, particularly to potential applicants. This guide may be downloaded from the following Internet location

<http://www.cordis.lu/improving>

(look under Human Potential Research Training Networks).

## INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared by the “Improving Human Research Potential and the Socio-Economic Knowledge Base” Programme of the European Commission referred hereafter as “Human Potential” Programme. Its aim is to give a step-by-step description of the handling of proposals for Human Potential **Research Training Networks** from the time a proposal arrives in the Commission offices to the time the proposer is informed of its selection or rejection.

The fundamental principles that lie behind the procedures developed for handling Human Potential Research Training Network proposals are:

**Quality.** Projects selected for funding must demonstrate a high scientific, technical and managerial quality in the context of the objectives of the Human Potential Programme and must help in making a contribution to Community policies in general.

**Transparency.** In order to provide a clear framework for researchers preparing proposals for funding, the process of reaching those funding decisions, both the principles and the practice, must be clearly described and available to any interested party. In addition, adequate feedback must be provided to proposers on the outcome of the evaluation of their proposals.

**Equality of treatment.** A fundamental principle of Community RTD support is that all proposals should be treated alike, irrespective of where they originate or the identity of the proposers.

**Impartiality.** All eligible proposals are treated impartially on their merits, following an independent peer review.

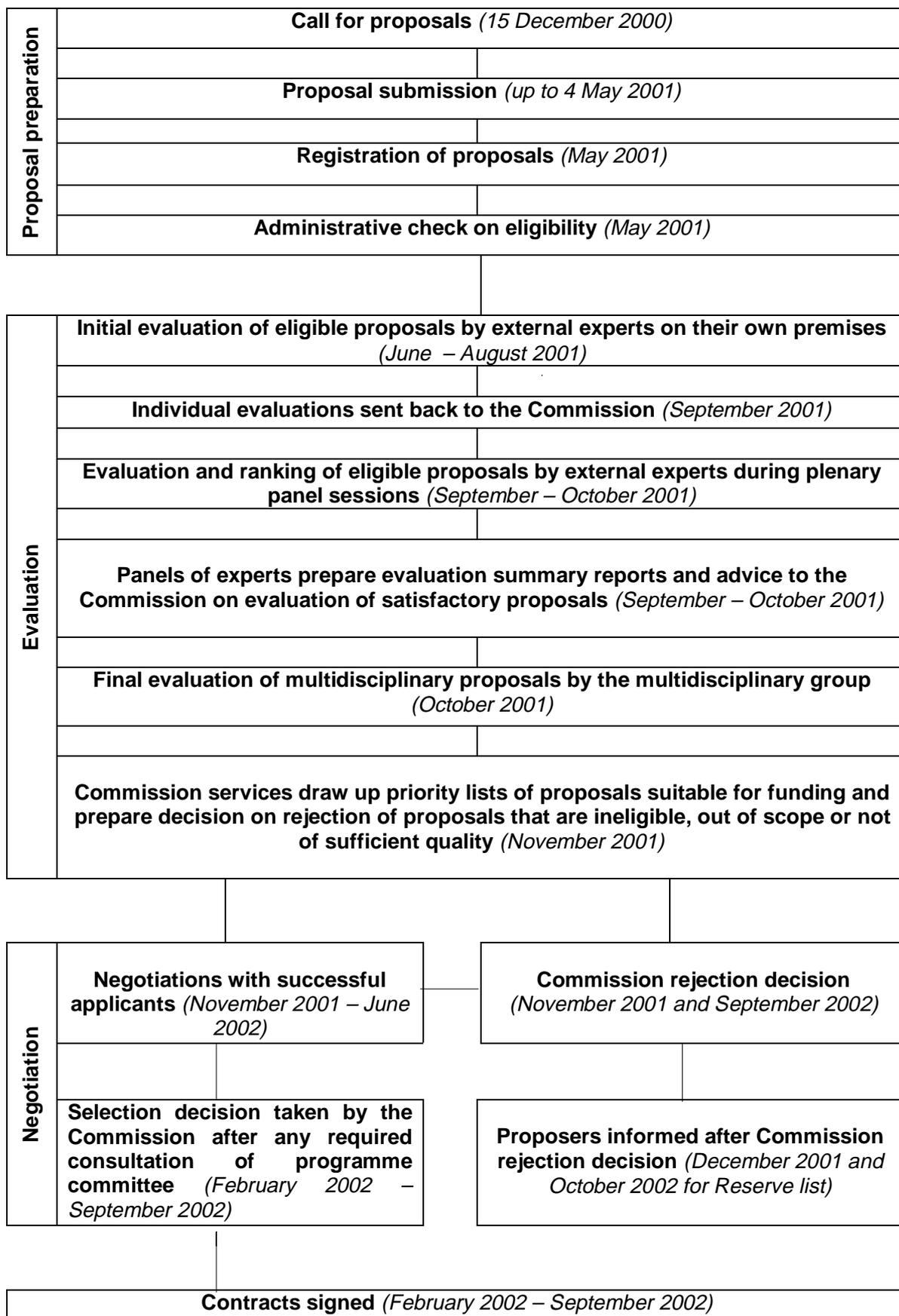
**Efficiency and speed.** The procedures have been designed to be as rapid as possible, commensurate with maintaining the quality of the evaluation and respecting the legal framework within which the Human Potential Programme is managed.

The Commission's handling of Human Potential Research Training Network proposals follows five steps:

- Step 1** - Receipt of Proposals and registration
- Step 2** - Examination for eligibility
- Step 3** - Peer Review of proposals
- Step 4** - Proposal ranking and rejection decision
- Step 5** - Contract preparation and finalisation

Completing the evaluation process (Steps 1 to 4) takes time and about six months may elapse between the closing date of the call for proposals and formal notification to the proposer that his/her proposal has been favourably evaluated or rejected.

**Summary of the steps involved in the proposal evaluation and project selection**



## STEP 1 - RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS AND REGISTRATION

Instructions on how to assemble the proposal and submit it to the Commission are contained in the Research Training Networks Guide for Proposers. In particular:

Proposers are encouraged to prepare proposals using a software tool called ProTool (Proposal Preparation Tool) which is available on the Fifth Framework Programme Website at <http://www.cordis.lu/fp5>. It helps proposers to prepare the administrative and technical information required. However, proposers may also use pdf or Microsoft Word forms available at <http://www.cordis.lu/improving> or the standard forms included in the information packages.

Proposals may be sent in one of two ways:

- Electronically, by normal e-mail or by server uploading, if made by ProTool.

The co-ordinator must request a digital certificate from the Commission's certification authority for electronic signature of the proposal file. When the proposal has been finalised, it is then "sealed" and a short validation file ("fingerprint") is created.

The validation file, which identifies the proposal file uniquely, must be sent (electronically or by fax) before the deadline. The unmodified proposal file must be received electronically within 48 hours after the deadline.

- By post, courier service or delivered by hand whether consisting of the standard forms included in the guide for proposers (available on the Website), or if generated by ProTool and printed out by the co-ordinator.

To be eligible, proposals submitted on paper must be received by the Commission at the address specified in the call on or before the deadline published in the call for proposals.

Packages containing proposals may be opened by the Commission staff (or any contractor appointed by the Commission for the purpose of providing administrative services for evaluation sessions) as they arrive for the purposes of registering the administrative details in Commission databases and for returning acknowledgement of receipt forms. In the case of proposals submitted electronically, files are unsealed and their contents entered into the databases as they arrive. No evaluation or analysis of the proposal contents takes place before the call deadline has passed, nor is any contact with proposers permitted. 10 working days after the deadline of the call, a record is drawn up of all the proposals received.

Electronic proposals are archived electronically under secure conditions at all times, both in sealed format as received, and in unsealed, decrypted format. Where a proposal is received correctly in both electronic and paper formats, only the electronic copy is treated as valid and used for making further copies for the purpose of evaluation.

Paper proposals and any paper copies of proposals are kept under secure conditions at all times. When no longer needed, all paper copies are destroyed except for any copies required for archiving and/or auditing purposes. Apart from an acknowledgement of receipt sent to the proposal co-ordinator not more than 3 weeks after receipt of the proposal, there is no correspondence with the proposers concerning the proposal submitted until after the completion of the evaluation. However, by analogy with the procedures followed for public procurement, the Commission services may request additional information of a purely technical nature from proposers.

## STEP 2 - EXAMINATION FOR ELIGIBILITY

Commission staff verify that proposals meet the eligibility criteria referred to in the call for proposals. These criteria are rigorously applied and any proposal found to be ineligible is excluded from evaluation.

An eligibility checklist is filled out for each proposal on the basis of the information contained in the proposal. If it becomes clear during or after the evaluation phase that one or more of the eligibility criteria have not been fulfilled by a proposal, it is declared ineligible and withdrawn from any further examination.

The following criteria are checked for eligibility of all proposals. Only proposals that fulfil all of these criteria are retained for evaluation:

- date of dispatch of electronic validation file or sealed electronic proposal before deadline
- date of reception of proposal on or before deadline
- for proposals submitted electronically, agreement between the unique identifier code sent with the validation file and that calculated from the proposal file
- signature of the co-ordinating legal entity (or appropriate electronic “signature”)
- signatures of the participants who would contribute to the project **or** a signed declaration of the proposal co-ordinator that he/she is authorised to send the proposal and that the proposal is agreed to by the participants
- completeness of the proposal, i.e. the presence of all relevant administrative forms and the proposal description (N.B. the completeness of the information contained in the proposal description will be for the expert evaluators to judge; the eligibility checks only apply to the presence of the appropriate parts of the proposal).

### **Photocopies of completed forms will be accepted.**

It is the responsibility of the applicants to ensure that proposals are sent to the address given in the call for proposals and are despatched in time to arrive by the stated deadline. The Commission can not be held responsible for packages wrongly addressed nor for proposals that are split between packages without adequate identification to allow the different parts to be reassembled.

The decision to exclude a proposal for failing eligibility criteria will be taken by the Commission. Co-ordinators of ineligible proposals will be informed immediately after the Commission decision.

## STEP 3 - PEER REVIEW OF PROPOSALS

### ***Overview of Proposal evaluation***

All proposals that have fulfilled the minimum eligibility criteria are evaluated by a peer review system carried out by panels of independent experts. There are seven such panels (Chemistry; Economic, Social & Human Sciences; Engineering Sciences; Environmental & Geosciences; Life Sciences; Mathematics & Information Sciences and Physics). A small multidisciplinary group of experts will finalise the evaluation of the proposals that are judged too wide to fall in the scope of a single disciplinary panel.

In the initial evaluation phase, each proposal is assessed against primary and secondary evaluation criteria by at least three panel members chosen from the relevant evaluation panels acting as independent referees. Copies of the proposals are sent by mail to the panel members, who carry out their assessment at their normal place of work.

The individual evaluations must be communicated to the Commission by mail or electronically one week at the latest before the planned date for the plenary session of the panel.

Each panel, during a plenary session, discusses and analyses the individual evaluations of the proposals assigned to that panel and awards a final score to each proposal that will be used to rank the proposals. The panel may decide that the proposal must be further examined by the multidisciplinary group.

## ***Evaluation Panels***

The panel members are independent experts sought through a call for applications published in the Official Journal of the European Communities and open for the duration of the Fifth Framework Programme. Experts are expected to have appropriate competence in the areas of activities of the Human Potential Research Training Networks. Care is taken to ensure that each panel of experts has an appropriate range and balance of competencies, geographical backgrounds and linguistic capabilities. As far as possible, attention is also given to achieving an appropriate gender balance<sup>1</sup>. Care is taken to avoid inviting experts who could be potentially biased for or against any particular proposal they are asked to examine, for whatever reason. Panel members cannot be proposal co-ordinator of any proposal submitted to the evaluation panel where they are appointed.

The list of panel members to be used for any particular evaluation session is submitted to the Director of the “Improving the Human Research Potential and the Socio-Economic Knowledge Base” Programme for approval, as are any replacements or additional panel members needed in the course of the session.

Panel members participating in the evaluation have to sign a contract with the Commission, binding them to confidentiality and impartiality regarding the proposals that they examine. Terms of reference and a code of conduct for panel members to be annexed to this contract is given in Annex A. A declaration regarding impartiality, to be signed by panel members is attached at Annex B.

The Commission has a policy of rotating the members of evaluation panels. As a standard procedure, at least one-third of the members of the Human Potential Research Training Networks panels is replaced for each evaluation.

The Commission appoints the chairperson and vice-chairperson for each panel from among the panel members. Their terms of office are not renewable; the vice-chairperson is however eligible to be appointed chairperson for the following call. During a chairperson's period of office, he/she may not:

- have played a role in the conception or preparation of any Human Potential Research Training Networks proposal;
- intend to be involved in the implementation or to participate, through publications or otherwise, in the presentation, dissemination or exploitation of the results of any Human Potential Research Training Networks proposal submitted for the current call.

The vice-chairperson of a panel shall act for his/her chairperson in any matter with which the chairperson is institutionally, or otherwise indirectly, involved.

For each panel, the Commission appoints a panel co-ordinator from among the Programme staff. His/her role is to help the chairperson to assign proposals to panel members for evaluation and to organise the evaluation following the principles and procedures described in this guide. He/she will not attempt to influence the panel's opinion for or against any proposal.

## ***Allocation of Proposals to Panels and assignment to Panel Members***

On the basis of information supplied in the proposal forms, the Programme staff allocate each proposal to one of the seven panels. Where proposals are allocated to a panel other than the one specified in the proposal form, the proposal co-ordinator will be informed.

Each panel chairperson, together with his/her panel co-ordinator, checks the allocation of proposals to his/her panel. They then assign each proposal normally to three members of the panel. These panel members become responsible for the individual evaluation of the proposal, the completion of the evaluation forms, and for leading a discussion on the proposal at the plenary session of the panel. A panel member may request an external expert to evaluate a proposal assigned to him/her. In that case, the panel member must take responsibility for the evaluation and be prepared to discuss the proposal at the plenary session of the panel. Moreover, the panel member must ensure that the external expert respects the code of conduct for panel members given in Annex A.

Where a panel member has played a role in the conception or preparation of a proposal allocated to his/her panel or intends to be involved in the implementation or to participate, through publications or otherwise, in the presentation, dissemination or exploitation of the results of a proposal allocated to his/her panel, the panel chairperson/co-ordinator arranges for that proposal to be evaluated by a minimum of four other panel members.

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<sup>1</sup> In its communication on “Women and Science”, the Commission has set itself a target of having evaluation panels comprising, if possible, 40% women.

From the evaluation point of view, multidisciplinary proposals fall within the overall competence of one lead panel, chosen by the proposal co-ordinator. Each of the panels is carefully constituted to ensure that a sufficient number of the panel members have expertise in multidisciplinary, and particularly, cutting-edge research. The aim is expressly to ensure that the panel has the necessary competence to evaluate multidisciplinary proposals without bias. Moreover, if the chairperson/co-ordinator of the lead panel feels that the necessary expertise in a particular area is lacking in his/her panel, the chairpersons/secretaries of other relevant panels will be asked to arrange for supplementary individual evaluations of particular multidisciplinary proposals by their panel members.

However, during the lead panel plenary session, if a proposal is judged to be too broad to be handled properly by the panel, the panel may decide to request the multidisciplinary group to make the final assessment based on the individual evaluations, the panel conclusions and the draft summary report.

### **Initial evaluation of the Proposals**

In the initial phase of the evaluation, panel members act as scientific referees. Their role in this phase is to provide the panel with an assessment of the quality of a proposal in the form of a numerical marking together with comments to the evaluation panel and elements for drafting the summary report that will provide feedback to the proposal co-ordinator.

The quality of a proposal is to be measured against the following ten primary evaluation criteria, grouped under three blocks - scientific merit of the collaborative research project, quality of the network partnership, organisation and management, and quality and content of the network’s training programme. Each proposal is also measured against two secondary criteria marked from 0 to 10 that will only be taken into account for ranking proposals of otherwise equal merit.

<b>Primary Evaluation criteria</b>	<b>Score range for criteria</b>	<b>Score range for blocks</b>
<b>1. Scientific merit of the collaborative research project</b>		<b>0-40</b>
(a) Research topic and project objectives	<b>0-10</b>	
(b) Scientific originality	<b>0-10</b>	
(c) Research method	<b>0-10</b>	
(d) Work plan	<b>0-10</b>	
<b>2. Quality of the network partnership, organisation and management</b>		<b>0-30</b>
(a) Collective expertise	<b>0-10</b>	
(b) Quality of the collaboration	<b>0-10</b>	
(c) Organisation and management	<b>0-10</b>	
<b>3. Quality and content of the network’s training programme</b>		<b>0-30</b>
(a) Training need	<b>0-10</b>	
(b) Training programme	<b>0-10</b>	
(c) Justification of the appointment of young researchers	<b>0-10</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>0-100</b>

<b>Secondary Criteria</b>	<b>Score range</b>	
(a) <b>Training</b> in a context promoting interactions between different disciplines or/and in complementary research teams	<b>0-10</b>	
(b) <b>Training</b> in an industrially relevant context	<b>0-10</b>	

In addition to marking each of the evaluation criteria individually, experts give a mark in the score range defined in the table above for each of the blocks of criteria. Only these overall marks for each block of criteria are taken into account for the final score for the proposal. The evaluators are also requested to make sound comments to justify each of the block score.

The evaluators must rank the different proposals assigned to them for individual evaluation and they are requested to use the full scale of score (0-100) for the primary criteria to reflect real differences of quality. Normally, the average of the scores should be between 70 and 75 with a standard deviation higher than 10. Exceptions to that rule require justification.

The secondary criteria are not part of the total score given to a proposal: they are only used to rank proposals with the same total score for the primary criteria.

Moreover, the evaluation experts are asked to answer a question relevant to ethical issues/Community policies and if the proposers have not followed the guidelines given by the Commission (see Annex D), the experts are invited to examine the justification given by the applicant very carefully.

The individual evaluation sheets must be sent back (by mail or preferably electronically) to the panel co-ordinator at least one week before the panel meeting. If the evaluation does not reflect an effective ranking of the proposals assigned to the panel member or if the comments for each block are insufficient, the panel co-ordinator will request him/her to review the individual evaluation.

The detailed description of each of the evaluation criteria and of the marking scheme can be found in Annex D.

The individual evaluation form to be used by panel members can be found in Annex E.

### ***Thresholds***

The minimum score required for block 3 (**Quality and content of the network's training programme**) is **23/30** for a proposal to be considered for funding.

The minimum **total** of the primary evaluation criteria scores is **70/100** for a proposal to be considered for funding.

### ***Plenary sessions of the Panels***

At the plenary session of a panel, the proposals assigned to that panel are analysed and classified on the basis of the individual evaluations.

In general, panels work along the following lines:

- Initially, each proposal is examined to ensure that it has a sufficient number of complete individual evaluations and to verify whether there is coherence in the marks of the different individual evaluations. If the marks awarded show significant discrepancies between the individual evaluations, the panel members have to explain their individual evaluation. The chairperson may ask another panel member(s) to act as an additional evaluator(s).
- If in one of the individual evaluations, the question on ethical issues and Community policies has been answered by "No", the panel may recommend not to continue with the evaluation of the proposal which is found not to fulfil this requirement.
- The panel then awards each proposal a score for each block of criteria. These scores are normally the average of the individual evaluation scores of the blocks, awarded for that proposal. However, the panel may choose to give a lower weighting or even to disregard the marks of a particular panel member where his/her marking is considered to be unreasonable. If a multidisciplinary proposal is considered to be too far from the panel expertise, the panel may decide that it must be further examined by the multidisciplinary group.
- For each proposal, a rapporteur is designated by the panel chairperson/co-ordinator to prepare an overall evaluation summary justifying the marks with comments suitable for providing as feedback to the proposal co-ordinator. The rapporteur is normally one of the panel members involved in the initial evaluation. For each proposal, the panel members attending the plenary session of the panel and involved in the individual evaluations sign the overall evaluation summary report.
- All proposals failing the evaluation thresholds of 23/30 on block 3 (Quality and content of the network's training programme) or a total of the primary evaluation criteria scores of 70/100, will be rejected. The secondary criteria are only discussed for the proposals having reached the thresholds.
- The proposals having reached the thresholds are then further examined in order to ensure that,
  - the ranking is in line with the panel's opinion;

- if a proposal does not conform to the guidelines (concerning number of participants and funding requested – description in Annex D), there is an adequate justification or a recommendation from the panel to the Commission to bring it inside guidelines;
- the participation of non-EU/non-Associated States and International Organisations, is justified and if a funding is requested, it is essential for achieving the objectives of the project.

Each panel therefore concludes the meeting with two lists of networks: first, a ranked list of the proposals having reached the thresholds; second, a list of proposals recommended to be rejected because they have not reached the thresholds. Moreover, a few proposals may not be finally evaluated and are sent to the multidisciplinary group that will give an additional advice and attribute a final score.

### ***Multidisciplinary Group***

The multidisciplinary group is a group of independent experts having a wide multidisciplinary scientific profile and appointed under the same conditions as the panel members. The Commission appoints a chairperson for the multidisciplinary group.

The group is not involved in the initial evaluation phase but has one single meeting to discuss those proposals where the different disciplinary panels have considered that it is difficult to make a final decision on the score. Each proposal is analysed and the group awards a score for each block of criteria and for the secondary criteria taking into account the individual evaluations and the comments of the lead disciplinary panel. The evaluation summary is reviewed, amended if necessary and signed by the expert from the group designated as rapporteur.

The group concludes the meeting with a final score for each of the proposals submitted for opinion. The proposals then reintegrate their respective lead panel with the score given by the multidisciplinary group placing them in the logical ranking of that panel.

### ***Independent Observers***

To tie in with the annual programme monitoring exercise, independent observers are invited by the Commission to monitor evaluation sessions. Their task is to verify that the procedures set out in this manual, the Manual of Proposal Evaluation Procedures and supplemented by information published by the Human Potential programme are adhered to and to report to the programme management on ways in which the process could be improved. Observers will be chosen from among those having replied to calls for monitoring and evaluation experts and calls for expert advisors concerning the RTD programmes. Terms of reference for the independent observers are set out in Annex C.

## **STEP 4 - PROPOSAL RANKING AND REJECTION DECISION**

### ***Distribution of the available funding between the Panels***

The distribution of the available funding between the panels is done proportionally to the total value of the requested budget for all eligible proposals allocated to each panel. This procedure keeps the "bottom-up" character of the Programme.

### ***Proposal ranking***

On the basis of the recommendations of the panels, the Commission services draw up, for each panel, one final ranked list of proposals that pass the required thresholds.

In drawing up the final ranked lists, the Commission also takes into account the programme priorities and may decide not to follow the panel's priority order. In this instance, the reasons for overriding the advice of the panels will be fully justified in writing by the services concerned at the time of the final ranking.

Based on the final ranked lists, the Commission services then draw up a priority list of proposals for each panel that can normally be funded as a result of falling inside the panel's available budget. In addition, a reasonable number of proposals are kept on a reserve list for each panel to allow for withdrawal of proposals and/or savings to be made during contract finalisation.

The Commission services also generates a single list of proposals (all panels together) to be rejected. These will include:

- proposals found to be ineligible during the evaluation (the proposals rejected following eligibility checks have been dealt with earlier)
- proposals failing either the training threshold or the overall threshold
- proposals falling below a certain ranking that cannot be funded for budgetary reasons (not retained on the priority lists, nor on the reserve lists)

Following an appropriate consultation of other Commission services on the final ranking and the rejection list, the decision on proposal rejection is taken at the level of the Commission. Immediately after this decision, co-ordinators of rejected proposals are informed in writing of the Commission's decision. A summary report of the evaluation of their proposal is also included.

## **STEP 5 – CONTRACT PREPARATION AND FINALISATION**

### ***Contract preparation***

Immediately following the preparation of the final ranked lists by the Commission services, the co-ordinators of all proposals of the priority lists (i.e. those not rejected and for which funding is available) are contacted in writing. They receive a summary report of the evaluation of their proposal and, where required, a request for further administrative information necessary for the preparation of a project contract. A deadline for replying to any request for further information is given, beyond which, if the information is not received, the Commission may terminate discussions on contract preparation and reject the particular proposal. That information may include what is necessary for establishing the financial viability of the contract participants and the potential availability of all the necessary resources to carry out the project. The co-ordinators of the proposals on the reserve list receive a summary report on the evaluation of their proposal and an indication that negotiations with a view to preparing a contract may be offered, but only if further funding becomes available.

Among the items to be dealt with in the contract preparation and finalisation phase is an examination of the costs proposed in relation to the resources requested and the detailed technical work to be carried out. In discussing with proposers, the Commission staff take account of the comments of the panels.

Once the contractual details have been finalised with the proposers and all the necessary financial and legal checks carried out, a selection decision is adopted by the Commission following normal internal procedures and the procedure adopted in the Human Potential programme decision. Once the selection decision has been taken, the contracts are sent for signature. If it proves impossible to reach agreement with any proposers on modifications to their proposal in line with the outcome and recommendations from the proposal evaluation, and within a reasonable time (to be indicated by the Commission), negotiations on contract preparation are terminated and the proposal rejected by Commission decision.

When the budget for the particular call has been used up, any proposals remaining from the reserve list which could not be funded by the available budget, will be rejected by a decision of the Commission as set out above and the co-ordinators informed.

### ***Report on evaluation***

Following each evaluation session, a summary report is prepared and made publicly available. The report gives general statistical details on the proposals received and those selected, on the evaluation procedure and on the panel members.

The names of the panel members assigned to individual proposals will not be made public, however the Commission will make available lists of all the panel members involved in the evaluation of proposals submitted to the Human Potential programme at regular intervals.

## **ANNEX A: TERMS OF REFERENCE AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PANEL MEMBERS**

1. The task of the panel member is to participate in a confidential, fair and equitable evaluation of each proposal according to the procedures described in this manual. He/she will endeavour to achieve this, follow any instructions given by Commission staff to this end and deliver a constant and high quality of work.
2. The panel member works as an independent person under contract to the Commission. He/she is deemed to work in a personal capacity and, in performing the work, does not represent any organisation, even if the contract for remuneration is concluded with the organisation employing the panel member.
3. The panel member will sign a declaration of confidentiality before starting the work. In doing so the panel member commits him/herself to strict confidentiality concerning his/her tasks. Invited panel members who do not sign the declaration will not be allowed to work as an evaluator. If a panel member has a direct or indirect link with a proposal, or any other vested interest, is in some way connected with a proposal, or has any other allegiance which impairs or threatens to impair his/her impartiality with respect to a proposal, he/she must declare such facts to the responsible Commission staff as soon as he/she becomes aware of this. The Commission staff will ensure that, where the strength of the link is such that it could threaten the impartiality of the panel member, the panel member will not participate in the evaluation of that proposal and, if necessary, of competing proposals, and will not be present at any discussion concerning it.

A panel member is deemed to have a direct link with a proposal if

- he/she is currently or has recently been employed by one of the proposing organisations; or
- he/she has been involved in the preparation of the proposal; or
- he/she is related to an applicant or a member of the proposing team; or
- he/she may be knowingly involved in the publication or exploitation of the results.

A panel member is deemed to have an indirect link with a proposal if he/she is employed by an organisation which has contractual links with one of the proposing organisations in the field covered by the proposal or if he/she has any direct link with or works for an organisation submitting a competing proposal.

4. Panel members should not discuss any proposal with others, including other panel members, except during the formal discussion at the meetings moderated by or with the knowledge and agreement of the responsible Commission staff.
5. Panel members may not communicate with proposers, nor should any proposal be amended during the evaluation session. Panel members' advice to the Commission on any proposal may not be communicated to the proposers or to any other person.
6. Panel members are not allowed to disclose the names of other panel members participating in the evaluation with them. The Commission services will make public lists of names of panel members without disclosing which proposals they have evaluated.
7. During the initial evaluation phase, the panel members are held responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any documents sent to them and destroying all confidential documents or files upon completing the evaluation. In such instances, panel members may seek further advice or information in order to allow them to complete their examination of the proposals, provided that any discussions or contacts with others respect the overall rules for confidentiality and impartiality.
8. During the panel plenary sessions taking place in an office or building controlled by the Commission, panel members are not allowed to take outside the evaluation building any parts of proposals, copies or notes, either on paper or in electronic form, relating to the evaluation of proposals. All information concerning the proposals will be securely stored during the panel members' absence from the evaluation building.

- 9.** In the evaluation premises, panel members must always visibly wear the badge provided to them at the beginning of the evaluation. Without badges, entrance to premises will not be allowed without special permission from the Commission staff. Badges should be returned to the evaluation organiser by the panel member, when leaving on the last day of his/her contract.
  
- 10.** Panel members are required at all times to comply strictly with any rules defined by the Commission services for ensuring the confidentiality of the evaluation process (for instance, regarding communication with persons outside the evaluation sessions). Failure to comply with these rules may result in exclusion from the immediate and future evaluation processes.

## ANNEX B: CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

*(Please tick whichever is applicable)*

I, the undersigned, confirm that I have read and understood the terms of reference and code of conduct for panel member. I declare that I am not the co-ordinator of any proposal submitted for evaluation under the IHP-RTN-00-2 Call for Proposals to the panel where I am appointed.

<input type="checkbox"/> I declare that I have not submitted, nor am I, to my knowledge, directly or indirectly involved, in any proposal submitted for evaluation under the IHP-RTN-00-2 Call for Proposals.
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<input type="checkbox"/> I declare that my participation in the evaluation of the following proposal(s) could create either a direct or an indirect conflict of interest:																											
<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left; border-bottom: 1px solid black;"><u>Acronym</u></th> <th style="text-align: left; border-bottom: 1px solid black;"><u>Title</u></th> <th style="text-align: left; border-bottom: 1px solid black;"><u>Reasons</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>.....</td><td>.....</td><td>.....</td></tr> <tr><td>.....</td><td>.....</td><td>.....</td></tr> <tr><td>.....</td><td>.....</td><td>.....</td></tr> <tr><td>.....</td><td>.....</td><td>.....</td></tr> <tr><td>.....</td><td>.....</td><td>.....</td></tr> <tr><td>.....</td><td>.....</td><td>.....</td></tr> <tr><td>.....</td><td>.....</td><td>.....</td></tr> <tr><td>.....</td><td>.....</td><td>.....</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Reasons</u>	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
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I undertake to inform the Commission staff immediately if I discover any conflict of interest, direct or indirect, with any proposal that I am asked to evaluate or which is the subject of discussion in any evaluation meeting at which I am present.

Panel: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ANNEX C: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS**

The role of the observers is to give independent advice to the Commission on the conduct of the evaluation sessions, ways in which the procedures could be improved, the appropriateness of the evaluation criteria used in the sessions and the way in which these criteria are applied by the panel members.

Observers are chosen by the Commission, in some cases from among the high level experts taking part in the annual monitoring exercises for each programme. Such a choice is aimed at obtaining continuity between the various exercises and ensuring that the monitoring panels are able to comment on the evaluation process from first hand experience. The observers will be required to examine the evaluation process from the point of view of its working and not the outcome. In particular, they will not express views on the proposals under examination or the panel members' opinions on the proposals.

The observers are invited to be present at the beginning of the evaluation sessions when the panel members are briefed by the Commission staff and to visit the evaluation panels to observe the discussions and the process of reaching a consensus viewpoint on the evaluation criteria set by the Commission.

The observers will report on their findings to the Commission. A summary of their report will be made publicly available. As well as producing a report, the observers are also encouraged to enter into informal discussions with the Commission staff during the evaluation sessions and to make observations on any possible improvements that could be put into practice immediately.

Observers are required to respect the same confidentiality obligations as panel members (see Annex A) and to sign a confidentiality agreement. They are not permitted to divulge details of the proposals, the panel members assigned to examining the proposals, nor the discussions in the evaluation panels.

## ANNEX D: EVALUATION CRITERIA AND MARKING SCHEME

### **Evaluation criteria**

The primary evaluation criteria are grouped under three blocks - scientific merit of the collaborative research project, quality of the network partnership, organisation and management, and quality and content of the network's training programme. Each proposal is also measured against two secondary criteria marked from 0 to 10 that will only be taken into account for ranking proposals of otherwise equal merit.

Primary Evaluation criteria	Score range for criteria	Score range for blocks
<b>1. Scientific merit of the collaborative research project</b>		<b>0-40</b>
(a) Research topic and project objectives	<b>0-10</b>	
(b) Scientific originality	<b>0-10</b>	
(c) Research method	<b>0-10</b>	
(d) Work plan	<b>0-10</b>	
<b>2. Quality of the network partnership, organisation and management</b>		<b>0-30</b>
(a) Collective expertise	<b>0-10</b>	
(b) Quality of the collaboration	<b>0-10</b>	
(c) Organisation and management	<b>0-10</b>	
<b>3. Quality and content of the network's training programme</b>		<b>0-30</b>
(a) Training need	<b>0-10</b>	
(b) Training programme	<b>0-10</b>	
(c) Justification of the appointment of young researchers	<b>0-10</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>0-100</b>
<b>Secondary Criteria</b>		
(a) <b>Training</b> in a context promoting interactions between different disciplines or/and in complementary research teams	<b>0-10</b>	
(b) <b>Training</b> in an industrially relevant context	<b>0-10</b>	

The following notes, explaining the meaning of these criteria, have been written as guidance to carry out the primary assessment of the proposals received.

### (A) Primary Criteria

#### **1. Scientific merit of the collaborative research project**

a. **Research topic and project objectives.** The expert should award a high score for the proposed research topic and project objectives only:

- when there is a strong scientific, technological or socio-economic reason for carrying out research in the field covered by the project;
- when the proposed research is timely;
- when it is clear from the proposal that the participants are committed to a joint research project that has well-defined and realistic objectives;
- when these objectives are challenging;
- when a major breakthrough could be expected.

b. **Scientific Originality.** A high quality project must be innovative, in other words, it must represent a significant step forward beyond the current state-of-the-art. The expert should therefore award a high score for scientific originality only:

- when the applicants have first demonstrated a sound knowledge of the current international state-of-the-art;
- when they have explained convincingly that the proposed research will represent a significant step forward.

c. **Research Method.** Research Training Networks are intended to encourage interaction between different disciplines, the combination of different technologies and the transfer of technologies from one scientific domain to another. The expert should therefore award a high score for the proposed research network only:

- when the methodological approach is appropriate and consistent with the objectives;
- when it integrates complementary techniques in an effective manner.

d. **Work Plan.** The expert should award a high score for the proposed work plan only:

- when the schedule and milestones of the proposed joint project are realistic and compatible with the resources that the participants will put into the collaboration;
- when there is a well-considered distribution of tasks and responsibilities among the participants.

## 2. Quality of the network partnership, organisation and management

a. **Collective Expertise.** Networks are intended to encourage interaction between research participants with complementary expertise and competence. The expert should therefore award a high score for the collective experience of the participants only:

- when the participants collectively have the necessary expertise and competence to carry out the proposed joint project;
- when their contributions address different aspects of the joint project;
- when at least three of the participants (the so-called “core teams”) are already established in the area of the proposed research, are of high quality and are from different countries of the Community and Associated States.

Please note that networks containing less experienced, but promising teams should not be penalised in the marking, provided that the participants collectively have the necessary expertise and competence.

b. **Quality of the collaboration.** One of the main objectives of networks is to encourage research teams to work together on high-quality joint research projects. The expert should therefore award high marks for the intended collaboration only:

- when it is clear from the proposal that the collaboration between the teams at the working level will be meaningful, interactive and mutually beneficial for the researchers taking part;
- when there is a convincing explanation of how any less experienced teams will be properly integrated into the project.

Low marks should be awarded to networks where the interaction between the teams is limited to the exchange of information and staff. Meaningful working-level collaboration around a joint project is an essential feature of a good network.

c. **Organisation and management.** Good management is an essential component of a successful network. The expert should therefore award high marks for network organisation and management only:

- when the organisation and management proposed for the network is well-adapted to the scope and complexity of the joint project and when all participants take responsibility for the organisation and management;
- when the techniques proposed for co-ordinating the joint project are considered to be sufficient and suitable;
- when the network co-ordinator has demonstrated the necessary scientific and organisational competence (for example, in putting together the proposal itself);
- when it is clear that the network has a carefully planned strategy for effective dissemination of the project results both during and after completion of the contract;

Please note that networks of more than eight participants should be particularly closely scrutinised to ensure that they will have the structures necessary to provide an effective co-ordination and integration of their joint activities.

## 3. Quality and content of the network’s training programme

a. **Training need.** If the requested funding for the network is higher than EUR 1.5 million, this criteria is of particular importance. The main objective of networks is to promote the training through research of young scientists within the frame of high quality transnational projects. The expert should award high marks for training need only:

- when there is a special interest or need, at the Community level, to promote the training of young researchers, in the research areas covered by the joint project;
- when it is clear that the European human potential in the research field will benefit from the training delivered in the project, and the career prospects of the young researchers will be enhanced.

b. **Training programme.** The young researchers appointed with network funds should receive training that goes beyond simply being employed to work in a research team of another country. The expert should therefore award high marks for the quality of the training only:

- where the training programme proposed for the young researchers takes advantage of the international nature of the network, and is sufficiently detailed in terms of special measures that the network intends to take to ensure training is delivered;
- when the research teams in the network offer to provide an appropriate training environment and demonstrate that gender aspects have been adequately integrated into the proposed training programme for the young researchers (balance of men/women in teams, in the decision-making process etc).

c. **Justification of the appointment of the young researchers.** The network must justify first, the overall total of person-months promised in the proposal and second, the proposed split between pre- and post-doctoral researchers in each of the participant nodes, and requested length of appointment. The expert should award high marks for justification only:

- when the resources allocated to the project are sufficient for the number of young researchers to be trained (as specified in the proposal), in terms of staff available and previous training experience;
- when it is clear that the network participants have taken into account the training opportunities offered in each node in their choice of pre- or post-doctoral researchers;
- when the network has a well thought out strategy for publicising vacancies and the salaries offered by the research teams are sufficient (notwithstanding any legal constraints) to ensure a high level of interest in the vacancies;
- when special measures are foreseen to promote equal opportunities for male and female researchers in terms of the appointment of young researchers.

## (B) Secondary criteria

While respecting the overriding primary criteria described above throughout the selection process, proposals successfully demonstrating the incorporation of the two criteria listed below, will be favoured at the margin over other proposals of equal merit.

a. **Training in a context promoting interactions between different disciplines and/or in complementary research teams.** One of the secondary aims of the networks activity is to encourage the exploitation of the multidisciplinary and/or complementary aspects of a network proposal for the **explicit purpose of training young researchers**. Therefore, where network proposals can clearly demonstrate that the multidisciplinary/complementary nature of their network will be exploited in the programme of training for young researchers, the network proposal will be judged at an advantage over other proposals of equal merit.

b. **Training in an industrially relevant context.** An equally important secondary criterion is enhanced co-operation between academia and industry in the training of the young researchers, whether or not the industrial connection is a signatory party. For that reason, the expert should judge whether any connections to industry, as stated in the network proposal, are **exploited to enhance the network's training programme**. Only under these circumstances will connections to industry be deemed to give a particular network proposal an advantage over other proposals of equal merit.

## Marking scheme

Marks for the quality of a proposal are awarded out of a maximum of 100 on the base of the primary evaluation criteria. The two secondary criteria will be used to decide between proposals of otherwise equal merit.

Each evaluation criterion (primary and secondary) is marked by the experts on a scale from 0 to 10. In this scheme, the scores indicate the following with respect to the criterion under examination:

- 0 - the proposal fails to address the issue under examination or can not be judged against the criterion due to missing or incomplete information
- 1 - 2 very poor
- 3 - 4 poor
- 5 - 6 fair
- 7 - 8 good
- 9 - 10 excellent

In addition to marking each criterion individually, experts give a mark in the score range defined in the table before for each of the blocks of primary criteria. The experts are encouraged to “look at the larger

picture” and score the proposal against the 3 important categories of criteria as a whole, rather than applying a “mechanical” process of adding the marks for individual criteria. Only these marks for the blocks of criteria will be taken into consideration in the final evaluation of the proposals to award a score out of a maximum of 100. Evaluators are requested to use the full scale of score (0-100) to reflect real differences of quality of the proposals. Normally, the average of the scores should be between 70 and 75 with a standard deviation higher than 10. Exceptions to that rule require justification.

Moreover, the evaluation experts are asked to answer a question relevant to ethical issues/Community policies and if the proposers have not followed the guidelines given by the Commission, the experts are invited to examine very carefully the justification given by the applicant.

### ***Ethical issues and Community policies***

The experts are asked to assess if the relevant ethical issues and safeguards/impact assessment regarding Community policies (e.g. environment) have been adequately taken into account in the preparation of the proposal?

### ***Guidelines***

The following guidelines have been given to applicants. The strong guidelines must be followed. Deviation to the other guidelines should be carefully justified.

- **Strong Guideline:** For each network, the financial support to its research teams from Member States and Associated States should not exceed EUR 200,000 per team, when averaged over all such teams in the network.
- **Strong Guideline:** **At least 60%** of the Community contribution to the network must be spent on personnel and mobility costs related to the temporary appointment of young researchers (salaries/grants paid to appointed young researchers, relocation costs and travel costs for visits to maintain contact with their home scientific community).
- **Strong Guideline:** Community support will normally not be granted to procure durable equipment. The only exception will be made in the case of funds used to equip a research team situated in a less-favoured region of the Community in which a researcher who has been trained abroad for a minimum duration of one year at a post-doctoral level, is appointed to an established position in that legal entity and will be active in the Human Potential network project. In order to target support towards research teams appointing researchers at the start of their scientific career, only those researchers having held an established position for five years or less are eligible for the research teams reimbursement of durable equipment.
- Major imbalances among the teams in terms of the funding requested have to be justified in the proposal (particularly where it is proposed that one of the teams in the network should receive more than twice the average requested for all teams). In terms of international balance, no more than 40% of the funding requested should be allocated to the teams of one country (except for twinnings);
- Network contracts will normally not exceed EUR 1.5 million in terms of Community funding. However, larger contracts may be concluded where the proposed work is of special interest to the Community in a field of research of particular importance for training.
- Networks will normally not exceed 4 years in duration.
- Networks should involve at least five mutually independent<sup>2</sup> legal entities which are established in at least three Member States of the Community or Associated States. At least one of these legal entities

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<sup>2</sup> An organisation is not considered independent if:

It is under the same direct or indirect control as another organisation, or

It directly or indirectly controls another organisation, or

It is directly or indirectly controlled by another organisation.

Control:

Company A controls company B if:

A, directly or indirectly, holds more than 50% of the share capital of B, or

must be established in a Community Member State. Networks of smaller size working in emerging and novel interdisciplinary fields of science and technology may exceptionally be supported and in this case at least two must be mutually independent legal entities established in two different Member States or, in a Member State and an Associated State.

The experts are invited to consider the justification for the proposals falling outside the guidelines and recommend an action:

- To bring the proposal inside guidelines (this will always be the case for the strong guidelines)
- To accept the justification and leave the budget as such
- To reject the proposal (score should then be set accordingly).

The experts are informed when a proposal does not conform to the guidelines

**Applicants have been informed that, as a general rule, where proposals that are selected for funding have conformed to these guidelines and have adequately justified the level of financial support requested, they will be granted the level of financial support requested in the proposal.**

**ANNEX E:**  
**INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION FORM**

<b>Page 1</b>	Primary evaluation criteria
<b>Page 4</b>	Secondary evaluation criteria
<b>Page 5</b>	Ethical issues and Community policies Funding justification Declaration by the panel member

Panel members responsible for a proposal should ensure that all five pages are properly completed.

The completed forms must be sent to the panel co-ordinator one week before the panel plenary meeting at the latest. Fax (+32 2 296 21 36) or E-mail can be used but in this case the signed originals must be given to the panel co-ordinator at the panel plenary meeting.

*Note: These forms may be downloaded from the CORDIS server location <http://www.cordis.lu/improving> (look under Research Training Networks)*



Proposal N°:

Short Title:

Panel:

Panel Member:

Primary Evaluation Criteria	Range of Scores	Score
<b>2. Quality of the network partnership, organisation and management</b>	<b>0 to 30</b>	
<p><i>a. Collective expertise:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the participants collectively the necessary expertise and competence to carry out the project?</li> <li>• Will their contributions address different aspects of the joint project?</li> <li>• Are at least three of the participants (the so-called “core teams”) already established in the area of the proposed research, are they of high quality and from different countries of the Community and Associated States?</li> </ul>	0 to 10	
<p><i>b. Quality of the collaboration.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it clear from the proposal that the collaboration between the teams at the working level will be meaningful, interactive and mutually beneficial for the researchers taking part?</li> <li>• Is there a convincing explanation of how any less experienced teams will be properly integrated into the project?</li> </ul>	0 to 10	
<p><i>c. Organisation and management.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the organisation and management proposed for the network well adapted to the scope and complexity of the joint project? Do all participants take responsibility for the organisation and management?</li> <li>• Are the techniques proposed for co-ordinating the joint project considered as being sufficient and suitable?</li> <li>• Has the network co-ordinator demonstrated the necessary scientific and organisational competence (for example, in putting together the proposal itself)?</li> <li>• Is it clear that the network has a carefully planned strategy for effective dissemination of the project results both during and after completion of the contract?</li> </ul>	0 to 10	
<p><b>Comments (mandatory):</b></p>		

Proposal N°:

Short Title:

Panel:

Panel Member:

Primary Evaluation Criteria	Range of Scores	Score
<b>3. Quality and content of the network's training programme</b>	<b>0 to 30</b>	
<p><i>a. Training need:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a special interest or need, at the Community level, to promote the training of young researchers, in the research areas covered by the joint project?</li> <li>• Is it clear that the European human potential in the research field will benefit from the training delivered in the project, and the career prospects of the young researchers will be enhanced?</li> </ul>	0 to 10	
<p><i>b. Training programme:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the training programme proposed for the young researchers take advantage of the international nature of the network, and is sufficiently detailed in terms of special measures that the network intends to take to ensure training is delivered?</li> <li>• Do the research teams in the network offer to provide an appropriate training environment and do they demonstrate that gender aspects have been adequately integrated into the proposed training programme for the young researchers (balance of men/women in teams, in the decision-making process etc)?</li> </ul>	0 to 10	
<p><i>c. Justification of the appointment of the young researchers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the resources allocated to the project sufficient for the number of young researchers to be trained (as specified in the proposal), in terms of staff available and previous training experience?</li> <li>• Is it clear that the network participants have taken into account the training opportunities offered in each node in their choice of pre- or post-doctoral researchers?</li> <li>• Has the network a well thought out strategy for publicising vacancies and are the salaries offered by the research teams are sufficient (notwithstanding any legal constraints) to ensure a high level of interest in the vacancies?</li> <li>• Are special measures foreseen to promote equal opportunities for male and female researchers in terms of the appointment of young researchers?</li> </ul>	0 to 10	
<b>Comments (mandatory):</b>		
<b>Total (1+2+3)</b>	<b>0 to 100</b>	

Proposal N°:

Short Title:

Panel:

Panel Member:

Secondary Evaluation Criteria	Range of Scores	Score
<p><i>a. Training in a context promoting interactions between different disciplines and/or in complementary research teams:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If relevant, has the network clearly demonstrated that their multidisciplinary/complementary nature will be exploited in the programme of training for young researchers?</li> </ul>	0 to 10	
<p><i>b. Training in an industrially relevant context:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are any connections to industry stated in the network proposal exploited in the network's training programme to enhance their training programme for young researchers?</li> </ul>	0 to 10	
<p><b>Justify the marks given for the secondary criteria (mandatory):</b></p>		

Proposal N°:

Short Title:

Panel:

Panel Member:

**Ethical Issues and Communities Policies**

Have relevant ethical issues and safeguards/impact assessment regarding Community policies (e.g. environment) been adequately taken into account in the preparation of the proposal?

YES NO 

**In the case of negative answer, please provide comments to explain:**

**Guidelines (only for proposals outside guidelines)**

If the proposal does not conform to the guidelines, is it justified?

YES NO 

**If no, explain what actions you recommend:**

**Declaration by the panel member**

I declare that I have neither direct conflict of interest nor any direct or indirect link with the proposal that could influence my impartiality. I undertake to keep confidential this proposal and any matter relating to it.

I declare that any external expert having helped me in the evaluation of the proposal has respected the rules of conduct, impartiality and confidentiality described in the Human Potential Research Training Networks guide for evaluators.

Place:

Full Name (*please print*):

Date:

Signature: