



Aim Higher

EUROSTARS

Funding excellence
in innovation

Guidelines for evaluating
the applications



September 2014
Version 1.1





Aim Higher

This document provides experts with a description of the evaluation criteria and how to apply them to a Eurostars application.

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Eureka Association - B - 1200 BRUSSELS
T +32 2 777 09 50
www.eurostars-eureka.eu

CONTACT > www.eurostars-eureka.eu/#in-your-country

Eurostars is a joint programme between more than 30 EUREKA member countries and the European Union



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Important things to know

Eurostars uses a two-step expert evaluation process

An application must navigate through a number of different steps if it is to become approved and receive financial support. There are two steps involving evaluations from experts:

- › Evaluation by three remote experts
- › Scoring and ranking by an independent evaluation panel (IEP)

What the experts do

The functioning of Eurostars is entirely dependent on the evaluations performed by our individual experts.

The assessments of our experts help direct millions of Euros of taxpayer's money to R&D performing small and medium-sized enterprises for market-oriented research and development.

An expert uses their technical and market expertise within their specialist field to provide objective assessments consisting of scores, justifications, comments and recommendations.

We pay particular attention to the application of technology to produce marketable products, processes and services. The applied marketing strategy of projects is considered as important as the degree of innovation and the technical merits. It is therefore vital that you, the expert, have an excellent understanding of dissemination strategies, appropriate market areas and routes to that market.

Experts have the ability to exclude poor quality applications

As with all of the other steps (checking for completeness of an application, checking for eligibility) not all applications will successfully pass each stage.

This is true of both steps involving experts.

Only if at least two of the three experts agree that at least two of the three criteria are satisfactory, will the application advance to the IEP for ranking.

Your output must be useful and relevant

Your justifications will be used to provide feedback to the applicants. They must be coherent, relevant and of use. Do not be afraid to be direct and honest.

Your comments will be critical in identifying potential weaknesses.

In the case of weak applications, it will be the justifications you provide which will be the basis for excluding the application. Your comments will be the basis of the feedback given to applicants.

We expect assessments of excellent quality

Eurostars expects excellence. This is true whether you are applying for funding, or whether you are evaluating the applications.

If you fall short of our expectations you will be asked to repeat the work. If you continue to produce unsatisfactory work we reserve the right to suspend any payment or financial compensation.

We expect you to follow our code of practice

- › You will evaluate applications independently.
- › You will evaluate applications objectively.
- › You will evaluate applications without prejudice.
- › You will give sufficient time and effort to the process.
- › You will provide accurate scores using the entirety of the scale available.
 - › Very poor applications will receive 1 point.
 - › Applications which are excellent and can barely be improved upon should be given 6 points.
- › You will clearly justify each score that you provide.
 - › Statements which are specific to the application at hand.
 - › Not vague, generic or formulaic answers taken from this document, other Eurostars guidelines, or readily available information sources (e.g. Wikipedia).
 - › Statements and scores will not be contradictory to one another.
- › You will uphold the confidential nature of the application.

We take conflict of interest seriously

A conflict of interest undermines everything that we are trying to achieve. We need you to openly and honestly inform us if there is any reason that you cannot or might not be able to perform an objective evaluation.

Experts who inform us of such an issue will be unable to evaluate applications during that period, but will be welcome to participate again in the future.

Occasionally, it is not clear that a conflict exists until after the initial invitation. Do not worry – as long as you inform us as soon as you are aware of the fact, we can take steps to correct this.

However we have a zero tolerance approach to individuals who fail to declare a conflict which we later discover.

- > You will be excluded from working for Eurostars or EUREKA in the future.
- > We will seek reimbursement of all fees paid to you for your work.
- > We will inform the Ministries in the affected countries.
- > We will inform the European Commission, and those responsible for managing their expert evaluation processes.

If you have any doubts about this issue, email us immediately at experts@eurostars-eureka.eu with subject 'question regarding conflict of interest'.

Conflict of Interest

DISQUALIFYING: THE EXPERT...	POTENTIALLY DISQUALIFYING: THE EXPERT...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > was involved in the preparation of an application; > stands to benefit directly should an application be accepted; > stands to benefit directly should an application be rejected; > has a close or other family relationship with any person representing an applicant legal entity in the applications; > is a director, trustee or partner of an application legal entity; > is employed by one of the applicant legal entities in the applications; > is in any other situation that compromises his/her ability to evaluate the applications objectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > was employed by one of the applicant legal entities in an application within the previous two (2) years; > is employed by one of the EUREKA NPC or funding bodies; > is involved in the management or coordination of one or more of the EUREKA initiatives; > is involved in a contract or research collaboration with an applicant legal entity, or had been so in the previous two (2) years; > is in any other situation that could cast doubt on his/her ability to evaluate the applications impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party. > Other circumstances which may arise but are not specifically listed above.

The Expert shall have not submitted nor be involved in any application to be assessed during the prescribed evaluation period.

If you discover that your assigned application raises a conflict of interest you are under the obligation to declare this to the EUREKA Secretariat immediately.

Evaluation documents

In order to perform an evaluation, you must login to the [Eurostars experts' website](#). Evaluations must be made using the designated form.

Documents relating to the application

Application Form: The project, its business case, its technical outline, its structure, costs and division of work and a description of each partners capabilities, tasks and ambitions.

Participant financial annexes: For each participant in the application: 2 financial reports. These documents may be submitted in the national language, so you may not be able to read them. If no financial reports can be submitted (for example, for a start-up company), a business plan may be accepted. Business plans must be provided in English. Organizations which are publically funded are not required to send these documents – this will have already been verified before you start your evaluation.

In any case, the most important information is transcribed into the application form and is usually presented in questions P31-P39, with a summary (in English) supplied in question P20 for each organization.

Application annex (optional – maximum of one): Illustrations and graphics cannot be included in the application form. These may be supplied separately.

Documents you need to perform the evaluation

Expert report: a form (PDF) where you record your scores and justifications.

Appointment letter: this is the official confirmation that work has been assigned. It contains the unique code which you need to reference when submitting your invoice.

Glossary

Application: all documents necessary for a Eurostars application (i.e. Eurostars application form and all required and optional annexes).

Eligible costs: costs that are nationally considered eligible in the application for which a financial contribution can be obtained. They may vary from country to country.

Full-time equivalency (FTE): is a measure of worker involvement in an activity. A company with 10 full-time employees has an FTE of 10, while a second company of 10 half-time employees will only have an FTE of 5. Therefore, a fixed percentage of a company's FTE is a percentage of the potential for work across the company, not a percentage of the number of employees.

Overheads: each country may apply its own unique overhead rate, some at more than 100%.

Product: the outcome or result of the project. It may be an actual product, or it may be a service or a process.

Work Package: each Eurostars application is built up by work packages. These are coherent clusters of activities or tasks that together are meant to realise a part of the application's overall objectives. All work packages together include 100% of the work defined by the project scope and captures all deliverables – internal, external, interim – in terms of the work to be completed. The overall structure of the application and the interdependency between the individual work packages should be described separately.

To do list

01. Carefully read the application (and annex if provided).
02. Rate each of the sub criteria on the 6 point scale
 - > 1 being the lowest
 - > 6 being the highest
03. Provide a summary of your thoughts.
04. Double-check content.
05. Upload your completed evaluation onto the secure website before the specified deadline.

Once you have successfully submitted your evaluation you will receive an email confirmation. This should be kept safe.

To ensure the highest quality we select evaluations at random for quality control purposes.

If we feel for any reason that improvements are required, we will ask you to amend your evaluation. You will be required to correct and return the document to us.

If the quality issues continue to be unaddressed we reserve the right to refuse payment and, in serious cases, to exclude you from our expert database.

Explanations

Section 1 - The three main criteria and their sub criteria

Quality and efficiency of the implementation – Project planning and consortium quality

1. Quality of the consortium

You should comment on elements such as:

- › The management experience of the partners,
- › The core business activities of the partners,
- › As a consortium, do the partners possess necessary and complementary key qualifications to meet the objectives and results?
- › As individuals, does each partner have the necessary technological experience to carry out their tasks?
- › Do all of the partners have commercial and/or scientific interests in achieving the results?

Sections of particular interest within the application form:

- › Section 5 – the consortium
- › Section 6 – the participants

2. Added value through co-operation

You should comment on elements such as:

- › The benefits brought through cooperation – does this need to be done/benefit from being done
 - › cooperatively?
 - › internationally?
- › Does the project demonstrate clear sharing of risks, of costs, of know-how, of benefits?
- › Is there a clear synergy in the partnership, i.e. the collaboration results in outputs which are not independently obtainable and which are greater than what could be achieved by any partner on its own?
- › Does the cooperation support and expand capabilities and knowledge of each partner beyond project results e.g. admittance to a new market, new technology and new skills?
- › Do all SME partners stand to gain commercially from the exploitation of the project results?
- › Does one partner stand to benefit disproportionately from exploitation of the project results (when compared to their input)?

Sections of particular interest within the application form:

- › Section 5 – the consortium - particularly information relating to IPR
- › Section 6 – the participants - particularly question P23

3. Realistic and clearly defined project management & planning

You should comment on elements such as:

- › Methodology and planning approach,
- › Milestones (key decision points) and outcomes,
- › Task identification,
- › Does the project plan include a realistic time schedule in relation to tasks and objectives?
- › Are key issues to be addressed and project objective(s) and outputs fully identified and precisely formulated from the outset?
- › Are the project's goals clearly identified and logically set out through well described work packages?
- › Are the work packages broken-down into logical, well-defined tasks which are relevant to the expected results?
- › Are the milestones and deliverables clearly identified? Do they allow verification of progress during project implementation, including go/no-go decisions?
- › Are the roles and responsibilities of each partner within each work package clearly described and differentiated in the work plan? Is task allocation by any partners to sub-contractors clearly identified?
- › Is the project management structure well described? Is there an appropriate and capable structure for implementing the project (e.g. taking decisions, tracking and ensuring progress, reporting, etc.)?
- › Does the main partner (as project manager) have relevant project management experience, including experience of multi-partner projects?
- › Do all partners have a well-defined role in the project and the assigned project tasks are in-line with that partner's core business?
- › If required, are the potential ethical/legal issues identified?

Sections of particular interest within the application form:

- › Section 4 – the work packages
- › Section 5 – the consortium
- › Section 6 – the participants

4. Reasonable cost structure

You should comment on elements such as:

- › Is the cost breakdown well-structured and corresponds to the tasks and activities to be implemented by each partner?
- › Are the costs reasonable (i.e. neither underestimated nor overestimated) for the proposed work and for each of the partners?
- › Are the project costs clearly justified?
 - › Are subcontracting costs appropriately justified?

Sections of particular interest within the application form:

- › Section 4 – the work packages
- › Section 6 – the participants

Impact - Market and Commercialisation

5. Market size

You should comment on elements such as:

- › Have the applicants quantified the market size, growth prospects and expected market share?
- › Are these descriptions realistic?
- › Is there a profitable market for the product?
- › Does this represent a strong foundation for sustainable competitiveness?
- › Is the potential market share well considered and justified?

Sections of particular interest within the application form:

- › Section 2 – the business case
- › Section 3 – the project
- › Section 5 – the consortium

6. Market access and risk

You should comment on elements such as:

- > Are the partners qualified to break into the market or, preferably, do they already have an established position?
- > Has the proposal identified barriers to the market and/or included important customers, or in other ways reduced the time and costs to market
 - > Regulatory
 - > Standards and certification
 - > Commercial
 - > Competition
 - > Quality
 - > Pricing
 - > Market acceptance

Sections of particular interest within the application form:

- > Section 2 – the business case
- > Section 3 – the project
- > Section 5 – the consortium
- > Section 6 – the participants

7. Competitive advantage

You should comment on elements such as:

- > Will the product be unique with very few competing products?
- > Will the product have a significant price or quality advantage over competing products or benefit to the customer?
- > Will the partners be able to generate strong IP to prevent copying of the end results? Will they need to?
- > Will the know-how developed within the project be such that they would have a very strong and clear time to market advantage over competition?
- > Have they carefully analysed existing IP and assessed whether it might affect their marketing approach?

Sections of particular interest within the application form:

- > Section 2 – the business case
- > Section 3 – the project
- > Section 5 – the consortium - particularly information relating to IPR

8. Clear and realistic commercialization plans

You should comment on elements such as:

- > Has the consortium clearly outlined the plans for commercialization of the product?
- > Has the split or sharing of project outputs been defined with a view to commercialization?
- > Have the individual participant's business plans for the commercialization been defined and are they realistic?
- > Do the commercialization plans include realistic and credible projections for
 - > revenue,
 - > investment required,
 - > anticipated costs associated with the product launch on the market?
- > Have the participants a proven track record of commercialization of R&D?

Sections of particular interest within the application form:

- > Section 2 – the business case
- > Section 3 – the project
- > Section 4 – the work packages
- > Section 5 – the consortium
- > Section 6 – the participants

Excellence - Innovation and R&D

9. Degree of innovation

You should comment on elements such as:

- > Is the product technologically new or a significant improvement on existing solutions?
- > Does it deliver objectively new products, processes or services to the consumer with an added value?
- > Is the product an advance on commercial state-of-the-art?

Sections of particular interest within the application form:

- > Section 2 – the business case
- > Section 3 – the project

10. New applied knowledge

You should comment on elements such as:

- › Will the project lead to the creation of new knowledge which is not yet known in the area?
- › Will the project resolve an issue of technical uncertainty, resulting in new knowledge?
- › Will the new knowledge bring the partners to the forefront of the area in question and thus well beyond the present state-of-the-art?
- › Could the technology or knowledge being developed be the potential basis for a wide number of applications?
- › Does the application for the technology/knowledge have the potential to be expanded into other areas/sectors beyond the scope of the application being developed in this project?

Sections of particular interest within the application form:

- › Section 2 – the business case
- › Section 3 – the project
- › Section 5 – the consortium - particularly information relating to IPR

11. Level of technical challenge

You should comment on elements such as:

- › Does the project involve a high degree of technical challenge?
- › Does achieving the project results require the application of a significant level of specialist's know-how and knowledge?
- › Is the level of technical challenge such that the project results could not easily be replicated by others?

Sections of particular interest within the application form:

- › Section 2 – the business case
- › Section 3 – the project
- › Section 5 – the consortium - particularly information relating to IPR

12. Technical achievability & risk

You should comment on elements such as:

- › Is the approach technically sound or is it fundamentally flawed?
- › Is the appropriate technology being employed for the envisaged development?
- › Are the proposed technical developments achievable within the defined budget and timescale?
- › Is the research method described appropriate for achieving the technical developments (e.g. it includes a programme of design, test, analysis, decision and iteration if appropriate)?
- › Is there an appropriate analysis of the risks?
- › Are the associated technical risks well described and approach to minimizing the effects of the risks has been outlined?
- › Does the project incorporate go/no-go decision points for appropriate outcomes and at regular intervals?

Sections of particular interest within the application form:

- › Section 2 – the business case
- › Section 3 – the project
- › Section 4 – the work packages

Section 2 - Summary

Please provide a brief summary of your conclusions (max. 1500 characters).

Additionally, please write 3 sentences that best characterise the strengths and 3 sentences that best characterise the weaknesses of the application.

Section 3 - Final questions

13. Is the stated time to market (Question 13 of the application form) realistic? If not, please justify.

14. Does the application represent value for public money - do you recommend this application for funding?

How Eurostars selects, assigns and works with experts

Availability

You will be contacted shortly before the submission deadline [for applications] to see if you are available and willing to evaluate applications. If you respond positively, we add you to the list of 'eligible' experts.

Selection

After the submission deadline, and once we have filtered out the ineligible applications, we begin to match applications to potential experts. This is performed by project officers (PO) with a technical, scientific or engineering background, using database search engines. The PO will read the application in question and by using keywords and phrases, will search the database to identify the three most suitable experts from the eligible list. For insurance, the PO will usually identify one or two reserve experts too.

It is possible that one expert is selected for several applications. If we think that the workload presents a potential problem we will reallocate some to the reserve expert instead. It is also possible that an eligible expert receives no evaluations. This can be for a number of reasons:

- › You confirm your availability before the applications are even received – we may not receive any within your specialist areas.
- › You may be selected as a reserve but never used.
- › You may have an excellent profile, but the database may contain more suitable individuals.

Assignment

Eurostars is a fast process. We have an evaluation window measured in weeks, not months.

As soon as we are able, we will begin to assign the experts who have been chosen to perform an evaluation. Depending on the number of applications we receive, this may take several days to complete. For each project you will be sent an email confirming the work and inviting you to access the documentation through the secure website. This email will also notify you of the deadline by which you must send us your completed evaluation.

Performing the work

Evaluations must be performed in accordance with the expectations of quality outlined previously. Evaluations must be performed in English.

- > For a single application, we will give you 7 days to perform and deliver the work.
- > For up to three applications, you will be expected to deliver them all within 10 days.
- > Where you will be given more than three applications, we will contact you and make specific arrangements.

There are many experts in many different countries - we cannot take into account your personal holidays or national holiday within the countries.

However, we understand that things can happen, and that circumstances can change. If you are called away for a few days, or are no longer available, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can discuss the situation and plan alternative arrangements that suit everyone.

If we have seen that you have not logged into our secure website within a certain number of days we will attempt to contact you to make sure that everything is fine.

If we cannot reach you and we cannot see that you are working, we will have to withdraw the invitation to evaluate and seek an alternative expert – usually one of the reserve experts originally identified.

Delivery

Our website prevents empty or incomplete evaluations being uploaded. If you experience a problem uploading the document, please check that it is complete. Evaluations can only be uploaded once. If it is submitted in error, or you wish to amend the document please contact us so that we can help.

Confidentiality

The EUREKA Secretariat

We aspire to be as transparent and open as possible. Eurostars is paid for by the tax payers of the participating countries. They have a right to know who they are giving money.

However, Eurostars does follow the ideas of peer review. We know that confidentiality can give experts the confidence to provide critical assessment without fear of retaliatory remarks. The anonymity given to experts will be upheld by Eurostars as long as experts adhere to our code of conduct, and do not abuse it.

As a rule the only people who have the ability to match specific evaluations to the people who wrote them are the employees of the EUREKA Secretariat. We do not comment on the status of individual experts. If you contact us and request a reference, we will only confirm whether or not you have performed any evaluations. We will be unable to provide an endorsement of your abilities.

We will not publically acknowledge* your role in the evaluation of a particular project.

*Eurostars, like most publically financed initiatives, is subject to performance reviews. Undertakings of this nature require the disclosure of certain information to a number of organisations or individuals. Within this context, it may be possible to identify the specific work of specific individuals.

Such information may be available to:

- > Organizations
 - > the European Commission,
 - > auditors of the above organizations,
 - > organisations charged with analysing the effectiveness of Eurostars as a programme.

All employees of these organizations are subject to confidentiality clauses within their employment contracts.

- > Individuals
 - > experts charged with analysing the effectiveness of Eurostars as a programme.

Experts are required to sign confidentiality agreements and to declare any potential conflict of interest. They are required to treat information contained within applications in the strictest confidence.

Occasionally, we are asked to provide data for the purposes of academic studies and scientific literature. Data is provided in an aggregate and anonymous manner, and the users are subject to the same confidentiality agreements as you, the experts evaluating the applications.

The Expert

The Expert is responsible for ensuring and maintaining confidentiality of any data, documents or other material related to the evaluation process, during and after completion of the evaluation. In the cases of a breach of the confidentiality, the EUREKA Secretariat reserves the right to suspend any payment or compensation and in serious cases to undertake legal action.

Information Security

Electronic submission of application documents

The electronic submission of evaluations uses https, which encrypts and decrypts the requests and information between the expert's browser and the server to which evaluations are submitted, using a Secure Socket Layer (SSL). SSL allows an SSL-enabled server to authenticate itself to an SSL-enabled client and vice versa, enabling the machine to establish an encrypted connection.

Data Protection Act

The EUREKA Secretariat is situated in the Kingdom of Belgium and as such is governed by Belgian data protection law. More information can be found (in English, Dutch and French) at <http://www.privacycommission.be>.

The information that evaluators provide will be used in the processing of all aspects of the relevant evaluation. This will include recording on the in-house and the Eurostars-contracted Programme Manager's processing computer and management information systems and in the preparation of material for applicants and for use by the assessment panels. In addition, information may be used in the generation and collation of output and performance indicators and other management statistics. It may also be used in policy and strategy studies to inform management in carrying out the business of the EUREKA Secretariat and in improving business processes.

Any queries on issues relating to data protection should be addressed to:

Eureka Association, Avenue de Tervuren 2, 1040 Brussels, Belgium.