EMPIR FAQ
Call 2020 ‘Virtual’ Evaluation Meetings

In response to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the EMPIR Committee and the EMPIR Programme Manager have agreed the need for ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings for the EMPIR Call 2020. This is in order to mitigate the impact of current and potential future restrictions on social movement and travel due to COVID-19, to avoid last minute changes and to ensure continued fairness for all applicants.

The purpose of this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document is to provide information on the EMPIR Call 2020 ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings. This information is for the consortia of proposals for Call 2020 and for delegates (i.e. referees and Joint Research Project (JRP) and Joint Network Project (JNP) proposal representatives) who would have otherwise attended the evaluation meetings in person.

PLEASE NOTE: this document may be updated as further information becomes available. Should you have a question that is not addressed below, the most appropriate and expedient form of communication with the EMPIR Management Support Unit (MSU) is by email empir.msu@euramet.org

1. What are ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings?

The EMPIR Call 2020, ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings will be very similar to previous EMPIR evaluation meetings, however they will be held remotely via web conferencing facilities instead of in a physical location.

Delegates, such as referees and JRP and JNP proposal representatives will be able to attend the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings using web conferencing (please see questions 6, 7 & 8 for more information).

2. Why are ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings necessary?

The EMPIR MSU organises and hosts annual evaluation meetings (for the evaluation of eligible proposals) following the close of Stage 2 of an EMPIR Call. The evaluation meetings are; 2-day review conferences for JRP and JNP proposals and a 1-day consensus group meeting for Support for Impact Project (SIP) proposals. In previous years these evaluation meetings have been held in hotels (i.e. at a physical location) across Europe with delegates attending in person.

Due to the unprecedented circumstances which have recently occurred across the world regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, entire countries have been forced to enter into ‘lockdown’. These government enforced ‘lockdowns’ have included restrictions on travel and social movement, which are still on-going and might be re-imposed again at a future date.

Such ‘lockdowns’ and restrictions would prevent the hosting of evaluation meetings (in a physical location) for the EMPIR Call 2020. In the light of this and a possible further wave of COVID-19 cases, the EMPIR Committee and the EMPIR Programme Manager have agreed that the evaluation meetings for the EMPIR Call 2020 should be hosted ‘virtually’.

The ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings are necessary:

- to support the safety and well-being of delegates attending the evaluation meetings
- to conform with restrictions on travel and social movement, that may be in place at the time of the evaluation meetings, due to COVID-19
- to ensure fairness and consistency for delegates attending the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings. By allowing delegates to attend the evaluation meetings ‘virtually’ this should prevent any bias due to different levels of restrictions on travel and social movement due to the status of COVID-19 across different countries at the time of the evaluation meetings
- to ensure that EMPIR Call 2020 proposals can be evaluated as per the EC’s requirements and to the same high standard as previous EMPIR Calls
3. Are ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings different to what is happening in Horizon 2020?

On 30/3/2020 the EC published that it is currently hosting its Horizon 2020 evaluation meetings ‘virtually’ as either video or web conferences, due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Expert contract in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak – Are evaluations and monitoring reviews still taking place?

Call evaluations

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, until further notice, all evaluations are carried out remotely using video or web-conference facilities. All contracted experts will receive further instructions from the call coordinator or EU services. An amendment of their contract is not necessary.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq/13072;type=1;categories=experts;programme=H2020;actions=;keyword=COVID-19%20outbreak

4. Will EMPIR Call 2020 proposals be evaluated in the same way at the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings compared to previous EMPIR Calls?

Call 2020 proposals will be evaluated by independent referees as per previous EMPIR Calls. However, instead of the referees being located together in a single physical location, they will be joining the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings using web conferencing facilities (please see questions 6 & 7 for more information).

Call 2020 JNP, JRP and SIP proposals will be evaluated using the same evaluation and marking criteria as used for previous EMPIR Calls. Please see

- Guide 6: Evaluating EMPIR Projects
- Form 6c: JRP Evaluation
- Form 6d: SIP Evaluation
- Form 6f: JNP Evaluation

Also available at https://msu.euramet.org/downloads/

As with previous EMPIR Calls, the evaluation process at the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings will be facilitated by EMPIR MSU staff. This is to ensure the same standards of impartiality and fairness, and the same rigorous processes are used, as have been achieved at previous EMPIR evaluation meetings.

The ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings will also be attended by: an Independent Observer (appointed by the EC) who will produce a report and recommendations on the evaluation meetings; a representative from the EC; the EMPIR Programme Manager; the EMPIR Chair; and the Deputy EMPIR Chair. As per previous EMPIR Calls, all these attendees will review the evaluation process at the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings.

For information on the agenda for the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings please see question 9.
5. When will the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings be held?
The ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings will be held on the same dates that were originally planned for the evaluation meetings (at a physical location). The schedule of the evaluation meetings will be similar to those for previous EMPIR Calls.

- Support for Networks ‘NET’ Review Conference: Tues 3rd & Weds 4th Nov
- Pre & Co-Normative ‘NRM’ Review Conference: Thurs 5th & Fri 6th Nov
- Support for Impact ‘SIP’ Consensus Group Meeting: Sun 8th Nov
- Metrology for Industry ‘IND’ Review Conference: Mon 9th & Tues 10th Nov
- Fundamental Metrology ‘FUN’ Review Conference: Weds 11th & Thurs 12th Nov

6. When do delegates attend the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings?
Attendance of ALL DELEGATES at the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings is by INVITATION ONLY.
As with previous EMPIR Calls, referees and JRP and JNP proposal representatives must attend the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings as follows:

- **Referees (NET, NRM, IND & FUN)** are required on DAYS 1 & 2 of each review conference
- **Representatives (NET, NRM, IND & FUN)** are required on DAY 1 ONLY of a review conference
- **Referees (SIP)** are required on DAY 1 of the consensus group meeting
- **Proposers (SIP)** are NOT ALLOWED to attend the consensus group meeting

7. How are delegates invited to join the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings?
The EMPIR MSU intends to host the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings using Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams has been chosen for its security, ability to be used with multiple operating systems and widespread access/use. See [https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software](https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software)

Referees and JRP and JNP proposal representatives will be invited to join the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings, via Microsoft Teams, as follows:

- **Referees (NET, NRM, SIP, IND & FUN)**: referees will be emailed by the EMPIR MSU confirming their selection to participate in the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings by early September. Following this, the EMPIR MSU will email referees further details of the evaluation meetings, including how to join the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings, via Microsoft Teams, nearer to the date of the meetings (mid to late October).

- **Representatives (NET, NRM, IND & FUN)**: ONLY ONE REPRESENTATIVE (for each eligible proposal) can ‘virtually’ attend an evaluation meeting. The REPRESENTATIVE MUST BE AN EMPLOYEE at ONE OF THE PARTNERS in the consortium. Ideally, they will be the coordinator for the proposal or an employee from a Funded Partner.

The EMPIR MSU will send email invitations to consortia after the eligibility of submitted proposals has been established (i.e. following the close of Stage 2). Once each JNP or JRP consortium has confirmed its representative, the EMPIR MSU will email details of how the representative can join the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings, via Microsoft Teams, nearer to the date of the meetings (late October).
8. How do I prepare to join the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings?

As stated in question 7, the EMPIR MSU intends to host the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings using Microsoft Teams. If delegates do not already have access to Microsoft Teams, it can be downloaded for free at https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/download-app

The EMPIR MSU recommends that all delegates familiarise themselves with Microsoft Teams prior to the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings. Basic demonstrations from Microsoft on how to use Teams are available at https://teamsdemo.office.com/#/0/0 and https://teamsdemo.office.com/ChatsAndMeetings/index.html#/0/0

In order to support delegates in joining the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings, the EMPIR MSU intends to invite delegates to a practice Microsoft Teams session prior to the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings.

In addition, on the morning of each ‘virtual’ evaluation meeting there will be a registration session and delegates are advised to register early so that any issues with joining Microsoft Teams can be identified and resolved before the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings begin.

PLEASE NOTE: whilst the EMPIR MSU will try to assist and support delegates with their use of Microsoft Teams for the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings, they cannot be held responsible for delegates’ use or any issues delegates may encounter when using Microsoft Teams.

9. Is there an agenda for the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings?

Similar to previous EMPIR Calls, the agenda for the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings will be available on the MSU website https://msu.euramet.org/calls.html in October (following the close of Stage 2).

PLEASE NOTE: that agenda timings will be Central European Time (CET).

In the meantime, details of the structure of the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings can be found in Guide 6: Evaluating EMPIR Projects

To ensure consistency between EMPIR Calls, the structure of the ‘virtual’ evaluation meetings is almost identical to those of previous EMPIR evaluation meetings. The only minor change is the necessary substitution of the face-to-face poster session between referees and JNP and JRP representatives at a review conference, with a presentation session.