

Guide 6: Evaluating Partnership Proposals

Important information about these documents

This call is being held ahead of any agreement from the Commission that relevant funding will be available. At present the relevant legislation is still under discussion in both Council and Parliament, and there is no certainty on the detailed arrangements for funding selected projects. The funding of any selected project, and the terms and conditions of participation in the projects, are dependent on completion of the legislative process and the subsequent contractual processes between the European Commission and EURAMET. Potential proposers act on this information at their own risk.

Background

Last year, EURAMET submitted a draft proposal to the EC for a further research programme to be established under article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) to follow on from EMRP and EMPIR. This was published by the EC at https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/european-partnerships-horizon-europe/candidates-digital-industry-and-space_en.

The initiative would be called the European Partnership on Metrology and would aim to create, by 2030, a sustainable and effective system for metrology at European level that ensures Europe has a world-class metrology system that:

- Provides metrology solutions, fundamental metrological reference data and methods, offering fit-for-purpose solutions supporting and stimulating European innovation and responding to societal challenges.
- Supports and enables effective design and implementation of regulation and standards that underpin public policies that address societal challenges.

The Commission commissioned an impact assessment into this proposal and 11 others in similar priority areas, and, based on those findings, published their own proposal for the Partnership, their response to the impact assessment and a draft of the Decision on 23rd February 2021. See:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2021:89:FIN>

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_702

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021SC0035&qid=1614677899327>

That draft Decision is currently under discussion in the European Council and the European Parliament.

Under the assumption that the Council and Parliament pass the basic act which would form the legal basis for this research programme, and that the participating countries named in the Draft Decision submit the required commitment letters, EURAMET is publishing potential Selected Research Topics and draft guidance notes. These documents are not approved by the Commission nor will they lead to a binding decision by EURAMET e.V. for any further negotiation or funding. All published guides and templates are subject to amendment by the EC and EURAMET e.V. as further information becomes known.

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1 Scope

This Guide explains how to evaluate Partnership proposals and the responsibilities of those involved. However, it does not include:

- [Form 6c: JRP Evaluation](#)
- information on eligibility, or writing and costing a proposal
- specific details for a call (e.g. evaluation criterion weightings) see the table of [Budget and Features](#).

2 Referees

In order to become a EURAMET referee, experts must declare their interest by registering with EURAMET's referees database.

EURAMET uses its referees database to compile a pool of potential referees for each Call. From this pool of potential referees EURAMET then selects appropriate referees to evaluate each proposal. Each proposal will be evaluated by at least three referees.

When selecting referees EURAMET seeks those with a high level of expertise and professional experience (in relevant areas). Very good language skills (in particular in English) are mandatory.

Providing this can be satisfied, EURAMET then seeks a balance in terms of geographical and business-sector balance, gender balance, appropriate rotation of referees from year to year, and absence of conflict of interest.

Referees must attend a review conference or virtual review conference to evaluate proposals. The EURAMET Management Support Unit (MSU) will liaise with referees in order to arrange these events.

As part of their evaluation duties each referee MUST

- complete, sign and email a copy of [Form 6a: Referee Code of Conduct and Declaration](#) to the EURAMET Management Support Unit (MSU) prior to taking part in the evaluation process.
- perform their work
 - independently and in a personal capacity. Referees do NOT represent either their employer or country.
 - impartially and treat all proposals equally. Proposals MUST be evaluated impartially on their merits irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants.
 - objectively and evaluate each proposal as submitted i.e. its merit and not its potential if certain changes were to be made.
 - accurately and make their judgement against the official evaluation criteria and the Call or topic the proposal addresses, and nothing else.
 - consistently and apply the same of judgement to all proposals.
- take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of their work is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest (a conflict of interest). Where a referee identifies a conflict of interest (at any stage during the evaluation process) they MUST IMMEDIATELY inform EURAMET.
- treat confidentially all data, documents or other material (in any form) that is disclosed to them in writing, electronically or orally in relation to the evaluation. In addition, the referee IS RESPONSIBLE for ensuring ADEQUATE PROTECTION OF ALL HARDCOPY AND ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS and information (made available to them) and for returning, erasing, or destroying all confidential information after the end of the evaluation.

3 Evaluation

3.1 Evaluation criteria & scoring

The evaluation criteria for proposals are:

1. Excellence
2. Impact
3. The quality and efficiency of the implementation

[Form 6c: JRP Evaluation](#) details the aspects to be taken into account for each of the evaluation criteria.

Each evaluation criteria must be scored in the range 0-5. The whole range of scores should be used; half marks may be given.

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

The threshold for individual criteria is 3. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the 3 individual scores is 10. If a proposal has scored less than this, it cannot be funded.

In some Calls the evaluation criteria may be weighted as indicated in the table of [Budget and Features](#)

Consensus comments must be given by referees to support the scores given for each evaluation criterion and in order to provide feedback to consortia.

3.2 Proposal admissibility and eligibility

EURAMET will check the admissibility and eligibility of all proposals and only eligible proposals will be evaluated. Where eligibility is not met, the proposal will be withdrawn, and the proposers informed. If it becomes clear before, during or after the evaluation phase, that one or more of the admissibility or eligibility criteria has not been met, the proposal will be declared inadmissible or ineligible and will be rejected.

Where there is doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, EURAMET reserves the right to proceed with its evaluation, pending a final decision on eligibility. The fact that a proposal is evaluated in such circumstances does not constitute proof of its eligibility.

3.3 Principles of evaluation

All Joint Research Project (JRP) proposals are evaluated against the evaluation criteria in [Form 6c: JRP Evaluation](#). Referees must evaluate each proposal as submitted and not its potential if certain changes were to be made.

If referees identify shortcomings they must reflect these in a lower score for the relevant evaluation criteria. Referees **MUST** only explain the shortcomings, and **NOT** make recommendations.

Proposals with significant weaknesses (e.g. that prevent the project from achieving its objectives or with seriously over-estimated resources) **MUST NOT** receive above-threshold scores.

Potential Partnership on Metrology Call Process

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Any proposal which contravenes fundamental ethical principles, or which does not fulfil the conditions set out for that Call may be excluded from evaluation at any time. In clear-cut cases (e.g. a proposal which does not include the required number of partners), the proposal may be ruled out of scope without referring it to referees.

3.4 Referees' individual preliminary assessment

Referees MUST prepare before attending a review conference or virtual review conference. Each referee will be emailed, by the EURAMET MSU, links to the proposal(s) to be evaluated and other relevant supporting documents, a few weeks prior to the review conferences.

Referees must not discuss proposals with proposers or other referees at this time. Instead, using this information referees should undertake their own individual preliminary assessment and:

- Familiarise themselves with the evaluation criteria in [Form 6c: JRP Evaluation](#)
- Understand the requirements for proposals in [Guide 4: Writing Joint Research Projects \(JRPs\)](#)
- Read the proposals assigned to them and note any key issues, or areas that need clarification.

Referees may also read other proposals (i.e. other than those assigned to them) for comparison.

Referees can privately score each proposal assigned to them, against the evaluation criteria. However, please note that a referees' individual preliminary assessment is private and only the final consensus score (agreed by all referees) will be recorded by EURAMET at the review conference or virtual review conference.

3.5 Review conference

Referees must attend either a review conference (in a physical location) or a virtual review conference for the evaluation of JRP proposals. Each review conference contains the following activities (in chronological order):

- Briefings on the evaluation process.
- A poster session (review conference in a physical location) or presentation session (virtual review conference) where referees clarify their understanding of proposals through informal discussions with consortium representatives.
- A private referee question development session in which referees share their initial opinions and formulate formal questions for each proposal to be asked to representatives in the next session.
- A formal question and answer session between referees and consortium representatives.
- A private referee marking session. For each proposal, referees agree a consensus score and comments for each evaluation criterion and complete a [Form 6c: JRP Evaluation](#).
- A private referee ranked list session where a ranked list of all proposals is formed based on the referee's scores. Where two or more proposals receive the same weighted score, the referees will attempt to separate them through discussion and a vote. The referees then agree the final ranked list.

3.6 Confirming the ranked list

If the referees decide not to separate any ties around the budget line then proposals will be separated: (i) first by giving more weight to the evaluation criteria with the largest weight for that Call, (ii) then by selecting projects that allow the target external participation for the Call to be met most closely and (iii) finally, selecting projects that allow the overall target external participation for the programme as a whole to be met most closely.

EURAMET's Partnership Committee will agree which proposals to fund based on the ranked list and recommendations of the referees and the available budget. Generally, proposals will be funded in ranked order until the available budget is spent, however EURAMET's Partnership Committee may adjust the distribution of the budget between Calls or decide to leave some budget unallocated.

4 EURAMET & Observers

4.1 EURAMET Management Support Unit

The EURAMET MSU is responsible for;

- (i) arranging the administration and logistics of the review conferences,
- (ii) checking the admissibility and eligibility of proposals to be evaluated
- (iii) managing the referee process for the review conferences, including the referee honoraria and expenses
- (iv) recording the outcome of proposal evaluations
- (v) negotiating grant contracts for successful proposals.

EURAMET MSU staff may also act as moderators/facilitators in referee discussions at the review conferences.

The MSU seeks to assist and gain consensus between referees, without any prejudice for or against particular proposals or the organisations involved and will not attempt to influence the opinion of referees.

4.2 The European Commission's Independent Observer & Representative

The European Commission may send an independent observer and a representative to the review conferences. The independent observer and representative will not participate directly in the evaluation procedure.

The independent observer will have access to all areas of the evaluation process and will report their observations and opinions to the European Commission and EURAMET.

5 Evaluation review procedure

If a proposer considers that the evaluation of their proposal has not been carried out in accordance with the Horizon Europe rules for Participation, the relevant work plan or the Call for proposals, they can request a review. A request for review shall relate to a specific proposal, and shall be submitted by the coordinator of the proposal to EMPIR.msu@euramet.org within 30 days of the date on which EURAMET informs the coordinator of the evaluation results.

On receipt of a request for review, EURAMET will form an evaluation review committee. The examination shall cover only the procedural aspects of the evaluation, and not the merits of the proposal.

The evaluation review committee shall provide an opinion on the procedural aspects of the evaluation process. The committee may recommend one of the following:

- re-evaluation of the proposal primarily by evaluators not involved in the previous evaluation.
- confirmation of the initial evaluation.

On the basis of this recommendation, a decision shall be taken by EURAMET and notified to the coordinator of the proposal. EURAMET will take such decision without undue delay.