



#HorizonEU

THE EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION PROGRAMME

2021 – 2027

HORIZON EUROPE PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Standard Briefing

History of changes

VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	06.05.2021	Original version
2.0	25.06.2021	Adaptation to the approach on the 'Do no significant harm principle'. Some minor formatting changes.
3.0	18.03.2022	Added link to video-briefings to help experts evaluate policy aspects Added slides about panel review and proposals with the same score
4.0	26.09.2022	Added slides on evaluating lump sum and COFUND proposals
5.0	07.03.2023	Added slides with the definition of score descriptors and on blind evaluations
6.0	24.03.2023	Updated annex on blind evaluation
7.0	27.10.2023	Updated annex on lump sum proposals (personnel cost dashboard; documenting the budget assessment)
8.0	14.03.2024	Updated slide on Confidentiality. Added point on the use of generative AI tools. Added slide with AI disclaimer.
9.0	05.07.2024	Updated slides on evaluation criteria highlighting that all comments should come with rationale behind. Added slide on experts' obligation to document their assessment of the lump sum budget
10.0	15.05.2025	Updated slides on Do no significant harm principle (DNSH) and Artificial intelligence (AI). New slide on the use of generative AI tools. Updated slides on blind evaluation pilot.
11.0	15.07.2025	Updated slide on completing reports in lump sum evaluations
12.0	15.09.2025	Updated slide on Proposal scoring, thresholds and weighting after WP2025 adoption.
13.0	01.12.2025	Updated slide on guiding principles. Updated slides on the use of AI tools. Updated slides on impact criteria and proposal scoring after WP2026/7 adoption. Updated slides on Blind Evaluation.

Content

Horizon Europe: An EU R&I programme	About Horizon Europe The impact logic in HE work programmes Overview of the evaluation procedure
Standard evaluation procedure	Evaluation criteria per type of action How to evaluate proposals
Individual evaluation and scoring	Evaluating the excellence, impact and quality of the implementation criteria Additional questions in the evaluation form The role of independent experts
Guiding principles	Confidentiality Conflicts of interest
Additional Information	Observers Implicit gender bias Logistic
Annexes	Evaluating Lump sum proposals Evaluation COFUND proposals

HORIZON EUROPE PROPOSAL EVALUATION

THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT EXPERTS





The role of independent experts

As an independent expert:

- You are **responsible for carrying out the evaluation of the proposals yourself** and you are **not allowed to delegate the work** to another person!
- You must close reports in the electronic system **within a given deadline**.
 - This is part of your contractual obligations!
 - The allowance/expenses you claim may be reduced or rejected otherwise.
- Significant funding decisions will be made on the basis of your assessment.
- If you suspect any form of **misconduct** (e.g. plagiarism, double funding), **please report** this to EU staff.
- You do not need to comment on **ethics**, as proposals that are **successful** in this scientific evaluation will undergo an ethics **review**.



Guiding principles

Independence

- You are evaluating in a personal capacity.
- You represent neither your employer, nor your country!

Impartiality & objectivity

- You must treat all proposals equally and evaluate them on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants!
- You must keep to subject-related judgements, without letting personal beliefs, external influences or outside factors such as geo-political events interfere!

Accuracy

- You evaluate each proposal as submitted, meaning on its own merit, not its potential if certain changes were to be made.
- You make your judgment against the official evaluation criteria and the call or topic the proposal addresses and nothing else.

Consistency

- You apply the same standard of judgment to all proposals



Confidentiality

You must:

- **Not discuss evaluation matters** (e.g. content of proposals, evaluation results or opinions of fellow experts) with anyone, including:
 - Other experts or EU staff or any other person (e.g. colleagues, students...) not directly involved in the evaluation of the proposal.
 - **The sole exception:** Your fellow experts who are evaluating the same proposal in a consensus group or Panel review.
- **Not contact partners** in the consortium, sub-contractors or any third parties.
- **Not disclose names** of your fellow experts.
- **Maintain confidentiality of documents, paper or electronic**, at all times and wherever you do your evaluation work (on-site or remotely).
 - Do not take anything away from the evaluation building (be it paper or electronic).
 - Return, destroy or delete all confidential documents, paper or electronic, upon completing your work, as instructed.
 - Please be aware that **the use of generative AI tools** for evaluation, particularly generative AI online tools, may represent a breach of the confidentiality requirements of your contract*.



Use of generative AI tools for proposal preparation

- Applicants:
 - **may use generative AI tools** when preparing proposals
 - **must be fully transparent** towards the granting authority and disclose which AI tools were used and how they were utilized;
 - must **exercise caution** and careful consideration while using generative AI tools;
 - must **review and validate** thoroughly any AI-generated content to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations;
 - remain **fully responsible for the content of the proposal** (including the parts produced by AI tools);
- The use of generative AI tools in drafting proposals **may not be considered** by expert evaluators **as a reason to penalise a proposal**.



Use of generative AI for proposal preparation

Disclaimer included in Application Forms (Part B)

*“When considering the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the preparation of the proposal, it is imperative to exercise caution and careful consideration. The AI-generated content should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicants to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations. **Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal** (even those parts produced by the AI tool) and must be transparent in disclosing which AI tools were used and how they were utilised”.*

Specifically, **applicants are required** to:

- **Verify the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness** of the content and any citations generated by the AI tool and correct any errors or inconsistencies.
- **Provide a list of sources used to generate content and citations**, including those generated by the AI tool. Double-check citations to ensure they are accurate and properly referenced.
- **Be conscious of the potential for plagiarism** where the AI tool may have reproduced substantial text from other sources. Check the original sources to be sure you are not plagiarising someone else’s work.
- **Acknowledge the limitations of the AI tool** in the proposal preparation, including the potential for bias, errors, and gaps in knowledge”.



Use of generative AI tools for proposal evaluation

Expert evaluators:

- **must not delegate** the evaluation of proposals to AI tools
- may use AI tools:
 - only for side tasks (e.g. to collect background information) and **not for the assessment** of proposals
 - only if the **confidentiality** of all the proposal information and the protection of **personal data** are ensured
 - if they take necessary precautions for potential limitations of AI tools (i.e. hallucinations and biases)
- **are responsible** for keeping the **confidentiality** of proposal information and the protection of **personal data**
- must be **aware that breaching confidentiality or personal data** obligations may have serious consequences, such as rejection, reduction, suspension or termination.



Conflicts of interest

You have a COI if you:

Were involved in the preparation of the proposal.

Stand to benefit directly/indirectly, if the proposal is successful or fails.

Have a close family/personal relationship with any person representing an applicant legal entity.

Are a director/trustee/partner of an applicant or involved in the management of an applicant's organisation.

Are employed or contracted by an applicant or a named subcontractor.

Are a member of an Advisory Group or Programme Committee in an area related to the call in question.

Are a National Contact Point or are directly working for the Enterprise Europe Network.

Are involved in a competing proposal.



Artificial intelligence

NEW! Simplification of proposal template from WP2025 onwards: no requirement for participants to demonstrate the robustness of the AI tools used, unless this is required by the topic conditions. Assessment of robustness of AI tool will only be performed when this is specified in the topic description or conditions.

- In relevant topics, experts must answer an additional question as part of their individual evaluations on whether the activities proposed involve the **use and/or development of AI-based systems and/or techniques**.
- If you answer 'yes' to this question, you must **assess the technical robustness^(*)** of the proposed AI-system as part of the excellence criterion (if applicable).
- In addition, your answer to this question will help us to with the **proper follow-up** of any aspects related to **Artificial Intelligence** in projects funded under Horizon Europe.

AI-based systems or techniques should be, or be developed to become:

- **Technically robust, accurate and reproducible**, and able to deal with and inform about possible failures, inaccuracies and errors, proportionate to the assessed risk posed by the AI-based system or technique.
- **Socially robust**, in that they duly consider the context and environment in which they operate.
- **Reliable and function as intended**, minimizing unintentional and unexpected harm, preventing unacceptable harm and safeguarding the physical and mental integrity of humans.
- Able to provide a suitable explanation of its **decision-making process**, whenever an AI-based system can have a significant impact on people's lives.

For more information:

[HE Programme Guide](#)
[General Annexes of the WP](#)
[Standard application form \(RIAs/IAs\)](#)
[Support video briefings to help experts evaluate policy aspects](#)





Thank you!

HorizonEU

<http://ec.europa.eu/horizon-europe>



© European Union 2021

Unless otherwise noted the reuse of this presentation is authorised under the [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license. For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the EU, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective right holders.

Image credits: © ivector #235536634, #249868181, #251163013, #266009682, #273480523, #362422833, #241215668, #244690530, #245719946, #251163053, #252508849, 2020. Source: Stock.Adobe.com. Icons © Flaticon – all rights reserved.