

**External Monitoring
of the
FP6 IST Thematic Priority**

**Synthesis of the Reports of the
Independent Monitoring Panels**

December 2006

Executive Summary

The majority of the evaluations of proposals responding to calls in the IST theme of FP6 were monitored.

During the evolution of FP6, the evaluation processes became well-established and the Monitoring Panels consistently found that they were managed very professionally, and that evaluations were conducted in a fair and equitable manner.

Contributing to the evolution of the evaluation process, the Monitoring Panels made approaching 100 recommendations for improvement. The Commission responded well to these recommendations, approving and implementing about half – most of the rest being impossible or against the presently accepted rules of the Commission.

In the opinion of the later Monitoring Panels, the processes were executed almost as well as they could be and that, while further fine-tuning might be made to the processes used in FP6, the transition to FP7 would be an appropriate time to consider more fundamental changes to the evaluation process. The recommendations fall into two categories:

- *Strategic*: ways to achieve a more effective outcome with regard to the strategic aims of the programme, and
- *Operational*: ways to increase efficiency of the evaluation process

The major strategic recommendation is to review alternative approaches to evaluation taken by other agencies around the world, with a view to selection – or design – of a more effective and efficient system that achieves both technical and socio-economic strategic goals, while being both transparent and fair.

In particular, the monitoring panels recommend that the Commission focuses on:

- ways to enhance the coverage of strategic objectives with a portfolio of projects, rather than considering each proposed project in isolation, and
- ways to achieve greater coherence among both proposers and evaluators about the specific aims of Calls for Proposals.

The monitoring panels also make recommendations for further fine-tuning to improve all aspects of fairness, effectiveness, and efficiency, even if the present processes are to be continued into FP7.

Strategic and operational considerations are not entirely independent: operational improvements in efficiency can yield strategic benefit by improving coherence of proposers and evaluators, and by freeing resource for strategic considerations; clarity of strategic aims and consistency of approach to their achievement will make the operational process more efficient. Improvements in both will improve efficiency for both industry and the research community

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report synthesizes the experiences, the results and the recommendations from the monitoring of the evaluations and associated processes for the calls for proposals in the IST Priority Theme during the Sixth Framework Programme.

The report focuses first on the still pertinent recommendations for consideration as part of a significant revision of the evaluation processes for FP7.

This is followed by other important observations of the monitoring panels that do not entail specific recommendations.

An annex provides an overview of the monitoring process; the way that it has evolved during FP6; and observations of the monitoring panels on the way that the process has operated in practice.

A second annex provides an overview of the results of surveys of the opinions of evaluators on the operation of evaluations in FP6. Opinions of IST evaluators are compared with opinions of evaluators throughout FP6 (the majority associated with calls by DG-RTD).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations that arise from the monitoring of evaluations during FP6 fall into two categories:

- *Strategic*: ways to achieve a more effective outcome with regard to the strategic aims of the programme, and
- *Operational*: ways to increase efficiency of the evaluation process

However, these categories are coupled: operational improvements can yield strategic benefit and vice versa. For instance, greater efficiency in the process will contribute to greater effectiveness by reducing pressure on both evaluators and officials, and allowing more time to be spent on important issues that have strategic impact. On the other hand, better understanding of the evaluation criteria will save time. Addressing both together should yield beneficial synergy and increase efficiency for the constituency.

2.1. Strategic recommendations

2.1.1. *Evaluate options for alternative evaluation processes for FP7*

Issue: The present evaluation processes are almost as refined and well-managed as they could be. To make significant further improvement to achievement of the strategic goals of the programme will require more major changes to the processes.

Basis for concern: Toward the end of FP6, the Monitoring Panel for the 5th Call concluded that, while further fine-tuning can make the present evaluation processes even more consistent, more effective and perhaps even more efficient, it is unlikely to make really significant impact on either

effectiveness or efficiency. Most improvements to the existing processes would require more resources, with negative knock-on effects. For instance, to allow evaluators more time would lengthen evaluation periods which would reduce the pool of evaluators – especially the much-needed evaluators from industry.

Several monitoring panels recommended that more use be made of 2-stage evaluation and remote reading, in order to access a richer set of evaluators - particularly from industry and business - but this has not been done within FP6. Other suggestions from evaluators with experience of other evaluation processes include panel-based consensus meetings (as in ‘FET Open’) to improve calibration and to avoid the problem of systematic bias in CMs.

Recommendation: Rather than make specific recommendations for particular changes to the evaluation process, it is recommended that the Commission reviews alternative approaches to evaluation taken by other agencies around the world, with a view to selection – or design – of a more effective and efficient system.

Alternative evaluation processes should be reviewed with regard to (at least):

- achievement of both technical and socio-economic strategic goals;
- support for achievement of strategic aims;
- the pros and cons of a 2-stage proposal process;
- transparency and fairness;
- access to appropriate mix of evaluators;
- avoidance of systematic bias (peer-review conservatism, ‘averaging’, ...);
- equality of contribution of evaluators (avoiding domination by individuals);
- access to industrial expertise;
- management of potential conflicts of interest;
- calibration of evaluators¹;
- provision of high quality feedback to proposers;
- confidentiality;
- time pressure on evaluators;
- sensitivity to scheduling disturbance; and
- best practice in use of ICT (see also section 2.2.4, below).

2.1.2. Coverage of Strategic Objectives

Issue: The Work Programme and the Call specify the strategic objectives to be addressed. To achieve coverage of each Strategic Objective typically requires a coherent portfolio of projects addressing a range of technical objectives, using a mix of instruments addressing different facets of scientific and technological development and deployment, and different communities. Ideally this desired portfolio should be covered by the

¹ While ‘calibration’ is a way to ameliorate the ambiguity of evaluation criteria, it would be desirable to reduce the ambiguity as far as possible at source. To this end, the Commission should refine its approach to the choice, description, and explanation of evaluation criteria, and subsequent ‘calibration’ of evaluators’ interpretations.

projects that are evaluated above threshold and earmarked for funding. Such strategic needs cannot be addressed within the present process.

Basis for concern: Monitoring panels observed that the emphasis on considering each proposal on its own merits had the consequence that the ranking of proposals within the scope of a single panel paid no regard to strategic coverage.

In addition, the difficulty of calibration across sub-panels had the consequence that merging ranked proposals from sub-panels in a combined panel paid no attention to the relative strategic importance of different types of proposal (e.g. STREPS and SSAs). The alternative sometimes used – of an ‘arithmetic’ merge of sub-panels based on normalised scores - avoided the considerable difficulty of ranking differing types of proposal across sub-panels with poor calibration between them, but had the consequence that strategic coverage is necessarily disregarded.

Recommendation: Greater emphasis should be given to consideration of strategic coverage and realisation of the desired portfolio to achieve coverage, rather than the policy that was adopted in FP6 of treating each proposal entirely on its own merits.

A range of measures should be considered that could contribute to achievement of optimum coverage of the portfolio. One measure, for instance, could be the addition of a criterion regarding relevance to the strategic aims and potential contribution to the strategic portfolio. During the panel meeting, evaluators would then have the opportunity to prioritise a set of above threshold projects in order to match the desired portfolio.

2.1.3. Technical Focus of Strategic Objectives

Issue: The Commission, Member States and the industrial and academic communities commit considerable resources to supporting strategic advisory groups, consultations, Internal Reflection Groups, unit workshops, Information Days, and so on, in order to devise, enrich, explain, interpret and evolve interpretation of the aims of the programme. This richness and precision of the aims cannot, in general, be captured in the brief context of a call for proposals. During FP6 the evolving interpretation was captured in additional material that was usually made available on CORDIS and summarised in the specific foci of each S.O. in each Call. However, inconsistency in communication of this detail to proposers and to evaluators jeopardises the fairness of the process and the selection of proposals that best address those aims.

Basis for concern: Monitoring Panels observed considerable variation in the extent to which the expression of the specific technical objectives in the work-programme were sufficiently clear and up-to-date to stand alone and, if not, in the way in which any additional explanation, guidance, and additional interpretive material was provided to proposers and to evaluators.

The consequent variability in the attention that proposers and then evaluators gave to the alignment of proposals to the specific aims of the call

exacerbated the problem of (lack of) calibration among evaluators with resulting difficulties in achieving consensus and in panel ranking. More importantly, it caused mismatches between expectations of proposers and evaluators, and consequent ‘noisy’ assessment of the criteria for ‘Relevance’ and ‘Impact’, that in turn affected how well the mix of projects that were eventually selected actually addressed the strategic objectives of the programme.

The question of how to handle information additional to that contained in the call became acute when there were significant developments *since* publication of the call that were pertinent to the specific focus, such as publication of a standard or the emergence of a ‘technology platform’.

Since, during FP6, additional material was not cited in the workprogramme nor in the calls for proposals, it might be argued that neither proposers nor evaluators should have been expected to make use of it. On the other hand, it could be argued that the efforts of all those involved in establishing more precise needs for Europe were therefore wasted, and moreover that it was unfair that those proposers who *did* make a serious attempt to thoroughly understand and align their proposal with the detailed ambitions of the calls gained no credit for their diligence. Moreover, this exacerbated the problem of over-subscription: even if proposals that did not address the specific aims were not selected, if their authors had not understand those aims, then their effort was wasted.

Recommendation: A common approach should be established across the various units on how any additional guidance on the interpretation of the call should be conveyed to both proposers and evaluators. (Note that this recommendation is closely related to the recommendation on ‘coverage’, above.) A ‘common policy’ does not necessarily imply a common procedure. The policy might, for instance, include options for deciding on *whether* additional information is required and *if so* how it should be communicated to both proposers and evaluators. A simple improvement to the process would be to clarify, in the Work Programme, the need for proposers to pay special attention to the specific foci of calls and to take cognisance of the evolving information provided by the Commission about the Strategic Objectives, so that proposers are fully aware of any information pertinent to the evaluation of their proposal.

The potential for 2-stage evaluation should be explored as a means to filter and/or provide feedback to proposers, so as to better match proposals that reach ‘full’ evaluation to strategic aims.

The Commission should also consider the potential for ‘rebalancing’ calls. However, their value for helping to achieve the desired strategic portfolio must be weighed against the significant overhead of administering *any* call for proposals. The Commission should also bear in mind the experience of earlier Framework Programmes in which more frequent calls led to opportunistic proposals which created considerable administrative burden.

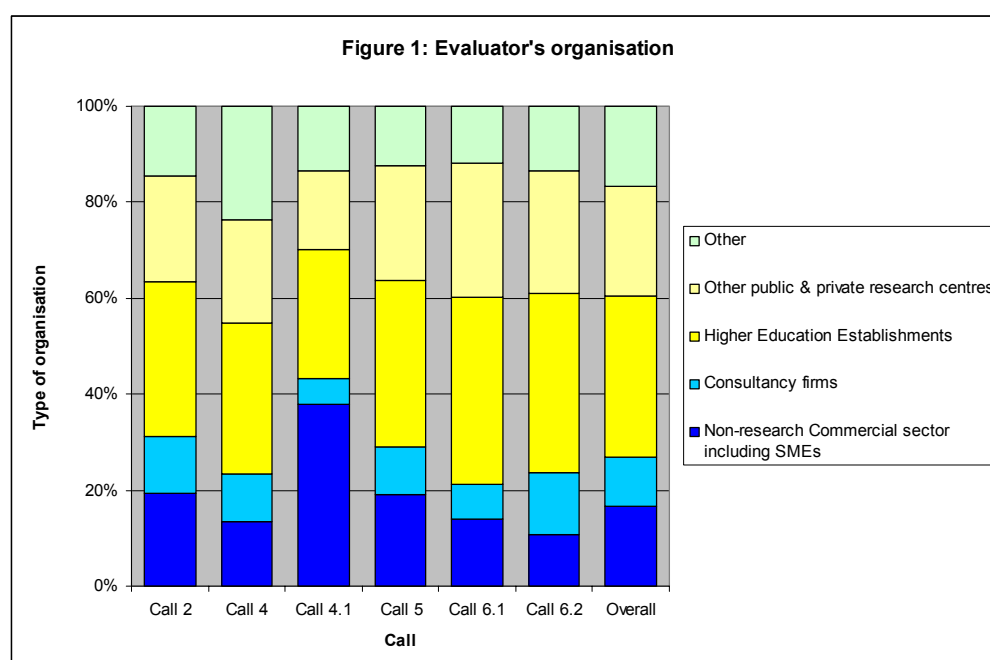
2.2. Operational recommendations

2.2.1. Participation of evaluators with industrial and business expertise

Issue: During FP6, evaluations have suffered from a shortage of industrial and business expertise.

Basis for concern: Figure 1 below shows that the proportion of evaluators from the commercial sector is around 27%, including the 10% that are consultants². This is higher than the proportion overall in FP6 (i.e. including DG-RTD evaluations), which is about 16%, of which more than half are consultants.

However, monitoring panels repeatedly expressed concern that industrial representation is too low, especially considering that the IST thematic research is intended to be industrially-oriented.



Recommendation: The Commission should consider initiating an awareness campaign for FP7 via European and national industry associations and selected top level executives to promote the benefits of the EU FP. Special attention should be paid to engagement of industry in New Member States.

The aim should be to convince industry and business of the value of the programme's strategic objectives for European business and the opportunities for their experts to gain valuable insight into the strategic thinking and scientific research underpinning advanced technology development, both around Europe and worldwide.

² The anomalous profile for Call 4 in Figure 1 derives from a high 'unknown' figure among 'Other', while Call 4.1 was a very small call involving few evaluators, having little impact on the overall statistics.

While a significant proportion of evaluators (18% in the IST theme – see also Annex 2)) prefer *not* to have remote reading of proposals, monitoring panels consistently recommend that it be investigated further, in order to gain the engagement of experts who are not able to commit to extended periods of time in Brussels or Luxembourg.

In parallel, a more sophisticated approach to the management of potential conflicts of interest is needed: more trust and more flexibility should be given to units and to the experts themselves to manage potential conflicts of interest. To assist experts, the Commission should consider also presenting, during the first ‘specific briefing’, an automatically extracted alphabetical list of participating companies - without identification of the proposals that they are involved in - so as to alert experts to unexpected conflicts.

To assist in the appropriate selection and assignment of experts, CVs in the evaluator database should be up-to-date. Experts should be required to update them early enough before the close of a call and the Commission should send an automatic reminder to all potential evaluators to do this.

The Commission should also consider establishing a certification process for evaluators that might be linked to budget limits and to the type of instrument for which they are considered competent.³

2.2.2. *Sharing of best practice*

Issue: The ‘best practice’ workshops and training sessions introduced for Project Officers during FP6 were thought by the monitoring panels to be very effective. Nevertheless there is still scope for improvement in the consistency and efficiency with which different units manage their evaluations.

Basis for concern: Monitoring panels observed that when there were no major differences between the initial opinions and scores of evaluators, then Consensus Meetings ran smoothly, leading to clear ESRs that in turn facilitated ranking in Panel Meetings.

However, monitoring panels consistently found that despite thorough briefing and a variety of calibration processes, there remained differences in interpretation of the criteria⁴ and in understanding of the pertinence of proposals to the aims of the call (*see section 2.1.3, above*). This led, frequently, to divergence of opinions in the Consensus Meetings, to compromise in the ‘Consensus Reports’ (despite efforts to achieve consensus rather than compromise), to fuzzily worded draft ESRs, to time-consuming confusion in Panel Meetings, and finally to concerns about the ultimate rankings. This was an inefficient usage of scarce resources.

³ While targeted primarily at the selection and assignment of experts with industrial and business experience, the recommendations for better maintenance of the CV database and the potential for ‘certification’ are more generally applicable.

⁴ The December 2005 Survey of Evaluators found that 80% had *some* difficulty with the criteria.

Almost all the downstream problems – especially final ranking – had their origins upstream - initially in the clarity of the call, then in the selection and assignment of evaluators, in the evaluators’ understanding of the criteria, and their understanding of the aims of the call. Subsequent steps in the process had their own knock-on effects as indicated above. Consequently, monitoring panels consistently identified the need to continue to share best practice in all aspects of the evaluation process and its management – particularly of meetings - and to seek even better practice – possibly drawing on the practices of other international funding agencies (*see section 2.1.1, above*).

Recommendation: The sharing of best practice should be continued and extended to address:

- unit-level planning and scheduling;
- briefings and re-briefings;
- evaluator selection (see also section 2.2.1, above);
- evaluator calibration;
- evaluator assignment (see also section 2.2.1, above);
- the arrangement and management of Panel Meetings, including specifically:
 - agreement on and clear description of valid approaches to ranking of closely-scored proposals,
 - whatever the time pressure, ensure that the draft ESR remarks are clear and consistent with the scores before the Panel Meeting begins;
- use of neutral, fluent English-speaking rapporteurs;
- training in meeting management, and particularly in conflict management;
- the use of ICT (see also section 2.2.4, below);
- suggestion of a glossary, for the IST theme as a whole, to ensure a common interpretation and usage of words among both proposers and evaluators.

2.2.3. *Use of ICT*

Issue: The efficiency of the evaluation process is lower than it could be because ICT is not used as much as it could be. This exacerbates the time-pressure on evaluators and officials, in turn exacerbating all the difficulties indicated above, posing a risk that experts will become de-motivated.

Basis for concern: Monitoring panels repeatedly observed mismatches between the use made by the Commission of ICT during FP6 evaluations, and the expectations of evaluators familiar with other national and international evaluation processes.

Monitoring panels also observed significant differences in the use of ICT between the different units involved in evaluations.

Monitoring panels observed that evaluators expressed frustration at the inefficiencies caused by the failure to use ICT effectively.

Recommendation: ICT should be used much more extensively and consistently for:

- evaluation planning and management – including but not restricted to Pinocchio or its successor;
- automated checking of proposals⁵ for:
 - compliance with requirements (e.g. presentation of financial information),
 - consistency checks – e.g. of tables of effort and costs,
 - automatic checking of text for duplication with other projects, even those already submitted and under negotiation (‘cut-and-paste’ proposals),
 - plausibility of resource requirements and effort/cost figures;
- provision of electronic copies of proposals to facilitate searching, comparison, and cross-referencing by evaluators, while also reducing the environmental impact;
- access to WWW to enable evaluators to check the state of the art etc. (this would require first that a policy be established on the use of material other than that provided by proposers);
- meeting management - for managing the parallel contributions from meeting participants (in a predominantly non-native-English-speaking environment) including:
 - the use of computers and ‘beamers’ in meetings so all participants can share a clear picture of the subject of discussion.
 - the use of wireless microphones in large meeting rooms.
- real-time monitoring of the evaluation process itself in order to detect problems – for instance, evaluators’ biases - early enough to take real time remedial actions;

The ICT should also be designed and configured for the full range of types of user, taking account of their differing needs and affording them appropriate privileges. For instance, the special needs of rapporteurs for consensus meetings and for panel meetings should be accommodated.

Some units have developed their own ICT tools, for instance for scheduling and monitoring evaluation. As well as sharing best practise in the operation of the evaluation processes, the best tools and the best practice in the use of tools should also be shared.

⁵ Automatic proposal checking would require a standard program or template for proposal submission. This has already been done in earlier IST programmes, and is required in various national programmes.

3. OTHER OBSERVATIONS OF THE MONITORING PANELS (NOT LEADING TO ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS)

3.1. Fairness of people

The Monitoring Panels consistently observed that both evaluators and Commission officials acted fairly, ethically and with integrity. The need for fairness has been at the heart of the ethos of all those involved in evaluation. Both officials and evaluators themselves have been alert to unforeseen conflicts of interest and potential conflicts of interest and have consistently acted with integrity when they have arisen.

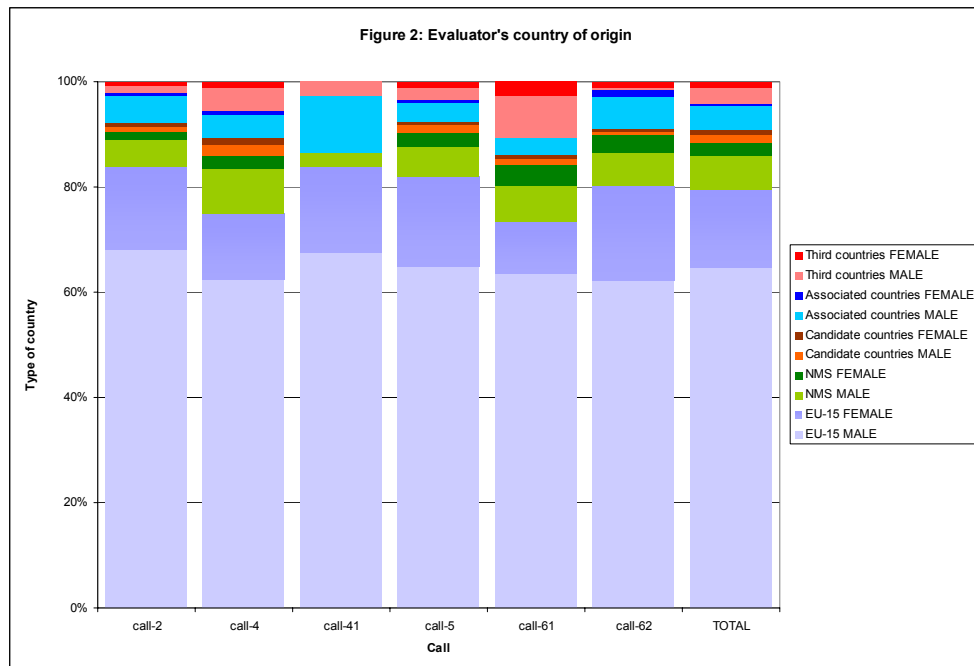
3.2. Fairness of the process

Monitoring Panels observed that, in general, the process avoided bias. Moreover, they observed that the process did discriminate properly between excellent proposals and mediocre proposals.

However, the consequence of the well-known difficulties of calibration, coupled with the difficulty that panels find in adjusting the ‘arithmetic’ ranking, means that the final ranking did not necessarily properly reflect the true merit of proposals in the ‘middle ground’ – including those in the critical area around the funding threshold. So, while the process did not embody any evident bias, it could be considered unfair in failing to give proper recognition to the relative merit of proposals. No additional recommendation is made here, since this concern is addressed via the earlier recommendations for review of the basic process and for sharing of best practice in the conduct of the process – especially those recommendations concerned with enhancing understanding of the strategic objectives (among both proposers and evaluators), and improving ‘calibration’ among evaluators.

3.3. Participation

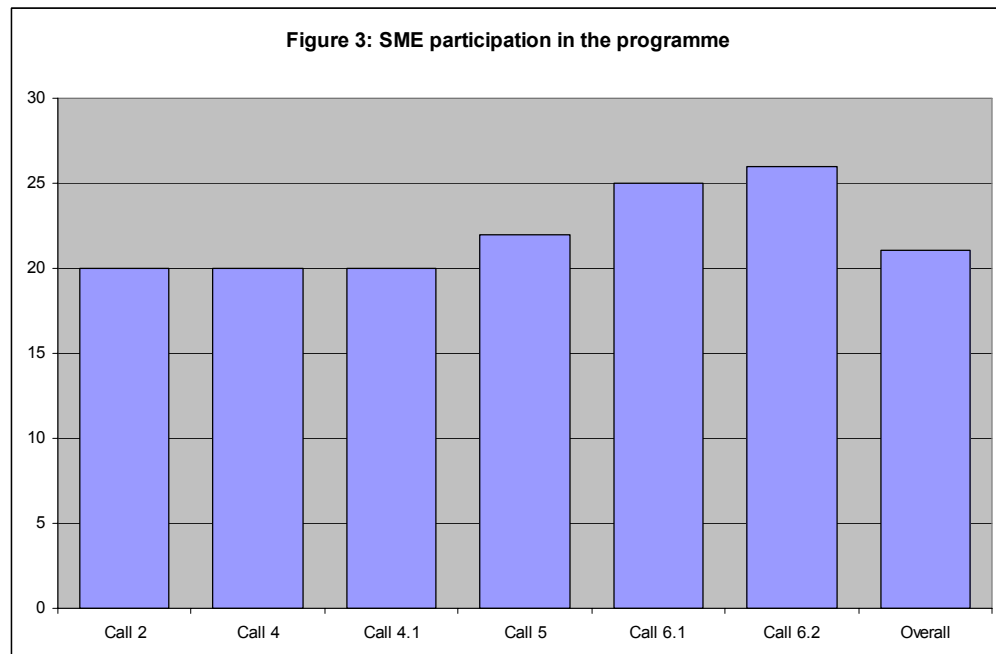
The Commission constantly strives to achieve appropriate representation from different countries, and an appropriate gender balance. Figure 2 below shows that almost 80% of evaluators are from the old ‘EU15’, which reflects their greater participation in the IST Programme.



The Monitoring Panels found no evidence that the processes of evaluation discriminated for or against the participation of New Member States or 3rd countries. Nor was there evidence of gender bias.

3.4. SME participation

SME participation in the programme, measured by the proportion of funding sought by SME partners in proposals, has remained more or less constant, at a little over 20% overall. (See figure 3 below.)



Monitoring panels made no recommendation for change to the existing process in order to affect the extent of participation by SMEs.

ANNEX 1

Monitoring History

Calls 1, 2, 4, 4.1, 5, and 6 in the IST Priority Theme were monitored.

1. THE MONITORING PROCESS

The monitoring process has followed a similar pattern throughout FP6, but has evolved to become ever more professionally managed.

In each call, after initial selection of a Monitoring Panel, the Commission has briefed the Panel thoroughly on the objectives, any known concerns, any constraints required for probity, the recommendations made in previous monitoring exercises and the Commission's response to those recommendations.

The Commission has consistently made it clear that the Monitoring Panel has freedom to:

- observe and comment on any aspect of the evaluation process and related processes that affect the evaluation and selection of proposals,
- interview Commission officials, at all levels, about the Call process.

Members of the Monitoring Panel have, with slightly varying balance in different calls, observed a mix of:

- general briefings of evaluators by the Commission,
- briefings specific to strategic objectives,
- project officer briefings within units,
- re-briefings during the evaluation period to give evaluators an opportunity to ask for further clarification or to express any concerns,
- consensus meetings,
- panel meetings,
- hearings (for IPs and NoEs) and their associated panel meetings, and in the early calls in FP6 ..
- discussion within the Commission on the Implementation Plan.

Members of the panel also (again with a different balance in different calls) interviewed a selection of both experienced and inexperienced:

- heads of unit,
- unit evaluation co-ordinators,
- project officers, and
- evaluators.

The Commission offered the Monitoring Panel any statistics and statistical analyses that they could provide based upon the data that was being gathered from the

process (such as the profile of the evaluation team, and the results of surveys of evaluators' opinions about the process).

The Commission also made facilities available including access to the staff managing the evaluation in order that panel members could schedule their engagement in the process; office space; and (as FP6 progressed), access to computing and internet facilities and access to the Commission's own database for the status of the evaluation.

Following a particular problem (addressed in the next section of this report) during the evaluation of the 4th Call, Commission staff also made themselves available for daily meetings in order to maintain a coherent view of the observations and to identify and address potential problems 'on-line' during the evaluation period.

2. CHANGES IN THE MONITORING PROCESS OVER TIME

One significant change to the process has been to reduce the scope between the Call 2 Monitoring Panel and that for Call 4 by excluding monitoring of the development of the Implementation Plan and the allocation of the reserve budget.

Another change was the introduction of daily meetings, during the evaluation, between members of the monitoring panel and Commission officials engaged in the evaluation (as mentioned above). This arose from the monitoring of the Call 4 evaluation, when at least one member of the monitoring panel was concerned about the way a particular part of the evaluation had been handled. As a consequence, the affected area of the call had to be repeated (as Call 4.1) at great expense to all concerned. The daily meetings introduced for subsequent calls enabled members of the monitoring panel to express any concerns as they arose, and hence (if those concerns should not be resolved) enabled the possibility of corrective action to be taken during the evaluation itself, reducing the risk of costly cancellation of a part of the call.

The introduction of these daily meetings had other benefits as well. The monitoring panel members could, for instance, liaise with Heads of Unit to refine their coverage of the evaluation, and to optimise their schedule for observation.

3. CHANGES IN THE FOCUS OF THE MONITORING PANEL

While all the monitoring panels addressed the core issue of the fairness and integrity of the evaluation process, there were some specific issues addressed by different panels.

In Call 1, the panel paid particular attention to the then 'new instruments' – Integrated Projects and Networks of Excellence. Given the unfamiliarity of evaluators with the expectations for these instruments, the panel considered the need for clarification of the evaluation criteria for them (in addition to the perennial general problems of calibrated interpretation of the criteria). The panel also paid special attention to the conduct and value of the 'hearings' for these instruments, which constituted a new and then somewhat experimental element in the evaluation process.

In Call 2, the panel expressed concerns about the high level of over-subscription. While it was recognised that competition leads to higher quality research, the cost of the bidding process and frustration within the research community was a concern. The panel recommended clarification of the strategic objectives of calls for proposals, together with ‘pre-screening’ measures, including the possibility of a 2-stage process (a recurrent topic of discussion since the early days of the Framework Programmes).

In Call 4, the panel addressed the need to consider the potential strategic value of proposals, and some of measures that are needed to achieve this, including the need for scientific and market intelligence both to inform the Commission in formulating calls for proposal, and to inform evaluators of those proposals.

While pre-screening and 2-stage processes have not been adopted, and indeed the provision of advisory clarification on the strategic objectives has become more problematic in order to ensure absolute fairness to proposers, the Call 5 monitoring panel returned to the subject of clarification of strategic objectives in the context of helping the Commission to achieve the desired strategic portfolio of projects in an open, transparent and fair way.

4. OBSERVATIONS ON THE OPERATION OF THE MONITORING PROCESS

All monitoring panels found the Commission staff, both those responsible for the evaluation and those responsible for the various Strategic Objectives that were the subject of Calls, responsive and co-operative. Briefings were clear, and within the constraint of the availability of raw data, the Commission provided any information asked for. The daily meetings with the Commission that were introduced during FP6 were particularly valuable for maintaining a coherent view of the observations and for dealing with potential problems in a timely manner.

The Commission has also responded well to the majority of the observations and recommendations made by Monitoring Panels. In particular, the introduction of training for Project Officers and sharing of best practice in management of the evaluation process were considered to be very beneficial.

Monitoring panels did, however, experience difficulty planning their engagement in the evaluation process. In order to maintain a tight schedule for evaluation and selection, and given uncertainty about the proposals that will be received and uncertainty about the availability of evaluators, sickness, etc., the units responsible for the various Strategic Objectives necessarily had difficulty scheduling their evaluation. The scheduling of any hearings was, in addition, dependent on the results of the first round of evaluation and other uncertainties. The consequence of the uncertainty and the late availability of evaluation schedules is that Monitoring Panels had difficulty scheduling their observations effectively – to achieve reasonable coverage of the various aspects of evaluation across the various Strategic Objectives. Some uncertainty is inevitable, but harmonisation around best practice of the way in which Units plan their evaluation (addressed among the recommendations in the body of this report) would help.

ANNEX 2

Evaluators' opinions on the process

After recent calls, on-line surveys have been conducted of the opinions of evaluators about the evaluation process (in all areas of FP6, not just IST). Their views have been sought on issues ranging from logistics to their opinions of the competence of their fellow evaluators, and they have been used to supplement and validate the monitoring panels' own observations.

The surveys have received almost 4500 responses in total, of which 1350 are from the IST theme. A summary of the surveys by DG-RTD⁶ concludes:

- most (c. 95%) evaluators find the quality of the evaluation process at least satisfactory, and often excellent.
- a significant majority (c. 95%) of evaluators with experience of other evaluation schemes find the quality of the EU process as good or better than them.
- there was an increasingly positive opinion of the various evaluation steps during the evolution of FP6, which may be correlated with improvements made to the process by the Commission.

Despite the difference in the balance of the type of employing organisations (discussed above) the views of evaluators in the IST theme are little different from their colleagues elsewhere in the FP. Typically, when normalised to take account of 'Don't Know' and 'Not Applicable' categories, the responses are within 1% of each other. One exception is in the evaluators' assessment of whether they had sufficient time, where only 55% of evaluators in the IST theme felt they had sufficient or more than sufficient time, compared with 73% overall. This is also in the context of an overall shift from 2003, in which almost 30% felt they had *more* than sufficient time, to 2004 and 2005 in which fewer than 7% felt they did. Another area of significant (though not major) difference was in the assessment of the hearing process for IP's and NoE's, where IST evaluators were rather more satisfied with the quality of the process than evaluators in general (more than 27% rating it excellent, compared with 20% overall).

However, none of these differences indicate that there should be significant concerns about variations between IST and other areas of the Framework Programme. Typically, under 5% of evaluators rate any of the facets of the process 'poor' (though this is not a figure to be dismissed, of course, given the large number involved).

⁶ "Survey among evaluators on proposal evaluation (from 2003 until 2005)", DG RTD Unit A5, Dec. 2005

**Response statistics for FP6
Survey among evaluators of FP6 calls**

There are 1352 responses matching your criteria of a total of 4493 records in the current set of data.

SECTION 1: QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF

What is your current or most recent organization type?

	Number of requested records	% Requested records
Higher education establishment	464	(34.3%)
Non-research commercial sector - Consultancy firm	169	(12.5%)
Private/commercial research centre - Company	114	(8.4%)
Non-research commercial sector - SME	108	(8%)
Non-research commercial sector - Large Company	76	(5.6%)
Private/commercial research centre - Industrial sector	70	(5.2%)
Public research centre - JRC	61	(4.5%)
Other organisation type (please specify)	60	(4.4%)
Private non-profit research centre	59	(4.4%)
Other public research centre	55	(4.1%)
Public research centre - International	46	(3.4%)
Non-research public sector	40	(3%)
Non-research private non-profit	21	(1.6%)
Non-research international oragnisation	9	(0.7%)

What is your gender?

Male	1042	(77.1%)
Female	310	(22.9%)

Place of residence

EU Member States	1194	(88.3%)
Associated Countries	70	(5.2%)
Others	48	(3.6%)
Candidate Countries	40	(3%)

Member States		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
Germany	143	(12%)
France	133	(11.1%)
United Kingdom	128	(10.7%)
Italy	109	(9.1%)
Spain	85	(7.1%)
Belgium	54	(4.5%)
Netherlands	46	(3.9%)
Greece	38	(3.2%)
Sweden	38	(3.2%)
Poland	31	(2.6%)
Portugal	30	(2.5%)
Austria	25	(2.1%)
Ireland	24	(2%)
Denmark	22	(1.8%)
Finland	22	(1.8%)
Hungary	15	(1.3%)
Slovenia	14	(1.2%)
Czech Republic	11	(0.9%)
Malta	6	(0.5%)
Cyprus	5	(0.4%)
Estonia	3	(0.3%)
Slovakia	2	(0.2%)
Latvia	1	(0.1%)
Lithuania	1	(0.1%)
Luxembourg	1	(0.1%)
Romania	13	(32.5%)
Bulgaria	12	(30%)
Turkey	10	(25%)
Croatia	1	(2.5%)
Norway	19	(27.1%)
Israel	18	(25.7%)
Switzerland	18	(25.7%)
Iceland	0	(0%)
Liechtenstein	0	(0%)
Was it your first time as an evaluator in an EU Research programme?		
NO	883	(65.3%)
YES	469	(34.7%)
What is your age group?		
36-49	685	(50.7%)
50-59	375	(27.7%)
25-35	174	(12.9%)
over 60	118	(8.7%)

SECTION 2 : QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EVALUATION PROCESS		
A. INFORMATION		
Was the invitation clear and timely?		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
5 (= Very clear and timely)	690	(51%)
4 (= Clear and/or timely)	443	(32.8%)
3 (= average)	129	(9.5%)
2 (= Not very clear and/or timely)	61	(4.5%)
1 (= Not clear or timely at all)	10	(0.7%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	6	(0.4%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	4	(0.3%)
How useful did you find the documentation BEFORE the evaluation?		
Useful	1193	(88.2%)
Did not use it	97	(7.2%)
Not useful	43	(3.2%)
How useful did you find the documentation DURING the evaluation?		
Useful	1260	(93.2%)
Did not use it	57	(4.2%)
Not useful	20	(1.5%)
Were the general briefing sessions clear and complete?		
4 (= clear)	640	(47.3%)
5 (= very clear)	513	(37.9%)
3 (= average)	148	(10.9%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	18	(1.3%)
2 (= unclear)	14	(1%)
1 (= totally unclear)	3	(0.2%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	3	(0.2%)
Were the specific briefing sessions clear and complete? (If applicable)		
4 (= clear)	597	(44.2%)
5 (= very clear)	523	(38.7%)
3 (= average)	102	(7.5%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	63	(4.7%)
2 (= unclear)	13	(1%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	11	(0.8%)
1 (= totally unclear)	4	(0.3%)

B. INDIVIDUAL READING AND CONSENSUS		
Did you have sufficient time for the reading of the proposals?		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
4 (= sufficient time)	654	(48.4%)
3 (= average)	359	(26.6%)
2 (= too little time)	218	(16.1%)
5 (= more than enough time)	90	(6.7%)
1 (= totally insufficient time)	13	(1%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	11	(0.8%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	0	(0%)
Did you have sufficient time for reaching consensus?		
4 (= sufficient time)	904	(66.9%)
3 (= average)	274	(20.3%)
2 (= too little time)	106	(7.8%)
5 (= more than enough time)	43	(3.2%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	10	(0.7%)
1 (= totally insufficient time)	5	(0.4%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	0	(0%)
How do you rate the process of reaching consensus?		
4 (= good)	725	(53.6%)
3 (= satisfactory)	335	(24.8%)
5 (= excellent)	213	(15.8%)
2 (= poor)	54	(4%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	9	(0.7%)
1 (= very poor)	8	(0.6%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	0	(0%)
How do you rate the role of the moderator in the consensus meetings?		
4 (= good)	716	(53%)
5 (= excellent)	314	(23.2%)
3 (= satisfactory)	251	(18.6%)
2 (= poor)	36	(2.7%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	16	(1.2%)
1 (= Very poor)	6	(0.4%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	4	(0.3%)

How do you rate the participation of the evaluators in the consensus discussion?		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
4 (= good)	773	(57.2%)
3 (= satisfactory)	287	(21.2%)
5 (= excellent)	231	(17.1%)
2 (= poor)	37	(2.7%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	9	(0.7%)
1 (= Very poor)	5	(0.4%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	2	(0.1%)
C. PANEL		
Did you participate in panel meetings?		
YES	1121	(82.9%)
NO	223	(16.5%)
Did you have sufficient time for the panel meeting?		
4 (= sufficient time)	654	(58.3%)
3 (= average)	208	(18.6%)
2 (= too little time)	136	(12.1%)
5 (= more than enough time)	61	(5.4%)
1 (= totally insufficient time)	12	(1.1%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	2	(0.2%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	1	(0.1%)
How do you rate the overall organisation of the panel meeting?		
4 (= good)	498	(44.4%)
3 (= satisfactory)	289	(25.8%)
5 (= excellent)	186	(16.6%)
2 (= poor)	95	(8.5%)
1 (= Very poor)	8	(0.7%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	1	(0.1%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	0	(0%)

How effective was the introduction of the proposals to the panel?		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
4 (= good)	434	(38.7%)
3 (= satisfactory)	407	(36.3%)
2 (= poor)	144	(12.8%)
5 (= excellent)	80	(7.1%)
1 (= Very poor)	10	(0.9%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	3	(0.3%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	0	(0%)
How effective was the panel chairperson?		
4 (= good)	508	(45.3%)
5 (= excellent)	384	(34.3%)
3 (= satisfactory)	149	(13.3%)
2 (= poor)	24	(2.1%)
1 (= Very poor)	9	(0.8%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	1	(0.1%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	1	(0.1%)
How fair and equitable was the process of ranking proposals?		
4 (= fair)	503	(44.9%)
5 (= very fair)	265	(23.6%)
3 (= average)	244	(21.8%)
2 (= unfair)	48	(4.3%)
1 (= very unfair)	13	(1.2%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	2	(0.2%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	1	(0.1%)
Do panel meetings add value to the decision process?		
4 (= high value added)	437	(39%)
3 (= average)	287	(25.6%)
5 (= very high value added)	161	(14.4%)
2 (= low value added)	158	(14.1%)
1 (= no value added)	23	(2.1%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	3	(0.3%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	3	(0.3%)

D. HEARINGS		
Did you participate in hearings?		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
NO	1097	(81.1%)
YES	208	(15.4%)
How do you rate the quality and usefulness of the questions to proposers at the hearings?		
4 (= good)	106	(51%)
5 (= excellent)	54	(26%)
3 (= satisfactory)	36	(17.3%)
2 (= poor)	6	(2.9%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	1	(0.5%)
1 (= Very poor)	0	(0%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	0	(0%)
How do you rate the quality of the hearing process?		
4 (= good)	106	(51%)
5 (= excellent)	57	(27.4%)
3 (= satisfactory)	33	(15.9%)
2 (= poor)	6	(2.9%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	1	(0.5%)
1 (= Very poor)	0	(0%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	0	(0%)
How do you rate the value added of the hearings?		
4 (= high value added)	102	(49%)
5 (= very high value added)	70	(33.7%)
3 (= average)	19	(9.1%)
2 (= low value added)	9	(4.3%)
1 (= Very low value added)	1	(0.5%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	1	(0.5%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	1	(0.5%)
F. EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT		
Did you have sufficient time to prepare the Evaluation Summary Reports (ESRs)?		
4 (= sufficient time)	698	(51.6%)
3 (= average)	250	(18.5%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	171	(12.6%)
2 (= too little time)	83	(6.1%)
5 (= more than enough time)	44	(3.3%)
1 (= totally insufficient time)	11	(0.8%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	9	(0.7%)

How do you rate the quality of the Evaluation Summary Reports (ESRs)?		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
4 (= good)	666	(49.3%)
3 (= satisfactory)	310	(22.9%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	122	(9%)
5 (= excellent)	101	(7.5%)
2 (= poor)	40	(3%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	16	(1.2%)
1 (= Very poor)	4	(0.3%)
G. SPECIFIC EVALUATION PROCEDURES		
Would you prefer a two-stage proposal submission and evaluation procedure?		
YES	762	(56.4%)
NO	537	(39.7%)
If you were involved in a two-stage procedure, was there sufficient information in the first stage proposal to carry out a reasonable evaluation?		
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	478	(35.4%)
4 (= enough)	205	(15.2%)
3 (= average)	66	(4.9%)
2 (= too little)	37	(2.7%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	36	(2.7%)
5 (= more than enough)	30	(2.2%)
1 (= totally insufficient)	1	(0.1%)
If you were involved in a two-stage proposal procedure, were the evaluation criteria applied appropriately?		
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	473	(35%)
4 (= yes, but not all)	115	(8.5%)
5 (= yes, totally)	103	(7.6%)
3 (= average)	73	(5.4%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	42	(3.1%)
2 (= no, only partly)	32	(2.4%)
1 (= no, not at all)	2	(0.1%)
Would you prefer remote evaluation?		
Yes, but remote reading only	669	(49.5%)
No, not under any circumstances	344	(25.4%)
Yes, but remote reading only for certain specific calls	161	(11.9%)
Yes, remote reading and remote consensus	67	(5%)

Would partly anonymous proposals increase the fairness of the evaluation?		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
NO	772	(57.1%)
YES	364	(26.9%)
Don't know	156	(11.5%)
SECTION 3: EVALUATION CRITERIA		
Do you think the evaluation criteria were clearly understood?		
4 (= yes, mostly)	785	(58.1%)
5 (= yes, entirely)	227	(16.8%)
3 (= average)	187	(13.8%)
2 (= no, only part of them)	145	(10.7%)
1 (= no, not at all)	7	(0.5%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	1	(0.1%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	0	(0%)
Do you think the evaluation criteria were consistently applied?		
4 (= yes, mostly)	659	(48.7%)
3 (= average)	312	(23.1%)
2 (= no, only part of them)	193	(14.3%)
5 (= yes, entirely)	162	(12%)
1 (= no, not at all)	24	(1.8%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	2	(0.1%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	0	(0%)
Please tick the types of instruments you evaluated in the current call		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
Specific Targeted Research or Innovation Projects	910	(67.3%)
Integrated Projects	546	(40.4%)
Specific Support Actions	356	(26.3%)
Co-ordination Actions	228	(16.9%)
Networks of Excellence	145	(10.7%)
Specific Research Projects for SMEs (Collective Research)	79	(5.8%)
Fellowships (Marie Curie actions)	69	(5.1%)
Specific Research Projects for SMEs (CRAFT)	43	(3.2%)
Integrating Infrastructure Initiatives	14	(1%)
Trans-national access to large Infrastructures	3	(0.2%)

For Networks of Excellence, which criteria did you find most difficult to apply?		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
Degree of integration and the JPA	36	(24.8%)
Potential impact	34	(23.4%)
Relevance	27	(18.6%)
Excellence of the participants	13	(9%)
Organisation and management	13	(9%)
No difficulty	13	(9%)
For Integrated Projects, which criteria did you find most difficult to apply?		
Potential impact	120	(22%)
Relevance	96	(17.6%)
S&T excellence	94	(17.2%)
Mobilisation of resources	78	(14.3%)
No difficulty	69	(12.6%)
Quality of management	49	(9%)
Quality of the consortium	21	(3.8%)
For Specific Targeted Research Projects, which criteria did you find most difficult to apply?		
Relevance	200	(22%)
Potential impact	195	(21.4%)
No difficulty	141	(15.5%)
S&T excellence	130	(14.3%)
Mobilisation of resources	116	(12.7%)
Quality of management	61	(6.7%)
Quality of the consortium	19	(2.1%)
For Co-ordination Actions/Specific Support Actions, which criteria did you find most difficult to apply?		
Quality of the coordination/Quality of support action	45	(19.7%)
No difficulty	45	(19.7%)
Potential impact	43	(18.9%)
Relevance	35	(15.4%)
Mobilisation of resources	22	(9.6%)
Quality of management	15	(6.6%)
Quality of the consortium	4	(1.8%)
Were the marking thresholds appropriate?		
4 (= yes, mostly)	755	(55.8%)
5 (= yes, entirely)	361	(26.7%)
3 (= average)	136	(10.1%)
2 (= no, only part of them)	73	(5.4%)
1 (= no, not at all)	8	(0.6%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	7	(0.5%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	2	(0.1%)

Were the weightings appropriate (if applied)?		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	410	(30.3%)
4 (= yes, mostly)	367	(27.1%)
5 (= yes, entirely)	165	(12.2%)
3 (= average)	143	(10.6%)
2 (= no, only part of them)	91	(6.7%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	34	(2.5%)
1 (= no, not at all)	29	(2.1%)
Were the horizontal issues (e.g. ethics, gender, science and society, etc) dealt with appropriately?		
YES	1188	(87.9%)
NO	118	(8.7%)
SECTION 4: OPINION ON THE EVALUATION TASK AND EVALUATORS		
Did all the proposals you evaluated fall within your area of expertise?		
More than 80%	604	(44.7%)
Yes, all	532	(39.3%)
More than half	191	(14.1%)
Less than half	25	(1.8%)
Did you think that there was a difference between the levels of marking applied to the first proposal and the last proposal you evaluated?		
NO	971	(71.8%)
YES	350	(25.9%)
Do you think that the efforts to calibrate (e.g. re-briefing, cross reading, etc.) are sufficient?		
YES	175	(50%)
NO	163	(46.6%)
How would you rate the level of complexity of the evaluation task?		
2 (= complex)	624	(46.2%)
3 (= average)	484	(35.8%)
4 (= easy)	114	(8.4%)
1 (= very complex)	110	(8.1%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	9	(0.7%)
5 (= very easy)	8	(0.6%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	3	(0.2%)

How would you rate the level of efficiency and speed of the evaluation task?		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
4 (= good)	732	(54.1%)
3 (= satisfactory)	397	(29.4%)
5 (= excellent)	172	(12.7%)
2 (= poor)	44	(3.3%)
1 (= very poor)	3	(0.2%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	3	(0.2%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	1	(0.1%)
How would you rate the level of transparency of the evaluation procedures?		
4 (= good)	653	(48.3%)
5 (= excellent)	453	(33.5%)
3 (= satisfactory)	196	(14.5%)
2 (= poor)	41	(3%)
1 (= very poor)	6	(0.4%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	2	(0.1%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	1	(0.1%)
How would you rate the level of impartiality/confidentiality/fairness of the evaluation?		
4 (= good)	630	(46.6%)
5 (= excellent)	439	(32.5%)
3 (= satisfactory)	235	(17.4%)
2 (= poor)	35	(2.6%)
1 (= very poor)	6	(0.4%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	4	(0.3%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	3	(0.2%)
If you have evaluated research proposals before for national or international research funding schemes, how do you rate the overall quality of the EU process in comparison?		
4 (= better)	459	(33.9%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	357	(26.4%)
3 (= similar in quality)	244	(18%)
5 (= very much better)	196	(14.5%)
2 (= worse)	46	(3.4%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	45	(3.3%)
1 (= very much worse)	5	(0.4%)

How would you rate the relevance of the expertise of the other evaluators?		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
4 (= good)	777	(57.5%)
3 (= satisfactory)	272	(20.1%)
5 (= excellent)	246	(18.2%)
2 (= poor)	38	(2.8%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	9	(0.7%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	8	(0.6%)
1 (= very poor)	2	(0.1%)
How would you rate the quality of the expertise of the other evaluators?		
4 (= good)	786	(58.1%)
5 (= excellent)	276	(20.4%)
3 (= satisfactory)	233	(17.2%)
2 (= poor)	36	(2.7%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	8	(0.6%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	8	(0.6%)
1 (= very poor)	5	(0.4%)
Do you think that the balance of expertise in the evaluation group(s)(industry, higher education, small firms, etc.) was appropriate?		
4 (= agree)	672	(49.7%)
3 (= average)	279	(20.6%)
5 (= strongly agree)	213	(15.8%)
2 (= disagree)	83	(6.1%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	67	(5%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	14	(1%)
1 (= strongly disagree)	12	(0.9%)
Were you aware of any instances of potential conflict of interest?		
NO	951	(70.3%)
YES	384	(28.4%)
If yes, were these:		
Indirect - evaluator's institution involved in the proposal	237	(61.7%)
Indirect - evaluator linked to a direct competitor	47	(12.2%)
Other (Please specify)	43	(11.2%)
Direct conflicts - evaluator involved in the proposal	35	(9.1%)

Did you think these were handled correctly?		
	Number of requested records	% Requested records
YES	904	(66.9%)
NO	39	(2.9%)
How would you rate the quality of the evaluation overall?		
4 (= good)	836	(61.8%)
5 (= excellent)	291	(21.5%)
3 (= satisfactory)	173	(12.8%)
2 (= poor)	25	(1.8%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	8	(0.6%)
1 (= very poor)	3	(0.2%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	2	(0.1%)
SECTION 5: LOGISTICS		
Was the registration efficient and welcoming?		
5 (= excellent)	586	(43.3%)
4 (= good/ high)	558	(41.3%)
3 (= satisfactory)	161	(11.9%)
2 (= poor)	29	(2.1%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	7	(0.5%)
1 (= very poor)	6	(0.4%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	0	(0%)
How do you rate the overall organisation of the evaluation?		
4 (= good)	674	(49.9%)
5 (= excellent)	510	(37.7%)
3 (= satisfactory)	137	(10.1%)
2 (= poor)	16	(1.2%)
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	4	(0.3%)
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	3	(0.2%)
1 (= very poor)	2	(0.1%)