



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
Research Fund for Coal and Steel

Manual of Evaluation Procedures of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel

2015

**Directorate – General for Research and Innovation
Research Fund for Coal and Steel**

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INTRODUCTION

This *Manual of Evaluation Procedures* explains the procedures adopted for the evaluation of proposals submitted to the RFCS programme by 15 September 2015, in response to the call RFCS-2015 published on the Participant Portal of the European Commission at the following link:

<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/rfcs/calls/rfcs-2015.html>

This manual is written in compliance with Art 27 of Council Decision 2008/376/EC (Official Journal of the European Union, L 130 of 20.05.08). This Council Decision will be referred to in this document as the RFCS Legal Basis.

According to the RFCS Legal Basis, the specific conditions and rules for participation to the RFCS call are set out in the Information Package. The 2015 edition of the RFCS Information Package (volume I) is published on the Participant Portal at the link http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/other_eu_prog/rfcs/guide/calls/rfcs-call-infopack2015_en.pdf.

If any provisions provided in this *Manual of Evaluation Procedures* conflict with those contained in the current version of the Information Package or could lead to ambiguous interpretation, the provisions of the Information Package will prevail.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The evaluation of proposals submitted to the RFCS programme before the annual cut-off date of 15 September 2015 will be carried out in several steps under the responsibility and coordination of the Commission. The Commission ensures a confidential, fair and equitable evaluation as well as a proper planning, coordination and monitoring of the overall evaluation exercise.

The evaluation of proposals is carried out by the Commission with the assistance of:

- Independent external experts acting as evaluators
- Independent external experts acting as observers

Independent external experts acting as evaluators

Proposals are evaluated by the Commission with the assistance of independent external experts acting as **evaluators**. These are appointed in their personal capacity and do not represent any specific organisation or interest.

When considering evaluators for appointment, the Commission refers to the database of independent experts established to provide experts to research and innovation EC programmes (registration in this database is via the Participant Portal of the European Commission, in the section dedicated to "Experts"). In order to populate this database, specific calls for expressions of interest can be published periodically by the Commission.

Evaluators appointed by the Commission must have the **skills** and **knowledge** appropriate to the technical field (Technical Group) in which they are asked to assist. They must also have a high level of professional experience in the public or private sector related to: research in the relevant scientific and technological fields; administration, management or evaluation of projects; dissemination and use of the results of research and technological development projects, technology transfer and innovation; international cooperation in science and technology; development of human capital.

In addition, experts are selected also considering the following criteria:

- An appropriate balance between academic and industrial expertise
- An appropriate gender balance
- A balanced distribution of geographical origins
- A minimum of 25% of new experts¹
- For each expert, a maximum of three consecutive participations are allowed
- Appropriate language and communication skills.

For each annual evaluation exercise, the Commission establishes a list of experts based on the criteria described above and taking into account the number of proposals to be evaluated, including a reasonable reserve list.

Once a year, the Commission publishes the full list of independent experts participating in the evaluation exercise. However, the names of the experts assigned to each specific proposal are not made public.

When signing the standard electronic contract for appointment, the experts commit to comply with the **Code of Conduct for Evaluators**, which binds them to perform their duties without any conflict of interest and ensuring the necessary confidentiality to the information handled during the evaluation. According to this Code of Conduct, reported Annex I to this *Manual of Evaluation Procedures*,² evaluators are not permitted for example to disclose to third parties details on the proposals, on the experts assigned to examine proposals, or on the discussions which take place within the evaluation panels. Moreover, they cannot act as evaluators for a given proposal if they have a conflict of interest with this proposal, according to the definition of conflicts of interest given in the above-mentioned Code of Conduct. They cannot be members of the RFCS programme committee, advisory groups and technical groups assisting the Commission in the implementation of the RFCS programme.

¹ A "new expert" is defined here as an expert who has never participated in the RFCS evaluation in the previous 5 years.

² The Code of Conduct in Annex I is an extract from the general model contract for independent experts assisting the Commission, available on the Participant Portal at the link: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/experts_manual/h2020-experts-mono-contract_en.pdf

Experts are recommended to regularly check this link for updates of the model contract and the annexed code of conduct.

Independent external experts acting as observers

Independent experts acting as **observers** are appointed in their personal capacity and do not represent any specific organisation or interest. They shall apply their professional skills, knowledge and ethics to the best of their abilities, in accordance with the guidelines and time schedule provided by the Commission.

The role of the observer is to give independent advice to the Commission on the conduct and fairness of all phases of the evaluation sessions, on ways in which the experts acting as evaluators apply the evaluation criteria, and on ways in which the evaluation process could be improved. The observer also verifies that the procedures set out in the *RFCS Information Package 2015, volume I*, and in this *Manual of the Evaluation Procedures 2015* are correctly applied. Observers are encouraged to liaise with the Commission officials involved in the evaluation sessions and to make observations on any possible improvements that could be put into practice. During the execution of their tasks, observers shall not express views on the proposals under evaluation or on the experts' opinions on the proposals.

The observers will report their written findings to the Commission. Subsequently, these findings will be summarised into one report which is finally presented to the Advisory Group members and to COSCO during the relevant annual plenary meetings.

When signing the standard electronic contract for appointment, the experts commit to comply with the **Code of Conduct for Observers**, which binds them to perform their duties without any conflict of interest and ensuring the necessary confidentiality to the information handled during the evaluation. According to this Code of Conduct, reported in Annex II to this *Manual of Evaluation Procedures*,³ observers are not permitted for example to disclose to third parties details on the proposals, on the experts assigned to examine proposals, or on the discussions which take place within the evaluation panels. Moreover, they cannot act as observers if they have a conflict of interest with any of the proposals to be evaluated, according to the definition of conflicts of interest given in the above-mentioned Code of Conduct. They cannot be members of the RFCS programme committee, advisory groups and technical groups assisting the Commission in the implementation of the RFCS programme.

BEFORE THE EVALUATION

Proposals are submitted electronically under the terms set out in the RFCS Information Package 2015 (volume I), available on the Participant Portal of the European Commission.

³ The Code of Conduct in Annex II is an extract from the general model contract for independent experts assisting the Commission, available on the Participant Portal at the link: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/experts_manual/h2020-experts-mono-contract_en.pdf

Experts are recommended to regularly check this link for updates of the model contract and the annexed code of conduct.

Proposals admissibility and eligibility check

After the call deadline, the Commission verifies that the proposals meet the admissibility and eligibility criteria given in the RFCS Information Package 2015 (volume I). If a proposal is deemed to be inadmissible or ineligible, it will not be evaluated. In this case the Commission informs the applicants in due time, also explaining the reasons for such a decision and how to appeal.

A proposal may be deemed ineligible also at a later stage of the evaluation process, should evidence arise of non-compliance with the eligibility and admissibility criteria. The fact that a proposal is evaluated in such circumstances does not constitute proof of its admissibility or eligibility.

If obvious clerical errors are found by the Commission (e.g., omission to submit evidence or information on a non-substantial element of the proposal), the project coordinator may be asked to provide the missing information. If the information provided by the applicants would substantially change the proposal (for example affecting its admissibility and eligibility or the evaluation outcome), it will not be taken into account.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Step 1: Briefing of evaluators

The independent experts appointed as evaluators receive in advance all necessary information on how to carry out their duties. The briefing material is composed of two main parts:

1) At the beginning of the remote evaluation phase (see Step 2), experts receive a specific briefing document which will include the necessary information on the evaluation exercise as well as guidelines and recommendations for a smooth and effective execution of their tasks. In addition, they receive other fundamental documents such as the *RFCS Information Package 2015 (volume I)*, the *Manual of Evaluation Procedures 2015*, the *Summaries of RFCS projects*, the guidelines on the use of the on-line evaluation platform (SEP). The experts asked by the Commission to act as rapporteurs will receive additional specific guidance on how to best carry out this task.

2) At the beginning of each central evaluation phase (see Step 4), an oral briefing is organised by the Commission to explain how the session will be organized and how the consensus meetings will be carried out, to remind experts of their duties and obligations, to give practical information on the evaluation premises and its surroundings, and any other information deemed necessary to guarantee a transparent, effective and high-quality central evaluation session.

Step 2: Remote evaluation phase

Each proposal is normally evaluated by three independent experts. This number can be increased in particular cases, for example if additional expertise appears necessary.

For the evaluation, each evaluator receives access to the SEP online system, where he/she can see only the proposals he/she is asked to evaluate. If the expert finds that he/she has a conflict of interest with a given proposal, or feels not fully knowledgeable on the topic, he/she can decline the task and report this to the Commission, which will assign this proposal to a different expert.

During the remote evaluation phase, an expert does not have any contact with other experts evaluating the same proposals and does not know their names.

For each proposal, the experts fill in electronically an Individual Evaluation Form reporting written comments for each evaluation criterion. Different evaluation criteria are used for Research projects, Pilot and Demonstration projects and for Accompanying Measures (see Annex III, Annex IV and Annex V to this *Manual of Evaluation Procedures*). The experts shall evaluate proposals as they were submitted, without giving recommendations on how to improve them and without evaluating their potential should certain changes be made. Therefore, if important information is missing or not convincing, or weaknesses are found, this shall result in a low scoring of the proposal.

Based on the written comments, experts score each evaluation criterion on a scale from 0 to 5 (with a 0.5 granularity), according to the following definitions:

0 - The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information (unless the result of an 'obvious clerical error').

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.

Annual priorities: 1 additional bonus point will be granted to research, pilot and demonstration proposals if they address at least one of the annual priorities in the relevant topic (see Annex VII to the Information Package 2015, volume I). The additional priority bonus point is not granted to accompanying measures.

Resubmitted proposals: A proposal that has been evaluated in one or several prior RFCS evaluations and was not retained for funding may be resubmitted and re-evaluated. Resubmitted proposals are re-evaluated independently from the scoring obtained in the previous evaluations. However, resubmitted proposals include a copy of the previous Evaluation Summary Report and an explanation from the applicants (Form B4) on how the shortcomings identified therein have been addressed in the revised proposal.

Step 3: Draft consensus report

For each proposal evaluated remotely, one of the evaluators is asked by the Commission to act as Rapporteur, i.e. to summarize into one common Draft Consensus Report the comments made by the individual evaluators. The rapporteur can decline this task in SEP, explaining to the Commission the reason for the rejection.

The Draft Consensus Report follows the same template of the Individual Evaluation Reports. This task shall be carried out electronically in the SEP system before the start of the central evaluation session (deadlines will be given by the Commission in the appointment letter). When carrying out his/her task, the rapporteur can see the comments made by the other two experts but does not know who their names.

The draft consensus report should reflect the views of all experts and highlight possible divergence, to serve as a basis for discussion during the central evaluation session.

Step 4: Central Evaluation Phase (Consensus Meetings)

Once the draft consensus reports have been prepared remotely by the Rapporteurs, central evaluation sessions are organized in the premises of the European Commission in Brussels. On this occasion, a consensus meeting is convened for each proposal to discuss the quality of the proposal and address open issues and divergences of the experts as identified by the rapporteurs in the draft consensus report. Participants are the experts who evaluate the proposal and a Commission representative acting as moderator. The independent observer may also be present.

The objective of the consensus meeting is to reach a fair consensus and generate a full consistent final evaluation, represented by a comprehensive, concise and clear final consensus report. The consensus report follows the same structure of the individual evaluation reports, i.e. it contains specific comments for each evaluation criterion and the relevant consensus scores. The consensus score for each criterion must be consistent with the definition of the scores given under Step 2 (Remote Evaluation Phase) and should reflect the text of the consensus report. In order to better differentiate proposals based on their merit and to facilitate achieving a consensus among evaluators, a 0.25 granularity in the consensus scores is adopted for the 2015 central evaluation session.

A Commission official chairs the consensus meeting and acts as moderator, ensuring that the consensus report faithfully reflects the evaluators' views and the consensus reached. If necessary, he/she assists the rapporteur with the task of recording the comments of the evaluators in the consensus report.

If the evaluators cannot reach a consensus on a particular aspect of the proposal, the Commission services may ask one or more additional evaluators to examine the proposal. In this case, the moderator may decide to suspend the meeting to give sufficient time to a new expert to read the proposal and form his/her own view. The consensus meeting is then reconvened at a suitable time and the new expert is invited to participate and contribute to the discussion.

Once all experts participating in the consensus meeting agree with the text and scores of the consensus report, they sign in the SEP system for its formal approval.

Step 5: Quality Control

The Consensus Report produced by the consensus meeting is checked by a Commission representative (different from the one moderating the meeting), who verifies the consistency between the comments and the scores for each criterion and the quality and clarity of the text produced.

In case of problems (for example inconsistencies between scores and comments, ambiguous comments, etc.), the consensus report is rejected and the rapporteur receives in SEP the task to revise it together with the comments of the Commission's officer responsible for the quality control. This task can be carried out by the experts either centrally in Brussels or remotely. The revised consensus report is submitted to the other experts for their approval and then once again to the Quality Control.

Step 6: Ranking list

After the evaluation, all proposals for Research, Pilot and Demonstration projects and for Accompanying Measures submitted under the same topic (Coal/Steel) will be ranked together in one list. The lists will be prepared as follows:

- proposals passing all evaluation thresholds will always precede proposals failing on one or more thresholds, regardless of the total score obtained;
- within each group, proposals will be ranked according to the total score given by the evaluators (this includes the additional priority bonus point, if granted);
- in case of proposals with equal total score, these will be ranked according to the following predefined cascade order of the evaluation criteria:

Rank	Criterion	Name of the criterion for the different types of activity		
		Research projects	Pilot and Demonstration projects	Accompanying Measures
1 st	Criterion 4	Benefits for the European coal and steel sectors	Benefits for the European coal and steel sectors	Benefits for the European coal and steel sectors
2 nd	Criterion 1	Scientific and technical approach	Technical approach	Overall approach
3 rd	Criterion 2	Innovative content	Contribution to Innovation	Dissemination value
4 th	Criterion 3	Quality of the implementation	Quality of the implementation	Quality of the implementation

Therefore for two proposals with same total score, and regardless of the type of activity, the proposal with higher score under criterion 4 will be ranked first. If these two proposals have same score under criterion 4, the proposal with higher score under Criterion 1 will be ranked first; and so on.

- In case the cascade mechanism explained above is not able to define the exact ranking for two proposals with equal total score (i.e. if they have exactly the same scores under each criterion), the proposal with the lowest total budget will be ranked first.
- Starting from the top of the two ranking lists (coal and steel), funding will be allocated to proposals that have passed all evaluation thresholds according to the requested EU

contribution, until the annual budget of the RFCS for the current call and the corresponding topic is fully assigned.

For each topic, the complete ranked list will therefore consists of the following different sections:

- the main list of proposals that have passed all thresholds and for which there is sufficient RFCS funding;
- the reserve list of proposals that have passed all thresholds and can be funded only in case proposals in the main list are withdrawn, excluded or if extra RFCS funding becomes available;
- the list of proposals that have passed all evaluation thresholds but cannot be funded because of insufficient RFCS budget;
- the list of proposals that didn't pass all evaluation thresholds;
- the list of inadmissible and/or ineligible proposals.

Within six months from the deadline for submission of proposals, the applicants will receive a notification from the Commission informing them about the evaluation outcome and giving indications on how to appeal.

ADVISORY GROUP PLENARY MEETINGS

The Coal and Steel Advisory Groups are two independent technical advisory groups established according to Art 19 to 23 and to Art 28.3 of the RFCS Legal Basis. Their role is to advise the Commission on specific coal- and steel-related RTD aspects.

Following the central evaluation session, the Commission organises a plenary meeting with each Advisory Group (Coal and Steel) to discuss the ranking lists of coal- and steel-related proposals, and to address issues concerning to the evaluation exercise. The findings and recommendations of the observer(s) who attended the central evaluation session are also presented and discussed.

Members of the Advisory Groups shall inform the Commission of any potential conflicts of interests which could be considered prejudicial to their independence (for that reason Advisory Group members sign, at the time of their appointment, a declaration regarding conflict of interest). Advisory Group members have a task of considerable responsibility and it is in the interest of the Advisory Group members, the Commission and the wider research community that they are not in a position to take undue advantage of or exercise undue influence on the implementation of the RFCS.

The Advisory Group members shall not disclose information received during the fulfilment of their tasks. To this purpose, they are required to sign a confidentiality declaration valid throughout their appointment with the Commission. The Commission may adopt supplementary measures of confidentiality, if necessary.

COSCO PLENARY MEETING

After discussing with the Advisory Groups, the Commission organises a plenary meeting with the COSCO programme committee composed of representatives of all Member States. During the meeting, the COSCO committee is asked to approve by a qualified majority (in accordance with Article 5(1) of Regulation (EU) No 182/2011) the draft Commission implementing decision on the granting of financial aid to successful proposals and the rejection of unsuccessful proposals.

At the beginning of each meeting, any person designated by the Member States shall inform the Commission of any conflict of interest with regard to a particular item on the agenda. In the event of such a conflict of interest, the person concerned shall, at the request of the chair, withdraw from the meeting whilst the relevant items of the agenda are being dealt with. In addition, the COSCO representatives are requested to respect confidentiality obligations concerning the discussion carried out during the meeting and the documents received.

Following the approval by the COSCO, the implementing act can be finally adopted by the Commission through a dedicated Commission Decision and the project Grant Agreement can be signed (this normally happens within 3 months from the notification of the evaluation results to the applicants).

PLANNING OF THE 2015 EVALUATION EXERCISE

The selection of proposals to be funded consists of the following steps. The dates presented in this table might be subject to change.

Proposal Submission Deadline	15 September 2015, 17:00:00 Brussels local time
Evaluation Session Coal – Remote	5 October – 25 October 2015
Evaluation Session Coal – Central (TGC1, TGC2, TGC3)	27 – 29 October 2015
Evaluation Session Steel – Remote	12 October – 22 November 2015
Evaluation Session Steel 1 – Central (TGS4, TGS9)	10 – 12 November 2015
Evaluation Session Steel 2 – Central (TGS5, TGS6, TGS7)	17 – 19 November 2015
Evaluation Session Steel 3 – Central (TGS8)	24 – 26 November 2015
Evaluation Session Steel 4 – Central (TGS1, TGS2, TGS3)	30 November – 2 December 2015
CAG Meeting	December 2015
SAG Meeting	January 2016
COSCO Meeting	February 2016
Notification of evaluation results to applicants	before 15 March 2016
Adoption of the implementing act (Commission Decision)	May 2016
Grant Agreement signature for projects retained for funding	before 15 June 2016
Typical start date of projects	1 st of July 2016

ANNEX I – CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EVALUATORS

ARTICLE 1 – PERFORMANCE OF THE CONTRACT

1. The expert works independently, in a personal capacity and not on behalf of any organisation.
2. The expert must:
 - (a) evaluate each proposal in a confidential and fair way, in accordance with the H2020 guidelines for submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures,
 - (b) assist the contracting party or relevant service to the best of their abilities, professional skills, knowledge and applying the highest ethical and moral standards
 - (c) follow any instructions and time-schedules given by the contracting party or relevant service and deliver consistently high quality work.
3. The expert may not delegate another person to carry out the work or be replaced by any other person.
4. If a legal entity involved in a proposal approaches the expert during the evaluation of this proposal, s/he must immediately inform the contracting party or relevant service.

ARTICLE 2 – OBLIGATIONS OF IMPARTIALITY

1. The expert must perform their work **impartially**. To this end, the expert is required to:
 - (a) inform the contracting party or relevant service of any conflicts of interest arising in the course of their work including of any proposal competing with the proposal where the expert may have a conflict of interest;
 - (b) confirm there is no conflict of interest for each proposal s/he is evaluating by signing a declaration in the electronic evaluation system.
2. **Definition of the conflict of interest:** For a given proposal, a conflict of interest exists if an expert:
 - (a) was involved in the preparation of the proposal
 - (b) stands to benefit directly or indirectly if the proposal is accepted
 - (c) has a close family or personal relationship with any person representing an applicant legal entity
 - (d) is a director, trustee or partner or is in any way involved in the management of an applicant legal entity

(e) is employed or contracted by one of the applicant legal entities or any named subcontractors

(f) is a member of an Advisory Group set up by the Commission to advise on the preparation of EU or Euratom Horizon 2020 work programmes, or work programmes in an area related to the call for proposals in question

(g) is a National Contact Point, or is directly working for the Enterprise Europe Network

(h) is a member of a Programme Committee.

In the following situations the contracting party or relevant service will decide whether a conflict of interest exists, taking account of the objective circumstances, available information and related risks when an expert:

i. was employed by one of the applicant legal entities in the last three years

ii. is involved in a contract or grant agreement, grant decision or membership of management structures (e.g. member of management or advisory board etc.) or research collaboration with an applicant legal entity or the fellow researcher, or had been so in the last three years

iii. is in any other situation that could cast doubt on their ability to participate in the evaluation of the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party.

3. Consequences of conflicts of interest

1. If a conflict of interest is reported by the expert or established by the contracting party or relevant service, the expert must not evaluate the proposal concerned (consensus group), or take part in any panel review (including possible hearings) where the proposal is discussed]
2. If a conflict becomes apparent at any stage of the evaluation, the expert must immediately inform the contracting party or relevant service staff. If a conflict is confirmed, the expert must stop evaluating the proposal concerned. Any comments and scores already given by the expert will be discounted. If necessary, the expert will be replaced]
3. If it is revealed during an evaluation that an expert has knowingly concealed a conflict of interest, the expert will be immediately excluded, and sanctions will apply (see Articles 14, 15, 16 and 18 of the Contract or in the Financial Regulation and its implementing rules). Any consensus group in which s/he has participated will be declared null. The consensus meeting will be reconvened and the proposal(s) concerned will be re-evaluated.

ARTICLE 3 – OBLIGATIONS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

1. The contracting party or relevant service and the expert must treat confidentially any information and documents, in any form (i.e. paper or electronic), disclosed in writing or orally in relation to the performance of the Contract.

2. The expert undertakes to observe strict **confidentiality** in relation to their work. To this end, the expert:
 - (a) must not use confidential information or documents for any purpose other than fulfilling their obligations under the Contract without prior written approval of the contracting party
 - (b) must not disclose, directly or indirectly, confidential information or documents relating to proposals or applicants, without prior written approval of the contracting party. In particular, the expert:
 - i. must not discuss any proposal with others, including other experts or contracting party or relevant service staff not directly involved in evaluating the proposal, except during the formal discussion at the meetings moderated by or with the knowledge and approval of the responsible contracting party or relevant service staff
 - ii. must not disclose:
 - any detail of the evaluation process and its outcomes or of any proposal submitted for evaluation for any purpose other than fulfilling their obligations under the Contract without prior written approval of the contracting party
 - their advice to the contracting party or relevant service on any proposal to the applicants or to any other person (including colleagues, students, etc.)
 - the names of other experts participating in the evaluation.
 - iii. must not communicate with applicants on any proposal:
 - during the evaluation, except in panel hearings between experts and the applicants organised by the contracting party or relevant service as part of the evaluation process;
 - after the evaluation.
3. If the proposals are made available electronically to the expert who then works from their own or other suitable premises, s/he will be held personally responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any documents or electronic files sent, and for returning, erasing or destroying all confidential documents or files upon completing the evaluation as instructed.
4. If the evaluation takes place in premises controlled by the contracting party or relevant service, the expert:
 - (a) must not remove from the premises proposals, copies or notes on evaluation, either on paper or in electronic form
 - (b) will be held personally responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any documents or electronic files sent, and for returning, erasing or destroying all confidential documents or files on completing the evaluation as instructed.
5. If the expert seeks further information (for example through the internet, specialised databases, etc.) to complete their examination of the proposals, s/he:

- (a) must respect the overall rules for confidentiality for obtaining such information
 - (b) must not contact applicants
 - (c) must not contact third parties without prior written approval of the contracting party.
6. These confidentiality obligations are binding on:
- (a) the contracting party (see Regulation No 31 (EEC), 11 (EAEC), laying down the Staff Regulations of Officials and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community
 - (b) the expert during performance of the Contract and for five years starting from the date of the last payment made to the expert unless:
 - i. the contracting party agrees to release the expert from the confidentiality obligations earlier
 - ii. the confidential information becomes public through other channels.

ANNEX II – CODE OF CONDUCT FOR OBSERVERS

ARTICLE 1 – PERFORMANCE OF THE CONTRACT

1. The expert works independently, in a personal capacity and not on behalf of any organisation.
2. The expert must:
 - (a) inform the contracting party or relevant service of the conduct and fairness of the evaluation session(s) that s/he is asked to monitor
 - (b) monitor the way in which the experts acting as evaluators apply the evaluation criteria, and how the evaluation procedures could be improved. In this context, the expert must verify that the procedures set out or referred to in the H2020 guidelines for submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures (available at <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/page/home>) are followed
 - (c) assist the contracting party or relevant service to the best of their abilities, professional skills, knowledge and applying the highest ethical and moral standards
 - (d) follow any instructions and time-schedules given by the contracting party or relevant service and deliver consistently high quality work.
3. The expert does not perform evaluation of proposals and must not express views on the proposals under evaluation or the experts' opinions on the proposals.
4. The expert may not delegate another person to carry out the work or be replaced by any other person.
5. If a legal entity involved in a proposal approaches the expert during the evaluation of this proposal, s/he must immediately inform the contracting party or relevant service.

ARTICLE 2 – OBLIGATIONS OF IMPARTIALITY

1. The expert must perform their work **impartially**. To this end, the expert is required to:
 - (a) inform the contracting party or relevant service of any conflicts of interest arising in the course of their work
 - (b) confirm there is no conflict of interest for each evaluation session s/he is monitoring by signing a declaration in the electronic evaluation system.
2. **Definition of the conflict of interest:** a conflict of interest exists if an expert:
 - (a) was involved in the preparation of the proposal
 - (b) stands to benefit directly or indirectly if the proposal is accepted

- (c) has a close family or personal relationship with any person representing an applicant legal entity
- (d) is a director, trustee or partner or is in any way involved in the management of an applicant legal entity
- (e) is employed or contracted by one of the applicant legal entities or any named subcontractors
- (f) is a member of an Advisory Group set up by the Commission to advise on the preparation of EU or Euratom Horizon 2020 work programmes, or work programmes in an area related to the call for proposals in question
- (g) is a National Contact Point, or is directly working for the Enterprise Europe Network
- (h) is a member of a Programme Committee

In the following situations the contracting party or relevant service will decide whether a conflict of interest exists, taking account of the objective circumstances, available information and related risks when an expert:

- i. was employed by one of the applicant legal entities in the last three years
- ii. is involved in a contract or grant agreement, grant decision or membership of management structures (e.g. member of management or advisory board etc.) or research collaboration with an applicant legal entity or fellow researcher, or had been so in the last three years
- iii. is in any other situation that could cast doubt on their ability to participate in the evaluation of the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party.

3. Consequences of a situation of conflict of interest:

1. If a conflict of interest is reported by the expert or established by the contracting party or relevant service during the monitoring of the evaluation session(s), the expert must stop monitoring the evaluation session(s). If necessary, the expert will be replaced.
2. If it is revealed during the monitoring of the evaluation session(s) that an expert has knowingly concealed a conflict of interest, the expert will be immediately excluded, and sanctions will apply (see Articles 14, 15, 16 and 18 of the Contract or in the Financial Regulation and its implementing rules). Any monitoring of evaluation session(s) already carried out by the expert will be declared null.

ARTICLE 3 - OBLIGATIONS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

1. The contracting party or relevant service and the expert must treat confidentially any information and documents, in any form (i.e. paper or electronic), disclosed in writing or orally in relation to the performance of the Contract.
2. The expert undertakes to observe strict **confidentiality** in relation to their work. To this end, the expert must:

- (a) not use confidential information or documents for any purpose other than fulfilling their obligations under the Contract, without prior written approval of the contracting party
 - (b) not disclose, directly or indirectly, confidential information or documents relating to proposals or applicants, without prior written approval of the contracting party. In particular, the expert:
 - i. must not discuss any proposal with others, including other experts or contracting party or relevant service staff not directly involved in the evaluation session(s)
 - ii. must not disclose:
 - any detail of the evaluation process and its outcomes or of any proposal submitted for evaluation for any purpose other than fulfilling their obligations under the Contract without prior written approval of the contracting party
 - their advice to the contracting party or relevant service on the evaluation session(s) to the applicants or to any other person (including colleagues, students, etc.)
 - the names of other experts participating in the evaluation.
 - iii. must not communicate with applicants on any proposal.
3. If the evaluation takes place in premises controlled by the contracting party or relevant service, the expert:
- (a) must not remove from the premises proposals, copies or notes on evaluation either on paper or in electronic form
 - (b) will be held personally responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any documents or electronic files sent and for returning, erasing or destroying all confidential documents or files upon completing the evaluation as instructed.
4. If the expert seeks further information (for example through the internet, specialised databases, etc.) to complete their monitoring of the evaluation session(s), s/he:
- (a) must respect the overall rules for confidentiality for obtaining such information
 - (b) must not contact applicants
 - (c) must not contact third parties without prior written approval of the contracting party.
5. These confidentiality obligations are binding on:
- (a) the contracting party (see Regulation No 31 (EEC), 11 (EAEC), laying down the Staff Regulations of Officials and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community³⁴)
 - (b) the expert during the performance of the Contract and for five years starting from the date of the last payment made to the expert unless:

- i. the contracting party agrees to release the expert from the confidentiality obligations earlier
- ii. the confidential information becomes public through other channels
- iii. disclosure of the confidential information is required by law.

ANNEX III – EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS

(Extract from the Information Package 2015, volume I)

Research projects are intended to cover investigative or experimental work with the aim of acquiring further knowledge to facilitate the attainment of specific practical objectives such as the creation or development of new products, production processes or services.

The proposals should demonstrate the ability to solve specific scientific or technical problems, as well as demonstrate the economic and/or scientific technological impact of the results.

The preliminary investigation on the state-of-the-art and literature review should not be part of the project, but should be completed prior to submission and described in the proposal.

The maximum total financial contribution of the European Union for Research projects is up to of 60 % of the eligible costs.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals for Research projects.

1. Scientific and technical approach

Threshold: minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 2

- 1.1 Does the proposal address the research objectives of the RFCS programme (see Articles 4 – 10 of Council Decision 2008/376/EC)?
- 1.2 To what extent do the applicants demonstrate their knowledge of the international state-of-the-art related to the proposed work?
- 1.3 Are the proposed methods and techniques clearly described and well explained? Is the overall approach suitable for achieving the project objectives?
- 1.4 Is the scientific and technical feasibility of the proposed work convincingly addressed?

2. Innovative content

Threshold: minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 3

- 2.1 Please summarise the innovative aspects of the proposal. Are these aspects clearly described in the proposal?
- 2.2 Does the proposal have an appropriate level of innovative value/originality? Does the proposal indicate how the intended results could lead to progress (either incremental or breakthrough) beyond the state-of-the-art in the coal or steel sector, through either
 - the development of new or improved products, processes or technologies?
 - a significant progress in the existing knowledge or technologies?
 - a significant contribution to putting into practice research results in an innovative way?

3. Quality of the Implementation

Threshold: minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 4

- 3.1 Are the Work Packages and Tasks clearly described and well defined? Are they responding to the set objectives?
- 3.2 Is the interaction of the partners and tasks clearly defined and appropriate? Is the project scheduling realistic?
- 3.3 Do the individual partners have the necessary operational capacity (in terms of, e.g., experience, skills, facilities, staff etc.) to carry out the proposed action? Is the

consortium as a whole well balanced and does it include relevant industrial participation?

- 3.4 To what extent are the manpower and the technical and financial resources claimed in the proposal appropriate for the tasks described in the different Work Packages?

4. Benefits for the European coal and steel sectors

Threshold: minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 1

- 4.1 What are the industrial benefits for the related European sector? Are the main project deliverables (in terms of industrial interest, scientific/technical prospect and strategic relevance) clearly identified?
- 4.2 Do the expected results offer the perspective of a wider and general use or are they limited to a specific application, product and/or company?
- 4.3 Is the use and/or implementation of the results addressed and credible? Are modelling, simulation and/or field testing activities appropriate in view of the industrial exploitation of the findings?
- 4.4 Are aspects of dissemination and (if applicable) standardisation convincingly addressed?

Annual Priorities

Which of the current annual priorities for the relevant topic (coal or steel), as listed in the 2015 RFCS Information Package (Volume I), is addressed in the proposal?

ANNEX IV – EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR PILOT AND DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

(Extract from the Information Package 2015, volume I)

Pilot projects aim at the construction, operation and development of an installation or a significant part of an installation on an appropriate scale and using suitably large components with a view to examining the potential for putting theoretical or laboratory results into practice and/or increasing the reliability of the technical and economic data needed to progress to demonstration stage, and in certain cases to industrial and/or commercial stage.

Demonstration projects aim at the construction and/or operation of an industrial-scale installation or a significant part of an industrial-scale installation with the aim of bringing together all the technical and economic data in order to proceed with the industrial and/or commercial exploitation of the technology at minimum risk.

Pilot and Demonstration projects aim to bridge the gap between Research and Innovation.

Innovation can be considered as the technological implementation of new products or processes within the relevant industrial sector, or of significant improvements to products or processes, based on previous research results. The innovation is technologically implemented if it is introduced on the market (product innovation) or used within a production process (process innovation).

Where reference is given to "Innovation" in the Evaluation Form for Pilot and Demonstration projects, the definition above applies.

The preliminary investigation on the state-of-the-art and literature review should not be part of the project, but should be completed prior to submission and described in the proposal.

No significant research efforts should be included in Pilot and Demonstration projects, as they should focus on the construction and validation of a ready-designed unit.

The maximum total financial contribution of the European Union for Pilot and Demonstration projects is up to 50 % of the eligible costs.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals for Pilot and Demonstration projects.

1. Technical approach

Threshold: minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 2

- 1.1 Does the proposal address the research objectives of the RFCS programme (see Articles 4 – 10 of Council Decision 2008/376/EC)?
- 1.2 Does the proposal rely on well-established scientific and technical results obtained in former research projects or by any other means?
- 1.3 Are the proposed methods and techniques clearly described and well explained? Is the overall approach suitable for achieving the project objectives?
- 1.4 Is the technical feasibility of the proposed work convincingly addressed? To what extent does the proposal take into account the relevant industrial risk and include appropriate measures in order to reduce it?

2. Contribution to Innovation

Threshold: minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 3

- 2.1 Please summarise the innovation aspects of the proposal. Are these aspects clearly described in the proposal?
- 2.2 Will the expected results lead to significant improvements in processes, products or applications by using existing technologies? Do they offer the potential for breakthrough innovation?
- 2.3 Will the project provide a step forward in the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of the proposed application?

3. Quality of the Implementation

Threshold: minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 4

- 3.1 Are the Work Packages and Tasks clearly described and well defined? Are they responding to the set objectives?
- 3.2 Is the interaction of the partners and tasks clearly defined and appropriate? Is the project scheduling realistic?
- 3.3 Do the individual partners have the necessary operational capacity (in terms of, e.g., experience, skills, facilities, staff etc.) to carry out the proposed action? Is the consortium as a whole well balanced and does it include relevant industrial participation?
- 3.4 To what extent are the manpower and the technical and financial resources claimed in the proposal appropriate for the tasks described in the different Work Packages?

4. Benefits for the European coal and steel sectors

Threshold: minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 1

- 4.1 What are the industrial benefits for the related European sector?
- 4.2 Does the proposal demonstrate a strategic importance for the European coal and steel industry? Does it contribute to the technological leadership of the EU related sector and to maintain a strong industrial base in Europe?
- 4.3 Are economic issues adequately addressed and is the further demonstration or deployment of the proposed technology credible?
- 4.4 Are the results easily transferable throughout the related EU sector?

Annual Priorities

Which of the current annual priorities for the relevant topic (coal or steel), as listed in the 2015 RFCS Information Package (Volume I), is addressed in the proposal?

ANNEX V – EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR ACCOMPANYING MEASURES

(Extract from the Information Package 2015, volume I)

Accompanying measures shall relate to the promotion of the use of knowledge gained or to the organisation of dedicated workshops or conferences in connection with projects or priorities of the Research Programme.

This activity includes the valorisation of research results having a direct impact in one of the following areas and excluding any kind of research activity:

- contribution to the assessment or enhancement of European or international technical regulations and standards;
- valorisation of results that have a direct and immediate potential application at industrial level. The improvement of product quality and environmental and safety standards in and around the workplace are of particular importance;
- exploitation of new or alternative market possibilities of products and processes related to the coal or steel sector.

The maximum total financial contribution of the European Union for Accompanying Measures is up to of 60 % of the eligible costs.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals for Accompanying Measures.

1. Overall approach

Threshold: minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 2

- 1.1 Does the proposal address the research objectives of the RFCS programme (see Articles 4 – 10 of Council Decision 2008/376/EC)?
- 1.2 Is the proposal in line with the role of accompanying measures (promotion of the use of knowledge gained or organization of dedicated workshops or conferences in connection with projects or priorities of the RFCS research programme).
- 1.3 Do the applicants indicate clear and quantitative objectives? Are they credible?

2. Dissemination value

Threshold: minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 3

- 2.1 Does the proposal intend to disseminate new information? Does it effectively address the appropriate audience in the field concerned?
- 2.2 Does the scope of the proposal (in terms of quality and quantity of the information to be disseminated) justify a dedicated accompanying measure?

3. Quality of the Implementation

Threshold: minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 4

- 3.1 Are the Work Packages and Tasks clearly described and well defined? Are they responding to the set objectives?
- 3.2 If applicable, is the interaction of the partners and tasks clearly defined and appropriate? Is the project scheduling realistic?

- 3.3 Do the individual partners have the necessary operational capacity (in terms of, e.g., experience, skills, facilities, staff etc.) to carry out the proposed action? If applicable, is the consortium as a whole well balanced?
- 3.4 To what extent are the manpower and the technical and financial resources claimed in the proposal appropriate for the tasks described in the different Work Packages?

4. Benefits for the European coal and steel sectors

Threshold: minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 1

- 4.1 Is there a clear need and clear benefit to carry out the project at European level instead of national or private level?
- 4.2 What are the industrial benefits for the related European sector? Does the proposal demonstrate a strategic importance for the European coal and steel industry?