HANDBOOK

ON EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF PROPOSALS FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN THE 7TH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CONCERNING

Information and Communication Technologies

FET-Open Xtrack Call
FP7-ICT-2013-X
EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF PROPOSALS IN THE ICT THEME
FET-OPEN XTRACK CALL

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................................................ 4

1 THE EVALUATION PROCESS – STEP 1: EVALUATION OF THE S&T QUALITY ................................. 5

1.1 PREPARATION .................................................................................................................................................... 5

1.1.1 Establish timetable for evaluation ................................................................................................................. 5

1.1.2 Appoint independent observers of the evaluation process .............................................................................. 5

1.1.3 Select the FET-Open Call coordinator and FET-Open Objective coordinators to manage evaluation .... 5

1.1.4 Select a pool of independent experts for the evaluation ................................................................................ 6

1.1.5 Brief the evaluators and rapporteurs ......................................................................................................... 6

1.2 EXECUTION ...................................................................................................................................................... 8

1.2.1 Proposal Reception ......................................................................................................................................... 8

1.2.2 Check assignment to appropriate call and objectives of received proposals ................................................. 8

1.2.3 Assign a Commission Moderator to each proposal ..................................................................................... 8

1.2.4 Proposal eligibility check, pre-screening and data correction .................................................................... 9

1.2.5 Assign evaluators to each proposal ............................................................................................................ 10

1.2.6 Conflict of interest (Appointment to the pool of remote experts) .............................................................. 10

1.2.7 Prepare evaluators’ dossiers ...................................................................................................................... 11

1.2.8 Conduct individual evaluations .................................................................................................................. 11

1.2.9 Conduct Consensus group ....................................................................................................................... 11

1.2.10 Finalise Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) for proposal failing on S&T criteria ................................ 12

1.2.11 Distribute Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) for proposals failing on S&T criteria ........................... 12

2 THE EVALUATION PROCESS – STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE PROPOSALS SUCCESSFUL ON

THE S&T CRITERIA AT STEP 1 ........................................................................................................................................ 12

2.1 PREPARATION ............................................................................................................................................... 12

2.1.1 Establish evaluation Panels: Appoint Panel coordinators ........................................................................... 12

2.1.2 Select a pool of independent experts for the evaluation ............................................................................... 13

2.1.3 Select the final list of experts to be used in the evaluation ......................................................................... 13

2.1.4 Assign evaluators to each proposal ........................................................................................................ 14

2.1.5 Assign rapporteurs to panels and proposals ............................................................................................ 14

2.1.6 Conflict of interest ....................................................................................................................................... 15

2.1.7 Prepare rapporteurs and evaluators dossiers .......................................................................................... 15

2.2 EXECUTION .................................................................................................................................................. 16
2.2.1  Brief the remote evaluators

2.2.2  Conduct individual remote readings

2.2.3  Brief on-site the evaluators and rapporteurs

2.2.4  Prepare Draft Consensus Reports (CR)

2.2.5  Consensus meetings– finalise Consensus Report

2.2.6  Panel meetings

2.2.7  Prioritise proposals

2.2.8  Finalise Evaluation Summary Reports (ESRs)

2.2.9  Prepare Evaluation Report – FET-Open level

2.2.10 Discovered conflicts of interest

2.2.11 Confidentiality of information and breaches thereof

2.2.12 Distribution of Evaluation Summary Reports (ESR) to proposers

2.2.13 Redress procedure

3  PROPOSAL SELECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

3.1  OVERVIEW OF THE SELECTION PROCESS

3.2  ESTABLISHMENT OF A “RECOMMENDED FUNDING” FIGURE PER PROPOSAL

3.3  DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE FET-OPEN

3.4  ETHICAL ISSUES REVIEW

3.5  INVITATION TO NEGOTIATIONS

3.6  ICTC INFORMATION SESSION

3.7  INTER-SERVICE CONSULTATION

3.8  FINALISATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

3.9  GRANT AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS AND SELECTION DECISION

3.10 REJECTION DECISION (INITIAL ROUND)

3.11 INFORMATION OF REJECTED PROPOSALS (INITIAL ROUND)

3.12 SELECTION OF PROPOSALS FROM THE RESERVE LIST

3.13 REJECTION DECISION (FINAL ROUND)

3.14 INFORMATION ON REJECTED PROPOSALS (FINAL ROUND)

ANNEX 1: INDICATIVE TIMETABLE– DRAFT

ANNEX 3: SUMMARY OF ROLES IN EVALUATIONS
Introduction

This handbook specifies in detail how the general procedures for evaluation and selection of proposals in the 7th Framework programme set out in the Commissions’ document: “Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures” (Quality, Transparency, Equality of treatment, Impartiality, Efficiency and Speed) are implemented in the evaluation and selection of proposals submitted under the ICT FET-Open Xtrack call.

The evaluation of proposals is one of the most critical elements within FP7. The large numbers of proposals received in each call, the uncertainty as to which topics will be addressed by the proposals, and the responsibility of the Commission services to provide to proposers the result of the evaluation of their proposals in the shortest possible time, means that the process for the receipt and allocation of proposals to evaluators must be clearly defined to be as efficient as possible.

To ensure the equal treatment of all proposals, the procedure of the evaluation itself must also be as standardised as possible. It must lead in a transparent and efficient way to establishing an unambiguous priority list. This constitutes a primary input to the selection decision.

The procedures here described apply to the ICT FET-Open Xtrack call for proposals (FP7-ICT-2013-X).

FET-Open Xtrack operate as a fixed deadline call. Compared with the procedures applicable to the other ICT fixed deadline calls, some adaptations are made in the detail of the procedure in order to accommodate the submission of the proposal in a single stage and an evaluation in two steps. The evaluation procedure can be summarised as follows:

- Proposals for STREP can be submitted anytime during the submission period. The submission is single stage.
- In the first step, the Section 1 related to S&T of any eligible proposal is evaluated anonymously as it comes in with the help of a minimum of 3 remote evaluators. At this stage only the S/T Quality, in the sense of Appendix 5 of the ICT Work Programme, is evaluated. An Evaluation Summary Report is sent to all proposers that fail to pass the evaluation threshold for S/T Quality.
- In the second step, the proposals that pass the evaluation threshold for S/T Quality are further evaluated through a combination of remote evaluation and panels of experts that convene in Brussels; they are not evaluated anonymously.

In the ICT Work Programme 2013, this handbook is applicable to the following objectives of the FET-Open Xtrack call:

- Objective ICT-2013.9.5: FET-Open Xtrack (STREP)

The procedures described in this document are set out to ensure that the real purpose of the evaluation, to get the best value for public money by selecting the best quality proposals in the fairest, most transparent and most efficient way possible can be reached. They take into account the recommendations made by the external observers who monitored the evaluations of the IST calls in FP6 and the earlier ICT calls in FP7.

Notes:

- In the text which follows the grammatical form he, his etc. is used for ease of reading. He/she should always be understood.
- The document referred to here as the "FP7 Rules for participation" is properly called "Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 of the European Parliament and the Council of 18 December 2006 laying down the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in actions under the Seventh Framework Programme and for the dissemination of research results (2007-2013)"
1 The Evaluation Process – Step 1: Evaluation of the S&T Quality

1.1 Preparation

1.1.1 Establish timetable for evaluation

Responsible: FET-Open Call coordinator

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 1

Procedure for carrying out task: The FET-Open Call coordinator plans a detailed timetable for the execution of the evaluation and implementation with the support of the Programme Operations unit. The objective is to provide results to proposers as swiftly as possible, within the limits of the available personnel and logistic resources and the necessity of ensuring a high level of quality control of the process. The evaluation of STREP proposals at step 1 is continuous, meaning that proposals are evaluated as they are received.

Approval of result: The HoU responsible for FET-Open approves the proposed timetable.

1.1.2 Appoint independent observers of the evaluation process

Responsible: Head of Unit in charge of “Evaluation and Monitoring” on behalf of the Director General.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.4

Procedure for carrying out task: The above Rules indicate that independent experts may be appointed as observers to examine the evaluation process. It defines the role of the observers as to give advice to the Commission on the conduct, fairness and equity of the evaluation process, ways in which the procedures could be improved, on the evaluation criteria and the way in which the evaluators apply the criteria.

Independent experts with a high level of experience in the field are selected and appointed. They observe the evaluation process and convey their opinions and recommendations subsequently to DG CONNECT in a written report.

Each observer subscribes to a Code of conduct and signs a Conflict of interest and confidentiality declaration.

Approval of result: The Director General or his delegate approves the terms of reference for the observers, the list of observers selected and later on receives their report, which is also presented to the ICTC.

1.1.3 Select the FET-Open Call coordinator and FET-Open Objective coordinators to manage evaluation

Responsible: FET-Open Head of Unit.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures.

Procedure for carrying out task: The FET-Open Call coordinator takes responsibility for the management of the evaluation of proposals addressed to the related FET-Open Call. The FET-Open Objective coordinator takes responsibility for the management of the evaluation of proposals addressed to the related FET-Open Objective. The FET-Open Head of Unit can either nominate a senior member of the statutory staff experienced in evaluation management as coordinator, or alternatively in agreement with his Director nominate himself as coordinator.

During the evaluation the FET-Open coordinators operate under the supervision of the Head of Unit and with his authority.
Approval of result: The Director in charge of FET-Open approves the FET-Open Call and FET-Open Objective coordinators. The names of the coordinators are published in an annex to the Evaluation report.

1.1.4 Select a pool of independent experts for the evaluation

Responsible for task: FET-Open Objective coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: The Framework programme and Specific programme decisions require that selection of actions will be based on open calls for proposals and independent peer review.

A description of the experts who may be appointed is given in the FP7 Rules for Participation Article 17.

Rules concerning the selection of experts are given in the FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.2.

Procedure for carrying out task: Two public calls have been made, addressed to individuals and to organisations. From response to these calls a database of experts has been drawn up. These calls remain open and the database is constantly updated.

Based on his best assessment of proposals expected to arrive, the FET-Open Objective coordinator selects and issues appointment letters to a pool of experts adequate in number and expertise to carry out the evaluation of proposals. The pool is composed of experts who agree to act as evaluators during one calendar year or as rapporteur. The pool is dynamic, i.e. regularly the pool is updated to replace experts that have already evaluated a significant number of proposals, or to expand the coverage of scientific disciplines.

This initial selection provides a sufficiently broad pool to ensure that the final choice will conform to requirements of competence and balance etc. described below.

- a high level of expertise
- an appropriate range of competencies

Providing the above conditions can be satisfied, other criteria are also taken into consideration:

- an appropriate balance between academic and industrial expertise and users
- a reasonable gender balance
- a reasonable distribution of geographic origin
- regular rotation of experts
- as required in the “Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures”.

Each expert subscribes to a Code of conduct and signs a Confidentiality and conflict of interest declaration.

Approval of result: The FET-Open Director approves the initial pool of experts; any experts added subsequently are also subject to his approval.

1.1.5 Brief the evaluators and rapporteurs

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator.


2  The European Communities pursue an equal opportunities policy and aims in particular at achieving in the medium term at least 40% of members of each sex in each expert group and committee (2000/407/EC: Commission Decision of 19 June 2000 relating to gender balance within the committees and expert groups established by it).

3  In the case of calls relating to specific international cooperation activities (SICA), a significant number of experts from the international cooperation partner countries will be included.

4  In general, the Commission will ensure that at least a quarter of the experts used by an activity/research area will be replaced each calendar year.
Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8.

Procedure for carrying out task: The briefing is done remotely by providing electronically a “briefing pack” that includes a “step-by-step” guide. This guide provides an overview of the remote evaluation of project proposals and a pointer to the Guide for Applicants. Detailed instructions on the evaluation procedure are included as annex in the Guide for applicants.

At the end of the year a debrief is done remotely, to provide the evaluators with a global feedback on the evaluation they participated on.

Approval of result: The Guidance notes and briefing materials are approved by the Head of Unit responsible for FET-Open.
1.2 Execution

1.2.1 Proposal Reception

Responsible: FET-Open Call coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 1.

Procedure for carrying out task: Proposals received through the electronic submission services are either hand delivered on electronic media or transmitted via internal mail to the FET-Open unit.

Approval of result: FET-Open Call coordinator.

1.2.2 Check assignment to appropriate call and objectives of received proposals

Responsible: FET-Open Call and Objective coordinators, Proposal Assignment Group (PAG).

Background for carrying out task: Established DG CONNECT procedure to check and confirm proposal allocation

Procedure for carrying out task: The PAG comprises one or more representative of each of the objectives open in the current ICT calls, each nominated by his Objective coordinator, with a secretariat provided by the Programme Operations unit.

Before the evaluation begins, the FET-Open Call and Objective coordinators checks that the proposals received correspond to the FET-Open call and objective.

Normally the proposal’s own declared first choice of objective as indicated on the proposal form A1 is taken. Where the proposer omits this information on his A1 form, gives invalid or erroneous information or gives more than one choice, the proposal assignment is agreed together with the PAG based on the centre of gravity of the proposal.

The PAG also supervises the transfer of proposals to or from other Themes in the Cooperation and Capacities Specific Programmes of FP7 if required a proposal may exceptionally be transferred between calls if it was clearly submitted in error to a certain call and it would have been ineligible in that call, while a more suitable call has been open in parallel1 and it can be accepted as eligible by those responsible for the alternative call. Any such transfer will be an exceptional procedure and in all decisions the principle of equal treatment of like cases will be maintained. The proposer will be informed of the transfer by email by the call to which the proposal was originally submitted.

Approval of result: The FET-Open Objective coordinator agrees the list of proposals assigned to his objective. In case of need, a system of later transfer by mutual agreement is employed.

1.2.3 Assign a Commission Moderator to each proposal

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8.

Procedure for carrying out task: The FET-Open Objective coordinator proposes a member of staff to act as “Commission Moderator” to each proposal. The Moderator moderates the remote Consensus group discussion for that proposal (see below).

The assignment is based on

- their known areas of expertise

1 The Commission cannot "store" proposals while waiting for a suitable call to be published
• appropriate distribution of the workload

Approval of result: The FET-Open Objective coordinator decides on the assignment of moderators.

1.2.4 Proposal eligibility check, pre-screening and data correction

Responsible: Commission Moderator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 2.5.

Procedure for carrying out task: When proposals are received from the electronic submission services the Commission Moderator carries out an eligibility check on each proposal:

• the proposal arrived before the call deadline
• the proposal is presented by an eligible consortium as required in the Rules of participation and defined in the Work programme1
• the proposal is complete with a Part A and a Part B
• the proposal is in scope of the call (either entirely, or the main weight of the proposal)
• Part B (sections 1, 2 and 3) should not exceed 10 A4 pages, excluding section 4 and a single title page with acronym, title and abstract of the proposal. Section lengths should respect the following limitations:
  ■ The length of Section 1 (S&T Quality) is maximally 8 A4 pages;
  ■ The length of Section 2 (Implementation) is maximally 1 A4 page;
  ■ The length of Section 3 (Impact) is maximally 1 A4 page
• The title page and Section 1 of Part B should be fully anonymous, meaning that it may not include the name of any organisation or its staff involved in the consortium or any other information which could identify an applicant. Furthermore, on the title page and in Section 1 strictly no bibliographic references or links to additional information are permitted.

Failure on any of these points eliminates the proposal from evaluation. Furthermore, if a proposal is clearly out of scope (i.e. not addressing the requirements for FET-Open specified in the call text) it is also declared ineligible. In all other cases where a judgement is needed the proposal will continue to evaluation by the experts, who will also address the question of eligibility in terms of scope in their judgement of the proposal. If the experts reach agreement that the proposal is out of scope, it is declared ineligible and excluded from further evaluation.

Eligible proposals are then read in detail (pre-screened) by the Commission Moderator for three purposes, which are significant later in the process

• to identify the proposing organisations, so that experts can be assigned to evaluate it without risk of conflict of interest.
• to confirm the type of instrument and technical areas covered by the proposal, to assist with its assignment to the appropriate panel of evaluators. The Commission will in no case change the funding scheme and instrument selected by the proposer.
• to confirm or if necessary correct in the Commission database the proposal data if there are discrepancies (e.g., the financial data does not add up to the reported total, data entry errors on the A2 forms etc.). This is to ensure consistency in the statistics prepared by the Commission for the Member states; the proposals themselves as seen by the experts are not changed.

Approval of result: The Head of Unit responsible for FET-Open approves the rejection of the proposals which are judged to be ineligible for evaluation.

1 At least 3 independent legal entities, each of which is established in a MS or AC, and no two of which are established in the same MS or AC.
1.2.5 Assign evaluators to each proposal

Responsible: Commission Moderator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.3

Procedure for carrying out task: The moderator assigns three experts to each proposal from the evaluation pool. In addition, the moderator may assign an additional expert to act as rapporteur. These experts will read that proposal in detail and participate in the Consensus group on it. The assignment is based on

- their known areas of expertise
- the avoidance of conflicts of interest (see 1.2.6)
- the avoidance of national bias
- variation in the composition of the Consensus groups
- appropriate distribution of the workload

Experts will be replaced in a Consensus group and re-assigned at any time on the discovery of previously unknown conflicts of interest.

Approval of result: The FET-Open Objective coordinator approves the assignment.

1.2.6 Conflict of interest (Appointment to the pool of remote experts)

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.3

Procedure for carrying out task: Experts who are employed by one of the applicant organisations in a proposal are normally considered as facing a “disqualifying” conflict of interest concerning that proposal. However, when justified by the requirement to appoint the best available experts and by the limited size of the pool of qualified experts, such experts may exceptionally be assigned to the pool of remote experts if the expert works in a different department/laboratory/institute from the one where the work is to be carried out, and if the constituent bodies operate with a high degree of autonomy.

If employed in the pool of remote expert, such experts will not read or take part in Consensus groups involving the proposal with which they have a conflict of interest.

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1 i.e. fixed group of experts always working together should be avoided except in duly justified cases

2 Annex I to the Appointment letter to experts defines “disqualifying” and potential conflicts of interest as:

A disqualifying conflict of interest exists if an expert:

- Was involved in the preparation of the proposal
- Stands to benefit directly should the proposal be accepted
- Has a close family relationship with any person representing an applicant organisation in the proposal
- Is a director, trustee or partner of an applicant organisation
- Is employed by one of the applicant organisations in a proposal
- Is a member of one of the fifteen Advisory Groups set up by the Commission to provide advice on the preparation of the annual work programmes of the specific programmes of EC FP7 or Euratom FP7.
- Is in any other situation that compromises his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially.

A potential conflict of interest may exist, even in cases not covered by the clear disqualifying conflicts indicated above, if an expert:

- Was employed by one of the applicant organisations in a proposal within the previous three years
- Is involved in a contract or research collaboration with an applicant organisation, or had been so in the previous three years
- Is in any other situation that could cast doubt on his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party.
Approval of result: The FET-Open coordinator takes the responsibility for the pool of remote experts. The subsequent detailed assignment of these experts to the proposals within the panel is subject to a further level of approval (see above)

1.2.7 Prepare evaluators’ dossiers

**Responsible:** FET-Open Objective coordinator.

**Background for carrying out task:** Established DG CONNECT procedure to support the evaluation process

**Procedure for carrying out task:** Using the data on the assignment of proposals to evaluators, support staff prepare for each expert one copy of each proposal to which he has been assigned, including a reporting form. Proposals and forms are sent electronically to the expert by the support staff from a central FET-Open email address.

**Approval of result:** The FET-Open Objective coordinator monitors the contents of each dossier for the experts.

1.2.8 Conduct individual evaluations

**Responsible:** FET-Open Objective coordinator and proposal moderators

**Background for carrying out task:** Guide for Applicants, FP7-ICT-2013-X – FET Open Scheme

**Procedure for carrying out task:** Readings are done remotely. Each evaluator of a proposal gets access to the part of the proposal that contain the S&T section. He reads it in detail and makes an individual assessment of the proposal for the S&T excellence criteria without discussion with others. He records his conclusions on an IER form, which he signs and returns to the central evaluation address (or the FET-Open Objective coordinator). The evaluator may advise at this stage to declare a proposal out of scope. IER forms are always returned by email followed by a signed fax in case a digital signature is not available. The evaluators are given 10 working days to judge the proposal.

**Approval of result:** The FET-Open Objective coordinator checks that each form returned is complete and properly signed. The IER forms are input to the consensus meeting.

1.2.9 Conduct Consensus group

**Responsible:** Commission Moderator.

**Background for carrying out task:** Guide for Applicants, FP7-ICT-2013-X – FET Open Scheme

**Procedure for carrying out task:**

When all the remote evaluators of a particular proposal have completed and delivered their IER forms for the S&T criteria, a draft Consensus Report (CR) is prepared by the Commission Moderator or by the rapporteur. The Commission moderator initiates the discussion between evaluators by sending the draft initial CR by email to the evaluators for comments or approval. The draft CR consists of a collation of the individual evaluation forms and a proposed consensus report for the S&T criteria based on the individual comments and marks.

The Commission Moderator takes no part in the assessment of the proposal. His role is to ensure that the discussion is properly and fairly conducted, that all issues are discussed, that all opinions are taken into account and that the conclusions are accurately recorded in the Consensus meeting forms. All email exchanges of the consensus finding are kept.

Possibly after several iterations, a consensus is reached. The consensus may lead to put back a proposal as ineligible if the proposal is judged at this stage as out of scope of the FET-Open call. In the event of a persis-

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1 This form includes the statement “I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, I have no direct or indirect conflict of interest in the evaluation of this proposal”
tent disagreement between evaluators when a consensus cannot be reached, the report sets out the majority view of the independent experts as to whether or not each applicable threshold has been achieved.

The contents of the CR are subject to quality control. The final CR will be sent to at least one expert (evaluator or rapporteur) for their signature.

Approval of result: The forms recording the result of the discussion (CR form) are signed for approval by at least by one expert and the Commission Moderator.

1.2.10 Finalise Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) for proposal failing on S&T criteria

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator.

Procedure for carrying out task: Guide for Applicants, FP7-ICT-2013-X – FET Open Scheme

Approval of result: The forms recording the result of the discussion (CR form) are signed for approval by at least by one expert and the Commission Moderator.

1.2.11 Distribute Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) for proposals failing on S&T criteria

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator.

Procedure for carrying out task: Guide for Applicants, FP7-ICT-2013-X – FET Open Scheme

Approval of result: The forms recording the result of the discussion (CR form) are signed for approval by at least one expert and the Commission Moderator.

2 The Evaluation Process – Step 2: Evaluation of the proposals successful on the S&T criteria at step 1

In the second step, the proposals that pass the evaluation threshold for S/T Quality are further evaluated through a combination of remote evaluation and panels of experts that convene in Brussels; they are not evaluated anonymously. The evaluation of the Implementation and Impact criteria is done as part of this second step.

2.1 Preparation

2.1.1 Establish evaluation Panels: Appoint Panel coordinators

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator.

Procedure for carrying out task: Guide for Applicants, FP7-ICT-2013-X – FET Open Scheme

Approval of result: The forms recording the result of the discussion (CR form) are signed for approval by at least one expert and the Commission Moderator.

ICT Handbook: FET-Open Xtrack Call Version V1.0, 10-09-2012
Procedure for carrying out task: The received proposals will be distributed to different “panels” of evaluators. Normally a single panel of experts should be responsible for the evaluation of all the proposals which address a particular budget allocation to ensure equality of treatment, as all proposals competing in that budget segment are evaluated to the same standards and are prioritised against each other.

In the event that too many proposals are received to be handled in a single conveniently-sized panel, or if sub-objectives or sub-themes involved require substantially different expert skills, then sub-panels can be organised, but then there must in that case be a final "integration panel" composed of members of each of the sub-panels, to ensure common standards and to produce a final merged priority.

For any proposal the type of instrument determines the panel to which it is assigned.

The FET-Open Objective coordinator under the supervision of his Head of Unit appoints a member of staff to each panel as Panel coordinator, to supervise the working of the group of experts who will comprise that panel.

Approval of result: The FET-Open Objective coordinator devises the panel structure in his objective and selects Panel coordinators. His choices are approved by his Head of Unit. In case the FET-Open coordinator is the Head of Unit the choices are approved by the Director responsible.

2.1.2 Select a pool of independent experts for the evaluation

Responsible for task: FET-Open Objective coordinator

Background for carrying out task: The Framework programme and Specific programme decisions require that selection of actions will be based on open calls for proposals and independent peer review.

A description of the experts who may be appointed is given in the FP7 Rules for Participation Article 17.

Rules concerning the selection of experts are given in the FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.2

Procedure for carrying out task: Two public calls have been made, addressed to individuals and to organisations. From response to these calls a database of experts has been drawn up. These calls remain open and the database is constantly updated.

The FET-Open coordinator selects a pool of experts adequate in number and expertise to carry out the second step of the evaluation of proposals successful on S&T criteria. This initial selection provides a sufficiently broad pool to ensure that the final choice will conform to requirements of competence and balance etc. described below.

Approval of result: The Director responsible for FET-Open approves the initial pool of experts; any experts added subsequently are also subject to his approval.

2.1.3 Select the final list of experts to be used in the evaluation

Responsible: FET-Open coordinator

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.2

Procedure for carrying out task: When the list of actually successful proposals on S&T criteria is finalised and the availability of experts are known, the FET-Open Objective coordinator establishes the final list of experts to be invited for the evaluation and informs his Head of Unit. At this stage it may be necessary to invite additional experts with specific expertise which is needed to evaluate the proposals actually successful at the first step but not covered by the pool of experts initially invited. The final list must respect the need to have

- A high level of expertise;

An appropriate range of competencies.

Providing the above conditions can be satisfied, other criteria are also taken into consideration:

- An appropriate balance between academic and industrial expertise and users;
- A reasonable gender balance¹;
- A reasonable distribution of geographical origins²;
- Regular rotation of experts³

Each expert contracted for the evaluation subscribes to a Code of conduct and signs a Confidentiality and conflict of interest declaration.

*Approval of result:* The final list of experts to be invited for the FET-Open evaluation is approved by the Head of Unit or in case the FET-Open Objective coordinator is the Head of Unit by the responsible Director.

### 2.1.4 Assign evaluators to each proposal

**Responsible:** Commission Moderator

**Background for carrying out task:** FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.3

**Procedure for carrying out task:** The moderator assigns at least three experts to each proposal for the second step of the evaluation. These experts will read that proposal in detail and evaluate the remaining criteria not yet evaluated at step 1 by providing their IERs. The assignment is based on

- their known areas of expertise
- the avoidance of potential conflicts of interest
- the avoidance of national bias
- an appropriate distribution of the workload

Experts will be replaced or re-assigned at any time on the discovery of previously unknown conflicts of interest.

*Approval of result:* The Commission Moderator suggests the assignment of experts to the proposals. The assignment is approved by the FET-Open Head of Unit. This includes approval of any last-minute changes to evaluator assignment caused by sickness, conflicts of interest etc.

### 2.1.5 Assign rapporteurs to panels and proposals

**Responsible:** FET-Open Objective coordinator.

**Background for carrying out task:** FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.3

**Procedure for carrying out task:** The FET-Open Objective coordinator, with the advice of his Panel coordinators assign experts as rapporteurs among his panels according to their known areas of expertise and to the number of proposals needed to be handled in each panel. The assignment is flexible according to circumstances – rapporteurs may be re-assigned according to need. They are responsible for completing the pro-

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¹ The European Communities pursue an equal opportunities policy and aims in particular at achieving in the medium term at least 40% of members of each sex in each expert group and committee (2000/407/EC: Commission Decision of 19 June 2000 relating to gender balance within the committees and expert groups established by it).

² In the case of calls relating to specific international cooperation activities (SICA), a significant number of experts from the international cooperation partner countries will be included.

³ In general, the Commission will ensure that at least a quarter of the experts used by an activity/research area will be replaced each calendar year.
posal-reporting forms accurately reflecting the opinion of the evaluation, from the IER provided by the evaluators.

Approval of result: The assignment of rapporteurs to panels and proposals is approved by the FET-Open Head of Unit.

2.1.6 Conflict of interest

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.3

Procedure for carrying out task:

An expert who is named as participant in a proposal and/or has a disqualifying conflict of interest of the following types:

- was involved in the preparation of the proposal,
- stands to benefit directly should the proposal be accepted
- has a close family relationship with any person representing an applicant organisation in the proposal
- is a director, trustee or partner of an applicant organisation
- is a member of one of the fifteen Advisory Groups set up by the Commission to provide advice on the preparation of the annual work programmes of the specific programmes of EC FP7 or Euratom FP7
- is in any other situation that compromises his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially

shall not participate in any way in the evaluation of proposals in the panel dealing with the proposal he is involved with, nor in any panel competing for the same budget segment. When justified by the requirement to appoint the best available experts and by the limited size of the pool of qualified experts, an expert employed by one of the applicant organisations may be assigned to the panel. Such an expert may however solely attend the panel meeting if he/she works in a different department/laboratory/institute from the one where the work is to be carried out, and if the constituent bodies operate with a high degree of autonomy. He must nevertheless withdraw from the panel meeting when a proposal for which he has a conflict of interest is discussed

Such experts will not read or take part in Consensus groups involving the proposal with which they have a conflict of interest.

In exceptional duly justified cases, experts in the circumstances described above may also participate in the Consensus group for the proposal in question. The Commission will inform the other experts in the group of the affiliation of the expert concerned. All such derogations for experts' participation in the consensus groups shall be reported in the Evaluation report.

Approval of result: The FET-Open Objective coordinator takes responsibility the distribution of experts to his panels. The subsequent detailed assignment of these experts to the proposals within the panel is subject to a further level of approval (see above)

2.1.7 Prepare rapporteurs and evaluators dossiers

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: Established DG CONNECT procedure to support the evaluation process

Procedure for carrying out task: Using the data on the assignment of proposals to evaluators, support staff prepare for each expert a dossier containing one copy of each proposal to which he has been assigned. The dossier also contains an adequate number of reporting forms plus other supporting information such as a copy of the relevant part of the Work programme etc.

Approval of result: The FET-Open Objective coordinator manages the correct completion of the task.
2.2 Execution

2.2.1 Brief the remote evaluators

This task may not be done remotely. In that case, it will be performed with the rest of the evaluation on-site in Brussels (see 2.2.3).

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: Detailed instructions on the evaluation procedure are included as annex in the Guide for applicants. A “briefing pack” containing these instructions and other key documents and briefing material is made available electronically to the experts.

Complementary information is made available at the same time, covering:

- the evaluation procedure
- the objective and instruments which they will be evaluating
- their rights and responsibilities as independent experts, and particularly, their confidentiality obligation

The briefing of the evaluators emphasises the principles for evaluation of proposals, that all proposals are treated equally on their own merit, that the evaluation concerns the proposal as presented and that it is evaluated only against the evaluation criteria set out in the Work programme.

Approval of result: The Guidance notes and briefing materials are approved by the Head of Unit responsible for FET-Open.

2.2.2 Conduct individual remote readings

This task may not be done remotely. In that case, it will be performed with the rest of the evaluation on-site in Brussels.

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: A briefing pack containing instructions and other key documents is provided to the experts. Each evaluator of a proposal reads it in detail and makes an individual assessment of the proposal for the Implementation and for the Impact criteria without discussion with others. He records his conclusions on an IER form, which he submits to the FET-Open Objective coordinator.

Approval of result: The FET-Open Objective coordinator checks that each form submitted is complete. The IER forms are input to the consensus report. They are signed by the expert.

2.2.3 Brief on-site the evaluators and rapporteurs

Responsible: Director and HoU responsible for FET-Open and FET-Open Call and Objective coordinators.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: Detailed instructions on the evaluation procedure are included as annex in the Guide for applicants. A “Welcome pack” containing these instructions and other key documents and briefing material is sent electronically to the experts prior to their arrival in Brussels.

Presentations are also made to the experts on arrival at the evaluation, covering:

- the evaluation procedure
the objective and instruments which they will be evaluating
their rights and responsibilities as independent experts, and particularly, their confidentiality obligation

The briefing of the experts emphasises the principles for evaluation of proposals, that all proposals are treated equally on their own merit, that the evaluation concerns the proposal as presented and that it is evaluated only against the evaluation criteria set out in the Work programme.

Approval of result: The Guidance notes and briefing materials are approved by the ICT Director responsible for FET-Open, who also normally participates in the briefing session.

2.2.4 Prepare Draft Consensus Reports (CR)

Responsible: Panel Objective coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: On the basis of the proposal and its remote IER forms, the proposal rapporteur prepares a draft Consensus Report (CR) for the Implementation and the Impact criteria. This will be the discussion basis for the consensus and panel meetings.

A weight and a threshold apply to each evaluation criterion. The weights are used to calculate an overall score on which a threshold may also applies.

If one or more evaluators have noted that there are ethical issues touched on by the proposal, this will be discussed in order to decide whether or not the issues require further attention. If so, the relevant box on the CR form will be ticked.

Where a proposal judged to be above threshold contains ethical issues, an Ethical Issues Report (EIR) will also be completed by the Proposal rapporteur, stating the nature of the ethical issues.

The Commission Moderator does not evaluate the proposal, his role is to ensure that the work is properly and fairly conducted.

The preparation of the draft CR and possible EIR may be done remotely or in Brussels. The consensus and panel meetings are normally done in Brussels, exceptionally they may be done remotely.

Approval of result: The forms recording the result are subject to further review by the panel as a whole (see below).

2.2.5 Consensus meetings– finalise Consensus Report

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator, Panel coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: All the draft CRs produced by the rapporteurs for the Implementation and the Impact criteria evaluated at step 2 are discussed and reviewed collectively in a consensus meeting to ensure they represent the consolidated view of the experts on the IERs for these two criteria. The meetings are chaired by the Commission moderators. The chair takes no part in the assessment of the proposal, his role is to ensure that the discussion is properly and fairly conducted, that all issues are discussed, that all voices are heard and that the conclusions are accurately recorded on the Consensus meeting forms. The contents of the CR are subject to quality control and form the basis for the draft ESRs for the Implementation and the Impact criteria.

1 The quality control ensures that the comments recorded give sufficient and clear reasons for the marks and in the case of proposals with high scores, any recommendations to the proposal are enclosed.
In the case of proposals that have been submitted previously to the Commission in FP7 under comparable conditions (e.g. similar work programme objectives and criteria), the moderator may, after the conclusion of the Consensus group, ask the experts to review the previous Evaluation Summary Report. If necessary, the experts will be required to provide a clear justification for their scores and comments if these differ markedly from those awarded to the earlier proposal. These remarks may be included by the Panel in the final ESR.

Approval of result: The Consensus Report, The Proposal Minutes and EIR are signed as a minimum by the proposal rapporteur and the Commission moderator.

2.2.6 Panel meetings

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator, Panel coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: All the draft ESR (final CR) from the proposal that reach step 2 are discussed and reviewed collectively in panel meetings. Thus the conclusion for each proposal is based on the collective wisdom, and consistency of the scoring is assured. In doing so the panel meetings also ensures that the marks have been used consistently, on all criteria, including on the S&T quality criteria that was evaluated at step 1. Their outcome is recorded as the final ESR for that proposal.

Another task for the panel discussion is to review any suggestions for reductions in effort suggested in the consensus reports for the proposals that have passed all thresholds. Such recommendations are set out in the final ESR.

The panel meetings are chaired by the Head of Unit or his deputy. The chair takes no part in the assessment of the proposal, his role is to ensure that the discussion is properly and fairly conducted, that all issues are discussed, that all voices are heard and that the conclusions are accurately recorded on the evaluation forms. For panel, an independent expert is assigned as panel rapporteur, whose task will be to report at the “integration” panel (if any) and provide input to the Panel report.

Approval of result: The final ESR. The Proposal Minutes are signed as a minimum by the proposal rapporteur and the Commission moderator.

2.2.7 Prioritise proposals

Responsible: FET-Open Objective coordinator, Panel coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: All above-threshold proposals are listed in order of total score. Where proposals on the list achieve the same overall score, they are prioritised firstly according to their score on S&T criteria and secondly according to their score on Impact. Where proposals on the list achieve the same score on all criteria the experts will re-examine the proposals with a view to recommending a priority order between them.

As the panel was normally responsible for the evaluation of all proposals which targeted a particular budget segment, this ordered list therefore governs the selection of proposals to be funded from that part of the budget (see below). If the panel was responsible for more than one budget segment then separate lists are produced. Separate lists may also be produced within a budget segment per sub-objective/sub-theme if this is specifically indicated in the Workprogramme. In the case where a budget segment was handled by more than one panel, an “integration” panel, comprising members from each panel, establishes a priority list of the above-threshold proposals for the segment as a whole. The panel report clearly describes the reasoning used by the panel to produce the priority list(s).

The procedure described above in the "integration" panel will involve only the sorting of proposals with tied scores, and the detection of work-overlaps between prioritised proposals. It will not involve any change in the scores awarded to the proposals by the panel in their earlier discussion (sections 2.2.6).
As part of their written report the experts provide any necessary supplementary information on these proposals to support the later selection decision e.g.:

- Proposals which overlap in activity and where therefore one is first choice and one is “backup”. In this case there need to be a thorough description of the reasons for the selection of the proposal(s) classified as ‘backups’.
- Suggestions of proposals to work together in a cluster or to be negotiated together as a merged project.
- Proposals for reduction in efforts – if relevant.
- Proposals requiring special attention due to the importance of ethical issues raised
- Other issues of strategic importance, coverage of the work programme in the area, industrial relevance, SME participation, third country participation etc. if relevant.

These supplementary remarks do not change the priority order of the proposals, but give input to the Implementation plan and negotiation of proposals by the Commission services.

**Approval of result:** The Panel reports, which includes all the lists of proposals in priority order, are signed by the Panel coordinator and at least three of the experts normally including the panel rapporteur.

### 2.2.8 Finalise Evaluation Summary Reports (ESRs)

**Responsible:** Panel coordinator.

**Background for carrying out task:** FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.9.

**Procedure for carrying out task:** The ESR of every evaluated proposal, showing scores and comments on all criteria, is reviewed by the FET-Open Objective coordinator and his support staff. The contents of the ESR are subject to quality control. The quality control is to ensure that the comments recorded give sufficient and clear reasons for the scores and in the case of proposals with high scores, any recommendations for modifications to the proposal are included. Proposal scores are not changed.

**Approval of result:** Individual ESRs are not signed. The Panel reports, which include the ESRs, are signed by the Panel coordinator and at least three of the experts, normally including the Panel rapporteur.

### 2.2.9 Prepare Evaluation Report – FET-Open level

**Responsible:** The FET-Open Call coordinator and support staff

**Background for carrying out task:** FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

**Procedure for carrying out task:** After the completion of all the panel reports the FET-Open Call coordinator with the help of FET-Open Objective coordinators and support staff generates a FET-Open evaluation report on a predetermined format, containing lists of proposals in prioritised order and summary extracts from the Panel reports concerned.

The Evaluation report consists of an introduction followed by the status of response to the FET-Open call, a status of the proposals that have completed evaluation and that were declared ineligible or below threshold, and a copy of the Panel reports. ESRs for every proposal examined are appended, organised according to objectives, type of instrument and alphabetically by acronym. The Evaluation report concludes with statistical annexes prepared from Pinocchio data.

**Approval of result:** The FET-Open evaluation report is signed by the FET-Open Head of Unit and counter signed by the Director responsible for FET-Open.

### 2.2.10 Discovered conflicts of interest

**Responsible:** The FET-Open call and objective coordinators

**Background for carrying out task:** FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.3
Procedure for carrying out task: Disqualifying or potential conflict of interest, known before the commencement of the evaluation, are treated as described in Section 2.1.13 above. It may be however that a conflict of interest is discovered at some later stage during the evaluation procedure.

An expert\(^1\) may declare to Commission staff a discovered conflict of interest at the individual reading stage. In this case he will be removed as reader/rapporteur of that particular proposal (normally by exchange of proposals with another reader/rapporteur) and subsequently the rules described in Section 2.1 will apply; or alternatively he will be asked to leave the evaluation.

At any later point in the evaluation, allegations of conflict of interest regarding an expert must be reported immediately to the objective coordinator and to his Head of Unit. If the Head of Unit considers that the allegations are well-founded, he immediately convenes an \textit{ad hoc} committee comprising the objective(s) coordinator, the Heads of Unit for the objective(s) concerned, the call coordinator(s) and the Head of Unit of Programme Operations, as chair. The committee will examine the outcomes of all of the Consensus groups in which the expert has participated.

The committee may recommend that one or more of the Consensus reports (or ESRs, if this stage has been reached) be declared null and void, and that new readings and consensus meetings are arranged using new experts to the greatest extent possible.

If the panel meeting has not yet been held, the new consensus report is discussed in the panel meeting and converted to an ESR and ranked in the panel meeting. If the panel meeting has already been held, but the panel members are still available, they are convened to a meeting which convert the consensus report(s) to an ESR(s) and if the proposal(s) is above threshold, they place the proposal in the priority list for the panel according to its score and the tie-breaking rules described in the Workprogramme. If the panel members are not any longer available the new consensus report(s) is directly converted to an ESR(s) and if the proposal(s) is above threshold, it is placed in the priority list by Commission staff by the application of the tie-breaking rules.

The text(s) and table(s) of the panel report(s) are updated as needed with regard to the proposal(s) that have been re-evaluated. A note to the file records the incident and the decisions made by the Head of Unit or the ad hoc committee. The note is approved by the director concerned. This note is filed with the evaluation report.

Approval of result: The FET-Open Objective coordinator handles declared conflicts of interest at the individual reading stage. All other cases are handled by the \textit{ad hoc} Committee whose recommendations are approved by the Director concerned.

\section*{2.2.11 Confidentiality of information and breaches thereof}

\textbf{Responsible:} FET-Open call and objective coordinators

\textit{Background for carrying out task:} FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.3

\textit{Procedure for carrying out task:} The Appointment letter signed by each expert contains a confidentiality undertaking; the significance of which is also specifically referred to during the evaluator briefing. Consequently, any expert who reveals to third parties information concerning the contents of proposals, the results of the evaluation or the identities or opinions of his fellow evaluators is in breach of contract.

When a leak is suspected or detected, the objective coordinator informs his Head of Unit and the call coordinator. If the evaluations are ongoing, the expert concerned shall be asked to explain the circumstances. If, in the judgement of the Head of Unit, the expert concerned has indeed deliberately breached the code of conduct, that expert will cease work. The appointment is then formally terminated by registered mail.

If the Head of Unit and call coordinator consider that the leak might jeopardise the evaluation results, any evaluation reports already produced by the expert should be discarded, and another expert asked to perform

\footnote{1 The expert may be an evaluating expert or a specifically recruited rapporteur.}
the work. The call coordinator should report the incident to the ICT Directors, with a description of the measures already taken, and possibly with a recommendation for follow-up. This could include removal of the experts' name from EMM for a time-limited period, or indefinitely. The ICT Directors report the incident and recommended actions to the Director General.

The measures taken will be commensurate with the gravity of the breach of confidence; the leakage of an evaluation result to a proposer is merely a premature disclosure of information which he will be given later anyway, the leaking of proposal information embarrasses the Commission services which are responsible for the security of proposals and, most seriously, the leakage of the names and opinions of fellow-evaluators places them at risk of harassment or reprisal.

The fact that an appointment letter was terminated prematurely will be recorded in EMM. When selecting experts, Objective coordinators should take note of any such flag relating to a previous appointment and investigate the situation before finally selecting the expert.

Approval of result: The ICT Directors agree on the measure taken in each case and report the recommended actions to the Director General.

2.2.12 Distribution of Evaluation Summary Reports (ESR) to proposers

Responsible: The FET-Open Call coordinator

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.9

Procedure for carrying out task: Shortly after the Evaluation report has been sent to the ICT Committee and the Commissioner, each unit responsible for proposals evaluated sends promptly by email a copy of the ESR – without identification of the evaluators involved – to the proposal coordinator (the individual named as the contact person for partner no. 1 in the proposal) to inform him of the result of the evaluation of his proposal. This email provides an address to be used if the coordinator believes there have been shortcomings in the handling of the proposal and that these shortcomings have jeopardised the outcome of the evaluation process (see Redress procedure below)

Where a proposal was found to be ineligible and was therefore not seen by the independent experts, an ESR is prepared by the Commission services without scores and comments except for an overall comment identifying the proposal as ineligible and giving the reason or reasons why.

Subsequently the unit may send a copy of each ESR – without identification of the evaluators involved – by registered mail to the proposal coordinator, with a covering letter signed by the Head of Unit or Director involved.

Approval of result: The Head of Unit or Director for the unit concerned signs the cover letters for the ESRs.

2.2.13 Redress procedure

Responsible: Internal Redress committee, ICT Directors.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 5.3 and the Rules for Procedure for the Evaluation Redress Committee

Procedure for carrying out task: Requests for redress must be raised within one month of the despatch date of the ESR copy.

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1 The fact that an appointment had been terminated prematurely is not necessarily a sign of wrongdoing. For example, an expert may finish work early due to a lower than expected volume of proposals; or hitherto unknown conflicts of interest may come to light only after appointment.

2 The procedures for the Evaluation Redress Committee is in the process of being drawn up at present (March 2007)
An internal FP7 Redress committee will be convened to examine each case. The committee itself does not evaluate proposals; the committee’s role is to ensure a coherent legal interpretation of such requests and equal treatment of applicants. It provides specialist opinions on the implementation of the evaluation process on the basis of all the available information related to the proposal and its evaluation in the form of a report with recommendations on line of action for each complaint. The scientific judgement of the experts is not to be questioned. The committee is composed of Commission staff having the requisite expertise in legal and procedural matters, S&T content, and/or information systems, varying according to the cases it is asked to consider. It is chaired by an official from a department other than the one responsible for the call. The call-coordinator (or other designated person from the department responsible for the call) is a member of the committee.

In the light of its review, the committee will recommend a course of action to the responsible Director. Three recommendations are foreseen: that the complaint is rejected as unfounded, that the complaint is upheld but the problem concerned did not jeopardise the decision whether or not to fund the proposal¹, or finally that the complaint is upheld and a re-evaluation is recommended.

In all cases, a reply will be sent to the applicant within two weeks (ten working days) of the date of reception of the request for redress. If a definitive reply cannot be given at that stage, the reply will be sent by the chair of the redress committee, with copy to the Director responsible and the call Objective coordinator. This reply will indicate when such a definite reply will be provided. The definite reply will always be sent by the Director responsible.

The redress procedure will normally not hold up the subsequent implementation of the call, i.e. the selection and negotiation processes for the selected proposals in the call.

*Approval of result:* ICT Directors.

¹ For example, the upheld complaint concerns the evaluation result on a particular criterion, but the proposal is below threshold on other criteria also.
3 Proposal selection and implementation

3.1 Overview of the selection process

The selection process defines the final distribution of the indicative budget between the objectives and also describes the procedure for the selection of proposals for funding based on the pre-allocation of funds defined in the Work programme.

3.2 Establishment of a “Recommended funding” figure per proposal

Responsible: FET-Open Head of unit, FET-Open Call and Objective coordinators, ICT Director

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.1

Procedure for carrying out task: The FET-Open Call and Objective coordinators together with the staff of the unit responsible for the objective analyses the financial data of each above threshold proposals and proposes a recommended EC contribution for each, taking into account any suggestions for reductions proposed by the evaluators, the merging of proposals or other justified reasons for budget adjustments. Where a proposal is eventually selected for implementation the reasons for significant budget reductions or cuts in duration, if any, are set out in the Implementation Plan and are specified in the letter inviting the proposers for negotiation.

The financial analysis is always based on an analysis of each proposal individually; budget cuts will not be made for the purpose of supporting additional projects that would not otherwise be funded.

Approval of result: The resulting “Recommended funding” for each proposal above threshold is approved by the Director responsible.

3.3 Draft implementation plan for the FET-Open

Responsible: FET-Open Head of unit, FET-Open Call coordinator, ICT Director responsible for FET-Open

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.1

Procedure for carrying out task: The FET-Open Head of Unit prepares with FET-Open Call coordinator and support staff a draft funding scenario. The draft funding scenario is firmly based on the priority order defined by the experts in the panel reports. Only in cases where proposals address the same topics or are in contradiction to EU policies or are overlapping with work already carried out can they be moved in the priority order: in such cases, there must be a clear explanation of the rationale behind the change to the priority order set out in the Implementation plan.

The funding scenario normally corresponds with the pre-allocation of the budget between instruments described in the Work programme. If this distribution is not respected clear reasons for the deviation must be set out.

To accommodate a specific situation, an extra budget could also be allocated to the FET Open call as part of the decision on the related Implementation Plan. The maximum amount that can be added to the indicative call budget is 10% of the indicative budget up to the limit of the total budget available for the implementation of the ICT theme.

Finally, a Reserve list is drawn up for each segment of the pre-allocated budget, in case negotiation fails with one or more of the selected proposals. The draft Implementation plan will also flag any of the selected proposals which will be subject to a later Ethical issues review (see below).

Approval of result: The resulting funding scenario is approved by the Director responsible for FET-Open. The draft Implementation plan is approved by the ICT Directors under the chairmanship of the Deputy Director General and then submitted to inter-service consultation and to the ICTC and Commissioner for information.
3.4 Ethical issues review

_Responsibility:_ The Director responsible for FET-Open, FET-Open Call coordinator

_Background for carrying out task:_ Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures 

_Procedure for carrying out task:_ There are three ways in which an above-threshold proposal that raises ethical issues can be identified or 'flagged' and for which an Ethical Issues Report (EIR) will be completed:

- Applicants are invited to describe ethical issues that may arise in the proposed research in an Ethical Issues Table (Annex 4, Section 4 of the Guide for applicants).
- The evaluators will also be invited to indicate any proposals that they consider could raise ethical concerns.
- Research involving certain activities\(^1\) automatically lead to referral for ethical review.

In these cases an Ethical Issues Report (EIR) form will be completed by the Panel Rapporteur in the Consensus group.

Subsequent to the evaluation, the FET-Open Call coordinator may also identify a proposal for further examination if he considers that a significant ethical issue has been missed by the experts or the applicants.

The Directorate will carry out a screening of its 'flagged' proposals and prepare a list including only proposals which have been included in the Short list for negotiation and Reserve list and for which further ethical review is prudent. Any proposals concerning human embryonic stem cells, research on non-human primates and research involving intervention on humans will always be included for further ethical review. The proposals will be sent to the DG Research 'Governance and Ethics' Unit which is responsible for the organisation of ethical reviews.

Following the ethical review of a proposal it is expected that in most cases the requirements and recommendations from the Ethical Review Panel will be taken fully into account in the project workplan during the negotiation of the grant agreement. In (rare) cases, following an ethical review of a proposal, when the Director considers that the ethical concerns expressed by the Ethical Review Panel are serious and cannot be adequately addressed in the negotiation of the grant agreement, the Director may request the Director in DG Research responsible for ethical reviews to hold a hearing between the applicants and the Ethical Review Panel. Following the hearing, if the Ethical Review Panel's concerns can still not be adequately addressed, the Director will propose to withdraw the proposal from the Implementation Plan.

The proposals which were flagged for ethical issues but for which a further review was not required will have these issues examined and dealt with by the Directorate concerned in the course of the normal grant agreement negotiations. Routine issues such as data protection may be dealt with in Annex 1 of the agreement, more critical issues may lead to the inclusion of additional ethical issues clauses in the grant agreement (notably, Clause 15)

_Approval of result:_ In the event of insoluble ethical problems the Director concerned recommends to the Director-General that the proposal be withdrawn from the Implementation plan.

3.5 Invitation to negotiations

_Responsibility:_ Unit responsible for the proposals in the call.

_Background for carrying out task:_ Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 5.1

\(^{1}\) Research involving children, patients or persons not able to give consent, research on non-human primates and research involving the use of embryos or human embryonic stem cells
Procedure for carrying out task: When the Director General or his delegate has approved the draft Implementation plan and it has been communicated to the Commissioner, to interservice consultation and to the ICTC, the unit responsible invites the proposals on the short list for negotiations on a grant agreement for their proposal. This discussion will concentrate on informing the consortia on the formal information requirements, the administrative data and the technical changes needed for establishing a grant agreement. Proposers are informed that an eventual agreement is conditional on the completion of a final Implementation plan approved by the Commission (and in some cases, on an ethical review).

Approval of result: The Head of Unit signs the invitation letters.

3.6 ICTC information session

Responsible: ICT Director

Background for carrying out task: DG CONNECT established practice

Procedure for carrying out task: The Commission services present the evaluation results and the draft implementation plan to the ICTC in formal ICTC meetings. The presentation highlights the coverage of the selected projects, proposals, participation of important groups (industry, SMEs, research organisations etc). The evaluation results and the draft Implementation Plan are presented to the Committee together with the timetable for selection of proposals. The Committee members provide their comments on the evaluation report and draft implementation plan in view of their national strategies. Their comments are input to the finalisation of the Implementation plan by the Commission services. In a separate session the committee members have the possibility to ask clarification to the Objective coordinators on the evaluation results for specific proposals, in a series of dedicated meetings (“bilaterals”).

Approval of result: The presentations and the discussions are set out in the minutes of the meeting. The comments from the Committee are input to the drawing up of the final Implementation Plan by the Commission services.

3.7 Inter-service consultation

Responsible: ICT Directors supported by Programme Operations unit

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.1

Procedure for carrying out task: The draft Implementation plan is circulated for formal inter-service consultation. If needed a meeting is held.

Approval of result: The output of the inter-service consultation is incorporated in the final Implementation plan (see below)

3.8 Finalisation of the Implementation Plan

Responsible: The CONNECT Director General/Deputy Director General or his delegate together with the ICT Directors

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.1

Procedure for carrying out task: Based on the comments received from the ICTC and after the outcome from the inter-service consultation is received, the ICT Director responsible for FET-Open reviews the draft Implementation plan and decides if there is a need to deselect any of the proposals proposed for selection in the draft Implementation plan or if there is a need to select any further proposals for funding by adding extra budget to the call. If needed the draft Implementation plan is amended. The final Implementation plan decides the final budget allocated to the call. After the approval of the final Implementation plan no extra budget can be allocated to the call, except for small adjustments to allow negotiation of proposals from the reserve list in case negotiations with proposals selected for funding fails. If the final Implementation plan differs from the draft Implementation plan in terms of which proposals are selected (rather than merely in terms of financial adjustments), an additional inter-service consultation is needed.
Approval of result: The final Implementation plan is approved by the ICT Directors under the chairmanship of the Deputy Director General and then submitted to the ICTC and Commissioner for information.

3.9 Grant agreement negotiations and Selection decision

Responsible: Commission services in the ICT Directorates

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 5.1, 5.2

Procedure for carrying out task: Proposers are supplied with a Negotiation guidelines document. Commission staff receives a briefing document on negotiation procedures. Representatives of successful proposals are invited to Brussels for grant agreement negotiations. In these negotiations any recommendations on changes to the proposed project work plan as set out in the ‘negotiation framework’ for each proposal will be incorporated. The Commission indicative funding level will be respected.

In the case of proposals for which negotiations cannot be completed in a reasonable time, or which in negotiation commence to deviate significantly from the original proposal as seen by the evaluators, the Commission negotiators may terminate the discussions. In this case the Director can decide to re-assign the budget to Reserve list proposals (see below).

Approval of result: The final lists of funded and rejected proposals are subject to Commission decision

3.10 Rejection decision (initial round)

Responsible: Programme Operations unit.

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.3

Procedure for carrying out task: The proposals from the call that are neither on the short list or reserve list for negotiation are included in a rejection decision, which in case the decision is not strategic is presented to the Director General or his delegate of DG CONNECT for decision, and which in case the decision is strategic is submitted through the Commissioner to inter-service consultation followed by a decision by the College.

Approval of result: The Commission decision by the Director General or his delegate or the College.

3.11 Information of rejected proposals (initial round)

Responsible: Unit responsible for the evaluation of the proposals in the call.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.3

Procedure for carrying out task: As soon as the rejection decision has been taken by the Commission, the unit concerned is informed by Programme Operations unit. They dispatch letters informing the unsuccessful consortia of the rejection decision.

Approval of result: The letters are signed by the Head of Unit or Director (as decided in the Directorate).

3.12 Selection of proposals from the reserve list

Responsible: ICT Directors

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1 A decision is to be considered strategic when the ranking established by the Commission services does not take into account the comments and the ranking of the proposals recommended by the external experts or that the budget breakdown or the distribution mechanism of the indicative budget as indicated in the call is not respected (Commission decision on “Octroi de pouvoirs délégues en matière de gestion des activités des septièmes programmes-cadres pour la recherche”)

ICT Handbook: FET-Open Xtrack Call

Version V1.0, 10-09-2012
Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.2

Procedure for carrying out task: In case negotiation with a proposal on the short list fails the FET-Open unit immediately informs the Director responsible. In case there is a proposal on the FET-Open reserve list that can be negotiated within the budget which has become available, the Director instructs the FET-Open unit to invite this proposal for negotiations. In this decision a very limited adjustment of the budget envelope for the call may take place to allow for negotiation of a proposal on the FET-Open reserve list to be able to fully expend the budget for the call.

An amendment to the Implementation Plan is drafted by Programme Operations unit and submitted through the ICT Director for approval and signature of the Director General.

Approval of result: The Director responsible for FET-Open approves the invitation for negotiation of proposals from the FET-Open reserve list. The Director General or his delegate approves the invitation for negotiations of proposals funded from any remaining savings once this is done.

3.13 Rejection decision (final round)

Responsible: Programme Operations unit.

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.3

Procedure for carrying out task: When the budget for the call has been consumed by selected proposals, any proposals from the reserve list that has not been negotiated, or any proposals which were on the short list but failed in negotiation, are included in a rejection decision, which in case the decision is not strategic is presented to the Director General or his delegate of DG CONNECT for decision, and which in case the decision is strategic is submitted through the Commissioner to interservice consultation followed by a decision by the College.

Approval of result: The Commission decision by the Director General or his delegate or the College.

3.14 Information on rejected proposals (final round)

Responsible: Unit responsible for the evaluation of the proposals in the call.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.3

Procedure for carrying out task: As soon as the rejection decision has been taken by the Commission, the unit concerned is informed by Programme Operations unit. They despatch letters informing the unsuccessful consortia of the rejection decision.

Approval of result: The letters are signed by the Heads of Unit or Directors (as decided in the Directorates).
Annex 1: Indicative timetable– DRAFT

FP7-ICT-2013-X

- Objective ICT-2013.9.5: FET-Open Xtrack (STREP)

Indicative budget: from 15 M€

Expected no. of proposals: 200 to 300

Expected number of experts: remote: 80 to 120, panel: 10 to 30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call publication in OJ, on CORDIS and on the Participant Portal</td>
<td>26th September 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start date for the reception of proposals</td>
<td>26th September 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cut-off date</td>
<td>29th of January 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation of all proposals completed for step 1</td>
<td>May 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation week in Brussels</td>
<td>End May 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production of Evaluation report and Statistical annex</td>
<td>June 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transmission of consolidated Evaluation report to DG, Commissioner, ICTC</td>
<td>June 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Release of ESRs</td>
<td>End of June 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production of Draft Implementation Plan</td>
<td>End of June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transmission of consolidated Draft Implementation Plan to Director General or his delegate and Signature of Director General or his delegate to DIP</td>
<td>Early July 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invitation to negotiations</td>
<td>July 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transmission of Draft Imp Plan to Commissioner, ISC and ICTC</td>
<td>July 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation to ICTC meeting (and bilaterals)</td>
<td>July/Sept 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>End ISC</td>
<td>July/Sept 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production of Final Imp Plan by Programme Operations unit and Signature of Director General or his delegate to Final Implementation Plan</td>
<td>Sept 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>First rejection decisions</td>
<td>Oct 2013</td>
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### Annex 3: Summary of roles in Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committee</td>
<td>Gives opinion on work programme</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gives comments on the evaluation result</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gives opinion on selected proposals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>Approves work programme by Commission decision</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Approves Guidelines for evaluation and selection procedures by Com-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>mission decision</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Approves rejection decisions by Commission decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>Give opinion on the Implementation plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director General</td>
<td>Make Commission decision on negotiated projects by delegation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Director General</td>
<td>Chairs Preparation of work Programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chairs Preparation of Evaluation planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chairs decision on evaluation procedures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chairs preparation of Implementation Plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT Directors</td>
<td>Prepares work programme in their areas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Approves list of objective coordinators</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Approves list of experts who are candidates to be invited to evaluation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Decides on eligibility issues</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chairs panel meetings and hearings (optional)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Approves evaluation report in their domain</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prepares Implementation plan in their domain</td>
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<td>Approves negotiation results</td>
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<td>Approves Draft Implementation Plan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Approves Final Implementation Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT Heads of Units</td>
<td>Prepare staff allocation during evaluation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Propose list of evaluators</td>
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<td>Approve final list of evaluators to be invited</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Approves final allocation of evaluators to proposals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Can act as Objective coordinator</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Appoint Objective coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appoint panel coordinators</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chair panel meetings and hearings (optional)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Appoint staff for negotiation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Approves negotiation results</td>
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<td>Senior statutory staff</td>
<td>Act as Objective coordinator</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Act as panel coordinator</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Act as consensus group and panel consensus meeting moderator</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Act as negotiator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other staff</td>
<td>Support the evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>Evaluate proposals (&quot;Evaluator&quot;)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Evaluate proposal and prepare Consensus forms and ESRs (&quot;Rap-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>porteur&quot;)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prepare Consensus forms and ESRs (&quot;Recorder&quot;)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Observe the evaluation process (&quot;Observer&quot;)</td>
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