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Horizon Europe

THE NEXT EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION INVESTMENT PROGRAMME (2021 – 2027)

#HorizonEU

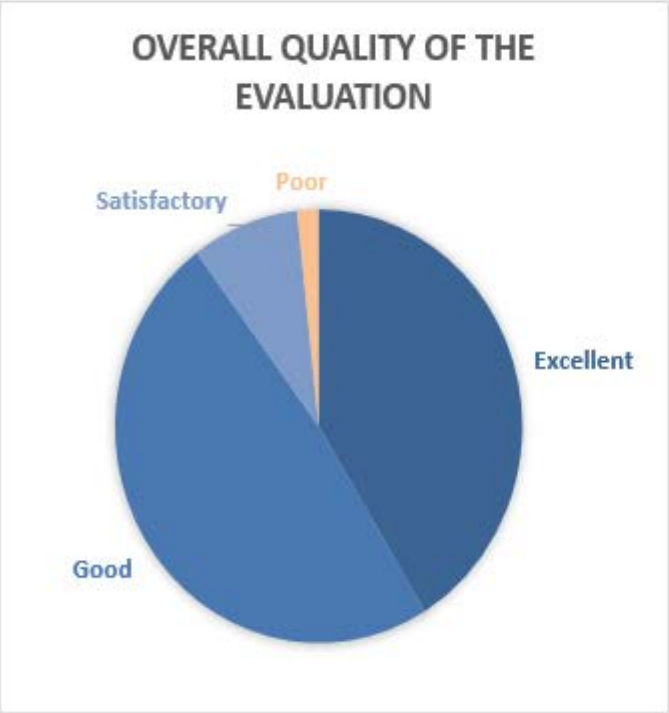
Proposal submission and evaluation in Horizon Europe

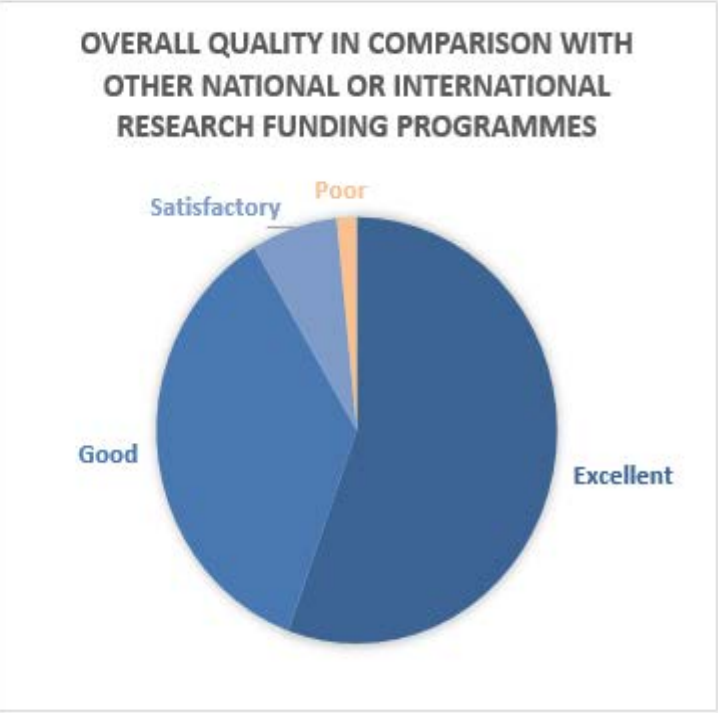
Building on experience and new challenges

Research and Innovation

Evaluation process in H2020

Solid and recognised process based on an evaluation made by external experts with a final decision taken by the Commission, fully and transparently justified.





Feedback from experts in the 2017 exercise: 12046 evaluators of H2020 calls were surveyed, 3600 answers were gathered.

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Evaluation process in HE

Pending final decisions on Horizon Europe, there seems to be consensus on certain key points. For example:

- **Continuity**: *It is based on H2020 evaluation process. Three evaluation criteria retained (Excellence, Impact, Quality of Implementation); Excellence only under the ERC;*
- **Transparency**: *It remains a transparent approach, based on an evaluation made by external experts with a final decision taken by the Commission, fully and transparently justified.*
- **Adapted to new features**: *Special arrangements possible, especially for missions and EIC (e.g. portfolio considerations when ranking; changes to proposals)*

Draft orientations for HE

Areas where system can be improved based on lessons-learned, and how novel features can be accommodated.

- *Missions and EIC*
- *Evaluation criteria (interpretation)*
- *Evaluation modalities*
- *Interaction with applicants*
- *Proposal template*

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Missions and EIC

*Special arrangements will be needed for the parts of the Programme where it is important to establish a **consistent portfolio of projects** (esp. EIC, missions). For example:*

- *Intrinsic quality of a proposal is determined first, and the portfolio considerations (spelled out clearly in the work programme) in a second phase;*
- *The approach adopted will largely depend on the design of a mission call, and may need to vary from mission to mission;*
- *Evaluation under the EIC is the subject of an ongoing pilot (EIC accelerator). It currently consists of a two-step process with a face-to-face interview at the second stage.*

Evaluation criteria

*The draft HE rules set the same three award criteria we have in H2020: '**Excellence**', ' **Impact**' and '**Quality and efficiency of the implementation**'. These need to be spelled out, taking into account the lessons learnt:*

- *Simplify and reduce the number of 'aspects to be taken into account', where possible, ensuring that the same aspect is not assessed twice;*
- *Include an assessment of the quality of applicants under 'implementation', rather than as a separate binary assessment of operational capacity;*
- *Simplify or remove assessment of management structures.*

Evaluation modalities (i.e.: single-stage, two-stage and two-step procedures; scoring)

*Much experience but need **better rationale** for the use of one or other approach; and **further simplification**, where possible:*

- *Reduce aspects evaluated at first stage; arithmetic methods for deriving first stage score; abolish 'substantial change' rule for second stage proposals (or at least define it with a very low bar); abolish first stage ESR for successful first stage applicants (while maintaining system of generalized feedback);*
- *Examine implications of 'blind' evaluation at first stage (re draft legislation);*
- *Review rules for ex-aequo (re draft legislation);*
- *Examine possible re-calibration of the scoring system (with the same resolution), to increase the range above threshold.*

Interaction with applicants

Can increase the robustness and credibility of the system, but comes with a cost in terms of time and resources.

Experience under H2020 (ERC & EIC pilot), and in national programmes.

- ***Interviews** should form part of the process where appropriate, while ensuring equal treatment for all eligible competing applicants;*
- *Other approaches? (e.g. **written input?)***

Proposal template

There seems to be no need for drastic changes at this stage. But improvements to be identified. For example:

- *Where feasible, capture information needed to assess the quality of applicants in a structured form;*
- ***Reduce the maximum length** of the proposal (e.g. 50 pages);*
- *Structured vs non structured proposal.*
- *Allow compatibility for more radical changes (e.g. videos?)*

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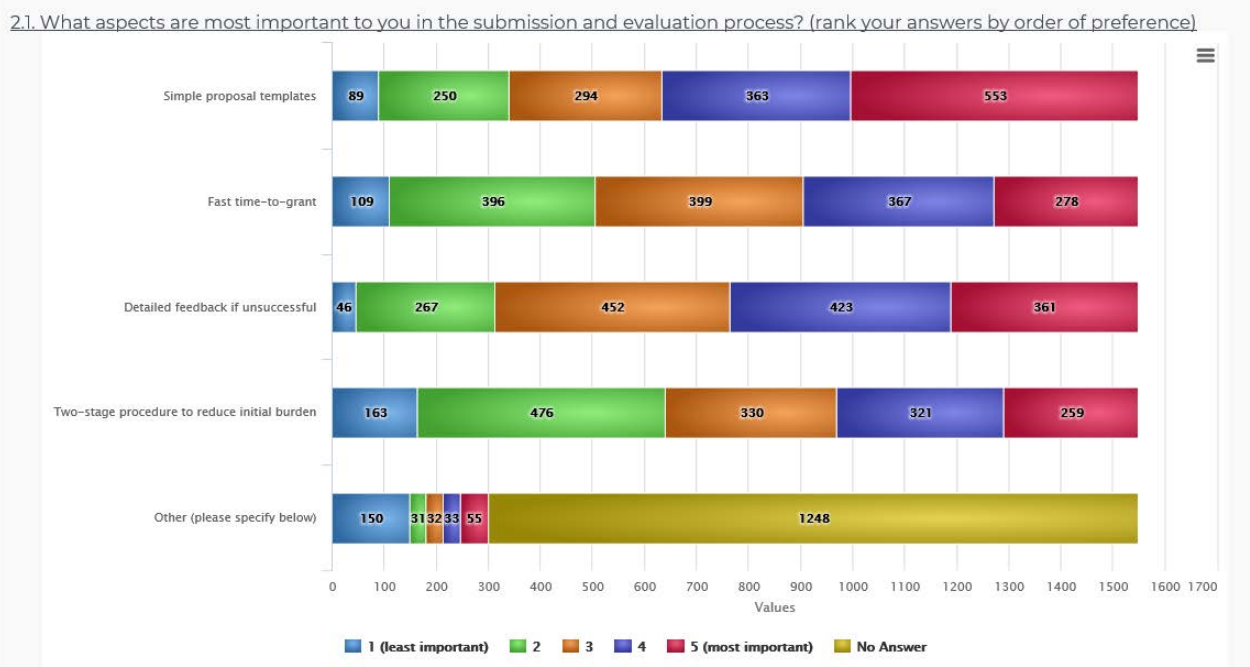
Other areas for attention include…

- *Resubmissions rules*
- *Ethics review*
  - A new streamlined approach is proposed that will put more weigh, where relevant, on compliance with national regulations harmonised across the EU (e.g. on clinical trials, data protection);
  - Applicants will be expected to supply more comprehensive information on such compliance (although they may not be penalized if incomplete at proposal stage).
  - Focus of resources on problematic cases.
- *Security scrutiny*
  - Implement a similar process as for ethics review based on a questionnaire in proposal
- *Redress ('Evaluation review')*
- *Use of artificial intelligence ('human-led AI').*

Results of consultation - Evaluation



A simple proposal template is the most important aspect for the submission and evaluation process, followed by detailed feedback to rejected applicants.

A two stage procedure to reduce burden to applicants is the less important aspect

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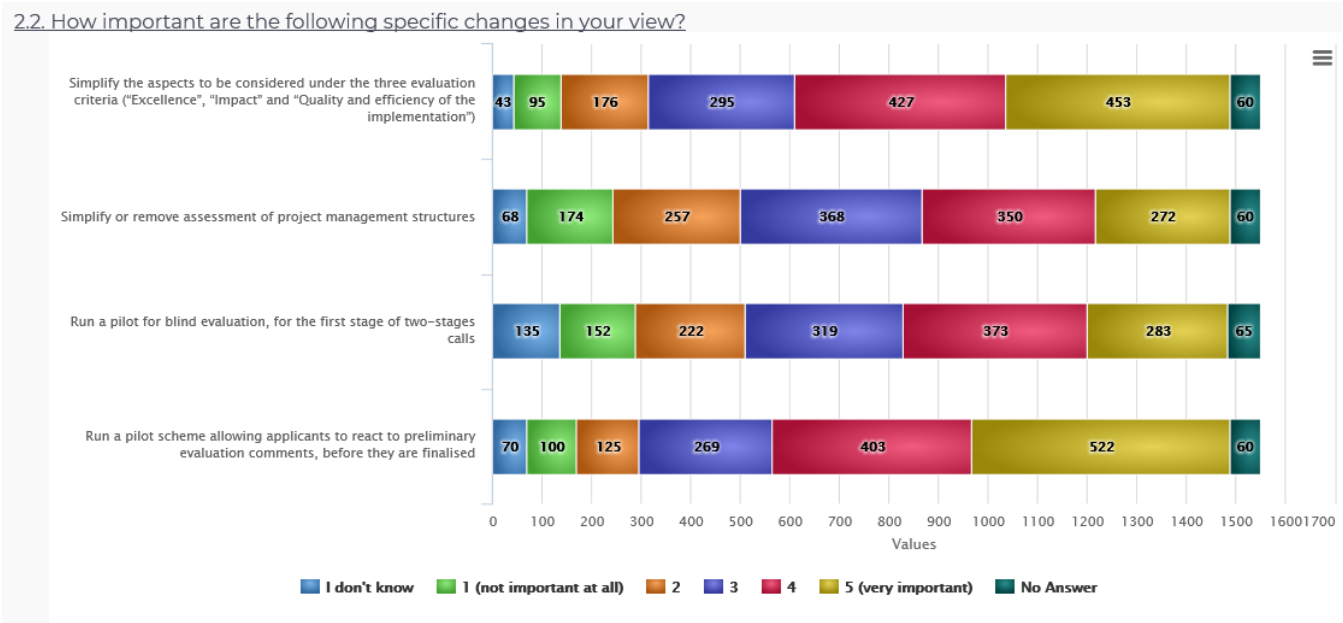
Results of consultation - Evaluation



To run a pilot 'right to react' schema and to simplify the aspects to be considered under the three evaluation criteria are the most important proposed changes.

To simplify assessment of management structures and to run a pilot on blind evaluations are the less important changes.

***Some open Hungarian answers to questions**:*

- *Improved quality of evaluation and ESRs. Transparency on evaluation results by timely publication of short summaries of projects selected for funding.*
- *Quality of evaluation feedback should improve, be less generic and more specifically providing feedback on elements of the project proposal.*
- *An evaluation report for stage 1, even if not fully detailed, would be very useful in the preparation of the proposal at the second stage.*

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Thank you!

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