

# Horizon Europe

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

#HorizonEU

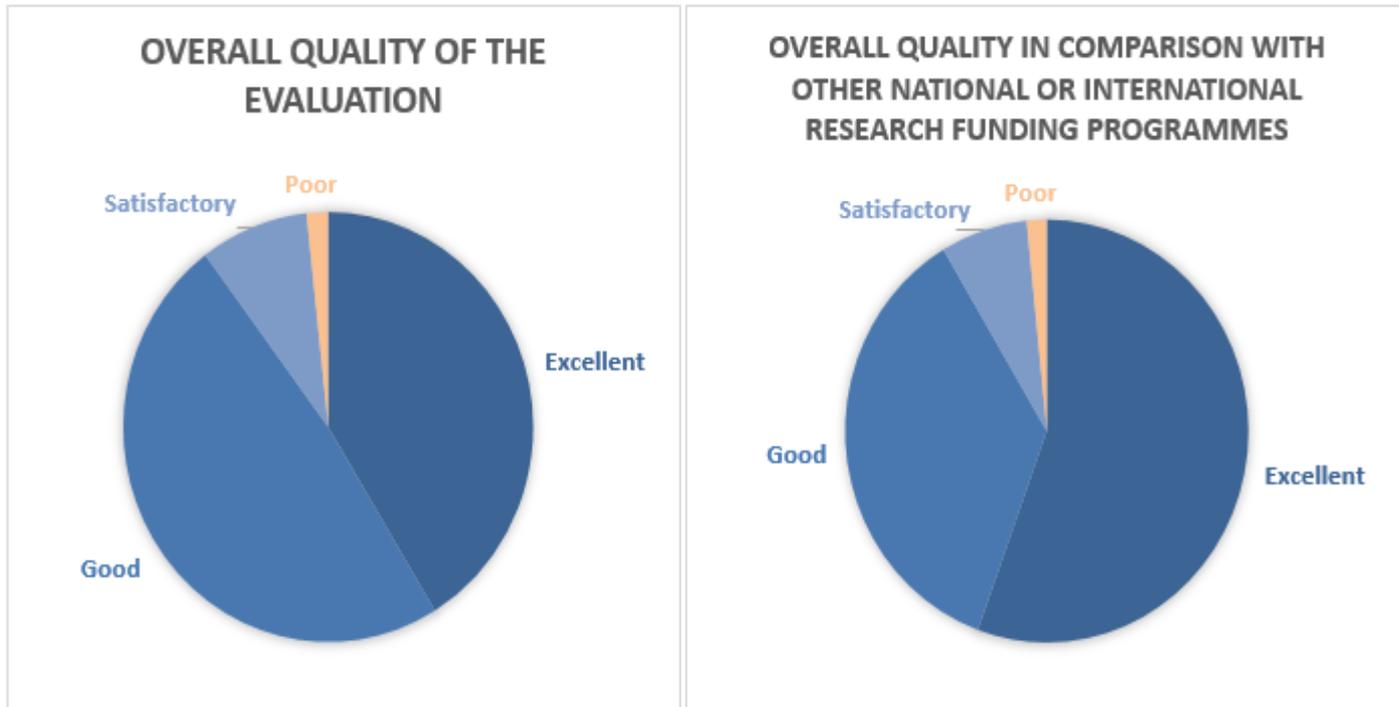
Proposal submission and evaluation in  
Horizon Europe

Building on experience and new challenges



# 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.

# Evaluation process in Horizon Europe

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 Horizon Europe

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

# 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:

- The approach adopted will largely depend on the design of a mission call, and may need to vary from mission to mission;
- Intrinsic quality of a proposal is determined first, and the portfolio considerations (spelled out clearly in the work programme) in a second phase;
- 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 Horizon Europe 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; 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:

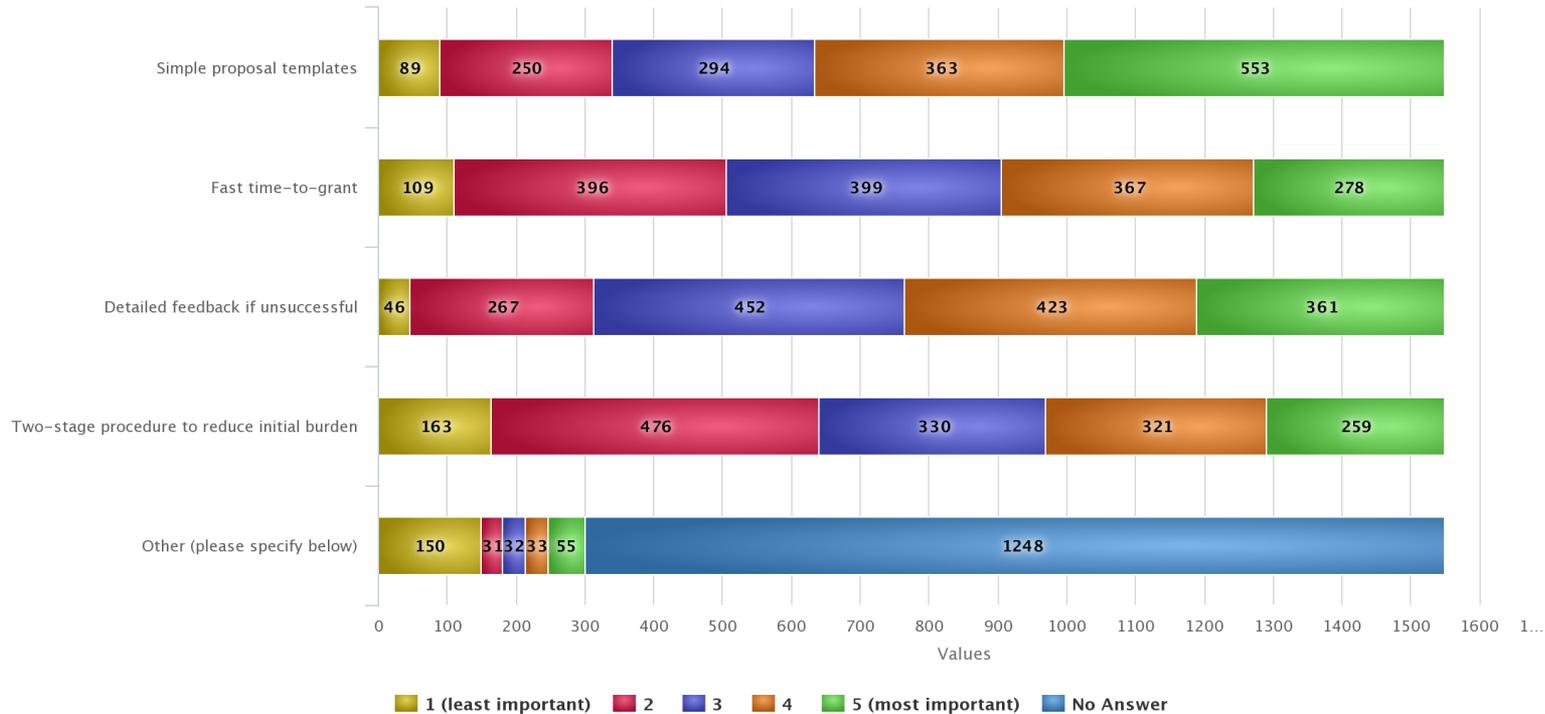
- Where feasible, capture information needed to assess the quality of applicants in a structured form;
- **Reduce the maximum length** of the proposal (e.g. 50 pages);
- Structured vs non structured proposal.
- Allow compatibility for more radical changes (e.g. videos?)

# Other areas for attention include...

- **Resubmissions rules**
- **Ethics review**
  - Streamlined approach; 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

2.1. What aspects are most important to you in the submission and evaluation process? (rank your answers by order of preference)



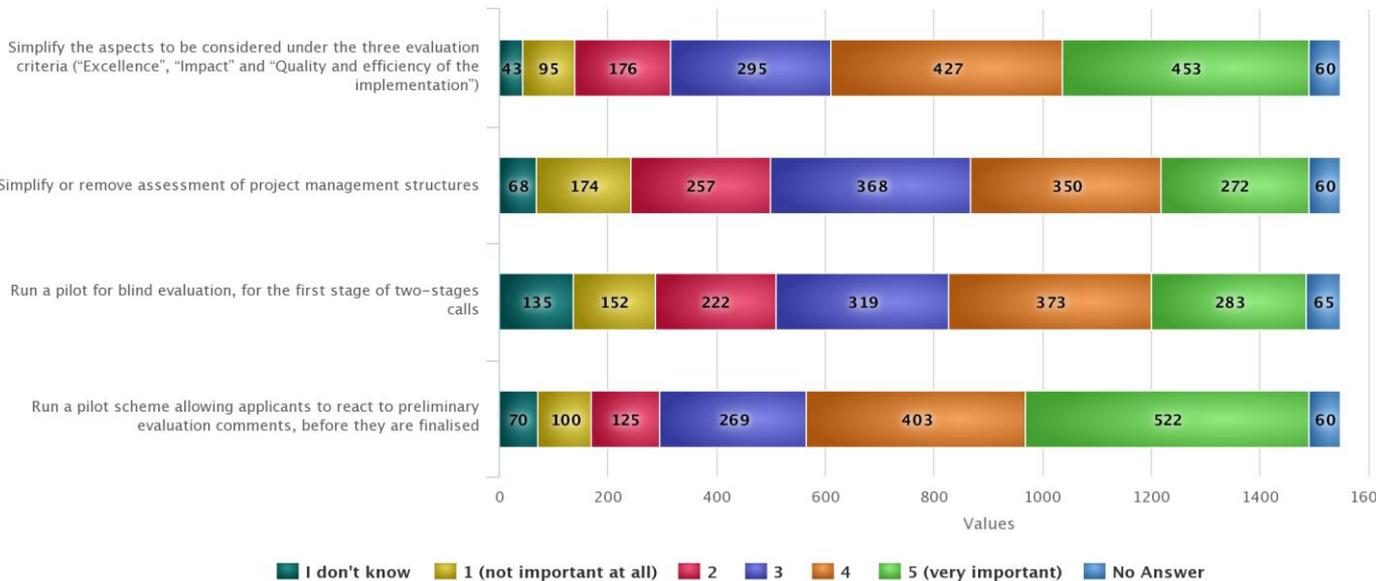
A **simple proposal template** is the most important aspect for the submission and evaluation process, followed by a **detailed feedback to unsuccessful applicants**.

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

Same trend for the 5 replies from Estonian stakeholders, with also a strong interest on the **fast time-to-grant**.

# Results of consultation - Evaluation

## 2.2. How important are the following specific changes in your view?



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.

Similar trend for the 5 replies from Estonian stakeholders with also a strong interest on the blind evaluation pilot

### Open questions:

- 'detailed feedback to unsuccessful proposals' and 'faster time-to-grant' seem to be repeated in addition to the **need to select good quality of experts.**
- For the evaluation of missions, there seem to be a generalized message : 'The quality and excellence of an individual proposal should never be compromised.'

# Thank you!

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