



M-ERA.NET Call 2020

Guide for Evaluators

Version 1.0

15 June 2020

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1. Definition

In the context of this document, the following terminology is used:

- **Call:** refers to the M-ERA.Net Call 2020 which was published on 17 March 2020 <https://www.m-era.net/joint-call-2020>.
- **FOs:** national or regional **funding organisations** participating in the joint Call 2020.
- **Consortium:** group of applicants submitting a proposal for a joint transnational collaborative project. **Coordinator:** one applicant appointed by the consortium that is the single point of contact for the FOs.
- **Partners:** partners are researchers, research institutions, companies, etc., forming a consortium. A partner is usually the legal entity that will receive the grant. For some FOs, the partner is also the **Principal Investigator (PI)**. For others, the partner might be the university, whereas the PI is the leader of a research group within a department or institute. At the stage of proposal submission and evaluation, partners are **applicants**. After successful evaluation and national implementation (negotiation phase), they become **beneficiaries**. All partners have to sign a **Consortium Agreement** in due time.
- **Beneficiary:** Beneficiaries are researchers, institutions, etc., receiving a grant by the FOs.
- **Evaluator:**
 - is appointed/assigned by the call secretariat to evaluate a certain Full-Proposal.
 - writes an evaluation report according to the criteria published in the *Guide for Proposers* (see Appendix A and in the *Briefing of Evaluators*). It is important that the written statements are sufficiently detailed and that they are in line with the awarded points. The evaluation will be provided via online tool. The evaluator confirms the peer review report and the common scoring online after the rapporteur provided her/his compilation. In case the evaluator does not agree with the compilation the possibility for an online discussion is provided.
 - is available for online discussions if applicable.
 - checks that the individual evaluation report is in agreement with all comments/requirements provided/listed in the Appendix A and in the *Briefing of Evaluators* document.

- **Rapporteur:**

- is one of the three evaluators appointed/assigned by the call secretariat to a certain Full-Proposal;
- evaluates the Full-Proposals in the same way as the evaluators (see above) i.e. acts also as an evaluator;
- reads the other two remote reports of the respective Full-Proposal;
- compiles the three individual assessments for a common peer review report (PRR) and scoring, only after the three evaluators have submitted their individual assessment report;
- amends the peer review report in order to provide an agreed compilation in case the other two evaluators do not agree with the report;
- checks that the peer review report is in agreement with all comments/requirements provided/listed in the Appendix A and in the *Briefing of Evaluators* document.

2. Background

Advanced materials technologies have been classified as Key Enabling Technologies (KET) with a wide range of product applications such as developing low carbon energy technologies and improving energy and resource efficiency. They have huge potential to fuel economic growth and provide jobs. In recent years, significant efforts have been made to ensure industry can meet the challenges it currently faces, in terms of the new materials being introduced and the stronger integration of product and processes required. Europe has a wealth of academic and industrial expertise and to ensure it stays at the forefront of developments it is crucial to have a strategic programme that helps to develop projects with impact on a global scale.

In this context, the “M-ERA.NET” network which has been established in 2012 under the FP7 scheme continues from 2016 to 2021 under the Horizon 2020 scheme aiming to develop a long-term cooperation between funding organisations from countries and regions across Europe and beyond.

While proposals are submitted jointly by a consortium, the individual project partners are solely funded by the respective FO (Funding Organisation), i.e. each country or region finances the participation of its own researchers according to its rules and the final funding decision remains with the corresponding FO.

In order to achieve maximum relevance and impact M-ERA.NET will set up a multiannual policy for joint programming aiming at the whole innovation cycle. M-ERA.NET has a clear target to mobilise very substantial national and regional resources and to use the financial top-up from the European Union for the benefit of the RTD community.

M-ERA.NET will implement the M-ERA.NET Call 2020 as a two-step procedure (a Pre-Proposal and a Full-Proposal step). The Pre-Proposal stage will be used to ensure that only high quality proposals which are in line with national requirements are invited to the Full-Proposal stage, targeting a reasonable balance of requested and available national/ regional budgets. The result of the Pre-Proposal evaluation is provided via M-ERA.NET online monitoring tool to prepare for the coordination meeting of the involved FO.

At the coordination meeting the list of Pre-Proposals recommended for Full-Proposal submission will be endorsed. The Full-Proposals are assessed by three different evaluators (selected and agreed experts) within one month after the Full-Proposal deadline via the M-ERA.NET online evaluation tool according to the evaluation criteria (see Appendix A and in the *Briefing of Evaluators* document).

Three individual and independent assessments (Individual Assessment Report – IAR) include written statements and the awarded scores. The three individual assessments are compiled by the rapporteur (one of the three experts). The compilation consists of a peer review report (consensus report) and scoring. The peer review report is not a copy and paste of the comments from the IAR of the three evaluators. The scoring of the compilation is not necessarily an arithmetic average of the three IAR scores. The two other experts receive this compilation and are provided with the possibility for an online discussion in case they do not agree with the peer review report and scoring. The evaluators confirm the compilation and consistency of the peer review report and scoring.

The rapporteur is also in charge of verifying that the peer review report is in agreement with all comments and requirements listed in the Appendix A and in the *Briefing of Evaluators* document.

The M-ERA.NET Call 2020 ranking list of recommended projects is based on the evaluators' compiled scoring. All three individual assessments, peer review report, scoring and the M-ERA.NET Call 2020 ranking list are available for the whole Call Consortium.

The national or regional commitment for funding proposals is provided by each agency via the M-ERA.NET online monitoring tool in order to prepare for the selection meeting.

At the M-ERA.NET Call 2020 selection meeting, proposals will be selected for funding based on the M-ERA.NET Call 2020 ranking list and the available national/regional budgets.

3. Administrative structures

3.1 Call Consortium

The call consortium is composed of national and regional FOs participating in the M-ERA.NET Call 2020. It supervises the whole call procedure and agrees on the final list of proposals recommended for funding.

The call consortium is supported by the M-ERA.NET coordinator and the call secretariat. It accompanies the entire lifespan of the call, evaluates the performance of the projects and resolves potential disagreements, which may arise during the lifetime of the projects. It supervises the activities of the call secretariat.

3.2 Call Secretariat

The call secretariat is the central basis for activities related to the implementation of the M-ERA.NET Call 2020. It is in charge of the operational implementation of the Call 2020, until the projects are selected. The call secretariat works under the supervision of the call consortium.

All proposals are submitted electronically via M-ERA.NET submission tool, which registers them and distributes them to the call consortium and the evaluators (see below for details on the evaluation process).

The call secretariat has the following duties and is represented by the following organisations:

Duty	Responsibility
launch calls	FFG, JÜLICH
provide comprehensive directory of national and regional contact points in participating countries/regions through website as decentralised helpdesk	JÜLICH, FFG
provide a central service & contact point for all other interested parties	FFG
implement, run and maintain the online tool for submission & evaluation & monitoring	FFG, VDI/VDE-IT
arrange for the maintenance & update of the data base of proposals and projects	UEFISCDI, FFG, VDI/VDE-IT
select and appoint evaluators	JÜLICH, FFG
contact, invite & guide evaluators	JÜLICH, FFG

collect individual evaluation results, ensure peer review reports and ranking of proposals	JÜLICH, FFG
collect scanned copy of signed declarations, payment to evaluators	KIT
prepare feedback emails to applicants	KIT, VDI/VDE-IT
compile call results	JÜLICH, FFG

4. Eligibility and Assessment of Pre-Proposals

The Pre-Proposal stage will be used to ensure that only high quality proposals which are in line with national requirements are invited to the Full-Proposal stage, targeting a reasonable balance of requested and available national/regional budgets. Each participating national/regional funding organisations is requested to implement an appropriate Pre-Proposal selection mechanism to comply with this requirement.

The eligibility check and the national/regional Pre-Proposal assessment will result in a recommendation for each Pre-Proposal. At the Call 2020 Coordination Meeting, all Pre-Proposals will be discussed and unanimously recommended or not recommended for Full-Proposal submission.

5. Selection of Evaluators for Full-Proposal Evaluation

1. Experts recommended by FOs and experts registered in the EC database are invited to participate in the M-ERA.NET Call 2020 evaluation process.
2. Experts are invited based on the call topics by the call secretariat.
3. The call secretariat prepares the list of evaluators allocated to those Pre-Proposals which have been recommended for Full-Proposal submission. The list is endorsed by the call consortium.
4. In any case the exclusion of evaluators and conflict of interest are considered.
5. Each evaluator assesses a maximum of 10 proposals and might be appointed by the call secretariat as rapporteur. Based on experiences from past calls experts are appointed to 3-4 proposals as evaluator and to 1-2 proposals as a rapporteur in average. The call secretariat expects similar numbers for Call 2020.
6. All evaluators have access to the online evaluation tool within 3 days after the Full-Proposal deadline.

7. The “Declaration for M-ERA.NET evaluation” is collected before access to the evaluation tool is granted, including:
- a confidentiality declaration,
 - a declaration of notifying M-ERA.NET in case of a conflict of interest,
 - a declaration concerning code of conduct and availability of the assessment in due time.
- The scanned copy of the originally signed “Declaration for M-ERA.NET evaluation” has to be uploaded online at: <https://m-era.net/monitor/evaluator-registration>

Applicants submitting a proposal to the M-ERA.NET Call 2020 are excluded from participation in the M-ERA.NET Call 2020 evaluation process!

6. Evaluation Procedure of Full-Proposal

Following the assignment of evaluators and rapporteurs, the evaluation proceeds as follows:

1. Access to Full-Proposals: The Full-Proposals are provided via the M-ERA.NET online evaluation tool to the evaluators and rapporteurs after they have signed and uploaded the “Declaration for M-ERA.NET evaluation” and declared confidentiality to notify the call secretariat in case of conflict of interest and to provide the assessment in due time.

2. Individual assessment of Full-Proposals: A proposals is assessed by three evaluators within one month after the Full-Proposal deadline via M-ERA.NET online evaluation tool according to the evaluation criteria (see Appendix A). These three individual and independent assessments (Individual Assessment Report – IAR) include written statements and awarded points. Written statements have to be provided for each criteria/sub-criteria and have to be in line with the given scores. The structure of statements focuses on strengths and weaknesses. Each individual evaluation has to follow all requirements listed in Appendix A and in the *Briefing of Evaluators* document. After IARs are submitted, evaluators will have the possibility to exchange opinions. Contact data of the three evaluators will be provided via M-ERA.NET online evaluation tool and the possibility for an online discussion is provided.

3. Compilation of Full-Proposals: The rapporteur (one of the three evaluators, selected/appointed by the call secretariat) compiles the three individual evaluation reports. The compilation consists of the peer review report and scoring. The peer review report has to fulfil all requirements listed in the Appendix A and in the *Briefing of Evaluators* document. The rapporteur ensures that the peer review report is in line with the awarded scores. All experts who provided individual written assessments confirm the compilation and consistency of peer review report and

scoring. The quality of peer review reports is checked by the call secretariat. This check will start as soon as the peer review report is accepted by all three evaluators.

4. Ranking list: The ranking list of recommended projects is based on the evaluators compiled scoring.

5. Provided information: The peer review report is provided to the applicants!

The three individual assessments, the peer review report, the scoring and the ranking list will be available for the whole call consortium.

6. Selection list: The national or regional commitment for funding is provided by agencies via the M-ERA.NET monitoring tool to prepare for the selection meeting. At M-ERA.NET Call 2020 selection meeting, proposals will be selected for funding based on the M-ERA.NET ranking list and the available national/regional budget. The recommended M-ERA.NET selection list will be forwarded to the involved programme owners who will be in charge of the final funding decisions.

7. Reimbursement

Experts will be reimbursed for their efforts. A fee of 200 EUR can be claimed for each evaluated proposal. No additional fee can be claimed for the rapporteur task.

The M-ERA.NET call secretariat reserves the right to refuse to provide a financial contribution in case of non-performance or poor performance or breach of any substantial obligation, including the obligation of confidentiality and any obligation described in the Code of Conduct (Appendix in *Guide for Evaluators*) and in the Declaration for the M-ERA.NET evaluation.

Should a claim for reimbursement/payment not have been supplied by the evaluator until 30 days after evaluation, the M-ERA.NET call secretariat reserves the right to refuse the reimbursement.

Appendix A. Evaluation criteria, scores, thresholds and evaluation reports

1. CRITERIA

Comments/Written statements must be provided for all criteria and sub-criteria.

- **1. Excellence (max. 5.0 points)**
 - 1.1 Clarity and pertinence of the objectives (max. 1.5 points)
 - 1.2 Credibility of the proposed approach and soundness of the concept (max. 2.0 points)
 - 1.3 Extent that proposed work is ambitious, has innovation potential, and is beyond the state of the art (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches (max. 1.5 points)
- **2. Impact (max. 5.0 points)**
 - 2.1 Contribution at the European or international level to the expected impacts listed in the work programme under the relevant topic (max. 2.5 points)
 - 2.2 Additional Impact (max 1.0 point)
 - Enhancing innovation capacity and integration of new knowledge;
 - Strengthening the competitiveness and growth of companies by developing innovations meeting the needs of European and global markets; and, where relevant, by delivering such innovations to the markets;
 - Any other environmental and socially important impacts (not already covered above);
 - 2.3 Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), to communicate the project and to manage research data where relevant (max. 1.5 points)
- **3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation (max. 5.0 points)**
 - 3.1 Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, including extent to which the resources assigned to work packages are in line with their objectives and deliverables (max. 1.0 point)
 - 3.2 Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures (max. 1.0 point)
 - 3.3 Quality and relevant experience of the individual participants (max. 1.0 point)
 - 3.4 Quality of the consortium as a whole (including complementarity, balance) (max. 1.0 point)
 - 3.5 Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks, ensuring that all participants have a valid role and allocation and justification of the resources to fulfil that role (max. 1.0 point)
- **Ethical issues:** Full-Proposals include the H2020 „Ethical issues Table”. In case ethical issues apply (applicants mark respective issues in the table) M-ERA.NET recommends that the national/regional organisations observe these issues (e.g. post-evaluation review) for their respective funded projects.
- **Gender aspect** is not an evaluation criterion. It is only used for M-ERA.NET internal purpose.

2. SCORES

The scores indicate the following with respect to the criterion under examination (definition of scores taken from the H2020 guidelines to applicants):

- **0** - The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
- **1 - Poor.** The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- **2 - Fair.** While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.
- **3 - Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
- **4 - Very good.** The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
- **5 - Excellent.** The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

3. THRESHOLDS AND EVALUATION REPORTS

Individual assessment report (IAR): Each criterion will be scored between 0.0 and 5.0 representing the sum of the scoring of the individual sub-criteria. Sub-criteria have individual maximum scores with a resolution of 0.1 points. There are no thresholds for sub-criteria. The awarded scores for each sub-criterion have to be justified with written statements by the evaluators.

Peer review report (PRR): the rapporteur will compile a peer review report, to be accepted by all three evaluators. The peer review report is drafted as soon as all three IARs are submitted. The rapporteur ensures an agreement on the PRR and that comments are in line with the scores. The final scoring of the main criteria will take into consideration the scores from the individual assessments. Each criterion will be scored between 0.0 and 5.0 in multiples of half (0.5) points. The threshold for individual criteria will be 3.0; the overall threshold, applying to the sum of the individual scores will be 10.0.

In case of equal scoring of proposals the scores of the individual criteria and sub-criteria can be compared as follows for the elaboration of M-ERA.NET ranking list: compare scores of impact criterion, if still equal compare scores of excellence criterion, if still equal compare scores of implementation criterion, if still equal compare sub-criteria.

Appendix B. Declaration for M-ERA.NET evaluation

Declaration for M-ERA.NET evaluation

- Please read the following declaration carefully and sign it to express your acceptance of the document.
- Please upload a scanned copy of the originally signed document at <https://m-era.net/monitor/evaluator-registration>.

NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

I hereby undertake to treat as confidential all and any information that I receive while participating in the work of evaluating M-ERA.NET project proposals, to use this information solely for the purpose of evaluation of the proposals, not to disclose it to any third party and not to make it publicly available or accessible in any way, except with the prior written consent of the company or other entity submitting the project proposal in question and the M-ERA.NET consortium.

I understand that this non-disclosure agreement is binding towards M-ERA.NET who has proposed me as an evaluator/rapporteur and towards (and for the benefit of) any applicant submitting the project proposal to the M-ERA.NET joint calls for proposals. Furthermore, I understand that this non-disclosure agreement concerns all and any information in any form that comes to my knowledge during my participation in the work of evaluating M-ERA.NET project proposals.

I understand that I shall be bound by this non-disclosure agreement as of the date of my signature of this obligation and that I shall be bound by it even after my participation in the work of the M-ERA.NET evaluation has ended.

Notification in case of Conflict of Interest

I declare that I have not submitted, nor am I, to my knowledge, involved in any proposal currently under evaluation or submitted for evaluation, under the M-ERA.NET Call 2020.

I declare that my participation in the evaluation of the following proposal(s) could not create a conflict of interest (see Appendix C in the M-ERA.NET “Guide for Evaluators” for explanation).

I hereby declare that I will instantly contact M-ERA.NET in case a conflict of interest arises:

Contact: Gabriella ALBERT (email: gabriella.albert@ffg.at phone: +43 57755-5011)

Code of Conduct and availability of assessments

I undertake to abide by the Code of Conduct for evaluators/rapporteurs covered in Appendix D in the M-ERA.NET “Guide for Evaluators” (“Code of conduct”).

I hereby declare that I will finish the evaluation in due time and accept the deadlines set by the M-ERA.NET call secretariat. This includes:

- Finalising as evaluator the individual written assessment until **22 December 2020** at the latest.
- Finalising as rapporteur the peer review report until **13 January 2021** at the latest.
- Furthermore I am available for online discussions for the compilation of the individual assessments and agree that my contact details are provided to other M-ERA.NET evaluators after the individual written assessment is finished.

Name (in CAPITAL LETTERS):

Date and Signature:

Appendix C. Conflict of Interest

Definition of the conflict of interest: for a given proposal, a conflict of interest exists if an expert:

- (a) was involved in the preparation of the proposal
- (b) stands to benefit directly or indirectly if the proposal is accepted
- (c) has a close family or personal relationship with any person representing an applicant legal entity
- (d) is a director, trustee or partner or is in any way involved in the management of an applicant legal entity
- (e) is employed or contracted by one of the applicant legal entities or any named subcontractors
- (f) is in any other situation that compromises his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially

Appendix D. Code of conduct

Fundamental principles of good research practice and peer-review are essential for research integrity. All parties involved directly or indirectly in the evaluation must ensure the transparency of the process as well as that the evaluation criteria published in the *Guide for Proposers* are respected equally for all proposals and that public funds are well used:

1. Evaluators are chosen for their technical or scientific or industrial expertise.
2. All parties involved directly or indirectly in the evaluation must act objectively, with no self-interested motives. They do not represent their company, organisation or establishment.
3. The evaluators shall evaluate the proposals based solely upon the information contained in the proposals.
4. Minutes will be kept for those meetings during which decisions are reached. These minutes will be circulated to participants for verification.
5. Evaluators should refrain in all cases from identifying external experts to third parties, and from divulging any other element which could compromise their anonymity. Likewise, evaluators should not contact applicants directly.
6. If any evaluator is the object of any pressure whatsoever from a project applicant, she or he must notify immediately the call secretariat.
7. If there is a conflict of interest (see Appendix C), the concerned person must inform the call secretariat as soon as finding that a conflict exists.

The M-ERA.NET call secretariat reserves the right to refuse to provide a financial contribution in case of non-performance or poor performance or breach of any substantial obligation, including the obligation of confidentiality and any obligation described in the Code of conduct (Appendix in *Guide for Evaluators*) and in the Declaration for M-ERA.NET evaluation.

Appendix E. Call schedule and evaluation timeline

Date	Step	Place
17 March 2020	Publication of the joint call	Call secretariat
	Start identification of evaluators	
16 June 2020 12:00 noon Brussels time	Deadline for submission of a) Pre-Proposals and b) National/Regional funding applications, if necessary*	a) Online (via IT tool) b) National/Regional agencies
	Invitation and registration of evaluators	Online (via IT tool)
September 2020	Feedback to applicants (recommended/not recommended for Full-Proposal submission)	Online (via IT tool)
	Assign recommended Pre-Proposals to registered experts (evaluators and rapporteurs)	
October-November 2020	Endorse list of evaluators allocated to proposals recommended for Full-Proposal submission	Call Consortium
	Inform registered evaluators (selected / not selected) and collect signed declarations from evaluators	Call secretariat
19 November 2020 12:00 noon Brussels time	Deadline for submission of: a) Full-Proposals and b) National/Regional funding applications, if necessary*	a) Online (via IT tool) b) National/Regional agencies
23 November 2020	National/Regional Full-Proposal checks completed	National/Regional agencies
24 November 2020	Access to online evaluation tool for evaluators	Call secretariat
22 December 2020	Individual written assessments finished	Online (via IT tool)
8 January 2021	Draft peer review report (compilation of evaluation reports) finished	
13 January 2021	Discussion & final peer review report finished	

20 January 2021	Peer review reports & ranking lists to agencies	
end January 2021	Selection meeting (SB)	National/Regional agencies
January / February 2021	Reimbursement of evaluators	Call secretariat
From February 2021	M-ERA.NET feedback to applicants (result of selection meeting, peer review reports and scoring)	Call secretariat
From February 2021	Contract negotiations for selected proposals	National/Regional agencies
From February 2021	Start of funded projects	Partners

For further information on M-ERA.NET: please go to <http://www.m-era.net>