European Partnership on Innovative SMEs / Innowwide

Evaluation guidelines

This document is a description of the Eureka Innowwide substance for expert evaluators. It specifies the evaluation process for the fourth Eureka Innowwide call.

It also serves as a detailed outline of the terms and conditions for their engagement in this process.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	DATE	CHANGE
1.0	8 September 2025	Original version

Contents

1. Your role as a remote expert

The functioning of Innowwide is entirely dependent on the evaluations performed by our remote experts. That is why we expect our remote experts to perform an excellent job.

Each application is evaluated by three remote experts who work individually. The experts who have evaluated each proposal must agree and electronically approve the consensus report elaborated by the *rapporteur* (one of the three experts). Successful applications are then checked by an independent evaluation panel, that ranks them in order of quality and recommends the best proposals for funding.

An expert uses their **technical and market expertise** within their specialist field to provide objective assessments consisting of scores and justifications. Innowwide pays particular attention to the impact that an innovative solution can have in a new market. The marketing strategy of projects is considered as important as the degree of innovation and the technical merits. It is therefore vital that you, the expert, have an excellent understanding of dissemination strategies, market areas and routes to those markets.

Your assessment must be in line with **Innowwide principles, which are reflected in the Innowwide guidelines available in the Innowwide library. In order to properly evaluate an Innowwide proposal, you must be aware of the scope and the eligibility criteria of Eureka Innowwide.**

2. Expert selection, work and responsibilities

2.1. How can I register as a Eureka Expert

If you would like to work as a remote expert for Innowwide, you need to create an account on Eureka's expert portal and fill in information on your professional experience and educational background. Eureka will only approve experts who fulfil the required criteria. Find more information here.

Completing your profile with all requested information and keeping it up to date will maximise your chances of being selected to evaluate applications.

Specific calls for Innowwide experts may be launched to increase our pool of experts.

2.2. How will I be selected to evaluate applications

If your profile has been validated and you are registered as an eligible remote expert, you will be contacted shortly before the submission deadline to see if you are available to evaluate applications. If you respond positively, you are added to the list of available eligible experts.

Please note: If you are no longer available, please inform us as soon as possible by sending an email to experts.innowwide@eurekanetwork.org. It is important to inform us before we start assigning you applications.

2.3. How will I be assigned

After the deadline, the Innowwide team will match the eligible applications with potential experts using database search engines to identify the most suitable experts from the list of available ones. The aim is that the distribution of applications among experts is balanced. For insurance, one or two reserve experts per application will be identified.

It is possible that one expert is matched for several applications. If we think that the workload would present a potential problem, we will reallocate some to the reserve expert instead. It is also possible that an eligible expert receives no evaluations. This can be due to several reasons:

- No applications received are within the expert's areas of expertise
- Other experts are more suitable for the applications received
- They were selected as a "reserve" expert, but never appointed as an evaluator or rapporteur

Innowwide is a fast process. As soon as we match applications to suitable experts, we will begin to assign the experts who have been chosen to perform an evaluation. Depending on the number of applications we receive, this may take several days to complete. You may therefore be assigned over different days.

2.4. Acceptance

Selected experts will receive an email invitation with instructions on how to create an account and login into our **SmartSimple platform**, where they can access the applications they have been assigned to.

After reading the assigned market feasibility project description carefully, experts must accept or reject their assignments within the time specified in the email.

We count on experts' prompt reaction to ensure the successful completion of the evaluation process. If an expert does not accept or reject the assigned application(s) within 48 hours, Eureka may withdraw the invitation and seek an alternative expert.

For the accepted assignment(s), experts get access to the full application form. Furthermore, they receive an email with:

a. **A statement of work.**
   They must click on the link to accept the statement of work. Any evaluation work performed outside the scope of a statement of work cannot be accepted nor remunerated.
b. **A Eureka master service agreement, if not yet signed**.
   A signed copy must be sent before the specified deadline.

Revoking a previously accepted review, delays the evaluation process**. Experts are encouraged to carefully consider their ability to complete the assignment before accepting it.** Systematically refusing or failing to justify the rejection of previously accepted reviews may lead to exclusion for future evaluation opportunities.

2.5. Tasks and timeline

Before starting the evaluation process, the experts are briefed.

The email invitation explains whether the expert has been selected to be an evaluator or both an evaluator and rapporteur. There are distinct tasks for each of these roles.

Evaluator tasks:

1. Prepare an **individual evaluation report,** including scores for each criterion (Excellence, Impact, and Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation) with explanatory comments.
2. Give feedback and approve a consensus report, which will be elaborated on by the rapporteur. If a consensus between the three experts cannot be reached after a first attempt, they will be invited to interact again and seek consensus.[1]

Evaluator and rapporteur tasks:

1. Prepare an **individual evaluation report,** including scores for each criterion (Excellence, Impact, and Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation) with explanatory comments.
2. Once the individual evaluation reports are finalised, draft an evaluation **consensus report** with comments based on the individual evaluation reports, considering all outlying opinions. All experts need to agree on comments and scores in the consensus report.

Three different deadlines will be set for each task (writing the individual evaluation report, writing the consensus report and approving the consensus report). This may take **17 working days**:

- Evaluator: Delivers the individual evaluation reports within **nine working days**.
- Evaluator and rapporteur: Delivers the consensus reports within **four working days**.
- Evaluator: Delivers comments and approves the consensus report within **four working days**.

The purpose is for the experts to reach a shared opinion and agree on comments and scores given in the consensus report. Evaluators can suggest modifications to the consensus report and the rapporteur may rework it.

Specific deadlines for each task will be outlined in the statement of work.

2.6. Performing the work

Evaluations must be made **in English** and to a high quality. The deadline for completing the work is stated in the statement of work.

Should an expert no longer be available, they should inform the Innowwide team as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made. If an expert is unreachable, or their work is not identifiable in the platform for more than a week, the Innowwide team may seek an alternative expert (usually one of the reserve experts originally identified).

Experts must:

- Evaluate each market feasibility project by rating and commenting on each of the evaluation criteria according to the scoring system provided.
- Double-check the content and submit their completed individual evaluation(s) before the deadline specified in the statement of work. Please note that once submitted, no more

[1] In exceptional cases where consensus still cannot be reached, the consensus report and comments will be forwarded to the independent evaluation panel.

changes can be made. If amendments to any of the evaluation reports are needed, experts must contact the Innowwide team for support: experts.innowwide@eurekanetwork.org

- For experts assigned as evaluators and rapporteurs, elaborate an evaluation consensus report with valid collective comments and scores for all the evaluation blocks before the deadline specified in the statement of work.
- Comment on the consensus report with the other evaluators assigned to it and try to reach a consensus of scores and comments. All experts must agree and electronically approve the consensus report, including the comments and scores. In cases where experts do not agree, the consensus report will be forwarded to the independent evaluation panel. Each applicant will receive a single evaluation consensus report with scores.
- Finally, experts must fill out an invoice for their work (a template will be provided) and send it through the dedicated invoicing platform.

Experts can track the status of their evaluations in the online dashboard.

2.7. Experts' responsibilities

We expect you to follow our code of practice:

- Evaluate applications independently,
- Evaluate applications objectively and without prejudice,
- Perform your assessment in line with Innowwide principles,
- Allocate enough time and effort to the process,
- Provide accurate scores using the entirety of the scale available,
- Clearly justify each score provided,
- Provide statements specific to the application at hand,
- Provide statements and scores that do not contradict,
- Uphold the application's confidentiality.

No vague, generic or formulaic answers taken from this document, other Innowwide guidelines or readily available information sources (e.g., Wikipedia) will be accepted.

2.8. Quality assurance

The Innowwide team performs quality checks on evaluations. If improvements are needed, experts will be asked by email to amend their evaluation and resubmit it.

If the quality issues are not addressed within the specified deadline, the Innowwide team reserves the right to refuse payment and/or, in serious cases, to exclude an expert from our database.

2.9. Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest undermines everything that we are trying to achieve. We expect you to inform the Innowwide team openly and honestly if there is any reason why you cannot or might not be able to perform an objective evaluation.

If this is the case, you will be unable to evaluate applications during this evaluation period, but you will be welcome to participate again in the future.

Occasionally, it is not clear that a conflict exists until after the initial invitation. As long as an expert informs us as soon as they are aware of the fact, steps will be taken to correct this. If the expert does not do so:

- The expert will be excluded from working for Innowwide or other Eureka programmes in the future.
- The Innowwide team will seek reimbursement of all fees paid to the expert for their work.
- The Innowwide team will inform the European Commission and those responsible for managing their expert evaluation processes.
- If an expert has any doubts about this issue, he/she must email experts.innowwide@eurekanetwork.org immediately with the subject line "Question on conflict of interest for Innowwide applications".

Conflict of interest	
Disqualifying: The expert…	**Potentially disqualifying: The expert…**
o was involved in preparing an application; o stands to benefit directly should an application be funded; o stands to benefit directly should an application be rejected; o has a close family/personal relationship with any person representing an applicant organisation; o is a director, trustee or partner of an applicant organisation; o is employed by one of the applicant organisations in the applications; o is in any other situation that compromises his/her ability to evaluate the applications objectively.	o was employed by one of the applicant organisations within the previous two (2) years; o is employed by one of the Eureka partnership members; o is involved in a contract or research collaboration with an applicant organisation, or has been in the previous two (2) years; o is in any other situation that could cast doubt on his/her ability to evaluate the applications impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party; o other circumstances which may arise but are not specifically listed above.

The expert must not have submitted nor been involved in any application that is being assessed during the evaluation period.

If an expert discovers that their assigned application raises a conflict of interest, they are under the obligation to declare this to the Eureka Network immediately.

2.10. Payment to experts

Each expert will be assigned a number of market feasibility project applications for the evaluation period. Experts will receive an email with the details of the fee they will be paid.

Each expert must satisfy the following conditions to receive payment for their work:

- Be included in Eureka's expert database and have a valid and signed master service agreement;
- Electronically accept the statement of work received via email;

- Complete the assigned evaluation(s) before the agreed deadline;
- Submit an invoice to the Eureka Network containing the statement of work reference/s number and the reviewed application/s number/s and acronym/s through the dedicated invoicing platform.

Invoices received from experts that do not fulfil one or more of the above-mentioned conditions will not be processed.

Please keep in mind that the payments to experts will be processed within **30 working days after the end of the evaluation period**, not after an expert has submitted their review or invoice.

3. Evaluation Criteria and Procedures

All submitted proposals having passed the eligibility check will go through an independent evaluation process by international remote experts according to criteria that support Innowwide's objectives. Then, an independent evaluation panel ranks the applications.

The evaluation process will be coordinated centrally by the Eureka Secretariat.

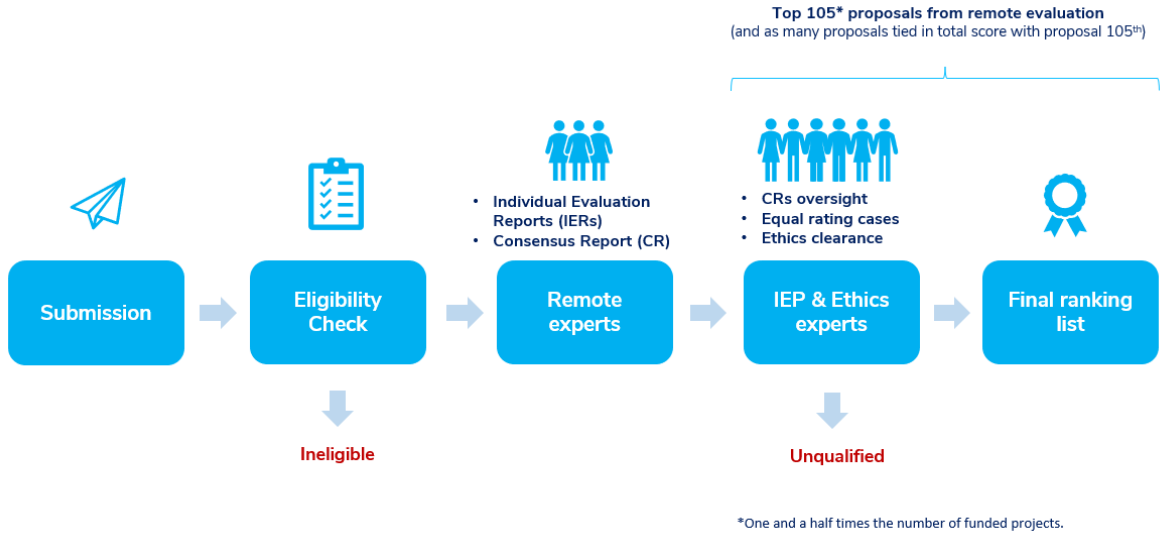

Figure 1: Eureka Innowwide Call 4 process overview

3.1. Technical evaluation by remote experts

3.1.1. Evaluation documents

Innowwide uses an online call management platform (https://eureka.smartsimple.ie) where all the necessary documents and forms for performing the evaluation work are located: market feasibility project application form and market feasibility project evaluation form.

Experts are advised to use the same email address for the SmartSimple evaluation platform as they did when registering for the Eureka's Expert Database (EED). If, for

technical reasons, a different email address is used, experts should check both inboxes to ensure they do not to miss any messages. Depending on the nature of the communication, messages may be sent from either platform.

3.1.2. Scoring system

Complete and eligible applications are evaluated by **three remote experts** (one of them acting as *rapporteur*, responsible for drafting a consensus report), using the online call management platform, according to three criteria: excellence, impact and quality and efficiency of the implementation. Each application is given points out of 100.

Evaluation criteria	
Excellence 30 Points	**Threshold: 18/30;** o Projects objectives, ambitiousness, and degree of innovation o Competitive advantage o Alignment with SME's overall business strategy o Co-creation or technology adaptation
Impact 40 Points	**Threshold: 24/40;** o Market size o Impact on end user o Market access and risk o Societal, environmental, ethical and gender relevance, in particular within the frame of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[2]
Quality and efficiency of the implementation 30 Points	**Threshold: 18/30;** o Capacity and role of the applicant SME and the main subcontractor o Availability of resources required o Realistic and clearly defined project management and planning o Reasonable cost structure

[2] UN Sustainable Development Goals

A scores table will be applied:

	Excellence	**Impact**	**Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation**
Not eligible	0 points The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.		
Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.	1-6	1-8	1-6
Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.	7-12	9-16	7-12
Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.	**13-18**	**17-24**	**13-18**
Very good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.	19-24	25-32	19-24
Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.	25-30	33-40	25-30

Applications below any of these thresholds will be discarded:

1. Excellence: 18 points
2. Impact: 24 points
3. Quality and efficiency of implementation: 18 points

Each expert will prepare an **individual evaluation report** that includes scores for each criterion with explanatory comments. Once the individual evaluation reports are finalised, the *rapporteur* will draft an evaluation **consensus report** and put forward comments that match the consensus scores[3] based on the individual evaluation reports.

The experts who have evaluated each proposal must agree and electronically approve the consensus report, including the comments and scores. In cases where experts do not agree, the consensus report, together with the disagreement notes, will be forwarded to the independent evaluation panel. All the comments made by and between the experts will be recorded in the platform.

The panel resolves cases where a consensus could not be reached, and a minority view was recorded in the consensus report.

After this, a list is generated, with applications ordered according to their total score in descending order.

The top 105 proposals (one and a half times the total number of projects to be funded) from remote evaluation that score above threshold, progress to the independent evaluation panel and ethics review. If some proposals have tied scores with the 105th proposal, those also progress to the independent evaluation panel and ethics review.

For proposals below threshold or not in the top 105, the outcome of the consensus phase will constitute the final result of the evaluation, and there will be no panel review.

3.2. Panel review and ranking list by the independent evaluation panel

An independent evaluation panel (including a minimum of five independent experts with a high-level strategic, technical, market, business development and financial expertise) will decide a ranking list based on evaluation results.

The independent evaluation panel carry out the following tasks:

1. Elaborate consensus reports and assign scores where remote experts have not agreed

The independent evaluation panel look at applications where consensus reports and scores were not reached by the remote experts and elaborate them.

2. Align consensus reports and scores

Independent evaluation panel members review the top 105 consensus reports to ensure that the consensus groups have been consistent in their evaluations and if necessary, propose a new set of marks or comments.

In parallel, an **ethics panel** review the list of applications that received a successful evaluation, discarding those that do not comply with relevant ethics requirements.

[3] Scores are rounded up.

3. Readjust ranking of applications with equal scores close to the threshold

The independent evaluation panel can readjust the ranking order of applications with equal scores and those close to the funding threshold.

They consider (in this order):

i. The score awarded in 'impact'
ii. When these scores are equal, they consider scores awarded in 'excellence'

If necessary:

iii. The gender balance among the team members in the proposal will be used as a factor for prioritisation

iv. Any further prioritisation will be based on geographical diversity, where priority will be given to those proposals from applicant countries underrepresented among projects higher up the ranking list.

The evaluation process may be monitored by one independent observer appointed to observe the practical application of the evaluation process and to give objective advice on the conduct and fairness of the evaluation process.

3.3. Communication of results

Each applicant will receive a single evaluation report, including qualitative feedback and scores based on the conclusions of the expert's assessments.

The Innowwide team will communicate the results. Only from then, applicants can follow a redress procedure (see section 5.4 of the call guidelines).

3.4. Funding decision

To be considered for funding, the application must score above the set threshold for each individual award criterion and be ranked in the top 70 projects (above the budget-threshold).

The final independent evaluation panel ranking list and the ethics scrutiny will include:

- a 'selection list' with applications that might receive funding;
- a 'reserve list' with applications that may in the end get funding if one or more applications in the selection list cannot sign a grant agreement.

This list will be publicly available on our website.

Funding will be allocated to applications ranked over threshold, and ethically viable according to the ranking list until the call available budget is exhausted.

4. Confidentiality

The Eureka Secretariat

We do not comment on the status of individual experts, and if you contact us and request a reference, we will only confirm whether you have performed any evaluations; we will be unable to provide an endorsement of your abilities, and we will not publicly acknowledge your role in the evaluation of a particular project.

Innowwide, like most publicly financed initiatives, is subject to performance reviews. Undertakings of this nature require the disclosure of certain information to organisations or individuals. Within this context, it may be possible to identify the specific work of specific individuals. Such information may be available to:

Organisations:

- The European Commission and its executive agencies,

- auditors of the above organisations and

- organisations charged with analysing the effectiveness of Innowwide as a funding instrument.

The expert

Experts are required to treat information contained within applications with the strictest confidentiality and to declare any potential conflict of interest.

The expert is responsible for ensuring and maintaining confidentiality of any data, documents or other material related to the evaluation process, during and after completion of the evaluation. In the case of a breach of those obligations, Eureka reserves the right to suspend any payment or compensation, and in serious cases, to undertake legal action.

Use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in evaluating applications

The use of generative **AI is strictly prohibited in the evaluation of the application content**. Using AI in the evaluation means sharing application information with third parties, constituting a breach of confidentiality. If confidentiality is compromised due to AI use, Eureka reserves the right to suspend any payments or compensation and, in serious cases, undertake legal action.

Eureka reserves the right to carry out random checks on submitted evaluations to ensure they have not used AI capabilities.

Please note that the use of generative AI in the application preparation is not prohibited. Therefore, **applicants cannot be penalised during the expert assessment for using AI**. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure content in the submitted application is factually correct and within required legal standards.

5. Information security

Use of technical information

The electronic submission of evaluations uses https, which encrypts and decrypts the requests and information between the expert's browser and the server to which evaluations are submitted, using a Secure Socket Layer (SSL). SSL allows an SSL-enabled server to authenticate itself to an SSL-enabled client and vice versa, enabling the machine to establish an encrypted connection.

Data Protection Act

The Eureka Network is situated in the Kingdom of Belgium and governed by Belgian and EU data protection laws.

More information can be found (in English, Dutch and French) on http://www.privacycommission.be.

Any queries on issues relating to data protection should be addressed to:

Eureka Network, Avenue de Tervueren 2, 1040 Brussels, Belgium or to privacy@eurekanetwork.org

Annex 1. Eligible activities

This is a fixed and exhaustive list of eligible activities that can be funded by Innowwide.

To be eligible, an Innowwide application must include elements from sections 1, 2 and 3 (market and technical activities) and can include (but not exclusively) elements from sections 4 and 5 (business development and promotion).

A market feasibility project must include some of (or all) the following activities:

1. Co-creation[4] and technology uptake preparatory work (innovation and technology transfer services)

a) Frugal innovation and the preparatory phase of a future international R&I project with the local strategic subcontractor

b) Analysis of the IP environment: Identification and assessment of the legal (and related technical and financial) IP environment in the target country, legal, technical (certification and alike) and commercial (royalties or duties) constraints or advantages for IP registration and defence

c) Technology scouting and novelty verification: Inventory and study of legal, technical and commercial situation of existing, registered and potentially legally conflictive technologies in the target market

d) Technology valuation: Technology market value calculation by experts (valuation and pricing through discounted cash flow, market comparison, benchmarking, rating and ranking, etc.)

e) Technology legal situation analysis: Due diligence of the technology legal situation in the target country (legal evaluation and actions to ensure overall technology freedom to operate and legal protection in the target country)

f) Technology protection and valorisation strategy design: Design, planning and preliminary implementation of measures to valorise existing technologies (licensing, venturing or partnering)

g) Certification and homologation compliance verification: Compulsory regulatory technical certification, testing and benchmarking activities

h) Technology partnership matchmaking

i) Small-scale proof of concept (trial and assimilation, further R&I preparatory work)

2. Market research (desk and field studies):

a) Business opportunities early survey detection (pre-conceptualisation)

[4] In the context of Innowwide, co-creation is the process by which products, processes or services, are jointly developed by the applicant company and its main subcontractor in the target country, leading to a new space where the value created may be shared.

b) Qualitative analysis (consumer analysis: segments, preferences, patterns, motivations, opinions, attitudes, values, culture, etc.)

c) Product commercial research (local customer experience oriented: concept, design, supply, use, etc.)

d) Market quantitative analysis (real, potential or tendencies)

e) Competition analysis (market share, positioning, value propositions, value chains, etc.)

f) Analysis of potential partners for distribution and marketing

g) Analysis of potential suppliers

h) PESTLE (political, economic, sociological, technological, legal and environmental issues) and market barriers analysis

3. Compliance verification:

a) Administrative and legal freedom to operate or due diligence verification

b) Business related social and cultural best practices identification and implementation planning

4. Business prospection trips – limited and justifiable within your market feasibility project:

a) Trade fairs, conferences, info days or networking and matchmaking events

b) Joint workshops or meetings with potential partners

c) Workshops with partners to prepare international R&I projects

5. Specific promotional technical material preparation (technology valorisation-oriented) – limited and justifiable within your market feasibility project

Subcontractors may collaborate in the implementation of any eligible project activities, i.e., frugal innovation and the preparatory phase of a future international R&I project; technology legal situation analysis; market research qualitative and quantitative analysis; administrative and legal freedom to operate or due diligence verification, etc.

Annex 2: Evaluation form

SECTION ONE

1. EXCELLENCE

Comment:

Consider the following:

- **Projects objectives, ambitiousness, and degree of innovation**: Are the project objectives ambitious? Is the product technologically new or a significant improvement on existing solutions?
- **Competitive advantage:** Consider the estimated added value of the proposed product, service or business model. Does the product have a significant price or quality advantage over competing products or have significant benefits to the customer in the target market?
- **Alignment with SME's overall business strategy:** Has the alignment between project objectives and SME's overall business strategy been clearly described? Does the expected expansion support the long-term goals on the SME in the best way?
- **Co-creation or technology adaptation:** Has the adaptation of the product (or process or service) to the target market been clearly described? Is the project going to facilitate co-creation? Could the technology or knowledge being developed have the potential for a wide number of applications beyond the scope of this project?

Score for Excellence

2. IMPACT

Comment:

Consider the following:

- **Market size**: Has the applicant quantified the market size, growth prospects and expected market share? Is the market generation potential in the short, medium and long term in the target country realistic?
- **Impact on end user:** Are the end user's needs correctly identified? Does the project bring a significant impact in the target country?
- **Market access and risk**: Has the applicant identified the market barriers? Does the market expansion allow for cost and time-to-market reduction? Has the applicant carefully analysed existing IP and assessed whether it might affect their marketing approach? Is the expansion foreseen in other markets beyond the initial target country?
- **Societal, environmental, ethical and gender relevance, in particular, within the frame of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[5]:** Has the applicant identified how the

[5] UN Sustainable Development Goals

project will contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? Is the contribution well described and realistic?

Score for Impact

3. QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF IMPLEMENTATION

Comment:

Consider the following:

- **Capacity and role of the applicant SME and the main subcontractor:** Does the team have the necessary technical or business experience? Is the relation between SME and subcontractor(s) relevant and clearly described? Do the applicant's and main subcontractor's teams have complementary expertise and competences that results in high added value and clear mutual benefits?
- **Availability of resources required:** are the indicated resources (personnel, facilities, networks, etc.) sufficient to carry out the market feasibility project?
- **Realistic and clearly defined project management and planning**: Are the project's goals clearly identified and logically set out through well described work packages? Are the work packages broken-down into logical, well-defined tasks which are relevant to the expected results? Is the timeframe realistic and the description of implementation comprehensive (milestones and risk management) taking the innovation ambitions and objectives into account?
- **Reasonable cost structure:** Are the costs reasonable (e.g., neither underestimated nor overestimated) for the proposed work and for each of the counterparts (consider, also, differences in living costs and wages between countries)? Are the costs clearly justified (staff, equipment, consumables, subcontracting, etc.)?

Score for Implementation

SECTION 2

This section is to be completed exclusively in the consensus report. It is not applicable for individual evaluation reports.

Comments:

1. Please list three **main strengths** of the application.
2. Please list three **main weaknesses** of the application.
3. Please provide a **summary of your overall conclusions**