

# How Eurostars assesses and ranks Eurostars applications

This document includes information on the evaluation process, with a particular focus on evaluation criteria and the scoring systems used to assess and rank Eurostars applications. Eurostars is part of the European Partnership on Innovative SMEs. The [partnership is co-funded by the European Union through Horizon Europe](#).

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<b>HISTORY OF CHANGES</b>		
<b>Version</b>	<b>Publication date</b>	<b>Changes</b>
Version 1	November 2021	Initial version
April 2022, version 2	April 2022	
April 2022, version 3	March 2022	Updated section "How does the panel rank applications?"  Deleted "Their primary role is to differentiate and correctly order the projects that received the same score from the remote experts."
April 2022, version 3.1	July 2022	Corrected note 1: "The fractional part (or decimal part) of a number is the excess beyond that number's integer part. E.g., in the number 3.3, the integer is 3, while the fractional part consists of the numbers after the decimal point, in this case 3."

## Considerations

Eurostars applications undergo a peer review process to determine which applications will be recommended for funding.

Each eligible application is first assessed and scored by three remote experts. Applications that receive a score above a minimum quality threshold (and pass the legal and financial viability check) then progress to the Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP), a body made up of up to 20 experts. Only applications rated by the panel to be above a minimum quality threshold are recommended for funding.

The evaluation process is designed to ensure that only excellent projects receive funding. You and your partners are in direct competition with all other applications. The scores reflect the quality of your application, while the ranking (if the application progresses to the panel review) reflects your position with regards to the competition.

### Experts may have different opinions

Not everyone will be convinced by every element of your application. Some will find your analysis unjustified, while others may be persuaded. The best way to create consensus amongst experts is to use clear wording, with as much detailed justification as possible.

### Evaluations are the personal opinions of the experts

The views expressed by the experts are not those of the Eureka Association. We try to ensure that experts explain their reasoning clearly, and that they demonstrate a level of consistency between the justifications and the scores given. We cannot influence the direction of an evaluation or ask an expert to change their mind.

## Evaluation by three remote experts

Each eligible application is assessed by three remote experts commissioned by the Eureka Association. This evaluation happens in parallel to the legal and financial viability check, where national funding bodies verify that each organisation applying from their country fulfil a set of requirements.

To progress to the Independent Evaluation Panel, an application must pass the legal and financial viability check and the thresholds of the remote evaluation by the three experts (more information about the legal and financial viability check can be found [here](#)).

### Who are the experts?

To be commissioned as an expert, an individual must first register in our expert database. Experts must:

- hold a higher education diploma (degree or higher),
- possess a minimum 10 years of professional experience in their chosen area(s) and
- be fluent in English.

If these criteria are met, the Eureka Association reviews the application documents, and a committee decides whether to accept the candidate as an expert for future evaluations.

### How are experts assigned to applications?

Three remote experts are assigned to each application. The experts are chosen and assigned by project officers with a technical background. The project officers read the applications and identifies three suitable experts from our database. For insurance, the project officers also identify two or three reserve experts.

Experts are assigned based on the matching of their technical expertise and the technological and market areas outlined in the application.

An application cannot be assessed by an expert whose nationality is the same as that of any of the organisations in the consortium.

### Can I exclude experts from evaluating my application?

You can request that specific organisations or individuals are excluded from evaluating your application by stating who should not be involved in the dedicated field in your application form. You cannot request that experts from an entire country are excluded.

### How are applications assessed?

The experts use their technical and market expertise in their specialist field to provide objective evaluations, consisting of scores and justifying comments. The three remote experts assess the application individually and independently from one another; they do not know each other's identity.

Applications are assessed against three evaluation criteria and sub-criteria, all of which have equal weighting:

<b>Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Q)</b>	<b>Impact (I)</b>	<b>Excellence (E)</b>
1. Quality of the consortium 2. Added value through cooperation 3. Realistic and clearly defined project management and planning 4. Reasonable cost structure	1. Market size 2. Market access and risk 3. Competitive advantage 4. Clear and realistic commercialisation plans 5. Economic, environmental and societal impact	1. Degree of innovation 2. New applied knowledge 3. Level of technical challenge 4. Technical achievability and risk

For a detailed description of what remote experts look for in your application, please read the guidelines for the remote experts.

Each remote expert assigns a score of between 1 and 6 to each sub-criterion, where 1 is the lowest score and 6 is the highest. These are integer values (i.e. no fractions or decimals).

For each expert, an average of the sub-criteria scores is found, giving the score for the main evaluation criterion. Averages that result in fractional parts<sup>1</sup> of 0.5 and above are rounded up to the nearest integer. Fractional parts lower than 0.5 are rounded down to the nearest integer.

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<sup>1</sup> The fractional part (or decimal part) of a number is the excess beyond that number's integer part. E.g., in the number 3.3, the integer is 3, while the fractional part consists of the numbers after the decimal point, in this case 3.

As there are three experts rating three criteria, nine values of between 1 and 6 are generated, as shown in the example below:

Ex.

	Q	I	E
Expert A	5	4	4
Expert B	3	4	5
Expert C	6	5	5

	Q	I	E
Expert A	3	4	4
Expert B	3	4	5
Expert C	4	4	5

Next, the average values for each criterion are calculated. These values must be greater than or equal to 3.6 for every criterion or the project is rejected.

Ex.

**Passed**

	Q	I	E
Expert A	5	4	4
Expert B	3	4	5
Expert C	6	5	5
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.6</b>

(> 3.6)    (> 3.6)    (> 3.6)

**Rejected**

	Q	I	E
Expert A	3	4	4
Expert B	3	4	5
Expert C	4	4	5
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4.6</b>

(< 3.6)    (> 3.6)    (> 3.6)

For applications that score at least 3.6 in every criterion, the nine expert scores are combined to give the application's total score.

Ex.

	Q	I	E
Expert A	5	4	4
Expert B	3	4	5
Expert C	6	5	5

= 41

After this, a list is generated, with applications ordered according to their total score in descending order. Only top-rated applications will progress to the Independent Evaluation Panel.

Before the launch of each Eurostars call for projects, a limit to the number of top-rated applications that will pass through to the panel is established. It means that projects that are accepted on one occasion may not be accepted with the same score on a second occasion if the total scores of a sufficient number of competing projects increase.

For example, if this limit is set at 200, the top 200 applications progress to the panel. If the 200<sup>th</sup> application has the same total score as some other applications, all applications with that score will progress to the panel.

Applications that are not among the top-rated are rejected.



## The Independent Evaluation Panel

Each application that passed the three experts' review is checked by the Independent Evaluation Panel: independent experts who define a ranking list of the applications and recommend the top applications for funding.

### Who are the experts on the panel?

The experts of the Independent Evaluation Panel are individually nominated by their country and endorsed by the High-level Group (the highest decision-making body of the programme). The composition of the panel changes each time to ensure adequate coverage of technical and market fields and to ensure representation of a variety of countries that participate in the programme, although the Chairperson of the panel is mandated for a longer period of time and oversees the work of several sessions to ensure consistency between calls. Gender balance is also sought when nominating and selecting the panel.

Following the advice of the panel Chairperson at the launch of each Eurostars call for projects, the Eureka Association selects the specific experts who will constitute the panel. The number of selected experts depends on the number of applications that need to be considered (10-14 is the norm, but it can be as high as 20 experts).

### How does the panel rank applications?

All members of the panel meet to review the applications together. For each application, they have access to the application form (including its annexes) and the remote experts' assessments. The panel check the applications against the three main criteria:

1. Quality and efficiency of the implementation,
2. Impact, and
3. Excellence.

The panel discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each application and compare the quality of each application. They can place greater emphasis on certain pieces of information over others, with the result being that a single consideration can potentially become a determining factor to its success. These considerations can also be different from what the experts emphasised.

Applications will be ranked and placed into groups between 1 and 6 according to their quality, with group 6 considered the best, and group 5 being the minimum grouping required to be recommended for funding. The panel will also provide justifying comments.

### Selection and funding of applications

Applications are selected for funding based on the ranking list defined by the panel.

Applications in group 6 are considered excellent and will be funded automatically.

Applications in group 5 are considered very good quality and (where there is national funding is available) are selected to receive funding.

The other applications in a lower group will not receive funding.