

Evaluation of Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

REA – European Research Executive Agency

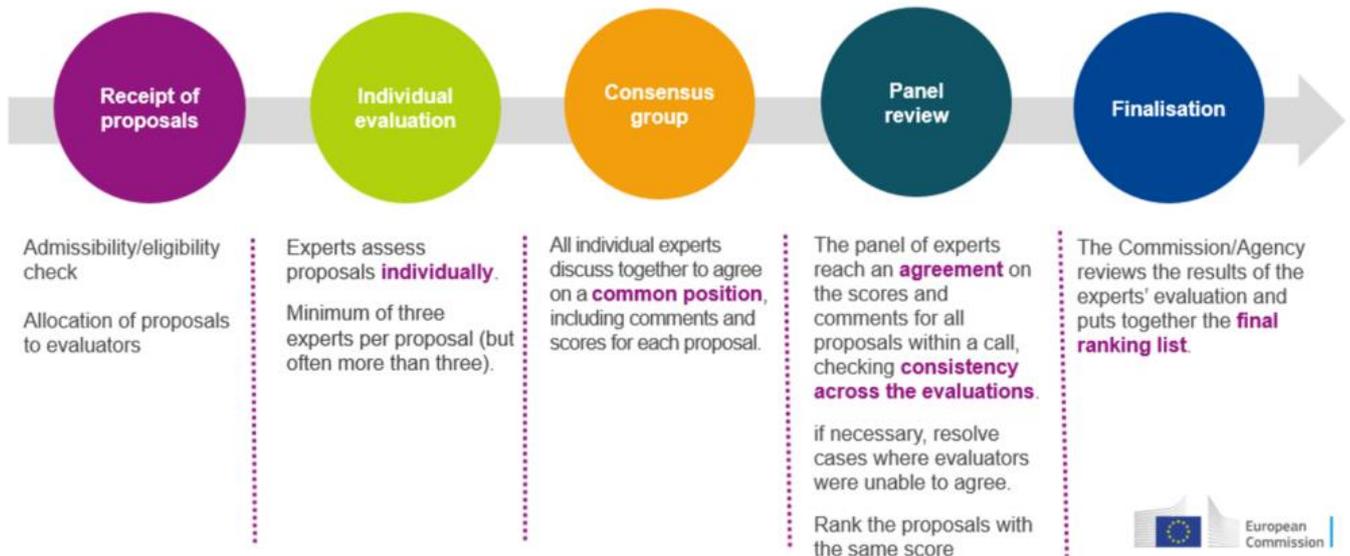


Figure 1: Overview of the evaluation process in MSCA

Roles:

The MSCA proposals are evaluated by at least three independent external **expert evaluators**. The expert evaluators selected for each proposal must collectively possess an appropriate scientific expertise to evaluate the proposal in question.

REA staff are responsible for the selection of expert evaluators. The selection is based primarily on the experts' scientific expertise while ensuring other criteria, such as an appropriate geographical and a gender balance. REA staff are also responsible for ensuring that none of the selected expert evaluators have a conflict of interest.

In the evaluation process the REA is assisted by **Vice-Chairs**. The Vice-Chairs are experienced external experts in the corresponding scientific field of the Panel. They assist the REA in ensuring the proper implementation of the evaluation process, without interfering in the evaluation itself, in monitoring and managing the process and ensuring its quality. Each panel is overseen by a panel **Chair**.

An **independent observer** is appointed by the REA to observe the overall evaluation process and to give an independent and impartial feedback to the REA and the European Commission on the conduct, transparency and fairness of the evaluation process, and on ways in which the procedures could be improved, if applicable.

Evaluation process:

1. Receipt of proposals

After the call deadline, REA checks the compliance of each submitted proposal with the conditions for eligibility and admissibility as laid down in the respective Work Programme and its general annexes. Proposals failing to comply with any of the eligibility and admissibility conditions will not be evaluated.

A first allocation of proposals to expert evaluators is usually done automatically by matching the keywords of the proposals, selected by the applicants, with the expertise of the expert evaluators. Subsequently, Vice-Chairs carefully double-check each assignment against the proposal and expert evaluators' expertise in order to obtain the best match. Each expert evaluator is generally assigned to several proposals in his/her scientific area. The final allocation of proposals to expert evaluators is then confirmed by the REA.

2. Individual evaluation

The expert evaluators assess each proposal assigned to them, independently, in terms of how the proposal addresses the different award criteria described in the Work Programme. During this phase, there is no interaction between the expert evaluators as they do not know the identity of the other expert evaluators assigned to the same proposal. At the end of this phase, each expert evaluator prepares an Individual Evaluation Report for each proposal assigned to him/her and submits this report in the Submission and Evaluation tool (SEP).

3. Consensus group

The expert evaluators assigned to the same proposal discuss the concerned proposal in order to reach a consensus on the comments and the score to be awarded for each evaluation criterion. One of the expert evaluators or a Vice-Chair not evaluating the proposal (depending on the MSCA calls), acts as rapporteur and he/she is responsible for preparing a Consensus Report at the end of the process. The Consensus Report reflects the consensus discussion among all expert evaluators involved in the evaluation of the concerned proposal. The consensus discussion can be moderated by the rapporteur, the REA staff and/or the Vice-Chair (depending on the MSCA call). At the end of this process, each expert evaluator involved in the evaluation of the concerned proposal must approve the Consensus Report in the SEP system.

Once the Consensus Report is approved by the expert evaluators, the report is automatically transferred to the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR). Vice-Chairs check that the ESRs meet the required evaluation standards. In case significant changes are needed, the Vice-Chair can send the report back to the expert evaluators and reopen the consensus discussion.

4. Panel review

During the panel reviews, the Chairs and Vice-Chairs are invited to perform another quality check of the ESRs, and may adjust the comments and exceptionally the scores if duly justified and if fully endorsed by the panel.

After Panel finalises its work, proposals are automatically ranked by the SEP system in descending order of the total score in their respective panel ranking list. Any *ex aequo* cases are also discussed and resolved by the panel before the final approval of the ranking lists by the Panel.

5. Finalisation

Within five months from the Call deadline, applicants will receive an "Evaluation Result Letter", explaining the outcome of the evaluation of their proposal with the ESR attached. In the ESR, in addition to the total score for the proposal, an individual score for each of the three evaluation criteria is given, along with the comments from the expert evaluators.

Outcome of the evaluation:

There following are the possible outcomes of the evaluation:

- **Main list:** the proposal will be invited for grant preparation;

- **Reserve list:** the proposal may be invited for grant preparation if sufficient budget is made available after all the main list proposals finalise their grant preparation phase. No action is needed from the side of the applicants on a reserve list. A notification will be sent to the remaining applicants at the closure of the reserve list when no remaining budget;
- **Above threshold:** despite the proposal having passed all the thresholds, it cannot be funded in view of the limited budget available for the call;
- **Below threshold:** the proposal cannot be funded because the total score obtained does not reach the minimum necessary threshold 70% (for MSCA and Citizens the threshold is 10/15).
- **Ineligible/inadmissible:** the proposal failed to comply with the eligibility and/or admissibility conditions. No ESR is sent to the applicant.

Means of redress on the funding decision:

After the evaluation results are communicated to the applicants, the evaluation review process will be opened. The Evaluation Result Letter will contain all necessary information to file an **evaluation review** request in case the applicant considers that there has been a procedural failing or a factual error in the evaluation process, and that it has jeopardised the decision whether or not to fund the proposal. The evaluation review does not concern the merits of the proposal. The coordinator must submit this request within 30 days after receiving the letter.