NEWFELPRO 2013

Guidelines for Evaluators and Evaluation Procedure – Second Call

Ministry of Science, Education and Sports

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PEOPLE

MARIE CURIE ACTIONS

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I. General

The evaluation of proposals is carried out by the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee with assistance from independent experts. The experts evaluate eligible proposals on a personal basis, not as representatives of their employer, their country or any other entity. They are expected to be independent, impartial and objective, and to behave in a professional manner throughout the process.

Before being granted access to project applications and commencing their work, evaluators will have to read and accept the Letter of Appointment for Independent Experts, the Code of Conduct for Experts Appointed as Evaluators and the Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Declaration as a compulsory part of the online registration process. These rules must be adhered to at all times before, during and after the evaluation.

All eligible project applications are evaluated by independent evaluators against the criteria established in the Call for Proposals. Evaluation is performed individually and remotely by three independent evaluators who possess the same field of expertise as the project applicant (peer review). All three experts will be international. The evaluators can access the project applications and evaluation forms from the NEWFELPRO website.

The names of the evaluators will not be made public. The NEWFELPRO Secretariat chooses evaluators for all the eligible proposals by issuing a call, whereas the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee staff verifies the quality of the evaluation process, ensuring a fair process and making sure that persons with a possible conflict of interest in no way participate in the evaluation process.

The evaluators are remunerated for their services according to the Contract for Services signed with MSES.

Under the terms of the Letter of Appointment for Independent Experts, the Code of Conduct for Experts Appointed as Evaluators and the Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Declaration, the experts must disclose beforehand any known conflicts of interest, and immediately inform the NEWFELPRO Secretariat if such conflicts become apparent during the course of the evaluation. The NEWFELPRO Secretariat and NEWFELPRO Selection Committee will take whatever action is necessary to eliminate such conflicts. The letter of appointment also requires experts to maintain strict confidentiality with respect to the entire evaluation process. They must follow any instructions given by the NEWFELPRO Secretariat to ensure such adherence. Under no circumstances may an expert on his/her own account attempt to contact an applicant, either during the evaluation or afterwards.

II. Code of conduct for experts appointed as evaluators

1. The task of an evaluator is to participate in the confidential, fair and unbiased evaluation of each proposal according to the conditions of the NEWFELPRO project. The evaluator must invest their best efforts to do so and subsequently deliver a high quality work.

2. The evaluator works as an independent person. Such a person is deemed to work in a personal capacity and, in performing the work, does not represent any organisation.

3. The evaluator must use appropriate, non-discriminatory language related to evaluation of project proposals.

4. The evaluator commits him/herself to strict confidentiality and impartiality concerning his/her tasks. If an evaluator has a direct or indirect connection with a proposal, or other interest in any way connected with a proposal, or has any other allegiance which may impair his/her neutrality with respect to a proposal, the evaluator must declare such facts to the NEWFELPRO Secretariat as soon as he/she becomes aware of such circumstances. The NEWFELPRO Secretariat and the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee will ensure that, where the nature of any relation is such that it could threaten the evaluator's neutrality, he/she will not participate in the evaluation of the respective proposal and, if necessary, the competing proposals.

5. Evaluators may not discuss any proposal with others, including other evaluators.

6. Evaluators may not communicate with applicants. No proposal may be modified during the evaluation process.

7. Evaluators may only send their evaluations to the NEWFELPRO Secretariat by e-mail.

8. Evaluators are not allowed to disclose the names of other evaluators participating in the evaluation.

9. The evaluator will be held personally responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any documents or electronic files sent, including the returning, erasing or destroying of all confidential documents or files upon completing the evaluation as instructed. Evaluators may seek further information (for example, on the internet, specialised databases, etc.) for the purpose of completing the examination of proposals. Evaluators must not disclose the contents of proposals or information on applicants to third parties (e.g. colleagues, students, etc.).

10. Evaluators are required to comply strictly with any rules defined by the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee to ensure confidentiality of the evaluation. Failure to do so may result in the exclusion from current and future evaluation processes.

III. Handling of conflicts of interest

By reading and accepting the Code of Conduct for Experts Appointed as Evaluators, and after reviewing the project lists and summaries, the evaluator will notify the NEWFELPRO Secretariat of any possible conflict of interest.

Conflict of interest can be **direct** or **indirect.**

1. **In a direct conflict of interest,** an evaluator is involved in at least one of the following or similar situations regarding at least one of the project proposals for which funding is requested within the same Call for Proposals:
    a. A person is an applicant, a team member, or consultant in one of the project proposals, or was involved in the preparation of such a proposal;
    b. A person is employed by the same institution or department which was involved in at least one project proposal;
    c. A person is in a kinship relation with any of the persons involved in the project proposal;
    d. A person has a personal interest or direct financial gain and would therefore benefit from one of the proposals being funded or not funded.

A person in a direct conflict of interest cannot participate in the evaluation process.

2. In an **indirect conflict of interest,** an evaluator is involved in at least one of the following or similar situations:
    a. A person who is employed by a legal entity (faculty) involved in the proposal, but not within the same department;
    b. A person has some other professional/business relation with at least one of the project proposals;
    c. A person is a competitor to the project in a scientific or business sense;
    d. A person wrote a letter of recommendation for one of the project proposals;
    e. Persons who have been in a student-professor relationship with the person involved in the project proposal, having less than 5 years of scientific autonomy or in any other professional relationship in the last 3 years;
    f. A person who has co-authored publications with the project applicant in the last 5 years;
    g. A person that may have any other relationship with a project applicant affecting his/her impartiality.

A person in an indirect conflict of interest may take part in evaluations, but cannot evaluate such proposals.

IV. Policy procedures for conflict of interest

Members of the NEWFELPRO Secretariat, the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee, and their families may not compete in the NEWFELPRO Calls for Proposals.

In case of other forms of personal relationships between a member of the NEWFELPRO Secretariat or the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee and the project applicant, including the case when the project applicant comes from the same institution as the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee member, or the applicant and the Selection Committee member are collaborating on the same or similar project, the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee or the NEWFELPRO Secretariat member must disclose such possible conflicts of interest on one or more project proposals once information of the projects applied for financing is presented.

The NEWFELPRO Selection Committee member who is involved in a conflict of interest regarding a specific project proposal must remain neutral when a decision on financing is being made, must leave the premises while a discussion concerning the selection of an evaluator or project's financing is in progress, must not comment on the evaluation process results or disclose information that might influence the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee's decision on financing. If the NEWFELPRO Secretariat member is in a conflict of interest with regard to any of the project proposals, he/she will not participate in the selection of the evaluator for the project in question. Every possible conflict of interest regarding members of the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee and the NEWFELPRO Secretariat is to be documented in the Reports from the Evaluation Sessions (RES), which are to be submitted to MSES together with the list of projects recommended for financing.

Checking for possible conflicts of interest in the evaluation procedure is done at three levels:

a. When selecting evaluators;
b. Upon the first contact when evaluators receive the list of project proposals with accompanying summaries;
c. After the evaluation, the procedure is finished.

Upon reading and accepting the Code of Conduct for Experts Appointed as Evaluators, and after reviewing the project lists and summaries, the evaluator notifies the NEWFELPRO Secretariat of possible conflict of interest, direct or indirect. If he/she is in a direct conflict of interest with at least one of the project proposals, the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee will exclude him/her from the immediate evaluation procedure. If an evaluator is in an indirect conflict of interest, he/she may not participate in the evaluation of the particular proposal and the NEWFELPRO Secretariat will invite another evaluator to do so.

In case a conflict of interest is not fully described in this document, the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee will make the final decision as to whether the particular evaluator may participate in the evaluation procedure or not, and whether to accept the evaluation report.

V. Selection of evaluators

The NEWFELPRO Secretariat establishes a list of experts capable of evaluating the received proposals, with the list approved by the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee. In addition to the publication for the Call for Evaluators on the MSES website, further wide dissemination will be assured via a mailing list which will include all research institutions connected with MSES. Sources for finding potential evaluators are listed below:

- EU public list of evaluators – FP7;
- Other accessible scientific databases;
- Successful project leaders funded by other foundations from the same fields of science;
- Recommendations from the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee;
- Recommendations from successful and eminent scientists;
- Expression of interest by experts replying to the Call for evaluators.

The independent expert list for evaluation is drawn up according to the principles listed below:

1. **Domain of expertise and level of competency:**
   The main criteria used for selecting experts are:
   a. A degree in education at PhD level;
   b. At least 10 years of professional experience, including at least 5 years acquired in scientific topics in a field relevant for the proposed project (number and quality of publications, number of patents, number of international project leads);
   c. An appropriate working knowledge of English language;
   d. A knowledge of evaluation methods (previous experience as evaluator at an international level will be strongly considered);
   e. Available references.
2. **Geographical distribution:**
   On the bases of the received applications, the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee should include experts from different countries or having different geographical origins;
3. **Balance of sectors:**
   An appropriate balance between academic and industrial expertise;
4. **Gender balance:**
   A reasonable gender balance will be assured and the participation of women at the selection phase will be strongly encouraged;
5. **Independence and rotation:**
   No more than 40% of the experts will be allowed to participate twice in the evaluation process of different calls. Hence, a regular rotation of experts will be assured;
6. **Absence of any conflicts of interests.**

<u>In accordance with current procedures, the names of the evaluators will be kept anonymous.</u>

VI. Before the evaluation

On receipt by the NEWFELPRO Secretariat, proposals are registered and acknowledged and their contents are entered into a database to support the evaluation process. Eligibility criteria for each proposal are checked before the evaluation begins. Proposals which do not fulfil these criteria will not be included in the evaluation.

For this call, a proposal will only be considered eligible if it meets all of the following conditions:

a. It is received by the NEWFELPRO Secretariat before the deadline given in the Call for Proposals;
b. It is complete (i.e. all of the requested forms are uploaded, signed and stamped);
c. Other eligibility conditions described above have been satisfied.

Where a maximum number of words has been indicated for a particular section of the proposal or for the proposal as a whole, the experts will be instructed to disregard all excess words.

VII. Evaluation procedure and selection of project proposals

1. All project proposals received by the call deadline and considered technically eligible are entered into the evaluation procedure to examine their compliance with the evaluation criteria relevant for the NEWFELPRO project and the Call for Proposals.

2. All project proposals are divided into groups according to the research area and then sent to respective evaluators.

3. The NEWFELPRO Secretariat sends an electronic invitation letter to each independent expert containing a description of their duties, the NEWFELPRO 2013 Guidelines for Evaluators and Evaluation Procedure containing the evaluation form and a short description of research proposals to be evaluated. They will register on the NEWFELPRO website and read and accept the Letter of Appointment for Independent Experts, the Code of Conduct for Experts Appointed as Evaluators and the Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Declaration as a compulsory part of the online registration process. Upon accepting their duties, the NEWFELPRO Secretariat will provide them with the authorisation to view and download the project proposal(s) for evaluation. An unsigned copy of the final evaluation is to be submitted online through the NEWFELPRO 2013 Web Application, and a signed copy of the final evaluation is to be sent to the NEWFELPRO Secretariat by mail.

4. If an evaluator does not register within seven days or withdraws from the evaluation (conflict of interest, change in circumstances, etc.), the NEWFELPRO Secretariat will propose and invite a new evaluator. This process will continue until all necessary evaluations are received.

5. Evaluators assess individual criteria, providing marks on a scale of 1-5. They are required to provide comments accompanying all their marks in a form suitable for providing feedback to the applicants. Half marks can be given.

6. If the difference in marks for any criterion is 2 or more, the Selection Committee convenes a phone or video conference to determine a consensus mark. Only projects that have obtained an overall mark of 3.5 or more will be considered for financing.

VIII. Individual evaluation of proposals

Each proposal will first be assessed independently by three experts chosen by the NEWFELPRO Secretariat from the pool of experts taking part in the evaluation. All project proposals will be evaluated against a fixed set of criteria as stated below.

Each criterion will be scored from 1 to 5. Half marks can be given, such as 5.0, 4.5, 4.0, 3.5, 3.0, 2.5, 2.0, 1.5 and 1.0.

1 – Poor. Few or no criteria have been met. 2 – Fair. Some of the criteria have been met, but an instance exists where they have not been met. 3 – Good. Most of the criteria have been met, but there may exist an unimportant instance where the criteria have not been met. 4 - Very good. All the criteria have been met and there is an instance where the proposal is assessed as excellent. 5 – Excellent. All the criteria have been met and in most of the instances the proposal is assessed as excellent.

There will be three main evaluation criteria each consisting of sub-criteria. Marks will be given according to sub-criteria. The mark for each evaluation criterion is calculated as an average of marks for the sub-criteria.

PROPOSAL ACRONYM:	
PROPOSAL TITLE:	
	MARK
1. Scientific/technological quality of the project	
1.1. The scientific/technological significance and originality of the proposed project (Is the proposed project important within its field? Is the problem which is addressed significant for the discipline? Could it possibly lead to an original result in this research/technology field?)	
1.2. Clarity and measurability of the goals and prospects for achieving them (Have the goals of the project been clearly stated? Is it possible to justify and verify the achievement of the goals?)	
1.3. Feasibility of the project and suitability of the methods – including a work plan and budget	
1.4. What is the probability of successfully carrying out the project considering all known conditions and obstacles? Are the research methods appropriate? Does the proposal contain a consistent work plan? Regarding the proposed milestones, is the timetable realistic? Is the proposed budget realistic considering the proposed results of the project?	
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT – strong and weak points:	
2. Scientific/innovation and leadership potential of the applicant	
2.1. Previous successes, demonstrated innovativeness and overall career development of the applicant, taking into consideration years of research experience (based on research results, publications in the last ten years, patents,	

participation in international research projects, etc., taking into account the level of experience)	
2.2. Applicant's potential for professional development and future excellence (field of research chosen for the project, match between the applicant's profile and the project, does the project represent a significant transfer of knowledge, and does the applicant have leadership qualities)	
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT - strong and weak points:	
3. Quality of the host institution	
3.1. Infrastructural capacity of the host institution for project implementation and compliance with relevant documents	
3.2. Degree of support provided by the host institution for the implementation of the proposed project (equipment, supervisor, additional financial support provided)	
3.3. Host institution scientific expertise in the field of proposed project	
3.4. Quality of the scientist in charge and his/her experience in the field covered by the proposed project (if applicable)	
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT - strong and weak points:	
Final mark	
COMMENTS TO THE NEWFELPRO SELECTION COMMITTEE:	

PROJECT EVALUATOR	
Name	
Signature	
Date	

The evaluation is done remotely. Experts review the proposals individually without discussing the project with the other experts.

XI. The Selection Committee's decision

The final ranking list of project applications, together with the evaluation forms signed by the independent evaluators will be presented to the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee. The NEWFELPRO Selection Committee reviews the written reports (evaluation forms) and rankings provided by the independent evaluators in order to make the final decision on financing the proposals. The NEWFELPRO Selection Committee will base its decisions on the evaluators' opinions relating to each proposal and will not change the marks or the ranking.

The Selection Committee calculates the overall average mark, taking into account the individual evaluations of each expert. If the difference in marks for any criterion is 2 or more, the Selection Committee convenes a phone or video conference to determine a consensus

mark. Only projects that have obtained an overall mark of 3.5 or more will be considered for financing. The result of the NEWFELPRO Selection Committee's decision is a shortlist of proposals recommended for financing and a list of proposals not recommended for financing.