



THE SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

The Seventh Framework Programme focuses on Community activities in the field of research, technological development and demonstration (RTD) for the period 2007 to 2013

HANDBOOK
on Evaluation and Selection of Proposals

7th Framework Programme for Research and Development
Information and Communication Technologies

Fixed deadline calls

ICT Call 9
Future Internet 2012
Infrastructure calls



18th January 2012

EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF PROPOSALS IN THE ICT THEME FIXED DEADLINE CALLS

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Introduction

This handbook specifies in detail how the general procedures for evaluation and selection of proposals in the 7th Framework programme set out in the Commissions' document: "*Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures*" (Quality, Transparency, Equality of treatment, Impartiality, Efficiency and Speed) are implemented in the evaluation and selection of proposals submitted to the ICT theme¹ in calls with a fixed deadline².

The evaluation of proposals is one of the most critical elements within FP7. The large numbers of proposals received in each call, the uncertainty as to how many proposals will be received for each area of the theme until the day of call close, and the responsibility of the Commission services to provide to proposers the result of the evaluation of their proposals in the shortest possible time, means that the process for the receipt and allocation of proposals to evaluators must be clearly defined to be as efficient as possible.

To ensure the equal treatment of all proposals, the procedure of the evaluation itself must also be as standardised as possible – the evaluators indeed use their own expert judgement, but within the framework of predefined evaluation criteria and a fixed scale of scoring. Because more proposals pass the evaluation thresholds than there is budget to pay for, they must then be prioritised, but the priority is simply based on their quality as reflected in their overall scores.

These priority lists from the evaluation provide the basic recommendations for the selection decision, which is made within the limits of the budget available and modified from the arithmetical priority order only with explicit input from the evaluators' reports and from the other Commission services, all of which are explicitly recorded in the final Implementation Plan.

The procedures described in this document are set out to ensure that the real purpose of the evaluation, to get the best value for public money by selecting the best quality proposals in the fairest, most transparent and most efficient way possible can be reached. The procedures described here take into account the recommendations made by the external observers who monitored the evaluations of the IST calls in FP6 and the earlier ICT calls in FP7.

Notes:

- In the text which follows the grammatical form *he, his* etc. is used for ease of reading. *He/she* should always be understood.
- The document referred to here as the "FP7 Rules for participation" is properly called "Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 of the European Parliament and the Council of 18 December 2006 laying down the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in actions under the Seventh Framework Programme and for the dissemination of research results (2007-2013)"

¹ The same principles are applied to Capacities (Infrastructures) evaluations managed by DG INFSO

² A complementary Handbook exists for continuous calls

1 Programme planning

1.1 Establish the Work programme

Responsible for task: ICT Directors with staff of Unit “Strategy for ICT research and development”¹

Background for carrying out task: The FP7 Rules for participation; The Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures

The Work programme contains:

- Details regarding the scientific and technological priorities,
- Timetable for implementation,
- Information regarding the funding schemes to be used,
- Evaluation criteria to be applied,
- Content of calls for proposals,
- Any restrictions that apply to participation, including, where appropriate, minimum numbers,
- Any provisions for third country participation,
- Any specific support actions outside calls for proposals,

Focusing a Work programme is considered essential, and as something that should emerge naturally through reconciling a bottom-up approach (e.g. through consultations which may be internally, externally through the Advisory Groups, Programme Committees, European Technology Platforms and other stakeholders and possibly through expressions of interest) and a top-down approach (e.g. from the Specific programme decisions). While such focusing helps to address the problem of over-subscription, it should not lead to situations where competition between proposals with similar technological focus is prevented.

A Work programme may be changed at any time, to correct it or to update it.

Procedure for carrying out task: The following steps need to be followed:

Step 1 The preparation:

Draw up a timetable and a draft Work programme on the basis of the above instructions. The current ICT Work programme includes:

- **Scientific and technological priorities:** 8 Challenges, FET Open and Proactive initiatives, a number of Public-Private Partnership calls, Coordinated calls with Brazil and Russia and an SME initiative on Digital content and languages.
- **Financing:** The budget is pre-allocated to the different calls and topics covered in the Work programme to provide an indication of the effort which will be devoted to each of them. In each area normally a certain amount of funding is ring-fenced for Coordination and Support actions and (in most cases) for a Network of excellence, then the remaining – and greatest part - of the funding is dedicated to Collaborative research projects. A certain minimum amount of this is set aside for STREPs and IPs specifically, with the rest distributed according to the quality of the proposals as assessed in the evaluation.
- **Instruments:** The objectives are open for specific instruments depending on their requirements. The instruments for each objective are clearly defined in the work programme.

¹ Capacities action in DG INFSO are carried out under a Work programme which is managed by DG Research

- **Calls:** Objectives were included in calls based on an analysis of the area's readiness for implementation and within the limits of the total funding available.
- **Evaluation criteria:** ICT currently uses the basic set of FP7 evaluation criteria without modification. For FET Open, FET Proactive and Digital Content special thresholds, weighting schemes and specific evaluation criteria are variously applied.

Step 2 The inter-service consultation:

Obtain agreement of the Commissioner to initiate inter-service consultation. The inter-service consultation involves also the parallel consultation of the Legal Service. The drawing up of all common texts and the consultation of the Legal Service is the responsibility of DG Research.

Step 3 The programme committee consultation:

The committee should provide an opinion on the text and updating of the Work programme (including scientific detail, timetable, use of instruments, content of calls for proposals, budget distribution, evaluation and selection criteria). In addition, a Work programme must take into account relevant research activities carried out by the Member States, Associated States, and European and international organisations. The programme committee must give its positive opinion on a modified Work programme before it is adopted by the Commission. The committee can only be consulted after the inter-service consultation has been completed successfully.

Step 4 The Commission adoption:

All decisions concerning the Work programme require a Commission decision by written procedure. DG Research is responsible for the preparation and follow-up of these written procedure dossiers.

Approval of result: Commission adoption of the Work programme.

1.1.1 Establish evaluation criteria

Responsible for task: Research Directorate Generals Inter-service group on Evaluation

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for participation Article 15.

Procedure for carrying out task: Based on experience in previous evaluations DG INFSO staff, working with colleagues in the rest of the Framework programme, have defined the evaluation criteria specified in the FP7 Rules for participation Article 15 as three detailed criteria for general application throughout FP7. The detailed criteria, weights and thresholds are published in the Work programme.

Approval of result: The evaluation criteria are approved by the Commission decision on the Work programme.

1.2 Publish the call

Responsible for task; Unit "Strategy for ICT research and development" and ICT Operations unit

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 2.1

Calls for proposals must give references to the work programme topics against which proposals are invited, indicative call budgets, available funding schemes and deadline for submission. A call for proposals will also specify whether a single or two-stage stage submission and evaluation procedure is to be followed, and whether consortium agreements are required.

Procedure for carrying out task:

A call fiche covering the above points is included in the Work programme. It is also published on the ICT CORDIS website and the Participant Portal. A brief formal call announcement is published in the Official Journal

Approval of result: The budgets, funding schemes etc. included under each objective are approved with the approval of the Work programme.

1.2.1 Inform and support the constituency

Responsible for task: The DG INFSO units responsible for objectives open in the call, with Unit “Strategy for ICT research and development”, Unit "Information and Communication" and ICT Operations unit.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for participation Article 13

Procedure for carrying out task: DG INFSO carries out a number of activities to prepare the research and industrial constituencies for the call and to support the preparation of proposals.

- **The Guides for applicants and other supporting documents**

Guides for applicants (one per instrument) are prepared by staff in ICT Operations unit, following a standard format for FP7 agreed in the Evaluation inter-service group. These are made available to proposers on the ICT CORDIS website and the Participant Portal. The Guides for applicants include in annex the Guidance notes for evaluators, which is issued to the experts participating in the evaluation. Other supporting material for proposers (FAQs, background information material) is similarly prepared and published by the ICT Operations unit.

- **The ICT Programme Information Desk**

ICT Operations unit maintains a Programme Information Desk to respond the proposers’ questions by telephone, fax or email¹. A central FP7 Enquiry service is also available to ICT Proposers who have more general questions. An Information desk for Capacities actions is supported by DG Research.

- **National Contact Points**

ICT Operations unit supports and trains – in co-operation with DG Research - a (worldwide) network of National Contact Points to provide help at the national level to prospective proposers. For each call ICT Operations unit arrange a briefing and training session for the NCPs in co-operation with Unit “Strategy for ICT research and development” and the operational units which have research objectives open in the call.

- **Call contact person list**

For each objective in the call, Heads of Unit nominate a contact person to respond to proposers’ questions on the technical content of the call. The contact person list, with their email address and phone number of the contact persons, is published on the call page on CORDIS and the Participant Portal.

- **Notification of intention to propose**

In order to register to use the Electronic Proposal Submission System (compulsory for FP7 calls) proposal coordinators provide in advance basic details of their planned proposals. This information is tabulated by ICT Operations and circulated within DG INFSO to support evaluation planning.

- **Pre-proposal check service**

A pre-proposal check service is offered for all objectives within the call. Staff in the units managing the objectives provide basic comment to proposers on consortium eligibility and correspondence of the planned proposal to the scope of call.

- **Events**

¹ Calls normally close in mid-week, so that a help facility is available to proposers throughout the last days of the call, and that there are working days after the close of call to deal with any unresolved problems

Under the supervision of Unit “Information and Communication” a number of events are organised to support and publicise the work of the DG INFSO. Individual Directorates also organise “Proposers’ Days”, at which potential proposers can make contact with each other and with INFSO staff, and discuss issues of proposal preparation and submission. These events are open for all interested parties up to the physical limits of space at the event.

Approval of result: Information material used is defined and approved by an interservice group for information. The information events are covered by the normal Commission procedures for relations with the public. Head of Unit of the involved units approve any other specific information and support activities.

2 The Evaluation Process

2.1 Preparation

2.1.1 Establish timetable of evaluation

Responsible: ICT Directors

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 1

Procedure for carrying out task: The ICT Directors plan a detailed timetable for the execution for the evaluation and implementation with the support of the ICT Operations unit, based on the pre-determined call close date as published in the call text. The objective is to provide results to proposers as swiftly as possible, within the limits of the available personnel resources and the necessity of ensuring a high level of quality control of the process.

Approval of result: The Deputy Director General and the ICT Directors approve the proposed timetable.

2.1.2 Appoint independent observers of the evaluation process

Responsible: Head of Unit “Evaluation and Monitoring” on behalf of the Director General.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.4

Procedure for carrying out task: The above Rules indicate that independent experts may be appointed as observers to examine the evaluation process. It defines the role of the observers as to give advice to the Commission on the conduct, fairness and equity of the evaluation process, ways in which the procedures could be improved, on the evaluation criteria and the way in which the evaluators apply the criteria.

Independent experts with a high level of experience in the field are selected and appointed. They observe the evaluation process and convey their opinions and recommendations subsequently to DG INFSO in a written report.

Each observer subscribes to a Code of conduct and signs a Conflict of interest and confidentiality declaration.

Approval of result: The Director General approves the terms of reference for the observers, the list of observers selected and later on receives their report, which is also presented to the ICT-C.

2.1.3 Select Objective coordinators to manage evaluation

Responsible: ICT Heads of Unit.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures.

Procedure for carrying out task: The Objective coordinator takes responsibility for the management of the evaluation of proposals addressed to that objective. The Head of Unit responsible for the research areas represented by a particular objective in the call can either nominate a senior member of the statutory staff experienced in evaluation management as Objective coordinator, or alternatively in agreement with his Director nominate himself as Objective coordinator.

During the evaluation the Objective coordinator operates under the supervision of his Head of Unit and with his authority.

Approval of result: The ICT Director approves the list of Objective coordinators proposed for his Directorate. The names of the coordinators of each objective are published in an annex to the final Evaluation report.

2.1.4 Establish evaluation Panels in each objective: Appoint Panel coordinators

Responsible: Objective coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8.

Procedure for carrying out task: Within each objective the received proposals will be distributed to different “panels” of evaluators. Normally a single panel of experts should be responsible for the evaluation of all the proposals which address a particular budget allocation within the objective to ensure equality of treatment, as all proposals competing in that budget segment are evaluated to the same standards and are prioritised against each other.

In the event that too many proposals are received to be handled in a single conveniently-sized panel, or if sub-objectives or sub-themes involved require substantially different expert skills, then sub-panels can be organised, but then there must in that case be a final "integration panel" composed of members of each of the sub-panels, to ensure common standards and to produce a final merged priority list. There will particularly need to be an integration panel for IP and STREP proposals in objectives where part of the pre-allocated Collaborative project budget is common to both instruments.

Thus for any proposal the type of instrument determines the panel to which it is assigned. There is no discretion for the Objective coordinator to change the type of instrument so as to alter a proposal's panel assignment. Also, no proposal may be moved to/from an objective without the consent of both Objective coordinators concerned and the approval of the Proposal Assignment Group (PAG) secretariat (see below).

The Objective coordinator under the supervision of his Head of Unit appoints a member of staff to each panel as Panel coordinator, to supervise the working of the group of experts who will comprise that panel.

Approval of result: The Objective coordinator devises the panel structure in his objective and selects Panel coordinators. His choices are approved by his Head of Unit. In case the Objective coordinator is the Head of Unit the choices are approved by the Director responsible.

2.1.5 Select a pool of independent experts for the evaluation

Responsible for task: Objective coordinators.

Background for carrying out task: The Framework programme and Specific programme decisions require that selection of actions will be based on open calls for proposals and independent peer review.

A description of the experts who may be appointed is given in the FP7 Rules for Participation Article 17.

Rules concerning the selection of experts are given in the FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.2

Procedure for carrying out task: Two public calls have been made¹, addressed to individuals and to organisations. From response to these calls a database of experts has been drawn up. These calls remain open and the database is constantly updated.

Based on their best assessment of proposals expected to arrive - supported by information from the database of pre-notified proposals – each Objective coordinator selects a pool of experts adequate in number and expertise to carry out the evaluation of proposals within his objective, taking also into account the possibility of cross-objective proposals where possible. This initial selection provides a sufficiently broad pool to ensure that the final choice will conform to requirements of competence and balance etc. described below.

Approval of result: The Director for the area concerned approves the initial pool of experts; any experts added subsequently are also subject to his approval.

2.1.6 Select the final list of experts to be used in the evaluation

Responsible: Objective coordinators

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.2

Procedure for carrying out task: When the list of actually received proposals and the availability of experts are known, the Objective coordinator establishes the final list of experts to be invited for the evaluation and informs his Head of Unit. At this stage it may be necessary to invite additional experts with specific expertise which is needed to evaluate the proposals actually received but not covered by the pool of experts initially invited. The final list must respect the need to have

- A high level of expertise;
- An appropriate range of competencies.

Providing the above conditions can be satisfied, other criteria are also taken into consideration:

- An appropriate balance between academic and industrial expertise and users;
- A reasonable gender balance²;
- A reasonable distribution of geographical origins³;
- Regular rotation of experts⁴

Each expert contracted for the evaluation subscribes to a Code of conduct and signs a Confidentiality and conflict of interest declaration.

Approval of result: The final list of experts to be invited for the evaluation by the objective is approved by the Head of Unit or in case the Objective coordinator is the Head of Unit by the responsible Director.

¹ <https://cordis.europa.eu/emmp7/index.cfm?fuseaction=wel.welcome>

² The European Communities pursue an equal opportunities policy and aims in particular at achieving in the medium term at least 40 % of members of each sex in each expert group and committee (2000/407/EC: Commission Decision of 19 June 2000 relating to gender balance within the committees and expert groups established by it).

³ In the case of calls relating to specific international cooperation activities (SICA), a significant number of experts from the international cooperation partner countries will be included.

⁴ In general, the Commission will ensure that at least a quarter of the experts used by an activity/research area will be replaced each calendar year.

2.1.7 Eligibility Committee

Responsible: Call coordinator

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 2.5

Procedure for carrying out task: Following the close of call, the EPSS helpdesk may be contacted by proposers saying that they were not able to submit their proposal in time, or that the proposal which they did submit was not the final version which they intended. The EPSS helpdesk will make a detailed analysis of the circumstances of each case and communicate this information to the Call coordinator.

The Call coordinator will chair an Eligibility committee comprised of Commission legal staff and the Commission staff responsible for the EPSS, which will make a recommendation in each case whether the proposal, or the revised version of the proposal, may be accepted in the evaluation. The recommendations and the circumstances of each case will then be considered by the ICT Directors, who will make the final decision as authorising officers.

Approval of result: The ICT Directors approve the list of proposals reviewed by the Eligibility committee which are judged to be eligible for evaluation.

2.1.8 Assign received proposals to appropriate objectives for evaluation

Responsible: The Proposal Assignment Group (PAG).

Background for carrying out task: Established DG INFSO procedure to check and confirm proposal allocation

Procedure for carrying out task: The PAG comprises one or more representative of each of the objectives open in the current call, usually the Objective coordinator, with a secretariat provided by the ICT Operations unit.

After the close of each call but before the evaluation begins, the PAG confers to agree on the assignment of each received proposal to an appropriate objective, which will take the responsibility for managing the evaluation of that proposal and reporting the result to the proposer. Proposals are printed and delivered to DG INFSO at a fast rate, so the process has to be as efficient as possible. It must also be as error-proof as possible, since the consequences of evaluating a proposal in an objective to which it was not addressed are serious.

Normally the proposal's own declared first choice of objective as indicated on the proposal form A1 is taken. Where the proposer omits this information on his A1 form, gives invalid or erroneous information or gives more than one choice, the proposal assignment is agreed by the group based on the centre of gravity of the proposal. The PAG also determines if a cross-objective evaluation is needed. However, also in cross-objective proposals a single objective will take responsibility for managing the evaluation and reporting the result to the proposer. This clear assignment of responsibility is essential to avoid double-evaluations or accidental omissions.

The secretariat supervises the transfer of proposals to or from other Themes in FP7 if required. A proposal may exceptionally be transferred between calls if it was clearly submitted in error to a certain call and it

would have been ineligible in that call, while a more suitable call has been open in parallel¹ and it can be accepted as eligible by those responsible for the alternative call. Any such transfer will be an exceptional procedure and in all decisions the principle of equal treatment of like cases will be maintained. The proposer will be informed of the transfer by email by the call to which the proposal was originally submitted.

Approval of result: The Objective coordinator agrees the list of proposals assigned to his objective. In case of need, a system of later transfer from objective to objective by mutual agreement is employed.

2.1.9 Proposal eligibility check, pre-screening and data correction

Responsible: Objective coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 2.5.

Procedure for carrying out task: When proposals are received from the PAG by the objective to which they are assigned, staff supporting the Objective coordinator will carry out an eligibility check of four points on each proposal:

- the proposal arrived before the call deadline via the EPSS, or on paper with a proper derogation
- the proposal is presented by an eligible consortium as required in the Rules of participation and defined in the Work programme²
- the proposal is complete with a Part A and a Part B
- the proposal is in scope of the call (either entirely, or the main weight of the proposal)

Failure on any of the four points eliminates the proposal from evaluation. For the last point a decision is only taken by the Commission services if the proposal is clearly out of scope (for example by addressing an objective not open in the call). In all other cases where a judgement is needed the proposal will continue to evaluation by the experts, who will incorporate the question of scope in their judgement of the proposal under criterion 1 (as indicated on the proposal forms).

All eligible proposals are then read in detail (pre-screened) for three purposes, which are significant later in the process

- to identify the proposing organisations, so that experts can be assigned to evaluate it without risk of conflict of interest.
- to confirm the type of instrument and technical areas covered by the proposal, to assist with its assignment to the appropriate panel of evaluators. The Commission will in no case unilaterally change the funding scheme selected by the proposer.
- To confirm or if necessary correct in the Commission database the proposal data if there are discrepancies (e.g., the financial data does not add up to the reported total, data entry errors on the A2 forms etc.). This is to ensure consistency in the statistics prepared by the Commission for the Member states; the proposals themselves as seen by the experts are not changed.

Approval of result: The ICT Directors approve the list of proposals which are judged to be ineligible for evaluation.

¹ The Commission cannot "store" proposals while waiting for a suitable call to be published

² At least three mutually independent organisations from Member states or Associate states. (Exceptionally for SA proposals, no restriction on consortium structure)

2.1.10 Assign evaluators to panels

Responsible: Objective coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.3

Procedure for carrying out task: The Objective coordinator, with the advice of his Panel coordinators divides his selected experts among his panels according to their known areas of expertise and to the number of proposals needed to be handled in each panel. The assignment is flexible according to circumstances - evaluators may be re-assigned according to need, and will “visit” panels in other objectives as necessary to evaluate cross-objective proposals.

Approval of result: The Objective coordinator takes responsibility the assignment of evaluators to his panels. The subsequent detailed assignment of these experts to the proposals within the panel is subject to a further level of approval (see below)

2.1.11 Conflict of interest

Responsible: Objective coordinators

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.3

Procedure for carrying out task: An expert who is named in a proposal as a representative of a participant or as having a role in carrying out the project and/or has a disqualifying conflict of interest of the following types:

- was involved in the preparation of the proposal,
- stands to benefit directly should the proposal be accepted
- has a close family relationship with any person representing an applicant organisation in the proposal
- is a director, trustee or partner of an applicant organisation
- is a member of one of the fifteen Advisory Groups set up by the Commission to provide advice on the preparation of the annual work programmes of the specific programmes of EC FP7 or Euratom FP7
- is in any other situation that compromises his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially

shall not participate in any way in the evaluation of proposals in the panel dealing with the proposal he is involved with, nor in any panel competing for the same budget segment¹.

However, when justified by the requirement to appoint the best available experts and by the limited size of the pool of qualified experts, and when not in any of the specific disqualifying situations described above, an expert employed by one of the applicant organisations may be assigned to the panel. But he will only participate in Consensus groups of other proposals, not those involving his own organisation, and he will not participate in any panel discussions unless he works in a different department/laboratory/institute from the one where the work is to be carried out, and the constituent bodies operate with a high degree of autonomy. In this case he will withdraw from the panel discussions when a proposal for which he has a conflict of interest is discussed, and he will not take part in any hearings, unless the proposal involving his employing organisation has already been eliminated.

¹ The separately defined section of the objective's budget which includes the proposal with which he has a conflict of interest

However in exceptional duly justified cases, experts in the circumstances described above may also participate in the Consensus group for the proposal in question. The Commission will inform the other experts in the group of the affiliation of the expert concerned. All such derogations for experts' participation in the consensus groups shall be reported in the Evaluation report.

Approval of result: The Objective coordinator takes responsibility for the distribution of evaluators to his panels. The subsequent detailed assignment of these experts to the proposals within the panel is subject to a further level of approval (see below).

2.1.12 Assign evaluators to each proposal

Responsible: Panel coordinators.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.3

Procedure for carrying out task: Within each panel, the Panel coordinator assigns at least three (STREP, CA, SA, CP-CSA for pre-commercial procurement) or five (IP, NoE, ERA-NET Plus, CP-CSA in Research Infrastructures) experts to each proposal received by his panel. These experts will read that proposal in detail and comprise the Consensus group for it. The assignment is based on

- their known areas of expertise
- the avoidance of potential conflicts of interest
- the avoidance of national bias
- variation in the composition of the Consensus groups¹
- an even distribution of the workload

Experts may be replaced in a Consensus group and re-assigned elsewhere at any time on the discovery of previously unknown conflicts of interest.

Normally the Consensus group consists only of evaluators from a single panel. In the case of a cross-objective proposal however, the Consensus group may include evaluators drawn from the other objectives, which the proposal's objectives involve, in numbers proportional to their level of involvement.

Proposal rapporteurs may be drawn from a small pool of experts specifically recruited for this task, with responsibility for completing proposal-reporting forms accurately reflecting the opinion of the Consensus group. Such experts are confined to these reporting duties and do not evaluate any proposal. They are known as "Recorders".

Alternatively, one member of each Consensus group may be nominated by the Panel coordinator as the Proposal rapporteur for that proposal; the role is distributed among all the experts on the panel on the principle of equal distribution of the workload.

Approval of result: The Panel coordinator proposes the assignment of experts to the proposals in his panel. The assignment is approved by the Head of Unit for the objective. (This includes approval of any last-minute changes to evaluator assignment caused by sickness, conflicts of interest etc.).

2.1.13 Prepare evaluators' dossiers

Responsible: Panel coordinators.

¹ i.e. fixed group of experts always working together should normally be avoided

Background for carrying out task: Established DG INFSO procedure to support the evaluation process

Procedure for carrying out task: For remote individual readings, support staff will allot the appropriate proposals to each expert in the remote evaluation tool Rivet, followed optionally¹ by a mail-out of paper copies.

For on-site reading, support staff prepare for each expert in their panel a dossier containing a copy of his proposals and an adequate number of reporting forms. In both cases the experts is also supplied with other supporting information such as a copy of the Work programme etc.

Approval of result: The Panel coordinator manages the correct completion of the task.

2.1.14 Assign a Commission Moderator to each proposal

Responsible: The Panel coordinators together with the Objective coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: The Panel coordinator proposes a member of the statutory staff to act as “Commission Moderator” to each proposal from among his support staff, based on an equal distribution of the workload. The Moderator chairs the Consensus group discussion for that proposal (see below). In large and complex cases an Assistant Moderator can be appointed. Where a proposal is for a follow-up or continuation of an existing IST/ICT project, the project officer for the existing project will not be appointed as Moderator or Assistant moderator. Panel or Objective coordinators may also act as Moderators.

Approval of result: The Head of Unit for the objective approves the assignment of Moderators or Assistant Moderators to each proposal. Where a Seconded National Expert (*Expert National Détaché*) is employed in the Moderating role he is mandated for the task by the Director-General (the Director-General may choose to delegate the mandate to a Director). He is not assigned to any Consensus group for a proposal involving his own organisation.

¹ The Objective coordinator decides, with the agreement of his Head of Unit

2.2 Execution

2.2.1 Brief the evaluators

Responsible: ICT Operations Unit, ICT Directors and Objective coordinators.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: Each expert has a dedicated space in the evaluation building network, in which the Objective coordinator will deposit the ICT Workprogramme, all the briefing slides, the Guidance notes for experts and any other documentation needed by the experts. (In the case of on-site evaluation, this will also include blank IER forms for the use of the experts). The evaluating unit will also provide some paper copies of the ICT Workprogramme for consultation.

Presentations are also made to evaluators in each objective on arrival at the evaluation using standard slides prepared by the ICT Operations unit covering:

- their rights and responsibilities as independent experts, and particularly conflict of interest and their confidentiality obligation
- the evaluation procedure (including dealing with ethical issues)
- the objective and instruments which they will be evaluating

The briefing of the evaluators emphasises the principles for evaluation of proposals, that all proposals are treated equally on their own merit, that the evaluation concerns the proposal as presented and that it is evaluated only against the evaluation criteria set out in the Work programme.

Approval of result: The Guidance notes and briefing materials are approved by ICT Directors, who may also participate in the briefing session.

2.2.2 Conduct individual readings (on-site)

Responsible: Panel coordinator and proposal moderators

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task) Each evaluator of a proposal reads it in detail and makes an individual assessment of the proposal without discussion with others. He records his conclusions on an IER form, which he signs¹ and returns to the Commission Moderator for that proposal (or the Panel coordinator).

The reading sessions are at all times supervised by Commission staff to ensure there is no discussion or sharing of views on any proposal, and to ensure the confidentiality of the contents of the proposals.

Approval of result: The Commission Moderator checks that each form returned is complete and properly signed. The IER forms are input to the consensus group meeting.

¹ This form includes the statement “I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, I have no direct or indirect conflict of interest in the evaluation of this proposal”

2.2.3 Conduct individual readings (remote)

Responsible: Panel coordinator and proposal moderators

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: Individual readings are done remotely. Each evaluator of a proposal reads it in detail and makes an individual assessment of the proposal without discussion with others. He records his conclusions on an IER form, which he submits to the Commission electronically (with electronic signature) or alternatively he signs a paper copy and returns (or brings) to the central evaluation address.

When the last IER for a particular proposal has been submitted, the comments on the set of IERs may be transmitted to the proposal Recorder/Rapporteur, to prepare (if the individual reports are in reasonable concordance) a first draft Consensus report.

No proposal material is sent to an expert until he has completed and returned the Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality declaration. The Consensus meeting does not begin until all individual forms are signed and returned.

Approval of result: The objective coordinator checks that each IER form is returned in time and is complete and properly signed before the consensus meeting. The IER forms are input to the consensus meeting.

2.2.4 Conduct Consensus groups

Responsible: Commission Moderator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: Once all of the evaluators assigned to a proposal have completed their individual evaluation, they confer together under the chairmanship of the Commission Moderator to discuss and agree scores and an overall score for the proposal.

Their discussion of the proposal continues until a consensus is achieved (i.e. a conclusion with which all the experts agree) regarding the comments and the accompanying scores for each evaluation criterion. In the event of persistent disagreement, the Commission Moderator may – but is not obliged to – bring in additional evaluators to examine the proposal. In the case that it is impossible to reach a consensus within a reasonable time, the Consensus report sets out the majority view of the independent experts but also records any dissenting views. In the event of the discovery of a concealed conflict of interest, the meeting may be suspended and the procedure in section 2.2.12 applied.

In the Consensus discussion of Integrated Project, CP-CSA proposals in Research Infrastructures and Network of excellence proposals, the experts additionally agree on questions to be put to the proposers for further explanation of their proposals if they are one of those which are called to a hearing (see below).

Where a proposal judged to be above threshold contains ethical issues, an Ethical Issues Report (EIR) will also be completed by the Proposal rapporteur.

The Commission Moderator does not evaluate the proposal, his role is to ensure that the discussion is properly and fairly conducted, that all issues are discussed, that all voices are heard and that the conclusions are accurately recorded on the Consensus meeting forms by the Proposal rapporteur.

The Panel coordinator and the Objective coordinator should periodically attend groups to ensure proper procedures are followed. The independent observers to the evaluation process may also attend groups at will.

Approval of result: The forms recording the result of the discussion are signed for approval by the Proposal rapporteur¹ and the Commission Moderator. The conclusions of the group are subject to further review by the panel as a whole (see below).

2.2.5 Resubmitted proposals

Responsible: Commission Moderator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: In the case of proposals that have been submitted previously to the Commission in FP7 the moderator may, after the conclusion of the Consensus group, ask the experts to review the previous Evaluation Summary Report. If necessary, the experts will be required to provide a clear justification for their scores and comments if these differ markedly from those awarded to the earlier proposal (a comparison with the text of the previously submitted version of the proposal may also be carried out if necessary). These additional remarks may be included by the Panel in the final ESR.

Approval of result: The Proposal minute form recording the result of any additional discussion by the experts is signed for approval by the Proposal rapporteur or the Commission Moderator. The additional remarks if any are subject to review by the panel as a whole (see below).

2.2.6 Panel discussion – review of Consensus group results

Responsible: Panel coordinator, Objective coordinator or Head of unit.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8.

Procedure for carrying out task: When the last Consensus group for the proposals assigned to a particular panel is completed, that panel confers to review the results of the consensus meetings for each proposal and to prepare the Evaluation Summary Reports (ESR). The panel (i.e. the experts present at the panel meeting) may consist of all the evaluators that have evaluated proposals in the panel area or a subset of them. The meeting is normally chaired by the Panel coordinator or may be chaired by the Head of Unit or Objective coordinator. As a Commission official he does not evaluate any proposal, but assures that the discussion is properly and fairly conducted, that all voices are heard and that the conclusions are accurately recorded on the ESRs. He is supported by an independent expert in the role of Panel rapporteur and may be co-chairing with an expert, whose task will be to assist with the production of the ESRs and Panel report.

The panel comes to an agreed conclusion on each proposal. This is recorded as the Evaluation Summary Report for that proposal. Thus the conclusion for each proposal is based on the collective wisdom of the whole panel, and consistency of the scoring is assured. If appropriate, the panel can agree to new scores or comments that differ from the scores or comments given in the Consensus Report.

In the special case where the Consensus group failed to reach a consensus, the panel as a whole now reach an agreed conclusion, which can be communicated to the proposer without contradictory majority/minority views. Another task for the panel discussion is to review any suggestions for reductions in effort or other

¹ Optionally, the whole Consensus group may sign along with the rapporteur

costs suggested in the consensus reports for the proposals that have passed all thresholds. Such recommendations are set out in the ESR.

Any expert who had a conflict of interest with a proposal in the panel (and therefore did not take part in the Consensus group) will also leave the room when that proposal is discussed in the panel.

In the case of all STREP, CA and SA proposals, CP-CSA for pre-commercial procurement and also of IP and NoE proposals which have failed defined evaluation thresholds¹, the scoring on the ESR now agreed is final.

In the case of IP, NoE and CP-CSA proposals in Research Infrastructures which have passed defined thresholds, the ESR scores are draft pending the results of the later hearing stage. A task for the panel in this case is to agree the list of questions to be communicated to the proposers.

Approval of result: The Panel report, which includes all the ESRs, is signed by the chair of the panel meeting and at least three of the independent experts, normally including the panel rapporteur.

2.2.7 Conduct proposal hearings

Responsible: ICT Director, Head of Unit, Objective coordinator or Panel coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: Proposers of IP, CP-CSA in Research Infrastructure and NoE proposals which have been determined in the panel discussion to have passed defined thresholds are invited to a hearing with the experts² to further explain their proposal. This hearing is based on questions devised by the experts in the Consensus group and panel discussions, which are sent to the proposers in advance of the hearing.

Any expert who had a conflict of interest with a proposal which is selected for hearing will not take part in the hearings. He may take part in the hearing if the proposal with which he has a conflict of interest has already fallen below threshold and been eliminated.

The hearing is chaired by a senior member of the Commission staff, normally an ICT Director, a Head of Unit, the Objective coordinator or the Panel coordinator. The chairman ensures that all of the pre-determined questions are posed within the time allotted. The chairman also enforces strict rules for any additional questions that may arise either by having all additional questions passed in writing through the chair or by agreeing rules for the additional questions with the experts in the panel before the hearings start – additional questions broaden the experts' understanding in the areas of which the proposers were notified in advance, they do not introduce new lines of enquiry.

¹ As indicated in the Guide for applicants

² The hearing panel may not be identical to the panel that evaluated the written proposals. In most cases it will be a subset of the experts having evaluated the written proposals. Any particular issues raised by individual proposals requiring specific expertise may be dealt with by inviting appropriate extra experts to the hearings for those proposals. In this case, the extra experts are only invited to comment on the particular issue on which they have expertise and not on the proposal as a whole.

The proposal discussed is the one presented for evaluation - proposers are supplying supplementary information on the existing proposal, not modifying it after close of call. They may support their responses with a limited number of slides.

Based on what they learn at the hearing, the panel of experts discusses the Evaluation Summary Report for the proposal and the selected proposal rapporteur draws up the final Evaluation Summary Report for the proposal¹. The Evaluation Summary Reports are reviewed by the panel and the scores for the proposals are agreed by the panel. The outcome is recorded in the panel report.

Approval of result: The Panel report, which includes all the ESRs, is signed by the chair of the panel meeting and at least three of the independent experts, normally including the panel rapporteur.

2.2.8 Prioritise proposals

Responsible: The evaluating panel

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8; ICT Workprogramme Annex 2

Procedure for carrying out task: All above-threshold proposals are listed in order of total score. Where proposals on the list achieve the same score the experts in the panel will re-examine the proposals with a view to recommending a priority order between them. In doing this they will follow (unless stated otherwise on the call fiche) the rules given in the ICT Workprogramme Annex 2; namely:

- Priority is first given to proposals covering topics not otherwise covered by more highly-rated proposals; and then within that group proposals are ranked according to score on criterion 1, then score on criterion 3, and then (if identical on both criterion scores) on the basis of other appropriate characteristics;
- Remaining proposals, not covering original topics, are then prioritised amongst themselves on the same basis as above.

A problem arises in prioritisation by coverage; if more than one proposal in the tied group covers the same new topic. In this case, elevating any one of them to the top of the group means that the others *ipso facto* no longer cover a topic not otherwise covered by a more highly-rated proposal. The one to be elevated to the top of the group will be selected by criterion scores as described above then, if identical on all criterion scores, on the basis of other appropriate characteristics judged by the experts.

Once the priority list is established, experts will additionally identify proposals which substantially overlap each other in terms of the work proposed (if any), with a recommendation as to which might be selected and which might be assigned to a Reserve list.

As the panel was normally responsible for the evaluation of all proposals which targeted a particular budget segment, this ordered list therefore governs the selection of proposals to be funded from that part of the budget (see below).

¹ It is possible that a proposal, which during the first stage of the evaluation was above the evaluation thresholds as a result of the information learned at the hearing falls below them. In general: scores can go up or down on the criteria as a result of the hearing.

If the panel was responsible for more than one budget segment then separate lists are produced. Separate lists may also be produced within a budget segment per sub-objective/sub-theme if this is specifically indicated in the Work programme.

Integration panel

In the case where a budget segment was handled by more than one panel, an "Integration" panel, comprising members from each panel, establishes a single priority list of the above-threshold proposals for the segment as a whole. In merging the previously-sorted lists generated by the different panels, the prioritisations decided earlier by these panels will be retained.

The integration of the separate lists may however generate new ties between proposals from different panels; these will be sorted by the Integration panel according to the rules given in the ICT Workprogramme Annex 2, described above. The Integration panel will also detect work-overlaps which may be created by the merging of lists, and will give selection/reserve list recommendations concerning such proposals.

This procedure described above will not involve any change in the scores awarded to the proposals by the panel in their original discussion (sections 2.2.5 or 2.2.6)

As part of their written report the experts provide any necessary supplementary information on these proposals to support the later selection decision e.g.:

- Proposals which overlap in activity and where therefore one is first choice and one is "backup". In this case there need to be a thorough description of the reasons for the choice of the proposal(s) classified as backups.
- Suggestions of proposals to work together in a cluster or to be negotiated together as a merged project.
- Proposals for reduction in effort/costs – if relevant.
- Proposals requiring special attention due to the importance of ethical issues raised
- Proposals which were evaluated as "cross-objective".
- Other issues of strategic importance, coverage of the work programme in the area, industrial relevance, SME participation, third country participation etc. if relevant.

These supplementary remarks do not change the priority order of the proposals, but give input to the Implementation plan and negotiation of grant agreements by the Commission services.

Approval of result: The Panel report, which includes all the lists of proposals in priority order, is signed by the Panel coordinator and at least three of the experts normally including the panel rapporteur.

2.2.9 Prepare Evaluation Report – Objective level

Responsible: The Objective coordinators and support staff

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.8

Procedure for carrying out task: After the completion of all the panel reports the Objective coordinator with the help of support staff or rapporteurs generates an Objective summary report in a predetermined format, containing lists of proposals in prioritised order and summary extracts from the Panel reports concerned.

Approval of result: The Evaluation report - Objective level is signed by the Objective coordinator and counter signed by the Director.

2.2.10 Finalise Evaluation Summary Reports (ESRs)

Responsible: Panel coordinator.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.9.

Procedure for carrying out task: The ESR of every evaluated proposal, showing scores and comments on all criteria, is reviewed by the panel coordinator and his support staff. The contents of the ESR are subject to quality control by the Panel coordinator and the Panel rapporteur. The quality control is to ensure that the comments recorded give sufficient and clear reasons for the scores and in the case of proposals with high scores, any recommendations for modifications to the proposal are included. Proposal scores are not changed.

Approval of result: The Panel report, which formally includes the ESRs, is signed by the Panel coordinator and at least three of the experts, normally including the Panel rapporteur, at a later stage. Individual ESRs are not signed.

2.2.11 Prepare consolidated Evaluation report and Statistical annex

Responsible: ICT Operations unit, ICT Directors.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 5.4

Procedure for carrying out task: The objective reports for each objective, along with its Panel reports and associated ESRs are submitted to the ICT Operations unit, which quality controls the reports, drafts an introduction with overall comments on the evaluation and adds overall call statistics. After approval by the ICT Directors the final Evaluation report is submitted to the Director General, the Deputy Director General, the ICT Committee and the Commissioner.

Approval of result: ICT Directors.

2.2.12 Discovered conflicts of interest

Responsible: Objective coordinators

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.3

Procedure for carrying out task: Disqualifying or potential conflict of interest, known before the commencement of the evaluation, are treated as described in Section 2.1.11 above. It may be however that a conflict of interest is discovered at some later stage during the evaluation procedure.

An expert¹ may declare to Commission staff a discovered conflict of interest at the individual reading stage. In this case he will be removed as reader/rapporteur of that particular proposal (normally by exchange of proposals with another reader/rapporteur) and subsequently the rules described in Section 2.1 will apply; or alternatively he will be asked to leave the evaluation.

¹ The expert may be an evaluating expert or a specifically recruited rapporteur.

At any later point in the evaluation, allegations of conflict of interest regarding an expert must be reported immediately to the objective coordinator and to his Head of Unit. If the Head of Unit considers that the allegations are well-founded, he immediately convenes an *ad hoc* committee comprising the objective(s) coordinator, the Heads of Unit for the objective(s) concerned, the call coordinator(s) and the Head of Unit of ICT Operations, as chair. The committee will examine the outcomes of all of the Consensus groups in which the expert has participated.

The committee may recommend that one or more of the Consensus reports (or ESRs, if this stage has been reached) be declared null and void, and that new readings and consensus meetings are arranged using new experts to the greatest extent possible.

If the panel meeting has not yet been held, the new consensus report is discussed in the panel meeting and converted to an ESR and ranked in the panel meeting. If the panel meeting has already been held, but the panel members are still available (for example; if they are meeting again for a hearing stage), they are convened to a meeting which convert the consensus report(s) to an ESR(s) and if the proposal(s) is above threshold, they place the proposal in the priority list for the panel according to its score and the tie-breaking rules described in the Workprogramme Annex 2. If the panel members are not any longer available the new consensus report(s) is directly converted to an ESR(s) and if the proposal(s) is above threshold, it is placed in the priority list by Commission staff by the application of the tie-breaking rules.

The text(s) and table(s) of the panel report(s) is updated as needed with regard to the proposal(s) that have been re-evaluated. A note to the file records the incident and the decisions made by the Head of Unit or the *ad hoc* committee. The note is approved by the director concerned. This note is filed with the evaluation report.

Approval of result: The Panel coordinator handles declared conflicts of interest at the individual reading stage. All other cases are handled by the *ad hoc* Committee whose recommendations are approved by the Director concerned.

2.2.13 Distribution of Evaluation Summary Reports (ESR) to proposers

Responsible: Units responsible for the proposals in the call.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 3.9

Procedure for carrying out task Shortly after the Evaluation report has been sent to the ICT Committee and the Commissioner, each unit responsible for proposals evaluated sends promptly by email under the Head of Unit's signature a copy of the ESR – without identification of the evaluators involved - to the proposal coordinator (the individual named as the contact person for partner no. 1 in the proposal) to inform him of the result of the evaluation of his proposal.

Where a proposal was found to be ineligible and was therefore not seen by the independent experts, an ESR is prepared by the Commission services without scores and comments except for an overall comment identifying the proposal as ineligible and giving the reason or reasons why.

In the event of a reported email delivery failure or by specific request of a proposal coordinator, a hard copy of the ESR - without identification of the evaluators involved – is sent by recorded delivery, with a covering letter signed by the Head of Unit involved. Both email and letter provide an address to be used if the coordinator believes there have been shortcomings in the handling of the proposal and that these shortcomings have jeopardised the outcome of the evaluation process (see Redress procedure below)

Approval of result: The Head of Unit for the units concerned signs the emails/cover letters for the ESRs.

2.2.14 Redress procedure

Responsible: Internal Redress committee, ICT Directors.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 5.3 and the Rules for Procedure for the Evaluation Redress Committee

Procedure for carrying out task: Requests for redress must be raised by the proposal coordinator within one month of the despatch date of the ESR hard copy.

An internal FP7 Redress committee will be convened to examine each case. The committee itself does not evaluate proposals, the committee's role is to ensure a coherent legal interpretation of such requests and equal treatment of applicants. It provides specialist opinions on the implementation of the evaluation process on the basis of all the available information related to the proposal and its evaluation in the form of a report with recommendations on line of action for each complaint. The scientific judgement of the experts is not to be questioned. The committee is composed of Commission staff having the requisite expertise in legal and procedural matters, S&T content, and/or information systems, varying according to the cases it is asked to consider. It is chaired by an official from the DG INFSO unit *Legal Aspects*. The call-coordinator (or other designated person from the department responsible for the call) is a member of the committee.

In the light of its review, the committee will recommend a course of action to the responsible Director. Three recommendations are foreseen: that the complaint is rejected as unfounded, that the complaint is upheld but the problem concerned did not jeopardise the decision whether or not to fund the proposal¹, or finally that the complaint is upheld and a re-evaluation is recommended.

In all cases, a reply will be sent to the applicant within two weeks (ten working days) of the date of reception of the request for redress. If a definitive reply cannot be given at that stage, the reply will be sent by the chair of the redress committee, with copy to the Director responsible and the call co-ordinator. This reply will indicate when such a definite reply will be provided. The definite reply will always be sent by the Director responsible.

The redress procedure will normally not hold up the subsequent implementation of the call, i.e. the selection and negotiation processes for the selected proposals in the call.

Approval of result: ICT Directors.

¹ For example, the upheld complaint concerns the evaluation result on a particular criterion, but the proposal is below threshold on other criteria also

3 Selection and implementation

3.1 Selection

3.1.1 Overview of the selection process

The selection process defines the final distribution of the indicative budget between the objectives open in the calls and also describes the procedure for the selection of proposals for funding based on the pre-allocation of funds per objective and per instrument defined in the Work programme.

3.1.2 Establishment of a "Recommended funding" figure per proposal

Responsible: Head of units, Objective coordinators, ICT Directors

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.1

Procedure for carrying out task: The Objective coordinator together with the staff of the unit responsible for the objective analyses the financial data of each above threshold proposals and proposes a recommended EC contribution for each, taking into account any suggestions for reductions proposed by the evaluators, the merging of proposals or other justified reasons for budget adjustments. Where a proposal is eventually selected for implementation the reasons for significant budget reductions or cuts in duration, if any, are set out in the Implementation Plan and are specified in the letter inviting the proposers for negotiation.

The financial analysis is always based on an analysis of each proposal individually; budget cuts will not be made for the purpose of supporting additional projects that would not otherwise be funded.

Approval of result: The resulting "Recommended funding" for each proposal above threshold is approved by the Director responsible.

3.1.3 Preparation of an initial implementation plan by the objective

Responsible: Heads of unit, Objective coordinators, ICT Directors

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.1

Procedure for carrying out task: The Head of Unit for each of the objectives prepares with his Objective coordinator and support staff a draft funding scenario for each objective. The draft funding scenario is firmly based on the priority order defined by the experts in the panel reports. Only in cases where proposals address the same topics with some indicated as a backup to others by the experts or are in contradiction to EU policies or are overlapping with work already being funded can they be moved in the priority order. In such cases, there must be a clear explanation of the rationale behind the change to the priority order set out in the Implementation plan.

The funding scenario normally corresponds with the pre-allocation of the budget between instruments within the objective as described in the Work programme and any other Work programme conditions concerning for example maximum/minimum numbers of proposals to be selected or a specified coverage of subtopics within the objective. If this distribution is not respected clear reasons for the deviation must be set out. The funding scenario shall also describe the overall coverage of the objective by the portfolio of the projects proposed for funding.

Approval of result: The resulting funding scenario for each objective is approved by the Director responsible for the objective.

3.1.4 Draft Implementation Plan

Responsible: The INFSO Director General/Deputy Director General together with the ICT Directors

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.1.

Procedure for carrying out task: The purpose of this stage is to integrate the initial implementation plans prepared by each objective into a single draft Implementation Plan for the call ensuring the best possible coverage of the actions involved.

The distribution of the indicative pre-allocated budget between the instruments for each objective given in the Work programme is summarised in an annex to this document.

The selection of proposals will in each objective be based on this distribution and on the quality of the proposals as defined by their score. Deviations from the distribution between instruments defined for the objective in the Work programme or the order of proposals according to score can take place only in duly justified circumstances, for example if there is not sufficient number of proposals in one of the lists to take up the pre-allocated funding, or if there is direct overlap of work between proposals on different lists.

Within each objective, the selection for the implementation plan is drawn up according to the following principles:

- CA/SAs and NoEs are selected based on quality and in line with the indicative budget of each in the work programme.
- The remaining budget is then allocated to the Collaborative projects; initially for IPs and STREPs up to the minimum indicative funding for each respectively, then the budget still available is allocated to those proposals of best quality and giving optimum coverage to all the subtopics of the objective.

Specific conditions stated in the Work programme for the objective, concerning for example maximum/minimum numbers of proposals to be selected or a specified coverage of subtopics within the objective are respected. Specific conditions concerning selection of proposals in international Coordinated calls are also respected.

Any remaining unused amount within an objective is transferred to a central pool for all the objectives within the Challenge. The pool is used to fund remaining above-threshold Collaborative action proposals anywhere within the Challenge, in priority order starting from the highest scoring.

Any remaining unused amount within a Challenge is transferred to a central pool for the Call. The pool is used to fund remaining above-threshold Collaborative action proposals anywhere within the call, in priority order starting from the highest scoring.

At this stage the resulting selection is checked for coverage within each objective, and if there are obvious holes in the selection and at the same time other subtopics that are more than adequately covered, a correction may be made by deselecting the lowest ranked proposal in the well-covered subtopic and selecting the highest scoring proposal in the uncovered subtopic. Any such deviations from the ranking order by score will be noted and justified in the Implementation plan.

After having allocated the total indicative budget for the call, the ICT Directors review the portfolio of projects selected, and decide whether there are any objectives which would merit selection of additional

proposals above those covered by the indicative budget. If this is the case these proposals are added to the Implementation plan. The maximum amount that can be added to the indicative call budget is 10%¹ of the indicative budget up to the limit of the total budget available for the implementation of the ICT theme.

Finally, a Reserve list is drawn up for each segment of the pre-allocated budget, in case negotiation fails with one or more of the selected proposals. The draft Implementation plan will also flag any of the selected proposals which will be subject to a later Ethical issues review (see below).

Approval of result: The draft Implementation plan is approved by the Director General or his delegate and then submitted to formal interservice consultation and to the ICT-C and Commissioner for information.

3.1.5 Ethical issues review

Responsible: The ICT Directors, Objective coordinators

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Annex A

Procedure for carrying out task: There are three ways in which an above-threshold proposal that raises ethical issues can be identified or 'flagged' and for which an Ethical Issues Report (EIR) will be completed:

- Applicants are invited to describe ethical issues that may arise in the proposed research in an Ethical Issues Table (Annex 4, Section 4 of the Guide for applicants).
- The evaluators will also be invited to indicate any proposals that they consider could raise ethical concerns.

In these cases an Ethical Issues Report (EIR) form will be completed by the Panel Rapporteur in the Consensus group.

- Subsequent to the evaluation, Objective coordinators may also identify a proposal for further examination if they consider that a significant ethical issue has been missed by the experts or the applicants.

Each ICT Directorate will carry out a screening of its 'flagged' proposals and prepare a list including only proposals which have been included in the list for negotiation and for which further ethical review is prudent². Any proposals concerning human embryonic stem cells, research on non-human primates and research involving intervention on humans will always be included for further ethical review. The ICT Directorates' lists will be compiled into a single list by the ICT operations unit and submitted to the DG Research 'Governance and Ethics' Unit which is responsible for the organisation of ethical reviews.

Following the ethical review of a proposal it is expected that in most cases the requirements and recommendations from the Ethical Review Panel will be taken fully into account in the project work plan during the negotiation of the grant agreement.

In (rare) cases, following an ethical review of a proposal, when an ICT Director considers that the ethical concerns expressed by the Ethical Review Panel are serious and cannot be adequately addressed in the negotiation of the grant agreement, the ICT Director may request the Director in DG Research responsible for ethical reviews to hold a hearing between the applicants and the Ethical Review Panel. Following the hearing, if the Ethical Review Panel's concerns can still not be adequately addressed, the ICT Director

¹ Percentage to be confirmed

² Reserve list proposals will be subject to screening if subsequently selected

responsible will propose to withdraw the proposal from the Implementation Plan after informing other ICT Directors.

The proposals which were flagged for ethical issues but for which a further review was not required will have these issues examined and dealt with by the Directorate concerned in the course of the normal grant agreement negotiations. Routine issues such as data protection may be dealt with in Annex 1 of the agreement, more critical issues may lead to the inclusion of additional ethical issues clauses in the grant agreement (notably, Special Clause 15)

Approval of result: In the event of insoluble ethical problems, the Director concerned recommends to the Director-General that the proposal be withdrawn from the Implementation plan.

3.1.6 Invitation to negotiations

Responsible: Units responsible for the proposals in the call.

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 5.1

Procedure for carrying out task: When the Director General has approved the draft Implementation plan and it has been communicated to the Commissioner, to interservice consultation and the ICT-C, the units responsible invite the proposals on the short list for negotiations on a grant agreement for their proposal. This discussion will concentrate on informing the consortia on the formal information requirements, the administrative data and the technical changes needed for establishing a grant agreement. Proposers are informed that an eventual agreement is conditional on the completion of a final Implementation plan approved by the Commission (and in some cases, on an ethical review).

Approval of result: The Head of Unit for the units concerned signs the invitation letters.

3.1.7 ICT-C¹ information session

Responsible: ICT Directors

Background for carrying out task: DG INFSO established practice

Procedure for carrying out task: The Commission services present the evaluation results and the draft implementation plan to the ICT-C in formal ICT-C meetings. The presentation highlights the coverage of the work programme achieved by the selected projects, proposals, participation of important groups (industry, SMEs, research organisations etc). The evaluation results and the draft Implementation Plan are presented to the Committee together with the timetable for selection of proposals. The Committee members provide their comments on the evaluation report and draft Implementation plan in view of their national strategies. Their comments are input to the finalisation of the Implementation plan by the Commission services. In a separate session the committee members have the possibility to ask clarification to the Objective coordinators on the evaluation results for specific proposals, in a series of dedicated meetings (“bilaterals”).

Approval of result: The presentations and the discussions are set out in the minutes of the meeting. The comments from the Committee are input to the drawing up of the final Implementation Plan by the Commission services.

¹ Or the appropriate committee for Capacities actions

3.1.8 Interservice consultation

Responsible: ICT Directors supported by ICT Operations unit

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.1

Procedure for carrying out task: The draft Implementation plan is circulated for formal consultation. If needed a meeting is held.

Approval of result: The output of the interservice consultation is incorporated in the final Implementation plan (see below)

3.2 Finalisation and execution of the Implementation Plan

3.2.1 Finalisation of plan

Responsible: The INFSO Director General/Deputy Director General together with the ICT Directors

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.1

Procedure for carrying out task: Based on the comments received from the ICT-C and after the outcome from the interservice consultation is received, the ICT Directors review the draft Implementation plan and decide if there is a need to deselect any of the proposals proposed for selection in the draft Implementation plan or if there is a need to select any further proposals for funding by adding extra budget to the call. If needed the draft Implementation plan is amended. The final Implementation plan decides the final budget allocated to the call. After the approval of the final Implementation plan no extra budget can be allocated to the call, except for small adjustments to allow negotiation of proposals from the reserve list in case negotiations with proposals selected for funding fails. If the final Implementation plan differs from the draft Implementation plan in terms of which proposals are selected (rather than merely in terms of financial adjustments), an additional interservice consultation is needed.

Approval of result: The final Implementation plan is approved by the Director General or his delegate and then submitted to the ICT-C and Commissioner for information.

3.2.2 Grant agreement negotiations and Selection decision

Responsible: Commission services in the ICT Directorates

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 5.1, 5.2

Procedure for carrying out task: Proposers are supplied with a Negotiation guidelines document. Commission staff receives a briefing document on negotiation procedures. Representatives of successful proposals are invited to Brussels/Luxembourg for grant agreement negotiations. In these negotiations any recommendations on changes to the proposed project work plan as set out in the 'negotiation framework' for each proposal will be incorporated. The Commission indicative funding level will be respected.

In the case of proposals for which negotiations cannot be completed in a reasonable time, or which in negotiation commence to deviate significantly from the original proposal as seen by the evaluators, the Commission negotiators may terminate the discussions. In this case the Director concerned can decide to re-assign the budget to Reserve list proposals (see below).

Approval of result: The final lists of funded and rejected proposals are subject to Commission decision

3.2.3 Rejection decision (initial round)

Responsible: ICT Operations unit.

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.3

Procedure for carrying out task: The proposals from the call that are neither on the short list or reserve list for negotiation are included in a rejection decision, which in case the decision is not strategic¹ is presented to the Director General of DG INFSO for decision, and which in case the decision is strategic is submitted through the Commissioner to interservice consultation followed by a decision by the College.

The rejection decision for the proposals that have sought redress cannot be launched before the completion of the Redress procedure (see above).

Approval of result: The Commission decision by the Director General or the College.

3.2.4 Information of rejected proposals (initial round)

Responsible: Units responsible for the evaluation of the proposals in the call.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.3

Procedure for carrying out task: As soon as the rejection decision has been taken by the Commission, the units concerned are informed by ICT Operations unit. They despatch letters informing the unsuccessful consortia of the rejection decision.

Approval of result: The letters are signed by the Heads of Unit or Directors (as decided in the Directorates).

3.2.5 Selection of proposals from the reserve list

Responsible: ICT Directors

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.2

Procedure for carrying out task: In case negotiation with a proposal on the short list fails the unit concerned immediately informs the Director responsible. In case there is a proposal on the reserve list for the objective concerned that can be negotiated within the budget which has become available, the Director instructs the unit responsible to invite this proposal for negotiations. In case there are no proposals on the reserve list for that objective, the Director informs ICT Operations unit on the failure and on the budget that has become available.

If budget is saved in negotiations with a proposal on the short list the unit concerned informs the Director, who in turn informs ICT Operations unit on the budget saving.

¹ A decision is to be considered strategic when the ranking established by the Commission services does not take into account the comments and the ranking of the proposals recommended by the external experts or that the budget breakdown or the distribution mechanism of the indicative budget as indicated in the call is not respected (Commission decision on “Octroi de pouvoirs délégués en matière de gestion des activités des septièmes programmes-cadres pour la recherche”)

When negotiations have progressed sufficiently to be able to establish the total savings of budget in the negotiations, ICT Operations unit informs the ICT Directors on the budget savings and presents a list of proposals with which negotiations could start within the available budget envelope. The ICT Directors then decide which proposals shall be invited for negotiations. In this decision a very limited adjustment of the budget envelope for the call may take place to allow for negotiation of a proposal on the reserve list to be able to fully expend the budget for the call. An amendment to the Implementation Plan is drafted by ICT Operations unit and submitted through the ICT Directors for approval and signature of the Director General.

Approval of result: The Director responsible approves the invitation for negotiation of proposals from the reserve lists within his objectives. The Director General approves the invitation for negotiations of proposals funded from any remaining savings once this is done.

3.2.6 Rejection decision (final round)

Responsible: ICT Operations unit.

Background for carrying out task: Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.3

Procedure for carrying out task: When the budget for the call has been consumed by selected proposals, any proposals from the reserve list that has not been negotiated, or any proposals which were on the short list but failed in negotiation, are included in a rejection decision, which in case the decision is not strategic is presented to the Director General of DG INFSO for decision, and which in case the decision is strategic is submitted through the Commissioner to interservice consultation followed by a decision by the College.

Approval of result: The Commission decision by the Director General or the College.

3.2.7 Information on rejected proposals (final round)

Responsible: Units responsible for the evaluation of the proposals in the call.

Background for carrying out task: FP7 Rules for submission of proposals, and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures Section 4.3

Procedure for carrying out task: As soon as the rejection decision has been taken by the Commission, the units concerned are informed by ICT Operations unit. They despatch letters informing the unsuccessful consortia of the rejection decision.

Approval of result: The letters are signed by the Heads of Unit or Directors (as decided in the Directorates).

Annex 1: Indicative timetable

ICT Call 9

Publication of call	18 th January 2012
Deadline for submission of proposals	17 th April 2012 17h00 Brussels time
Evaluation of proposals	May-June 2012
Invitation letter to coordinators of highly-rated proposals to appear before the evaluation panel together with member of the consortium ("Hearings")	Early June 2012
Hearings week	Week beginning 18 th June 2012
Evaluation Summary Reports sent to all proposal coordinators	Early July 2012
Invitation letter to successful applicants to launch negotiations with Commission services	Mid July 2012
Letters to unsuccessful applicants	August 2012
Signature of first grant agreements	October 2012

Future Internet 2012

Publication of call	17 th May 2012
Deadline for submission of proposals	24 th October 2012 17h00 Brussels time
Evaluation of proposals	November 2012
Invitation letter to coordinators of highly-rated proposals to appear before the evaluation panel together with member of the consortium ("Hearings")	End November 2012
Hearings week	Week beginning 3 rd December
Evaluation Summary Reports sent to all proposal coordinators	Before 22 nd December 2012
Invitation letter to successful applicants to launch negotiations with Commission services	Before 22 nd December 2012
Letters to unsuccessful applicants	January 2013
Signature of first grant agreements	March 2013

Annex 2: Budget allocations

ICT Call 9

Objective	Total budget M€	CSA max M€	NoE max M€	IP min M€	STREP min M€	CP not pre-allocated M€
ICT 2011.2.1 Cognitive Systems and Robotics (b), (c), (e)	82	2	-	40	24	16
ICT 2011.4.3 Digital Preservation	30	7		11.5	6.9	4.6
ICT 2011.5.2 Virtual Physiological Human (a), (b)	58	-	-	29	17.4	11.6
ICT 2011.5.2 Virtual Physiological Human (d)	8.5	-	-	-	8.5	0
ICT 2011.8.2 ICT for access to cultural resources	40	5	-	14	10.5	10.5
ICT 2011.9.9 FET Proactive: Quantum ICT (QICT) including ERA-NET-Plus	22	7 (ERA NET Plus)	-	0	0	15
ICT 2011.9.10 FET Proactive: Fundamentals of Collective Adaptive Systems (FOCAS)	23	-	-	0	0	23
ICT 2011.9.11 FET Proactive: Neuro-Bio-Inspired Systems (NBIS)	23	1	-	0	0	22
ICT 2011.9.12 Coordinating Communities, Identifying new research topics etc. (a), (b), (c), (d)	2.5	2.5	-	-	-	-
ICT 2011.10.3 International Partnership building and support to dialogues (b)	2	-	-	-	2 (SICA)	-
TOTAL ICT Call 9	291					

Future Internet 2012

Objective	Total budget M€	CSA max M€	NoE max M€	IP min M€	STREP min M€	CP not pre-allocated M€
FI.ICT-2011.1.8 Use case scenarios and early trials (Phase 2)	67.5	-	-	Up to 5 IPs	-	-
FI.ICT-2011.1.9 Capacity building and infrastructure support (Phase 2)	12.5	-	-	1 IP	-	-
TOTAL	80					

Annex 3: Summary of roles in Evaluations

Function	Role
Committee	Gives opinion on work programme Gives comments on the evaluation result Gives opinion on selected proposals
Commission	Approves work programme by Commission decision Approves Guidelines for evaluation and selection procedures by Commission decision Approves rejection decisions by Commission decision
Other services	Give opinion on the Implementation plan
Director General (or delegate)	Approves Draft Implementation Plan Approves Final Implementation Plan Make Commission decision on negotiated projects by delegation
Deputy Director General	Chairs Preparation of work Programme Chairs Preparation of Evaluation planning Chairs decision on evaluation procedures Chairs preparation of Implementation Plans
ICT Directors	Prepares work programme in their areas Approves list of objective coordinators Approves list of experts who are candidates to be invited to evaluation Decides on eligibility issues Chairs panel meetings and hearings (optional) Approves evaluation report in their domain Prepares Implementation plan in their domain Approves negotiation results
ICT Heads of Units	Prepare staff allocation during evaluation Propose list of evaluators Approve final list of evaluators to be invited Approves final allocation of evaluators to proposals Can act as Objective coordinator Appoint Objective coordinator Appoint panel coordinators Chair panel meetings and hearings (optional) Appoint staff for negotiation Approves negotiation results
Senior statutory staff	Act as Objective coordinator Act as panel coordinator Act as consensus group moderator Act as negotiator
Other Commission staff	Support the evaluation
Experts	Evaluate proposals ("Evaluator") Evaluate proposal and prepare Consensus forms and ESRs ("Rapporteur") Prepare Consensus forms and ESRs ("Recorder") Observe the evaluation process ("Observer")