HORIZON 2020 PROPOSAL EVALUATION

THE EVALUATION PROCEDURE IN PRACTICE

Overview of the Evaluation Process

Evaluators

Receipt of proposals	Individual evaluation	Consensus group	Panel Review	Finalisation
Eligibility check Allocation of proposals to evaluators	Individual Evaluation Reports (Usually done remotely)	Consensus Report (May be done remotely)	Panel report Evaluation Summary Report Panel ranked list	Final ranked list

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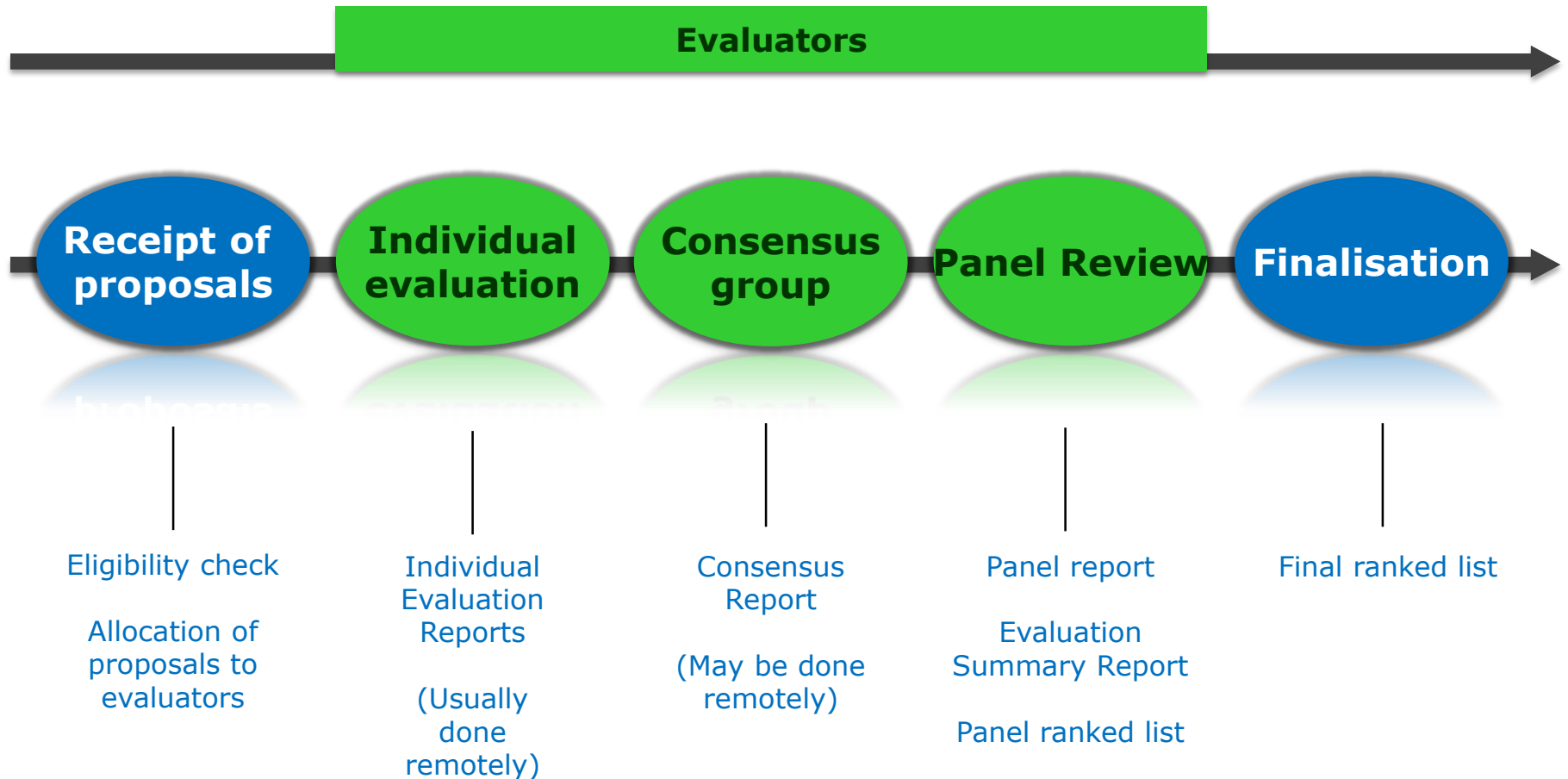
Admissibility and eligibility checks

- **Admissibility is checked by the Commission/Agency:**

  - Readable, accessible and printable

  - Completeness of proposal
    presence of all requested forms

  - Inclusion of a plan for exploitation and dissemination
    of results (unless otherwise specified in the WP)

  Page limits: Clearly set out in electronic system; excess page(s) marked with a watermark

  new

- **Eligibility checked by the Commission/Agency - however, if you spot an issue relating to eligibility, please inform the Commission/Agency**

  - Minimum number of partners as set out in the call conditions

  - Other criteria may apply on a call-by-call basis as set out in the call conditions

- **"Out of scope" – you need to check if the content of a proposal corresponds, wholly or in part, to the description of the call or topic**

  - A proposal will only be deemed ineligible in clear-cut cases

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Evaluation criteria

- **There are three evaluation criteria:**

  - Excellence (relevant to the description of the call or topic)

  - Impact

    - ❑ **Communication activities** new

    - ❑ **Research data management where relevant** new

  - Quality and efficiency of the implementation

    - ❑ **You should check requests for 'exceptional funding' from third country participants not included in the list**

    - ❑ **This criterion is not evaluated in the first stage of a two-stage procedure**

> **Innovation Management:** is a process which requires an understanding of both market and technical problems, with a goal of successfully implementing appropriate creative ideas.
> **Typical Output:** new or improved product, service or process.
> **For consortium:** it allows to respond to an external or internal opportunity.

- **The criteria are adapted to each type of actions, as specified in the WP**

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Type of actions

Research and Innovation Action

- **Action primarily consisting of activities aiming to establish new knowledge and/or to explore the feasibility of a new or improved technology, product, process, service or solution**

  - For this purpose they may include basic and applied research, technology development and integration, testing and validation on a small-scale prototype in a laboratory or simulated environment

  - Projects may contain closely connected but limited demonstration or pilot activities aiming to show technical feasibility in a near to operational environment

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Type of actions

Innovation Action

- **Action primarily consisting of activities directly aiming at producing plans and arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services**

  - *For this purpose they may include prototyping, testing, demonstrating, piloting, large-scale product validation and market replication*

  - *Aiming to validate the technical and economic viability in a (near) operational environment and/or aiming to support the first application/deployment in the market of an innovation that has already been demonstrated but not yet applied/deployed in the market due to market failures/barriers to uptake*

  - *Projects may include limited research and development activities*

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Type of actions

Coordination & Support Action

- **Actions consisting primarily of accompanying measures such as**

  - standardisation, dissemination, awareness-raising and communication, networking, coordination or support services, policy dialogues and mutual learning exercises and studies, including design studies for new infrastructure, and

  - may also include complementary activities of strategic planning, networking and coordination between programmes in different countries

Evaluation criteria
Research and Innovation Actions/Innovation Actions

Excellence

Clarity and pertinence of the objectives

Soundness of the concept, including trans-disciplinary considerations, where relevant

Extent that proposed work is ambitious, has innovation potential, and is beyond the state of the art (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches)

Credibility of the proposed approach

Impact

The expected impacts listed in the work programme under the relevant topic

Enhancing innovation capacity and integration of new knowledge

Strengthening the competitiveness and growth of companies by developing innovations meeting the needs of European and global markets; and, where relevant, by delivering such innovations to the markets

Any other environmental and socially important impacts (not already covered above)

Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), to communicate the project, and to manage research data where relevant

Implementation

Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources

Complementarity of the participants within the consortium (when relevant)

Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management

Evaluation criteria
Coordination & Support Actions

Excellence

Clarity and pertinence of the objectives

Soundness of the concept

Quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures

Credibility of the proposed approach

Impact

The expected impacts listed in the work programme under the relevant topic

Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), to communicate the project, and to manage research data where relevant

Implementation

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Operational capacity

- **As part of the Individual Evaluation, give your view on whether each applicant has the necessary <u>basic</u> operational capacity to carry out their proposed activity(ies)** based on the information provided

  - Curriculum Vitae or description of the profile of the applicant

  - Relevant publications or achievements

  - Relevant previous projects or activities

  - Description of any significant infrastructure or any major items of technical equipment

- **At the consensus group, you consider whether an applicant lacks basic operational capacity**

- **If yes, you make comments and score the proposal without taking into account this applicant and its associated activity(ies)**

- **Not for stage 1 of two-stage procedures**

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Proposal scoring

- **You give a score of between 0 and 5 to each criterion based on your comments**
    - Half-marks can be used
    - The whole range of scores should be used
    - Scores must pass *thresholds* if a proposal is to be considered for funding

- **Thresholds apply to individual criteria...**
  The default threshold is 3 (unless specified otherwise in the WP)

- **...and to the total score**
  The default overall threshold is 10 (unless specified otherwise in the WP)

- **For Innovation actions, the criterion Impact is given a weight of 1.5 to determine the ranking**

Interpretation of the scores

0 — The proposal **fails to address the criterion** or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

1 — **Poor.** The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 — **Fair.** The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3 — **Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
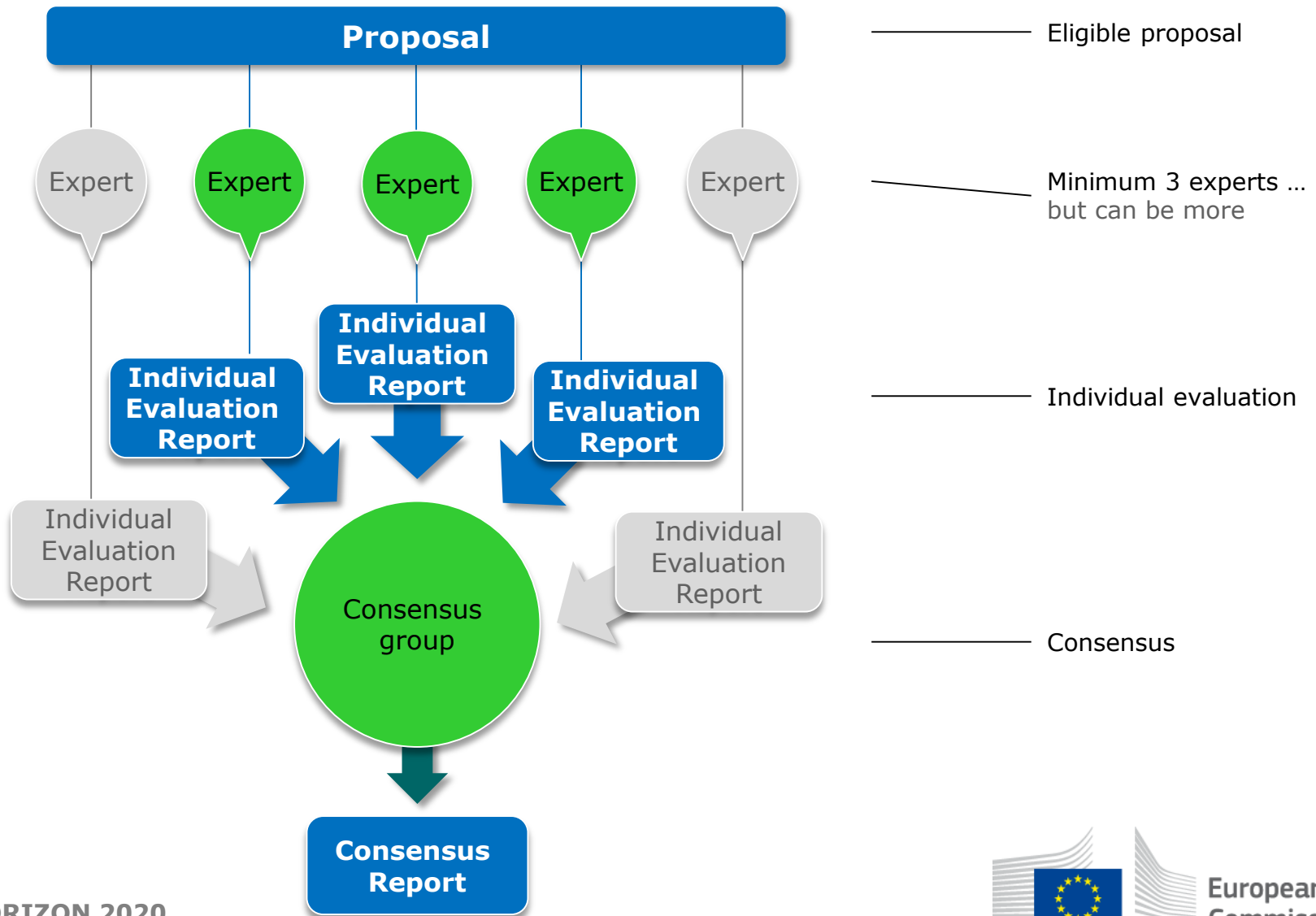
4 — **Very Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5 — **Excellent.** The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

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Evaluation Process

Proposal — Eligible proposal

Expert · Expert · Expert · Expert · Expert — Minimum 3 experts … but can be more

Individual Evaluation Report — Individual evaluation

Consensus group — Consensus

Consensus Report

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Individual evaluation

- **You read the proposal and evaluate it against the evaluation criteria**

  – Without discussing it with anybody else

  – As submitted - not on its potential if certain **new** changes were to be made

  – Do not penalise applicants that did not provide detailed breakdown costs – they are not required

  Look at the substance: Some proposals might be handicapped by language difficulties, others deceptively well written

- **You disregard excess pages marked with a watermark** **new**

- **You check to what degree the proposal is relevant to the call or topic**

- **You complete an Individual Evaluation Report (IER)**

  – Give your view on operational capacity **new**

  – Give comments and scores for all evaluation criteria (scores must match comments)

  – Explain shortcomings, but do not make recommendations **new**

- **You then sign and submit the form in the electronic system**

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If a proposal

- **Is only marginally relevant in terms of its scientific, technological or innovation content relating to the call or topic addressed, you must reflect this in a lower score for the Excellence criterion**

  - No matter how excellent the science!

- **Does not significantly contribute to the expected impacts as specified in the WP for that call or topic, you must reflect this in a lower score for the Impact criterion**

- **Would require substantial modifications in terms of implementation (i.e. change of partners, additional work packages, significant budget or resources cut...), you must reflect this in a lower score for the "Quality and efficiency of the implementation" criterion**

- **If cross-cutting issues are explicitly mentioned in the scope of the call or topic, and not properly addressed (or their non-relevance justified), you must reflect this in a lower score for the relevant criterion**

  - A successful proposal is expected to address them, or convincingly explain why not relevant in a particular case

  - Proposals addressing cross-cutting issues which are not explicitly mentioned in the scope of the call or topic can also be evaluated positively

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Consensus

- **It usually involves a discussion on the basis of the individual evaluations**
  - It is not just a simple averaging exercise
- **The aim is to find agreement on comments and scores**
  - Agree comments before scores!
  - If an applicant lacks basic operational capacity, you make comments and score the proposal without taking into account this applicant and its associated activity(ies)
- **"Outlying" opinions need to be explored**
  - They might be as valid as others – be open-minded
  - It is normal for individual views to change
- **Moderated by Commission/Agency staff (or an expert in some cases)**
  - Manages the evaluation, protects confidentiality and ensures fairness
  - Ensures objectivity and accuracy, all voices heard and points discussed
  - Helps the group keep to time and reach consensus

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Consensus report (CR)

- **The *rapporteur* is responsible for drafting the CR**
  - Including consensus comments and scores
  - In some cases, the rapporteur does not take part in the discussion
- **The quality of the CR is paramount**
  - It often remains unchanged at the panel stage
- **The aim of the CR is to give:**
  - A clear assessment of the proposal based on its merit, with justification
  - Clear feedback on the proposal's weaknesses and strengths
- **Avoid:**
  - Comments not related to the criterion in question
  - Comments that are too short or too long or use inappropriate language you should explain what you mean in an adequate length and clear manner
  - Categorical statements that have not been properly verified e.g. "The proposal doesn't mention user requirements" – when there is a short reference…
    - ❑ **Applicants can challenge those through evaluation review procedures**
  - Scores that don't match the comments
  - Making recommendations
  - Marking down a proposal for the same critical aspect under two different criteria

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The panel review

- **Consists of experts from the consensus groups and/or new experts**

- **Ensures the consistency of comments and scores given at the consensus stage**

- **Resolves any cases where a minority view is recorded in the CR**

- **Endorses the final scores and comments for each proposal**
    - Any new comments and scores (if necessary) should be carefully justified

- **Prioritises proposals with identical total scores, after any adjustments for consistency**

- **Recommends a list of proposals in priority order**

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Proposals with identical total scores

- **For each group of proposals with identical total scores, the panel considers first proposals that address topics that are not already covered by more highly-ranked proposals**

- **The panel then orders them according to:**

  - For RIAs – First, their score for Excellence, and second, their score for Impact
  - For IAs – First, their score for Impact, and second, their score for Excellence

- **If there are ties, the panel takes into account the following factors:**

  - First, the size of the budget allocated to SMEs
  - Second, the gender balance of personnel carrying out the research and/or innovation activities

- **If there are still ties, the panel agrees further factors to consider:**

  - e.g. synergies between projects or contribution to the objectives of the call or of Horizon 2020

- **The same method is then applied to proposals that address topics that are already covered by more highly-ranked proposals**

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Observer(s)

- **Appointed by the Commission/Agency may attend any meetings or monitor remote evaluation, to ensure a high quality evaluation**

- **They check the functioning and running of the overall process**

- **They advise, in their report, on the conduct and fairness of the evaluation sessions and, if necessary, suggest possible improvements**

- **They do not evaluate proposals and, therefore, do not express any opinion on their quality**

- **They may raise any questions -** please give them your full support

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Ethics review

- **Only proposals that comply with the ethical principles and legislation may receive funding**

- **For proposals above threshold and considered for funding, an ethics screening and, if necessary, an ethics assessment is carried out by independent ethics experts in parallel with the scientific evaluation or soon after**
  - Proposals involving the use of human embryonic stems cells automatically undergo an ethics assessment

- **For those proposals in which one or more ethical issues have been identified, the experts will assess whether the ethics issues are adequately addressed**

- **The ethics experts will produce an ethics report and give an opinion on the proposal, including:**

  - Granting ethics clearance (or not)

  - Recommending the inclusion of 'ethics requirements' in the grant agreement, or

  - Recommending a further Ethics Assessment and/or an Ethics Check or Audit

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Logistics

- **A new electronic system for the evaluation of proposals is available and accessible via your ECAS password**
  - Please make sure you know your ECAS login and password
- **Please bring your own device**
  - You are invited to bring your own laptop/tablet/notebook for the on-site evaluation in Brussels
  - There are no fixed computers available in the open space/reading rooms of the evaluation building in Brussels
    - ❑ **Laptops are available upon request**
    - ❑ **Fixed computers are available in the meeting rooms**
- **Reduction of paper copies**
  - A few printers are available in the evaluation building in Brussels
  - Copies of proposals will be still made available for the on-site evaluation
- **Electronic workflow**
  - The processing of your payment requests is done electronically (no more queues for reimbursement)