



## **DECISION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD**

**approving the list of actions selected for funding under the Shift2Rail JU call for proposals H2020-S2RJU-2017-01**

**N° 1/2017**

THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE SHIFT2RAIL JOINT UNDERTAKING,

Having regard to:

- 1) Council Regulation (EU) No 642/2014 of 16 June 2014 establishing the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking<sup>1</sup> (S2R JU) and in particular Article 8(p) of the S2R JU Statutes;
- 2) Decision N° 21/2015 of 11 December 2015 of the S2R JU Governing Board establishing the Financial Rules of the S2R JU and, in particular, Article 35 thereof;

Whereas:

- 1) On 9 November 2016, the Governing Board of the S2R JU adopted the S2R JU Annual Work Plan for 2017 (Decision N°25/2016). This Annual Work Plan was the bases for the launch of the call for proposals H2020-S2RJU-2017-01, which was launched on 10 January 2017 with deadline of 30 March 2017;
- 2) The call for proposals H2020-S2RJU-2017-01 comprised a total of 17 topics;
- 3) In the above-mentioned call for proposals, each of the topics had its own dedicated budget line and therefore topics were not competing against each other for the same budget;
- 4) The proposals submitted within the call for proposals were evaluated by independent experts, as foreseen by Article 17.2 of the S2R JU Statutes and in accordance with the criteria defined in the S2R JU Annual Work Plan for 2017. On the basis of this evaluation, the experts established a ranking list per topic, providing a recommended priority order of proposals having equalled or passed all the thresholds, as well as a list of proposals not marked for possible funding as they did not meet the overall thresholds and/or one or more of the individual thresholds;
- 5) The report of the independent observer finds that evaluation was conducted in a fair, transparent and open way and that each proposal received adequate and equal treatment, according to the defined rules and procedures;
- 6) In accordance with Article 8(p) of the S2R JU Statutes, the S2R JU Governing Board should approve the list of actions selected for funding, on the basis of a proposal from the S2R JU Executive Director, in accordance with Article 10(4)(g) of the S2R JU Statutes.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 177, 17.06.2014, p.9.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

*Article 1*

The call ranked lists pertaining to the call for proposals H2020-S2RJU-2017-01, including the lists of actions selected for funding (Annex 1 to this decision) are hereby approved.

*Article 2*

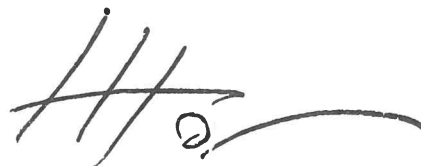
This decision shall enter into force on the date of its adoption. The Executive Director shall inform the applicants of the results of the evaluation. The date of the individual notification letter by the Executive Director constitutes the official invitation to start the preparation of the grant.

Enclosures:

- Annex 1 – Call ranked lists pertaining to the call for proposals H2020-S2RJU-2017-01, including the lists of actions selected for funding
- Annex 2 – List of below threshold proposals pertaining to the call for proposals H2020-S2RJU-2017-01
- Annex 3 – List of inadmissible proposals pertaining to the call for proposals H2020-S2RJU-2017-01
- Annex 4 – List of ineligible proposals pertaining to the call for proposals H2020-S2RJU-2017-01
- Annex 5 – Independent Observer's Report

Done at Brussels, on 7 June 2017.

For the Governing Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several stylized, overlapping strokes.

Henrik HOLOLEI

The Chairperson



Below available budget	2	10	UNION DES INDUSTRIES FERROVIAIRES EUROPEENNES - UNIFE	BE	S2R-OC-IP4-01-2017	RIA	777621	CARRYON	Completion for smart IRip Racking and seamless multimodal journeys	36	3,499,993.75 €	3,499,993.75 €	6,994,470.00 €
Main list	1	12	UNION INTERNATIONALE DES CHEMINS DE FER	FR	S2R-OC-IP5-01-2017	RIA	777594	OPTIYARD	Optimised Real-time Yard and Network Management	24	1,499,900.00 €	1,499,900.00 €	1,499,900.00 €
Below available budget	2	10	THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM	UK	S2R-OC-IP5-01-2017	RIA	777637	SMART-Yard	Smart Management for Autonomous Real-Time Yards	30	1,499,960.00 €	1,499,960.00 €	2,999,860.00 €

55	Total	107,388,806.02 €
17	of which to be financed	60,119,073.52 €

55	H2020-S2R-JU-2015-01	107,388,806.02 €
17	of which to be financed	60,119,073.52 €
7	- CFM	40,634,960.27 €
10	- OC	19,484,083.25 €

ANNEX 2: List of below threshold proposals

Final Score	Coordinator		Topic Code	Type of Action	Proposal			Financial Details	
	Organisation	Country			Number	Acronym	Title	Duration	Grant Requested
9	THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD	UK	S2R-OC-IP4-01-2017	RIA	777608	SIMTraC	A Smart Mobile Intelligent Real Time Travel Information Companion	36	3,494,000.00 €
12	Railistics GmbH	DE	S2R-OC-IP5-01-2017	RIA	777638	SWIFT	Single Wagon Information For Train transfer	30	1,491,875.00 €
6	UNIVERSITE DE VALENCIENNES ET DU HAINAUT-CAMBRESIS	FR	S2R-OC-IP3-02-2017	RIA	777624	FSAZUS	Future Station and Accessibility	18	1,187,897.50 €
9	UNIVERSITA DEGLI STUDI DI GENOVA	IT	S2R-OC-IP2-02-2017	RIA	777620	WITCH	Wireless Integrity Train Check	27	1,683,060.00 €
9	Limmat M&M S.L.	ES	S2R-OC-IP5-01-2017	RIA	777525	RETIARIUS	Optimization for Real-time Yard and Network Management	24	1,499,500.00 €
8	Teknologian tutkimuskeskus VTT Oy	FI	S2R-OC-IP3-01-2017	RIA	777628	CLOREAM	CLoud-based Real time Energy and Asset Management	24	2,234,250.00 €
9	UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA	PT	S2R-OC-IP2-02-2017	RIA	777617	enSTOKER	ENergy harveSTing fOr trackside Railway and onboard sustainable signalling and communication systems	36	1,595,251.25 €
5.5	UNIVERZITET U NOVOM SADU FAKULTET TEHNICKIH NAUKA	RS	S2R-OC-IP3-01-2017	RIA	777612	RI-AMS	Railway Infrastructure Asset Management System	36	799,141,25 €
7.5	TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITAET DRESDEN	DE	S2R-OC-IP2-02-2017	RIA	777625	TIBET	Train Integrity based on Energie Harvesting Technology	30	1,607,500.00 €
8.5	D'APPOLONIA SPA	IT	S2R-OC-IP3-03-2017	RIA	777623	CorRaileyes	Enhanced Data Accuracy and Reliability from Autonomous Combined Satellite and UAS-based Monitoring of the Railway Assets at the Regional Scale	24	599,625.00 €
5	LEVEL, s.r.o.	CZ	S2R-OC-IP2-02-2017	RIA	777488	Energy4ever	Railway Energy Harvesting and its practical usage	30	1,779,562.50 €
7.5	AZVI SA	ES	S2R-OC-IP3-03-2017	RIA	777641	SAMS	Satellite and unmanned Aerial vehicles based Monitoring Solution for rail infrastructure network maintenance	18	597,431,25 €
6	Tele-Rilevamento Europa - T.R.E. s.r.l.	IT	S2R-OC-IP3-03-2017	RIA	777581	tRACTIVE	Railways-assets Continuous Monitoring using EO data	18	588,862.50 €
9	SERVICIOS DE TECNOLOGIA INGENIERIA E INFORMATICA SL	ES	S2R-OC-IP1-02-2017	RIA	777634	NEXTGEN-RG	NEXT GENERATION RUNNING GEARS	22	2,740,723.00 €
5.5	CHALMERS TEKNISKA HOEGSKOLA AB	SE	S2R-OC-IP3-03-2017	RIA	777597	DEPTH	Adding depth: data fusion of remote sensing data and low-cost ground based sensors	24	598,613,75 €

ANNEX 3: List of inadmissible proposals							
Topic Code	Type of Action	Proposal			Financial Details		Reason(s) for non-admissibility
		Number	Acronym	Title	Duration	Grant Requested	
S2R-CFM-IP1-01-2017	Research and Innovation Actions	777573	AMDINVENTOR	Asociación Mundial Derechos Inventor-AMDINVENTOR	24	41,250,000.00 €	Withdrawn/abuse
S2R-CFM-IP4-01-2017	Innovation Actions	777598	RailTravelAgeInfo	Harry Edward Margaret Erik Rail Travel in the Age of Information	36	0.00 €	Inadmissible. Does not fulfil the criteria.
S2R-OC-CCA-01-2017	Research and Innovation Actions	777646	Dor 4.0	Digital On Rail 4.0	18	0.00 €	Inadmissible. Budget missing in Part A.

ANNEX 4: List of ineligible proposals

Topic Code	Type of Action	Proposal				Financial Details		Reason(s) for Ineligibility
		Number	Acronym	Title	Duration	Total Cost	Grant Requested	
S2R-OC-CCA-01-2017	Research and Innovation Actions	777616	FRIM	Fibre based Instantaneous Rail Management	20	479,791.25 €	479,791.25 €	Ineligible. Does not fulfill the criteria.
S2R-OC-IP1-02-2017	Research and Innovation Actions	777444	New concepts	New Concepts for Electrified Container wagon	24	1,669,750.00 €	1,542,500.00 €	The proposal has been considered as "out of scope" by the evaluators. In particular the evaluators reported that "The objectives are not pertinent to the four required work streams of the S2R-OC-IP1-02-2017 call topic. The proposal makes no reference to innovative sensors and condition monitoring, optimised materials, active suspension and control technology, or noise and vibration."
S2R-OC-IP1-02-2017	Research and Innovation Actions	777584	COSMARG	Concepts for smart and active running gears	36	2,799,035.00 €	2,799,035.00 €	Ineligible. Does not fulfill the criteria.
S2R-OC-IP2-01-2017	Research and Innovation Actions	777632	B4Labs	Baseline 4 labs	30	1,789,168.75 €	1,789,168.75 €	Ineligible. Does not fulfill the criteria.



## OBSERVER REPORT

**Programme:** Horizon 2020 Framework Programme

**Call for proposal:** H2020-S2RJU-2017-01

**Published:** 10 November 2016

**Opening date:** 10 January 2017

**Deadline:** 30 March 2017

**Date of evaluation:** Between March 31 and May 11, 2017

**Observer:**

Name		
Diego	SPOTTORNO VERGARA	

**Number of pages in this report (title page included):** 14



## 1. Background

This report describes the observer's assessment of the evaluation of the following call:

**Call for proposal:** H2020-S2RJU-2017-01

**Published:** 10 November 2016

**Opening date:** 10 January 2017

**Deadline:** 30 March 2017

**Budget:** 60.800.000 EUR

This call covers the following topic(s)/type(s) of action:

Topic code	Panel	Type of action	Budget	Number of proposals
S2R-CFM-IP1-01-2017	CFM-RIA	Shift2Rail-RIA	8,400,000	2
S2R-CFM-IP4-02-2017	CFM-IA	Shift2Rail-IA	1,800,000	1
S2R-CFM-IP3-01-2017	CFM-RIA	Shift2Rail-RIA	6,000,000	1
S2R-CFM-IP4-01-2017	CFM-IA	Shift2Rail-IA	4,100,000	2
S2R-CFM-CCA-01-2017	CFM-RIA	Shift2Rail-RIA	3,200,000	1
S2R-CFM-IP2-01-2017	CFM-RIA	Shift2Rail-RIA	13,400,000	1
S2R-CFM-IP5-01-2017	CFM-RIA	Shift2Rail-RIA	4,400,000	1
S2R-OC-IP1-01-2017	RSTOCK	RIA	3,500,000	4
S2R-OC-IP5-01-2017	SMART	RIA	1,500,000	4
S2R-OC-IP4-01-2017	SMART	RIA	3,500,000	3
S2R-OC-IP3-01-2017	INFRA	RIA	2,200,000	5
S2R-OC-IP2-01-2017	AUTO	RIA	1,800,000	5
S2R-OC-CCA-01-2017	INFRA	RIA	700,000	4
S2R-OC-IP2-02-2017	AUTO	RIA	1,700,000	6
S2R-OC-IP3-03-2017	INFRA	RIA	600,000	9
S2R-OC-IP1-02-2017	RSTOCK	RIA	2,800,000	10
S2R-OC-IP3-02-2017	INFRA	RIA	1,200,000	3

The topic code in the above table refers also to the IP (Innovation Programme) to which it belongs:

IP 1: Cost-efficient and reliable trains

IP 2: Advanced traffic management and control systems

IP 3: Cost efficient and Reliable High Capacity Infrastructure

IP 4: IT Solutions for Attractive Railway Services

IP5: Technologies for sustainable and attractive European rail freight

CCA: Cross Cutting Activities

The topic code also refers to the topic category. There are 2 categories of topics:

- Those identified as CFM (call for members) are restricted to S2R JU members only and the work programme clearly specifies that only one proposal per topic will be funded within this category

- Those identified as OC (Open Call) are open to non S2R JU members only and depending on budget availability more than one project may be funded.

It is noted that each of the 17 topics has its own dedicated EU budget line and therefore topics are not competing against each other for the same budget. The total estimated EU budget for the call is about 60.800.000 Euros.

A total of 62 proposals were received of which:

- Two (2) were considered inadmissible.
- Four (4) were declared ineligible.

The 56 remaining eligible proposals were distributed over 5 evaluation panels:

- AUTO (10 eligible proposals, all RIAs, all in response to OC),
  - INFRA (17 eligible proposals, all RIAs, all in response to OC),
  - CFM (7 eligible proposals. 5 of them were RIAs and 2 IAs),
  - RSTOCK (13 eligible proposals, all RIAs, all in response to OC),
  - SMART (9 eligible proposals, all RIAs, all in response to OC)
- One (1) proposal was withdrawn.

The report analyses the efficiency of the procedures, usability of the instruments (including IT tools), conduct and fairness of the evaluation sessions, and compliance with the applicable rules. The objective is to give independent advice for improving the evaluation processes for the S2R JU.

## Scope of the observer report

The report analyses the efficiency of the procedures, usability of the instruments (including IT tools), conduct and fairness of the evaluation sessions, and compliance with the applicable rules.

The objective is to give independent advice for improving the evaluation processes for Commission funding.

## 2. Methodology

The approach followed by the observer was in line with the requirements of the H2020 Grants Manual. All relevant information was made available to the observer in a timely manner: briefings, some exchange of mails between the S2R team and the experts, specific information regarding the evaluation procedure (such as databases highlighting the allocation of proposals to experts and their subsequent allocation in panels) and the observer report template. The information provided by S2R to the observer was extensive, accurate and very useful in order to follow the evaluation process.

Ahead of the observation process carried by the observer (remotely and in situ), he had the opportunity to review a number of documents that were essential to carry out an independent and efficient observation:

- General and specific Horizon 2020 documents and relevant evaluation rules ([http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2016-2017/annexes/h2020-wp1617-annex-ga\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2016-2017/annexes/h2020-wp1617-annex-ga_en.pdf))
- H2020 Grants Manual - Section on: Proposal submission and evaluation [http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/pse/h2020-guide-pse\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/pse/h2020-guide-pse_en.pdf)
- Strategic S2R documents, namely:
  - The S2R Master Plan: providing a high-level strategic vision to achieve the S2R objectives and identifies key priority research areas (<http://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/rail/doc/2015-03-31-decisionn4-2015-adoption-s2r-masterplan.pdf>)
  - The S2R Multiannual Action Plan (MAAP) providing a long-term investment plan, identifying projects, milestones and deliverables to achieve the Master Plan objectives. It is a useful document to understand the programmatic/global view on the Innovation Programme ([http://www.shift2rail.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/S2R-JU-GB\\_Decision-N-15-2015-MAAP.pdf](http://www.shift2rail.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/S2R-JU-GB_Decision-N-15-2015-MAAP.pdf))
  - The Annual Work Plan 2017 ([http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/jtis/h2020-wp17-shift2rail\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/jtis/h2020-wp17-shift2rail_en.pdf))

The observation-process consisted of two different phases:

**A. Specific actions feeding into the online observation of this call include:**

- On March 31st the S2R team established contact with the experts in order to provide them with the necessary tools and knowledge to carry out the evaluation. Experts were informed about the timing of the evaluation sessions, call topic, and also about different deadlines: both for the Individual Evaluation Sessions (IES) and for the Draft Consensus Reports. Experts also received “standard briefing slides”, “FAQ for experts”, “experts’ recommendations” and useful information about Brussels logistics.

Experts were asked to confirm (in accordance with Section IV.1 of the H2020 Grants Manual) the absence of conflicts of interests between themselves and the proposed calls.

- S2R also shared its **briefing for evaluators**. Such briefing outlined the specific challenge of the evaluation and the following instructions concerning the methodology to be used by experts in the evaluation process:
  - 1 The scoring system
  - 2 The standard criteria to be applied to the evaluation (based in the excellency, impact, quality and efficiency of the proposals).
  - 3 Experts were suggested a to follow a formulation-text for their evaluation.
- On May 1<sup>st</sup> all experts had submitted their individual evaluations. However, rapporteurs had received in the SEP system evaluations that had been finished before. Rapporteurs therefore had enough time to conclude their consensus reports before the beginning of the evaluation session.

**B. Specific actions feeding into the onsite observation of this call include:**

The evaluation session began at 9:00 on May 8 at the European Commission (Covent Garden Building). Following the experts’ registration, staff from S2R welcomed experts and reminded them about:

- General information regarding S2R
- Specific information regarding the evaluation (such as the way panels were going to work, how they were going to be allocated, evaluating methods such as the grading system, etcetera)
- Information about the observer’s role in the evaluation. More specifically, they were asked by the S2R staff to contact the observer in order to provide him any information that could be useful for improving future evaluations.

Representatives of the European Commission gave experts a briefing on reimbursements, security measures and other technicalities.

## **Discussion on the proposals**

Experts were distributed in five different panels. These panels worked from Monday 8 May until Thursday 11 of May.

Each group had an assigned Rapporteur and a representative from S2R. Rapporteurs shared their “Consensus Reports” with the rest of the experts.

Individual discussions of each of the 55 eligible proposals took place in all panels. Under the leadership of the Rapporteurs and the S2R representatives, all consensus groups discussed each proposal and arrived to a conclusion about the quality of every one of them. The methodology used to assess the quality of the proposals respected at all times the instructions provided by S2R in its “briefing for evaluators”.

The independent observer attended experts’ briefing sessions, as well as all panel meetings. The observer moved from one panel to another throughout the whole evaluation and, in addition to this, held individual meetings with experts and rapporteurs who expressed their views about the evaluation and the treatment received from the S2R staff. To ensure privacy and transparency these meetings were held privately (without staff from S2R present) in an office that was provided to the observer.

From the beginning till the end of the process, the observer had the full support of the S2R staff. Thanks to this help, the observation was done in a transparent manner.

## **3. Assessment**

### Scale of complexity of the evaluation task:

In terms of number of proposals to be evaluated the task was complex, as 56 eligible proposals were received and the complexity of the topics made the discussions between experts technical and lengthy. However, the observer found that the S2R team involved in the evaluation was well prepared to meet the scale and complexity of the tasks and therefore the evaluation was carried out without any significant problem.

Each proposal was evaluated by 3 to 5 experts. An additional expert was selected ahead of the joint evaluation phase to act as a recorder (rapporteur) to prepare the consensus report. In four of the five panels, he/she was a dedicated rapporteur not involved in the evaluation itself. The rapporteurs had prepared a draft of the consensus reports before the local evaluation phase in Brussels. All initial drafts were not prepared to the same degree of elaboration: some were a compilation of individual evaluation comments, whereas some others were already well edited.

Experts did not have to move from one panel to the other (unlike in other evaluations). This certainly made the evaluation less complex for experts than in previous evaluations where some of them had participated.

Two conclusions can be highlighted from this:

1. The work of the panels was more efficient in those where the “rapporteur” did not participate as an expert. In the only panel where the rapporteur was also

acting as an expert (and hence providing his/her opinion about the proposals) the work moved slower and discussions were blocked more often than in the other groups

2. In the cases where rapporteurs had already edited consensus reports (instead of bullet points or general comments copied and pasted from individual evaluations), discussions moved more smoothly and agreements between the independent experts were more easily achieved.

#### Transparency of the procedures:

The procedures were transparent at every stage of the evaluation. The S2R staff was willing to provide any relevant information - both to the independent experts and to the independent observer - at all times. Thanks to this level of transparency, it was possible to assess the quality of the evaluation, the commitment of the independent experts and their support to the evaluation itself.

The main phases of the evaluation process (individual evaluations, consensus meetings, panel meetings and proposal ranking) and the roles of each of the participants (moderators, evaluators, rapporteurs and observer) were clearly defined. Planning of the evaluation i.e. team composition, room allocation and schedule of meetings, was also sound and clearly communicated to all participants.

The evaluation criteria, scoring system and thresholds applied were well understood by all experts. Score interpretation tables were clearly displayed in every consensus meeting room and very often the moderators invited experts to refer to this table to ensure that scores were in line with agreed comments.

Moreover, the experts were repeatedly informed about transparency requirements during briefings and also during consensus meetings. Requirements regarding possible conflicts of interest were specifically highlighted and accepted by all experts and rapporteurs.

The observer is fully convinced that the evaluation was conducted with the highest standards of transparency, fairness and diligence at all stages.

#### Throughput time of the evaluation and the efficiency of the procedures:

The throughput time of the evaluation was the one expected by S2R. All panels had time to conclude their evaluations without any problems within the timeframes expected for each panel before the beginning of the evaluation.

Disparities regarding the amount of proposals to be evaluated per each panel created a logic situation: different panels needed more or less time to evaluate their proposals depending on the number of bids they had to evaluate.

However, it was noticed that each group needed more or less time to evaluate proposals depending on the leadership skills of rapporteur. Whereas in some groups rapporteurs managed to create lively (and yet in depth discussions) of each proposal, in other panels the rapporteur did not always manage to move forward with certain discussions due to debates amongst independent experts that were not handled efficiently.

To fix this situation it would be convenient to set a guideline with more specific instructions to all rapporteurs regarding procedures to conduct evaluations. An example of such guideline could include instructions in the following points:

- How to begin discussions in one common way for all groups.
- How to proceed debating the proposals in a systematised and efficient manner.
- How to increase the participation of all experts in order to avoid lengthy discussions between only two persons.
- How to conclude discussions efficiently.

Although the efficiency of procedures will always depend on the quality of rapporteurs and the experts' willingness to arrive to consensus, it was believed by most experts that a guideline of this nature would be very effective in order to improve the quality of the evaluations in the future.

To conclude, the observer would like to highlight that all the procedures stated in the rules of procedure (mentioned above) were efficiently handled by S2R.

#### Efficiency, reliability and usability of the procedures, including the IT-tools:

All procedures and tools were managed efficiently and reliably by the experts, the rapporteurs and the S2R staff.

The IT evaluation tool SEP was employed in the evaluation process. The tool is fully operational and all experts have become familiar with the system. Rapporteurs were especially happy with the SEP system, which allowed them to begin working in consensus reports ahead of the deadline given to the independent experts to submit their reports.

Following a number of conversations with the experts, the observer believes that a videoconference call between the experts of each panel ahead of the evaluation could be useful to speed up the evaluation process, especially at its initial stages.

#### Impartiality, fairness and confidentiality of the evaluation:

The evaluation was conducted in an impartial manner. The group of independent experts fully respected the Section IV.2 of the Grants Manual. Experts showed a high level of skill, experience and impartiality.

Each expert provided his or her opinion freely and moderators gave support to the group of experts guiding them, when necessary, during drafting the consensus reports.

The Award Criteria (scoring method) was entirely based in the grading system provided by the European Commission (From 0 to 5 according to the level of the proposals). The award criteria was shared with the experts prior to the individual evaluations, explained again during the introductory meeting and, furthermore, it was visible in all the rooms where discussions were held. S2R moderators reminded experts, when needed, about the scoring system.

Independent and Consensus Reports were treated with confidentiality by S2R and also by the Independent Experts.

Gender balance was not achieved: 70% of the experts were men. However, female experts stressed their understanding with regard to this situation. Moreover, they pointed out that taking into consideration the topic of the evaluation a 30% rate of women was optimal.

Geographical diversity was achieved.

#### Conformity of the evaluation with the applicable rules (including guidance documents):

The evaluation was entirely based on the applicable rules. All parts of the evaluation set in the Grants Manual were followed.

More specifically, all rules stated in the following documents were strictly followed.

- Grants Manual - Section on: Proposal submission and evaluation: ([http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/pse/h2020-guide-pse\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/pse/h2020-guide-pse_en.pdf))
- SEP User guide ([https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/expert/expert\\_evaluation\\_user\\_manual.Pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/expert/expert_evaluation_user_manual.Pdf))
- Horizon 2020 Work Programme ([http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2016-2017/annexes/h2020-wp1617-annex-ga\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2016-2017/annexes/h2020-wp1617-annex-ga_en.pdf))

#### Quality of the evaluation process in comparison with similar national/international evaluation procedures:

The evaluation process showed a larger degree of transparency in comparison with evaluations undertaken by Member States (as stated by a number of experts). The presence of an independent observer in the evaluation process is seen as good practice process. Outside the European Commission this role does not always exist but according to independent experts it warrants the quality of the evaluation process.



#### Overall quality of the evaluation:

Considering the level of transparency during the evaluation, the professionalism shown by the experts, rapporteurs and S2R staff, the observer believes that the overall quality of the evaluation was **extremely high**.

Independent experts discussed all proposals with professionalism. Each proposal received the same level of attention by the experts regardless of whether they considered it good or bad. Furthermore, each grade agreed by the experts was discussed sufficiently and transparently without any external concerns.

Although certain aspects of the evaluation process could be improved (namely the system used by rapporteurs to conduct discussions, which could be more systematised), the methods used during this evaluation guaranteed a fair evaluation **uniquely based in the quality of the proposals**.

#### Other remarks:

##### Quality of the documentation provided to experts beforehand:

The documentation provided to the experts and to the observer beforehand was sufficient. Moreover, it was delivered with enough time to study it and to make a good use of it.

Although the briefing material contains some guiding information on how to write (or what to write and what not to write) in IERs the observer would like to suggest that it would be beneficial, especially for the benefit of first-time evaluators, to have a more comprehensive guide "useful tips for drafting reports" in order to have a better uniformity in the format.

##### Quality of the on-site briefing sessions:

As mentioned above, experts received an opening on-site briefing session with all kinds of useful information (regarding the Joint Undertaking, the evaluation, procedures, payment issues, security measures, etc). This briefing session was well structured and useful to all experts, rapporteurs and to the observer.

The understanding of all experts of the call was high. However, a few experts did not participate with the same level of enthusiasm during discussions than others.

The evaluation process, in general, was well understood by the experts and by the rapporteurs. However, as previously pointed out, the lack of a systematised procedure for all panel discussions led to different kind of debates in each panel. It was noted that rapporteurs with previous experience in evaluations had a better understanding of how to proceed with discussions. This led to a situation in which in some panels proposals were discussed faster than in others. However, regardless of the speed of the discussions, the transparency and professionalism of all rapporteurs was the same in all panels and, therefore, **each proposal was discussed with the highest standards**.

### Understanding of the award criteria:

Thanks to the repeated instructions regarding this issue and to the constant assistance of the S2R staff, the understanding of the award criteria by all independent experts was optimal.

The allocation of experts to proposals: balance (gender, geographic, sector), relevance and balance of expertise, ...

The level of expertise of all experts was high. They all seemed to know very well the call and the topics they were discussing. All experts had a good understanding of what was expected from them. Whenever a technical doubt could come up regarding evaluation procedures, moderators from S2R were always available to make clarifications.

Experts came both from the academic and from the private sector. This was useful as it allowed proposals to be evaluated from different angles.

Geographically, the allocation of experts was well balanced.

In terms of gender balance, the observer noticed a majority of men (70%) over women (30%). However, as previously pointed out, female experts appreciated the fact that in this specific sector it is very complicated to achieve a higher level of gender balance.

### The process of the individual evaluations and the actors involved

The individual evaluations were done on time (a number of evaluations were submitted ahead of the deadline set by S2R). This was also the case with the consensus reports.

A number of rapporteurs highlighted the large amount of time it took them to prepare draft reports after receiving the individual assessments done by the experts. This is understandable considering that some panels had up to five experts presenting their views of each proposal.

However, both the rapporteurs and the experts stressed that they received enough time to carry out their tasks.

### The process of the consensus meetings and the actors involved

Consensus meetings were held differently in each panel. Although the quality of the evaluation was high in each one of them and every single proposal received a high level of attention from experts, as previously pointed out, a common evaluating-system would be very welcome.

The role of the rapporteur in consensus meetings has proved to be extremely important. The panels that counted with an experienced rapporteur proved to function more smoothly than those in which the rapporteur lacked experience or organisation skills.

Criteria and scoring scheme: appropriateness, completeness, relevance, clarity, consistency in application, ...

The 3 criteria used were understood and respected by all evaluators. They are rather independent from each other, they do not overlap and therefore the number of situations where comments could apply to 2 different criteria was thus minimized and hence it makes it easier for evaluators not to penalize (or reward) twice a proposal for the same negative (or positive) comment.

There were no specific difficulties expressed by evaluators in understanding the scoring system, the significance of thresholds, the need of “commenting before scoring”, or the need to have scores matching the comments.

The score interpretation table was displayed in every panel meeting room and extensively looked at by evaluators when it came to grading a proposal against a set of comments.

#### Final panel meeting and the actors involved

Each panel had a final panel meeting where conclusions achieved during the evaluation were reviewed by experts and rapporteurs. This proved to be a useful exercise as it led to discussions where experts had the opportunity to re-phrase their views and make minor changes.

The observer believes that final panel meetings were extremely useful and guaranteed a higher level of transparency and quality in the evaluations.

#### Hearings (if any) and the actors involved

Not applicable

#### Occurrence and handling of specific issues (if any) such as conflicts of interest

No conflicts of interest took place during the evaluation. No specific issues had to be handled.

#### Quality of evaluation summary reports

In terms of content, the quality of the evaluation summary reports was – as stressed by all experts – high. However, whereas a number of rapporteurs had already drafted the summary reports in advance others had made summary reports based in bullet points and decided to draft the conclusions during the meetings. The observer cannot judge which system is better as this depends on the preferences of each rapporteur.

After being drafted by each panel, summary reports were checked by members of S2R to ensure their quality, which guaranteed high quality evaluations from every panel.

Overall conduct of staff: responsiveness, hospitality, competence, ...

The conduct of the staff was excellent. The support given by S2R was outstanding.

The observer would like to highlight the degree of professionalism shown by each member of the S2R team. Whenever any expert, rapporteur or the observer himself had any doubt or needed anything from the S2R team their response was immediate and of high quality.

The reason why the observer could move from one panel to another and share impressions with the experts and rapporteurs was precisely because of the willingness of the S2R team to have a transparent and competent evaluation.

Infrastructure and working conditions for evaluators

The conditions at the Covent Garden building were very good. Regardless of some minor technical complications during the second day of the evaluation (which was a holiday at the European Commission) everything worked within the high standards of this institution.

Workload and time given to evaluators for their work, (remotely and/or on-site, as applicable)

According to the independent experts and rapporteurs, the time they had to prepare independent and consensus reports was sufficient.

A number of experts highlighted that having a videoconference call prior to the joint sessions in Brussels would be positive in order to get to know other experts in advance.

Remuneration of evaluators (in relation to workload)

No comments were made by any expert regarding this specific issue.

## **4. Recommendations**

1. The use of a unique system for evaluations at the consensus groups - which could be explained in more specific recommendations to the rapporteurs - could make the evaluation process more unanimous. As previously mentioned, an example of such guideline could include instructions in the following points:

How to begin discussions in one common way for all groups

How to proceed debating the proposals in a systematised and efficient manner

How to increase the participation of all experts in order to avoid lengthy discussions between only two persons  
How to conclude discussions efficiently

2. Experts should be reminded about the fact that discussions amongst themselves should always lead to a final agreement. In a few occasions, two experts held long discussions amongst themselves. Although it is understandable that persons with a high level of expertise feel the need to defend their viewpoints, it should be more clearly stressed that the goal of these evaluations is to achieve an agreement.

3. The idea to have a videoconference call between each panel would be welcome in order to speed up introductions at the beginning of evaluating sessions in Brussels.

To conclude, the observer would like to stress that the transparency and professionalism shown throughout the whole evaluation allowed an excellent assessment of each proposal. The outstanding work done by S2R and the independent experts has certainly allowed each proposal to be treated fairly and carefully.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping, stylized strokes that form a complex, abstract shape.

Diego Spottorno Vergara

Observer