



CALL 2 FOR APPLICATIONS EVALUATION GUIDELINES

Viability Assessment Projects
(VAPs) in International Markets



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1 Introduction

This document provides experts evaluators with a description of the INNOWWIDE substance and details of the two-stage evaluation process for call 2 of the INNOWWIDE Coordination and Support Action (CSA).

It also serves as a detailed outline of the terms and conditions for their engagement by the CSA in evaluation stages 1 and 2 of that call.

1.1. What is INNOWWIDE?

Competition has become global and so is innovation. To compete effectively in new and emerging foreign markets European SMEs need to develop partnerships with strategic counterparts from countries outside Europe to undertake *co-creation of RTDI projects*¹ and further joint business development (new product-market combination).

Developing a *new product-market combination* with a strategic international partner outside the EU or its Associated Countries can be very challenging for SMEs in terms of technological & financial risks and market barriers. Before starting it is essential to assess first the technical feasibility as well as a deep understanding of the financial, legal, market and cultural aspects in the target foreign markets.

That is why a new instrument is needed, beyond conventional market studies, selection of sales channels and export aid.

The Horizon H2020 (H2020) funded INNOWWIDE pilot Coordination and Support Action (CSA) aims precisely to cover this gap, and thus bring innovative European SMEs to the forefront of international markets by funding Viability Assessment Projects (VAPs) in cooperation with local stakeholders around the world, creating the conditions to increase the uptake of European innovative solutions in markets outside Europe.

The INNOWWIDE CSA follows an SME friendly bottom-up approach, with no specific topics to be addressed.

This document relates to the second and last call of the INNOWWIDE pilot CSA. Please visit the INNOWWIDE webpage (<https://innowwide.eu>) to check the outcome of the first call.

1.2. What is a VAP?

A VAP is the instrument conceived by the INNOWWIDE CSA for innovative European SMEs with the ambition to develop a new and innovative product-market combination (or process or service) with strategic counterparts outside Europe.

¹ In the context of INNOWWIDE co-creation of RTDI projects are intended as the joint definition of international collaborative RTDI projects of European /H2020 Associated Countries SMEs with entities from beyond the EU or Associated Countries for further joint product development. Product development must be understood in the widest sense, i.e. product / service / process development.

VAPs are a comprehensive, balanced and coherent set of preliminary technical, market, legal and socioeconomic assessments intended to validate the viability of an international, innovative business solution along emerging global value chains (international, innovative product-market combination development) in collaboration with strategic counterparts, considering where appropriate frugal innovation², **including the preparatory phase of a future International Cooperation RTDI project underpinning the product development stage.**

Each VAP must focus on a target third country as pilot market wherein to develop and validate the proposed innovative business solution, in close collaboration with local counterparts.

VAPs must also identify and assess key local technical and market framework conditions in the target third country that may favour or impede the effective deployment of the proposed innovative collaborative solution.

Finally, VAPs also include a refined and viable definition of such innovative business solution, together with their implementation strategies in the target third country.

After VAP implementation SMEs should have a clearer view regarding future product development activities in the target market together with local counterparts that could encourage future investment decisions.

1.3. VAPs specific requirements and outcome

More specifically, VAPs must:

- **Be the preliminary phase of a potential International Cooperation RTDI project of the applicant SME with local counterparts in the target country in the short or medium term³.**
- Feature a co-creation⁴ based product-market development preparatory work done by a European innovative SME together **with at least one future local strategic partner, initially bound in as subcontractor for VAP implementation⁵** -e.g. a supplier, customer, end user, research provider or complementary technology developer-. The foreseen product-market combination must create high impact on the targeted third country pilot market.

² Fraunhofer and Nesta (2017) define frugal innovation as: “the process of innovating in conditions of constraint, to produce solutions that are substantially more affordable than alternatives, and accessible to a broader range of people, while also meeting user needs as – or even more – effectively”. It is especially appropriate for open innovation schemes with lower end developing countries and should be considered for VAPs targeting them

³ Local counterparts could be the strategic subcontractor and/or another company / institution with RTDI capability and ready to favour the exploitation of the future technological cooperation RTDI project results

⁴ Co-creation (joint product / process / service development with local counterparts) is a management initiative, or form of economic strategy, that brings different parties together (for instance, a company and a group of customers), in order to jointly produce a mutually valued outcome. Co-creation brings a blend of ideas from direct customers or viewers (who are not the direct users of the product) which in turn creates new ideas to the organization. Cf. [Wikipedia](#)

⁵ Other non-strategic subcontractors brought in as conventional service providers are also allowed if needed and duly justified (e.g. innovation and/or market consultants, legal advisors etc.)

- Include a wide variety of activities to explore the practical (societal and cultural acceptance), technological and commercial viability of the proposed co-creation based innovative solution and how it needs to meet local conditions and demands.

- **Last six months**

- Have a minimum eligible budget of € 86,000

All the VAPs must result in a **final report**⁶ addressing the:

- **Technical feasibility (incl. upgrade/transfer/integration) of the proposed joint product-market development and future International Cooperation RTDI project preparation and inception**

- Business model viability

- Key local legal, financial, political, cultural and behavioural aspects conditioning business and technology development and how to cope with them

- Optimal exploitation pathways, including further RTDI and product development investment with local counterparts and involvement of potential end users / clients as early adopters / launching customers.

1.4. VAP eligible activities

The funded VAPs must involve combinations of the following activities:

1. Co-creation and technology uptake preparatory work (innovation and technology transfer services)

- a. **Definition of a future International Cooperation RTDI Project for co-creation or technology adaptation (including where appropriate frugal Innovation) with the local strategic subcontractor/s (compulsory)**
- b. Analysis of the IP environment
- c. Technology scouting and novelty verification
- d. Technology valuation
- e. Technology legal situation analysis
- f. Technology protection & valorisation strategy design
- g. Certification and homologation compliance verification. Compulsory regulatory technical certification, testing and benchmarking activities
- h. Technology partnership matchmaking
- i. Small scale proof of concept awareness (trial and assimilation, further RTDI preparatory work)

2. Market prospection and business model development

2.1 Market research (desk & field studies):

⁶ The beneficiary SME must commit to establish specific VAP financial accounts and to report to the INNOWWIDE consortium details of the execution and results of the VAP.

- a) Business opportunities early survey detection (pre-conceptualisation)
- b) Qualitative analysis (consumer analysis: segments, preferences, patterns, motivations, opinions, attitudes, values, culture, ...)
- c) Product commercial research (local customer experience oriented: concept, design, supply, use...)
- d) Market quantitative analysis (real, potential, tendencies)
- e) Competition analysis (market share, positioning, value propositions, value chains...)
- f) Analysis of potential partners for distribution and marketing
- g) Analysis of potential suppliers
- h) PESTLE and market barriers analysis (social, economic, environmental, technological and legal issues)

2.2. Compliance verification:

- a) Administrative & legal Freedom To Operate (FTO)/ due diligence verification
- b) Business related Social and cultural best practices identification and implementation planning

2.3. Business prospection trips (limited and duly justified):

- a) Trade fairs/ conferences/ info days/ networking and matchmaking events
- b) Joint workshops/ meetings with potential partners
- c) Workshops with partners to prepare joint RTDI proposals/ projects

2.4. Specific promotional technical material preparation (technology valorization oriented)

See the INNOWWIDE Call 2 guidelines for full details of the possible activities

To be eligible, the proposal must include at least:

- 4 elements from Section 1 – Co-creation and Technology Uptake Facilitation (Innovation and Technology Transfer Services). **Option a) thereof (definition phase of a future International Cooperation RTDI project) is compulsory.**
- 4 elements from Section 2.1 - Market research (desk & field studies)
- 1 element from Section 2.2 - Compliance verification
- Sections 2.3 and 2.4 are optional and must be duly justified for the purposes of the VAP.

2 Overview of the evaluation process and expert's role

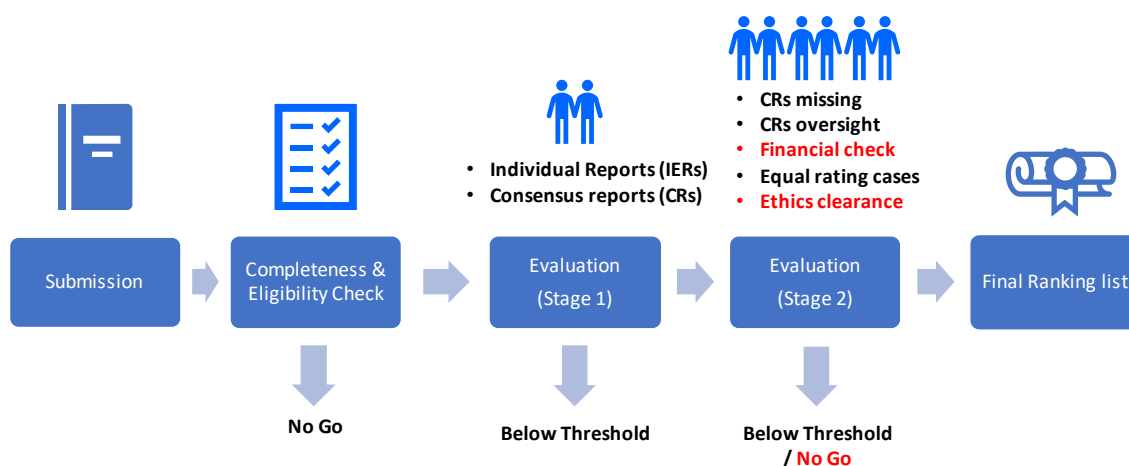
The INNOWWIDE CSA follows a two-stage remote evaluation process:

- > Stage 1: Individual VAP Evaluation by two remote independent experts, one of them acting as rapporteur in charge of drafting an Evaluation Consensus Report (CR).
- > Stage 2: High-level Experts Review Panel (ERP) oversight, dealing with, successively:
 1. VAPs without CR and/or strong discrepancies between evaluators at stage 1. ERP will produce those lacking from stage 1 together with their corresponding scoring.
 2. Stage-1 CRs and scores oversight to detect potential inconsistencies. CRs-scores alignment

3. Assessment of the financial situation of applicant SMEs for final high-scored, above threshold proposals with clear options of being funded
4. Final score adjustment of VAPs with equal scores and nearing the funding threshold
5. Further Ethics clearance, wherein those VAP proposals failing to comply with Ethics requirements will be discarded.

The ranking list stemming from the Ethics scrutiny will be the final one elevated to the INNOWWIDE CSA General Assembly (GA).

The diagram below illustrates the whole process:



Experts are chosen through a previous selection procedure, as commented in the following section. **Experts must have an excellent understanding of international collaborative RTDI planning and project implementation, dissemination and exploitation strategies (post-RTDI business development), appropriate target market areas and routes to those markets.**

Experts rely on their technical and market know-how within their field of expertise to provide objective assessments consisting of scores, comments and recommendations.

3 Experts’ selection, work and responsibilities

3.1. Application for INNOWWIDE Calls evaluation

In order to be selected as an INNOWWIDE CSA Expert, candidates must be included in the EUREKA Expert Database (EED)⁷. Specific calls for INNOWWIDE evaluation will be launched to raise awareness on the subject, see the INNOWWIDE website (<https://innowwide.eu>).

⁷ <https://expert-community.eurekanetwork.org/#/register>

3.2. Availability

Experts will be contacted approximately one month before the submission deadline for applications to confirm their availability and willingness to participate in the evaluation of applications. An availability request will be sent by the INNOWWIDE team via email. Experts will have the opportunity to confirm by clicking a link provided in the email. Upon positive feedback, they will be added to the list of experts available for evaluation. Experts cannot be selected unless they have electronically confirmed via email.

Available experts might not receive any assignments. This could be for several reasons:

- > No proposals within expert's areas of expertise.
- > Excellent profile, but other experts are more relevant for the VAP proposals received

3.3. Selection and assignment

After the submission deadline, the matching of the eligible applications with the potential experts is performed by INNOWWIDE team members with an appropriate background, using database search engines to identify the two most suitable experts from the availability list.

Two reserve experts will also be identified per project to be prepared for any eventuality.

Selected experts will receive an email notification with further instructions from the INNOWWIDE team to access the INNOWWIDE online platform, including, if not already done, the creation of a specific INNOWWIDE evaluator account

The email notification will also specify whether the expert has been selected as evaluator or evaluator & rapporteur. In the first case, the role will be to evaluate the assigned VAPs individually and share the evaluation comments and scores with a second evaluator through the INNOWWIDE online platform. In the second case, the role will be the same, and in case of agreement on the overall VAP evaluation, draft and draw up a single consensus report for the VAP (comments and scores), plus in case of disagreement, write down the main reasons of it. The rapporteur will be designated on the basis of the comparatively wider experience in international collaborative RTDI project implementation and post RTDI business development.

3.4. Acceptance

Selected experts must log into the INNOWWIDE online evaluation platform (<http://innowwide.smartsimple.ie>) to access their assigned applications, on the dashboard and carefully read the assigned VAPs descriptions. **They must accept or reject their assignments.** For the accepted assignment(s), they will receive an email with:

- a. The INNOWWIDE Statement of Work (SOW). **They must click on the link to accept the SOW.** Any evaluation work performed outside the scope of the SOW will not be accepted nor remunerated.
- b. The EUREKA Master Service Agreement (MSA), if not yet signed. **A signed copy must be sent back before the specified deadline.**

3.5. Performing the work

Evaluations must be performed in English and in accordance with the expectations of quality outlined previously. The deadline for performing the work is available in the SOW.

Should an expert be no longer available, they should inform the INNOWWIDE team as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made. Should an expert be unreachable, or their work not be identifiable in the platform for more than a week, the INNOWWIDE team reserves the right to seek an alternative expert – usually one of the reserve experts originally identified.

Experts must:

1. Perform the evaluation of each VAP by rating and commenting upon each of the evaluation criteria according to the INNOWWIDE scoring system provided below.
2. Share and comment upon the evaluation of each VAP with the second evaluator assigned to it and try to reach a consensus in scores and comments.
3. Double-check the content and make sure the individual evaluation forms are complete (once submitted no more changes can be made).
4. Submit their completed individual evaluation(s) before the deadline specified in the SOW.
5. *(For Experts selected as evaluators & rapporteurs)* Additionally write down and upload onto the platform an evaluation Consensus Report (CR) with the shared and valid comments and scores for all the evaluation blocks before the deadline specified in the SOW. Individual evaluations will be stored, but the evaluation output for the applicant will be a single evaluation consensus report with consensus scores.
6. Finally, expert will have to fill out the invoice for their work (template available in the INNOWWIDE Dashboard) and send it to the INNOWWIDE Team at innowwide.finance@eurekanetwork.org

Experts can track the status of their reviews in the INNOWWIDE online dashboard:

- *‘Pending’*: please accept or reject the review;
- *‘Review Underway’*: please complete your review;
- *‘Submitted’*: review completeness checks underway;
- *‘Completed’*: your review was accepted;
- *‘Clarification needed’*: an email will be sent to you with further details;
- *‘Rejected’*: your review was not accepted;

3.6. Delivery

The INNOWWIDE platform prevents uploading of empty or incomplete evaluations. Should there be a problem in uploading the evaluation, please check that it is complete. **Evaluations can only be uploaded once.** If it is submitted in error, or amendments are needed in any of the evaluation reports, experts must contact the email address experts.innowwide@eurekanetwork.org for support.

3.7. Quality assurance

The INNOWWIDE team performs quality checks in order to ensure the highest quality of evaluation. If improvements are required, the experts will be asked, by email, to amend their evaluation. The experts will have to log into the INNOWWIDE online platform to correct and resubmit the evaluation.

If the quality issues are not addressed, within the specified deadline, the INNOWWIDE team reserves the right to refuse payment and/or, in serious cases, to exclude an expert from the EED.

3.8. Experts' responsibilities

The experts are expected to follow EUREKA's code of practice:

- > Evaluate applications independently.
- > Evaluate applications objectively and without prejudice.
- > Give enough time and effort to the process.
- > Provide accurate scores using the entirety of the scale available
- > Clearly justify each score that is provided.
- > Provide statements which are specific to the application at hand.
- > Provide statements and scores not contradictory to one another.
- > Uphold the confidential nature of the application.

No vague, generic or formulaic answers taken from this document, other INNOWWIDE guidelines, or readily available information sources (e.g. Wikipedia) will be accepted.

3.9. Conflicts of interest

Experts are expected to openly and honestly inform the INNOWWIDE team if there is any reason why they cannot or might not be able to perform an objective evaluation.

If this is the case, these experts will be unable to evaluate applications during that period but will be welcome to participate again in the future.

Occasionally, it is not clear that a conflict exists until after the initial invitation. As long as an expert informs us as soon as they are aware of the fact, steps will be taken to correct this. If the expert does not do so:

- > The expert will be excluded from working for INNOWWIDE or other EUREKA programmes in the future.

- > The INNOWWIDE team will seek reimbursement of all fees paid to the expert for their work.
- > The INNOWWIDE team will inform the European Commission, and those responsible for managing their expert evaluation processes.

If an expert has any doubts about this issue, he shall email immediately at experts.innowwide@eurekanetwork.org with the subject line ‘Question regarding conflict of interest for INNOWWIDE applications’.

Conflict of Interest	
Disqualifying: The expert...	Potentially disqualifying: The expert...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - was involved in the preparation of an application; - stands to benefit directly should an application be accepted; - stands to benefit directly should an application be rejected; - has a close or other family relationship with any person representing an applicant legal entity in the applications; - is a director, trustee or partner of an application legal entity; - is employed by one of the applicant legal entities in the applications; - is in any other situation that compromises his/her ability to evaluate the applications objectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - was employed by one of the applicant legal entities in an application within the previous two (2) years; - is employed by one of the INNOWWIDE consortium members; - is involved in a contract or research collaboration with an applicant legal entity, or had been so in the previous two (2) years; - is in any other situation that could cast doubt on his/her ability to evaluate the applications impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party. - Other circumstances which may arise but are not specifically listed above.

The expert shall have not submitted nor have been involved in any application to be assessed during the prescribed evaluation period.

If an expert discovers that their assigned application raises a conflict of interest, they are under the obligation to declare this to the EUREKA Association immediately.

3.10. Payment to experts

Each expert will be assigned a number of specific VAPs throughout the Stage 1 evaluation period of 10 working days. Experts will receive an email with the details of the fee to be paid, based upon the number of VAP accepted in point 3.4 to be evaluated by them.

Each expert must satisfy the following conditions to receive payment for their work:

- > Be included in the EUREKA Expert Database and have a valid and signed Master Service Agreement (MSA);

- > Electronically accept the SOW received via email;
- > Complete the assigned evaluation(s) before the agreed deadline – i.e. **the reviews must have received the status ‘Completed’ in the INNOWWIDE online platform**
- > Submit an invoice to the EUREKA Association containing the SOW reference number and the reviewed application number(s) and acronym(s) (e.g. VAP: # Acronym: ????) to innowwide.finance@eurekanetwork.org

Invoices received from experts that do not fulfil one or more of the above-mentioned conditions will not be processed by the INNOWWIDE team.

Please keep in mind that the payments to experts will be processed 30 working days **after the end of the evaluation period**, not after an expert has submitted their review or invoice.

4 The INNOWWIDE Evaluation System

4.1. Stage 1: Individual evaluation and Consensus Reports

First, at stage 1, two independent experts will evaluate all submitted proposals having passed the eligibility and completeness check.

4.1.1. Evaluation documents

INNOWWIDE uses an online call management platform (see section 3) where all the necessary documents and forms for performing the evaluation work are located.

The following documentation is needed to successfully complete an evaluation:

1. VAP application form: consisting of General Information, The Pitch, Proposal Excellence, Impact and Implementation Sections;
2. VAP Evaluation form: a form where scores and justifications are recorded (See Annex).

The email address that the expert provided during the registration to EUREKA’s expert database (EED)⁸ will be used in all communication regarding the evaluation. If an expert wishes to communicate via a different email, they are required to update their profile in the Expert database accordingly.

4.1.2. Scoring system

All submitted proposals having passed the eligibility and completeness check will be passed onto and evaluated by 2 independent experts against the following evaluation criteria and scores, based on a 200 points scale:

⁸ <https://expert-community.eurekanetwork.org>

1. Excellence = 30% of the final score – maximum 60 points – threshold 30 points

- **Future collaborative RTDI project excellence/quality.**
- Technical and commercial novelty and ambition
- Relevance for target market
- Competitive position
- Alignment with applicant SME overall business strategy⁹

2. Impact = 40% of the final score – maximum 80 points – threshold 50 points

- **Ability to generate co-creation and future International Cooperation RTDI projects** (including where appropriate frugal Innovation) involving the applicant and local partners.
- Market generation potential in the short, medium and long term in the target country:
 - o Convincing previous estimate of new and substantial demand and expectation (including willingness to pay) and needs of targeted audiences for the innovation.
 - o Total target market size and growth-rate envisaged. Expected target market share
- Estimated added value of the proposed product, service or business model.
- Market barriers potential reduction and early adopters' engagement
- Cost and time to market reduction
- Scale-up and job creation potential
- Expected market expansion beyond the initial target country
- Societal, environmental, ethics and gender relevance, in particular within the frame of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3. Quality and efficiency of implementation = 30% of the final score – maximum 60 points – threshold 30 points

- Appropriateness, feasibility and mutual consistency of VAP objectives, impact, approach and proposed activities.
- Technical/business experience of the team. Complementary expertise and competences, high added value and clear mutual benefits **Especially, capability to undertake a further International Cooperation RTDI project.**

⁹ Applicants will be asked to clarify in the application form why a VAP is needed for their innovation-based international product-market development, including an explanation on the constraints they are facing. **Business-as-usual approaches will not be accepted**

- Availability of resources required (personnel, facilities, networks, etc.);
- Clear justification of VAP costs (staff, equipment, consumables, subcontracting, others)
- Relevant, realistic description of how the beneficiary SME and the subcontractor/s, especially strategic ones will be involved and related.
- Realistic timeframe and comprehensive description of implementation (milestones, risk management) taking the company's or applicant's innovation ambitions and objectives into account.

The following Score Equivalence Table will be applied at stage 1:

	Excellence	Impact	Implementation
Non eligible	0 points. The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.		
Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.	1-12	1-16	1-12
Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.	13-24	17-32	13-24
Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.	25-36	33-48	25-36
Very good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.	37-48	49-64	37-48
Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.	49-60	65-80	49-60

Proposals will proceed to the Evaluation Stage 2 and will be directly included in an *initial ranking list* if their consensus scores are equal or above the following thresholds:

1. Excellence: 30 points
2. Impact: 50 points
3. Quality and efficiency of implementation: 30 points
4. Overall score: 150 points

Proposals below any of these thresholds will be discarded. **This means that proposals failing to reach at least good qualifications and their upper limit scores in the Excellence and**

Implementation Sections, and very good qualifications in the Impact Section in the table above will not go through to Stage 2.

An **Individual Evaluation Report (IER)** will be prepared by each expert, including specific comments for every aspect to be considered for scoring each criterion. Once the IERs be finalized, one the 2 experts, acting as rapporteur, will draft a **Consensus Report (CR)** with the same structure of the IERs and put forward specific comments and consensus scores to be discussed with the other expert¹⁰.

Both the individual and consensus evaluation outputs must be useful and relevant. They must be coherent, relevant and constructive since they will be used to provide feedback to the applicants.

Proposals failing to receive CRs nor consensus scores will be also forwarded to the Evaluation Stage 2 (together with their IERs and disagreement notes) for their review and corresponding CRs preparation and consensus scores assignment by the External Review Panel (see below).

The evaluators' comments will focus on identifying VAPs main strengths and weaknesses in each evaluation block and overall, since they will be the basis for the initial qualitative judgement of them (poor-fair-good-very good-excellent) and the subsequent quantitative scoring within the limits established in the equivalence table above

4.2. Stage 2: External Review Panel

Stage 2 evaluation is performed by an External Review Panel (ERP) composed of a minimum of five independent experts with a high-level strategic, technical, market, business development and financial expertise¹¹.

The INNOWWIDE team will assign proposals passing to Stage 2 trying to match each one of them with the most appropriate ERP expert profiles in a balanced manner.

The experts will review their assigned proposals remotely and will be invited to a one-day remote panel discussion to ratify the results and resolve any disagreements. One of the members will be appointed as the Chair of the ERP to facilitate the panel discussions and resolve any disagreements that might occur. The ERP Chairman will run the remote panel meeting.

4.2.1. Step 1: Consensus Reports for VAPs without them at Stage 1

The ERP will first look at proposals without a CR reached by the two evaluators at Stage 1, producing and writing down them and their corresponding scores. All proposals that did not have a CR in Stage 1 will be additionally reviewed by **one ERP member**, who will check the individual Evaluation Reports and all comments from the two independent experts from Stage 1. The ERP member will produce the CR and the new scores based on the abovementioned

¹⁰ See 3.5 Performing the work

¹¹ More detailed internal planning and operational procedures are included in the ERP Mandate and Terms of Reference to be sent to the experts involved in it.

evaluation criteria, the stage 1 evaluation information provided and his/her expertise and present the CR for scrutiny before the ERP.

- Those proposals finally scored above threshold in the opinion of the ERP will be included in the abovementioned initial ranking list directly coming from Stage 1, according to their scores.
- Those proposals finally scored below threshold will be discarded

This Step 1 will be performed remotely on the INNOWWIDE online platform.

4.2.2. Step 2: CRs and scores oversight

Emerging CRs and scores from evaluation stage 1 will be overseen by ERP members to detect potential inconsistencies between CRs and scores, and ensure an appropriate CRs-scores alignment by adjusting scores whenever appropriate. Every CR and its related scores will be checked by **one ERP member** and its outcome will be presented for approval by the ERP at the one-day remote panel discussion. In principle only quite a few of these cases are expected since the CR drafting exercise at evaluation stage 1 is precisely thought out to avoid it.

4.2.3. Step 3: Assessment of the financial SME situation of shortlisted proposals

For final above threshold scored proposals included in the initial ranking list and with high chances of being funded (70 uppermost ranked proposals and the following 15), the ERP will then analyse more in depth the financial situation and prospects of those of their related applicant SMEs with detected insufficient or not credible financial ratios from the self-Financial Viability Checks (weak FVC score, equal or below 5) requested at the submission stage, in order to confirm their financial capability to implement the VAP.

Start-ups or SMEs without two years of financial records will be also financially assessed in any case; instead of the self-financial Viability Check the financial assessment will be based on a two-year Business Plan requested as well at the submission stage.

SMEs with a weak FVC score will be reviewed remotely by **one ERP member** in order to confirm the capability of the applicant to implement the VAP.

Business plans from start-ups or SMEs without two years of financial records will be reviewed remotely by **two ERP members**. Any disagreements between the ERP members will be discussed and clarified during the one-day remote panel discussion. The ERP chair will intervene in cases where consensus cannot be reached.

SMEs with assessed insufficient or not credible financial situation will be discarded from the initial ranking list.

4.2.4. Step 4: Ranking readjustment of equally scored proposals

The ERP will readjust the ranking order of those proposals with equal scores and near the funding threshold (positioned between 55 and 85). To this end they will take account of, in this order:

- i. The consensus scores already received in the Excellence Section, and the comments given by the stage-1 experts (or by the additional ERP expert in case of lack of CR at stage 1) on the quality and best definition of the further RTDI project
- ii. the geographical balance of target country groups.

Two members of the ERP will review remotely these proposals.

Any disagreement between the ERP members will be discussed and clarified during the one-day remote panel discussion. Each proposal will be discussed and consensus will be reached regarding the final scores. The ERP chair will intervene in cases where consensus cannot be reached.

4.2.5. Step 5: Ethics review

Finally, two Ethics experts will review the list of proposals that passed the previous Stage 2 steps discarding those not complying with the applicable Ethics requirements.

The final ranking list emerging from the Ethics clearance will be the final one forwarded to the General Assembly (GA) for approval.

5 Call financial decision

The proposed final ranking list of the VAPs will be presented to the INNOWWIDE General Assembly (GA) for approval. It will be composed of the 70 first ranked successful VAPs, followed by a reserve list of ranked VAPs over threshold, financially and ethically viable. Funding will be allocated according to the ranking list until the call available budget (4.2 M€) is exhausted.

Annex 1: Evaluation form

SECTION ONE – SCORE

1. Excellence

The expert should provide feedback on each one of the following elements:

- > **¿Is a reliable and feasible future collaborative RTDI project adequately envisaged and outlined?**
- > Does the proposal introduce comparative business novelty and/or technical improvements regarding the specific local market conditions?
- > Are the planned actions relevant for the target market?
- > Will the product, service or business model have a significant advantage over competing products or benefit the customers?
- > Is the VAP ambition presented realistic and well defined?
- > Is VAP aligned with the applicant SME overall business strategy?
- > **To sum up: Main strengths and weaknesses within this subsection**

2. Impact

The expert should provide feedback on each one of the following elements:

- > **Is the VAP likely to facilitate significant and relevant further co-creation and related future collaborative RTDI projects involving the applicant and local partners?**
- > Are the estimations for the potential market size and its growth rate in the target country realistic? Is the potential target country market share well considered and justified?
- > Is there substantial real demand on the targeted market? Are the market estimates and expectations of the newly created demand in the target country convincing?
- > What is the added value of the proposed new product, service or business model?
- > Has the proposal identified potentially affordable target market barriers?
 - Regulatory
 - Standards and certification
 - Commercial
 - Competition (including IPR)
 - Quality
 - Pricing
 - Market acceptance
- > Have important target third country early adopter customers / users been engaged?
- > Has any way of time and cost to market reduction been identified?

- > What is the potential for scale-up and job creation for the applicant? Is there a potential effect on the foreign technology and business partners involved?
- > What is the global dimension of the proposal in terms of further market development and commercialization beyond the target country?
- > What is the relevance of the proposal on societal, environmental, ethics, gender and other similar issues?
- > **To sum up: Main strengths and weaknesses within this subsection**

3. **Quality and efficiency of implementation**

The expert should provide feedback on the following elements:

- > Are the objectives, expected outputs and impacts, approach and proposed activities appropriate, feasible, mutually consistent and well presented, **having in mind future co-creation and collaborative RTDI work to support product-market development**? Are the VAP goals clearly identified and logically presented?
- > Is there a realistic timeframe and comprehensive description of VAP implementation key issues (milestones, deliverables, risk management and contingency plans) taking the company's or applicant's innovation ambitions and objectives into account?
- > Does the proposal demonstrate and realistically justify that adequate resources to carry out the VAP **and undertake a further collaborative RTDI project** are/will be available, particularly?
 - *Staff*: relevant **technical and business experience**, capabilities and allocation
 - *Subcontractors, in particular strategic ones* (future RTDI partner(s)): Are their roles, tasks and responsibilities clearly described and explained? Do they meet the strategic role required?
- > Are the VAP costs (staff, equipment, consumables, subcontracting, others) clearly justified?
- > **To sum up: Main strengths and weaknesses within this subsection**

SECTION 2 – NARRATIVE

Under the Section 2 experts should make appropriate comments:

1. Please describe three **main strengths** of the proposal.
2. Please describe three **main weaknesses** of the proposal.
3. Please provide a **brief summary of your overall conclusions**



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