

Guidelines for Evaluators



Water Joint Programming Initiative WaterWorks2014 Cofunded Call

Research and Innovation for Developing
Technological Solutions and Services for
Water Systems

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Abbreviations

Col = Conflict of Interest

CS = Call Secretariat

CSC = Call Steering Committee

CV = Curriculum Vitae

EU = European Union

IPR = Intellectual Property Rights

NCP = National Contact Point

SER = Summary Evaluation Report

SRIA = Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda

Water JPI = The Joint Programming Initiative "Water Challenges for a Changing World"

I. Introduction

The Joint Programming Initiative “Water Challenges for a Changing World” ([Water JPI](#)) is an intergovernmental initiative with the vision of achieving sustainable water systems for a sustainable economy in Europe and abroad. However, addressing this grand challenge requires a transnational and multi-disciplinary approach to the economic, ecological, technological and societal challenges facing European waters.

Since 2008, Water JPI has assembled a cohesive group of European Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Programmes from 19 partner countries plus the European Commission (EC) and from 5 observer countries. Water JPI has achieved a joint vision on water challenges, a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) (version 1.0, October 2014) and is committed to play a pivotal role in the building of the European Research Area (ERA) in collaboration with H2020.

WaterWorks2014 responds to the Horizon 2020 (H2020) Societal Challenge 5 2014 Call topic Water-3 [2014]: Stepping up EU research and innovation cooperation in the water area. This ERA-NET Cofund constitutes a major step towards the planning and implementation of Water JPI activities and aims at further reducing the fragmentation and dispersion of EU water-related Research and Innovation activities and supporting EU policies and initiatives in the field of water.

A total of 17 Funding Partner Organisations (FPOs) from 15 countries have agreed to launch in March 2015 a cofunded transnational and multidisciplinary call for research and innovation proposals on the topic “**Research and Innovation for Developing Technological Solutions and Services for Water Systems**”:

1. **for Water Treatment, Reuse, Recycling and Desalination;**
2. **for Water Resources Management;**
3. **to Mitigate Impacts of Extreme Events (Floods and Droughts) at Catchment Scale.**

For further detail, please consult the *Call Announcement*.

II. Online Evaluation System

Access to the proposals under evaluation is granted through the Online Evaluation Portal (<https://ww2014-submission.fct.pt>). Credentials (usernames and passwords) to access the portal will be sent to the reviewers by the CS.

For each proposal, the following items/features are available:

- A statement on Conflicts of Interest;
- All information submitted in the application form. The application forms can be printed and a pdf file can be generated with it;
- Evaluation Report Forms.

III. Evaluation Criteria

The scientific evaluation is based on the following award review criteria:

1. Excellence

The following aspects should be taken into account, to the extent that the proposed work corresponds to the topic description:

- Clarity and pertinence of the objectives;
- Credibility of the proposed approach;
- 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).

2. Impact

The following aspects should be taken into account, to the extent to which the outputs of the project should contribute at the European and/or International level:

- The expected impacts listed in the H2020 Societal Challenge 5, Call topic Water-3 [2014];
- 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 public and private markets, including public administrators (public executive bodies) and civil society organizations;
- Any other environmental and socially important impacts;
- 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;
- Support the development of technological solutions and services for the implementation of EU water policy.

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation

The following aspects should be taken into account:

- 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.

NOTE:

No appeal can be brought to challenge evaluation's results or decisions of the CSC.

IV. Scoring System

The WaterWorks2014 Cofunded Call scoring system uses a **1-4 point scale** (no half-marks allowed).

If the pre-proposal or full proposal is within the scope of the call, the following scoring system should be applied: POOR, FAIR, GOOD, EXCELLENT.

POOR (scoring value = 1). The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

FAIR (scoring value = 2). The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

GOOD (scoring value = 3). The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

EXCELLENT (scoring value = 4). The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

The threshold will be defined by the CSC in view of the results of the evaluation.

Reviewers have to identify strengths and weaknesses (if any) for each criterion and should provide context for their comments based on the application, i.e., evaluators will be asked to score proposals as they were submitted, rather than on their potential if certain changes were to be made. When an evaluator identifies significant shortcomings, he or she must reflect this by awarding a lower score for the criterion concerned. Finally, the Evaluation Panel is asked to give an overall assessment of the application including the strengths and weaknesses, as well as possible additional recommendations. There should be consistency between the numerical scores and written comments.

The following approach will be applied for every group of *ex-aequo* proposals requiring prioritisation:

- Precedence of criteria: The scores in the criterion “Excellence” take precedence over “Impact” and this over “Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation”.

If a distinction still cannot be made, the Evaluation Panel and the Call Steering Committee (CSC) may decide to approve additional factors. These factors will be documented in the Evaluation Report of the Evaluation Panel.

V. Evaluation Procedures

The WaterWorks2014 Funding Partners launch this joint call through a two-step procedure:

STEP I: Pre-Proposals

All eligible pre-proposals will be subject to a remote scientific evaluation by at least two external evaluators based on two criteria - ‘Excellence’ and ‘Impact’. A ranked list of pre-proposals will be produced based on the final scores given to the aforementioned criteria.

The objective of this first step is to identify the best proposals to proceed to Step 2 and ensure the balance between the requested and available funds at the national level. For this purpose, the FPOs will consider setting a value ratio of 3 as a standard between requested and available funding.

STEP 2: Full Proposals

All full proposals will be subject to a single international peer review process by an Evaluation Panel based on three criteria - 'Excellence', 'Impact' and 'Quality and Efficiency of Implementation'. A ranked list of proposals will be produced based on the final scores given to the aforementioned criteria.

Evaluation Panel

The constitution of the Evaluation Panel will take into consideration the number of applications for each topic/subtopic, a good gender balance, a fair geographic and institutional distribution of evaluators, an open nationality policy (part of the Evaluation Panel members may come from countries not participating in the call to allow for additional flexibility in case of conflicting interests) and a diversified professional experience/background in RDI (e.g. policy, academia, industry, etc.).

The proposals will be distributed among the Evaluation Panel members according to their expertise. The Evaluation Panel will be headed by a Chair. The Panel Chair will be a regular member of the panel with the added duties of moderating the panel meeting and conveying the results of the discussions to the CSC.

Each proposal will be evaluated with the assistance of at least three Panel members: 1st Reader and Rapporteur, 2nd Reviewer, and 3rd Reviewer.

The composition of the Evaluation Panel (as a group and not per individual proposal) will be made public once the CSC has made their final funding decisions and published on the Water JPI webpage and on the WaterWorks2014 Funding Partner Organisations webpages.

Role of the Evaluation Panel

- Submit written individual evaluation reports of the proposal(s) assigned to them on the online evaluation portal before the panel meeting;
- Inform in advance the CS of any potential or disqualifying conflicts of interest;
- Inform in advance the CS of the need to obtain additional external evaluations (to provide knowledge in a particular field);
- Prepare the evaluation meeting through a careful reading of all proposals and respective individual evaluations reports. The proposals and respective individual evaluation reports will be made available to all panel members about two weeks before the panel meeting;
- Commonly discuss all full-proposals during the panel meeting, taking into account the individual evaluation reports produced by the external experts and EP members, and decide its final ratings and the comments to be transmitted to the applicants;
- Submit in the online evaluation system a written Consensus Report (CR) for each application explaining the Panel final decision to the applicants and to the CSC;
- Produce the final ranked list of applications. This will be achieved using the final evaluation scores given (based on evaluation criteria scores and threshold levels);
- Produce a Panel Meeting Report with a summary of the meeting and comments regarding the evaluation process (namely, the working methodology adopted by the panel, the identification of potential Col issues and their resolution and recommendations that might help to improve procedures in future calls). This report should be signed by all evaluation panel members.

Panel Evaluation Meeting

The EP meeting is anticipated for the 29-30 October 2015. All logistic arrangements related to this final meeting will be carried out by the Call Secretariat.

All proposals will be commonly discussed by the EP, barring conflicts of interest, and their relative merit assessed. Discussions on each proposal will be led by the first reviewers or rapporteurs and should take into account all individual evaluation reports produced by the reviewers and EP members. Panel members will then reach an agreement on the proposal's final rates and the comments to be transmitted to the applicants.

Advice may also be requested about the relative importance of each partner's contribution to the collaborative proposal.

The CS will be the contact point for the reviewers throughout the evaluation period and will assist the panel during the panel evaluation meeting.

VI. Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

Confidentiality

Research plans, abstracts, and evaluation statements are confidential documents. Proposal documents should therefore be handled and stored with due care and confidentiality.

All reviewers involved in the evaluation are asked not to disclose any information concerning the proposal documents or their evaluation to outsiders, during and after the evaluation process has been concluded. In addition, reviewers should not copy, quote or otherwise use material contained in the applications for anybody's benefit or disadvantage.

In case of doubts/questions about the proposal documents or evaluations, reviewers are advised to contact the CS.

Once the evaluation has been completed, external reviewers and EP members are required to destroy all proposal documents and any copies made of them or return them to the CS.

Conflict of Interest (Col)

Representatives of the WaterWorks2014 Funding Partner Organisations (CSC, CS, NCP's), Reviewers and EP members and are required to declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest towards the proposals submitted under the WaterWorks2014 Cofunded Call.

Reviewers that have submitted any applications to the present Call, both as Consortium Coordinator, Principal Investigator or Research Team Member, have to decline participating in the evaluation process.

Circumstances that could be interpreted as a disqualifying conflict of interest are laid down in the following criteria:

- 1 - First-degree relationship, marriage, life partnership, domestic partnership;
- 2 - Personal interest in the application's success or financial interest by persons listed under no.1;

- 3 - Current or planned close scientific cooperation;
- 4 - Dependent employment relationship or supervisory relationship (e.g. teacher-student relationship up to and including the postdoctoral phase) extending five years beyond the conclusion of the relationship;
- 5 - The affiliation or pending transfer to the applying institutes/organizations;
- 6 - Researchers who are active in a council or similar supervisory board of the applying institution are excluded from participating in the review and decision-making process for applications originating from this institution;

A potential conflict of interest may exist, even in cases not covered by the clear disqualifying conflicts indicated above, in the following circumstances:

- 7 - Relationships that do not fall under no. 1, other personal ties or conflicts;
- 8 - Financial interests of persons listed under no.7;
- 9 - Participation in university bodies other than those listed under no. 6, e.g. in scientific advisory committees in the research environment;
- 10 - Research cooperation within the last three years, e.g. joint publications;
- 11 - Preparation of an application or implementation of a project with a closely related research topic (competition);
- 12 - Participating in an on-going scientific or inter-personal conflict with the applicant(s).

The individual reviewer will not be able to proceed in case of a disqualifying conflict of interest. In this case the individual reviewer is required to inform the CS of the situation, for project re-allocation.

The Potential Cols declared will be analysed by the CS in Step 1 and by the CS and the EP Chair in Step 2. Should a Col emerge for any panel member, the Chair should solve it supported by the CS and make an explicit mention of it on the Panel Meeting Report. The reviewer concerned must leave the meeting room during the proposal discussion.

VII. Glossary

WaterWorks2014 = ERA-NET Cofund with the European Commission.

ERA-NET = Instrument using grants to support public-public partnerships in their preparation, establishment of networking structures, design, implementation and coordination of joint activities as well as Union topping up of no more than one joint call a year and of actions of a transnational nature.

Cofunded Call = Call for RDI proposals with top-up funding from the EU.

Consortium/Consortia = Transnational collaborative RDI proposal(s), comprised by a minimum of three partners that must be eligible to be funded by three different participating countries.

Consortium Coordinator = Coordinator of the transnational collaborative research, development and innovation proposal. Coordinates the submission of the proposal prepared by the partners to the WaterWorks2014 online submission system, represents the Consortium before the CSC and the CS and, if funded, is responsible for the project internal management.

Principal Investigator = Leader of the research team of an applicant organization/institution.

Team Member = Member of a research team of an applicant organization/institution.