



Fundamental set of rules for a European system

20.06.2017 Version 3

Grant Agreement n° 312762

Acronym : EUROFLEETS2

Title: New operational steps towards an alliance of
European research fleets

Activity type: Networking Activity

WP N°: 5

Task N°: 5.3

Deliverable N°: D 5.7

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Reference: EUROFLEETS2-WP5-D5.7-200617-V3

Security: Public

Document information	
Document Name	Fundamental set of rules for a European system
Document ID	EUROFLEETS2-WP5-D5.7-200617-V3.doc
Revision	V3
Revision Date	
Author	AWI
Security	Public

Approvals				
	Name	Organisation	Date	Visa
Coordinating team	V. Mazauric	Ifremer	29/06/17	
Activity Coordinator				
WP Leaders				

History			
Revision	Date	Modification	Author
	27.06.2016	First release	AWI
	13.09.2016	Update	AWI
	20.06.2017	Update	AWI

Diffusion list				
All beneficiaries				

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1. Introduction

This Deliverable centres on the task 5.3 “Models to achieve a shared European evaluation procedure”.

This task will therefore deal with:

- * Establishing a model for a harmonised European evaluation system that can be applied to European calls;
- * Disseminating this model to national, European and international agencies and initiating a discussion with these agencies or structures to adopt this model, fully or partly, for applications from European Researchers for ship-time on their research vessels.

This Deliverable addresses the establishment of a model for a harmonised European Evaluation system.

2. The EUROFLEETS2 Ship time Evaluation System

The EUROFLEETS2 Evaluation System is based upon the best experiences from different European ship-time application and evaluation procedures further considering general European Science Foundation (ESF) as well as European Commission evaluation procedures. A set of public documents, such as guidelines for applicants, guidelines for evaluators, and evaluation criteria, were drafted and agreed within the Research Vessel (RV) operators to implement the evaluation system.

The **Figure 1** below outlines the different stages of the evaluation and the bodies involved in the execution of respective tasks.

The evaluation procedure is as follows:

1. ELIGIBILITY

Upon call closure the Evaluation Office (EO) checks if proposals meet the eligibility criteria. When proposals fail to meet these, they are excluded from the further evaluation process and rejected by the EO.

2. SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION

A member of the Scientific Review Panel (SRP), expert on the respective proposal topic, is allocated to each proposal by the chair of the SRP and the EO. This SRP member accompanies the proposals and he/she is responsible for throughout the different steps of the evaluation process and – if the proposal is successful – even afterwards for the cruise reporting. One member of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) participates at the SRP meetings ensuring the transparency of the evaluation process.

- a) **Selection of reviewers:** The Scientific Review Panel suggests external experts to evaluate each of the proposals.
- b) **Individual assessment:** The review is carried out by three external experts per proposal.
- c) **Consensus evaluation:** Every SRP member reports on his/her allocated proposal and comments on the received reviews. This is followed by an open discussion where the SRP members reach a consensus.

All proposals for which at least two reviews are available are discussed according to the scientific criteria. Further secondary criteria, like the involvement of countries with less access to marine infrastructure (though a proper definition remains open) and new user groups, the age/position of the PI, female applicants and, if applicable, the potential use of remote access by shore based scientists are also taken into account. The watchdog gave a report and commented on the received reviews for a given proposal followed by an open discussion.

In the case that not all three requested reviews are available, the following routine is applied: If two reviews are available and there is agreement on the proposal evaluation results, the proposal is discussed and a final decision is made in the consensus meeting. In case two reviews deviate considerably, a third review is requested in order to obtain a final judgement on the proposal. If only one review is available, the proposal is discussed, however a decision on this proposal is postponed until at least one more review is available. In these cases the new reviews are circulated and a final judgement is taken by e-mail.

In case of conflict of interest of any of the SRP members, either being a Principal Investigator (PI) or partner on a proposal, or belonging to an institution involved in the proposal under discussion, the SRP member is requested to leave the room during the discussion of the proposal.

Proposals are assigned to categories defined previously in the Guidelines for Applicants:

- A - Recommended for scheduling
- B - Additional proposals
- C - Not recommended

- d) **Interranking:** In a second round, the proposals are ranked and recommended for scheduling or rejected.

3. LOGISTIC EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

Only the proposals ranked as excellent are recommended for scheduling and forwarded to the Logistic Review Panel (LRP). The LRP evaluates the proposals for their logistical feasibility following their assigned ranking number, independently of the RV requested, and they ultimately decide which RV fits best each proposal.

4. FEEDBACK AND NEGOTIATION OF SUCCESSFUL PROPOSALS

All applicants receive a funding decision accompanied by a Consensus Evaluation Report (CER), which is prepared by the allocated SRP member. The CER is based upon the individual reviews and takes comments and judgements made during the SRP discussion into account. Proposals selected for funding start the negotiation phase to include the cruise in the respective RV schedule.

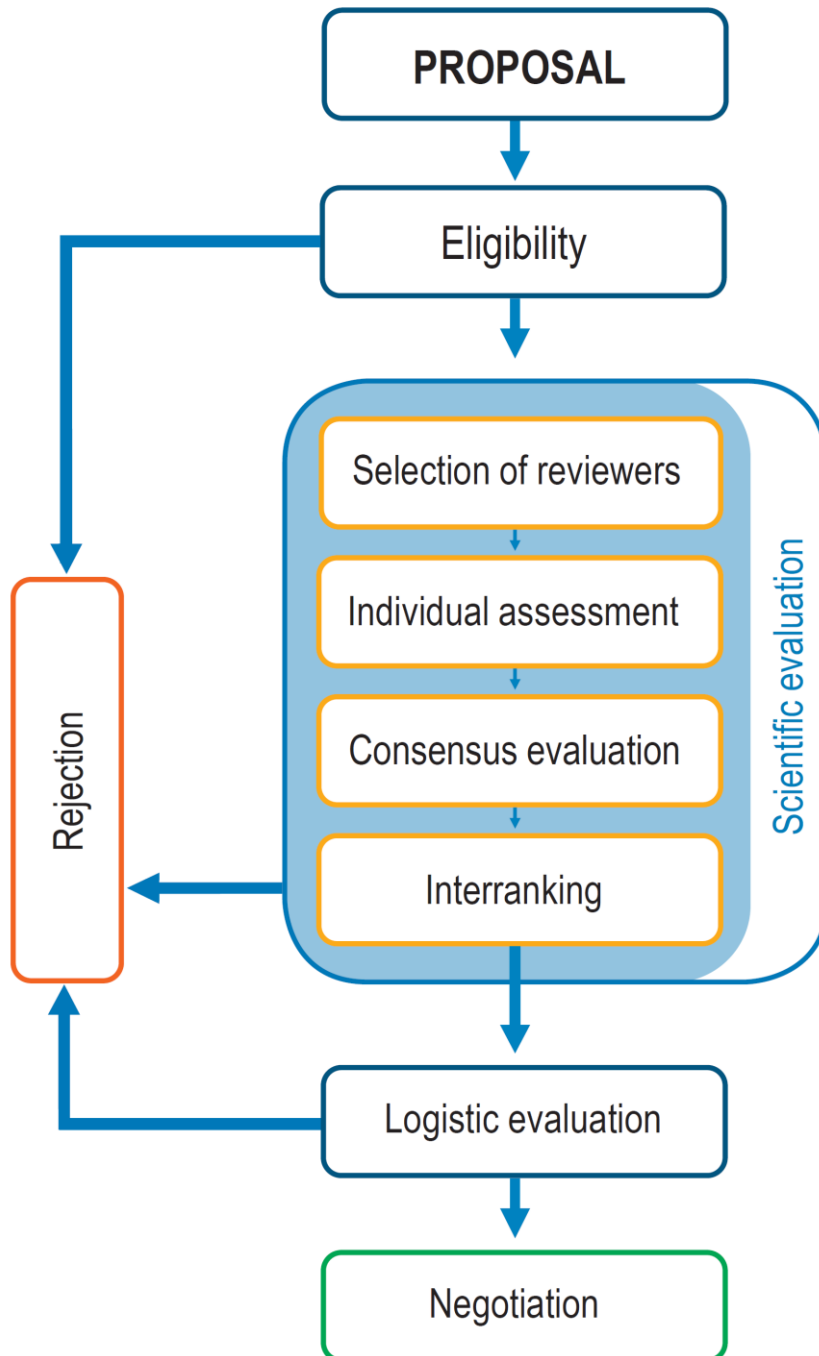


Figure 1: Work flow and different steps involved in the EUROFLEETS evaluation procedure

3. The EUROFLEETS2 Proposal Eligibility Criteria

Proposals for access to any of the offered infrastructures within EUROFLEETS2 were accepted for evaluation if they met all of the following six strict criteria:

- 1) Affiliation (1):** The Principal Investigator (PI) and the majority of the users must work in an institution established in a member state of the European Union or state associated to Framework Programme 7 (Switzerland, Israel, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Albania and Montenegro, Faroe Islands as stated on the CORDIS website). This requirement ensures that EUROFLEETS2 gives access mainly to EU or associated FP7 users.
- 2) Affiliation (2):** The PI of a project and the majority of the users must work in a country other than the country the requested infrastructure is based. They cannot apply for ship-time on a research vessel from their own country, e.g. a PI working at a Spanish institution is entitled to apply for ship-time on all of the listed EUROFLEETS2 vessels, except the Spanish RVs (i.e. RVs Ramon Margalef, Angeles Alvarino, Sarmiento De Gamboa and Hesperides in the frame the EUROFLEETS2 ship-time calls) and/or to apply for the Spanish ROV Liropus (also accessible in EUROFLEETS2). Also, i.e. a PI working in Germany can apply for ship time on one of the Spanish accessible RVs only if the majority of the users (including embarked team) does not work in Spain. This requirement ensures that access to RV and equipment is transnational.
- 3) Affiliation (3):** In the case of proposals requesting a combination of Research Vessel and marine equipment, both infrastructures should belong in priority to different countries, and the PI must work in a country other than the country the requested infrastructures are based. This requirement supports the RV and equipment interoperability.
- 4) International cooperation:**
 - In the case of proposals requesting a RV or a RV in combination with a marine equipment, the proposals must involve at least two partners from two different countries. This requirement supports international cooperation.
 - In the case of proposals requesting only a piece of marine equipment to be deployed from a previously funded cruise (not EUROFLEETS2 funded), the proposals can involve partners from one single country, as long as they work in a country other than the country the requested infrastructure is based. However, international partners are encouraged even if only as remote participants for data treatment and exploitation.
- 5) Training:** Proposals must include an advanced training or educational programme.

- 6) **Dissemination:** Only user groups that are entitled to and willing to disseminate the knowledge they will generate under the project are eligible to benefit from access free of charge to the infrastructures under the EUROFLEETS2 flag. User groups must agree to comply with the EUROFLEETS data policy.

The non-fulfilment of any of the previous criteria implied the non-acceptance of the proposal for further evaluation.

The following recommendations were also mentioned and further considered at the evaluation stage:

- 1) We encouraged larger partnerships than from two different nations, for the proposals partnerships, for the embarked scientific party and as well for the remote participation of partners for data treatment and exploitation.
- 2) Because of the limited funding available through EUROFLEETS2, the proposals were encouraged to adjust their research plans to the number of days offered per RV or marine equipment.
- 3) The PI or a designated cruise leader of a proposal must have the appropriate scientific/technical expertise to conduct on-board research surveys.
- 4) Collaborative applications from teams and institutions with limited or no access to marine infrastructure and young scientists are strongly encouraged. International and/or industrial partners are welcome.

4. The EUROFLEETS2 Evaluation Criteria

Eligible proposals were evaluated using the following criteria. Criteria of lesser importance are marked *.

1) Scientific and technical quality of the ship-time/marine equipment proposal (weighting 30%)

a) General scientific background:

Is the current state of knowledge in the research area well described?

Are cited references relevant and reflect the state-of-the-art?

b) Specific aims of the expedition:

Is the proposed topic of high scientific quality and does it provide innovative aspects?

Are the research objectives and expected deliverables/outputs of the proposal clearly stated? Are they achievable?

To which extent do the expected results lead to a progress beyond the current state-of-the-art?

2) Quality of the work programme (weighting 25%)

Is the work plan adequate? Is it clearly described and well defined? Is the research area, the number of planned stations and transects well justified? Can the proposed work plan be realized in the set time?

Are the scheduled tasks and methods adequate to the set objectives? Is it clearly stated which methods and equipment will be employed?

Does the proposed project maximise the use of the research vessel and associated infrastructure? Has the proposal assessed any likely risks and are provisions for downtime/bad weather included?

3) Scientific qualification/track record of the proposing PI and user group (weighting 10%)

Background/track record of the PI

Background/track record of the scientific team

Are the roles and responsibilities of the scientific team clearly stated? Is the combined expertise suitable to achieve the research objectives of the cruise?

4) Technical capability to carry out the research cruise and data exploitation (weighting 10%)

Is all necessary equipment available to carry out the proposed project?

Is a clear concept presented how the gathered data will be shared with shore-based scientists, analysed and published?

Is additional funding available to support the research cruise and analysis of gathered data and samples?

*Will data be fed into international/national data banks or models?

5) Collaboration with international/national partners/industry (weighting 15%)

To what extent are new European user groups with limited access to marine infrastructure integrated?

*To what extent is the proposed project embedded into larger research programmes on a national, EU or international level?

*What is the potential for a long term integration/collaboration on an international level?

*Are collaborations with industry envisaged?

*Are there “remote participants” for data treatment and exploitation?

6) Training of young scientists/public outreach (weighting 10%)

How many young scientists and students at PhD level and below will be involved?

*Are dissemination activities addressing the general public planned?

*Are spare berths devoted to (international) young researchers/scientists in a training role?

Applicants have to ensure that sufficient information is provided in the proposal to enable a thorough evaluation of all criteria.

5. Fundamental set of rules for an European system

Several rules have been considered as imperative when establishing a future European System for Evaluation to give access to European Research Vessels.

1. **Affiliation:** As applied in EUROFLEETS2, eligibility criteria must ensure that the affiliation rules promote that EU and associated “EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation” countries are benefiting from this action, that the access to RV and marine equipment is transnational and that the action works towards improving RV and equipment interoperability.
2. **International cooperation:** International cooperation must be a requisite for proposals submitted to a European System. After the experience in EUROFLEETS2, were only two

different nationalities were requested to compose the scientific team, we consider that this rule must be strengthened and a requirement of a minimum of three nationalities must be guaranteed in order to foment the spirit of international cooperation and open opportunities to newcomers.

3. **Training and education:** Proposals must include an advanced training or educational programme. Training of new generations of scientists and technicians must be an essential component to any research proposal.
4. **Excellent science:** Only scientifically excellent proposals must be considered for funding. In this respect, the two-step evaluation system used by EUROFLEETS2, in which only scientifically excellent-ranked proposals are considered for the logistical evaluation, ensures that only excellent proposals are considered for funding.
5. **Early career or newcomers:** Promote access to research infrastructure to early career scientists or to PIs from countries with no access to this infrastructure. This criterion is considered within the proposal evaluation. EUROFLEETS2 has been proved as an excellent platform for giving access to marine infrastructure to non-traditional users such as early career scientists and users from non-equipped countries.
6. **Dissemination:** Only user groups that are entitled to and willing to disseminate the knowledge they will generate under the project are eligible to benefit from access free of charge to the infrastructures offered.

6. Relevance of the EUROFLEETS2 Evaluation System

The relevance of the EUROFLEETS2 ship-time proposals evaluation system is that:

- 1) It is based on procedures of European evaluation systems and ensures the scientific excellence of the granted proposals, as only proposals ranked as excellent in the scientific evaluation are then evaluated logistically.
- 2) It has been accepted by the RV operators of 22 European RVs, as members of the EUROFLEETS2 project. This is especially relevant as this is the first time that a European evaluation system grants ship-time on national RVs. It has been tested in 8 calls for proposals (three calls managed under EUROFLEETS(1) and five under EUROFLEETS2) and proved successful, with a total of 41 cruises (17 EUROFLEETS(1) cruises + 24 EUROFLEETS2 cruises) successfully scheduled on board European RVs.

The shared evaluation system developed under the umbrella of EUROFLEETS, has been proved efficient and its criteria should be used as a baseline for developing a shared evaluation for future European calls.