

**Creative Europe – MEDIA Sub-Programme**

**GUIDE FOR EXPERTS**

**ON ASSESSMENT OF**

**SUPPORT TO INTERNATIONAL CO-PRODUCTION FUNDS**

**managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The European Commission's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (the Agency) is responsible for the implementation of the Actions of the Creative Europe MEDIA. The Agency is in charge of the selection of projects to be funded, it assesses projects with the assistance of independent experts to ensure that only those of the highest quality are selected for funding. Thus, the final decision on the selection or rejection of applications is taken by the Agency.

This Guide for Experts provides instructions and guidance for experts when assessing applications, in order to ensure a standardised and high quality assessment.

The Guide for Experts provides information on:

- the role and appointment of experts;
- the principles of the assessment;
- the assessment process in practice;
- information on how to assess the award criteria for each action and field.

## 2. THE MEDIA SUB-PROGRAMME: INTERNATIONAL CO-PRODUCTION FUNDS SCHEME

The general objectives of the MEDIA sub-programme of Creative Europe are to strengthen the competitiveness and distribution of the audiovisual industry in Europe and thus contribute to growth and jobs as well as to cultural and linguistic diversity.

The international co-production funds scheme will contribute to the objectives competitiveness and distribution through strengthening the capacity of European producers to co-produce with countries from outside of Europe, opening new markets for co-produced films.

Within the field of reinforcing the audiovisual sector's capacity to operate transnationally, one of the priorities of the MEDIA Sub-programme shall be to:

- increase the capacity of audiovisual operators to develop European audiovisual works with a potential to circulate in the Union and beyond and **to facilitate** European and **international co-production**, including with television broadcasters.

Instead of giving support directly to international co-productions, this support will be given through existing European co-production funds, as specified in the specific measures of the MEDIA programme:

The MEDIA Sub-programme shall provide support for:

- activities helping European and international co-production partners to meet and/or provide indirect support for audiovisual works co-produced **by supporting international co-production funds** based in a country participating in the Programme.

The funds will manage the support to international co-productions as specified in the guidelines. The expected outcome of this action is:

- a number of high quality co-productions supported by the fund
- a distribution strategy for the supported co-productions.

### **3. EXPERTS**

#### **3.1 Role of experts**

The assessment and selection of grant applications is organised on the basis of impartiality and equal treatment of all applicants.

The role of experts allows providing a fair, impartial, and consistent assessment of project applications according to the objectives and the policy priorities of the Programme.

The assessment is a key part in the selection procedure. Based on the experts' assessment, a list of grant applications ranked in quality order is established, which serves as a basis for the Agency to take the grant award decision, following the proposal of the Evaluation Committee.

Based on the experts' comments, the Agency provides feedback to the applicants on the quality of their application (cf. section 4).

#### **3.2 Appointment of experts, code of conduct and conflict of interest**

Experts are appointed on the basis of their skills and knowledge in the areas and the specific field(s) of the audiovisual sector in which they are asked to assess applications.

To ensure their independence, the names of the experts are not made public.

Experts are required to perform the assessment to the highest professional standards and within the deadline agreed with the Agency.

Through the appointment by the Agency experts are bound to a code of conduct as set out in the appointment letter or contract with the expert.

All information related to the assessment process is strictly confidential. Therefore, experts are not allowed to disclose any information about the applications submitted and results of the assessment and selection to the public. They must not have a conflict of interest<sup>1</sup> in relation to the proposals on which they are requested to give their opinion. To this end, they sign a confidentiality and conflict of interest declaration prior to beginning their work and adhere to it during and after the evaluation.

### **4. ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Preparation for assessment**

Before the start of the assessment, the experts are briefed by the Agency on the Programme and the action under assessment, as well as on the assessment process.

Experts are provided with the reference documents for the assessment and get access to the Online Evaluation Expert Tool (OEET), in which they perform the assessment using the standard quality assessment forms.

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<sup>1</sup> Financial Regulation Art. 57(2): « ... a conflict of interests exists where the impartial and objective exercise of the functions of a financial actor or other person, ..., is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other shared interest with a recipient.»

Before starting the assessment of applications, experts must:

- have a sound knowledge of the Support to International Co-production Funds Guidelines<sup>2</sup> which provides all necessary information to potential applicants on the actions for which they can apply for a grant;
- have an in-depth understanding of the award criteria applicable to the applications under assessment (cf. section 4.3);
- be familiar with all the reference documents and tools provided by the Executive Agency.

Experts have to read the whole application carefully before completing the assessment form. It is recommended to read several applications before assessing any one of them in full: this allows experts to benchmark answers in different sections of the applications.

Each expert works individually and independently, gives scores and comments for each criterion and summarises his/her assessment in the assessment form.

The eligibility criteria are assessed by the Agency in the first phase of the selection process. Only eligible projects are sent to experts for evaluation. Each eligible project is sent to two experts for an independent evaluation.

#### **4.2 Assessment forms**

Experts carry out their assessment in English, using the Online Expert Evaluation Tool (OEEET). The applications to be assessed as well as the evaluation forms are accessible through OEEET. Experts are provided with technical instructions for the use of OEEET by the Agency as part of their briefing.

Experts examine the issues to be considered under each award criterion, enter their scores for each applicable criterion and provide comments on each award criterion and on the application as a whole (cf. section 4.3).

On completion of the assessment, experts validate the individual assessment in the Online Expert Evaluation Tool, thereby confirming that they have no conflict of interest with respect to the assessment of that particular proposal.

#### **4.3 Assessment of award criteria and scoring**

Experts assess applications only against the award criteria defined in the Guidelines. These award criteria are listed and further explained in Annex 1 of this Guide.

Each of the award criteria is defined through several elements which must be taken into account by experts when analysing an application. These elements form a list of points to be considered before giving a score for the given criterion. They are intended to help experts arrive at the final assessment of the criterion in question.

In order to give clear guidance to experts as to how individual elements of analysis should be assessed, further information is provided in the above mentioned annexe.

When assessing applications against award criteria experts make a judgement on the extent to which applications meet the defined criteria. This judgement must be based on the information

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<sup>2</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/funding/international-coproduction-funds-2016\\_en](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/funding/international-coproduction-funds-2016_en)

provided in the application. Experts cannot assume information that is not explicitly provided. Information relevant for a specific award criterion may appear in different parts of the application and experts take all of them into account when scoring the award criterion.

An application can receive a maximum of 100 points for all criteria relevant for the action. The table below shows the relative marks of each criterion:

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Max. points</b>
1	Relevance and European added value	This criterion evaluates the added value compared to current activities of European co-production funds, the geographical coverage in particular the European and International dimension of the proposed projects, the policy in terms of failure to complete projects, the track record of the fund to attract and select culturally diverse international co-productions with international audience potential and the strategy of the fund to support distribution of projects.	40
2	Quality of the content and activities	This criterion evaluates the adequacy of the methodology to the objectives including the overall strategies of the fund, the target group, selection methods, the synergy with other organizations, the feasibility, and cost efficiency.	25
3	Dissemination of project results, impact and sustainability	Impact on the promotion and circulation of co-productions, audiences to be reached.	30
4	Quality of the project team	This criterion assesses the distribution of the roles and responsibilities of the team in relation to the appropriateness of the decision making process with regards to applicants for funding.	5

Within the maximum number of points per award criterion, ranges of scores are defined that correspond to a fixed definition of the expected quality standard so that as coherent approach as possible is implemented, across experts as well as across schemes. The score cannot include decimals. The standards on a 10 points scale are as follows:

- 9-10 Very good – the application addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question convincingly and successfully. The answer provides all the information and evidence needed and there are no concerns or areas of weakness.
- 7-8 Good – the application addresses the criterion well, although some small improvements could be made. The answer gives clear information on all or nearly all of the evidence needed.

- 5-6 Acceptable – the application broadly addresses the criterion, but there are some weaknesses. The answer gives some relevant information, but there are areas where detail is lacking or the information is unclear.
- 3-4 Fair – the application addresses the criterion, but there are many weaknesses. The answer gives some relevant information, but there are several areas where detail is lacking or the information is unclear.
- 1-2 Very weak – the application fails to address the criterion or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information. The answer does not address the question asked, or gives very little relevant information.
- 0 No evidence –the application fails to include a minimum amount of evidence to enable the criterion to be evaluated.

N.B. Although indicated on the scoring scale, experts should avoid "0" which relates to "no evidence". For obvious particular case, experts should contact the agency staff à priori.

Experts are expected to give comments on each award criterion and, in their comments, refer explicitly to the elements of analysis under the relevant criterion. The comments on each award criterion have to reflect and justify the score given for it.

At the end of the assessment, experts give overall comments on the application as a whole. In the comments, experts must provide a thorough analysis of the application highlighting its relative strengths and weaknesses.

As their comments will be used by the Executive Agency to provide feedback to applicants, experts must pay particular attention to clarity, consistency and appropriate level of detail. All evaluation reports are to be written in English.

The Executive Agency monitors the quality of expert assessments and can require the expert to revise the assessment should the necessary quality standard not be met.

Experts must assess all applications in full, regardless of the score given to any award criterion.

#### **4.5 Possible problems with applications**

Experts are under no circumstances allowed to contact applicants directly. In case of any problems arising during the assessment, experts contact the Agency. The Agency decides whether the applicant will be asked to provide additional information or clarifications or if the application should be assessed in the form it was submitted.

Also, if experts notice during the assessment that the same or similar text appears in two or more applications submitted, as well as any other indications of possible double submissions and overlaps, they inform the Agency about that immediately.

#### **4.6 Panel of experts and Consolidated assessment and final score**

Once all applications have been assessed by two experts, the experts meet in Brussels to fulfil the following further evaluation steps:

**First phase of the Expert panel:** Consolidation of each assessment between the two experts.

In this phase, the two experts having assessed the project compare their evaluations and reach to an agreement for a consolidated score. In case the two experts fail to agree on the consolidation, the project will be discussed collectively by the expert panel in the second phase.

### **Second phase of the Expert panel:**

During the second phase of the Expert panel, the following evaluation steps will be carried out by all experts:

- discuss the projects for which the consolidation has failed, and that need to be discussed further;
- validate scores of all projects that have been subject to consolidation process;
- discuss any issues/questions related to projects;
- confirm the ranking of all projects.

At the end of the two phases of the Expert panel, the approved consolidated assessment forms the basis of the final score of the eligible applications.

### **5. Feedback to applicants**

As explained in the Guidelines, the Agency notifies the applicant in writing of the selection result once the grant award decision is taken, providing the relevant information on the assessment scores and comments.

In case of a request for further information or appeal by an applicant, the Agency may request the expert involved in the assessment to provide additional elements of information on the assessment as necessary.

Annexes:

1. Award criteria
2. Reference documents on policy priorities in the field of the audiovisual
3. Template for the Declaration of absence of conflict of interests and of confidentiality

	Criteria	Definitions	Max. points
1	Relevance and European added value	This criterion evaluates the added value compared to current activities of European co-production funds, the geographical coverage in particular the European and International dimension of the proposed projects, the policy in terms of failure to complete projects, the track record of the fund to attract and select culturally diverse international co-productions with international audience potential and the strategy of the fund to support distribution of projects.	40

#### Elements of analysis of the award criteria:

In order to decide the score to attribute, the experts will have to check the following aspects and answer to the following questions:

- The added value compared to current activities of the co-production fund **(10 points)**,  
*please refer to Sections D.2.1, D.2.2 and D.4.Q1 of the Application form*  
How does the proposal enlarge the current scope of the applicant fund (opening to new European countries, implementation of a support devoted to the distribution, changes in the editorial line...)? What is the relevance of such a development regarding the objectives pursued by the call for proposals? How does it address issues/needs raised by the market?
- The geographical coverage: European and International dimension of the proposed projects **(10 points)**,  
*please refer to Sections D.3.1 and D.4.Q2 of the Application form*  
Would the supports proposed by the fund be open to professionals from all MEDIA countries? If not, is this restriction relevant? Would the fund be able to address the needs of professionals from a large number of European and non-European countries?
- The policy in terms of failure to complete projects supported by the co-production fund **(5 points)**,  
*please refer to Sections D.3.1 and D.4.Q3 of the Application form*  
How the selection process implemented by the fund would limit the risk of failure (selection criteria, external experts...)? In case of failure, would the fund have a clear and relevant policy aiming at addressing this challenge?

- The track record of the co-production fund to attract and select culturally diverse international co- productions with international audience potential **(10 points)**,  
*please refer to Section D.2 the application form*  
How many MEDIA countries were involved in the projects supported by the fund during the last two years of activity (2014, 2015)? How many non-MEDIA countries were involved in the projects supported by the fund during the last two years of activity? What is the % of the supported projects (2014, 2015) which have been completed? What is the % of the supported projects which have been sold in at least three non-domestic territories?
- The strategies implemented in order to guarantee the potential of circulation of the projects supported by your action **(5 points)**,  
*please refer to Section D.4.Q4 of the application form*  
Are the strategies clearly described? Are they relevant regarding the objectives pursued by the fund?

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Max. points</b>
2	Quality of the content and activities	This criterion evaluates the adequacy of the methodology to the objectives including the overall strategies of the fund, the target group, selection methods, the synergy with other organizations, the feasibility, and cost efficiency.	25

**Elements of analysis of the award criteria:**

In order to decide the score to attribute, the experts will have to check the following aspects and answer to the following questions:

- The quality and coherence of the strategies implemented in order to reach the target group and to facilitate international co-production and/or to strength their circulation including synergies with other funds **(10 points)**,  
*please refer to Sections D.2, D3 and D.4.Q5 of the Application form*

Would the global objectives and the terms of the implementation of the action (number and dates of publication of the call for proposals, clarity of the guidelines, targeted projects, number of selected projects, synergies and complementariness with other support funds, amount and structure of the payment of the grants awarded by the fund...) contribute to facilitate international co-production and/or strengthen the circulation of international audiovisual works?

- The quality of the methodology related to the selection and the follow-up of the projects supported by the co-production fund **(10 points)**,  
*please refer to Sections D.2, D3 and D.4.Q6 of the Application form*

Are the eligibility and award criteria clearly described? Would they allow selecting the projects with the highest potential of circulation?

- The cost-effectiveness of the action **(5 points)**,  
*please refer to Sections D.3.2, D4 of the application form and to the Budget Form (Annex II)*

If you rank the proposals according to the ratio (total budget of the action/number of projects supported by the action), the application with the lowest score may have the highest mark (5 points). Nevertheless, these results should be put into perspective on an application per application basis. For each application, costs which seem to be not relevant or too high comparing to usual practices should be clearly identified? The "effectiveness" dimension of the criteria should also be taken into account (according to the scores given to the two previous criteria).

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Max. points</b>
3	Dissemination of project results, impact and sustainability	Impact on the promotion and circulation of co-productions, audiences to be reached.	30

**Elements of analysis of the award criteria:**

In order to decide the score to attribute, the experts will have to check the following aspects and answer to the following questions:

- The impact on the competitiveness of the co-production fund to attract international talents **(10 points)**,  
*please refer to Sections D.2.1, D.3.2 and D.4.Q7 of the application form*

To what extent would the action reinforce the competitiveness of the fund to attract the best talents involved in the international co-production segment?

- The impact on the promotion, distribution and potential audience of co-productions supported by the fund **(20 points)**,

*please refer to Section D.4.Q8 of the application form*

To what extent would the action improve the quality and the visibility towards professionals of the supported projects: what could be the related impact on their international distribution? To what extent would the action contribute to enlarge the potential audience (in terms of territories) of the supported projects? To what extent would the action help the fund to diversify the audience profile (to reach new categories of consumers in a given territory) of the projects it supports?

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Max. points</b>
4	Quality of the Team	This criterion assesses the distribution of the roles and responsibilities of the team in relation to the appropriateness of the decision making process with regards to applicants for funding.	5

**Elements of analysis of the award criteria:**

In order to decide the score to attribute, the experts will have to check the following aspects and answer to the following questions:

*please refer to Section D.4.Q9 and Q.10 of the application form*

What are the coherence and complementarity's of the team including tasks division and decision making process? Is the expertise of the team on issues related to the distribution and international circulation of audiovisual works satisfying?

**The Legal basis of Creative Europe:**

[http://ec.europa.eu/culture/creative-europe/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/creative-europe/index_en.htm)

**Support to International Co-production Funds:**

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/funding/international-coproduction-funds-2016\\_en](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/funding/international-coproduction-funds-2016_en)



Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

### Declaration of absence of conflict of interests and of confidentiality

Title of Call for proposals: Support to International Co-production Funds

Reference: Call for proposal [include reference here]

#### I. Conflict of interests

I, the undersigned [Surname, family name], having been appointed as an expert for the abovementioned call, declare that I am aware of Article 57 of the Financial Regulation, which states that:

*"1. Financial actors and other persons involved in budget implementation and management, including acts preparatory thereto, audit or control shall not take any action which may bring their own interests into conflict with those of the Union.*

*Where such a risk exists, the person in question shall refrain from such action and shall refer the matter to the authorising officer by delegation who shall confirm in writing whether a conflict of interests exists. The person in question shall also inform his or her hierarchical superior. Where a conflict of interests is found to exist, the person in question shall cease all activities in the matter. The authorising officer by delegation shall personally take any further appropriate action.*

*2. For the purposes of paragraph 1, a conflict of interests exists where the impartial and objective exercise of the functions of a financial actor or other person, as referred to in paragraph 1, is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other shared interest with a recipient."*

I hereby declare that I do not fall under any of the following circumstances in which a conflict of interests might exist. I confirm that, if I discover before or during the evaluation that a conflict of interests exists, I will declare it immediately to the Agency.

#### **1/Disqualifying conflict of interests:**

- Involvement in the preparation of the proposal;
- Direct benefit in case of acceptance of the proposal;
- Close family relationship with any person representing a participating organisation in the proposal;
- Director, trustee or partner of a participating organisation;
- Current employment by a participating organisation;
- Current involvement in a contract or collaboration with a participating organisation;
- Any other situation that compromises my ability to evaluate the proposal impartially.

#### **2/Potential conflict of interests:**

- Employment by one of the participating organisation within the previous three years;
- Involvement in a contract or collaboration with a participating organisation within the previous three years;
- Any other situation that could cast doubt on my ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of a third party (*Ex. Past or current personal relationships, nationality, political affinity, etc.*).

I hereby declare that I fall under one or more of the above circumstances (please specify which and explain)\* :

*\*Ex. In case of employment by a structure including different departments or institutes, please specify the degree of autonomy between them.*

I hereby declare on my honour that the disclosed information is true and complete to the best of my knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

**II. Confidentiality and personal data protection**

I also confirm that I will keep all matters entrusted to me confidential and will process the personal data I receive only for the purposes of the performance of the present evaluation. If unnecessary or excessive personal data are contained in the documents submitted by the applicant, I will not process them further or take them into account for the evaluation of the proposal. I will not communicate outside the panel any confidential information that is revealed to me or that I have discovered. I will not make any adverse use of information given to me.

Signed: .....

Date/Place:

Name (in capitals):

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<sup>3</sup> In case of false, incomplete or incorrect statements or failure to provide information in an attempt to obtain the contract or any benefit resulting therefrom, or where this was the effect of the action, this constitutes a breach of the contract between the Agency and the expert. The Agency may decide to terminate the contract and to recover any sums paid to the Contractor under the order (cf. Article 8 of the General Conditions).