



# Evaluation review process in Horizon Europe

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# Evaluation review process – legal basis

## Regulation 2021/695, establishing Horizon Europe

### Article 30 - Evaluation review procedure, enquiries and complaints

1. An applicant may request an evaluation review if it considers that the applicable evaluation procedure has not been correctly applied to its proposal.
2. Only the procedural aspects of an evaluation may be the subject of a request for an evaluation review. The evaluation of the merits of a proposal shall not be the subject of an evaluation review.

# Evaluation review process in Horizon Europe

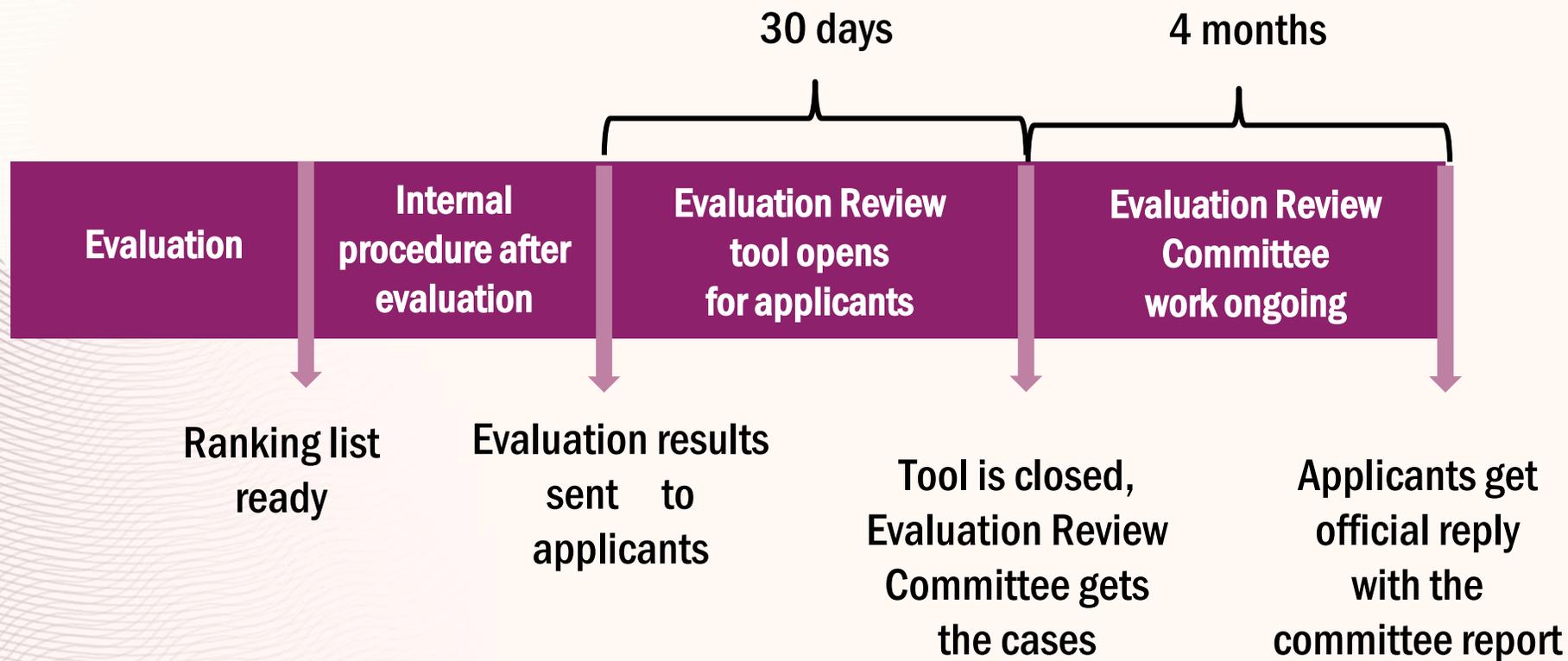
## ✓ Is LIMITED to procedural aspects of the evaluation

- suitability of the experts,
- manifest errors of assessment,
- factual errors (substantive inaccuracy of the facts), etc.

## X Does NOT extend to the merits of the evaluation

- assessment by the experts of the quality of the proposal.

# Evaluation review process - overview



# Guiding principles

## **Fairness & impartiality**

*Complainants must be treated equally and impartially, irrespective of their origin or identity.*

## **Efficiency**

*Complaints should be handled efficiently without compromising quality or neglecting the rules.*

## **Confidentiality**

*Proposals and all beneficiary-related information, data, and documents received must be treated confidentially.*

# Evaluation review request

## How is the complaint filed:

- **By the coordinator** (for PF also by the researcher).
- **Within 30 days** after receiving the evaluation result letter electronically.

## Timing & deadlines for the Evaluation Review completion:

Whole process must be completed within **4 months** after the deadline for submitting complaints, including sending the response to applicants.

# How the complaint is assessed?

The **Evaluation Review Committee** must review the evaluation on the basis of the **complaint** and all the **documents** relating to the proposal, the call and the evaluation, such as:

- *Evaluators' CVs*
- *Proposal*
- *Work Programme*
- *Other call documents (e.g. GfA)*
- *Evaluation reports (evaluation summary report (ESR), individual evaluation reports (IERs), consensus report (CR), panel report, ethics summary report / security summary report, if applicable.*

# Main actors

## Evaluation Review Committee:

- To analyse each complaint and to decide whether there has been a **procedural flaw in the evaluation process that might have jeopardised the outcome of the evaluation** of that particular proposal.
- To check the CV of experts to confirm whether they are suitably experienced and qualified to evaluate the concerned proposal.
- To ensure a coherent interpretation and equal treatment of the applicants during the proposal evaluation.
- Committee **does not examine the merits of the proposal**; it covers only the **procedural aspects** of the evaluation.

# Other actors – not part of the Committee

## Call Coordinators

- Supporting documents, procedure, cannot influence the process

## Quality controller

- Responsible for checking the quality of the outcome (procedure, typos, wording, arguments used by the Committee)

## Responsible Authorizing Officer

- REA HoD, responsible for the call in question (Delegation on behalf of Director)

## Redress Office / Legal officers

- In case of need – legal advice, procedural questions, difficult cases, etc.

# Evaluation Review Committee

- Internal committee of the DG/Agency concerned
- REA Committees: 2-year mandate, formally appointed by the REA Director

## Composition:

- **min 4 members (incl. chairperson)**
- Experienced POs
  - *good knowledge of evaluation procedure*
  - *come from a unit other than the one responsible for the call – to avoid a conflict of interest*
- If needed, REA Legal officer

**! The Evaluation Review Committee is NOT the same as the Admissibility and Eligibility Review Committee.**

# Procedure

- The **committee chairperson** - organising the work of the committee.
- The **committee members assess all cases** assigned to them (2 members per case).
- The committee **may seek advice from experts with specialist knowledge** (*e.g. input from project officers, evaluators, moderators*).
- The committee may also **seek advice from the redress office, legal office**, etc.
- **Committee decides on each case by consensus** (all members agree on all cases).

## Specific case: Disagreement/NO consensus

- Chairperson must bring the case to the attention of Authorizing officer (REA HoD).
- Difficult cases may be escalated to the REA Director and/or to the Redress office.

# No clear-cut case?

REA policy since FP7:

Give benefit of the doubt to the applicant!

# Possible outcomes

## Case A: Inadmissible

- Request not submitted by coordinator;
- Request submitted out of time or out of the IT system;
- Request does not contain any reasons;
- Request does not raise shortcomings in the evaluation procedure.

## Example:

“Please re-evaluate my proposal. Kind regards, XY”

*No reasons, no shortcomings are highlighted*

# Possible outcomes

## Case B: Unfounded (majority of cases)

**No sufficient evidence to support the complaint;** procedure was correct; the results of the evaluation are confirmed.

Majority of cases – disagreement with experts` assessment.

### Example:

Experts state in the ESR:

“Methodology is not sufficiently justified, it is missing XYZ”

Applicant argues:

“I disagree with experts, my methodology is well described on the pages 6 and 7, and those missing elements mentioned by the experts are not relevant to my project.”

*Experts assessment is questioned, it is a disagreement with suitably qualified experts, this is not in the scope of the evaluation review.*

# Possible outcomes

## Case C: Committee agrees with the applicant however no influence on outcome

**Committee found evidence** to support the complaint, **but no re-evaluation is recommended** because the shortcoming is limited to a certain part of the evaluation and **did not influence the overall outcome**.

Complaint about a criterion that, even if accepted and the score for that criterion would be increased to 5, it would still not have put the proposal for funding in the ranking list (*Committee recalculates the score!*).

### Example:

**Committee agrees with the applicant** on the point raised under the criterion 2. The proposal scored 68% and if the proposal would be re-evaluated for the criterion 2 and “5” would be granted to this criterion, the proposal would receive a score 79%. The lowest Reserve list proposal (funding range) scored 87%. **The re-evaluation would not change the overall result.**

# Possible outcomes

## Case D: Founded, full or partial re-evaluation recommended

**Procedural errors, factual errors, manifest errors of assessment with impact on the outcome of the evaluation, etc.**

**Serious problem in the evaluation procedure which is likely to have jeopardised the evaluation result (whether or not to retain the proposal in question); substantive inaccuracy of the facts.**

### Example:

Experts state in the ESR:

**“The work plan is not complete, list of deliverables is not presented.”**

Applicant argues:

**“I disagree with experts, the list of deliverables is presented on the page 17.”**

The Committee agrees with the applicant. They recalculate the score for this concerned criterion and the **proposal would be in the funding range = re-evaluation**

# Case D - what happens afterwards?

If the complaint is upheld for re-evaluation, the proposal is sent to (full or partial) **re-evaluation**.

- Re-evaluation carried out by **experts who have not been involved** in the evaluation of the proposal in question.
- **New experts - conflict of interest** for the proposal must be ensured.

**Re-evaluations – fully based on the proposal as it was originally submitted:**

- No additional information is admissible
- The conditions and requirements of the call to which it was submitted apply

# Case D - what happens afterwards?

- ✓ If the **re-evaluation results** in a score which **is higher** than the score of the lowest proposal originally invited to grant preparation - re-evaluated proposal invited to grant preparation.
- ✓ If the **re-evaluated proposal** receives the **same score** as another proposal invited to grant preparation, the experts must determine the **priority order** by applying the method set out in the Work Programme.

**The score of the re-evaluation is the final score for the proposal, even if lower than the one awarded originally**

# Committee concluded the work, what is next?

RAO either:

- **Takes a decision in line with the conclusions of the committee**, or
- **May ask the committee to reconsider its position**, taking account his/her comments (in very exceptional cases and normally in favour of the applicant)

**Specific case - Deviation from the recommendation of the evaluation review committee:**

If the committee confirms its position and the RAO would still like to deviate from it, the matter must be referred to the **REA Director for final decision**.

# Information to the applicants

On the basis of the consensus decision, the committee prepares the **Summary Report of the Evaluation Review Committee (“Report“)**:

- Outcome of the evaluation review process (Specific details of the complaint, analysis of the committee, final result)

Once the RAO approves the results:

- Applicant is informed, **Evaluation Review result letter with enclosed Report is sent to them,**
- Applicant is also informed about other means of redress, if desired.

**The work of the committee including the results of the Evaluation Review must be documented in the internal report, available for audit purposes.**

# MSCA Evaluation Review Results in H2020

<b>2014-2020</b>	<b>No of evaluated proposals</b>	<b>No of submitted requests</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Result A+B</b>	<b>Result C</b>	<b>Result D</b>	<b>Funded after re-evaluation</b>	<b>% of upheld cases (C+D)</b>
<b>ITN</b>	<b>10 704</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>1,3%</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0,4%</b>
<b>IF</b>	<b>64 345</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>1,2%</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0,3%</b>
<b>RISE</b>	<b>2 230</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0,9%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0,09%</b>
<b>COFUND</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1,5%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0,5%</b>
<b>NIGHT</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3,0%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0,2%</b>

# REA Evaluation review committees - MSCA

In total 7 REA Evaluation Review Committees (mandate 2022-2023):

		REA Units/Calls covered
Dep A (MSCA)	Com A	DN, SE, INCO, COFUND, Citizens, RR, NCP, MCAA
	Com B	PF
	Com C	PF
Dep B	Com D	Cluster 6: B2, B3, B4
	Com E	B1 (RFCS), B4 (AGRIP)
Dep C	Com F	C1, C2
	Com G	C3, C4

# Want to submit a request?

## When to submit a request for Evaluation Review:

- ✓ When you have spotted a clear contradiction in the ESR
- ✓ When you consider there is a factual mistake in the ESR
- ✓ When you feel that experts were not suitably qualified to assess your proposal
- ✓ When you suspect that the evaluation procedure was not followed

## When NOT to submit a request for Evaluation Review:

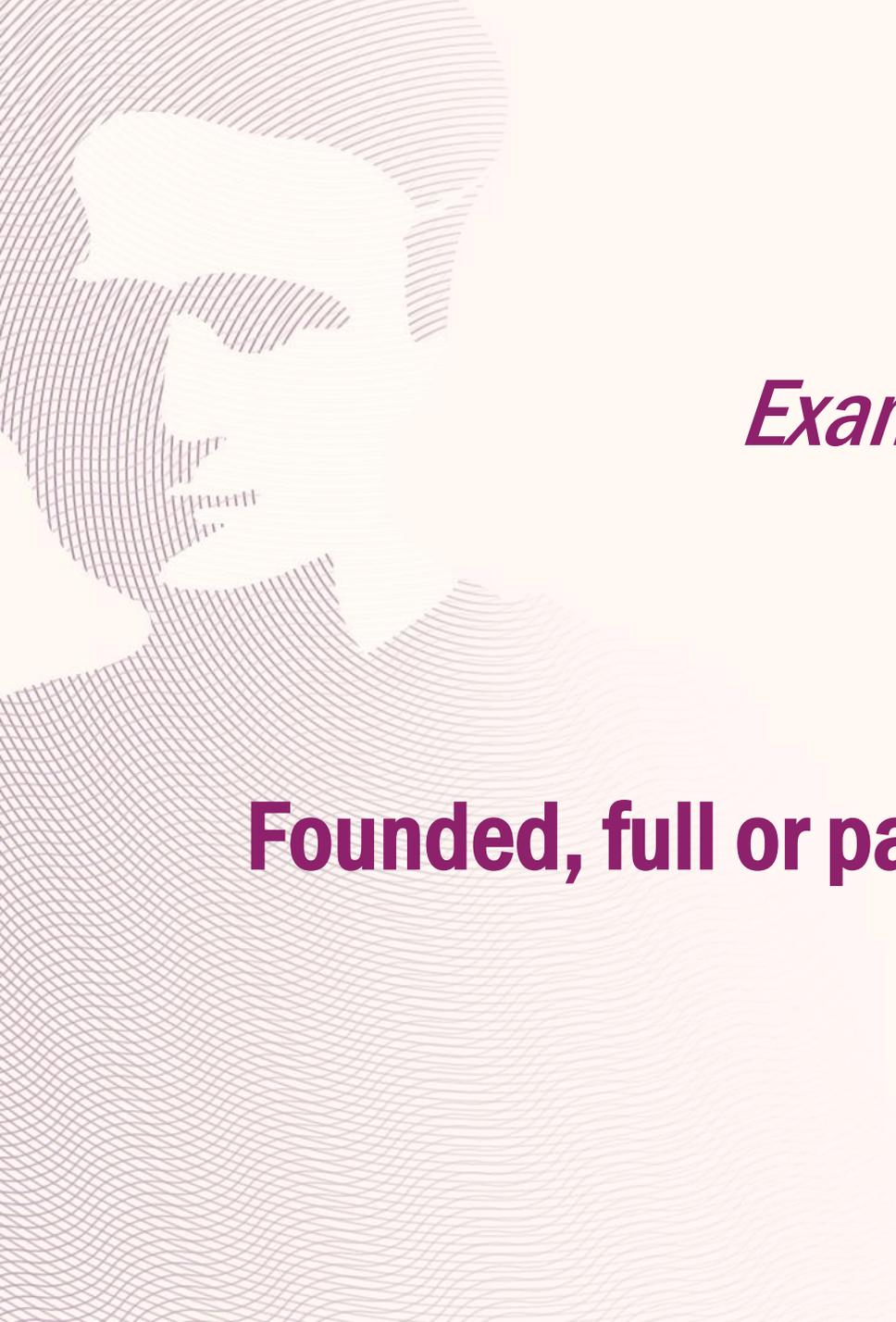
- ✗ You are not happy with the result of the evaluation, you have expected positive comments
- ✗ When you disagree with the opinion of the experts
- ✗ When you find your score too low
- ✗ When your resubmitted proposal scores lower than the one from the previous year

***NB: the list is not exhaustive***

# Length of the complaints

**The length of the redress complaints in HE:  
5000 characters**

(general annexes of the HE WP - legal basis to reinforce the size limit of complaints)



*Examples from the past:*

**D cases**

**Founded, full or partial re-evaluation recommended**

# D case (1)

Weakness in the ESR: *"All industrial partners are SMEs close to the universities and are not representative of the industry as a whole, this limits the industrial impact of the training".*

Applicant stated: „There are no SMEs in the consortium.“

Conclusion of the Committee: Even if experts most likely considered very small companies, after legal check it was confirmed that none of the industrial partners was **SME by definition**.

**D case – proposal was re-evaluated**

## D case (2)

Weakness in the ESR: “Although the host has excellent computing facilities, **there is no mention of the type of computational infrastructure** the researcher will have access to”.

Applicant stated: “*Computing aspects are mentioned clearly (e.g. Page-6, ‘Other Key Arrangements’ and Page-5, T2)*”.

Committee agrees with the applicant that the computing resources are mentioned in the proposal.

**D case – proposal was re-evaluated**

# D case (3)

**Weakness in the ESR: “The management structure is insufficiently clear, the number of persons participating in the different work packages is missing.”**

**Applicant stated: “There is a list of people involved with their specific roles and the work package number they will be involved in, see Table 1 (page 9).”**

**Committee agrees with the applicant that the Table 1 contains the number of persons participating in different work packages.**

**D case – proposal was re-evaluated**



*Examples from the past:*

**C cases**

**Committee agrees with the applicant however no influence on outcome**

# C case (1)

**Weakness in the ESR under criterion 2: “Since the researcher already holds an associate professor position, the impact of the proposed fellowship in their skills set will be incremental.”**

**Applicant stated: “I am not currently an “associate professor”, but an assistant; therefore I do not hold an established position. This is clearly indicated in the proposal (Part B).”**

**The Committee agrees with the applicant, however no re-evaluation is proposed since even if a partial re-evaluation of the proposal were to award the maximum score under criterion 2, the proposal would still be far down the ranking list to be considered for funding.**

**C case – no re-evaluation recommended as proposal is too far down in the ranking**

# C case (2)

Applicant is claiming a **contradiction between the following weakness** in the ESR under criterion 3:

**“The work packages timing is not entirely adequate, concerning the insufficiently allocated time for validation of the proposed theoretical model as well as inappropriate overlapping of work packages”**

**and the following strength:**

**“A well-structured work plan has been described in a very detailed and exhaustive way, and it includes an appropriate breakdown of the tasks needed to achieve the research objectives. The work packages, as described in the proposal, are credible and well organized”**

**The Committee agrees with the applicant, however no re-evaluation is proposed since even if a partial re-evaluation of the proposal were to award the maximum score under criterion 3, the proposal would still be far down the ranking list to be considered for funding.**

**C case – no re-evaluation recommended as proposal is too far down in the ranking**

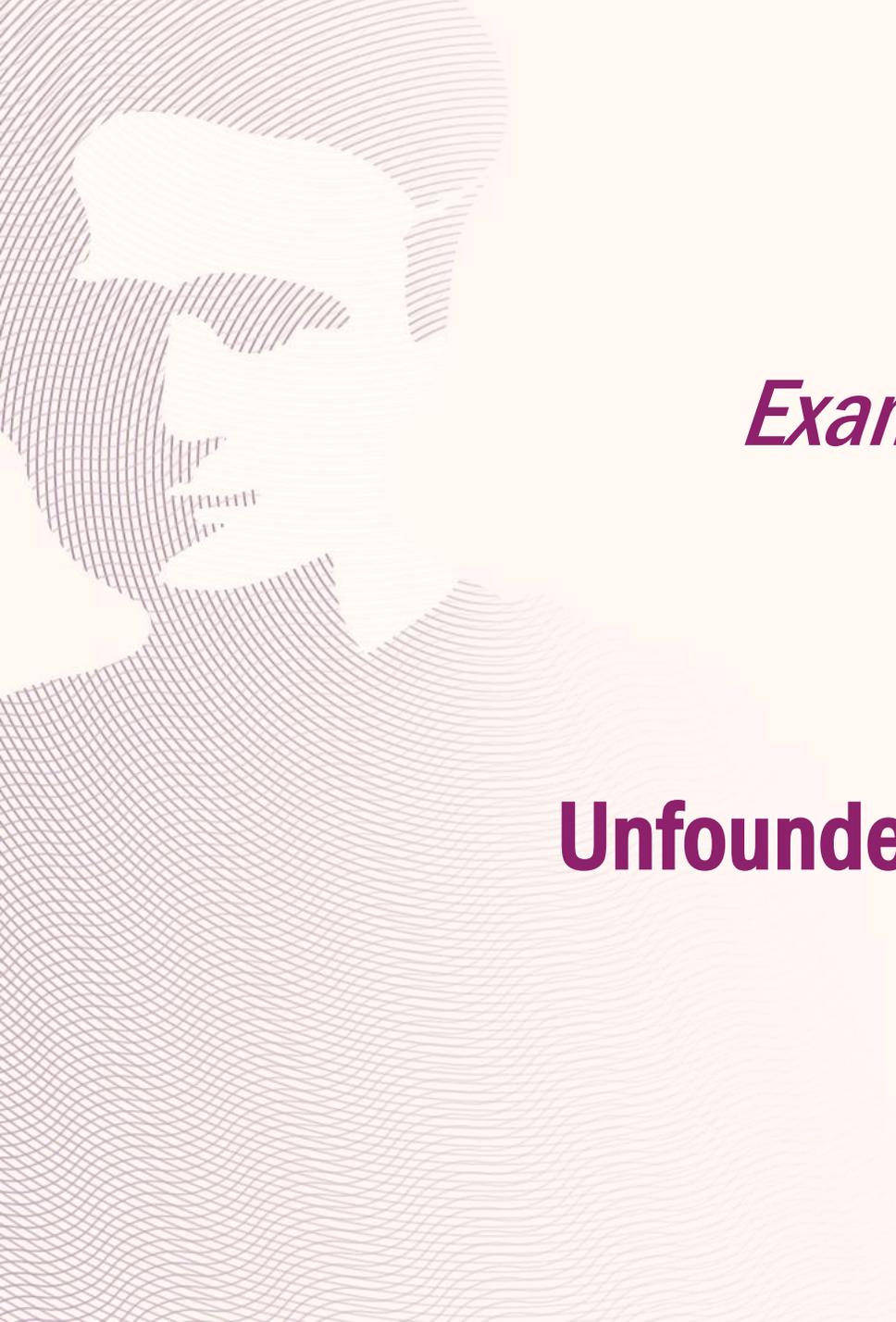
# C case (3)

**Weakness in the ESR under criterion 3: The work program does not include specific training activities to increase competitiveness of the researcher”,**

Applicant stated: “The statement on specific training activities is not correct, as **the proposed work program *includes both a distinct work package “Management and Career Development Plan” (cf. section 3.1.1 and table 3) with concrete training elements and also a specific work package entitled “Training” (cf. section 3.1.1 and table 4) dedicated to this subject, both of which will enhance my competitiveness”*** .

**The Committee agrees with the applicant, however no re-evaluation is proposed since even if a partial re-evaluation of the proposal were to award the maximum score under criterion 3, the proposal would still be far down the ranking list to be considered for funding.**

**C case – no re-evaluation recommended as proposal is too far down in the ranking**



*Examples from the past:*

**B cases**  
**Unfounded, no sufficient evidence**

# B case (1)

Weakness in the ESR under criterion 1: **“The training courses related to cancer cell biology are insufficiently detailed.”**

Applicant stated: **“Three professional courses in cancer research as well as three training courses in soft and transversal skills are mentioned in the proposal.”**

After close reading of the ESR, as well as all other related documents, the Committee notes that this claim essentially relates to **differences of opinion between the applicant and the expert evaluators**. The experts did not state that trainings were not mentioned in the proposal, but that they were not “sufficiently” detailed.

**B case – the Committee finds no evidence to support the complaint.**

**The results of the initial evaluation are confirmed.**

# B case (2)

The applicant contests **all weaknesses under the criterion 1**. They refer to the parts of the proposal where these elements are presented. In addition, **new information that were not part of the proposal** are included in the complaint, in order to prove those elements.

**The Committee cannot taken into account new elements that were not part of the original proposal**. This claim relates to a difference of opinions between the applicant and the expert evaluators.

**B case – the Committee finds no evidence to support the complaint.**

**The results of the initial evaluation are confirmed.**

# B case (3)

**Weakness in the ESR: “The management of risks is weak considering the proposed workload overly ambitious and the monitoring mechanism not detailed enough.”**

**The applicant does not consider these aspects as significant risks for their proposal.**

**The Committee cannot not call into question the judgement of appropriately qualified experts and considers this claim as difference of opinion between the applicant and the expert evaluators.**

**B case – the Committee finds no evidence to support the complaint.**

**The results of the initial evaluation are confirmed**



**REMEMBER:**



**Successful complaints are normally the short ones...**