



Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

Erasmus Mundus and External Cooperation

## **Erasmus Mundus Action 2 - Partnerships**

# **EXPERT ASSESSMENT MANUAL**

## **Selection May-June, 2011**

**For the assessment of proposals submitted under the**

**Call for proposals EACEA/41/10**

Document prepared by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, Unit  
Erasmus Mundus and External Cooperation, P4

# Content

## Introduction

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION .....	3
2. OVERVIEW OF THE SELECTION PROCEDURE .....	4
3. EXPERTS' ROLE AND OBLIGATIONS .....	6
4. ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE .....	8
5. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSALS.....	13
6. THE ONLINE ASSESSMENT TOOL.....	24

## ANNEXES

- A. Call for Proposals EACEA/41/10
- B. Programme Guide (in particular EM Action 2 – Strand 1 section 3 and EM Action 2 – Strand 2 section 6)  
[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus\\_mundus/programme/programme\\_guide\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/programme/programme_guide_en.php)
- C. Erasmus Mundus Action 2 – Partnerships, Guidelines to the Call for Proposals EACEA/41/10  
[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus\\_mundus/funding/2010/call\\_eacea\\_41\\_10\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/funding/2010/call_eacea_41_10_en.php)
- D. Erasmus Mundus Action 2 – Partnerships (Strand 1) – Corrigendum to the Guidelines to the Call for Proposals EACEA/41/10  
Erasmus Mundus Action 2 – Partnerships – Modification to the Guidelines to the Call for Proposals EACEA/41/10  
[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus\\_mundus/funding/2010/call\\_eacea\\_41\\_10\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/funding/2010/call_eacea_41_10_en.php)
- E. Application form and annexes  
[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus\\_mundus/funding/2010/call\\_eacea\\_41\\_10\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/funding/2010/call_eacea_41_10_en.php)
- F. List of thematic fields  
[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus\\_mundus/funding/2010/call\\_eacea\\_41\\_10\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/funding/2010/call_eacea_41_10_en.php)

## **Introduction**

The European Union recognises the importance of higher education for economic and social development. Higher education plays a crucial role in producing high quality human resources, in disseminating scientific discovery and advanced knowledge through teaching and educating future generations of citizens, high level professionals and political leaders, who in turn can contribute to better governance.

In this context, the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 partnerships offer a unique higher education institutional cooperation frame and training opportunities relevant to the skilled manpower needs of the targeted regions and the EU. Thus, EM Action 2 students and staff benefit from the opportunity to study in Europe and abroad while the participating universities raise their capacities, build pole of expertise and gain international visibility.

This manual describes the assessment process in detail and the tasks experts are invited to perform. It is prepared on the basis of the EM Call for Proposals, the Programme Guide, the Guidelines applicable to the Call, the application form and the Agency's Grant Management Manual.

## **1. Description of the Action**

The Erasmus Mundus Action 2 partnerships' objective is to achieve better understanding and mutual enrichment between the European Union and third countries in the field of higher education through promoting the exchange of persons, knowledge and skills at higher education level. This will be achieved through the promotion of partnerships and institutional co-operation exchanges between European Higher Education Institutions and Third Country institutions and a mobility scheme addressing student and academic exchanges.

EMA2-Strand 1 aims to promote European higher education, to help to improve and enhance the career prospects of students and to promote intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries, in accordance with EU external policy objectives in order to contribute to the sustainable development of third countries in the field of higher education. It includes partnerships between European and third-country higher education institutions, exchange and mobility at all levels of higher education, including a scholarship scheme. This means support for mobility for students (undergraduate, master, doctoral and post-doctoral) and for staff (academic and administrative).

The EMA2-Strand 1 - partnerships with countries covered by the ENPI, DCI, EDF and IPA instruments aim:

1. To contribute to the mutual enrichment of societies by developing the qualifications of men and women so that they possess appropriate skills, particularly as regards the labour market, and are open-minded and internationally experienced;
2. To promote mobility both for students, researchers and academics from third countries, specially from vulnerable groups, selected on the basis of academic excellence, to obtain qualifications and/or experience in the European Union;

3. To contribute towards the development of human resources and the international co-operation capacity of higher education institutions in third countries through increased mobility streams between the EU and third countries in accordance with the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

The overall indicative amount available under the Call for EMA2-Strand 1 is EUR 94,5 million. 38 partnerships are expected to be funded aiming at a minimum number of mobility of 3,335 individuals.

The EMA2-Strand 2 - partnerships with countries/territories covered by the ICI instrument should foster mobility in the following categories: master students, doctoral and postdoctoral candidates, and higher education academic and administrative staff. The partnerships will contribute to improving the quality of the education. These projects should be in line with the growing role of the European Union in the economic and political sphere and reflect the key themes of the EU's relationship with its industrialised partners.

The specific objectives of EMA2-Strand 2 activities are:

1. To support cooperation between higher education institutions with a view to promoting study programmes and mobility;
2. To foster the mobility of students, doctoral and post-doctoral candidates between the European Union and the third countries/territories by promoting transparency, mutual recognition of qualifications and periods of study, research and training, and, where appropriate, portability of credits;
3. To support the mobility of professionals (academic and administrative staff) with a view to improving mutual understanding and expertise, of issues relevant to relations between the European Union and the partner countries;
4. To develop a distinctive value for the promotion of region to region cooperation.

The overall indicative amount available EMA2-Strand 2 under the Call is EUR 6,3 million. 4 partnerships are expected to be funded aiming at a minimum number of mobility of 140 individuals.

## **2. Overview of the Selection Procedure**

### **2.1 Background**

The 2011 Erasmus Mundus Call for proposals (EACEA/41/10) was officially published on 16 December 2010

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:294:0018:0024:en:PDF>

The Call refers to the procedures and requirements described in the relevant sections of the Erasmus Mundus Programme Guide and the Guidelines to the Call for Proposals EACEA/41/10.

The deadline to submit proposals under the Call for Proposals EACEA/41/10 was 29 April 2011.

The selection decision is expected to be taken end June 2011, following which all applicants will be informed about the results. Selected partnerships may start their activities as of 15 July 2011, the expected starting date of the eligibility period.

## 2.2 Selection Procedure

Proposals are selected through a competitive system based on their academic quality, and all candidates are subject to the same rules. The evaluation of the proposals submitted under this call will undergo a seven-step selection procedure:

<b>Step 1. →</b>	Registration and acknowledgement of receipt by the Agency.
<b>Step 2. →</b>	Eligibility check performed by the Agency and EU Delegations with the objective to ensure that the eligibility requirements mentioned under section, section 6.1.2 (for Action 2-Strand 1) and 6.2.2 (for Action 2-Strand 2) of the Programme Guide are respected. EU Delegations are also consulted also on the relevance of the project (facultative).
<b>Step 3. →</b>	Assessment against the relevant Award Criteria by independent experts including individual assessments, consolidated assessments and academic debriefing. The academic debriefing is attended by all experts and chaired by the Agency. Minutes of the debriefing have to be approved and signed by the lead experts and the Agency.
<b>Step 4. →</b>	Verification of the applicants and partners compliance with the Selection Criteria by the Agency and the experts. The selection criteria are intended to evaluate the applicants' technical and financial capacity in order to ensure that they: have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action.
<b>Step 5. →</b>	The Evaluation Committee composed of representatives of various General Directorates of the Commission (Foreign Policy Instrument Services, EuropeAid Development and Cooperation, Enlargement) and the Agency, will establish a list of projects to be proposed for funding as well as a reserve list per lot. All elements of step 2-4 and also other elements proposed by the Evaluation Committee are taken into account. Adjustments are based on consensus. Minutes of the meeting have to be approved and signed by each Committee member and are submitted to the Authorising Officer (the Director of the Agency) together with the established main and reserve list as well as a list of proposals not proposed for funding for decision on grant awards.
<b>Step 6. →</b>	The selection decision is based on: the relative high quality of the proposal in comparison with the other proposals received as well all outcomes of the Evaluation Committee and the budget available. The selection decision is taken by the Authorising Officer.
<b>Step 7. →</b>	Applicants are notified by the Agency about the selection decision. The consolidated version of the experts' assessments is provided to all applicants as part of this notification.

## 3. Experts' role and obligations

### 3.1 Role of independent experts

Independent academic experts have been appointed to assist the Agency in the assessment of EM Action 2 proposals. The selection of independent experts takes place on an annual basis, taking into account the list of experts who have applied to the Agency's Experts Call for Expressions of Interest ([http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/call\\_experts/call\\_experts\\_2007\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/call_experts/call_experts_2007_en.php))

Experts must have perfect understanding of the relevant reference documents – among which the Programme Guide, Action 2 guidelines to the Call, the application form and the present manual – in order to perform efficiently their assessment work.

The role of the independent experts is twofold:

- To provide the Evaluation Committee with an objective academic assessment quantified in a score on the quality of the proposals which have been submitted under the Call.
- To give recommendations to the applicants. Experts should note that their comments and recommendations on the quality will be sent to the applicants as feedback (*the experts' identity will, however, remain confidential*). Experts are therefore requested to draft them with accuracy.

Each proposal will be assessed by 2 independent experts. These two experts - identified as “expert 1” and “expert 2” - will operate with the same level of responsibility although “expert 1” will be responsible for drafting and submitting the consolidated assessment on behalf of both experts ( see 4.4 below).

They will have to judge each of the proposals against the set of award criteria defined for Action 2 - and presented in detail under 6.1.3 for Action 2 Strand 1 and 6.2.3 for Action 2 Strand 2 of the Programme Guide and as repeated in this manual. This judgment will take the form of comments, recommendations and individual scores, provided for each of the issues addressed under the relevant award criterion.

Experts should make sure that all their comments and recommendations are explicit, transparent, detailed, instructive, complete and in accordance with the scoring proposed. Comments should consist of judgements and not of simple summaries of the proposal. They should be tailored to the assessment of each proposal and therefore not be based on a copy-paste approach from one assessment to another. All aspects of the proposal, relative to the award criteria, should be commented on.

### 3.2 Role of lead experts

Two experts with a longstanding experience in assessing European co-operation projects will be appointed as “lead experts”.

Although lead experts may be asked to assess a limited number of proposals themselves, their main role will be to provide quality assurance, guarantee coherence and monitor progress of individual and consolidated assessments performed by independent experts within their group.

In order to achieve these objectives, lead experts will have to work in close cooperation with the experts of their group, as well as with the contact person(s) of the Agency. During the consolidation phase in particular, lead experts will collaborate closely with the two individual experts in order to facilitate consensus discussions and ensure the quality, coherence and completeness of the consolidated assessment comments and scores.

If necessary, the lead experts will organise or carry out third assessments (if no consensus has been reached). They will co-chair the Academic Debriefing, and finally will assist the Evaluation Committee as resource person whenever the Evaluation Committee needs clarification as to the expert's assessment outcomes.

### **3.3 Experts' obligations**

Experts perform assessments on a personal basis, not as representatives of their employer, their country or any other entity. They are expected to be **independent, impartial and objective**, and to behave throughout the assessment process in a professional manner.

All the information made available to experts is to be treated as **strictly confidential**. No information on the proposals submitted or on the provisional results of the assessment or selection may be disclosed to third parties. Experts may not photocopy anything without specific permission from the Agency. No documents or electronic data may be taken off the assessment premises. Any notes taken as a result of the experts' work must be deposited with the Agency at the end of the assessment process. Phone calls during the working day are not allowed in the reading and meeting room in Brussels. Under no circumstances may experts contact an applicant on their own account.

Experts should also declare that there is no **potential conflict of interest** in any of the proposals they are invited to assess. Examples of conflict of interest are: the expert is employed by the applicant or works in collaboration with the applicant; the expert is employed by the same institution as the applicant; the expert is involved in a contract or collaboration with the applicant; the expert was involved in the preparation of the proposal; the expert is related to the applicant (family/friend relations) or have professional relations with the applicant; the expert would benefit directly from the proposal being funded or not funded. If experts have a conflict of interest, or in case of doubt, they have to inform one of the officials from the Agency without any delay, so that the proposals concerned can be allocated to another expert. **To this end, experts will be requested to sign a declaration to certify any absence of conflict of interest.**

If, at any time, prior or during the assessment process, experts believe they may have a conflict of interest with one of the proposals that have been allocated to them, they have to inform one of the Agency's staff members without delay, so that, if necessary, the proposal(s) concerned can be allocated to (an)other expert(s).

Since the experts' comments and recommendations will be communicated to the applicant at the end of the selection process, experts have the obligation to provide complete, meaningful

and useful comments. Although it may be important to describe the most relevant aspects of the proposal, the comments must constitute concrete and substantiated qualitative judgements/assessments and not be a mere description of the factual elements contained in the proposal.

Finally, the assessment process must be completed within the period which has been communicated to the experts. The timing has been carefully planned and the timetable must be adhered to by all persons concerned.

## **4. Assessment procedure**

### **4.1 Assessment Procedure**

All proposals will be assessed by two experts. Each expert will be allocated a number of proposals to assess. Proposals will be allocated in a way to match as much as possible the geographical and academic expertise of each of the experts.

The proposals will be assessed against a set of award criteria listed in the Programme Guide and the Guidelines to the Call for proposals. No other assessment criteria may be applied.

#### **Key dates of the assessment procedure**

<b>Induction</b>	23 May, a.m.	Briefing of experts and lead experts and preparation of the assessment exercise
<b>Individual assessment</b>	23 - 26 May	Individual assessment by external experts
<b>Consensus discussion and consolidation</b>	26 May, p.m. – 27 May, a.m.	Consensus discussions and consolidated assessments by experts 1 and 2
<b>Academic de-briefing</b>	27 May, p.m.	General panel discussions and de-briefing

### **4.2 Induction**

All experts selected to assess EM Action 2 proposals under the call EACEA/41/10 are required to have read and assimilated the content of the present manual as well as the relevant sections of the Programme Guide, Action 2 Guidelines to the Call including the published corrigendum and the modification and the EM Action 2 application documents in advance of the assessment exercise.

On the 23 May, the Agency will organise a briefing session during which all experts will be introduced to their respective roles and to the assessment procedures and tools designed to assist them in their assessment work.

### 4.3 Individual Assessments

Experts are acting individually and independently. They do not discuss the proposals with their fellow experts when filling in the assessment forms. The experts record their individual opinions by using the on-line assessment tool.

Experts will be asked to assess to what extent the elements covered by the award criteria have been addressed by the applicant partnership.

Experts should verify the coherence between the answers given to the award criteria and all the relevant sections of the application and its mandatory annexes.

Experts are not obliged to consult other sources of information than the application form and its mandatory annexes. They can consult other documents or sources of information provided by the applicant in order to crosscheck, verify or **confirm information provided in the application form but not to find new elements that failed to be addressed in it.**

**The amount of text to be written per award criteria should be about 15 lines.**

During this first phase, experts are expected to carry out the following activities for each of the proposals attributed to them using the online assessment tool (see Chapter 6).

- Check if you do not have a potential conflict of interest with any of their proposals. If this was the case, immediately inform the contact person(s) in the Agency who will allocate the corresponding proposal(s) to (an)other expert(s);
- Analyse the proposal against EM award criteria;
- Draft comments and recommendations on each criterion as well as on the application as a whole;
- Provide individual scores - from 0 to 5 – for each issue addressed under the relevant award criteria (the online tool will automatically provide the global score - from 0 to 100 - resulting from the sum of individual scores, weighted in accordance with the importance of the relevant award criteria);
- After a final proofreading of the printout of the online assessment, “submit/endorse” the individual assessment in the online assessment tool;
- Print, sign and provide to the Agency contact person(s), the signed assessment form.

### 4.4 Consensus discussion and consolidated assessment

Once the two individual assessments have been finalised and submitted with the on-line assessment tool, experts will be provided with the name of the second expert for each of the proposals assessed. The two experts will meet to discuss each proposal. The consensus discussion serves the purpose of assuring that the experts have a common understanding of all aspects of the proposals, and should serve the purpose of assuring that:

- The two experts have a common understanding of all aspects of the proposal;
- Their comments and scores are coherent, for each award criteria and globally.

At the end of the consensus discussion two different situations can occur:

- If there is **not significant divergence** between the individual assessments the "expert one" will be able to access a consolidated form with the two individual assessments on the on-line tool. The two experts together are invited to revise the consolidated assessment by modifying and harmonising their comments and recommendations and confirm or amend the average scores. Although experts may use the arithmetical average of their scores for their consolidated assessment, they can also modify individual assessment scores in accordance with the agreement reached during the consensus discussion.

Once the consensus discussion is finalised, the "expert one" will have to submit and endorse the consolidated assessment. The two experts will have, then, to sign the consolidated assessment form print-out and return it to the Agency.

- If there is a **significant divergence of more than 20 points** between the final score of the two individual assessments, the consensus discussion will serve to the purpose of consolidating the assessments in order to reach a consensus.

- ✓ If both experts agreed on reducing the existing divergence, they must readjust the scoring and comments in the consolidated assessment form. Once the individual assessments have been submitted and validated, "expert one" (only) will be able to access a merged version of the two individual assessments on the on-line tool. The two experts together are invited to revise the merged assessment and modifying, if necessary, their comments, recommendations and scores.

Once the consensus discussion is finalised, the "expert one" will have to submit and endorse the consolidated assessment. The two experts will have, then, to sign the consolidated assessment form print-out and return it to the Agency.

- ✓ If **no common agreement** on reducing the scoring divergence can be reached, a third expert will be asked to assess the proposal. When the third assessment is finalised, the expert who has given the middle final score will be act as "expert one" and he/she will have to submit and endorse the consolidated assessment (on the on-line consolidation form the 3 experts' comments will appear). The three experts will be asked to sign the on-line consolidated assessment print-out and return it to the Agency.

For reasons of availability of experts, resources and time, third assessments should represent the rare exception to the rule.

**After this stage, the comments, recommendations and scores can no longer be changed.**

The consolidated assessment must contain:

- A common agreed score for each award criterion; this score should generally lie between the respective original scores (included);
- An agreed set of comments under each award criterion;

- An agreed overall final score, calculated as the sum of the scores given to the single award criteria.

Comments and recommendations in the consolidated assessment form must be in line and not contradictory. Experts should make sure that all their comments and recommendations are **clear, objective, transparent, detailed, instructive, complete and in accordance with the scoring**. When assessing the proposals, the experts' must assure the quality, accuracy and coherence of their comments and recommendations which will be sent to the applicants.

#### 4.5 Academic De-briefing

After the completion of the proposals' assessments by the experts, an academic debriefing will be held. The academic debriefing will be set per lot of countries. There will be then 16 main debriefings for EM Action 2 – Strand 1 and 4 main debriefings for EM Action 2 – Strand 2, each covering their relevant lots.

The aim of this meeting is:

- Provide an overview of the assessment outcomes to the Agency;
- Ensure coherence and consistency across the expert assessments;
- Elaborating arguments in favour or against ex-aequo proposals;
- Identify a provisional list of proposals ranked on the consolidated final ratings per lot.

As a result of these discussions, minor adjustment to the scorings may be agreed (up to maximum +/- 5 scores). Decisions to alter the score of proposals have to be documented in the minutes of the panel discussion. They are taken by a simple majority vote of experts present in each panel.

At the end of the debriefing, the Agency will establish the final ranking list of proposals for each lot taking into account possible score changes following the panel discussions. The shortlist of proposals and the corresponding background information (consolidated assessment, relevant statistics, proposals summary, etc.) will be sent to the Evaluation Committee in preparation of their meeting.

#### 4.5 Guidance on scores

When attributing a score to the various criteria, the experts should apply the following guidelines:

Score	Guidance
0 – the proposal fails to address the issue under examination or cannot be judged against the criterion due to missing or incomplete information	A score of <b>0</b> should be given for a criterion if the information detailed in the Call for Proposals would reasonably have been expected by the expert and is not present in the proposal. The specific information missing should be entered in the comments' section. It is not anticipated that the score of 0.5 will be given.

1 – poor	A score of <b>1.0</b> or <b>1.5</b> should be awarded if the proposal is of poor quality for the criterion in question. This may be because information is incomplete in the view of the expert, not clear or not convincing. Assessment comments for proposals in this category should indicate the areas where the proposal is lacking or is of poor quality and could be improved if subsequently re-submitted.
2 – fair	A score of <b>2.0</b> or <b>2.5</b> should be awarded where the content of the criterion in question is considered fair. There may be some strong and relevant points within the proposal, but there may also be weaknesses and in particular there may be no specific details brought out which singles out the proposal from others. Assessment comments for proposals awarded scores in this range should indicate the areas where the proposal could be improved if subsequently re-submitted.
3 – good	Scores of <b>3.0</b> or <b>3.5</b> should reflect that the proposal demonstrates overall good features with regard to the award criterion in question (even though it may contain some notable weaknesses) or does not contain features that set it apart from many other good proposals being assessed.
4 – very good	Scores of <b>4.0</b> or <b>4.5</b> should reflect that the proposal has identifiable features which demonstrate that the proposal is of a high quality with regard to the award criterion in question. There should be features that set the proposal apart from other good quality proposals within the assessment.
5 – excellent	In general, experts should not use the score of <b>5</b> unless they feel that the content of the proposal could not be improved. In cases where a score of 5 is awarded, the expert should feel confident that there would be a high level of consensus from all experts.

Each criterion has a relative weight. The score of the each of the five award criteria will be calculated on the basis of the relative weight of the criterion. The total score will be a figure between 0 and 100. It will be automatically calculated on the basis of the individual scores provided by the expert.

## 5. Assessment of the proposals

### General remarks

The selection success rate may vary from one Lot to another one depending on the number of proposals received by Lot and their quality.

A number of proposals have been submitted by running partnerships. These proposals have to be assessed on exactly the same grounds as new proposals and there should be no positive or negative discrimination in favour or against them. During the consensus discussions, the Agency provides to the experts additional information on the recommendations of previous selection rounds in order to verify / confirm information presented in the new application.

Finally, some of the applications presented under the present Call for proposals may be resubmissions of proposals rejected during previous selection rounds. Before and during the assessment phase, the Agency will try to identify these proposals and, if applicable, provide the experts during the consensus discussion and consolidated assessment with the assessment comments and recommendations provided by the experts involved in the assessment of the previous submission(s). If, during the assessment of a proposal, experts believe that it may be a resubmission of a previously rejected proposal, they should immediately inform their contact person(s) in the Agency who will do the necessary check and, if applicable, provide with the assessments of the previous submission(s).

### 5.1 Application form

As mentioned under chapter 3, experts will have to assess to what extent all the elements covered by the award criteria have been addressed by the applicant consortium. In order to perform this task they will analyse the specific answers provided to the award criteria, but also all the other information included in the application for and its mandatory annexes. The following section underlines the specific aspects experts should look at when reading the application form

#### 5.2.1 Section A. Identification of the applicant and other organisations participating in the project

Sections A **have to be filled in by all the partnerships members** (i.e. the applicant and its partners).

Section A should be read in detail by the experts when assessing the expertise of the participating organisation in carrying out the project proposal. Aspects such as presentation of the organisation in relation with the activities covered by the project; the role of the organisation in the project; skills and expertise of the key staff involved in the project management as well as previous experience are crucial elements when assessing the solidity, reliability and sustainability potential of the partnership. Applicants are required to provide CVs to the application form.

There should be a list of projects/activities implemented by the partnership organisations in relation with the proposal (title, duration, funding programme, partners involved).

The elements of information provided under this section have to be compared (crosschecked) with the answers provided by the applicant to the specific issues addressed under the relevant award criteria.

*☞ Information to be used in the assessment of points 2.1 - Partnership composition and cooperation mechanisms of the award criteria*

### 5.2.2 Section B – Description of the project

Section B contains some quantitative elements linked to proposed project proposals, as well as a summary of it. Under this section the experts have to pay attention to:

- **Coverage in third countries zone:** in this part the applicants are required to provide information on the geographical areas where the home and host institution are located. It is very important especially to know whether the home institutions are in less developed areas, considering that for some lots it is an eligibility requirement (for example for Argentina). The coverage in the third countries zone is linked with the impact that the project have in terms of development. **Regional coverage third countries:** proposals should demonstrate to which extent their partnership will foster regional cooperation among the third country/territory institutions and beyond that the promotion to Target group 2 and Target group 3 applicants (in case of EMA2-Strand 1). The EU Delegations in the respective third countries are also requested to provide their feedback on the relevance in this respect.

*☞ Information to be used in the assessment of point 1. Relevance of the award criteria and point 2.1 Partnership composition and cooperation mechanisms*

- **Indicative distribution of individual mobility in the respective annual mobility cohort:** under this part, the applicants have to indicate the number of the different type of mobility per cohort. The maximum project duration is 48 months. Depending on the length and organization of mobility, mobility can be organised in three different cohorts (see also 5.2.4 Award criteria and timetable). It should be assessed how the distribution is organized among the three cohorts, and be verified whether mobility fall within the eligibility period.

*☞ Information to be used in the assessment of points 2.2 Organisation and implementation of the mobility of the award criteria*

- **Thematic fields covered by individual mobility:** in this part the applicants are required to provide information on the thematic fields that each institution has expertise and is interested to send /host mobility. Please bear in mind that the thematic fields are defined for each lot and reflect the needs of third countries. The applicants are not required to address all the thematic fields defined for the lot.

*☞ Information to be used in the assessment of point 1. Relevance of the award criteria*

- **Number of individual mobility activities foreseen and distribution of mobility per type:** under this part the applicants are required to provide information by country. For some of the lots it is an eligibility requirement to fulfil certain quota of mobility per country. It is a very important element to take this into consideration in order to see how the mobility is allocated among the partner countries/institutions.

*Important aspects to bear in mind when analysing the mobility component:*

The distribution of mobility must be in compliance with the percentage indicated in the Guidelines to the Call for proposals and the Programme Guide in each individual window or lot.

In accordance with the Programme Guide at least 50% of the mobility flows must correspond to Target group I with some exemptions to this rule for some specific window or lot as indicated in section 4 of the Guidelines to the Call for proposals. For EM Action 2 - Strand 1 partnerships, the number of Target group II and III should be commented in view of a reaching a wide geographical/institutional spread as well in view of involving vulnerable groups in line with the programme's objectives.

☞ *Information to be used in the assessment of points 2.2 Organisation and implementation of the mobility of the award criteria*

### **5.2.3 Section C- Technical capacity**

Under this section experts will have to pay attention to the relevant expertise of the partnership to implement the activities and to consider their experience in managing cooperation projects of this size (see also CVs annexed to the application form and Section A). There should be a list of projects/activities implemented by the partnership organisations in relation with the proposal (title, duration, funding programme, partners involved). Comments should be provided whether past experience is taken into account and how the know-how is shared with less experienced partners.

☞ *Information to be used in the assessment of point 2.1 Partnership composition and cooperation mechanisms of the award criteria*

### **5.2.4 Annex 1 – Award criteria and timetable for the implementation of the project activities**

The award criteria allow evaluating the quality of the proposals submitted in relation to the objectives and priorities set so that grants are awarded to actions which maximise the overall effectiveness of the Call for proposals. They allow the selection of proposals which comply with the objectives and priorities of this Call for proposals and which guarantee the visibility of the Community funding.

According to the Call for proposals there are a number of conditions with regard to the timetable which needs to be respected like the maximum project duration, the duration per type of mobility, the start of mobility etc. Experts have to pay attention that all formal requirements are fulfilled in the planning.

The mobility needs to fall within the maximum project duration.

If indicated, the call for applicants to participate in an individual mobility needs to remain open minimum 45 days after publication.

The organization of students' mobility can be organized in three cohorts:

- First cohort – the mobility starts as of September 2011. The latest mobility start date for the first cohort is 31 December 2012.

- Second cohort – the mobility starts as of September 2012. The latest mobility start date for the first cohort is 31 December 2013.
- Third cohort – the mobility starts as of September 2013. The latest mobility start date for the first cohort is 31 December 2014.

Staff mobility may start later any time during the eligibility period and must be finalized before the end of the eligibility period, as all other mobility.

The duration per mobility type needs to be respected. The duration of mobility is an important element that is defined for each type of mobility. It is interesting to see how the applicants have combined "degree-seeking mobility" with "non-degree seeking" or short-term mobility. The duration of the mobility has an impact as well on the process of recognition (recognition of period of study, diploma etc).

*☛ Information to be used in the assessment of points 2.2 Organisation and implementation of the mobility of the award criteria*

In addition, the type and frequency of partnership meetings / working groups should be considered. The timing and type of meetings should allow a smooth organisation of the mobility.

*☛ Information to be used in the assessment of point 2.1 Partnership composition and cooperation mechanisms and 2.2 Organisation and implementation of the mobility of the award criteria.*

### 5.3.1 Erasmus Mundus Action 2 - Strand 1

<b>1. Relevance (25%)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>The potential to foster institutional cooperation, to develop higher education teaching and learning capacity and to build the management capacity of HEIs in the third-countries;</i></li><li>• <i>The particular needs and constraints of the target groups and country/countries;</i></li><li>• <i>The thematic needs and how they fit into the development strategies of the third-countries involved and have and impact on the participating institutions in the these countries;</i></li><li>• <i>Cross cutting issues like equal opportunities, gender balance, social equity and the programme possible brain drain effects.</i></li></ul> <p>Under this criterion applicants need to state the relevance of their proposal in relation with the EMA2-STRAND1 objectives (section 6.1), and how the expected results contribute to fulfil the requirements defined in the respective Guidelines to the Call for proposals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The answers to these questions should provide clear, concrete, exemplified justifications of the proposal from both the academic and structure points of view. Based on an needs' analysis of different target groups (students and staff ) and needs of countries, the applicant should clearly explain how the project fits into the development strategies for the countries involved, how it will contribute to build management capacity for the third country institutions (i.e. for the HEIs which do not have international mobility experience etc.).</li><li>• The project can focus in one or more thematic fields identified for the lot concerned. The experts should assess how the choice to focus the project in one or more thematic fields is justified from the academic point of view and whether it is coherent with the description in other parts of the application in particular the needs' analysis.</li><li>• Regarding the cross cutting issues, experts should assess the strategy and the concrete measures that the applicant will put in place in order to comply with the requirements of the Call.</li></ul>
<b>2. Quality (65 %)</b>
<p>Under this criterion the applicant needs to explain the measures undertaken to ensure a qualitative organisation and implementation of the mobility. It will focus on the expertise of the partnership proposed to achieve the project's objectives, strategies/procedures and activities in order to organise and implement the mobility, the services and facilities offered to accepted students and staff as well as the way the partnership intends to ensure efficient participation of these students and staff in the mobility scheme.</p>
<b>2.1 Partnership composition and cooperation mechanisms (20%)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>The impact in terms of diversity (partners and associates members, geographical coverage, or inclusion of peripheral as well as higher education institutions in larger cities), applicant and partners' experience in the management of international cooperation projects, their technical and operational expertise and complementarities;</i></li><li>• <i>The partners' level of involvement and participation in the project (visibility strategy, selection procedure for students and staff mobility, balanced distribution of tasks and the mobility activities among the partners);</i></li><li>• <i>The quality and reliability of the cooperation mechanisms defined between the participating organisations, and the joint anticipated quality assurance measures in place to monitor to project development (indicators and benchmark);</i></li><li>• <i>The quality of the plans for communication and cooperation mechanisms (Memorandum of Understanding);</i></li></ul>

Under this criterion applicants need to explain their cooperation mechanisms, the involvement of partners in the project, their operational capacity and expertise in order to achieve the project's objective.

- The experts should assess the degree of the involvement and commitment of the partner institutions during the complete project duration as well as the quality and solidity of the management and monitoring measures envisaged to ensure a good functioning of the project.
- The experts should assess if the applicant has ensured a diversity of partners (partners and associates members, geographical coverage, or inclusion of peripheral as well as higher education institutions in larger cities), as well as the degree of operational expertise of the partnership as a whole to run such a partnership. The role of associates and other actors should be assessed as well, if applicable.
- The completion (detailed description) of the future memorandum of understanding must be taken into account in the assessment of this criterion.
- The experts should comment if reference is made to previous experience in managing EM Action 2 (former EM ECW) partnerships or other EU funded programmes (lessons learnt).

## **2.2 Organisation and implementation of the mobility (25%)**

- *The proposed mobility activities will be implemented, and the proposed results and objectives will be achieved throughout a cost/effectiveness balance. Efficient use of mobility periods – making best use of time abroad for maximum benefit. Appropriateness of project outcomes and related activities;*
- *Strategy and concrete measures proposed to ensure visibility, awareness raising, project promotion;*
- *Measures taken to attract the appropriate number and profile of individual students and staff in order to ensure mobility flows proposed as well as relation between them and the thematic expertise of the partner institutions, the profile of the students / staff;*
- *Methodology and the criteria set to guarantee an impartial and transparent selection process based on merit and equal opportunities as well as standards agreed by the partnership for joint application, selection, admission and exams procedures;*
- *Integration of the mobility scheme among the partner institutions (i.e. the proposal fulfil requirements in terms of numbers and types of mobility activities, balance of the mobility flows proposed among the partners);*
- *The agreed mechanisms for students examination and study credits recognition and transfer ( use of ECTS or other equivalent mechanism , use of a Diploma Supplement);*
- *The anticipated quality assurance and evaluation strategy envisaged by the partnership in order to ensure an efficient monitoring of the project course (from both academic and administrative points of view);*
- *Concrete measures taken by the partnership to meet the cross- cutting requirements of equal opportunities, gender balance participation of disabled and economically disadvantaged people, brain drain prevention.*

Under this criterion the applicants need to focus on the way the partnership intends to manage the mobility in order to ensure its efficient and effective implementation. The applicants have to provide concrete measures to attract the appropriate number of students and staff, methodology to ensure impartial and transparent selection process, agreed mechanisms for ensuring recognition of the period of study abroad, evaluation strategy etc.

- Experts should base their assessment on the variety and detailed description of the information and promotion channels proposed (institutional, national, websites, conference, fairs etc). The experts should assess the promotion strategy in order to ensure participation in the mobility of students from TG 2 and TG 3.
- The involvement of students from TG 2 should be commented in particular in view of a wider participation of the countries involved in the programme.
- The experts should assess the strategy and mechanisms put in place in order to ensure the recognition of study periods of short term and full seeking degree mobility.

- The experts should assess if the distribution of mobilities foreseen among the partners is done according to the capacity to host students and academic offers.
- The experts should assess the mechanisms put in place in order to ensure a transparent, impartial and objective selection process based on merit and equal opportunities. The experts should comment if other actors like Ministries or other governmental bodies etc. are consulted or involved.

### **2.3 Student's / staff facilities and follow-up (20%)**

- *Student agreement clearly defining the mutual rights, obligations and responsibilities of the student and the partnership concerning academic, financial and administrative aspects of the student's participation in the mobility scheme;*
- *Learning agreement describing the programme of study abroad and how its existence facilitates academic recognition;*
- *Practical arrangements for the reception of incoming students and scholars in the host institution in particular the assistance for obtaining visa, administrative support, housing facilities, languages courses, support for visa/ residence permit, etc;*
- *Integration of academic staff in the study programme and relevance of training plans for administrative staff.*

Particular attention will be paid under this criterion to the services and facilities offered to enrolled students and staff as well as to the way the partnership intends to ensure efficient participation of these students and staff in the partnership's activities.

- The hosting institutions must guarantee a high level of support and assistance to the participants (preparation, implementation and follow-up of mobility).
- The experts have to assess the level of information and assistance that the partnership will provide to candidates and selected students and staff in order to address all issues.
- For students and staff the partnerships are obliged to design agreements that cover precisely the rights and obligations from both parties (the partnership and the individual students/staff) during the involvement in the course. Experts should assess the level of development and coverage of these agreements.
- The learning agreement is the main document for facilitating recognition. The learning agreement must be signed by the home/host institutions and the student. The experts should assess the level of development of this document and comment whether the document is considered to be signed by the responsible actors.

### **3. Sustainability (10%)**

- *Relevant activities to be pursued and outputs to be maintained or developed after the end of the European Commission funding;*
- *Impact on its target groups and at institutional level including recognition of studies among partners, creation of international cooperation cells in third- countries;*
- *Tangible impact, multiplier effects and plan for capitalisation of the project results and dissemination activities in Europe and third-countries.*

Under this criterion the applicant needs to demonstrate how the partnership will ensure the appropriate dissemination and exploitation of project's results, as well as the impact and sustainability of these results in the long term (financially, institutionally) beyond the funding period.

**Maximum total 100%**

### 5.3.2. Erasmus Mundus Action 2 - Strand 2

<b>1. Relevance (25%)</b>
<p>Under this criterion applicants need to state the relevance of their proposal in relation with the EMA2-STRAND1 objectives (section 6.2), and how the expected results contribute to fulfil the requirements defined in the respective Guidelines to the Call for proposals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Geographical coverage of the partnership;</i></li><li>• <i>Significance of the project for the relationship between European Union and the Third-Countries/Territories as well as justification for the choice of the thematic field(s) (see thematic fields of the respective Guidelines to the Call for proposals).</i></li></ul>
<b>2. Contribution to excellence (25%)</b>
<p>Under this criterion applicants should demonstrate from an academic and institutional point of view that they have the potential to contribute to the excellence, innovation by transfer of knowledge and know how.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>The project contribution to educational quality, excellence and transfer of knowledge and know-how;</i></li><li>• <i>The potential to foster institutional cooperation, to develop higher education teaching and learning capacity of students, researchers in view of further study professional opportunities;</i></li><li>• <i>A sound strategy for the thematic fields chosen in line with the guidelines, and the impact on the participating institutions and the academic community and beyond.</i></li></ul>
<b>3. Quality (50%)</b>
<p>Under this criterion the applicant needs to explain the measures undertaken to ensure a qualitative organisation and implementation of the mobility. It will focus on the expertise of the partnership proposed to achieve the project's objectives, strategies/procedures and activities in order to organise and implement the mobility, the services and facilities offered to accepted students and staff as well as the way the partnership intends to ensure efficient participation of these students and staff in the mobility scheme.</p>
<b>3.1 Partnership composition and cooperation mechanisms (15%)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>The diversity of the partnership (partners and associates members), applicant and partners operational capacity, their experience in managing international projects;</i></li><li>• <i>The partners' level of involvement and participation in the project (visibility strategy, selection procedure for students, and staff mobility, distribution of tasks among the partners , distribution of the mobility activities among the partners);</i></li><li>• <i>The quality and reliability of the cooperation mechanisms defined between the participating organisations, and the joint anticipated quality assurance measures in place to monitor to project development (indicators and benchmark);</i></li><li>• <i>The quality of the plans for communication and cooperation mechanisms (Memorandum of Understanding).</i></li></ul> <p>Under this criterion applicants needs to explain their cooperation mechanisms, the involvement of partners in the project, their operational capacity and expertise in order to achieve the project's</p>

objective.

- The experts should assess the degree of the involvement and commitment of the partner institutions during the complete project duration as well as the quality and solidity of the management and monitoring measures envisaged to ensure a good functioning of the project.
- The experts should assess if the applicant has ensured a diversity of partners (partners and associates members, geographical coverage). The role of associates and other actors should be assessed as well, if applicable.
- The completion (detailed description) of the future memorandum of understanding must be taken into account in the assessment of this criterion.
- The experts should comment if reference is made to previous experience in managing EM Action 2 partnerships or other EU funded programmes (lessons learnt).

### **3.2 Organisation and implementation of the mobility (20%)**

- *Integration of the mobility scheme among the partner institutions (i.e. the proposal fulfil requirements in terms of numbers and types of mobility activities, balance of the mobility flows proposed among the partners);*
- *Strategy and concrete measures proposed to ensure visibility, awareness raising, promotion of the mobility scheme;*
- *Measures to attract the appropriate number and profile of individual students and staff in order to ensure mobility flows proposed as well as relation between them and the thematic expertise of the partner institutions, the profile of the students / staff;*
- *Methodology and criteria set to guarantee an impartial and transparent selection process based on merit and equal opportunities as well as standards agreed by the partnership for joint application, selection, admission and exams procedures.;*
- *Mechanisms for students examination and study credits recognition and transfer (use of ECTS or other equivalent mechanism, use of a Diploma Supplement);*
- *The anticipated quality assurance and evaluation strategy envisaged by the partnership in order to ensure an efficient monitoring of the project (from both academic and administrative points of view);*
- *The quality of the sustainability plan within and beyond the envisaged contractual period;*
- *The impact on participants and at institutional level including recognition of studies among partners;*
- *Tangible impact, multiplier effects and plan for capitalisation of the project results and dissemination activities in Europe and partner countries.*

Under this criterion the applicants need to focus on the way the partnership intends to manage the mobility in order to ensure its efficient and effective implementation. The applicants have to provide concrete measures to attract the appropriate number of students and staff, methodology to ensure impartial and transparent selection process, agreed mechanisms for ensuring recognition of the period of study abroad, evaluation strategy etc.

- Experts should base their assessment on the variety and detailed description of the information and promotion channels proposed (institutional, national, websites, conference, fairs etc).
- The experts should assess the strategy and mechanisms put in place in order to ensure the recognition of study periods.
- The experts should assess if the distribution of mobilities foreseen among the partners is done according to the capacity to host students and academic offers.
- The experts should assess the mechanisms put in place in order to ensure a transparent, impartial and objective selection process based on merit and equal opportunities.

### **3.3 Student / staff facilities and follow-up (15%)**

- *Student agreement clearly defining the mutual rights, obligations and responsibilities of the student and the partnership concerning academic, financial and administrative aspects of the student's participation in the mobility scheme;*
- *Learning agreement describing the programme of study abroad and how its existence facilitates the full academic recognition;*
- *The practical arrangements for the reception of incoming students in the host institution in particular the assistance for obtaining visa, administrative support, housing facilities, languages courses, support for visa/ residence permit, etc.;*
- *Integration of academic staff in the study programme and appropriateness of training plans for administrative staff.*

Particular attention will be paid under this criterion to the services and facilities offered to enrolled students and staff as well as to the way the partnership intends to ensure efficient participation of these students and staff in the partnership's activities.

- The hosting institutions must guarantee a high level of support and assistance to the participants (preparation, implementation and follow-up of mobility).
- The experts have to assess the level of information and assistance that the partnership will provide to candidates and selected students and staff in order to address all issues.
- For students and staff the partnerships are obliged to design agreements that cover precisely the rights and obligations from both parties (the partnership and the individual students/staff) during the involvement in the course. Experts should assess the level of development and coverage of these agreements.
- The learning agreement is the main document for facilitating recognition. The learning agreement must be signed by the home/host institutions and the student. The experts should assess the level of development of this document and comment whether the document is considered to be signed by the responsible actors

**Maximum total 100%**

## 6. The online Assessment Tool

### General remarks

Specific instructions on the way to complete the on-line assessment form tool will be provided to the experts in the context of the briefing meeting organised at the beginning of the assessment period. At the end of the assessment exercise, experts must print, sign and date the final version of their assessment forms. The signed forms must be handed over to the Agency representatives for audit purposes.

### 6.1 Accessing individual proposals

After logging in to the tool, experts will find the list of proposals that have been allocated to them. For each of the proposals the list identifies:

- The "type of assessment", i.e. "Expert 1", "Expert 2" or "consolidation"<sup>1</sup>
- The proposals' reference number
- The decision proposed by the expert
- The assessment submission date
- A hyperlink named "**assess**" that opens the individual assessment screens for the proposals concerned.

### 6.2 General screen

The "**General**" screen includes

- Some key features of the proposals such as the project title, project legal representative and project coordinator, the expert's name, expert decision, the global scoring, the technical capacity decision and comments.
- A menu displayed on the left hand side of the screen that gives access to the other sections of the assessment tool (see sections 5.2 to 5.7 below).

The **Expert decision** provides the experts with 3 different options, "Highly Recommended / Good quality", "Recommended / Adequate quality" and "Not Recommended / Weak quality". In principle each of these options should correspond to a range in the experts score, i.e.

75-100	Highly recommended / Good quality
50-75	Recommended / Adequate quality
< 50	Not recommended / Weak quality

Usually a proposal that has received less than 50 scores should not be recommended for selection.

---

<sup>1</sup> The "consolidation" assessment will only be displayed to the experts playing the role of "expert 1" and after the submission of the individual assessment by both experts concerned

Comments and recommendations should relate to the experts' assessment of the strengths, weaknesses and potential of the proposal, relative to the award criteria. All aspects of the proposal, relative to the award criteria, should be commented on.

The *Technical Capacity* decision and, if applicable, comment, refers to the capacity of the applicant partnership to implement the proposal with the expected levels of excellence. In principle, this decision will almost always be "Accepted". However, if the expert has doubts about the technical capacity of the applicant consortium, he/she should select the option "Rejected" or "Clarification" and provide a comment in the comment box just below.

### **6.3 Typology screen**

Only if the proposal addresses directly and concretely one or more of the issues identified under the "Typology" screen -, experts will have to tick the relevant box(es). On the basis of this information, the Agency will be able to draw up statistics on the identified number of projects covering the specific listed themes.

### **6.4 Scoring screen**

The "**Scoring**" screen is the screen in which applicants will have to record their comments and recommendations for each of the five award criteria. They will also have to provide a score for each of the issues addressed under each award criterion.

### **6.5 Global comments screen**

In order for the experts' comments to be as instructive and complete as possible, **it is recommended that the text to be written in the global comments screen is about 15 lines**. Global comments and recommendations should relate to the experts' assessment of the application as a whole and focus on strengths, weaknesses and potential of the proposal. They should provide the applicant with a summary of the global evaluation of the proposal.

### **6.6 Agency Comments screen**

In addition to the comments and recommendations that will be communicated to the applicant, the online assessment tool contains also a specific screen where experts can bring **to the attention of the Agency, Experts panels and/or Evaluation Committee** issues or aspects of the application that are not necessarily linked to the individual award criteria but may prove useful during the selection process or the monitoring of the project, once approved.

These comments will not be included in the selection notification letter sent to all applicants.

### **6.7 Attached documents screen**

Through this screen, experts will be able to download the electronic version of the application form together with its mandatory annexes.

### **6.8 Project List**

This hyperlink will bring the expert back to the list of proposals allocated to him/her.