Creative Europe – MEDIA Sub-Programme

GUIDE FOR EXPERTS
ON ASSESSMENT OF
SUPPORT FOR ONLINE DISTRIBUTION
Call for proposals EACEA 11/2016
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 sub-programme. 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: SUPPORT FOR ONLINE DISTRIBUTION

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 online environment represents a growing window of exposure for European works. Therefore, improving the presence, discoverability and attractiveness of European works online represents a key priority of the Creative Europe MEDIA sub-programme.

Within the specific objective of promoting transnational circulation, two of the priorities of the MEDIA Sub-programme shall be to:

- support transnational marketing, branding and distribution of audiovisual works on all other non-theatrical platforms;
- promote new distribution modes in order to allow the emergence of new business models.

The MEDIA Sub-programme shall provide support for the following measures:

- establishing systems of support for the distribution of non-national European films through theatrical distribution and on other platforms, as well as for international sales activities, in particular the subtitling, dubbing and audio description of audiovisual works;
- innovative actions testing new business models and tools in areas likely to be influenced by the introduction and use of digital technologies.

The current Online Distribution Call for proposals covers two actions:

- Action 2: the preparation of digital packages facilitating the commercialisation of European audiovisual works on VOD services provided in countries where those works are not available;
- Action 3: innovative strategies for distribution and promotion of European audiovisual works.

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\(^1\) 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.

\(^1\) 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 for Online Distribution Guidelines\(^2\) 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 (OEET). The applications to be assessed as well as the evaluation forms are accessible through OEET. Experts are provided with technical instructions for the use of OEET 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 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 two tables below show the relative marks of each criterion:

**Action 2: Support to the development of "On line Ready" packages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Max. points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Relevance and European added value</td>
<td>This criterion evaluates the relevance of the content of the action including European dimension vis-à-vis the objectives of the call for proposals.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Quality of the activities</td>
<td>This criterion evaluates the adequacy of the methodology to the objectives and the marketing strategy together with the feasibility and cost-efficiency.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Dissemination of project results, impact and sustainability</td>
<td>This criterion assesses the impact of the action on the availability, the visibility and the potential audience of European audiovisual works and the strategies for developing the sustainability of the action.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Quality of the project team and the grouping</td>
<td>This criterion will take into account the extent of the partnership and the exchange of knowledge within the partnership vis a vis the objectives of the action.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
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**Action 3: Support to innovative strategies for distribution and promotion of European audiovisual works**

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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
Action 2: Support to the development of "On Line Ready" packages

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<td>This criterion evaluates the relevance of the content of the action including European dimension vis a vis the objectives of the call for proposals.</td>
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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 relevance of the project vis-à-vis the objective of the call for proposals, in particular to improve the availability and visibility of European audiovisual works on VOD services provided in countries where those works are not available *(10 points)*, *please refer to Section D.3.1.1 of the Application form.*

Is the project relevant and coherent with the objectives pursued by the Action 2 (improve "the availability and visibility of European audiovisual works on VOD services provided in countries where those works are not available")?

- The extent, European dimension and scope of the programmes in the catalogue *(10 points)*, *please refer to Section D.2.1 of the application form*

Are the extent, European dimension and scope of the catalogue satisfying (size, geographical linguistic diversity, genre diversity...) with regard to the objectives of the call for proposals?

- The distribution of content from countries with a low production capacity *(10 points)*,
please refer to Sections D.2.1 and D.3.1.1 of the Application form.

Is the proportion of audiovisual works from European countries with a low production capacity satisfying? Does the project address the specificities of these audiovisual works in an appropriate way?

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<td>2</td>
<td>Quality of the activities</td>
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</table>

This criterion evaluates the adequacy of the methodology to the objectives and the marketing strategy together with the feasibility and cost-efficiency.

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 adequacy of the methodology to the objectives pursued by the project (15 points),
  please refer to the Section D.3.1.2 of the Application form.
  Is the proposed methodology clearly described (editorial line, choice of the targeted territories, choice of VOD services targeted, cooperation between the different segments of the value chain, timing of the activities...)? Is this methodology adequate to the objectives pursued by the project?

- The quality of the promotion and marketing strategies in order to reach the audience on the targeted VOD services in the territories covered by the project, as well as the techniques and tools deployed (15 points),
  please refer to the Section D.3.1.2 of the Application form.
  Are the promotion and marketing strategies (including the techniques and the tools deployed) clearly described and coherent? Do these strategies address efficiently the differences between transnational platforms and local services? Are these strategies adequate to the objectives pursued by the project?

- The feasibility and cost-effectiveness of the submitted action (10 points)
  please refer to the Section D.3.1.2 of the Application form + Annex 2 (budget).
  Are the main challenges faced by the project clearly identified and efficiently addressed? Is the project cost-efficient in relation to the objectives to be reached?
Element 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 of the project on the availability, visibility and the potential audience of European audiovisual works on Online services (10 points), please refer to Sections D.2.1 and D.3.1.3 of the Application form.
  Is the impact of the action on the availability, the visibility and the potential audience of European audiovisual works on Online services clearly described? Is this impact satisfying and coherent compared to the current situation of the audiovisual markets?

- The methodology proposed for assessing the results and defining appropriate mid-term strategies in order to ensure the sustainability of the project and for sharing of best practices (10 points), please refer to the Section D.3.1.3 of the Application form.
  Is the methodology for assessing the results and defining appropriate mid-term strategies coherent and well developed?
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 the Section D.3.1.4 of the application form.

Does the team/partnership bring an added value to the action? Are the coherence and complementarity of the team/partnership satisfying with regard to the tasks division, the decision making process, the exchange of knowledge...?
### Action 3: Support to innovative strategies for distribution and promotion of European audiovisual works

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relevance and European added value</td>
<td>This criterion evaluates the relevance of the content of the action including European dimension vis a vis the objectives of the call for proposals.</td>
<td>30</td>
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</table>

#### 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 of the project compared to the current situation of the audiovisual markets (15 points),
  *please refer to Section D.3.2.1 of the Application form.*
  What is the added-value of the project in terms of innovative distribution strategies? How does it address the complementarity between off-line and online distribution platforms? What is the relevance of such developments regarding the objectives pursued by the Action 3, in particular the development of new business models or tools in order to improve the potential audience of European audiovisual works?

- European dimension of the audiovisual works, cross-border and cross-language distribution (15 points),
  *please refer to the Sections D.2.2 and D.3.2.1 of the Application form.*
  Is the European dimension of the project regarding the origin of the audiovisual works covered, the cross-border and cross-language distribution (subtitle/dubbing policy, partnerships, geo-blocking policy, targeted territories ...) satisfying?
### Criteria Definitions

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<tr>
<td>Quality of the activities</td>
<td>This criterion evaluates the adequacy of the methodology to the objectives and the business model, innovative aspects, the marketing strategy, the feasibility and cost-efficiency.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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 adequacy of the methodology to the objectives pursued by the project (15 points),**
  
  *please refer to the Section D.3.2.2 of the Application form.*
  
  Is the proposed methodology clearly described (choice of the distribution platforms covered, choice of targeted territories, choice of European audiovisual works, cooperation between the different segments of the value chain, timing of the activities...)? Is this methodology adequate to the objectives pursued by the project?

- **The quality and complementarities of the promotion and marketing strategies in order to reach the target audience on the different distribution platforms and/or territories covered by the project, as well as the techniques and tools deployed (15 points),**
  
  *please refer to the Section D.3.2.2 of the Application form.*
  
  Are the promotion and marketing strategies (including the techniques and tools deployed) clearly described and coherent? Do these strategies address efficiently the differences between the different distribution platforms (off-line/on-line) and/or territories (transnational/local) covered by the project? Are these strategies adequate to the objectives pursued by the project?

- **The quality and the innovativeness of the Business model, feasibility and cost-effectiveness of the project (10 points),**
  
  *please refer to the Section D.3.2.2 of the Application form + Annex 2 (budget).*
  
  Is the Business model clearly described? Is the innovativeness of the Business model satisfying and coherent with the on-going evolution of the audiovisual markets? Are the main challenges faced by the project clearly identified and efficiently addressed? Is the action cost-efficient in relation to the objectives to be reached?
### Annex 1  SUPPORT FOR ONLINE DISTRIBUTION – Award Criteria

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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dissemination of project results, impact and sustainability</td>
<td>This criterion assesses the dissemination of the project’s results in view of ensuring the share of information / transparency and the impact of the support on the potential audience of European audiovisual works.</td>
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</table>

**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 potential audience of European audiovisual works *(5 points)*,  
  *please refer to Section D.3.2.3 of the Application form.*  
  To what extent the project could improve the potential audience of European audiovisual works?

- The capacity to improve the efficiency of relationships between the various sectors of the European audiovisual industry (producers, distributors, sales agents, festivals, cinemas, VOD services, TV broadcasters...) *(5 points)*,  
  *please refer to the Section D.3.2.3 of the Application form.*  
  To what extent the project could improve the relationships between the various sectors of the European audiovisual industry?

- The methodology proposed for collecting, analysing and disseminating data in order to share the results and guarantee the transparency of the project *(10 points)*,  
  *please refer to the Section D.3.2.3 of the Application form.*  
  Is the methodology for collecting, analysing and disseminating the results well developed and integrated in the project? To what extent would it facilitate the spread of the good practices related to the project towards the whole industry?
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Quality of the project team and the grouping</td>
<td>This criterion will take into account the extent of the partnership and the exchange of knowledge within the partnership vis a vis the objectives of the action</td>
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**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 the Section D.3.2.4 of the application form.*

Does the team/partnership bring an added value to the action? Are the coherence and complementarity of the team/partnership satisfying with regard to the tasks division, the decision making process, the exchange of knowledge...?
Annex 2  Reference documents on policy priorities

The Legal basis of Creative Europe:

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/index_en.htm

Support for Online Distribution:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/funding/support-for-online-distribution-eacea-112016_en
Title of Call for proposals: Support for Online Distribution

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.

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):

3 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).