1. EMIL Deliverable

D4.2 EMIL's Guide to Evaluation of FSTP Projects

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Abstract

This document describes the protocol and criteria with which the Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP) proposals from EMIL calls will be evaluated during the selection process to be funded. These criteria will also be applied throughout their development process once they have been funded.

Contents

1. Introduction

EMIL - the European Media and Immersion Lab – **main objective is to set up a dedicated XR Media Lab** to foster innovation and new solutions in the field of XR Media. It will develop technologies, methodologies and tools for radically new applications, services, and products. EMIL cooperates with contemporary XR media research and development offering open research and technical services and the EMIL network for the use of industries like media, gaming, healthcare, manufacturing, fashion, architecture, publishing, education, urban planning, agriculture, environmental planning, cultural heritage, and art.

To do so, **EMIL will support and execute two calls for European based XR technology developers and content creators (see deliverable D2.1 "FSTP Text and Application procedure")**. The EMIL consortium partners will support and guide the funded Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP) projects towards their goals. The EMIL network is an open network looking for new members and growth and it will also entice more members through the two financial supports to third party (FSTP) calls, providing funding in the range of 250.000-500.000€ per selected project, with indicative duration of 15 months to ensure focused effort. FSTP funding is aimed at projects by outstanding technology developers, media innovators, SMEs, academia, and others that enable new ways of creative storytelling and interaction through immersive media technologies. The total funding to be provided to all FSTP by EMIL is 5.600.000€.

EMIL's FSTP calls I and II will be carried out in the light of the same basic principles which govern European Commission calls:

> **Excellence.** The proposal(s) selected for funding must demonstrate a high quality in the context of the topics and criteria set out in the call;

Transparency. Funding decisions must be based on clearly described rules and procedures, and all applicants should receive adequate feedback on the outcome of the evaluation of their proposals;

Fairness and impartiality. All proposals submitted to a call are treated equally. They are evaluated impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants;

Confidentiality. All proposals and related data, knowledge and documents are treated in confidence;

Efficiency and speed. Evaluation of proposals and award of the financial support should be as rapid as possible, commensurate with maintaining the quality of the evaluation, and respecting the legal framework.

For further detail on EMIL's FSTP Calls please refer to deliverable D2.1 "FSTP Text and Application procedure".

Evaluation steps

The present guide defines the evaluation criteria for FSTP proposals presented to the calls for projects of EMIL. This guide is both addressed to FSTP proposal writers as well as to the expert panels that will evaluate the proposals. In this manner, the criteria are unified and proposal writers will understand how their proposals will be evaluated.

1. Proposals will first be checked by the Project Committee (PC) for compliance with the eligibility criteria (Figure 1(1)); for further detail on the Eligibility Criteria please refer to deliverable D2.1 "FSTP Text and Application procedure". Proposals that are not eligible or do not comply with the administrative instructions will not be evaluated by the expert panel.
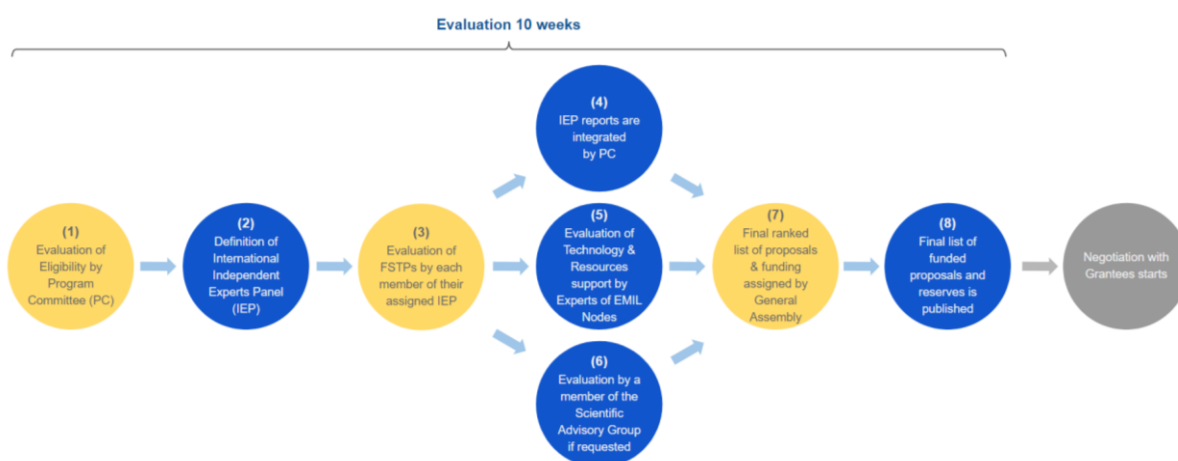

Figure 1.   Sequence of evaluation steps for FSTP proposals submitted to EMIL.

2. Proposals that are eligible will then go through an especially created international Independent Experts Panel (IEP) (Figure 1(2)). An IEP will be formed for each proposal in order to match their main focus. Each IEP will be composed of three international independent experts in the field that will seek a balance between academia and industry, as well as gender parity whenever possible.

3. Each member of the IEP will evaluate the proposal individually (Figure 1(3)) using the categories and rubric detailed below and will emit an individual report.
4. The PC will then integrate the individual reports of the IEP members for each FSTP proposal (Figure 1(4)). This will take those proposals with a sufficiently high mark through the following step.
5. Those FSTP proposals with sufficiently high grades given by the IEP will be evaluated by the technological experts at EMIL Nodes (Figure 1(5)) to specifically assess their technological feasibility and the adequacy of resources that the proposals ask to use from the Nodes during their execution. This will modulate the grade of the IEP to make sure that the proposals are feasible with the technological resources and assessment of EMIL Nodes and for the expected execution times.
6. If specific evaluation is found necessary, an expert from EMIL's Scientific Advisory Group will be asked to also review the proposal (Figure 1(6)) and further modulate the final score.
7. The PC will then generate a final ranked list of proposals according to their global grades as per the previous steps and will propose this list for funding to EMIL's General Assembly (EGA) (Figure 1(7)). This list will not only include the proposals positively graded to receive funding but will also include the proposals that will act as reserves in case the negotiation stages for their FSTP Agreement cannot be accomplished (please see D2.1 "FSTP Text and Application procedure"). The list will also include those proposals that have not achieved a sufficiently high grade.
8. Once the aforementioned list is ratified by the EGA, it will be published in EMIL's website (https://emil-xr.eu)

This evaluation process will take about 10 weeks to complete, after which the negotiation period will start with each FSTP proposal grantee. For further details on the negotiation process please refer to D2.1 "FSTP Text and Application procedure".

2. Evaluation criteria and rubric

Proposals will be evaluated by an international Independent Expert Panel (IEP) that will seek a balance between academia and industry, as well as gender parity whenever possible. Each proposal will be evaluated by three members. The three members will have to fill out a conflict-of-interest form to ensure a fair and transparent evaluation.

The proposal review will be based on the principles of relevance, transparency, equity, efficiency, quality, and independence as well as the best practices laid out in the European Science Foundation Peer Review Guide. To support this, guidelines on integrity will be developed and promoted to all parties involved in the review process, including applicants, reviewers, committee members, and staff.

Proposals will be ranked by the Program Committee (PC) (according to the grades provided by the IEP members for each proposal and the modulation of these grades by the EMIL Node experts and an expert from EMIL's Scientific Advisory Board) based on the categories of Excellence & Relevance, Quality, Efficiency, Impact, Sustainability, and Implementation as described below. Each category will receive a score between 0 and 5 with the following meanings:

5: Excellent: The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.
4: Good: The proposal addresses the criterion well, although certain improvements are possible.
3: Fair: While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses that would need correcting.
2: Poor: There are serious inherent weaknesses in relation to the criterion in question.
1: Very poor: The criterion is addressed in a cursory and unsatisfactory manner.
0: Not addressed at all: The criterion is not addressed at all in the proposal.

A minimum threshold of 3 out of 5 is needed for every category. However, the proposal must score at least 17 out of 25 (17/25) to be ranked. Additionally, the categories are weighted as indicated below.

2.1 Excellence & Relevance (0-5 points, threshold 3) (20% weight)

Extent to which the objectives of the FSTP Project are consistent with the EMIL-HORIZON-CL4-2021-HUMAN-01-06 call objectives. The main aspects are listed below:

- Developing ground-breaking XR experiences, open APIs, and access to substantial production aspects, as EMIL nodes are doing with their lighthouse projects. Proposals must explore the feasibility of a new or improved technology, product, process, service, or solution.
- Effective and timely delivery of FSTP projects, by making a rational and realistic use of EMIL's nodes resources and relying on a consortium of experienced researchers, project managers, developers, industry representatives and content creators, with constant verification of progress.
- Enter EMIL's network of support and expertise, initially based on the EMIL nodes and associated industry and education institutions, to exchange know-how and best practice, making effective use of all aspects of XR projects to achieve a mature European expert network which can exist beyond EMIL.
- Promote community building between the FSTPs and create strategic relations with industrial, commercial, and institutional supporters to increase the impact of results and ensure the longevity of the networked laboratory after completion.
- To disseminate and exploit results at key European events and guide project results into commercialisation.

2.2 Quality (0-5 points, threshold 3) (20% weight)

Extent to which the FSTP Project's objectives are expected to be achieved, considering their relative importance.

- How future-oriented the proposal is: proof of the novelty; references of similar XR experiences; how the proposal is different from those; and how it advances in the field of XR; i.e. the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, and goes beyond the state-of-the-art.
- If technological advances are proposed how they will move from TRL4 to TRL8, making a significant advance in XR technology.
- Relevant experience and capacity to implement the proposed solution (Does the team have the required skills to develop the proposed solution, is there complementary competencies in the team, ...).
- Accuracy in the description of objectives and the procedures to achieve them

2.3 Implementation (0-5 points, threshold 3) (20% weight)

The quality, coherence, and structure of the workplan to achieve the proposal in an efficient way (see point 4. Efficiency). Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, interdisciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension, etc.

- Definition of work packages, tasks, milestones, and deliverables is coherent with project objectives and work to be achieved, and will favour successful completion
- Gantt chart showing feasibility of workplan.
- Risk Management Plan to increase the probability of the project success by identifying potential challenging tasks early and envisaging mitigation measures to avoid or reduce the probability of negative occurrence.
- Budget definition in consonance with the proposal's ambition and needs.
- Description of how the implementation will support the funding plan of the call (40% + 40% + 20% check the text of the Calls) which needs some interim co-funding.

2.4 Efficiency (0-5 points, threshold 3) (20% weight)

Extent to which the outputs and/or desired effects have been planned with an optimised use of resources (funds, expertise, time, administrative costs, etc.).

- Rational analysis and justification of resources needed:
    - related to the budget of the proposal, and
    - related to the resources of EMIL Nodes.
- Capacity and role of each member in the proposal, and extent to which they bring together the necessary expertise.

2.5 Impact and Sustainability (0-5 points, threshold 3) (20% weight)

- Expected impacts with Key Performance Indicators to measure them. Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by the FSTP Project, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. Extent to which the benefits from the FSTP Project continue after the funding period, or the probability that they continue in the long-term in a way that is resilient to risks.
- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work plan, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions due to the project.
- Quality of the Ethics Self-assessment. All proposals will undergo an ethics screening to detect if there are any potential ethical or security risks.
- Suitability and quality of the measures to maximize expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.
- Means and measures to provide continuity of the exploitation after the funding and the project are over.
- Description of the IP that is expected to be generated from the proposal and how they will be dealt with.

Annex 1 Technology Readiness Levels

	EU definition: where a topic description refers to a TRL, the following definitions apply, unless otherwise specified:	*A proposal for EMIL's definition regarding XR media productions*
TRL 1	basic principles observed	basic principles observed
TRL 2	technology concept formulated	a service concept formulated or synopsis and the preliminary version or sections of script
TRL 3	experimental proof of concept	experimental proof of service concept or advanced version or production schedule or …
TRL 4	technology validated in lab	plan for testing the service or advanced production schedule
TRL 5	technology validated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)	service tested in small scale or content described carefully or full script with schedule
TRL 6	technology demonstrated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)	service demonstrated in a real environment or sketches and visuals of the content. Demos or protos or similar of the game, service or all the content ready for editing or …
TRL 7	system prototype demonstration in operational environment	service prototype demonstration in operational environment, content edited
TRL 8	system complete and qualified	service complete and qualified, content ready for publishing
TRL 9	actual system proven in operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies; or in space)	service or content tested in the final environment