



Information about Review Panels' composition

When it comes to implementing an independent and fair assessment of applications, it is of critical importance that the composition of Review Panels is kept confidential as long as the assessment process is ongoing. This is particularly important in cases when strategic core institutional funding is considered. This approach is in line with standard practice in most national and international peer review systems (e.g. the ERC discloses panel composition only after a given evaluation process is completed).

Keeping this information confidential reinforces the integrity of the evaluation as it avoids any interference in the process. It is a way to preserve individual review panel members from having direct contact (incidental, e.g. meeting at scientific events – or deliberate, e.g. phone call) with individual applicants, groups of applicants or representatives organisation (e.g. association or societies). Should direct contact happen, this may not only bias a reviewer's perception, but it would also bring distortion in the system as all applications would therefore not be treated equally. This is particularly important as sometimes knowing the panel composition can allow deducting the attribution of applications to individual panel members.

In addition, and particularly in the case of evaluation involving a very large number of scientists, disclosing the names of individual review panel members may result in these experts being constantly contacted by email or phone during the process. Keeping panel composition confidential is therefore also a way to safeguard review panel members in their mandate.

Besides not publicising the composition of review panels, one also has to consider that the same considerations are given when review panel members are requested to keep all information they receive (including external assessments and rebuttal) as confidential and not to share it with anyone besides those involved in the evaluation process, it is also clear that they should not contact the applicants to seek any further clarification or detail.

It is in ESF quality requirement to ensure that an evaluation process demonstrates integrity and neutrality, while this is an expectation from its partner organisations for which ESF performs a given evaluation, it is also a strong prerequisite for experts involved, who will eventually have their name associated with the process. In this context integrity and neutrality are guaranteed –among other things- by the non-disclosure of review panels composition. In this context, ESF specifically requests partner organisations to respect this requirement.

It is also clear that transparency is another key pillar to be respected, in order to guarantee the required level of transparency; it is ESF's policy to:

- Define, with the partner organisation, the profile of experts to be involved, including specific requirements and criteria – This information can be released as soon as an evaluation process starts,
- Provide the list of Review Panel members to the organisation requesting the evaluation for information and comments, this confidential information can be circulated within the organisation governance and/or advisory structure,
- After the evaluation process is concluded, make public the list of review panel members.