**Call for Expressions of Interest for Evaluators**

**MSCA 2017 Prize Awards Competition**

**Malta EU Presidency MSCA 2017 Conference: Enhancing R&I Capacity through Researchers’ Mobility**

**General**

This is a Call for Expressions of Interest for Evaluators to provide advisory support to the Malta Council for Science and Technology (hereinafter referred to as the Council) and on behalf of the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) in the systematic and objective assessment of submitted proposals for the MSCA 2017 Prize Competition. The aim is to shortlist 10 proposals per each of the 3 categories (‘Innovation and Entrepreneurship’, ‘Communicating Science’, and ‘Contribution to a better society’).

**Background to MSCA**

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) of the Horizon 2020 programme provide grants for all stages of researchers' careers - be they doctoral candidates or highly experienced researchers - and encourage transnational, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary mobility. The MSCA enable research-focused organisations to host talented foreign researchers and to create strategic partnerships with leading institutions worldwide.

The MSCA aim to equip researchers with the necessary skills and international experience for a successful career, either in the public or the private sector. The programme responds to the challenges sometimes faced by researchers, offering them attractive working conditions and the opportunity to move between academic and other settings.

**MSCA 2017- overview**

The MSCA 2017 Conference will take place in Malta on 11th and 12th May 2017 under the auspices of the Maltese EU Presidency to the Council of the EU. The event will focus on ‘Enhancing R&I capacity through researchers’ mobility’ and will be organised by the Malta Council for Science and Technology of the Ministry for Education and Employment.

The overall objective of the conference is to discuss and reflect on the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions with a special focus on ‘Enhancing R&I capacity through researchers’ mobility’. The objectives of the event will be reached by sharing of good practices and encouraging a debate on past and ongoing experiences. Experienced and early stage researchers, academics from various universities, European Commission officials, proposal evaluators, representatives of National Contact Points and Programme Committee Meetings will have the possibility to share good practices, views and opinions. The input from the participants will be then elaborated into a conference report.

The event will also look into other current and future aspects of the MSCA programme such as ‘Widening Participation’, in terms of encouraging organizations and researchers from the EU 13 to increase their participation in the MSCA. The role of policy makers, research institutions, non-academia sector, and National Contacts Points in this regard will be addressed.

Furthermore, the conference will also highlight current and future societal challenges in order to prepare researchers for an attractive career and knowledge-exchange opportunities. The interaction between academia and industry sectors, skills, mobility, and gender issues will be among the key elements.

**The Prize Awards Competition**

The MSCA 2017 conference will feature Prize Competition for experienced and early stage researchers. The competition will be divided in three categories and will be open for all researchers who have benefited from MSCA Horizon 2020 and FP7 funding. **The three categories will be as follows:**

**• Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

**• Communicating Science**

**• Contribution to a better society**

The prize competition will be open by a call for submissions which will be promoted on MSCA website of the European Commission, as well as the MSCA 2017 dedicated website and through other communication channels, including the NCP and the MCAA networks. The competition will be open for self-applications, however, letters of recommendation will be encouraged. Researchers will be able to submit their applications throughout the month of February 2017, thus allowing enough time for the panel of experts to shortlist the best ten submissions for each of the categories. A total 100 submissions are expected. The ten shortlisted submissions will be then provided to another panel of evaluators composed by two or three evaluators from previous calls for application for MSCA Prize Awards (MSCA 2016 Luxembourg or previous MSCA Presidency conference).

The selected experts will need to base their evaluations on the below (more detailed evaluation criteria will be set following consultation with the selected evaluators/experts):

• The CV and track record of the MSCA fellow;

• The outcome of the MSCA fellowship and its relevance for the fellow’s career;

• Motivation by the fellow to apply for the award;

• MANDATORY: Availability of the fellows to participate in the MSCA awards ceremony on 11th May 2017 in Malta;

• Innovative approach;

• Effectiveness of outreach to the general public (applicable only for Communicating Science category);

• Coverage in mainstream media (e.g. published articles and/or interviews- (applicable only for Communicating Science category).

Eligible will be all fellows that:

• have received funding under MSCA (FP7 and/or H2020), thus including closed and ongoing projects

• are available to attend the MSCA 2017 Malta conference on 11th and 12th May 2017

**Service Requirements**

1. Contribution to the final definition of the criteria for the selection of the MSCA 2017 Prize Awards fellows.
2. Evaluation of project proposals submitted in response to calls for proposals in line with the MSCA 2017 Prize Competition criteria.

**Budget and Finances**

In line with legislative measures, all Evaluators engaged should have a valid VAT number. It is essential that you either provide a copy of your VAT certificate or if this has not as yet been provided by the VAT department, you declare that you have applied for it.

Please note that the Council will require an invoice for any work and an official receipt for all payments affected.

**The remuneration offered is as follows:**

€40 (+ VAT) per submission.

The average length of the proposals to be evaluated is 2 pages.

Turnaround required: 10 days

**Duration of Contract and Conditions**

Evaluators shall bind themselves to conduct such assignments in accordance with the terms of this Call.

Any additional information or clarification, as may be requested by MCST, shall be deemed to form an integral part of the original assignment.

The Council may accept Evaluators who propose the provision of services in more than one category. The Council requires two Evaluators per category. Applicants must have a proven and successful track record.

The selected Evaluators will be expected to sign a formal contractual undertaking for the provision of services within two weeks from being notified of the conclusion of the adjudication process.

Evaluators shall, with exception to information that is already in the public domain, not divulge to third parties any of the information obtained in the course of this Call; or, in the event of a service allocation, during the course of evaluation, without the prior written consent of the Council. Information must be protected and used in accordance to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2001.

Evaluators will be expected to sign a Non-disclosure Agreement.

The agreement shall run from 1st February 2017 until 30th April 2017 and be of a maximum value of €2500.

The place of work will be the place where the evaluator has his official (permanent) address or the Council.

In limited instances, the selected Evaluators may be asked to participate in evaluation meetings at the Council premises or through Skype as part of their service provision. This service is considered to form part of the Evaluation itself and will not necessitate additional remuneration.

Evaluation sheets with set criteria and guidelines will be provided per section upon the provision of an assignment.

Decisions taken by the Council with regards to the allocation of assignments to the selected Evaluators shall be binding and shall not be the subject of negotiation and/or discussion.

Evaluators must refuse work in the case of potential conflict of interest, and may refuse work by providing reasonable justification.

The selected Evaluators shall ensure that all services are delivered within the time frames stipulated by the Council. Payment will be effected following the completion of the allotted assignment and upon presentation of an invoice. Evaluators are to produce an official receipt of payment within 20 working days. Consecutive failure to do so may lead to the termination of the contract.

If any disagreement or dispute arises out of the contract signed between the selected Evaluators and the Council, such matter may be referred to arbitration under the Arbitration Rules and Procedures established by the Laws of Malta.

**Evaluation Guidelines**

Evaluators should be guided by the following principles:

* Independence: Evaluation should be completed in one’s own personal capacity.
* Impartiality: All proposals and stage reports should be treated equally and evaluated impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicant or service provider.
* Objectivity: Each proposal and stage report should be evaluated as submitted and not based on potential changes and/or alterations.
* Accuracy: Judgements should be taken against the official evaluation criteria and the proposal or stage report in question.
* Consistency: The same standard of judgment should apply to all proposals and stage reports.
* Confidentiality: It is essential that:

- Evaluation matters, such as: the content of proposals/stage reports, the evaluation results or the opinions of fellow experts, are not discussed with anyone.

- Any related third parties are not contacted.

- Confidentiality of documents is maintained at all times.

**Conflicts of Interest (COI)**

A COI exists if the Evaluator:

* was involved in the preparation of the proposal or provision of service;
* stands to benefit directly / indirectly if the proposal or stage report is positively evaluated;
* has a family / personal relationship with any person representing an applicant or service provider legal entity;
* is a director / trustee / partner/ supervisor of an applicant or service provider or involved in the management of either;

COI conditions are documented in the Evaluator’s contract. Any breach of the above will lead to the termination of the Evaluator’s contract, with the Council also reserving its rights at law. In such cases the evaluation will also be declared null and void. The invoice / expenses will also be rejected. It is the Evaluator’s responsibility to declare a potential conflict of interest prior to commencing any assigned work.

**Exclusion Criteria**

Evaluators shall be excluded from application and participation if:

* they are currently beneficiaries of a project under the MSCA programme.
* they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
* they have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgement which has the force of res judicata;
* they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which MCST may justify;
* they have been the subject of a judgement which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity;
* they are currently subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 16(8) of the Malta Financial Services Authority Act.

**Instruction and Application**

Evaluators are to submit one (1) copy of their application by electronic mail clearly marked “Call for Evaluators in [select preferred category]”. Alternatively, Evaluators may opt to hand deliver their applications in a sealed envelope addressed to:

Lili Vasileva

Horizon 2020 Unit

The Malta Council for Science and Technology

Villa Bighi, Kalkara KKR 1320

In the preparation, submission and any other process relevant to the submission and adjudication of this Call, potential Evaluators shall be guided by the following:

Each application should include the following items:

1. A covering letter clearly listing the areas applied for;

2. A detailed Europass Curriculum Vitae;

3. A copy of certificates;

4. A professional Profile (include proof of similar practice);

5. A profile of the Entity (if applying as part on an entity);

6. Copy of the VAT certificate.

7. Company registration number (if applying as part of an entity);

8. Annex 01;

9. Annex 02

10. Annex 03

**Notes:**

Evaluators must, at minimum, hold a tertiary level of education.

Evaluators must show proof of at least five years of related practice in their preferred categories.

Preference will be given to Evaluators holding prior evaluation practice at an international level.

If the evaluation services are being provided under the auspices of an entity, a profile of the entity should be provided in addition to the professional profile and Curriculum Vitae of the person designated as the Evaluator within that entity.

If the evaluation services are being provided under the auspices of an entity, the company’s registration and VAT number should be provided. With exception to this clause, if the Evaluator is self-employed, then only the VAT number is required.

Any requests for information or clarifications related to this Call are to be submitted via email at: lili.vasileva@gov.mt

Interested Evaluators are requested to submit their response and all relevant documents by not later than noon on **16th January 2017**. All documents should be initialised on each page.

*Data Protection Clause: The information collected through this Call shall be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2001. The contents remain confidential and intended solely for the use of this purpose, and will not be disclosed or copied without your consent to anyone outside the Ministry for Employment and Education unless the law permits us to.*

**Award Notification**

Submissions shall be opened and scheduled by 31st January 2017.

**Annex 01 – Submission Checklist**

This checklist is intended to facilitate submission. Candidates are requested to submit a copy of the checklist together with all relevant documents in sequence.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ref** | **Submission Task** | **Submission Check box** |
|   |   |   |
| 1 | A cover letter clearly listing the categories applied for |   |
| 2 | A detailed Europass Curriculum Vitae |   |
| 3 | A copy of certificates |   |
| 4 | A professional Profile (include proof of similar practice, applied to the selected category/categories) |   |
| 5 | A profile of the Entity (if applying as part on an entity) |   |
| 6 | Copy of the VAT certificate. |   |
| 7 | Company registration number (if applying as part on an entity) |   |
| 8 | Annex 01 |   |
| 9 | Annex 02 (Enterprises only) |   |
| 10 | Annex 03 |   |

*Note: An inability to provide any of the above will lead to categorical exclusion.*

**Annex 02 – Statement on Conditions of Employment (Enterprises only)**

1. It is hereby declared that all employees engaged with the company shall enjoy working conditions including wages, salaries, vacation and sick leave, maternity and parental leave as provided for in the relative Employment Legislation. Furthermore, we shall comply with Chapter 424 of the Laws of Malta (Occupational Health and Safety Authority Act) as well as any other national legislation, regulations, standards and/or codes of practice or any amendment thereto in effect during the provision of services under this contract.

2. It is hereby declared that the service being provided under this Call will be carried out by the bidding entity employees or bona fide self-employed individuals or subcontracted third parties. No work will be carried out by persons designated as self-employed where their actual employment status in terms of the Employment Status National Standard Order LN 44/2012 is that of an employee without prior notification to the Council. Such notification must reach the Council with 2 days of allocation of an assignment.

3. It is hereby declared that all the employees of the bidder, whether providing services to the Council or not, have a written contract of service and are registered with the competent authority of Malta which is the Employment and Training Corporation. Copies of the written contracts of service of the employees or sub-contracted parties will be available at any time for inspection.

4. It is hereby declared that if the bidder is found in breach of any of the above declarations it is accepted that this application will be nullified and that we will have no right to be compensated for any damage we may have suffered or will suffer in the future in respect to this termination.

5. The Evaluator or legal representative agrees to all the conditions listed in this statement.

Signature...........................................................................

Name of Signatory............................................................

I.D. No. .............................................................................

Name of bidder/contractor..............................................

**Annex 03- Additional questions**

1) Are you a representative of:

• Academia

• Industry

• Other (please specify)…………………………………………

2) Exposure to similar evaluation processes. Mention any past involvement in evaluating MSCA (and other H2020/FP7 projects):

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3) How familiar are you with MSCA programme and with its rules of participation?

• Proficient

• Very good

• Good

• Average

• Low