



European Theoretical Spectroscopy Facility I3 (project 211956)

Deliverable D4.5: "Final call evaluation report"

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Summary D4.5

Whereas the Spring 2007 call for pilot projects was evaluated by a panel of ETSF scientists representing the 10 ETSF core nodes, the ETSF calls for proposals under ETSF-I3 were all evaluated by an external independent panel. As such, the ETSF call is evaluated according to common rules in large experimental facilities as well as EC rules for Integrated Infrastructures Initiatives (I3s) Transnational Access. **The role of the external panel is to guarantee the independence and impartiality of the evaluation with regard to proposers as well as to the ETSF nodes (core and associates). The introduction of the independent External Evaluation embodied a deep change of the ETSF call evaluation. Together with users' feedback, it initiated several subsequent improvements.**

Between the 2008 Spring and Autumn calls for proposals, ETSF-I3 IT4 **improved the online submission form** to address the problems raised by the external evaluators in terms of proposals standardisation and other characteristics information.

The independent experts also expressed a need for more information about the feasibility of the projects. On 11th February 2009, a decision of the ETSF-I3 Steering Committee included a new step in the call evaluation process: **a report assessing the feasibility of each proposal**. It is sent to the external evaluators together with the proposals.

The ETSF proposes two different types of user projects: (i) **collaborative research projects that** address a specific scientific problem, providing a deeper interpretation of experimental data, guidance for new experimental efforts, or prediction of materials' properties and (ii) **training projects that** provide dedicated training on topics in theoretical spectroscopy (theory, methodology, software, *etc.*), delivered to individuals or groups, at the user's site, an ETSF node, or at another suitable place.

In 2009, feedback from users strongly expressed the **need to speed up the evaluation of training proposals**. Originally evaluated at the same time as the collaborative research proposals, only twice a year, it could take from 3 to 9 months to be evaluated. A new training evaluation process was agreed by the Steering Committee in September 2009 that allows the evaluation of training proposals all year round rather than twice a year only. Since Autumn 2009, this evaluation process has worked smoothly and provided full satisfaction to users as well as to the ETSF nodes in charge of the training projects.

An effort was also made to **speed up the collaborative research projects evaluation process**. Finally, a duration of 3 months between the submission deadline and the posting of response letters seems to be the acceptable compromise between evaluation quality and the users' eagerness to know the results.

Whereas in the 2007 call for pilot projects an internal panel – where all ETSF core (mandatory) and associated (optional) nodes are represented – carried out all the evaluation steps (ranking, feasibility and allocation of resources to successful projects), during ETSF-I3 most of these steps were carried out by the external panel (ranking) and the Beamline coordinators (feasibility). **The main role remaining to the Internal Evaluation Panel is the allocation of resources to successful proposals, based on the External Panel ranking.**

During ETSF-I3, the ETSF call gathered proposals from 16 new countries compared to the 2007 call for pilot projects. In 2010, thanks a big effort to reach out to new countries and a call specially dedicated to widening the geographic spread of projects within the European Research Area (ERA), 5 proposals from the ERA countries not previously strongly represented in the ETSF call were successful. By the end of 2010, proposals had been received from most western Europe countries (except for Portugal and Iceland). Several countries of eastern Europe had still not participated to the ETSF call: Greece, Romania and the three Baltic countries, Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia, Albania, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus. Outside Europe, the ETSF call has received proposals from Algeria, Egypt and Namibia, Brazil, Mexico and the USA, China and Japan.

Before ETSF-I3, no user project from industry had been successful at the ETSF call for proposals. **A strong objective of ETSF-I3 was to reach out to companies and gather more proposals from the private sector. The ETSF call received 11 proposals from industry during ETSF-I3, out of which 9 (from 7 different companies, including two SMEs) were successful.** ETSF-I3 has shown that it is possible to create a relationship based on confidence with the ETSF. The first experiences of user projects with companies enable the facility to move towards the next step: have industry pay full cost for their user projects.

The overall conduct of the ETSF call for proposals was assessed a posteriori by the ETSF-I3 Advisory Board composed of experimentalists and theoreticians from academia and industry. In addition, the independent experts that form the External Evaluation Panel also gave their opinion of the ETSF call. Their feedback is that **the quality of the proposed projects rose in the past three years. The ETSF has created a sustainable contact between experimentalists and theoreticians** (rather than *ad hoc*). And **the number of proposals submitted could be much higher if the ETSF would collaborate with experimental facilities**, establishing joint calls for proposals, for example.

From Spring 2008 to Spring 2010, the call for proposals and its evaluation were greatly improved under ETSF-I3 IT4, an effort fully funded by ETSF-I3. At the same time, the ETSF call daily management was partially funded by ETSF-I3. **Since Autumn 2010, the ETSF call is fully managed by permanent ETSF staff funded by the CNRS at the ETSF Centre for Users and Technology (Paris).**

If on one side the management of the ETSF call and its evaluation are funded by a single institution (CNRS), on the other side, the ETSF call must operate at European level to give its users the best of its services. Indeed, its capabilities are not disseminated equally in each country. On the contrary, each country is complementary. Users from a country A may need ETSF capabilities that are available only in a country B. Moreover, more than one third of our projects could only be implemented thanks to the collaboration of several ETSF nodes. Independently of the origin of the users, the ETSF must work as an integrated European facility to deliver the best services.