EMPOWOMEN

Call for evaluators #2

Guidelines for Evaluators

OPENING: 18th of September 2024
CLOSING: 18th of November 2024 at 17:00 CET

Project Website: https://empowomen.eu/

Apply: https://bit.ly/empowomen-2nd-open-call-for-evaluators

V1.0
18/09/2024

List of Acronyms

EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
MS	Member States
OCT	Overseas Countries and Territories
OC	Open Call
FSTP	Financial Support for Third Parties
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
VAT	Value Added Tax
VIES	VAT Information Exchange System
BAE	Business Angels Europe
SWG	Startup Wise Guys
CoI	Conflict of Interest
AWU	Annual Working Unit

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1. About EmpoWomen project

EmpoWomen funded by the European Union through its Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme, seeks to overcome the obstacles faced by women in the field of R&D&I to improve equality in deep tech entrepreneurship.

Despite consistent growth in the business world, women remain substantially underrepresented as entrepreneurs, particularly in Europe. In the deep tech sector, currently valued at 700 billion EUR, women account for only 10% of patent applications, and less than 15% of startups are founded or co-founded by women.

EmpoWomen offers a unique programme for scaling up women-led companies with the objective of creating an exclusive support programme for female founders and entrepreneurs leading deep tech startups from widening-area countries to grow into tomorrow's female tech leaders and put women at the forefront of deep tech in the world.

The initiative EmpoWomen is a 2-year programme (2024-2025) which consists of a unique acceleration and mentoring programme and includes non-repayable funding totalling €1,125M, prizes and services to 25 women-led deep-tech companies selected through a competitive process from European emerging markets and the outermost regions and associated EU countries.

SPLORO, TechUkraine, Business Angels Europe (BAE) and Startup Wise Guys (SWG), altogether with 8 startup associations from the widening area will run this innovative programme which will be the first to support deep tech women-led companies. The selected women-led businesses will each have access to a 6-month programme consisting of a dedicated acceleration and investment readiness support service by SWG, webinars and events, together with specialist training and mentoring from Business Angels, combined with Demo days and direct connections with both Angel Investors and Venture capitals (VCs), offering the potential to access investment.

1.1   EmpoWomen Open Calls

The purpose of EmpoWomen Open Calls is to actively involve women-led deep tech early-stage startups in the widening areas. The Open Call #2 (OC#2) seeks to identify and choose promising startups to participate in a customized acceleration programme. The overarching goal is to offer support that nurtures the development and investment potential of these startups, with the ultimate aim of cultivating them into leading female figures in deep tech innovation within Europe.

2. Open Call for Evaluators

2.1   Evaluators profile

EmpoWomen is looking for independent evaluators who can assess the quality of the received applications within the Open Call #2 shortly after the call is closed. **The evaluators should meet the following criteria:**

- Based in a European country (EU nationals (Member States (MS) of the European Union (EU), including their outermost regions, as well as Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) linked to an EU Member) as well as nationals of Horizon Europe associated countries, full list [HERE](#)).

- Expertise in Deep-Tech Innovation: Evaluators should have a strong understanding of deep- tech innovation, including the ability to evaluate projects based on their innovativeness, feasibility, and potential to go beyond the state-of-the-art.

- Entrepreneurial, Investment, or Innovation Background: Evaluators should have experience in entrepreneurship, investment, or innovation to effectively assess the proposals in the context of the EmpoWomen programme.

- Experts with experience in evaluating proposals for the European Commission or similar experience.

An evaluator cannot be linked to an organization that has participated in OC#1 or that aims to participate in the OC#2 or for an organization that is currently involved in the EmpoWomen consortium.

The evaluators will be responsible for providing a neutral but technical/scientific and/or commercial review of the received applications, generally focusing on, but not limited to, the following aspects:

- Quality and relevance of the proposed project or initiative.

- Technical feasibility and innovation potential.

- Alignment with the objectives and focus deep tech technologies of EmpoWomen.

- Potential impact and scalability of the proposed solution.

- Consideration of ethical, legal, and regulatory aspects.

- Evaluation of the applicant's expertise, track record, and capacity to execute the project. It is important to note that the number of applications per evaluator depends on various factors:

- the availability of evaluators,

- time and,

- the number of applications submitted.

Evaluators will be notified of the number of proposals during the contract signing process, and you will have access to the details of the proposals once the contract is signed and you log in to the SPLORO platform for evaluations. For specific dates, please refer to Section 3 of this document.

3. Tentative timeline of activities

- Call for evaluators: **18.09.2024 – 18.11.2024, 17:00h CET**

- Proposals evaluation: **03.12.2024 – 31.01.2025**

- Webinar with evaluators**: 11.12.2024**

- Remote evaluation: **13.12.2024 – 10.01.2025**

- Interviews: Some evaluators will participate in the interview stage only with those applicants who have passed the evaluation stage. Therefore, they are required to be available on the following dates: **20.01.2025 – 31.01.2025**

Evaluators who cannot be present on the specified interview dates will not be eligible to receive any compensation as evaluators. This availability during the interview phase is a mandatory requirement to ensure the integrity of the evaluation process.

4. Evaluators selection process

Evaluators will be selected by the EmpoWomen team members based on their competences and needs for the OC#2. If you are interested in becoming an evaluator, please create an evaluator profile on the SPLORO platform, complete all the necessary fields in the form and upload your **CV (in .pdf format).**

Apply here: LINK

4.1   Evaluators' liability

By applying to the EmpoWomen evaluator Call and registering on the SPLORO platform, the expert:

- understands that applying (registration) does not guarantee selection as an evaluator for any of the open calls.

- understands that they will need to provide a signed services contract, together with a Code of

Conduct, along with any other requested documents, if selected to serve as an evaluator for a specific open call published on the SPLORO platform.

- confirms that the team in charge of the OC#2 will inquire about their availability to perform the evaluation within the specified timeframe for the given open call, to attend an informative session (if necessary), and a debriefing session after selection (if necessary).

- confirms interest in being informed about future opportunities to act as an evaluator in ongoing and upcoming open calls.

- ensures that they will only evaluate applications from applicants with whom they have no Conflict of Interest (CoI).

4.2   Admissibility

The applicant must be based on European country (citizens of EU Member States, including their outermost regions, as well as countries and territories overseas linked to EU members, as well as nationals of Horizon Europe associated countries; full list HERE). Note: if not a citizen of these countries but a resident/taxpayer in one of these countries, you are still eligible to become an evaluator.

- Applications for the call for Evaluators can be submitted at any time starting from **18.09.2024 to 18.11.2024**.

- Applications for the call for Evaluators must be submitted electronically through the SPLORO platform, as indicated in this call, using the provided form on the platform, and a CV must be attached as a **.pdf** file as part of the application.

- Applications must be completed in all parts, and the CV must be legible, accessible, and printable.

- The vehicular language of the Project is English. Therefore, all fields, documents and other contents must be uploaded strictly in English. **Upload of documents in any other language will be considered non-eligible.**

If the eligibility criteria are met, the expert evaluation will be conducted by the EmpoWomen team members. To formalize the collaboration, unless otherwise specified, selected evaluators will be required to sign a declaration of no conflict of interest, a confidentiality agreement with the project representative (coordinator, treasurer, etc.) and the contract prior to the start of the evaluation.

4.3   Conflict of interest

Evaluators must not have a conflict of interest at the time of their appointment and must sign a contract stating that they do not have one. They must also notify the consortium if such a conflict arises in any of the applications to which they have been allocated. When an evaluator reports a potential conflict of interest or it is brought to the project consortium's attention in any way, the project consortium will assess the circumstances and any objective aspects of information available. If the consortium determines that there is a conflict of interest, the evaluator will be removed from the application's evaluation. All potential conflicts of interest will be thoroughly investigated.
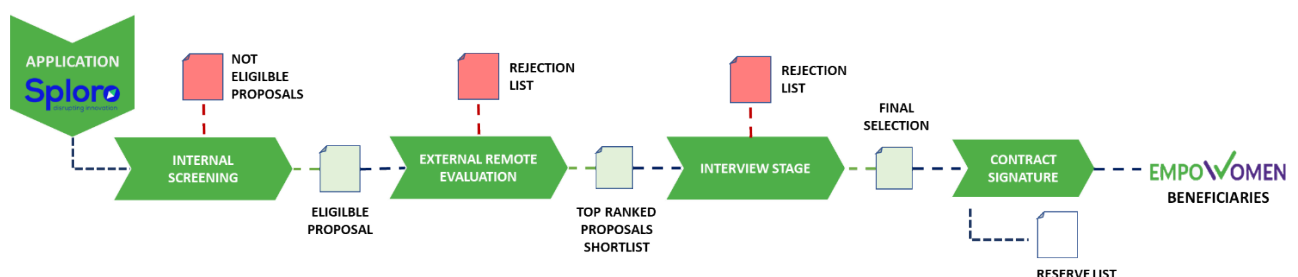
4.4   Confidentiality

All information connected to the evaluation process is absolutely confidential, thus evaluators are bound by secrecy. They are not permitted to reveal any information regarding the applications submitted, as well as the outcomes of the assessment and selection, to anyone. They are also not permitted to use the application's concepts for their own purposes.

It is also strictly forbidden to announce or reveal that evaluators are or have been an evaluator for the EmpoWomen call.

5. Startup Evaluation Procedure

The evaluation process to be followed during the selection of the applicants is shown in the following figure.

- **Step 1. Internal Screening (Eligibility criteria for startups):** The number of evaluators chosen depends on the quantity of proposals that pass Step 1.

- **Step 2. External remote evaluation**: All selected evaluators will carry out Step 2 of the evaluation procedure.

- **Step 3. Interview stage**. The number of evaluators involved in the interviews will also depend on the number of top-ranked proposals resulting from Step 2 (external remote evaluation).

Selected evaluators for the interviews who decline participation due to unavailability (note that Section 3 specifies the interview period) will not receive payment for completing the External Remote Evaluation, which is Step 2 of the Evaluation Procedure.

5.1   Step 1: Eligibility criteria for startups

An automatic filtering to discard non-eligible proposals will follow the shortlist below. Eligibility criteria check will verify:

a) All the required fields in the online application form have been completed and all documents are uploaded.

b) All documents are uploaded in English.

c) The startup is a 'deep tech' company.

d) The start-up is founded or co-founded by women holding a top management position (CEO, CTO or equivalent) in the company at the time of submission.

e) The existence of a legal entity.

f) Registration of the company before the opening of the call and with less than 6 years since registration (deadline date set by submission deadline)

g) Company classification as SME. A SME will be considered as such if complying with the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC and the SME user guide. In a summary, the criteria which define an SME are:

   o Independent (not linked or owned by another enterprise), by Recommendation 2003/361/EC.

   o Headcount in Annual Work Unit (AWU) less than 250.

   o Annual turnover less or equal to 50 million EUR OR annual balance sheet total less or equal to 43 million EUR.

h) Having raised less than 1M EUR in equity or public funding until submission date.

i) The uniqueness of the proposal (proposal not already funded in the Women TechEU

initiative and/or any other identical project to avoid double funding).

j)   Companies located in the list of eligible countries or regions.

Applications marked as non-eligible will get a rejection letter including the reasons (a to i) for being declared as non-eligible. No further feedback on the process will be given.

5.2   Step 2. External remote evaluation

All activities will be carried out individually on the SPLORO platform. **On 11.12.2024** an online webinar will be conducted with the selected evaluators, where the evaluation process will be explained step by step, with special attention to the evaluation criteria. Additionally, they will be briefed on how the SPLORO platform works.

After the webinar, the evaluators will be sent a manual for the platform and all the necessary documentation for the evaluation process.

Each proposal will then be assigned to 2 evaluators, and consequently, 2 individual evaluation reports will be prepared for each proposal, which should be based on the assessment of 3 different evaluation criteria **(Excellence, Impact and Implementation).**

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
EXCELLENCE	Projects must demonstrate high-quality, and a clear set of objectives aligned with the EmpoWomen vision and with the general objectives of the project. The following aspects will be evaluated: 1) Alignment of the application with the call and the EIC; 2) Degree of deep-tech innovation; 3) Current traction/implementation/achievements of the project
IMPACT	1) Quality of the future implementation plan; 2) Business plan; 3) Growth potential of the proposed innovation/solution; 4) Need of EmpoWomen support; 5) IPR
IMPLEMENTATION	Relevance of the female (co-)founder role in the company; 2) An overall gender balance and the position held by women in the startup; 3) Team's skills, motivation, and commitment to execute the project; 4) Quality and efficiency of the work plan.

The evaluators will score each award criterion on a scale from 0 to 5:

SCORE	DEFINITION
0	Proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
1	Poor – criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
2	Fair – proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses
3	Good – proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
4	Very good- proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
5	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

The total score will be calculated as an average of the score of the 3 different criteria. **The threshold for each criterion will be three (3), while the overall score threshold will be ten (10).** That means if a proposal receives less than 3 in one criterion or less than 10 overall score, will not be recommended for funding by the independent evaluators and will be automatically rejected.

Each evaluator will score a proposal without knowing the evaluation of their colleague, thus preventing one evaluator from influencing the other. Therefore, the same evaluation can receive very different scores.

The **normalisation** method will be employed to address this, which will be explained in the evaluator's manual. This method ensures a more balanced distribution of scores and reduces the possibility of biases and distortions. All proposals will be ranked based on their scores at the end of the evaluation process.

5.3   Step 3: Interview stage

The top-ranked projects of the external remote evaluation shall be duly invited to participate in an online interview. Given that the interview will be recorded, utmost consideration shall be accorded to data protection throughout the process.

Some evaluators will participate in the interviews, while others will not be involved in this stage. The evaluators selected to be part of the interviews will be notified in mid-January and will receive all relevant information regarding the proposals that have advanced to this phase and are assigned to them for evaluation.

The number of interviews per evaluator depends on various factors: the availability of evaluators' time, the evaluator's expertise and the number of applications submitted.

It is crucial to clarify that a prerequisite for being chosen as an evaluator is availability during the specified interview period in **Section 3**. **Evaluators selected for interviews who decline participation due to unavailability will not receive payment for completing the External Remote Evaluation, which is step 2 of the Evaluation Procedure.**

The evaluation of this stage will be simple. The 2 evaluators will determine individually if the proposal they are interviewing should move forward with a yes/no decision. Each yes decision will motivate an extra 1 point in the overall evaluation and a new shortlist list will be populated.

At the end of the evaluation process all proposals will be ranked based on their scores (15 points from remote evaluation + 2 points from interview maximum).

6. Payment conditions

As an integral part of the evaluation process, it is **mandatory for all evaluators belonging to EU Member States to be registered in the VIES (VAT Information Exchange System) before engaging in the assessment of proposals**. The VIES registration ensures that evaluators possess valid VAT identification numbers, contributing to the transparency and credibility of the evaluation process. This measure aligns with international standards and is crucial for handling financial transactions associated with the compensation system outlined below.

In the evaluation process, each evaluator has the opportunity to receive up to 40 EUR for each proposal reviewed. Additionally, those evaluators who participate in the interviews will receive an additional incentive of 25 EUR for each interview they collaborate in. This compensation system aims to recognize and value the time and effort dedicated by the evaluators, encouraging their comprehensive participation in the evaluation process.

Action	Amount/Action
Review	40 EUR
Interview	25 EUR

Given the dynamic nature of the evaluation process, where assignments are made to align with the evaluator's experience and knowledge, it is important to note that a specific minimum number of evaluation sessions cannot be guaranteed. However, the precise details of the evaluator's work will be formally

communicated via email by the EmpoWomen consortium. It is estimated that the evaluator will be involved in evaluating up to 30 applications received in EmpoWomen Open Call #1. Additionally, the evaluator is entrusted with conducting interviews based on the defined evaluation criteria, with a total number not exceeding 30 interviews.

Each evaluator will sign a contract for evaluating the proposals with SPLORO, the coordinator of the project.

The evaluator is required to prepare an invoice and forward it to SPLORO. Each invoice submitted by the evaluator must clearly state:

- The reference of the contract: EmpoWomen2024-2.

- Identification of the evaluator.

- The number of evaluations performed.

- The EVALUATOR's bank details.

SPLORO will make a single payment via bank transfer. All payments will be made to the bank account provided by the evaluator, strictly in euros, to bank accounts that accept euros. The transfer will be made to the evaluator's account within 60 days of receiving the invoice.

All taxes, including VAT, are included in the fees payable by SPLORO. It is important to note that SPLORO is not subject to any commercial tax, including VAT, and the amount indicated as the project fee is therefore considered as all-inclusive.

Call for evaluators #2

Annex 1: Application Form

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1. General Information

- Name*

- Surname*

- Country of residence* (dropdown single choice): EU Member States + Associated Countries + "Other" = 46 options

    o If "other", please specify (dropdown single choice, 115 options for other countries)

- Nationality* (dropdown single choice): EU Member States + Associated Countries + "Other" = 46 options

    o If "other", please specify (dropdown single choice, 115 options for other countries)

- List of Horizon Europe Associated Countries as published by the European Commission on the date of submission.

- Gender* (dropdown single choice)

    o Male

    o Female

    o Other

    o Prefer not to say

- Phone number (+ Country code)*

- Email*

- Are you applying on your own, or as a representative of your organisation? (single choice)

    o If "On my own": ID Number*

    o If "Representing my organisation":

        ▪ Organisation legal name*

        ▪ Organisation short name*

        ▪ VAT Number*

- LinkedIn profile* (content type: link)

- Please upload your CV (.pdf format) (file type: PDF)

2. Technological Experience

- Graduate studies*** (max 100 characters)**

- Post-graduate studies* **(max 200 characters)**

- Experience related to the deep tech technologies* **(dropdown multiple choice, max 3 options)**
    - Advanced Computing /Quantum Computing
    - Advanced Manufacturing
    - Advanced Materials
    - Aerospace, Automotive and Remote Sensing
    - Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, including Big Data
    - Biotechnology and Life Sciences
    - Communications and Networks, including 5G/6G
    - Cybersecurity and Data Protection
    - Electronics and Photonics
    - Internet of Things, W3C, Semantic Web
    - Robotics
    - Semiconductors (microchips)
    - Sustainable Energy and Clean Technologies
    - Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Metaverse
    - Web 3.0, including Blockchain, Distributed Ledgers, NFTs
    - Other
        - **(If selected)** Please specify the field and experience **(max. 300 characters)**
    - I have no experience in deep tech technologies.
- Please detail your expertise related to the EmpoWomen Open Call #2 objectives* **(max. 300 characters)**.
- Please detail your expertise in EC proposals evaluation* **(max. 300 characters)**.
- Please detail your expertise in Cascade Funding/Open Call proposals evaluation.* **(max. 300 characters)**

3.   Business experience

- I have started my own company* **(YES/NO)**
    - o   If yes, tell us about* **(max 300 characters)**
- I have been/am an angel investor or venture capitalist*** (YES/NO)**
    - o   If yes, tell us about it*** (max 300 characters)**
- I have been/am part of the advisory board of a company* **(YES/NO)**
    - o   If yes, tell us about it*** (max 300 characters)**
- I have been/am a start-up mentor **(YES/NO)**
    - o   If yes, tell us about it* **(max 300 characters)**
- I have worked/work in a start-up accelerator* **(YES/NO)**
    - o   If yes, tell us about it*** (max 300 characters)**
- I have experience in the following fields* **(multiple choice, max. 300 characters per choice)**

4.   Other

- Do you confirm your availability in the end of January for the interview process?* **(YES/NO)**