

DG INFORMATION SOCIETY AND MEDIA

ICT Policy Support Programme

Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme



Guidance notes on Project Technical Reviews

Pilot Type A, Pilot Type B, Thematic Networks, Best Practice Networks

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Disclaimer

This guide is aimed at assisting beneficiaries and external experts. It is provided for information purposes and its content is not intended to replace consultation of any applicable legal source or the necessary advice of a legal expert, where appropriate. Neither the Commission nor any person acting on its behalf can be held responsible for the use made of this guide.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of a technical review is to assess the work carried out under the *project* over a certain period and provide recommendations to the Commission. Such technical review evaluates the project reports and deliverables, the proper use of resources, the management of the project and the expected impact in line with Article II.29 of the grant agreement.

This document provides guidance for the reviewers on the review process as well as on the content of their report to the Commission. It can also be used by project consortia to understand the technical review requirements.

Project reviews will be organised by the Commission, after the end of a reporting period to assess the work carried out during the precedent reporting periods¹.

The Commission will carry out technical reviews in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement. The review may be carried out by the Commission services alone or by the Commission services with the assistance of independent experts appointed by the Commission. The review may be based only on the written material (deliverables and reports) submitted by the project, or it may involve a review meeting with project representatives or on-the-spot visits. If the Commission uses the assistance of independent experts², the Commission will inform the coordinator of the identity of the experts. In accordance with Article II.29.2 of the grant agreement, when appointing experts the Commission will take account of any objection on the part of the beneficiaries based on legitimate interests.

Technical reviews of projects shall be carried out on a confidential basis.

¹ The technical review will concentrate on the preceding reporting period. If no technical review was organised for several preceding reporting periods any deliverables/reports related to these preceding periods may be covered as well.

² The Commission will typically involve 2-4 independent experts, depending on the type and content of the project.

1. MANDATE OF THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT(S)

1.1. Objectives

The reviewer's task is to give expert advice to the Commission on the *project*, with respect to the following issues:

1. the degree of fulfilment of the *project* work plan for the relevant period and of the related deliverables;
2. the continued relevance of the *project* objectives and potential with respect to the targeted results;
3. if applicable, the resources planned and utilised in relation to the achieved progress, also with respect to economy and efficiency;
4. the management procedures and methods of the *project*;
5. the beneficiaries' contributions (individually and collectively) and integration within the *project*; and
6. the expected potential impact and the appropriateness of the planned use and dissemination of results.

Based on the above assessments, the review conclusions will recommend any course of action that may be required or is commendable (see also Chapter 2 below). Reviewer(s) assist the Commission by making recommendations on any reorientation that may be required, but the final decision on the outcome of the review and possible follow-up actions is taken by the Commission services.

1.2. Outline of the review process

The Commission will inform the coordinator in due time in writing of its intention to organise a review.

The Commission is required to ensure the confidentiality of technical reviews. To this end, a "Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Declaration" will be signed by the reviewers before the project technical review. The Commission will ask the coordinator to communicate the review material to the reviewers only after having received the signed "Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Declaration".

The Commission may organise a formal meeting where the relevant consortium representatives³ meet the reviewers to present the project and work done during the period under review. The meeting will be chaired by a Commission representative, the Project Officer (PO). The time and venue for the review will be such as to facilitate the presentation and inspection of project results, either on Commission premises or on-site (Option 1, see Section 1.2.1).

³ It is expected that after the final review all project participants will have attended at least one review meeting. The coordinator must attend all meetings and the Commission may request the participation of specific beneficiaries at any review meeting.

The Commission may also choose to perform a 'remote' review based on the project material alone, without a meeting with the project representatives (Option 2, see Section 1.2.2). Such a review can be performed by the PO on his/her own or with the assistance of one or more independent experts as reviewers.

1.2.1. Option 1 – Review based on project deliverables and formal meeting

In case of a review meeting the PO will announce the time, date and venue for the review at least 6 weeks before the actual review will take place. The agenda and the logistical aspects of the review will be agreed in advance by the project consortium and the PO. The coordinator will provide to the reviewers all of the review material (see Section 1.3 below) at the latest 15 days before the meeting. No other communication between the reviewers and the consortium should take place.

The reviewers will read all relevant documents before the meeting and will attend the review meeting. The consortium must ensure that the team present at the review meeting is knowledgeable to answer all questions on the project.

At the review meeting the project team presents the key aspects of the project. Enough time should be foreseen to allow open discussions between the consortium, the reviewers and the PO. After the presentation and discussion the reviewers normally hold a separate meeting moderated by the PO to discuss their findings, to reach a common assessment and to formulate recommendations. Initial verbal feedback on the results of the review is given to the consortium immediately following this separate meeting.

To properly document the meeting, the attendance list (annex II to the review report) should be filled out by all participants and business cards given to the PO.

1.2.2. Option 2 – 'Remote' review based on project deliverables

In this option the project is reviewed "remotely" on the basis of the respective deliverables and reports. The Commission will inform the coordinator of the period during which the review will be carried out. The coordinator in turn will ensure that staff is available during the review period to answer any project-related questions or provide any further information that may be required to conclude the review in due form.

If external experts are appointed as reviewers, they will assess the relevant documentation and submit a draft review report to the PO, together with any comments/queries they might have on the assessed material. If necessary, the PO will submit such queries to the coordinator and inform the reviewers of the respective replies. The reviewers will take the co-ordinator's replies into account for finalizing their review reports.

1.3. Review material

The Description of Work (Annex I to the Grant Agreement) is the key reference document for the assessment by the reviewers.

The documents to be reviewed should include the following:

- Progress report for the period under review,
- Deliverables due in this period according to the deliverable table in Annex I, and
- Any other reports or information that may have been requested by the Commission.

In addition to facilitate the review the additional documents can be made available to the reviewers by the PO, such as:

- Report(s) from previous review(s), if applicable.
- The relevant work programme and specific call for proposals under which the project was selected.
- Any other useful documentation (e.g. copy of correspondence between the project coordinator and the Commission).

1.4. Reporting

The reviewers will use the attached technical review report to formulate their observations and recommendations. When more than one reviewer is involved in the project review, in addition a single consolidated review report will be drafted, normally by one of the reviewers who will act as rapporteur.

The Commission conclusions from the review will be sent to the coordinator within one month following the review. If these indicate any contractual or legal consequences then they will be accompanied by a formal letter to inform the coordinator about the options and the deadlines the consortium has to respect. The consolidated review report by the reviewers will be attached. In any instances where the Commission conclusions differ from the review recommendations these will be indicated and explained to the consortium.

The coordinator may communicate any observations on the review report to the Commission within one month of its receipt (Article II.29.5 of the grant agreement).

2. REVIEW OUTCOME

On the basis of the reviewers' formal recommendations, the *Commission* will inform the *coordinator* of its decision (which may differ from the reviewers' recommendations).

The review may come to the following conclusion:

- Excellent progress (the project has fully achieved its objectives and goals for the period and has even exceeded expectations).
- Good progress (the project has achieved most of its objectives and goals for the period with relatively minor deviations).
- Unsatisfactory progress (the project has failed to achieve critical objectives and/or is not at all on schedule).

Following the technical review, the Commission may take any measure it considers appropriate, including the following:

- to allow the project to continue without modification of Annex I or with minor modifications;
- to consider that the project can only continue with major modifications
- to accept or reject reports and deliverables. In case a report or deliverable is rejected appropriate justification will be provided;
- to suspend the time limit for evaluating reports and deliverables and disbursing the corresponding payments, or to suspend payments;
- to suspend the project;
- to initiate the termination of the grant agreement or of the participation of any beneficiary according to Article II.10 of the grant agreement;
- to reduce the grant, to issue a recovery order regarding all or part of the payments made by the Commission and to apply any applicable sanction;

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1. European Commission

The technical review is one element of the process the Commission undertakes in order to monitor and ensure that projects progress in accordance with the grant agreement and the objectives of the programme. The Commission may carry out a review alone or revert to the assistance of appropriate independent experts as reviewers.

The Commission will take the reviewers' views into account when drawing its conclusions. Ultimately, however, it is the Commission which is responsible for determining the actions to be followed after the review.

The Commission is responsible for ensuring that the review is fair, conducted in a professional manner and that all necessary steps and actions for the preparation of the review are taken in good time.

A Commission representative will chair the review meeting ensuring that all points are addressed and that all necessary information is made available to the reviewers, while the consortium is given every reasonable opportunity to adequately present and demonstrate the results.

3.2. Reviewers

Reviewers are independent experts selected on the basis of their expertise. They work in a personal capacity and, in performing the work, do not represent any organisation. They are expected to review projects fairly and objectively, on the basis of the information supplied. Reviewers must treat confidentially the material and information communicated to them.

Reviewers are required to sign a "Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Declaration" before starting to work.

During the review session, the reviewers shall exercise utmost diligence in establishing all relevant facts.

To ensure continuity and consistency, reviewers may participate in subsequent reviews of the same project.

3.3. Project coordinator

The project coordinator shall make available to the Commission all the information that may be requested with a view to verifying that the grant agreement is properly managed and performed and that the project is on track in pursuing its objectives.

He/she is in charge of checking that beneficiaries have no objections based on legitimate interests in regard to the reviewers proposed by the Commission, and that the consortium agrees on the agenda and on the list of consortium representatives at the review meeting.

The coordinator will communicate to the partners any information requests from the Commission as well as the review outcome.

3.4. Other beneficiaries

The other project beneficiaries shall make available all detailed information that may be needed to facilitate the verification of the project. Beneficiaries shall attend technical review meetings when relevant and/or requested by the Commission.

4. TEMPLATE FOR THE TECHNICAL REVIEW REPORT

The template hereafter provides the structure for the technical review report that needs to be prepared by the reviewer(s).

It may in the future be completed on-line via an IT reporting tool that is currently under construction.

If the reviewer feels not to have the competence or the information to answer a question, this should be declared in the corresponding sections.

TECHNICAL REVIEW REPORT



Grant Agreement number:

Project Acronym:

Pilot A Pilot B Thematic Network Best Practice Network

Project start date:

Project duration:

Period covered by the report, from to

Date of review meeting (if applicable):

Name(s) of expert(s):

-
-
-
-

Individual report

Consolidated report

If consolidated, name of expert drafting the consolidated report:

1. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

a. Executive summary

Comments, in particular highlighting the project progress towards achieving its objectives and reaching its impact:

- Excellent progress (the project has fully achieved its objectives and goals for the period and has even exceeded expectations).
- Good progress (the project has achieved most of its objectives and goals for the period with relatively minor deviations).
- Unsatisfactory progress (the project has failed to achieve critical objectives and/or is not at all on schedule).

b. Overall recommendations (e.g. corrective actions at Work Package level, or re-tuning the objectives to optimise the impact or keep up with the developments in relevant policies, or on best use of resources).

2. OBJECTIVES, QUALITY and PROGRESS OF WORK

- a. Have the objectives for the period been achieved? In particular, has the project as a whole been making satisfactory progress in relation to the Description of Work (Annex I to the grant agreement)?

Comments – in particular highlight any outstanding achievements

- b. Has each work package (WP) been making satisfactory progress in relation to the Description of Work (Annex I to the grant agreement)?

Comments on the quality of work per work packag

3. RESOURCES and IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

- a. To the best of your estimate, have resources used, i.e. personnel resources and other major cost items, been (i) utilised for achieving the progress, (ii) in a manner consistent with the principle of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Note that both aspects (i) and (ii) have to be covered in the comments. The resources should be examined at the level of work packages and at the level of participants.

Comments

ad (i)
ad (ii)

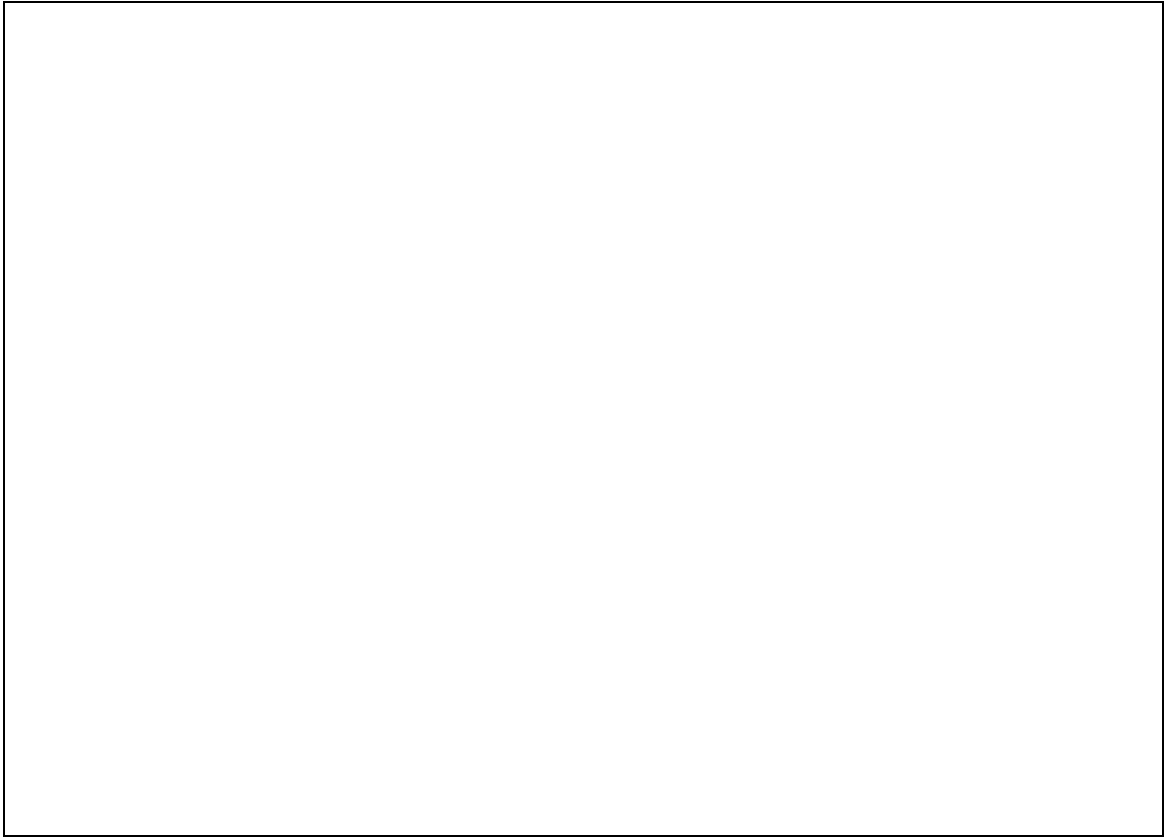
- b. If applicable, please comment on large deviations with respect to the planned resources.

Comments

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- c. Do you identify evidence of underperforming beneficiaries, lack of commitment/performance or change of interest of any beneficiaries? Do you identify any beneficiaries with no visible contribution to the project in the examined period?

Comments



4. MANAGEMENT and COLLABORATION

a. Has the project management been performed as required?

Comments

b. Has the collaboration between the beneficiaries been effective?

Comments

5. POLICY SUPPORT and BROADER IMPACT

- a. Will the project have an impact on the implementation of the policies it supports?

Comments on the usefulness/sustainability/scalability/accessibility/usability of the results of the project (results can be for example services, content, specifications, reference implementations, source code, etc.).

- b. Are the plans for the use and exploitation of results appropriate?

Comments on the plans of use of results of the consortium as a whole and for individual beneficiaries or groups, if applicable also outside of the consortium

- c. Have the beneficiaries disseminated project results and information adequately

Comments on dissemination and exploitation activities

- d. Are potential users and other stakeholders (also outside the consortium) suitably involved (if applicable)?

Comments

- e. Is the consortium interacting in a satisfactory manner with other related programmes projects or other relevant national/international programmes, standardisation bodies (if relevant)?

Comments

6. OTHER ISSUES

- a. Have policy-related and/or regulatory issues been properly handled (if applicable)?

Comments

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- b. Have ethical issues been appropriately handled (if applicable)?

Comments

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- c. Have safety issues been properly handled (if applicable)?

Comments

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Name (s) of the expert(s):

Date:

Signature(s):

Review Meeting List of Participants

Project Acronym:

Review meeting date:

venue:

Name	Function	Beneficiary	Contact details email <u>and</u> telephone