

## **Guidelines for Programme Steering Committees Concerning Assessment of Applications for Funding**

Many ESF Programmes deliver part of their activity through the award of funds for the support of travel grants, conferences, workshops and schools. Frequently, such awards follow an open call for proposals and selection following assessment. ESF follows certain standards in its own assessment processes, and expects ESF standards to be followed within its Programmes when allocating ESF funds.

1. ESF delegates powers of approval for these awards to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee must agree to any further delegation of these powers.
2. The Steering Committee may establish sub-groups of its members, to assess proposals and to select those recommended for funding. If a sub-group is set up, there should be a rotation of members.
3. It is recommended that these sub-groups consist of more than two persons: at least two members plus one person authorised to take the decision (typically the Committee Chair) to ensure that problems of conflicts of interests can be properly dealt with. External advice may be sought.
4. The Steering Committee should agree on the criteria for assessing proposals in line with the Programme's objectives. Wherever possible, these criteria should be made known to potential applicants in advance.
5. In operating these criteria, it is expected that every care will be taken to avoid any bias, intentional or unintentional, on the grounds of gender, age or, within the bounds of the Programme collaboration, nationality. However, the Steering Committee may set overt criteria to address a specific Programme need, e.g. regional/national balance in an activity, or fellowships for young researchers.
6. Decisions taken under delegation from the Steering Committee should be reported to the Committee's next meeting.
7. Records of decisions, and any related assessments or rationale, should be archived in the ESF dossier of the Programme.
8. Steering Committee members and other assessors should not involve themselves in the assessment of proposals in which they have a personal or financial interest. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. uniqueness of expertise), such a bar may be waived with the agreement of the other members involved, if the interest is declared and considered not to compromise the potential decision.
9. Evidence of contravention of these guidelines with respect to bias or interest may result in removal of the member from the Steering Committee and notification to the relevant ESF Member Organisation.