



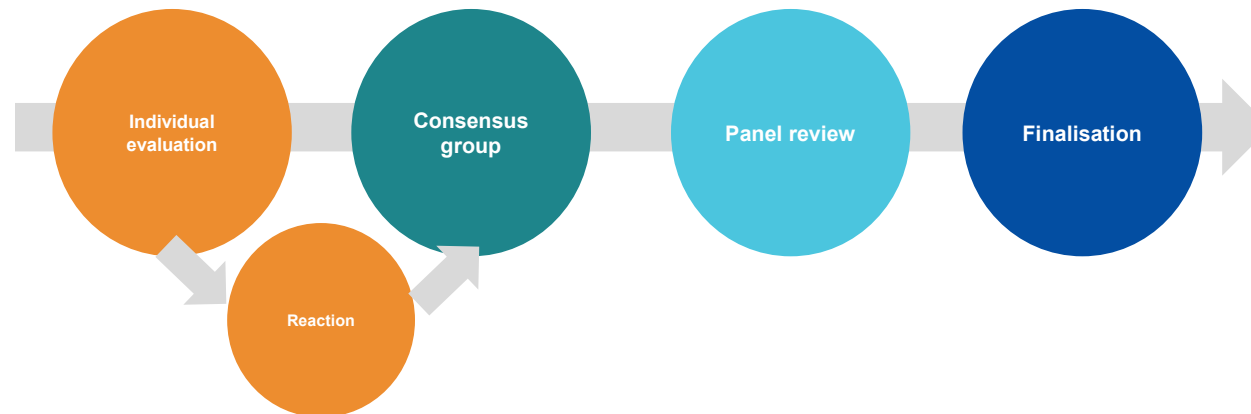
Right-to-react (rebuttal) pilot

Pilot analysis and ways forward

RTD.H.3

Pilot analysis - introduction

- **Four calls** across the **HE work programme 2021-2022** were selected to participate in the pilot.
- The objective of the rebuttal mechanism is to increase **transparency**, to **correct any factual or major misunderstandings** by experts at an early stage, and to provide **more detailed feedback** to applicants during the evaluation process.
- The mechanism was introduced as **an addition to the standard evaluation process**, leaving the existing formal complaint options (redress, Ombudsman etc) intact.
- After the individual evaluation, **comments from experts were sent to applicants** (without scores and anonymously), who then were able to react to those comments. During the consensus phase, experts were advised to take into consideration their individual comments and the reactions from participants.



Pilot overview

Number of proposals that made use of the rebuttal step			
Call	N. of proposals evaluated	N. of rebuttal-replies received	%
HORIZON-EIC-2021-PATHFINDEROPEN-01	868	846	97.5%
HORIZON-CL6-2021-BIODIV-02	1	0	0%
HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-TALENTS-01	88	87	99%
HORIZONCL6-2022-COMMUNITIES-02	16	16	100%

Pilot analysis - summary

- **Applicants** are in favour of the mechanism (although only 12% considered that their reactions helped evaluators to clarify possible misunderstandings)
- **Evaluators** are also in favour of the mechanism (but 55 % considered the rebuttal did not influence in the way they performed their evaluation)
- The rebuttal mechanism significantly extended the **time** needed for evaluation
- All calls needed extra **efforts** from experts and staff, in particular for checking the quality of the experts' individual comments
- The number of **redress** cases received after the evaluation increased in all rebuttal calls (contrary to expectations)

Pilot analysis - summary

- The mechanism doesn't seem to have an influence in the **final score** of the proposals.
 - An **analysis of the deviations between the scores** awarded in the IERs and the CRs (ESRs for Pathfinder) in calls with and without the rebuttal mechanism showed similar behavior, indicating that the mechanism has little influence on the final outcome.
 - This is actually an indication that the standard evaluation process, with the consensus and panel phases, already includes effective mechanisms to avoid factual errors and misunderstanding by individual experts.
- We have not found evidence that the **quality of the Evaluation Summary Report** increases with the introduction of the rebuttal mechanism

Pilot - final outcome

- Decision to discontinue the rebuttal mechanisms (given the feedback received by EAs, limited impact on evaluation outcomes and high resource-intensity) and implement alternative measures to further increase the transparency of the HE evaluation system.
- **Actions to be implemented shortly (or already done):**
 - Better communication through the Horizon Implementation Days
 - Update information in the call update published in the Portal after evaluation (e.g. distribution of scores, funding threshold, number of reserve proposals, etc.).
- **Other measures** (long-term) being discussed. Some would need piloting (e.g. allow applicants to suggest evaluators, partial randomization)