



## **Eurostars Programme Document**

*Endorsed by the HLG in Como on 19 October 2006  
and  
revised according HLG meeting in Venice on 18-19 April 2007*

## **Contents**

<b>1. The Eurostars Programme</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Introduction	3
1.2 Objectives of the Eurostars Programme	3
1.3 Target group	4
1.4 Description of activities of the Eurostars Programme	4
1.5 Eurostars dedicated management structure	4
1.6 Financing of the Eurostars Programme	6
<b>2. The Eurostars Submission Procedure</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Call for Eurostars project proposals	6
2.2 Assistance for Eurostars applicants and pre-screening	6
2.3 Formal submission of a Eurostars project proposal	6
2.4 Application requirements	6
2.5 Completeness check	7
2.6 Eligibility check	7
<b>3. The Eurostars Evaluation Procedure</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 Evaluation criteria	8
3.2 Evaluation of Eurostars project proposals	9
3.2.1 Assessment of Eurostars project proposals	9
3.2.2 NPC cover note	9
3.2.3 Evaluation and ranking by the Independent Evaluation Panel	9
3.2.4 Approval by the Eurostars HLG	10
3.3 Contract negotiations	11
3.4 Timeline of the evaluation procedure	11
<b>4. Funding and Monitoring of Projects</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 Basic funding principles	12
4.2 Contribution by the Eurostars Programme	12
4.3 Monitoring of projects	13
4.4 Changes in the projects	13
<b>Annex: Composition Independent Evaluation Panel</b>	<b>14</b>

# **1 The Eurostars Programme**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The EUREKA Ministerial Conference in Paris in June 2004 stated that EUREKA is an excellent scheme for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and resolved to develop greater coherence between EUREKA and the Framework Programme (FP) of the European Union (EU) in order to make European collaboration more effective through appropriate combined actions. The conference made an urgent appeal to explore the possibility of setting up concrete financial mechanisms, aiming at the reinforcement of the cooperation between EUREKA and the Framework Programme on the basis of instruments such as Article 169 or Article 171 of the European Treaty.

In 2004, the Competitiveness Council resolved that Europe and the Member States need to stimulate SMEs to invest more in research and development (R&D) and innovation and that EU and national Funding Programmes should be made more suitable for innovative and research-intensive entrepreneurship. The Competitiveness Council also stressed the need for EU Member States and the Commission to enhance the effectiveness and complementarities of national and European support programmes for SMEs.

On 29 June 2005, during the EUREKA High Level Group (HLG) meeting in Maastricht, the Eurostars Programme was presented. The proposal aimed at setting up an integrated programme for research and development (R&D) performing SMEs with high growth potential, by implementing a new structure with common evaluation criteria. Twenty two EUREKA Member States committed immediately themselves to support the Eurostars Programme both in terms of finance and human resources.

The Eurostars Programme is a clear commitment from the EUREKA Network to harmonise and synchronize national programmes. The Eurostars projects serve a civilian purpose, are directed at the development of new products, processes or services and are initiated by an SME. This SME should be located in a EUREKA Member State which is committed to the Eurostars Programme. The SME should cooperate with at least one participant from another EUREKA Member State.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Eurostars Programme**

Eurostars is a new European programme for R&D performing SMEs co-funded by the European Communities, in which the national funding schemes are synchronised and harmonised. An R&D performing SME is a SME in which at least 10% of manpower in terms of full time equivalent (FTE) is occupied with R&D or 10% of annual turnover is dedicated to R&D.

Following this line, the target group will experience a transparent, fast decision making process better suited to their way of working.

The Eurostars Joint Programme aims to support those R&D performing SMEs by:

- creating a sustainable European R&D support mechanism for R&D performing SMEs;
- encouraging them to create new economic activities based on R&D results and bring new products, processes and services to the market faster than would otherwise be possible;
- promoting technological and business development, and internationalisation of those companies.

Eurostars Programme will contribute to European competitiveness, innovation, employment and economic change and help to achieve the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives. As an initiative of the EUREKA network it will support, through its bottom-up approach, research and development activities carried out by trans-national consortia led by a Eurostars SMEs co-operating with other SMEs, research organisations and/or large enterprises.

### **1.3 Target group**

Eurostars targets R&D performing SMEs with high growth potential. These SMEs are knowledge-intensive, technology/innovation-based companies. They are characterised by a strong customer or market orientation, aiming to achieve a prime international position by leading strongly innovative, market oriented projects. Established companies will have a track record of performing, project proposal-oriented and cutting-edge R&D, which is a key element in their corporate strategy and business plan. Based on their own R&D efforts, they are able to develop products, processes or services that have a clear innovative or technological advantage. Companies may vary in size and legal statute, being either established business operations with a track record or high potential start ups.

### **1.4 Description of activities of the Eurostars Programme**

There are two types of activities in the Eurostars Joint Programme:

- (1) R&D and innovation activities driven by one or more R&D performing SME(s) established in a participating EU Member State, Iceland, Israel, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey (further referenced as the "participating States") and which can be carried out in the entire field of science and technology. The R&D activities are:
  - implemented via multi-partner trans-national projects involving at least two partners from different participating States addressing research, technological development, demonstration and dissemination activities. Research organisations, universities or large companies may also participate in these projects;
  - executed for their core part by the R&D performing SME(s), which should contribute for at least 50% of the total project costs related to R&D activities. Minor subcontracting may be accounted for, if necessary for the project;
  - targeted at market-oriented research and should be of short to medium term duration and address high risk research; the SME(s) should demonstrate the capability to exploit the project results within a realistic time frame;
  - led and coordinated by one of the participating R&D performing SMEs, the so-called "leading SME".
- (2) Brokerage, programme promotion and networking activities through specific Eurostars events or in combination with existing EUREKA and national events, in order to promote the Eurostars Joint Programme and enhance its impact. These will include the organisation of workshops and the establishment of contacts with other stakeholders such as investors and knowledge management providers.

### **1.5 Eurostars dedicated management structure**

The dedicated implementation structure of the Eurostars Joint Programme will be the EUREKA Secretariat [or any other Legal Entity to be created by the participating States]. Its role is to manage the

Eurostars Joint Programme and to receive, allocate and monitor the Community financial contribution to the Eurostars Joint Programme.

The governance system of the Eurostars Joint Programme involves five main bodies:

- (1) The "EUREKA High Level Group (HLG)" is composed of the persons appointed by the EUREKA Member States as High Level Representatives, including a representative from the European Commission. HLG is responsible for the admission of new Member States to the Eurostars Joint Programme.
- (2) The "Eurostars High Level Group" is composed of the EUREKA High Level Representatives of the States participating in the Eurostars Joint Programme and a representative of the European Commission as observer. It is competent to supervise the implementation of the Eurostars Joint Programme, and in particular for: the nomination of the members of the Eurostars Advisory Group, the approval of the operational procedures to run the Eurostars Joint Programme, the approval of the call planning and call budget, and the approval of the ranking list of Eurostars projects to be funded.
- (3) The "Eurostars Advisory Group" is composed of EUREKA National Project Coordinators (NPC) from the States participating in Eurostars Programme and is chaired by the Head of the EUREKA Secretariat. The Eurostars Advisory Group will advise the Eurostars Secretariat in the execution of the Eurostars Joint Programme and will provide advice on its implementation modalities, such as funding procedures, the evaluation and selection process, synchronisation between the central and national procedures, and project monitoring. It will advise on the planning for the cut-off dates of the yearly call for proposals. It will also advise on the progress of the execution of the Eurostars Joint Programme, including the progress towards further integration.
- (4) The "Eurostars Secretariat", which is an integral part of the EUREKA Secretariat (ESE), will act as the dedicated implementation structure for Eurostars Programme, for which the Head of ESE acts as a legal representative of the Eurostars Programme towards the EUREKA High Level Group, the Eurostars High Level Group, the European Commission, the EUREKA network and the outside world. The Eurostars Secretariat is in charge of the execution of the Eurostars Joint Programme, and in particular for:
  - Establishment of the yearly call budget, central organisation of common calls for proposals and reception of the project proposals (single entry point);
  - Central organisation of the eligibility and evaluation of project proposals, according to common eligibility and evaluation criteria, central organisation of the selection of project proposals for funding, and project monitoring and follow-up;
  - Receipt, allocation and monitoring of the Community contribution;
  - Collecting the accounts on the distribution of funding by the funding bodies in the participating States to the partners in Eurostars projects;
  - Promotion of the Eurostars Joint Programme;
  - Reporting to the EUREKA HLG, to the Eurostars HLG, to the EUREKA Network and to the European Commission on the Eurostars Joint Programme, including on the progress towards further integration.
- (5) The NPC Network supports:
  - Promotion and information on the Eurostars Programme in the EUREKA Member States;
  - Performing the pre-screening;
  - Performing part of the eligibility check and writing the cover note;

- Involvement in the monitoring of Eurostars projects.

## **1.6 Financing of the Eurostars Programme**

The Eurostars Secretariat will have an annual budget to cover the running costs of the Eurostars Programme. The budget will be approved by the Eurostars HLG.

## **2 The Eurostars Submission Procedure**

### **2.1 Call for Eurostars project proposals**

The Eurostars Programme will be continuously open for funding applications with 2 - 4 cut-off dates per year. The Eurostars Secretariat will inform the public about the closing dates in due time.

### **2.2 Assistance for Eurostars applicants and pre-screening**

Eurostars applicants are strongly advised to contact their EUREKA NPCs for information about the Eurostars Programme and for assistance in preparing a Eurostars project proposal.

The NPC will perform a pre-screening to determine the chances of success of a Eurostars applicant. In this pre-screening the NPCs involved will investigate whether the project proposal falls within the scope of the Eurostars Programme and check with the National Funding Agency whether there are any obvious reasons<sup>1</sup> for exclusion on the basis of the national track record (earlier receipt of funding for similar project).

### **2.3 Formal submission of a Eurostars project proposal**

The formal application will be submitted by the leading SME to the Eurostars Secretariat. Complete applications that are received before the cut-off date will be allowed for the eligibility procedure. The NPCs will be informed when a Eurostars project proposal is received at the Eurostars Secretariat.

### **2.4 Application requirements**

Required documents for making an application (English only) under the Eurostars Programme will include:

- Project proposal (is Project Form in which the following topics are addressed):

---

<sup>1</sup> Reasons can not relate to the field of technology

- Technological innovation (state of the art, innovation, maturity);
  - Detailed description of the objectives of the project and the expected results;
  - Description and assessment of the technological risk;
  - Cooperation (added value of the cooperation, IPR);
  - Expected economic impact, assessment of the market risk;
  - Execution and phasing of the project (approach, detailed bar chart, milestones);
  - Budget plan and financing structure of the project
  - Signatures of all participants.
- Approved yearly financial report over the previous book year, if available, and a business plan plus other financial statements (such as preliminary figures over the most recent period). These documents may be in the national language;
  - A written statement by the applicant that it is able to finance its share of the project cost;
  - A written statement by each SME that it fulfils the European Union definition of SME at the application date;
  - A draft consortium agreement<sup>2</sup>;
  - The required documents used for the Eurostars application should also be used for the request for funding at national level.

## 2.5 Completeness check

As soon as a project proposal is received, the Eurostars Secretariat will check if all required documents are present. Only project proposals which are complete at the cut-off date will be admitted into the eligibility check. If a project proposal is incomplete, the leading SME and NPCs involved will be informed about the missing information. The leading SME will be given the opportunity to revise the project proposal. If a satisfactory revised project proposal is received before the cut-off date, it will be admitted into the eligibility check.

## 2.6 Eligibility check

Eurostars project proposal must meet all eligibility criteria, otherwise this project application will not be accepted in the Eurostars Programme.

Criteria to be checked by the Eurostars Secretariat at project level:

1. Is the leading SME based in a Eurostars Member State?
2. Does the project meet the EUREKA criteria?<sup>3</sup>
3. Is (are) the R&D performing SMEs<sup>4</sup>, SME(s) according to the European Union definition?
4. Is the project duration 3 years or less?
5. Is market introduction<sup>5</sup> foreseen within 2 years after the project has ended?
6. Is/are R&D performing SME(s) undertaking at least 50%<sup>6</sup> of the total R&D related project costs?

---

<sup>2</sup> A model consortium agreement will be made available on the Eurostars Public Website

<sup>3</sup> The project has a civilian purpose; is directed at the development of a new product, process or service; represents cooperation in the form of a specific project and involves at least two participants from two different EUREKA member-states, supports the EUREKA aims to enhance European competitiveness.

<sup>4</sup> An R&D performing SME is a SME in which at least 10% of the FTEs are occupied with R&D or 10% of annual turnover is dedicated to R&D.

<sup>5</sup> or in the case of (bio-)medical research are clinical trials started within 2 years after project has ended

<sup>6</sup> minor subcontracting may be accounted for

7. Is there a well balanced partnership whereby no partner or country is performing more than 75% of the total project in terms of costs?

Criteria to be checked by relevant NPCs at participant level:

8. Are all participants legal entities?

If all eligibility criteria are met, the Eurostars project proposal will be evaluated.

### **3. The Eurostars Evaluation Procedure**

#### **3.1 Evaluation criteria**

In this section, the criteria for the evaluation of Eurostars project are described. There are 3 evaluation criteria:

- Basic Assessment
- Technology and Innovation
- Market and Competitiveness

Basic Assessment relates to the partnership and partners, and project structure. It deals with the project plan and the capabilities of the partners in relation to their tasks in the project. Aspects to be considered include:

- Well balanced partnership
- Added value through cooperation
- Technological capacity of all partners
- Managerial capacity of all partners
- Methodology and planning approach
- Milestones and deliverables
- Cost and financing structure
- Financial commitment of each participant

Technology and Innovation relates to the requirement that the project must involve a high technological advance. Aspects to be considered include:

- Degree of technological maturity or risk
- Technological achievements envisaged
- Degree of innovation
- Technological progress performed in the project by the SMEs
- Geographical / sectoral impact

Market and Competitiveness relates to the market targeted, the profitability of the project results and the competitive advantages for the partners involved. Assessment aspects include:

- Market size
- Market access and risk
- Time to market
- Return on investment
- Market potential for SMEs
- Strategic importance of the project

- Enhanced capabilities and visibility for the participants

## **3.2 Evaluation of Eurostars project proposals**

The evaluation procedure for Eurostars project proposals will follow a two step procedure, first an assessment by two independent experts (3.2.1) and then the evaluation and ranking by the International Evaluation Panel (3.2.3).

### **3.2.1 Assessment of Eurostars project proposals**

Eurostars project proposals will be assessed by two technical experts commissioned by the Eurostars Secretariat. The most appropriate experts will be selected. Preferably, experts from countries not represented in the consortium will be chosen. The expert report will consist of an analysis and an assessment of the project management and the partnership of the project, the technological innovation envisaged and the economic impact of the project. The experts will use the Expert Assessment Form for this purpose. The experts will rate the proposals on each criterion by using the quality indicators poor, average, good or excellent on the assessment form.

To safeguard confidentiality, the technical experts will be required to sign a non-disclosure and an integrity agreement. They shall refrain from assessing any proposal they have a conflict of interest in. Applicants will be allowed to ask for the exclusion of specific experts on strategic grounds. Applicants will do so in a separate form by quoting the names of persons or companies that should not be involved in the evaluation of the project proposal. To guarantee their independence, the identities of the technical experts will not be revealed to the applicants.

The experts will be chosen by the Eurostars Secretariat according to a fixed procedure.

### **3.2.2 NPC cover note**

All involved NPCs will check the financial and legal status of their participants, the (draft) consortium agreement, the availability of Eurostars budget at the national Funding Agency, and will write a cover note on these topics. This cover note will then be forwarded to the main NPC. The main NPC uses the information to write the overall cover note.

### **3.2.3 Evaluation and ranking by the Independent Evaluation Panel**

The Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP) will be formed to evaluate and rank project proposals. The composition of the IEP is described in Annex.

The IEP will receive the file of the Eurostars project proposal from the Eurostars Secretariat. Each file will consist of:

- The Eurostars required documents, as described in 2.4
- Expert reports
- NPC cover note

The evaluation and ranking of the applications will be done during the IEP meeting. The ranking will be based on the evaluation criteria. The ranking system allows an allocation of a maximum of 10 points to each criterion on a scale from 0 to 10. This reflects that the technological aspects, the market aspects and the basic project conditions are considered of equal importance for a good Eurostars project. The total score for a project is the sum of the scores given to each criterion, producing a maximum of 30 points. The projects will be ranked from the highest score down to the lowest score. All projects which were allowed for evaluation by the IEP will be ranked.

#### *Preparation of the meeting of IEP*

Each IEP member will read through the provided files and will evaluate each individual project proposal. Each IEP member will score the project proposal on the evaluation criteria and send the outcome to the Eurostars Secretariat.

#### *Meeting of the IEP*

After each cut-off date the IEP will meet in Brussels to collectively rank the received project proposals. The ranking procedure will be as follows. If feasible, the IEP may hold short interviews (approximately 30 minutes) with the leading SME of each project. During the IEP meeting the members will discuss each proposal paying specific attention to the information in the files and the findings of the interviews (if these were performed). During the meeting IEP members may revise their ratings of projects. Any changes in the ratings must be justified and the reasons for the revision will be recorded in the minutes. The final ratings will be used to draw up the final ranking list, which will be signed by the IEP chairman. The final list will be sent to the Eurostars HLG for approval.

The IEP, with support of the Eurostars Secretariat, determines the logistical procedures of its meetings.

#### *Thresholds*

In order to guarantee that only high quality Eurostars project proposals are eligible for funding, a quality threshold will be defined. If a project scores less than 6 on one or more of the evaluation criteria or less than 20 points overall, the proposal will not be eligible for funding within the Eurostars Programme.

#### *Archiving*

The IEP will return all information (project proposals, expert reports, notes, scores etc) to the Eurostars Secretariat. The Eurostars Secretariat will be responsible for adequately archiving the documents.

#### *Report on IEP meeting*

The Eurostars Secretariat will write the minutes of the IEP meetings. These include the summary of discussion on the projects and the final scores as well as any other relevant decisions taken. The IEP chairman will sign the minutes for agreement. The Eurostars HLG, the Eurostars NPCs, national Funding Agencies and the European Commission will receive a copy of the minutes and the ranking list of the projects. NPCs and national Funding Agencies will also receive a copy of the expert reports for the project proposals which they are involved in.

### **3.2.4 Approval by the Eurostars HLG**

The IEP will present its final ranking list to the Eurostars HLG for adoption. The Eurostars HLG will adopt or reject the ranking list as a whole. This may be done during a formal Eurostars HLG meeting or by written procedure. The Eurostars HLG can veto an individual Eurostars project partner if misconduct or other evident and proven legal constraints have come to light during the evaluation period.

### *Information to proposers*

The Eurostars Secretariat will inform the leading SME about the outcome of the evaluation including the conclusions of the IEP.

### **3.3 Contract negotiations**

After approval of the Eurostars project, the participants will enter into contract negotiations with the National Funding Agency. During these negotiations the fine-tuning of the work plan and eventual adjustments of the budget may be carried out, taking into account the experts' recommendations. Adjustments of the work packages and the budget will need the consent of the leading SME who is responsible for the overall performance of the consortium and the outcome of the project as a whole. After the contract negotiations are completed the Eurostars Secretariat will check whether the project still meets the Eurostars eligibility criteria. During the negotiations the consortium agreement may be finalised. If the budget for an individual Eurostars participant is reduced, this budget may be allocated to other Eurostars participants of that Member State.

### **3.4 Timeline of the evaluation procedure**

In order to process the Eurostars project proposals within a minimum amount of time, the following timeline will be followed.

#### *Closing date X*

Funding project proposals are submitted to Eurostars Secretariat.

Eurostars Secretariat checks completeness of and performs eligibility check on the project proposals.

#### *Week X+1*

Complete project proposals are sent to NPCs involved.

NPCs are required to complete the eligibility check.

#### *Week X+2*

Eurostars Secretariat commissions two assessment reports on the project by experts in the field.

Eurostars Secretariat selects and invites IEP Members

Individual project proposal for the National funding can be prepared

#### *Week X+6*

Expert reports received by Eurostars Secretariat.

Main NPC will submit overall cover note to the Eurostars Secretariat.

Eurostars Secretariat sets up agenda for IEP meeting and makes relevant arrangements.

#### *Week X+7*

Eurostars Secretariat sends complete project proposal files to IEP members.

#### *Week X+10*

Meeting of IEP + ranking.

Eurostars Secretariat writes minutes of the meeting.

Minutes and ranking list are sent to Eurostars HLG for adoption.

*Week X+12*

Eurostars HLG adopts or rejects IEP ranking.

Final ranking is communicated to all proposers, NPCs involved and relevant national funding agencies and the European Commission by the Eurostars Secretariat.

*Week X+17*

Contract negotiations concluded including the national funding decision

## **4 Funding and Monitoring of Projects**

### **4.1 Basic funding principles**

The allocation of funding to selected Eurostars projects shall follow the order of the ranking list.

The national financial contribution to selected Eurostars projects is calculated according to the national funding rules. The Community financial contribution to selected Eurostars projects is calculated as maximum one third of the national financial contribution that would be paid according to the national funding rules.

In case a project is selected for funding, but one or more participating States have exhausted their earmarked budget(s), all efforts should be made to find alternative ways of funding this project and its participants. It is only in the case where for a participant other sources of funding cannot be mobilized that the project may continue without that participant(s). Whatever the option chosen, the dedicated implementation structure shall ensure that the project is still viable and sufficiently close to the proposal as evaluated by the independent experts. If it appears that the project is not viable anymore, or is too far away from the proposal evaluated by the independent experts, this project may be taken out of the ranking list in order to consider the next project.

In case of a loan, a standard calculation for gross grant equivalence will apply, taking into account the interest subsidy intensity and the average failure rate of the underlying national programme

### **4.2 Contribution by the Eurostars Programme**

The Community contribution will be disbursed by the Eurostars Secretariat to the national funding agencies on the basis of actual payments made to the participants in Eurostars projects. The process whereby the Eurostars Secretariat refunds national agencies on the basis of the payments made enables the national agencies to follow their own national procedures. As it is based on payments made, it also avoids complex procedures to cover eventualities such as bankruptcies, takeovers and projects finishing under budget. Furthermore it offers the Eurostars Secretariat an extra way to monitor the progress of each project.

### **4.3 Monitoring of projects**

The responsibility for monitoring the Eurostars projects will be at the Eurostars Secretariat. The leading SME in a Eurostars project will be required to periodically report in English on the progress of the whole project. This report will be based on the Project Form. The Eurostars Secretariat will provide all relevant NPCs with a link to this information.

Project participants will also have reporting obligations under their national funding schemes. The Funding Agencies will forward their actual payment reports to a Eurostars Project, together with their request for Eurostars refund to directly to the Eurostars Secretariat with a copy to the NPC. The Eurostars Secretariat will check if the project still meets the eligibility criteria on international cooperation.

The Eurostars Secretariat will make the payments to<sup>7</sup> the funding agency on the basis of the progress reports and the payment reports.

To support the monitoring and evaluation of projects and to identify and solve bottlenecks at the national level, a staff member of the main NPC office will visit each project once during its lifetime and once after its completion.

### **4.4 Changes in the projects**

The leading SME immediately informs the Eurostars Secretariat about any major changes concerning the project (contents, duration, finances). The Eurostars Secretariat will inform the involved NPCs and relevant national funding authority correspondingly.

Eurostars Secretariat will approve or reject all major changes, such as changes in the project objectives and the consortium. All changes will be archived in the project files at the Eurostars Secretariat.

---

<sup>7</sup> For efficiency reasons the timing and payment schedule will be defined in the Eurostars contract between the Eurostars Secretariat and the funding agency involved

## **Annex: Composition Independent Evaluation Panel**

The Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP) consists of an IEP Chairman and six IEP members. The IEP tasks are to establish the ranking list for Eurostars project proposals. The Chairman will not rank or score the proposals but will only moderate the meeting. The Chairman will be selected for duration of three years.

Each Eurostars Member State may nominate a maximum of two persons for membership of the IEP. The Chairman will be proposed by the Eurostars Secretariat and will be confirmed by the Eurostars HLG. For each evaluation session the Eurostars Secretariat will select six IEP members from different Eurostars Member States on the basis of an established procedure. The selection of six IEP members will have to be endorsed by the Eurostars HLG. The IEP members should collectively cover a reasonable spread of technical expertise. The IEP members should have a technical background (preferably with industrial R&D experience) and experience of how companies function and decide on R&D investments (profile of a member of a company board). Such competences will ensure that the IEP members are capable, with the aid of the expert evaluation, of assessing both the technological aspects of a project proposal and the economic impact described. To ensure uniformity and consistency over the IEP meetings, the Chairman will be present at all IEP meetings. If he/she cannot be present, the IEP will select a proxy for the meeting. At least five members must be present, including the Chairman, for the IEP meeting to be quorate. The IEP members will be rotated, as far as possible, to allow equal representation for each Eurostars Member State.

### *Independence of IEP members and confidentiality*

The IEP will treat all information it receives regarding Eurostars projects as strictly confidential. Should an IEP member have personal interests in, or be involved with a participant in a Eurostars project, a substitute member will be appointed. For each meeting the aspect of independence will be tabled. IEP members will be expected to notify the IEP Chairman of any such involvement.

To safeguard confidentiality, the IEP Chairman and IEP members will be required to sign a non-disclosure and an integrity agreement.