



SURVEY AMONG EVALUATORS ON PROPOSAL EVALUATION 2007

Summary

European Commission
DG RTD – Unit A.1
April 2008

Purpose and methodology of the survey

This report is based on an anonymous on-line survey addressed to all experts who have participated in the evaluation of proposals during the first year of the Seventh Framework Programme. The purpose of the survey was to receive the experts' opinions on the quality of the evaluation process and procedures applied. The survey is based on 2281 responses which were recorded between 30 July and 30 November 2007.

The results were presented and discussed at the meeting of independent observers that took place on 25 January 2008.

The survey is very similar to the survey that was used in FP6 in order to allow for comparisons between the results in FP6 and the various series of calls of FP7¹. It was structured along the various evaluation steps as follows:

1. Questions about the expert
2. Questions about the evaluation process (Information; Individual evaluation and consensus; Hearings; Panel review).
3. Evaluation criteria
4. Opinion on the evaluation task and on the other evaluators
5. Logistics
6. Comments and recommendations

The questions were formulated with multiple choice questions with possible answers ranging from "1" to "5". (1 =poor/ very low/ strongly disagree/ not in favour; 5 = excellent/ very high/ strongly agree/ strongly in favour). The experts were asked to choose "N/A" if a question was not applicable and "Don't know" if the evaluator had no opinion. Evaluators were asked to comment if a particularly low mark was given.

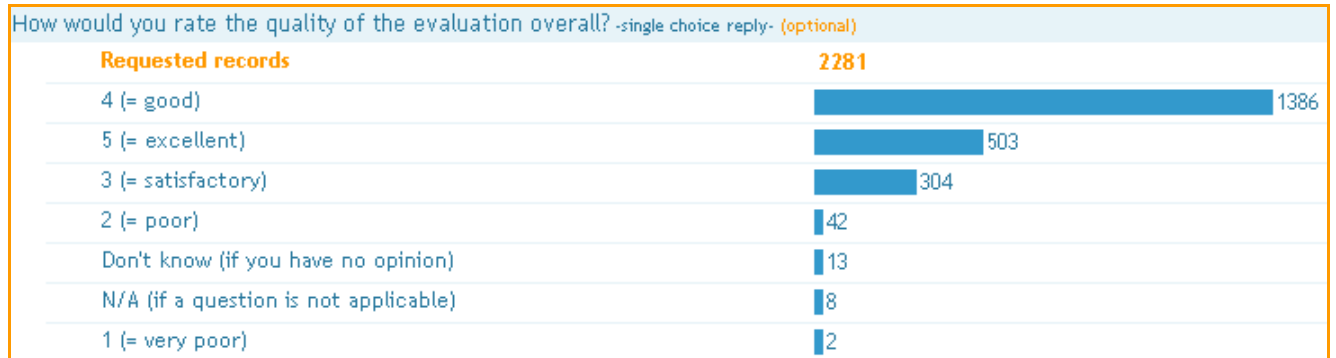
The survey was developed via the IPM ('Interactive Policy Making') tool on EUROPA. The collected data will only be kept until they have been statistically evaluated, and in any case not more than up to 5 years of the end of FP7.

Summary charts showing the responses to all questions are given in annex. This synthesis presents some of the more salient results.

¹ It should be noted that the data requested in relation to the two ICT calls have been collected in another survey. That survey is practically identical to the current one and the results point in the same direction.

General conclusions

The data collected from the first year of FP7 give a positive picture of the quality of the evaluation process. Across the calls 96% of the respondents found the quality of the evaluation overall 'satisfactory' to 'excellent' (same percentage as in the last year of FP6).

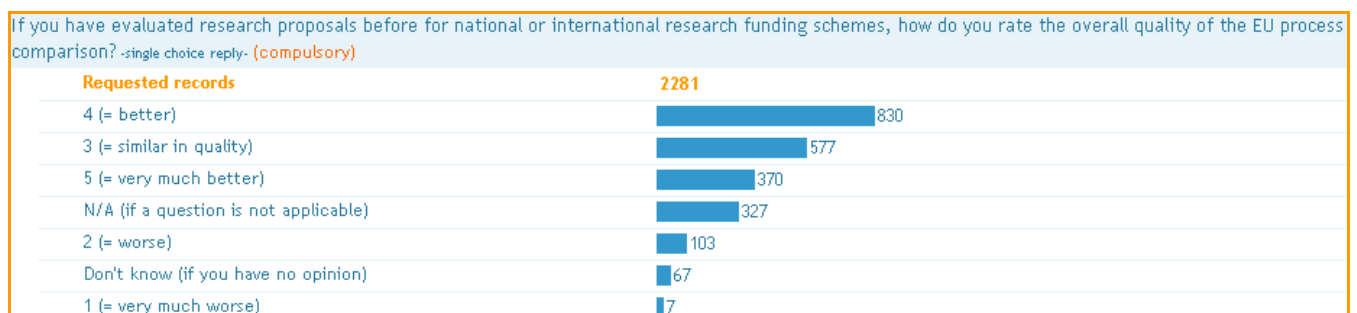


Of the evaluators that had previously evaluated research proposals for national or international research funding schemes 91% found the EU evaluation process similar or better (also same percentage as in the last year of FP6).

– *"By far the best evaluation process relative to what we see at a national level."*

– *" Generally, I am very impressed with the whole evaluation procedures I know from the Commission, definitely better than what I know from my own National Science Foundation for example. "*

– *"This evaluation process has been excellent; better than my previous experience evaluating EU proposals. In all aspects of the evaluation it was very significantly better, transparent, and impartial than my experience evaluating National and local proposals in my country."*



In all respects covered by the survey, evaluators were generally very satisfied with the way in which the evaluations were conducted, both with respect to efficiency and fairness. *Some of the results that nevertheless point towards issues for attention are reported below.*

- Like in FP6 there is a **clear preference** among evaluators for **remote individual evaluation**. Remote consensus enjoys practically no support at all.

Do you prefer remote evaluation? -single choice reply- (optional)	
Requested records	2283
Yes, but remote individual only	1395
No, not under any circumstances	317
Yes, but remote individual only for certain specific calls	225
Yes, remote individual and remote consensus	164
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	120

- A large majority (>80%) believes there is **sufficient time** for the reading and the individual evaluation of proposals. However, a minority of the experts (390 evaluators, or around 17%) thought they had too little or totally insufficient time for this part of the evaluation, which is similar to the figure recorded in FP6 (~15,5%). Many evaluators would also like to see more time for consensus discussions.

Selected critical comments

– "The evaluators should be given more time to individually evaluate the proposals."

– "The lack of time, both for the remote individual evaluation and for the consensus sessions was the single factor that had the most negative impact on the evaluation."

Did you have sufficient time for the reading and the individual evaluation of the proposals? -single choice reply- (optional)	
Requested records	2283
4 (= sufficient time)	1183
3 (= average)	540
2 (= too little time)	351
5 (= more than enough time)	132
1 (= totally insufficient time)	39
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	8
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	1

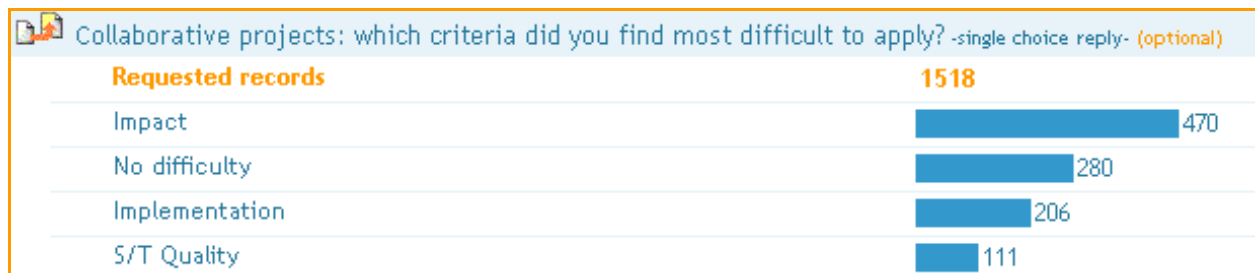
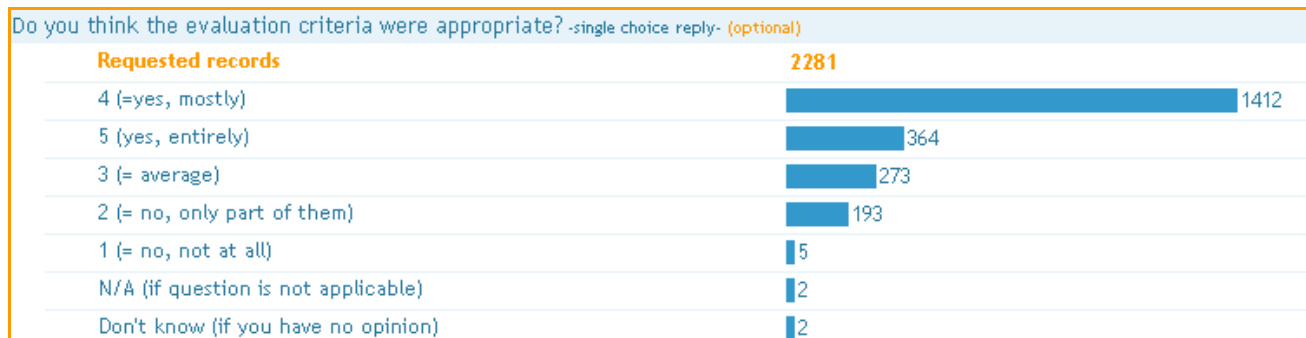
- Asked whether they thought that the **evaluation criteria** were appropriate and consistently applied 90% believed they were. Less than 9% thought only part of the evaluation criteria were appropriate. The 'impact' criterion was found most difficult to apply.

Selected critical comments

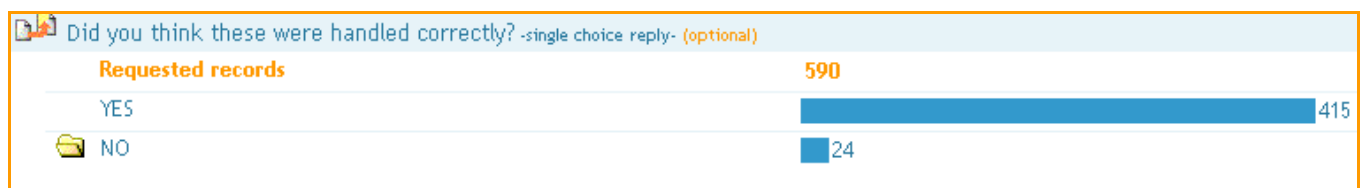
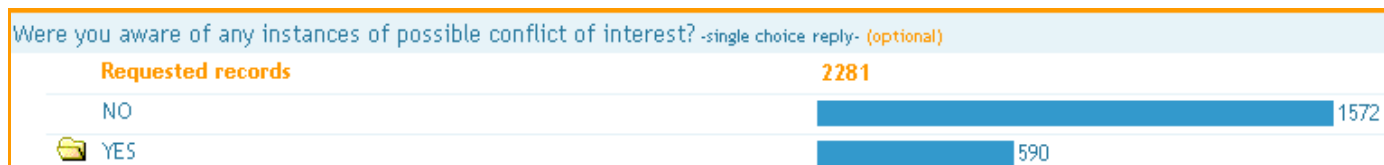
– "There was too much emphasis on the policy relevance and impact and not sufficient attention on the S/T excellence of the proposals."

– "More relative weight should be given to scientific criteria (S/T score)"

– "The scale of 0-5 does not have sufficient dynamic range to discriminate between proposals at the decision boundary, or to highlight an outstanding proposal among others that are excellent."



- As many as 25% of the evaluators answered 'YES' when asked if they were aware of any possible conflicts of interest. However, an overwhelming majority believed that these possible conflicts of interest were thought to be handled correctly. The comments of the experts who thought otherwise have been examined, and there is no evidence that the rules on conflict of interest have been breached. Nevertheless, the Commission of course takes such reports seriously and will continue to follow this issue closely.

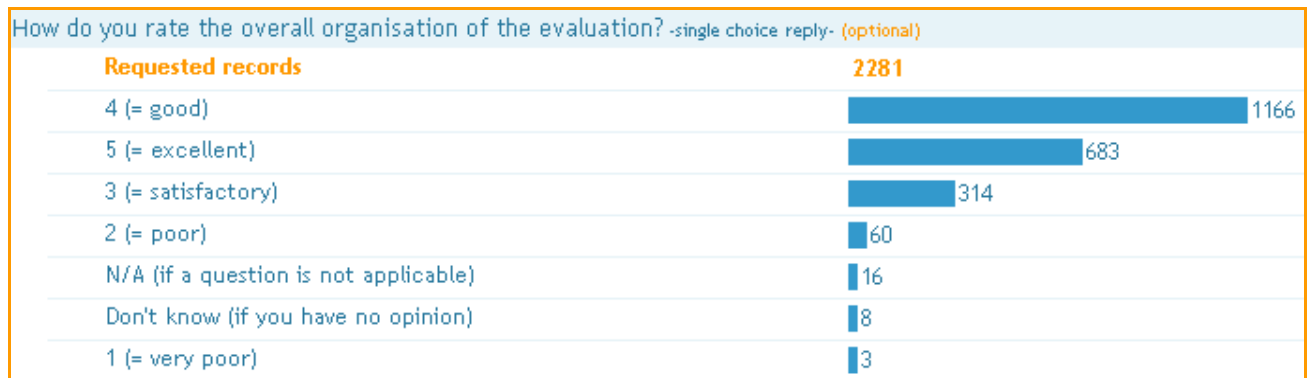


- Most comments have probably been made in relation to the **late reimbursement** of experts' expenses.
 - *"The reimbursement procedures take so much time that I hesitate to participate again. I have just recently received the last payment."*
 - *"Payment and reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses were made four months after the end of the evaluation process. This seems excessive according to any standard."*

– *"Pay me faster. I am still waiting to get paid for work in early July, and project progress report I completed in May. Slow reimbursement makes me less likely to want to do the evaluations again, if asked."*

Logistical aspects of the evaluation

An overwhelming majority of the experts (~95%) rates the overall organisation of the evaluation 'satisfactory' to 'excellent'.



Nevertheless many comments and recommendations have been made with respect to the logistics of the evaluation, such as access to Internet, the working of the RIVET system and other supporting infrastructure. The quality of the coffee has also been of concern to many.

- *"Internet access is absolutely necessary during the evaluation to check references and links provided in the proposals. It is unfair to proposers not to do so because they can rightfully assume that evaluators have internet access."*
- *"Problems with RIVET that have been pointed out already last year after similar evaluation processed last within the FP6 program and were not corrected (in spite of promises to do so). For example: 1) Lack of "spell check" within RIVET 2) Small and fading fonts when printing from RIVET 3) No Automatic "save" after a certain time to avoid loss of material 4) The scoring had to be recorded in increments of 0.5, while an increment of 0.1 would have been much more appropriate."*
- **More fruit and better food and coffee!**
 - *"During the many hours of evaluation we did not even get to eat fruits, and the coffee was bad. Basic courtesy is that the host tries to make life easy for the evaluator, as he puts in a lot of his time into it."*
- Several experts (13%) have complained that they received the **invitation too late** leading to problems with booking of hotel, flight, etc.
 - *"I found that the letter arrived too close to the Brussels meeting. Consequently, it was very difficult to reserve reasonably priced accommodations. The other members of my panel also experienced this difficulty and wasted a lot of time contacting hotels looking for a room. If the letter of offer process can't be done earlier, would it be possible for the EU to reserve a block of rooms at 2-3 reasonably priced nearby hotels to facilitate this?"*

Response charts for 'FP7 - Survey among evaluators of FP7 calls'

▶ Current search:

Query definition

All data requested

Result pages

▶ There are 2283 responses matching your criteria of a total of 2283 records in the current set of data.

INSTRUCTIONS

For most of the questions you will have to choose an item in a select box from "1" to "5". (1 =poor/ very low/ strongly disagree/ not in favour; 5 = excellent/ very high/ strongly agree/ strongly in favour). Please choose "N/A" if a question is not applicable and "Don't know" if you have no opinion. Please comment if there is a particularly low mark. For some questions, further explanation can be obtained by clicking on the ? symbol.

PRIVACY STATEMENT

1. The Specific e-Service

"Survey among evaluators of FP7 calls"

2. Purpose of the survey

The objective of this process, operated by the Directorate-General for Research (Unit A.1), is to ask experts who have participated in the evaluation of proposals for FP7 calls for their views on the evaluation process and procedures applied. Final summary tables of the survey will be published on Cordis.

3. Do we collect personal information?

No personal data are collected.

The survey is anonymous. Each reply is being assigned a random processing number. No technical identification data is being collected.

Certain questions will help us better understand the profile of respondents: organization type (mandatory); gender (optional); country of origin (mandatory); age (mandatory); kind of call you have participated in (mandatory); call you have participated in (optional).

The data controller certifies that the above information is correct and guarantees that the results will be used in an aggregated form that will not allow the identification of individuals within a response category.

Accordingly, this data processing operation has not been notified to the Data Protection Officer (DPO) in accordance with recital No 8 of Regulation (EC) No 45/2001.

4. Technical information

The system is based on XML web forms and uses session cookies in order to ensure communication between the client and the server. Therefore, your browser must be configured to accept these cookies.

5. How long do we keep data?

The collected data will only be kept until they have been statistically evaluated, and in any case not more than up to 5 years of the end of FP7. The survey will be open until 30 November 2007.

SECTION 1: QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF

Before starting the survey we would like to ask you some details about yourself in order to classify the results of the survey.

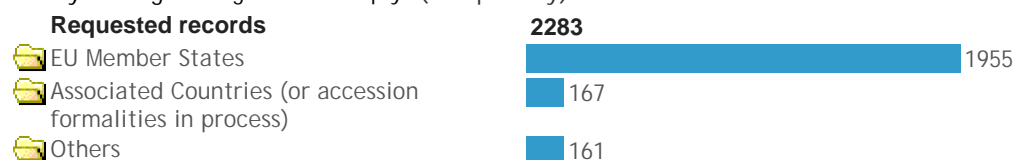
What is your current or most recent organization type? -single choice reply- (compulsory)

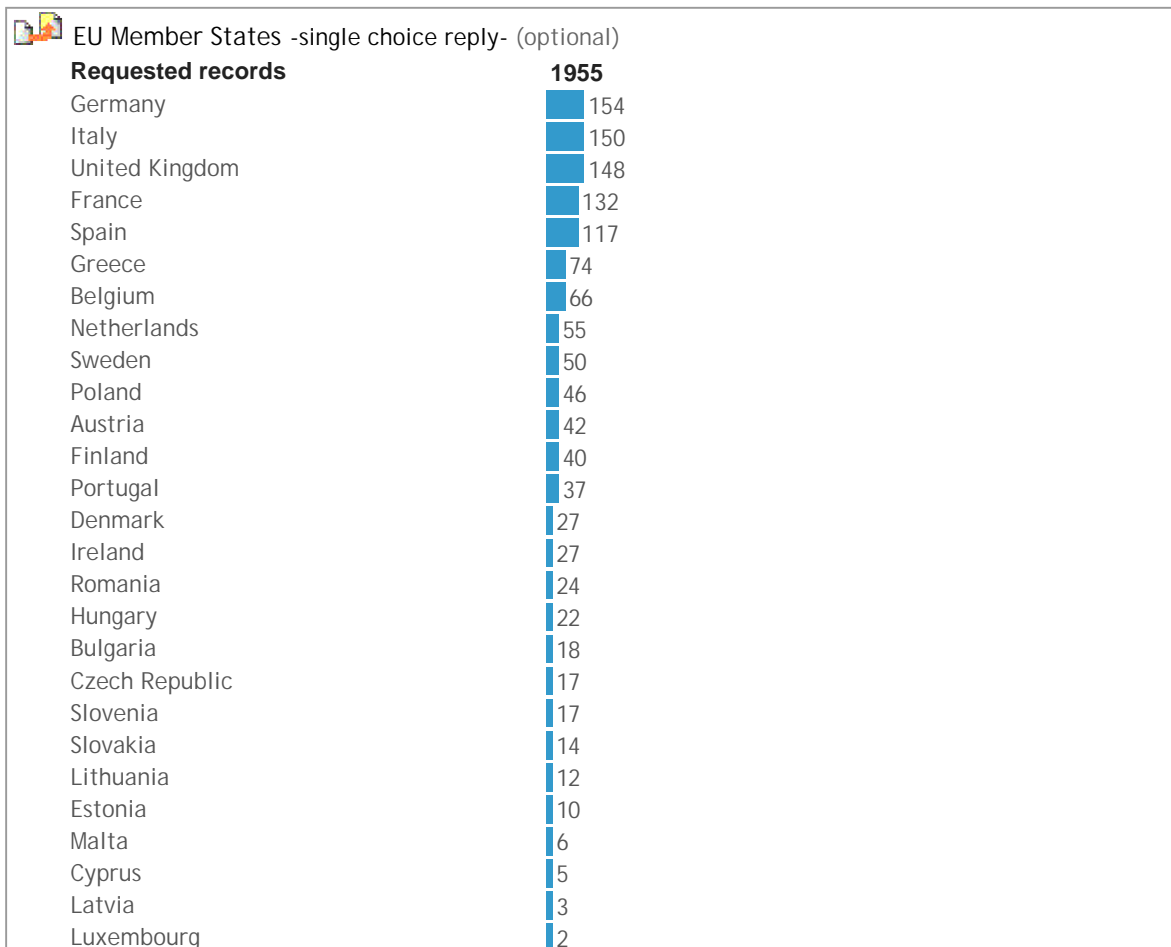


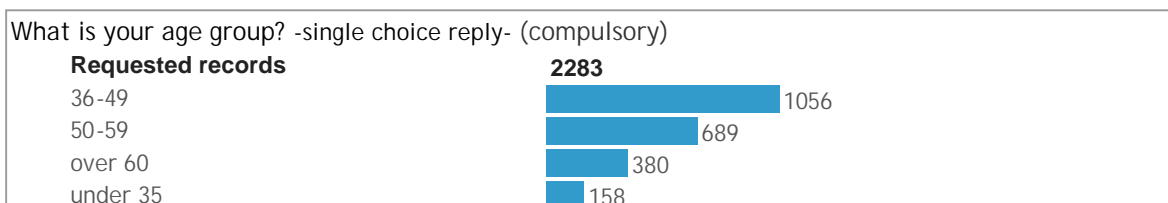
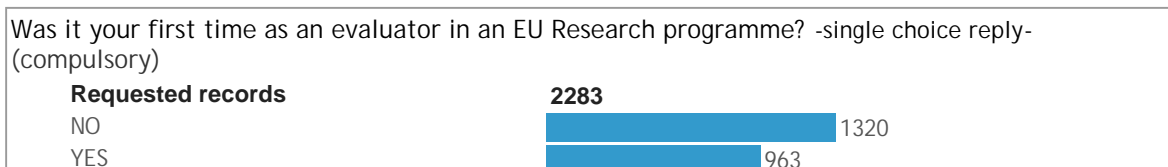
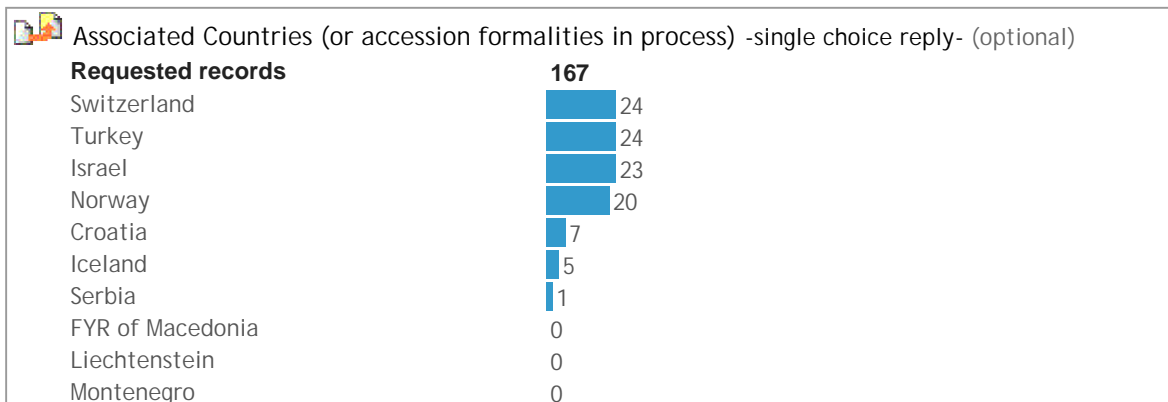
What is your gender? -single choice reply- (compulsory)

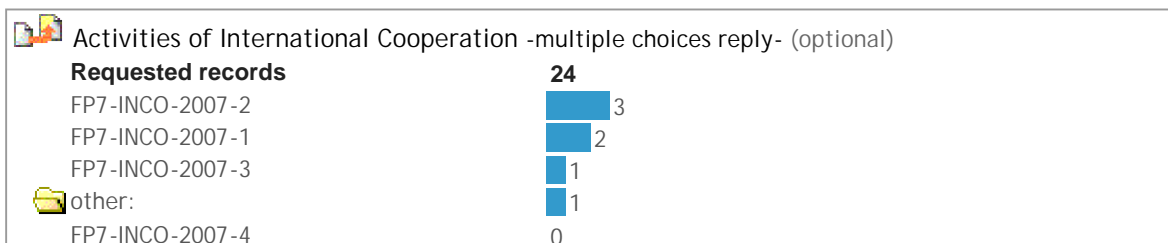
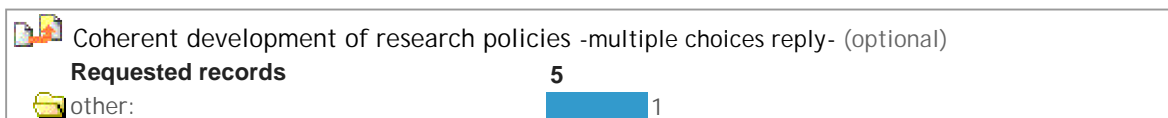
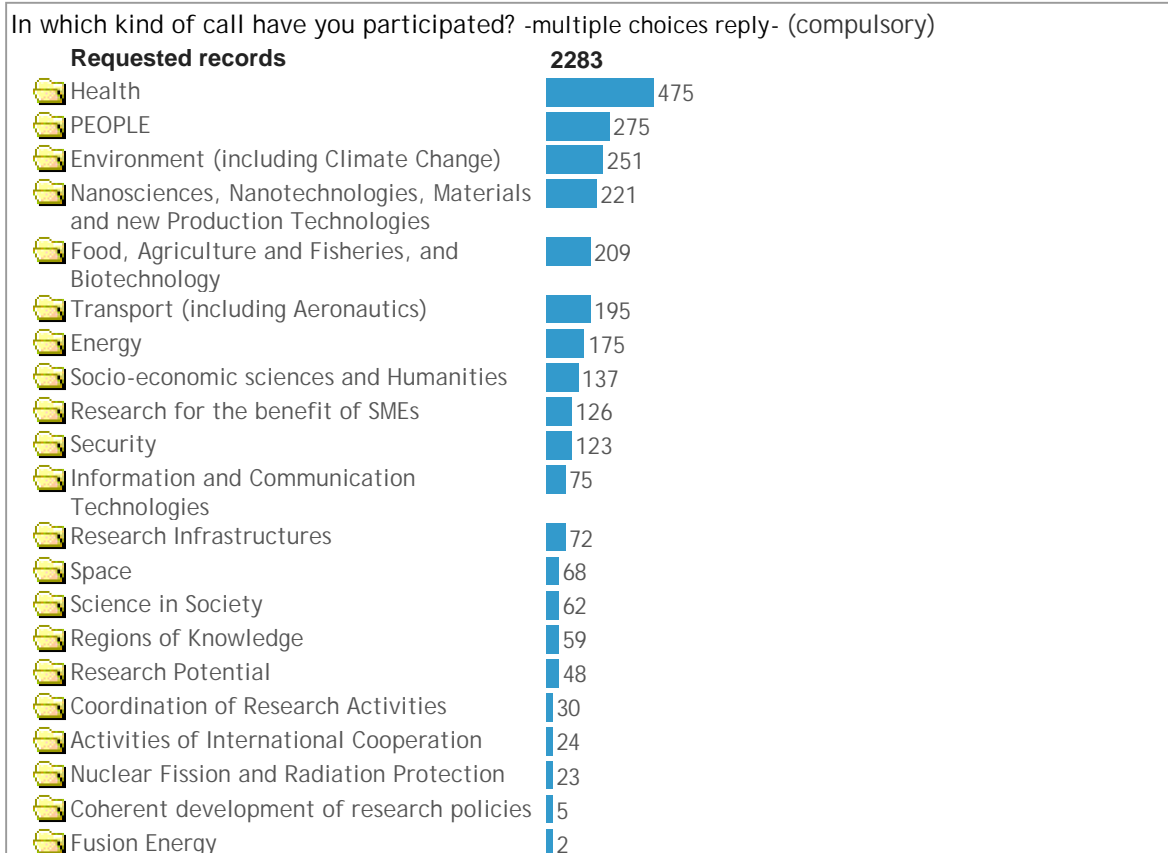


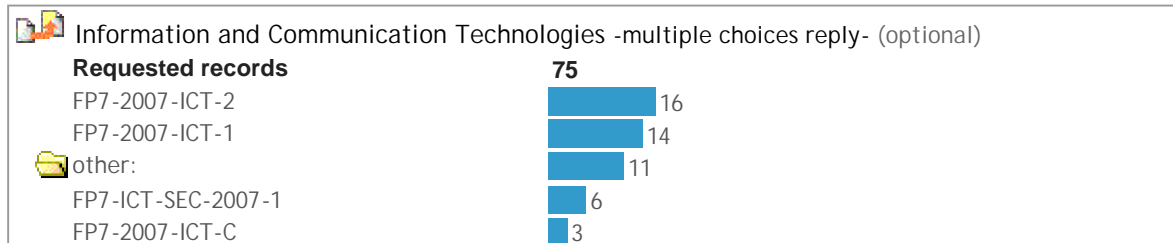
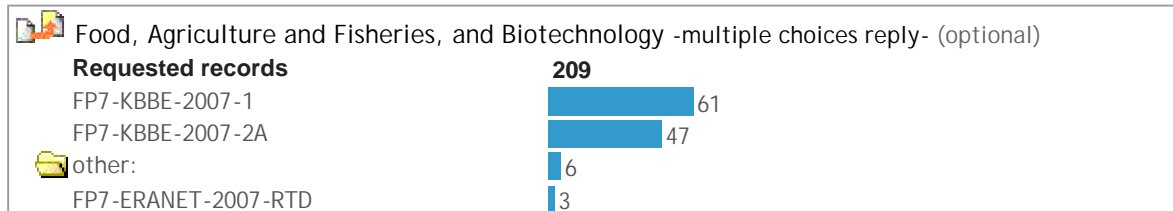
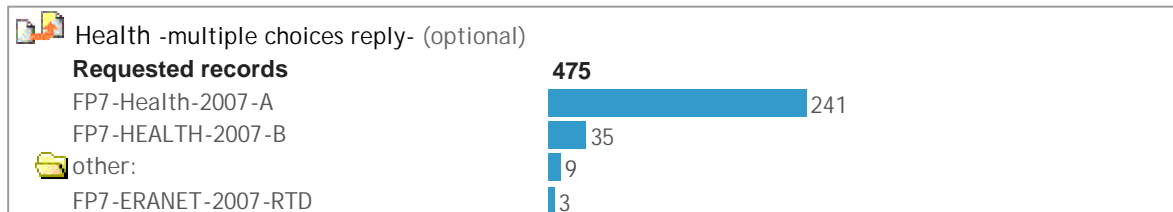
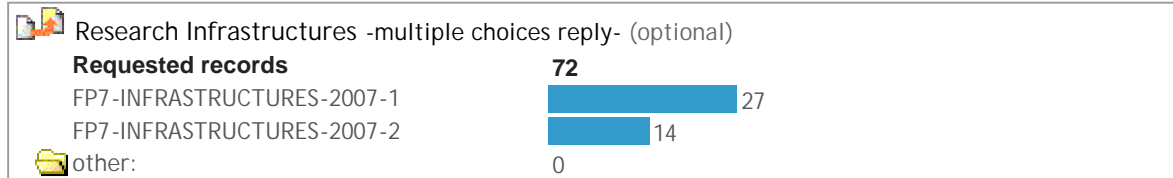
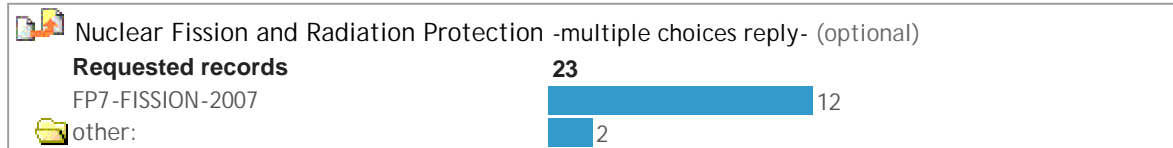
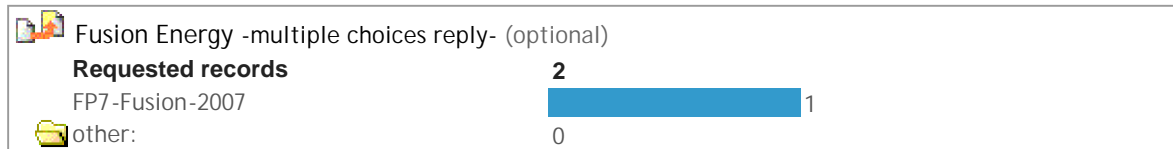
Country of origin -single choice reply- (compulsory)

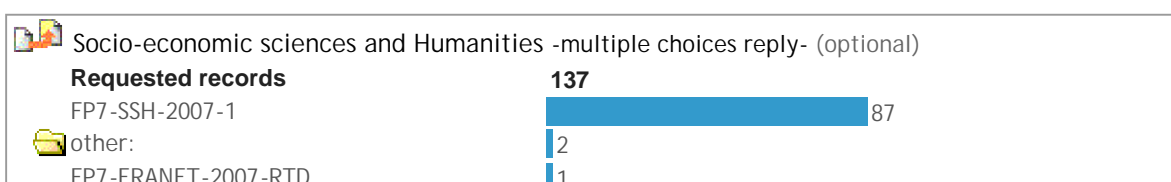
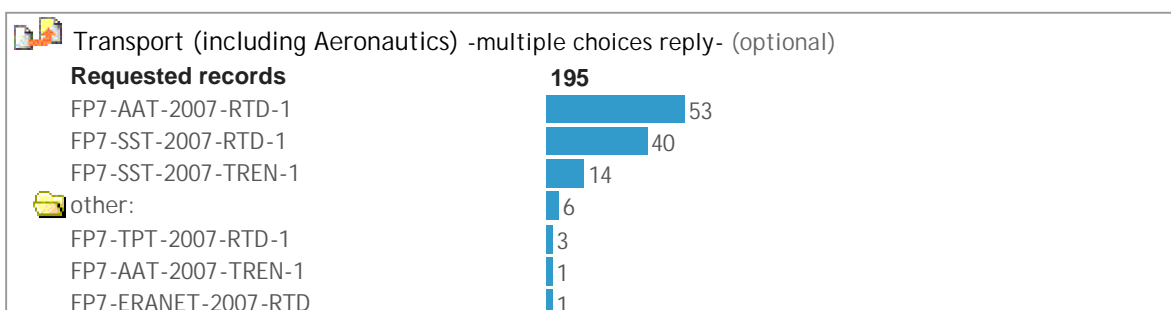
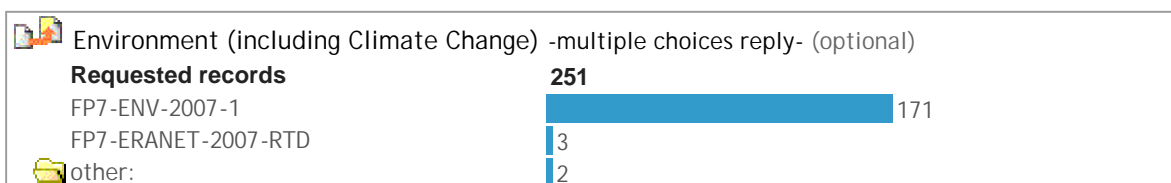
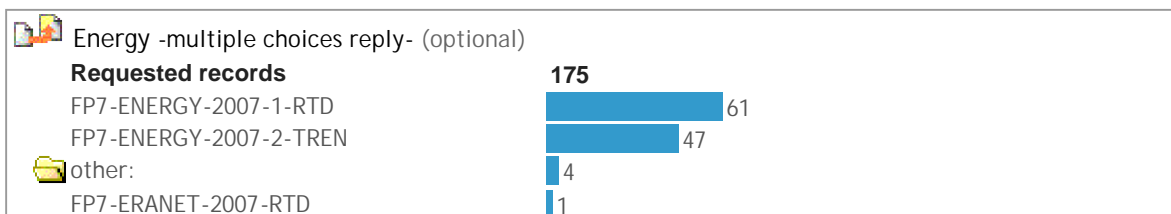
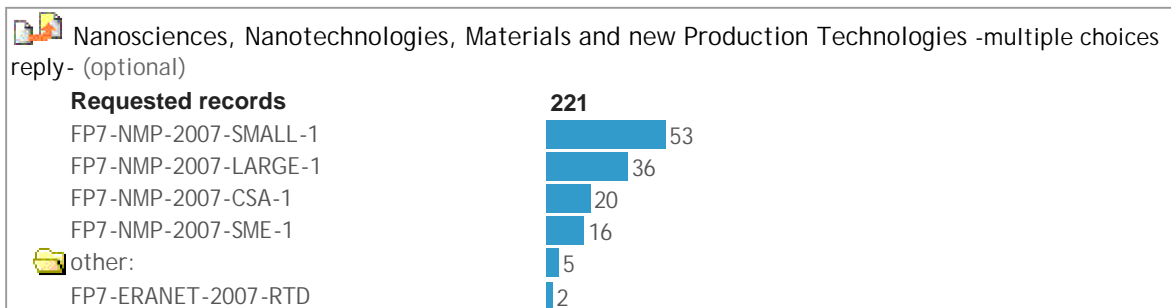


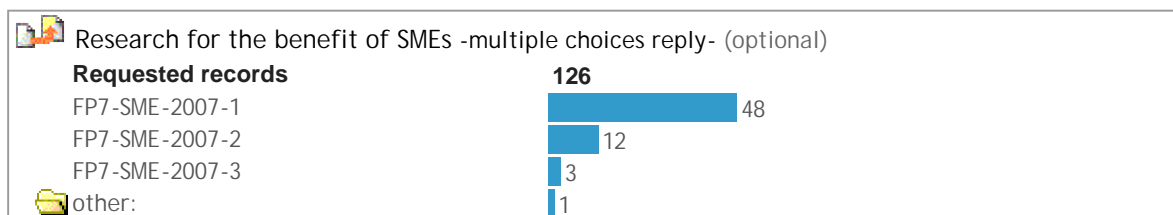
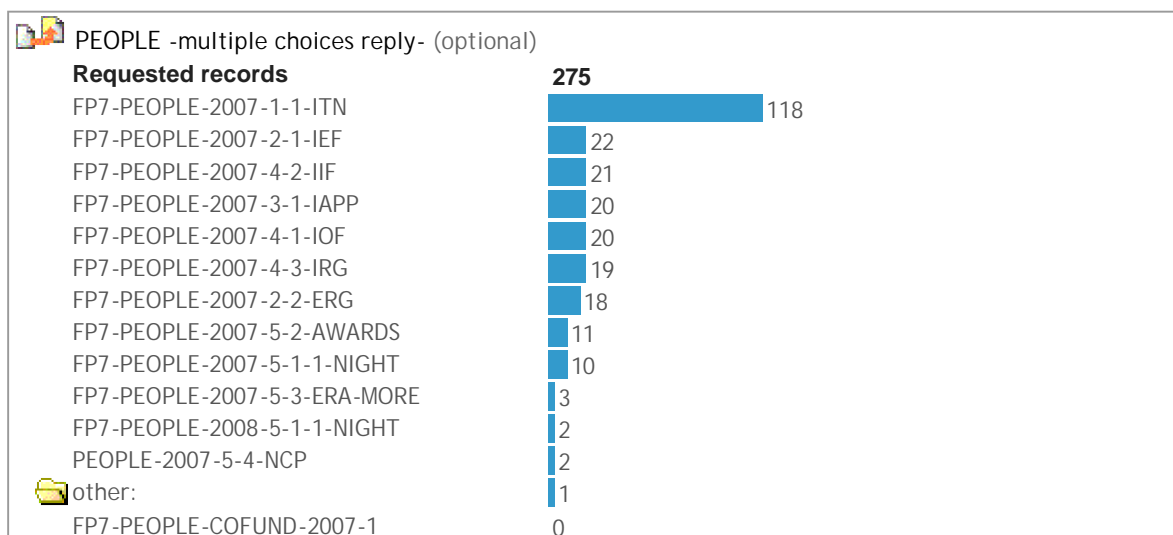
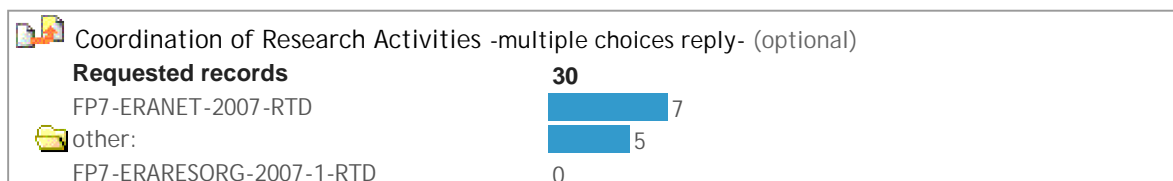
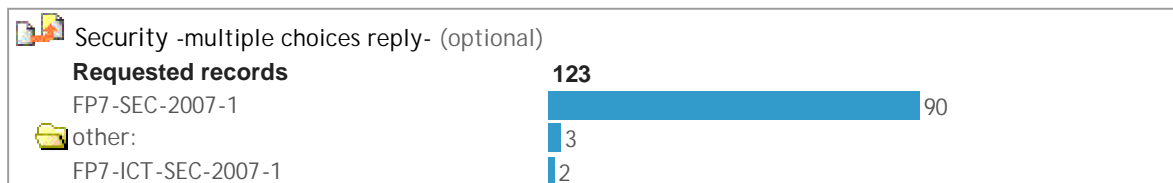
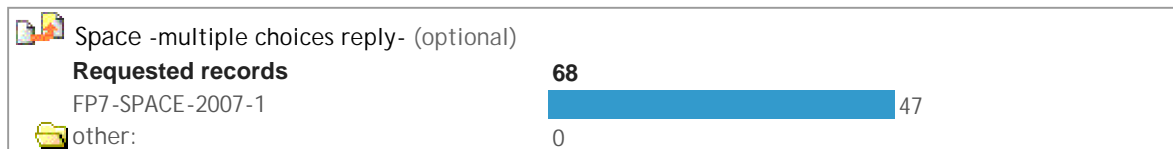


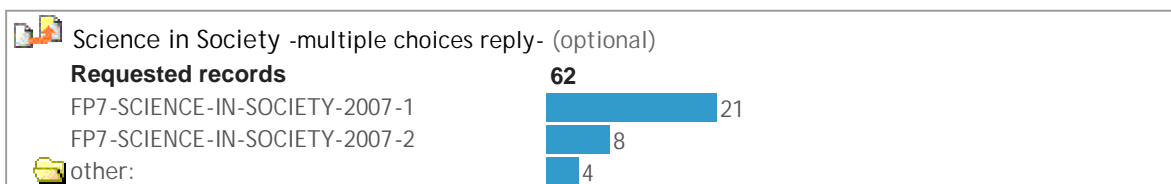
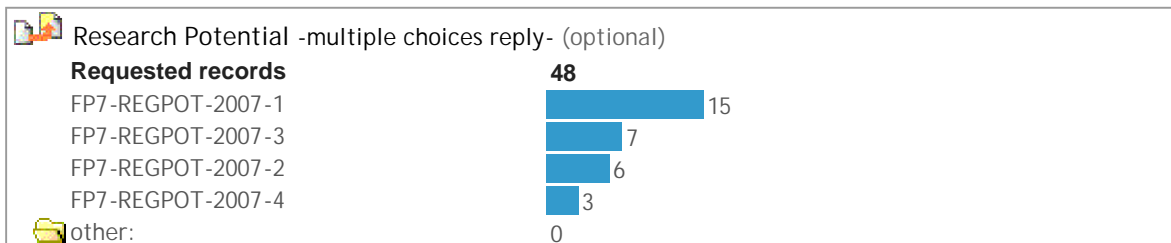
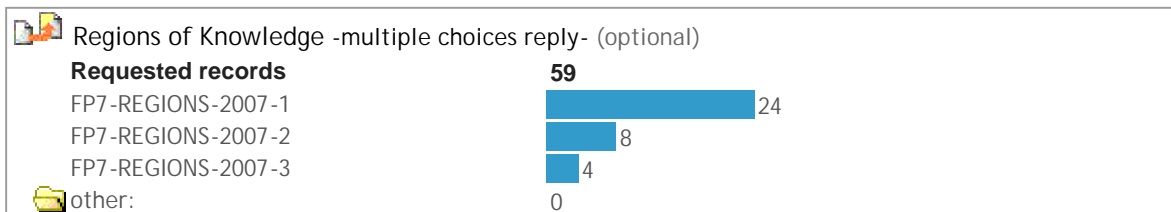








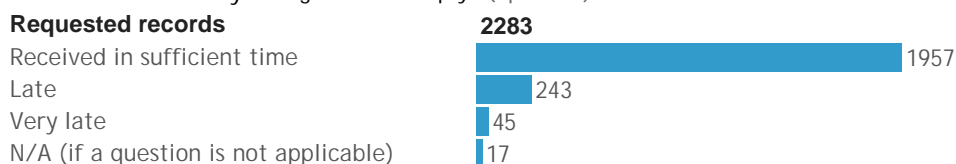




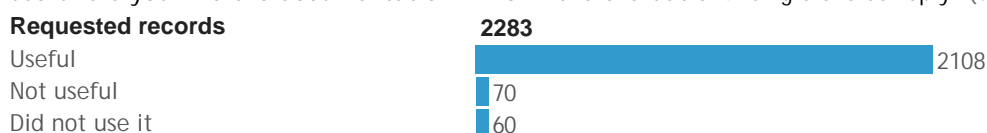
SECTION 2 : QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EVALUATION PROCESS

A. INFORMATION

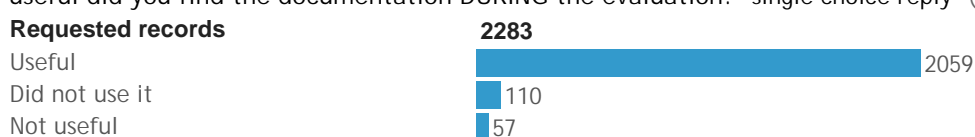
Was the invitation timely? -single choice reply- (optional)



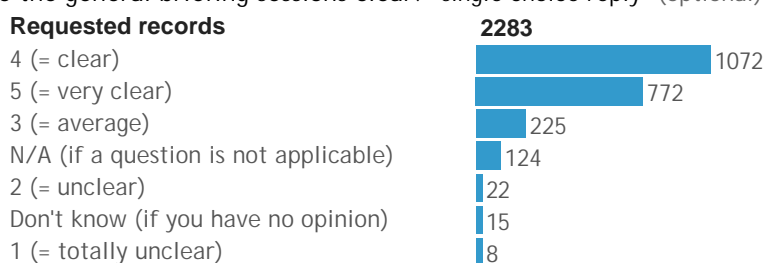
How useful did you find the documentation BEFORE the evaluation? -single choice reply- (optional)



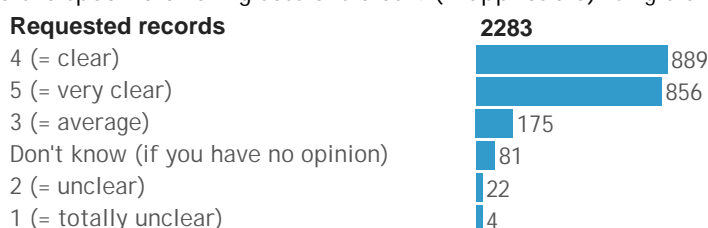
How useful did you find the documentation DURING the evaluation? -single choice reply- (optional)



Were the general briefing sessions clear? -single choice reply- (optional)

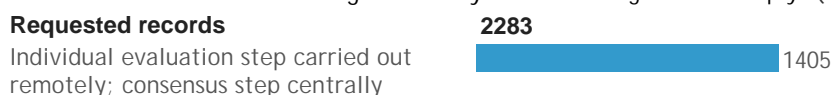


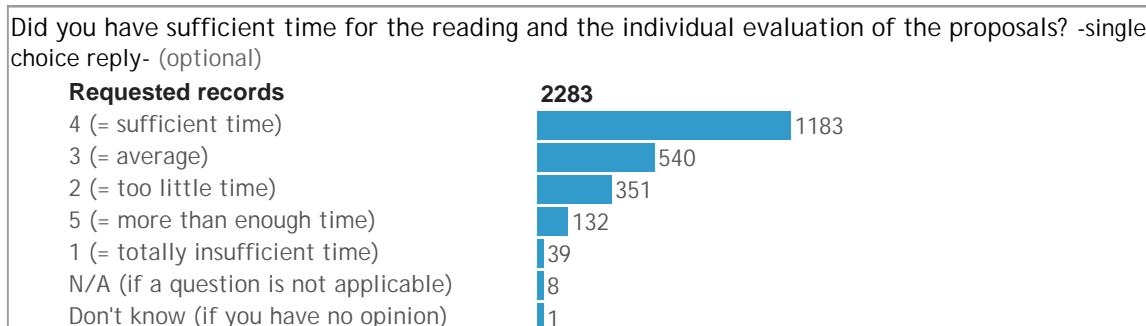
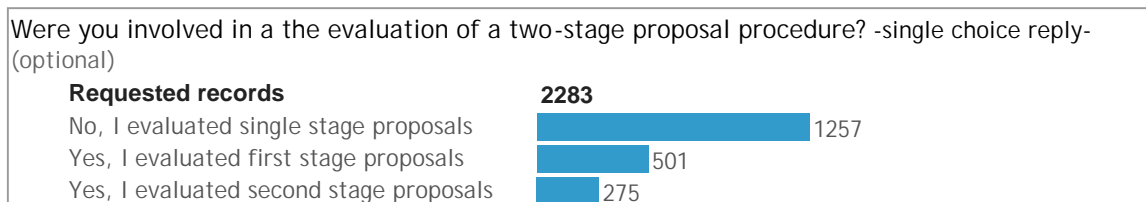
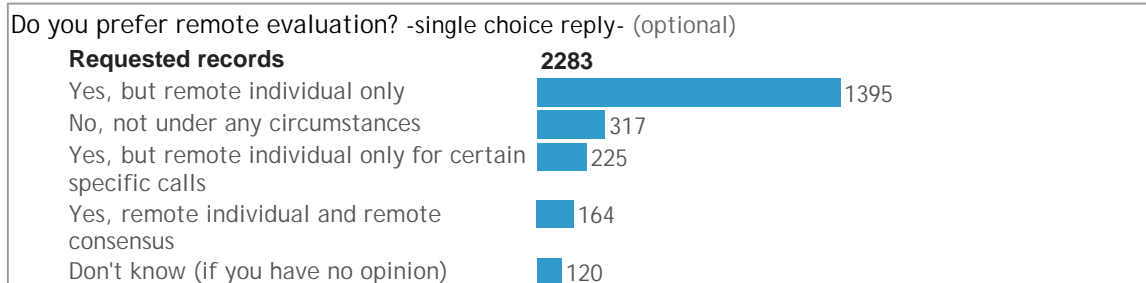
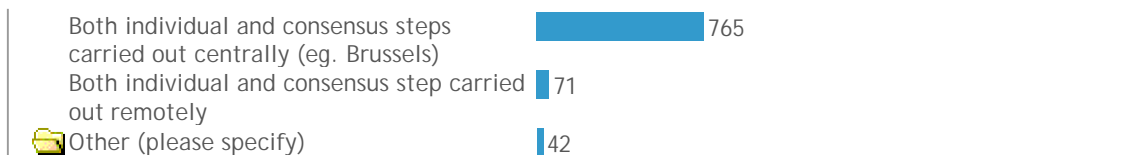
Were the specific briefing sessions clear? (If applicable) -single choice reply- (optional)

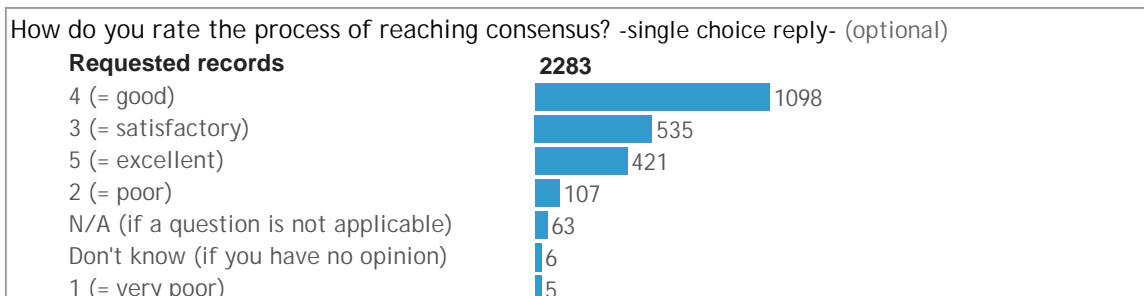
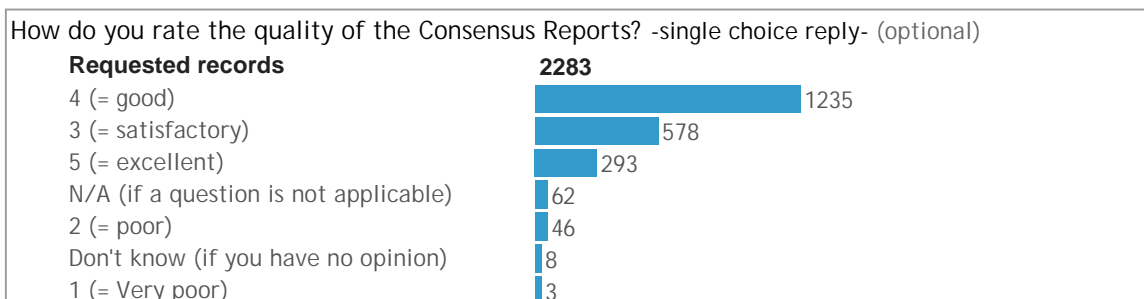
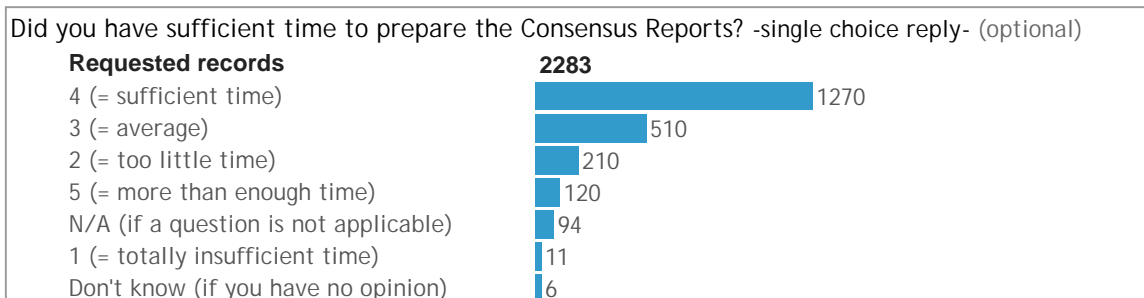
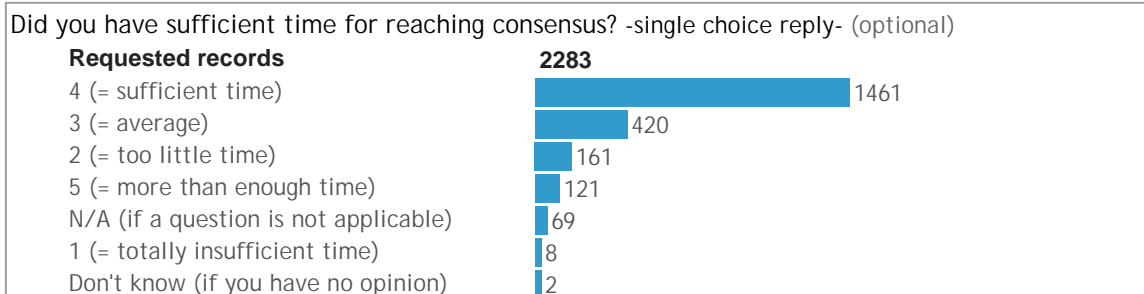


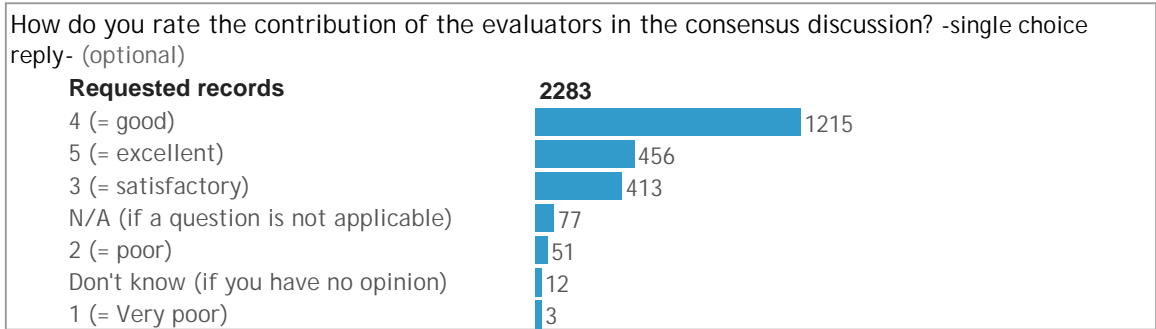
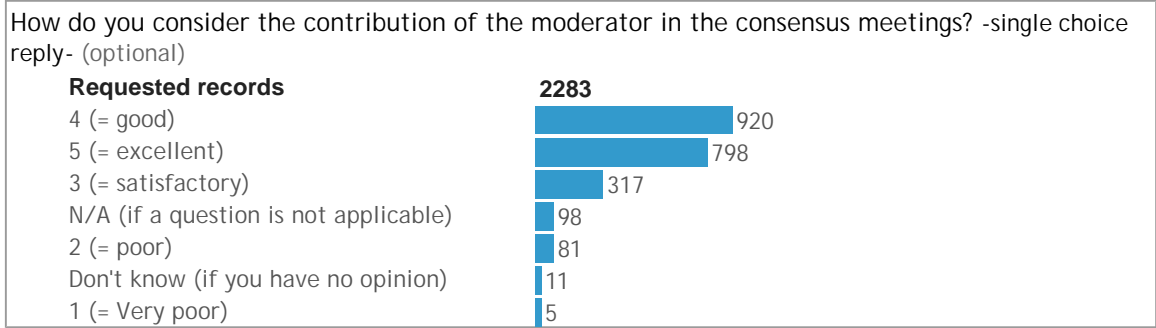
B. INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION AND CONSENSUS

How was the evaluation session organised in your call? -single choice reply- (compulsory)

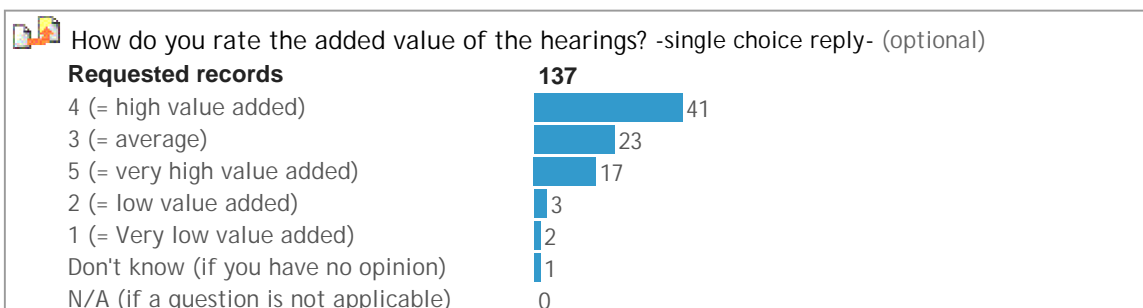
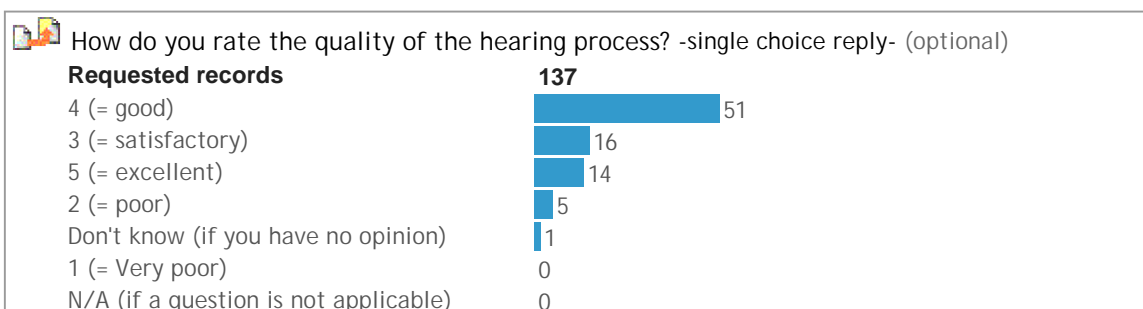
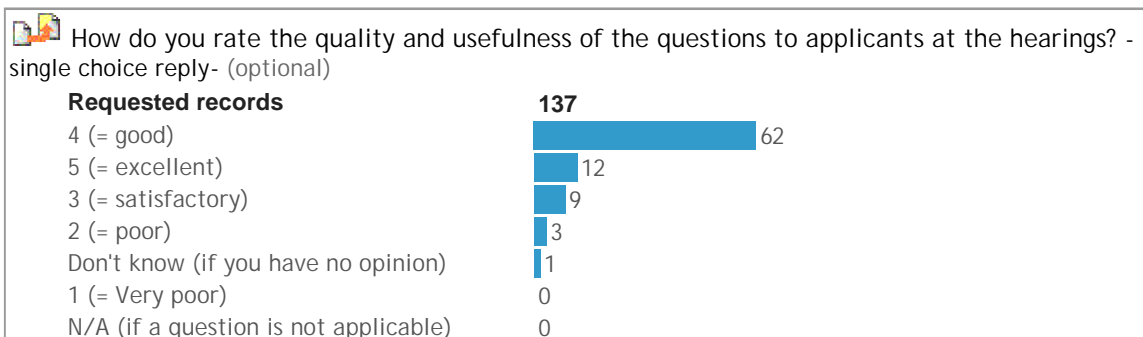
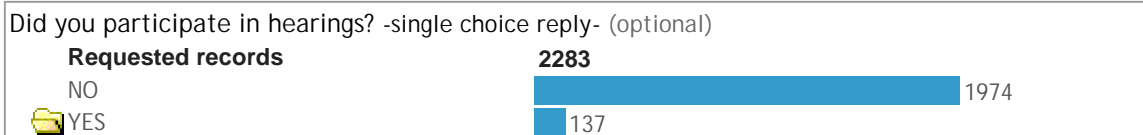






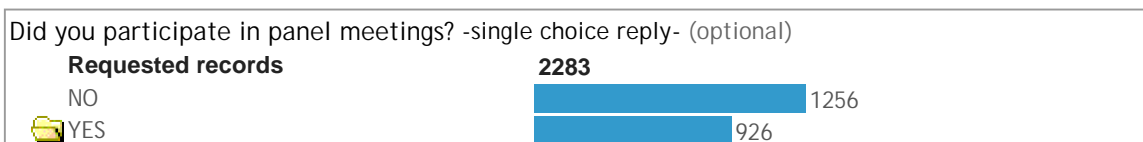


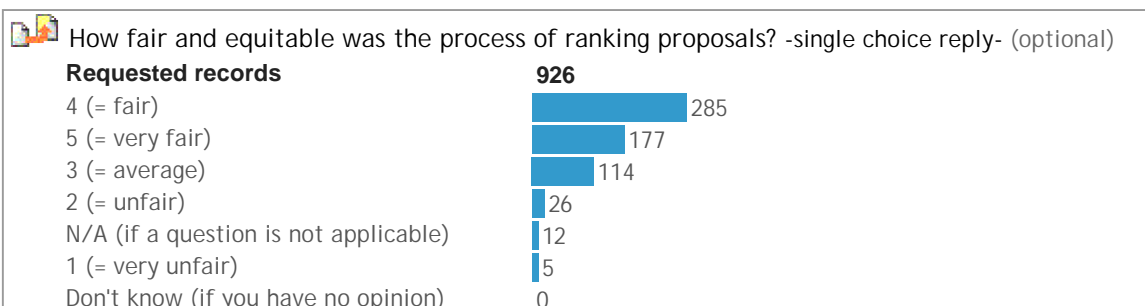
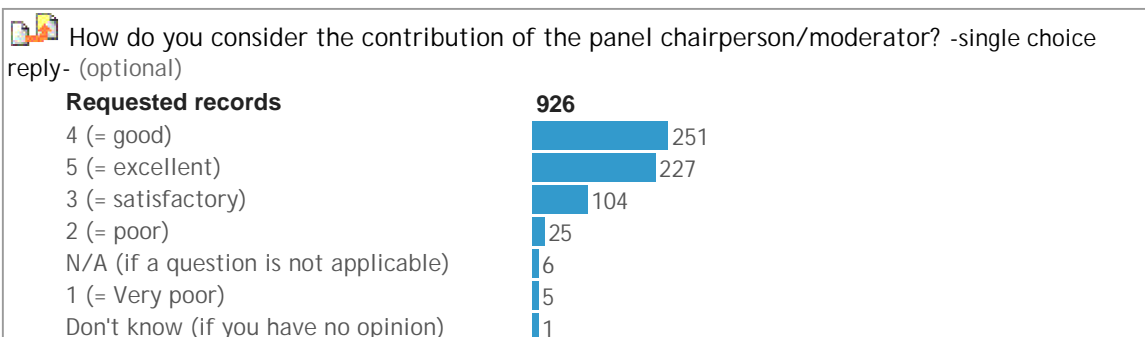
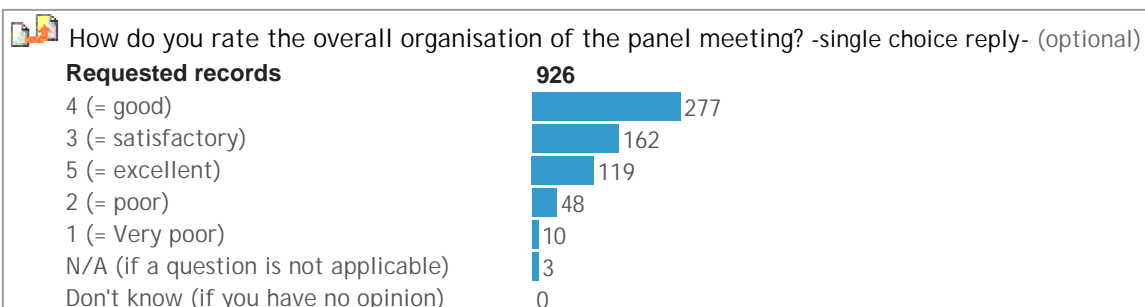
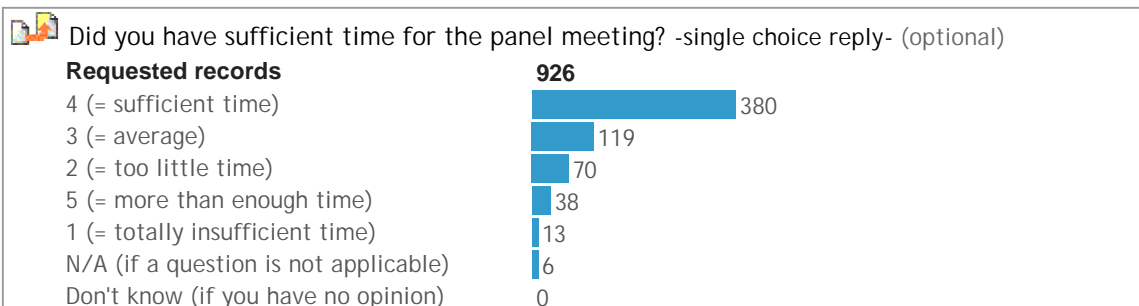
C. HEARINGS

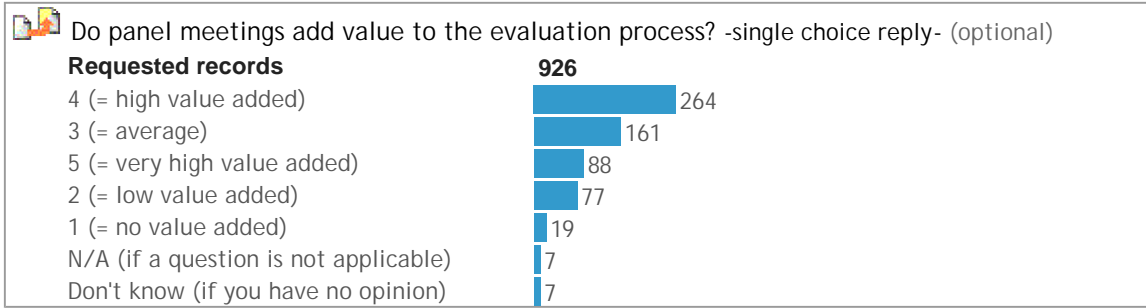


D. PANEL REVIEW

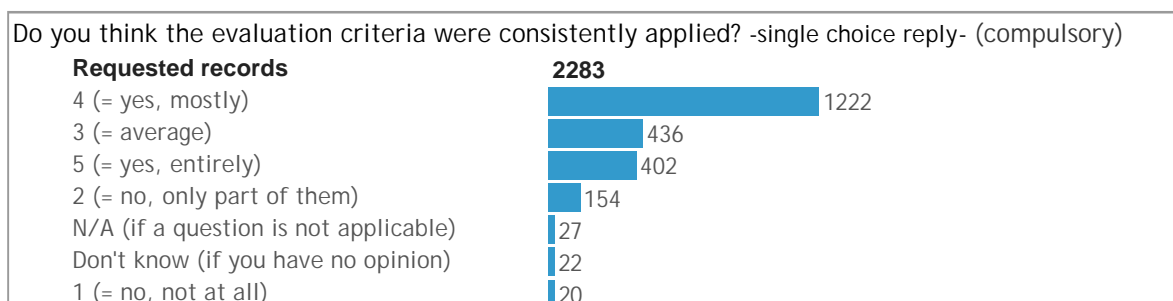
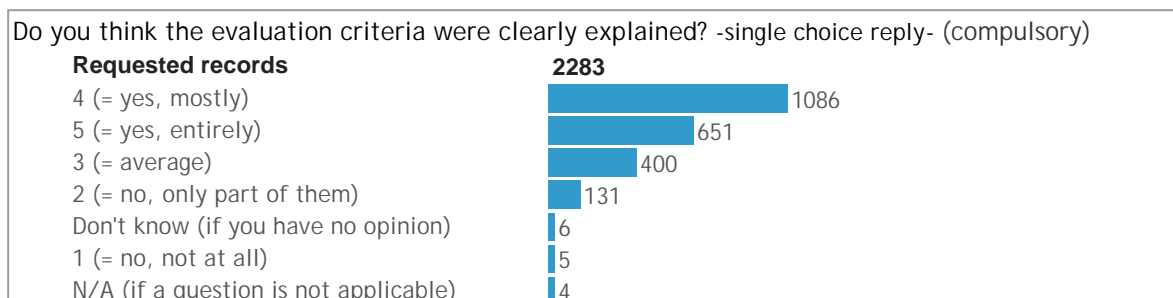
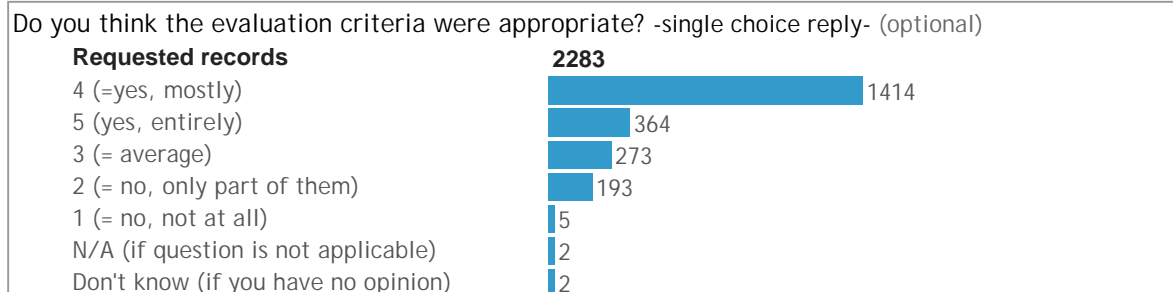
(held after the consensus discussions to establish the recommended final ranking of proposals)



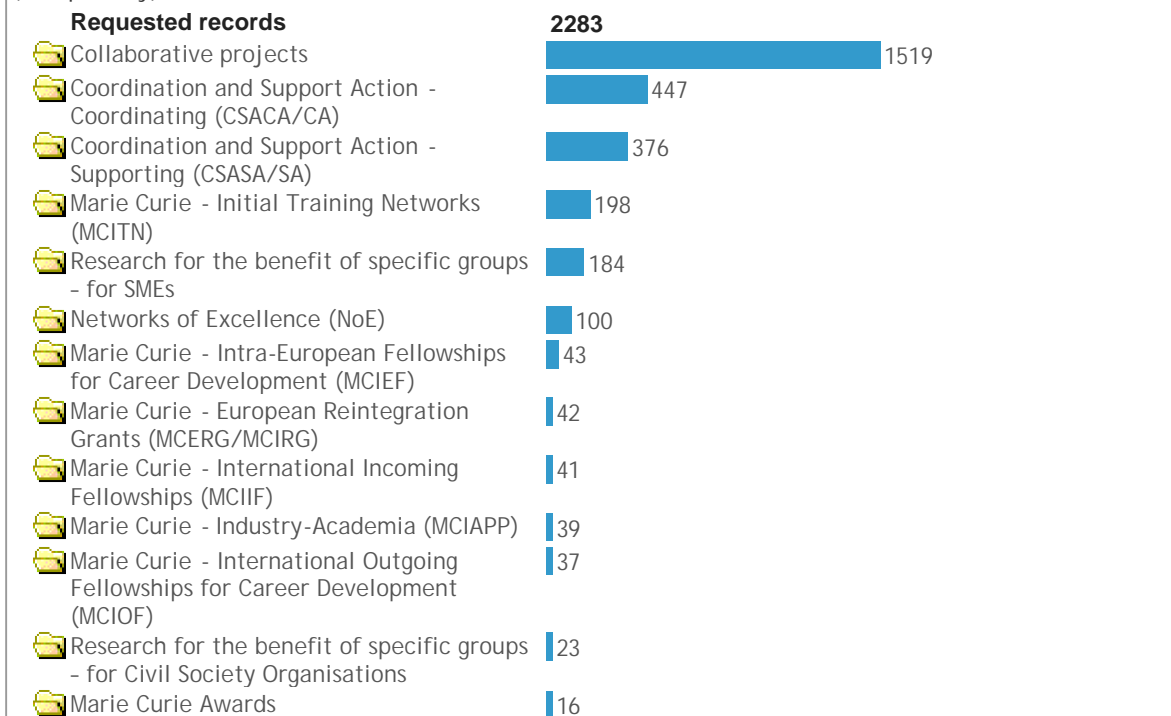




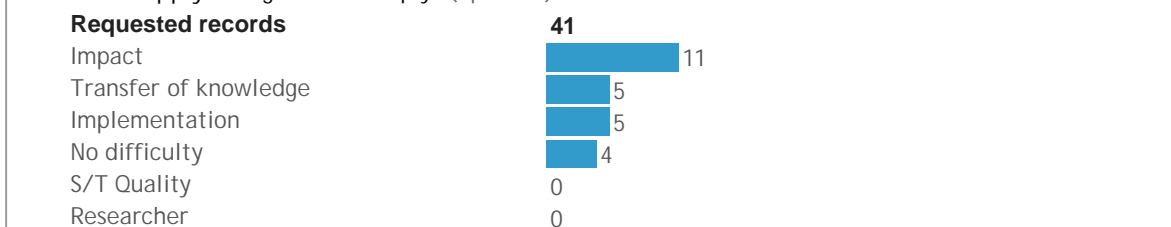
SECTION 3: EVALUATION CRITERIA

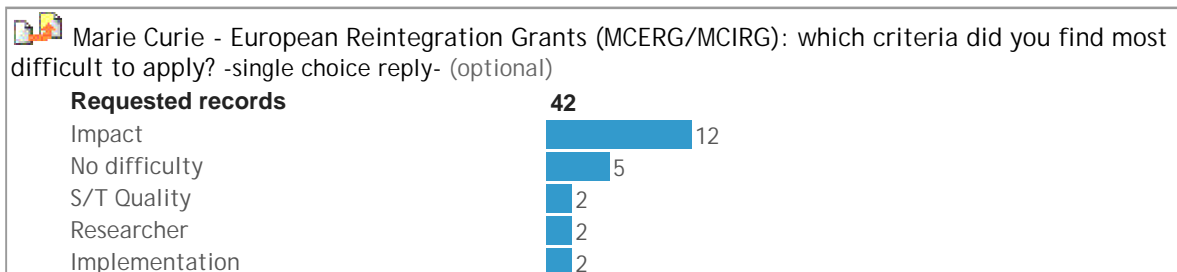
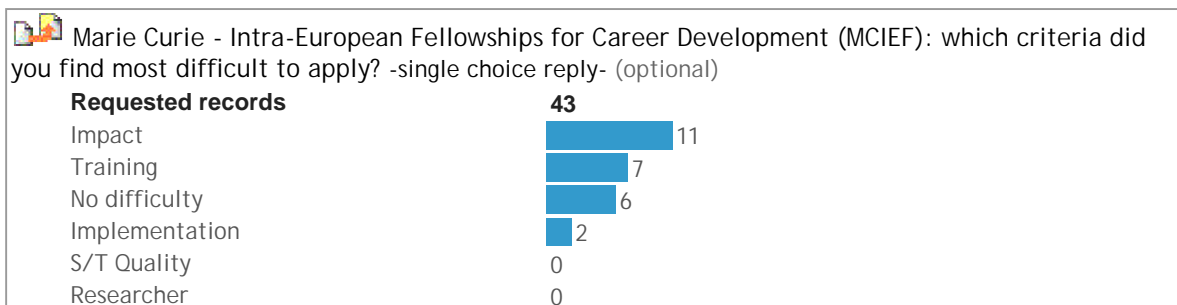
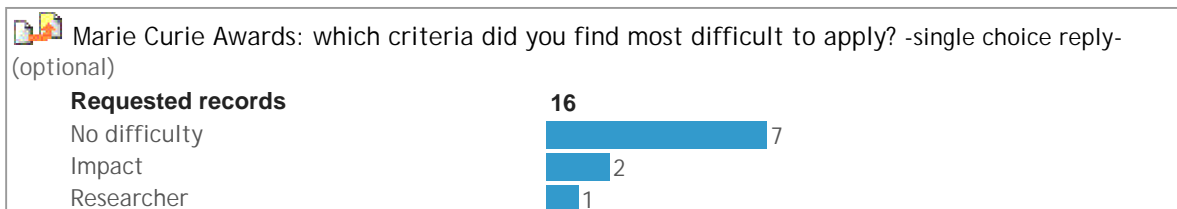
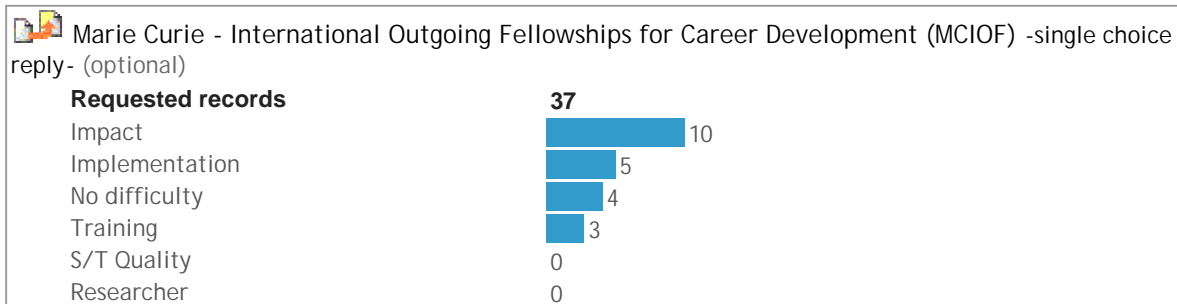


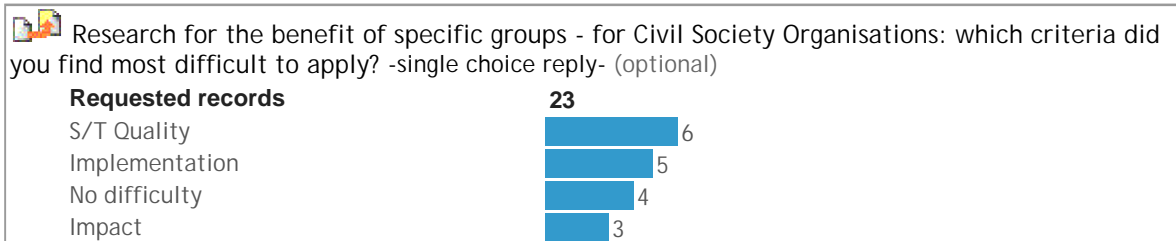
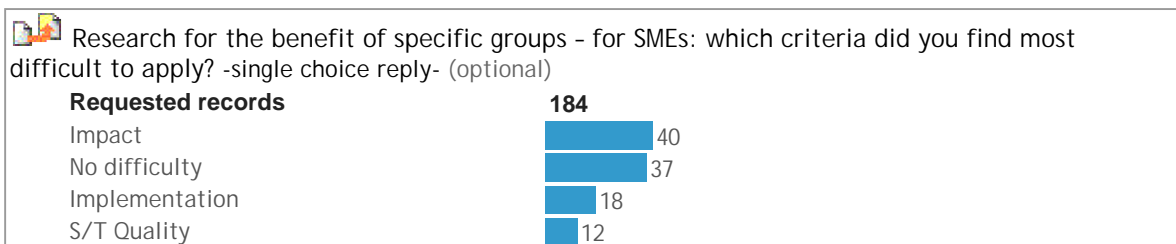
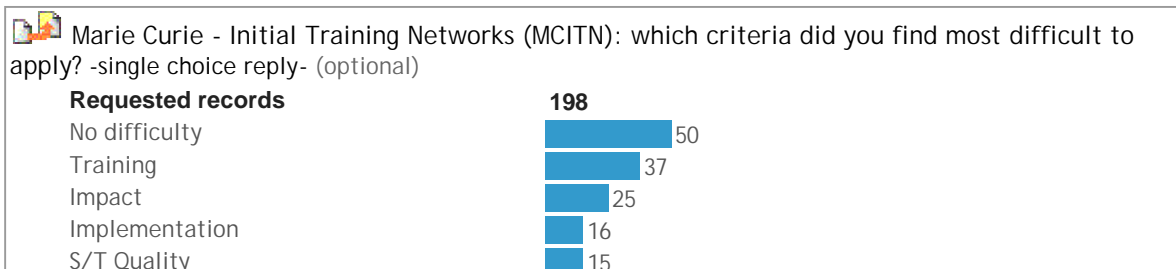
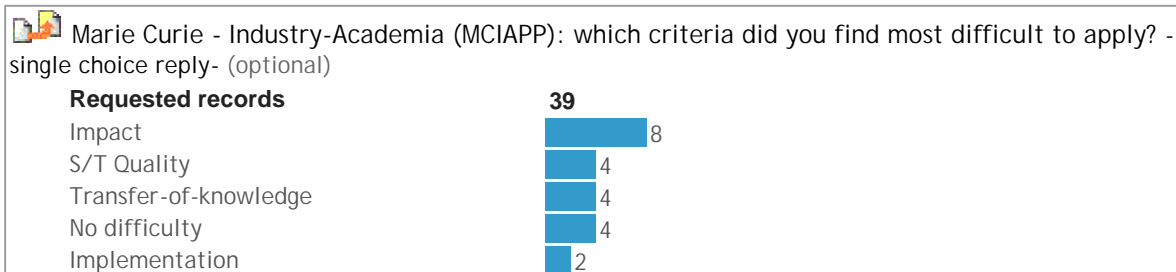
Please tick the types of funding schemes you evaluated in the current call -multiple choices reply- (compulsory)

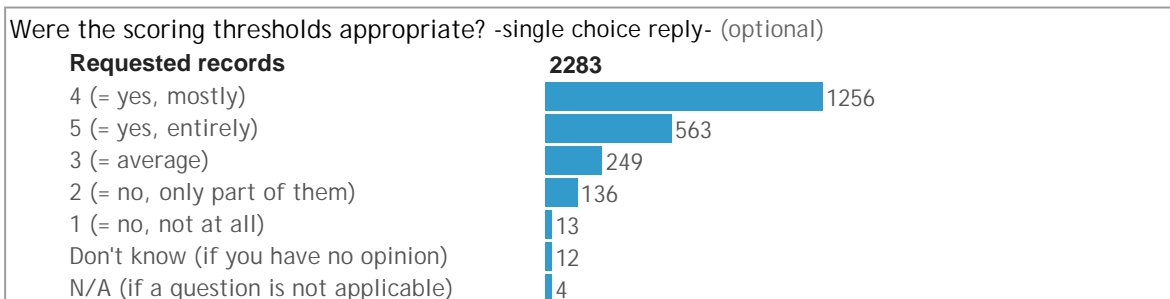
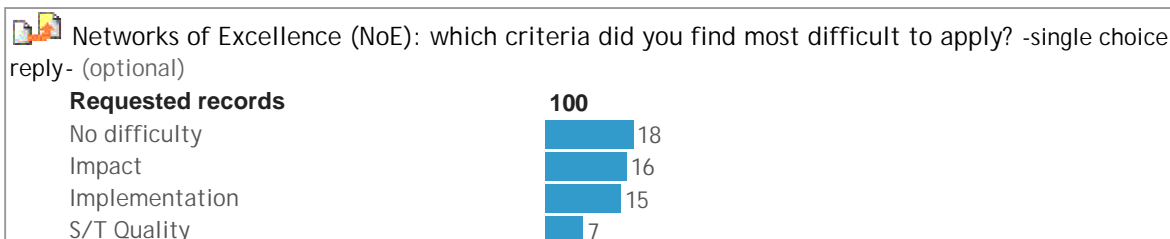
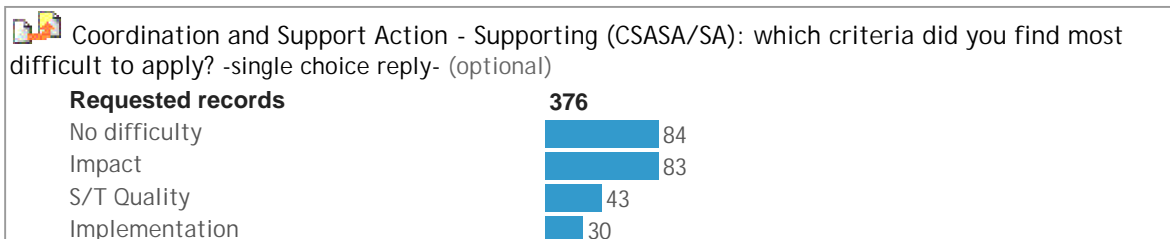
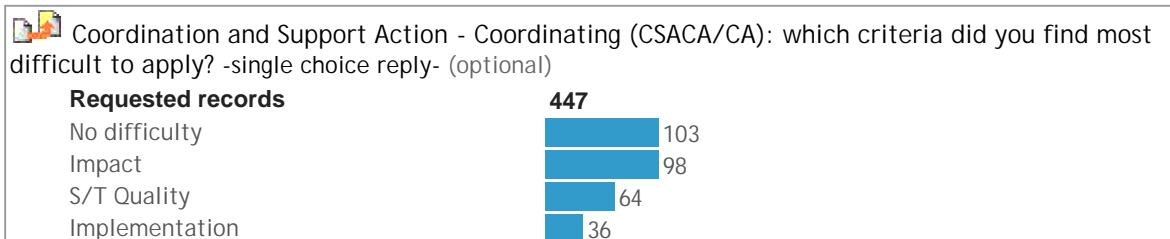


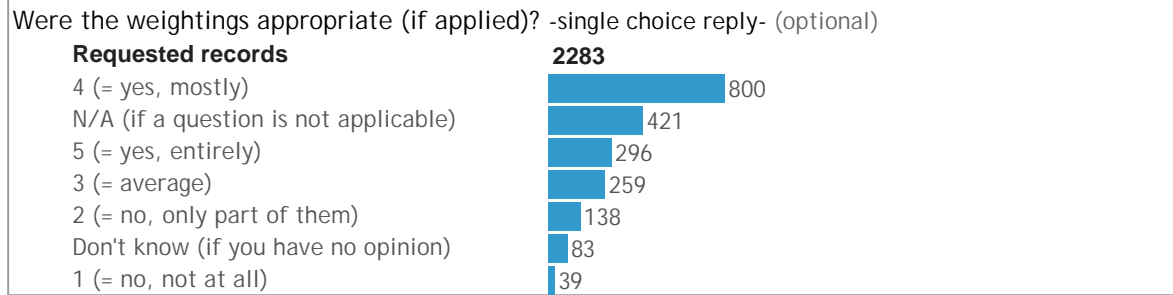
Marie Curie - International Incoming Fellowships (MCIIF): which criteria did you find most difficult to apply? -single choice reply- (optional)





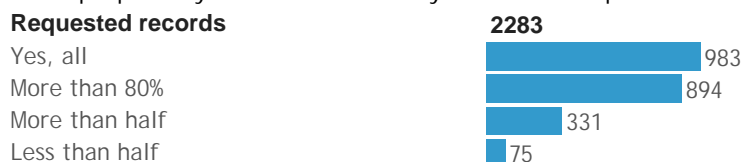




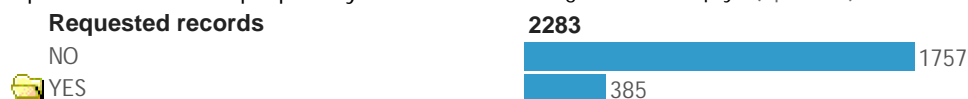



SECTION 4: OPINION ON THE EVALUATION TASK AND EVALUATORS

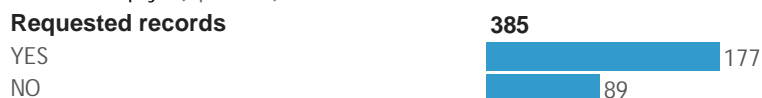
Did all the proposals you read fall within your area of expertise? -single choice reply- (compulsory)



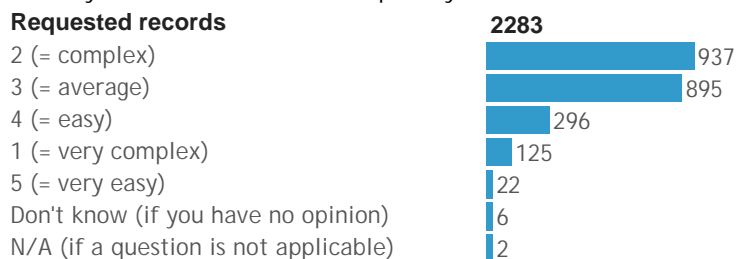
Did you think that there was a difference between the levels of marking applied to the first proposal and the last proposal you evaluated? -single choice reply- (optional)



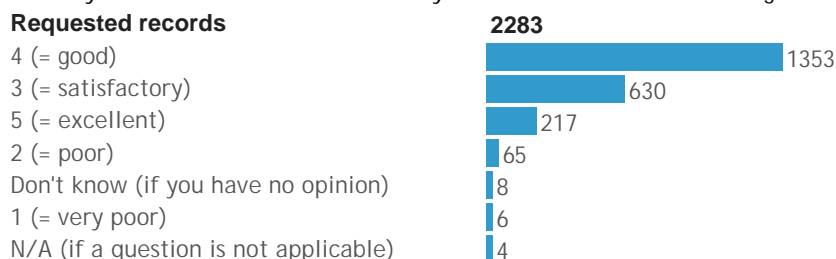
 Do you think that the efforts to calibrate (e.g. re-briefing, cross reading, etc.) are sufficient? -single choice reply- (optional)

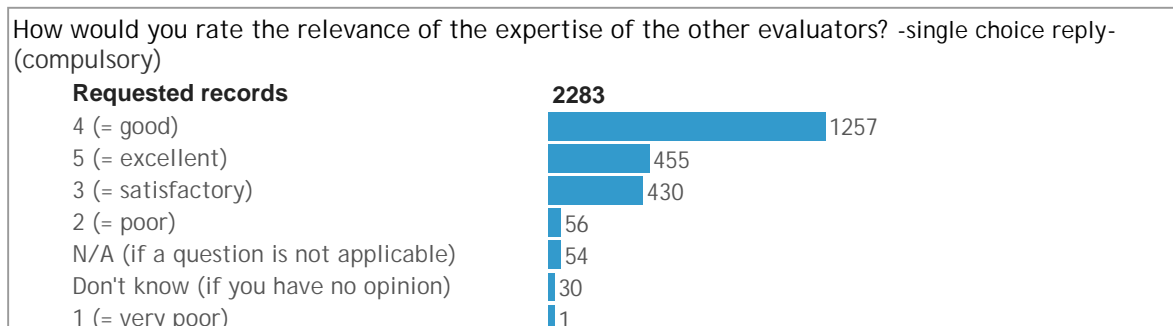
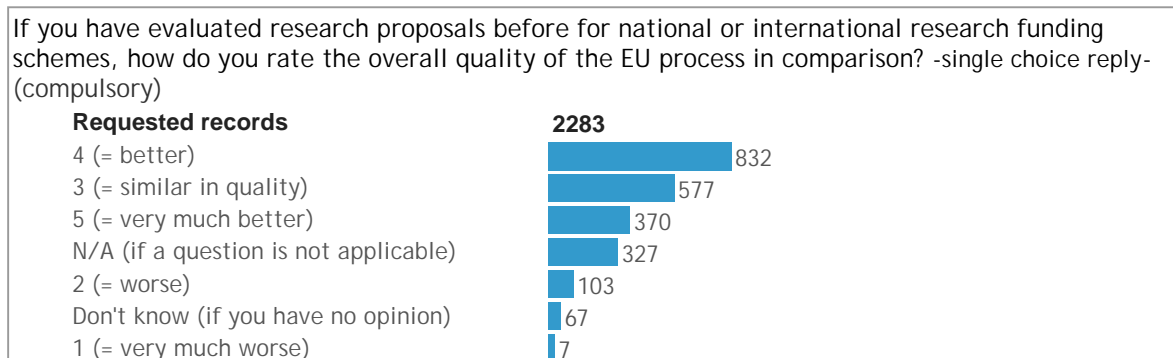
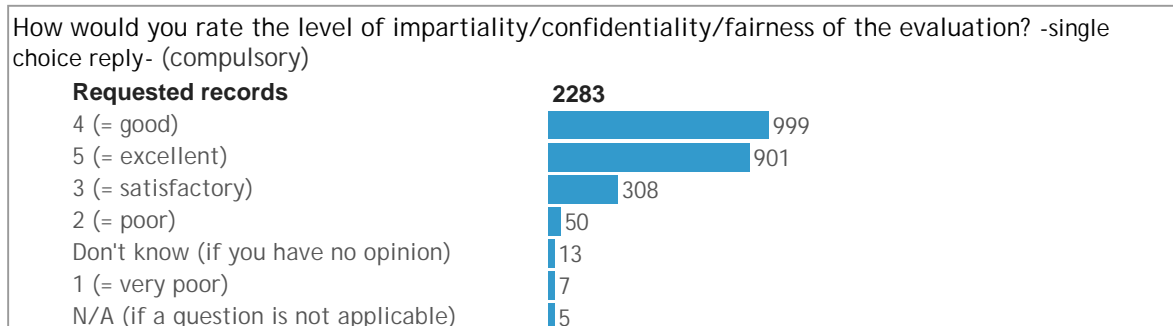


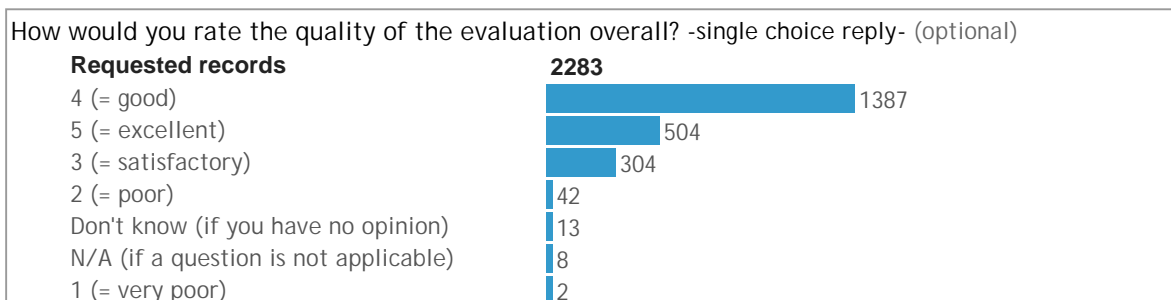
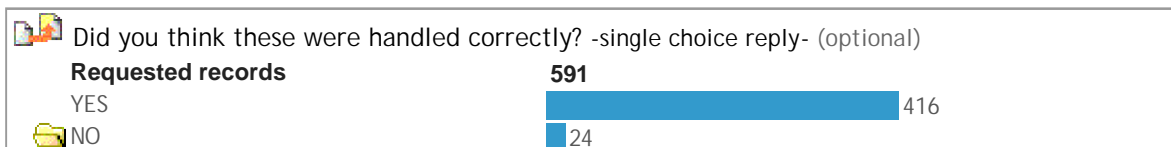
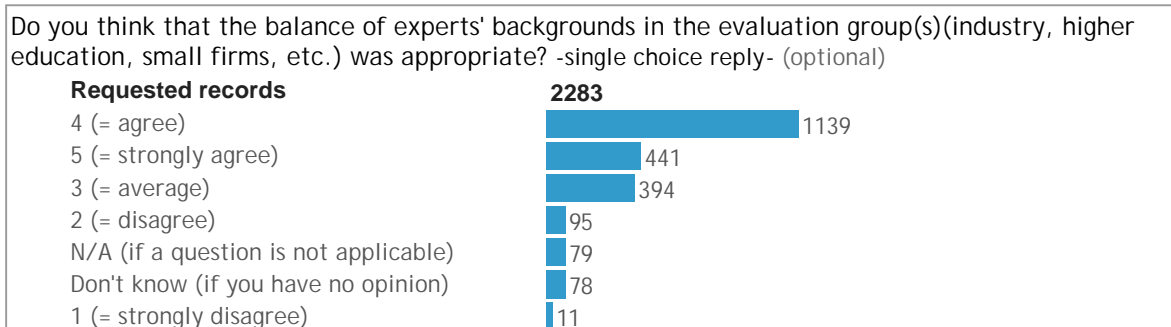
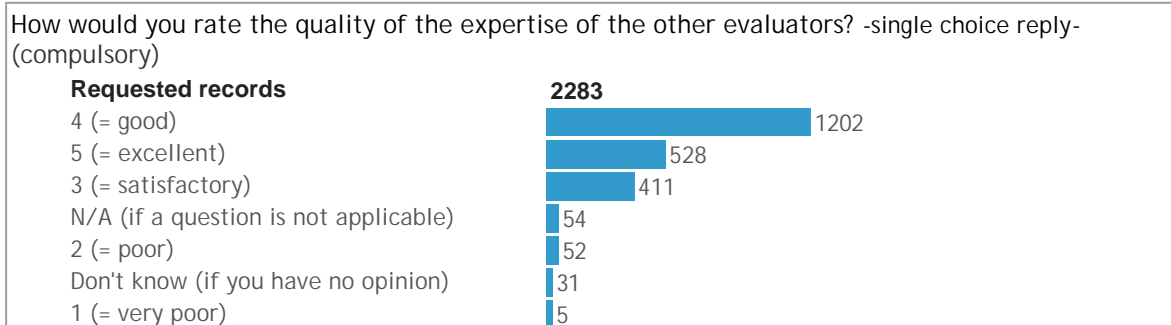
How would you rate the level of complexity of the evaluation task? -single choice reply- (compulsory)



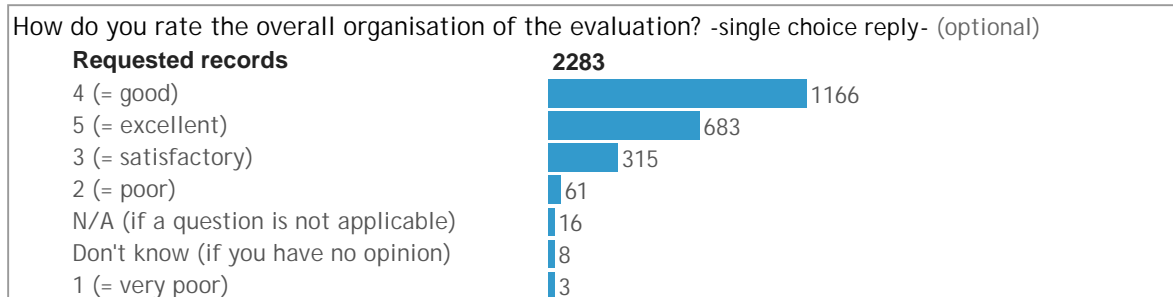
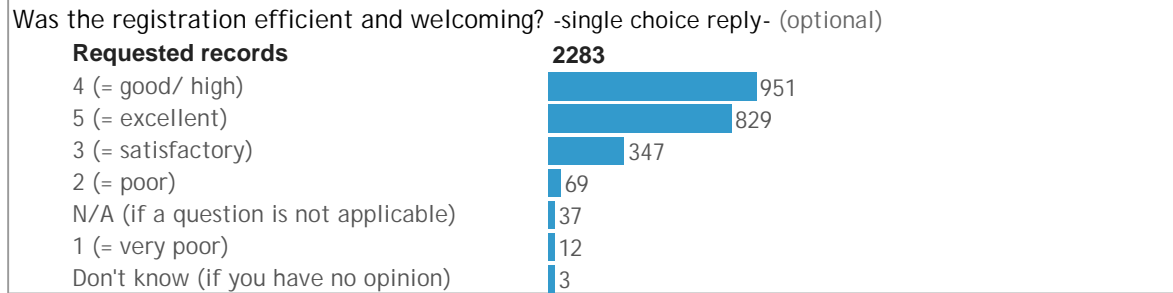
How would you rate the level of efficiency of the evaluation task? -single choice reply- (compulsory)







SECTION 5: LOGISTICS



SECTION 6: COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PATIENCE

If you wish to print the survey: print all before submitting! When you have completed the survey, please click on the "SUBMIT" button. The data will be automatically submitted.

If you have follow-up questions, please send an e-mail to Mr [Tom Berland](#) , DG RESEARCH, A1 (Interinstitutional relations and coordination of the Framework programme).