Monitoring the quality of peer review in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7)

observers, expert surveys, redress

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1st Workshop of ESF MOForum on Peer Review

- **FP7 launched in December 2006**
  - €51 billion until 2013

- **Funding decisions based on peer review!**
  - Commission follows advice of independent experts
  - Over 50,000 registered in database

- **Common submission and evaluation rules**
  - No major change from FP6
  - coherent approach, but some flexibility according to themes

- **57 calls for proposals published and evaluated in the first year**
  - 2007 budget = €6 billion
  - 26,000 proposals
  - 6,700 expert evaluators.

Independent observers

- **An observer is appointed for every evaluation session. They provide assurance that the process is fair**
  - Can also provide on-the-spot constructive advice
  - And recommendations for the future
- **They are senior persons with substantial experience in research, research policy and/or management**
  - Observers are usually <u>not</u> experts in the scientific domain concerned
  - They attend briefings and evaluation discussions
  - Chat with experts and Commission staff
- **Their reports are made available to Programme Committee**
- **Annual meeting of all observers to discuss and agree common recommendations**
  - 40 observers met in Brussels on 25 January

Questionnaire survey of experts

- **When experts get home to their office, they receive an e-mail inviting them to complete an on-line survey**

- **By December 2007, 2281 responses following 3500 invitations**

- **Questions about:**

  - Personal profile

  - Evaluation process

  - Evaluation criteria

  - Opinion on the task and on the other evaluators

  - Logistics

  - Comments and recommendations

96% of the respondents found the quality of the evaluation overall 'satisfactory' to 'excellent'

How would you rate the quality of the evaluation overall? -single choice reply- (optional)

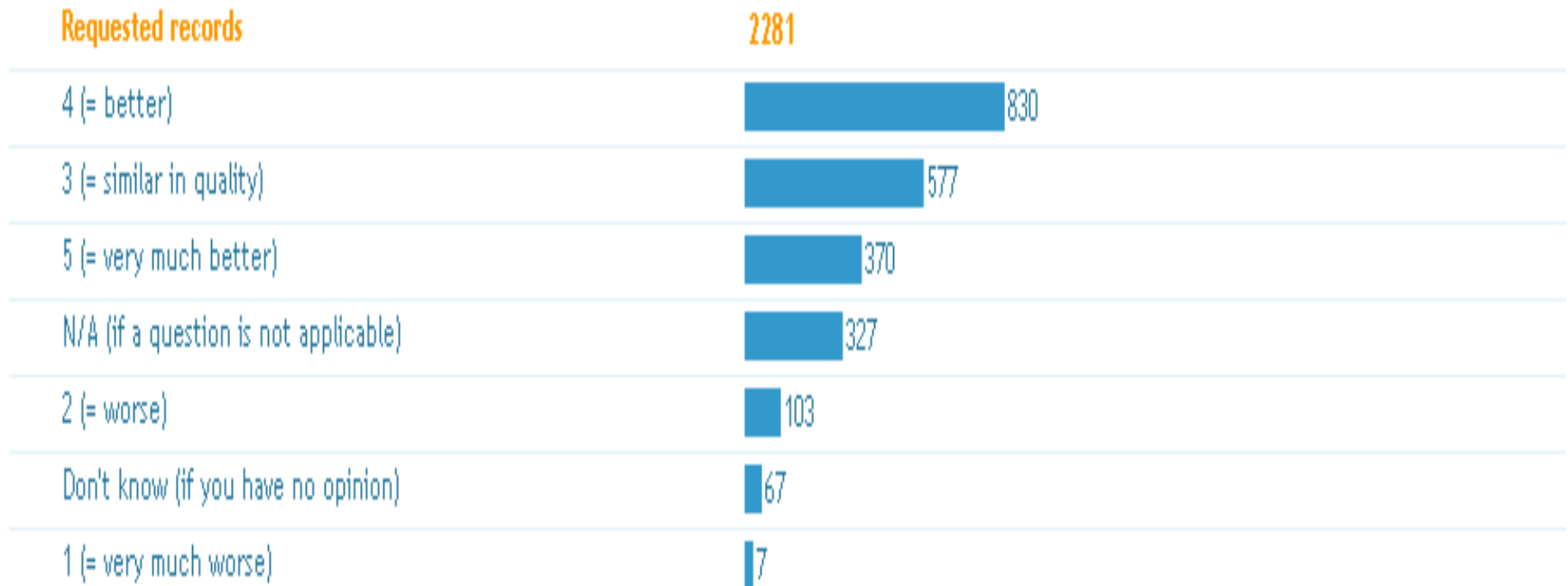|	
Requested records	2281
4 (= good)	1386
5 (= excellent)	503
3 (= satisfactory)	304
2 (= poor)	42
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	13
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	8
1 (= very poor)	2

91% found the EU evaluation process similar or better than national or international schemes

If you have evaluated research proposals before for national or international research funding schemes, how do you rate the overall quality of the EU process comparison? -single choice reply- (compulsory)

Requested records	2281
4 (= better)	830
3 (= similar in quality)	577
5 (= very much better)	370
N/A (if a question is not applicable)	327
2 (= worse)	103
Don't know (if you have no opinion)	67
1 (= very much worse)	7

FP7 redress procedure

- **In the past, complaints arrived haphazardly**
  - Handled at different levels
  - No systematic treatment
  - No common record

- **Redress does not give a new right of appeal…**

- **…but it will ensure a consistent and coherent approach to complaints**
  - Establish "due process"
  - Uphold principles of transparency and equal treatment

- **Included (by Council) in the *Rules for Participation*:**

- **Procedure outlined in "evaluation rules"**

- **Applicants have one month to submit a redress request after receipt of "intial information" of the evaluation results**
  - Before selection and rejection decisions have been made
  - Non-contentious proposals are not slowed down by redress
- **Specific web form on CORDIS**
- **Internal committees consider complaints**
  - independent of hierarchy,
- **Judgement of appropriately qualified experts not called into question**
- **Redress committees look at, for example:**
  - Evaluators' Expertise
  - Gross factual errors
  - Incorrect application of rules
- **In 2007 between 3-10% of applicants sent in a redress request**
  - Around 500 complaints so far
  - To date, 4 redress requests will lead to a re-evaluation (at least one of which will now be funded)

Redress lessons learned

- **Successful in revealing problems (even minor ones) in a systematic way**

- **Ensures equal treatment**

- **Reassures: the evaluation system is sound**

- **But, very resource intensive**

- **More effort needed to communicate what is and what is not covered by redress**