D2.3 Summary of the call v2

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Executive Summary

The Open Data Incubator for Europe (ODINE) is an H2020 project aiming at establishing an EU-wide, industry-focused network of open data startups and SMEs around Europe. In version 1 of this summary, we described the ODINE's open call process, detailed the workflow of the evaluation process, summarized the first half of the call, covering evaluation rounds 1 to 5 since May 2015 until April 2016 and described an initial set of lessons learned, aimed at providing insight to future incubation programs. In this version, we present the summary of the 8 evaluation rounds from May 2015 to August 2016, and present a final set of recommendations and lessons learned for future programs.

This document is of interest for current and future organisers of open calls involving SMEs on data-driven verticals looking for an account on how the call was designed and operated in ODINE. Policy-makers and researchers in both open data and entrepreneurship can obtain insight of the provenance and sectors of the applicants to the ODINE program.

Our main findings and recommendations are summarized below:

- ODINE received **1173** applications from **707** different companies from **34** countries, granting **57** companies an amount of **€ 5.424.623,73** in total
- 278 companies used their right to re-submit. Companies that re-submitted did so 1.67 times in average, for a total of 466 re-submissions (39% of the total)
- 21 companies improved enough after re-submission to be granted. However, to discover them, 466 re-submissions had to be reviewed
- ODINE received at least one application from 34 of the countries of the H2020 network. Applicants from UK, Spain, Germany and Italy represented 58.9% of the total.
- Success rates per country did not correlate with number of applications. Spain and Italy had a relatively low success rate, while 4 countries at the end of the tail of the number of applications distribution had high success rate (Israel 2 out of 7, Estonia 1 out of 3, Latvia 1 out of 4 and Switzerland 1 out of 11).
- Number of applicants and grants per country seems to correlate with the Open Data Maturity level of the country (more mature, more applications and grants). There are two exceptions: Italy and Germany have low Open Data Maturity and produced significantly more applicants than countries in their same category
- A significant majority of applicants identified themselves in the "Information and Communication" economic activity class. Applicants that identified themselves in the "Real Estate Activities" economic activity class had a high success rate compared to others.

- The ODINE team handled 414 e-mail enquiries about the evaluation process.
- A qualitative analysis of a survey of 15 external evaluators that reviewed applications for ODINE revealed they praised the structured process of the call, while suggesting improvements on the questions to ask in the template and their relative weight in the evaluation.

ODINE was a program tailored at funding applications of open data to a broad scope of business sectors, in companies at different levels of maturity, which was challenging for the operation of both evaluation and incubation. Future programs might benefit from reducing their scope or the projected number of applicants in favour of slightly longer evaluation cycles and the concourse of sector experts instead of broad open data/ business/ technology evaluators.

1. Introduction

The Open Data Incubator for Europe (ODINE) is an H2020 project aiming at establishing a EU-wide, industry-focused network of open data start-ups and SMEs around Europe. ODINE incubates SMEs by providing them full technical and process support: inception of the idea, data commoditization, networking, and connection with venture capital. ODINE's ultimate objective is to contribute to the establishment of a new industry implementing value-added services on top of open data.

A central part of the project is the process of selection of SMEs to be incubated by the program, dubbed the "Open Call". To succeed in bringing on board the most promising ideas and the best SMEs, ODINE had to overcome three challenges. First, executing a rolling process of 8 successive rounds in the most inclusive way possible with limited resources. Second, run most of the process virtually, that is, without any in-person interview with applicants. Third, ensuring a consistent evaluation process in an unbiased way to promote a competitive application round.

In the first version of this document, we fully described the process of the call from the perspective of each of the stakeholders: applicants, ODINE team, and external evaluators, and reported general statistics about the number, origin and sector of the applicants from rounds 1 to 5. In this updated version we report:
- Statistics for all rounds. We analyse how the number of received applications evolved on time, the geographic coverage
- Statistics about the support provided to applicants during the project
- A qualitative analysis of feedback provided by the external evaluators through a survey.
- Lessons learned and recommendations

2. Summary of the Competitive Call Process

The call is an open innovation mechanism meant to be an instrument to support open data-driven entrepreneurship in Europe. The competitive call covers the first three stages: definition, idea solicitation and idea selection, while incubation covers mentoring and business development.

The call is a rolling process comprised of 8 rounds of two months duration each. It is governed by the Guide for Applicants -"the guide"- a document detailing all the rules that companies need to follow to submit an application. This includes the eligibility criteria, the

proposal template and the evaluation criteria. Additionally, the ODINE team prepared tutorials on the use of the submission platform for applicants and conducted one webinar about the application process[1]

Each round is comprised by 5 phases: 1) Submission reception 2) Eligibility check 3) Review 4) Interview and final selection and 5) Negotiation. The first three phases are run through a dedicated submission platform, phase 4 is done using videoconference software (Google Hangouts), and the last phase is managed using Google Drive and e-mail communication.

A detailed description of the call process was given in version 1 of this deliverable. For the sake of self-containment, we provide a summary below:

For Applicants: The entry point to the application process was the ODINE website, where all the documentation and the call calendar was available. Following rules of the European Commission, to be eligible, applicants had to be established in any country of the H2020 network. To apply, two documents had to be produced. First, a declaration of honour confirming that the applicant was not in bankrupt and has no conflict of interest. Second, an application following a proposal template comprised by three sections covering the three main criteria that the consortium deemed critical for success: a description of the Idea, with especial emphasis on how innovative and open-data centred was, its Impact, i.e., describe its potential market, added value and general Impact; and the Team and Budget planned to be committed during the 6-months incubation period.

The evaluation criteria used for assessing applications were included in the documentation, giving applicants the opportunity to pre-screen the fit of their idea to the program. Content hints were also included in the proposal template to help applicants give precise answers. After the review phase, applicants received a document with feedback on their application. If they were rejected, they receive the reasons of why, allowing them to improve their idea for a subsequent round. Re-submissions of the same idea to a subsequent round were allowed up to three times.

Applicants selected for interview had to prepare a 5-minute pitch of their idea to be presented in front of panel comprised of two external evaluators and at least one ODINE representative, followed by a 25-min Q&A session. The final decision of granting was taken after interviewing all short-listed applicants. Those rejected received a second document with feedback on their interview. Those granted proceeded to the negotiation phase.

At negotiation phase, applicants had one month to provide all the information required to assess their financial health and legal status before receiving any funds from the EC. In parallel, applicants negotiated with the ODINE incubation team a set of KPIs and milestones that served to track the progress of the project and the goal-oriented transfer of funds.

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N498yJyuDOw

Payments were done as follows: 30% when the incubation started, 30% at Month 4 (against reaching the agreed milestones) and 40% after the incubation ended (against reaching agreed milestones and after a panel of independent external experts assessed the results of the incubation).

For the ODINE team: The ODINE call was a rolling process of 8 rounds; the anatomy of a single round is depicted in Figure 1. After the reception phase of a round finished, the submission phase of the next round started immediately. In parallel, the rest of the phases were carried out, finishing in time for the next cycle.
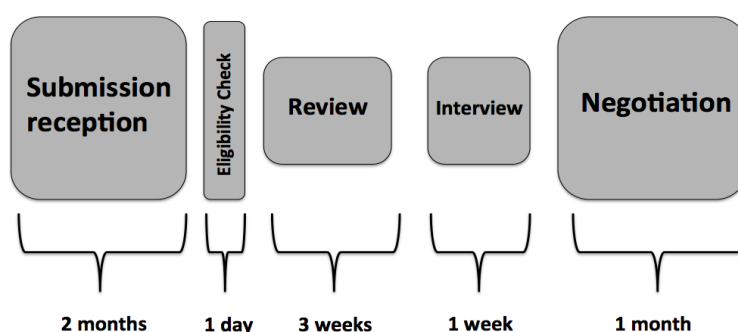
Figure 1. Overview of a round in the call

The role of the ODINE team in each phase was as follows:
1. Check the eligibility of all received application according to the criteria stated in the Guide for Applicants.
2. Assign each application to two external evaluators and make sure that all evaluations were collected in due time. Moderate the comments of the evaluators, guiding them towards providing applicants with constructive feedback. Make the decision of which applications proceeded to interview phases, breaking ties if necessary to ensure that we were within the operational limits of the interview (20-24 interviews)
3. Organise the logistics of the video-calls for the interviews. At least one member of the consortium had to be present to moderate the interview. Make the final selection of the ideas granted to join the program
4. All administrative procedure for signing the sub-grantee agreement, including the agreement on KPIs and milestones to be achieved during the incubation period.

For External Evaluators: Each external evaluator declared before each round the number of applications that he was willing to review for that period. Each evaluator received 75€ per hour of work, considering the review of each application a 30min effort. They had 3 weeks to complete all their reviews before handing over to the ODINE team for shortlisting the applicants for interview.

The review consisted in a score sheet for each of the main criteria we set for evaluation (Idea, Impact, Team & Budget). The full version is included in this document's Annex 1. Criteria were evaluated in a scale of 4 points: (1) Poor, (2) Average, (3) Good and (4) Excellent. In addition, evaluators had to assign an overall evaluation in a 3-point scale and declare if they considered the application should be invited to interview (Yes, maybe, or No). To help reflect about the overall quality of the batch of applications that were assigned, we asked evaluators to list the, in their opinion, best 3 applications they received.

During the lifetime of the project, we worked with 21 external evaluators. 5 of them only did it for the first round, and 2 only for the 8th round. From the remaining 14, 10 worked for 5 rounds or more and 4 for 2 to 4 rounds. The latter category is comprised by two evaluators that had to withdraw from later rounds due to other commitments, and their two replacements. From 9 to 11 evaluators worked in each round, except for the last one, where the extra applications received prompted us to hire 2 more.

3. Update of Open Call statistics

In the previous version of this summary, we reported several statistics of the call up to the 5th round. In this version, we update them to account for all 8 rounds and provide insight about their meaning for measuring the success of the call and possible improvements for future EU programs based on this particular flavour of open innovation.
We focus our analysis in four aspects:
1. Breakdown per outcome of the evaluation process.
2. Evolution of number of applications and re-submissions. Was our re-submission policy justified? How did it work out?
3. Geographic coverage of applicants. Which countries applied the most? Which ones were the most successful? Did we manage to get applicants from the entire H2020 network?
4. Economic activity of applicants. Were there sectors more interested in applying to ODINE? Which ones were more successful?

3.1 Analysis per evaluation outcome

ODINE received 1173 applications from 707 companies (466 re-submissions from 278 companies), largely surpassing its 500 applicants target. Table 1 shows the breakdown of applications by evaluation outcome. 759 applications were reviewed by external evaluators, from which 157 were interviewed, 57 of them being granted. 21% of the applications were declared ineligible, in most of the cases, this was due to applicants not following the format

rules stated in the guide for applicants, either by surpassing the page-limit or by modifying the margins of the template to artificially win more space.

Outcome	Count
Ineligible	257 (21%)
Rejected without interview	759 (64.7%)
Rejected after interview	100 (8.5%)
Granted	57 (4.8%)
Total	1173

Table 1: Breakdown of applications by stage achieved

Figure 1 shows the number of resubmissions superposed on the total number of applications in a per-round basis. The 1st round received 68 applications, while from rounds 2 to 7, the total number kept relatively stable around 150 applications, but with a steady growth in the number of re-submissions. Note that in the 7th round the number of re-submissions was higher than the number of new applicants. We believe that, as the re-submission effort was relatively low due to the simple application process, many companies felt encouraged to reapply several times. 278 companies submitted more than once, and 133 of them did it twice or more.
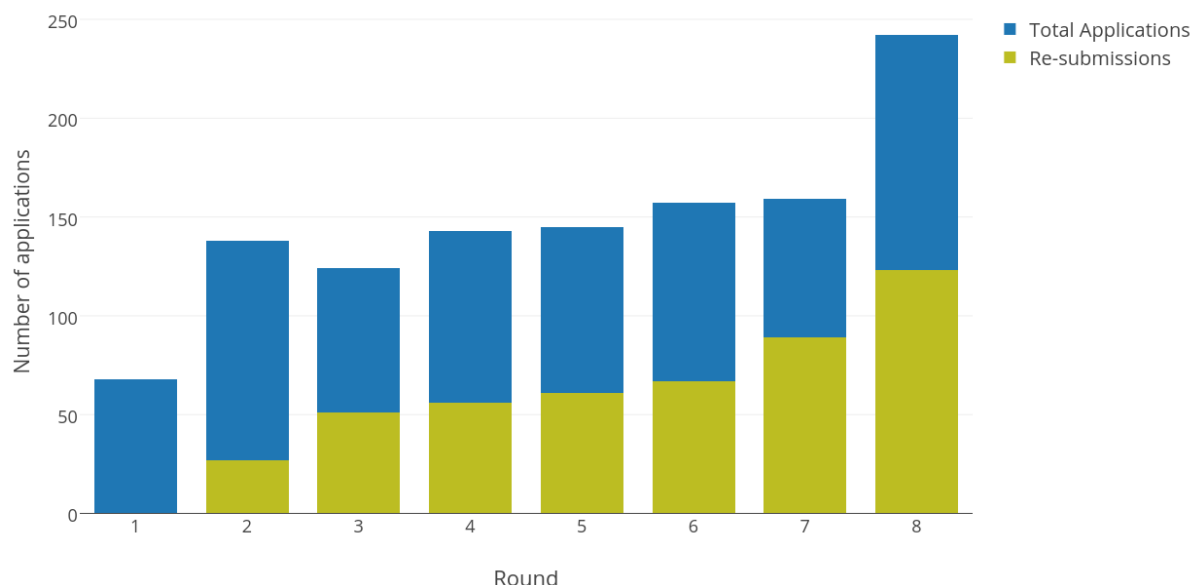
Figure 1: Applications and re-submissions across evaluation rounds

The 8th round saw a large spike in the number of applications: more than 50% more than the average of rounds 2-7. A possible reason for this peak in the last round is that many young start-ups, waited for their idea to be as mature as possible before applying to the programme. From an operative point of view, the peak in the 8th round surpassed our planned per-round capacity (200 applications), forcing us to add 2 additional reviewers that did not participate in previous rounds.

To analyse how the re-submission policy worked out and provide quantitative insight on how companies used the provided feedback, we counted how many of the 278 re-submitting companies achieved a further stage of the process after a re-submission, and how many did not make any progress. First, we counted how many re-submitters did not make any progress from the "ineligible" and "rejected without interview" stages. Then, from those re-submitters that were shortlisted for interview in any of their attempts, we counted those that were not granted in any further attempt and those that were not shortlisted for interview in a further attempt (that is, those that did not improve their application); Then, we counted those that had a previous rejection without interview or ineligibility and those that were granted (indicating they improved their application after feedback). We also counted separately the corner cases where companies improved to be interviewed, were not granted, and in a further attempt were declared ineligible or rejected without interview. Table 2 shows the results:

Outcome Change	#Companies
Did not improve from "Ineligible" or "rejected without interview"	200
Worsened after interview	30
Did not improve from interview phase	3
Improved to interview but then worsened	11
Improved to interview but not granted	13
Improved to granted	**21**
Total re-submitters	278

Table 2: Evaluation improvement of companies that re-submitted

More than 70% of the companies did not improve enough to the interview phase or were not shortlisted to interview after a previous submission where they were. However, we highlight the fact that 21 re-submitters improved enough to be granted, that is, 36% of the 57 granted companies. Despite the additional evaluation effort required and the fact that many submissions did not improve enough or at all, the possibility of re-submission allowed a significant amount of worth-to-fund ideas to be refined that could have been lost without it.

3.2 Geographical coverage

For analysing geographical coverage, we computed a histogram of the number of applications per country, distinguishing companies (in blue) and re-submissions (in green), ordered decreasingly by total applications (Figure 2). The countries with more applications were UK, Spain, Germany and Italy, with over 100 each. The sum of the applications from these 4 countries represented 58.1% of the total. If the number of applicants is considered instead, there is almost no variation (58.9%). All countries appear to have a similar rate of re-submission except for Austria and Sweden (few applicants resubmitting many times) and Slovenia (many "1-shot" applicants). In terms of spread, we received at least one application from 33 of the 41 members of the H2020 network.
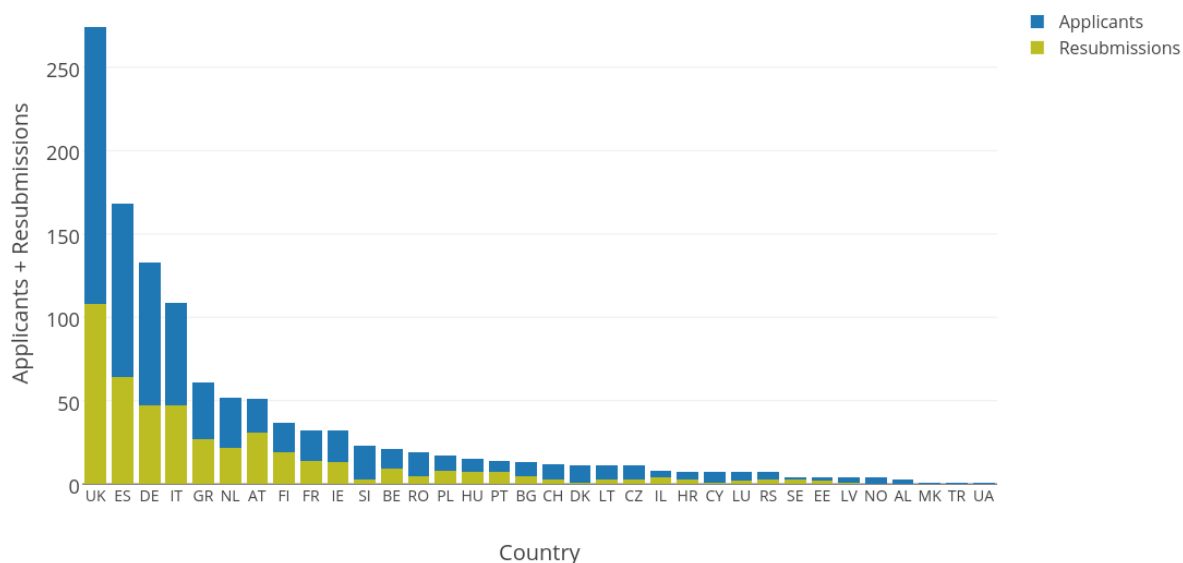
Figure 2: Histogram of applications per country as applicants + resubmissions

One factor possibly influencing the higher number of applications from UK, Spain and Germany is that ODINE consortium members are based in those countries, as such; dissemination through their networks was naturally larger in those countries. This trend was already recognized in the first half of the call; therefore, we focused our dissemination efforts in countries we considered underrepresented according to our knowledge of their open data and entrepreneurship potential, including focused advertising in Czech Republic, Sweden and Poland. To evaluate the effectiveness of our approach to diversify our pool of applicants, we compared the countries of applicants from rounds 1 to 5 versus rounds 6 to 8 (when we started implementing our dissemination changes), filtering out the 4 top countries (UK, Germany, Spain, Italy). Figure 3 shows the results:
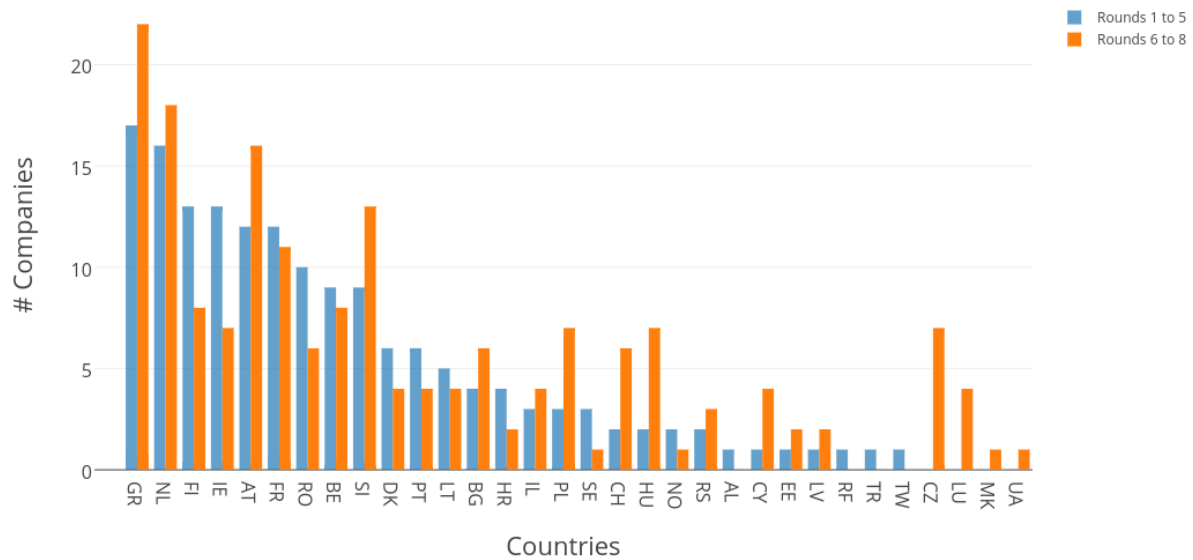
Figure 3: Comparison of number of applicants per country before and after re-focusing dissemination.

The focused campaign was not very successful in Sweden (only 1 new applicant), but it was successful in attracting new applicants from Poland and Czech Republic. Other countries that significantly increased their number of applicants during the second half of the call were Hungary, Switzerland, Cyprus and Luxembourg.

The next question we asked was: is there an association between the per-country number of applications and the per-country number of granted companies? We plotted in Figure 4 a per country histogram of granted applications, with the x-axis following a decreasing order of applications. If the shape of the histogram is similar to the one in Figure 2 that would mean that the success rates of each country are similar. However, Spain, Italy and Greece had a lower success rate than expected, while 4 countries at the end of the tail (Switzerland, Israel, Latvia and Estonia) had high success despite having only few applications.
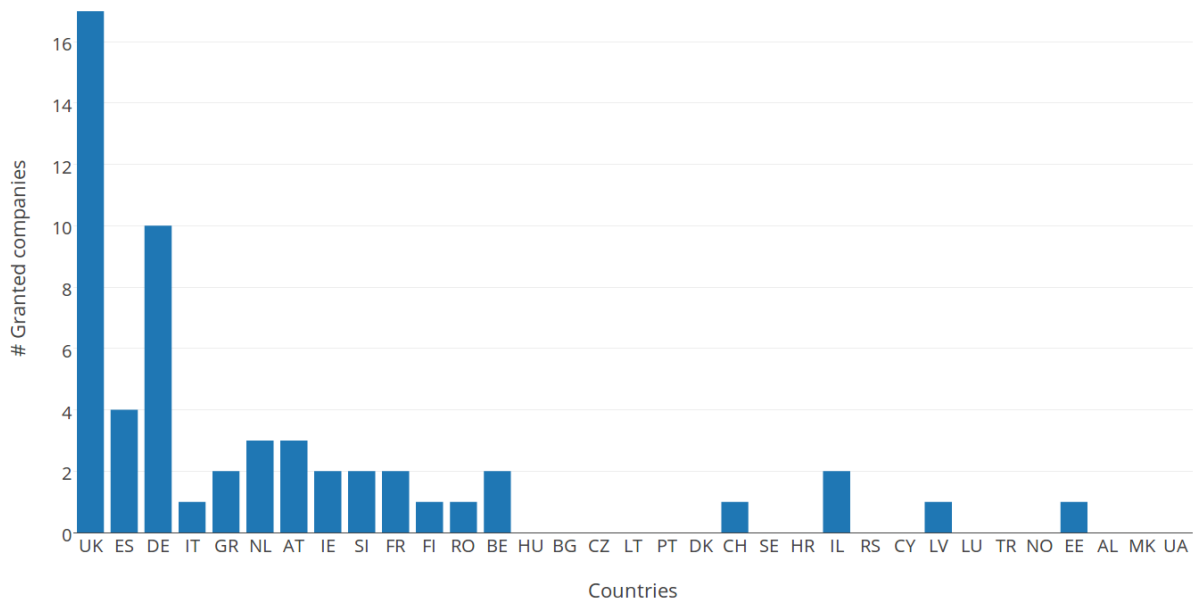
Figure 4: Number of granted applications per country

In its independent report about ODINE, International Data Corporation (IDC) asks the question *did countries with a strong Open Data market generate more business ideas applying to ODINE*? To answer it, they compared the national provenance of granted companies with the 2016 Open Data Maturity benchmark of EU Member States, developed by Capgemini consulting on behalf of the European Commission[2]. The benchmark classifiers EU28+ countries in 4 categories: *Beginners*, in the early stages of their open data journey; *Followers*, successfully developed a basic open data policy and have brought in more advanced features on their portal; *Fast Trackers*, having either a policy or a portal that is substantially developed; *Trend Setters*, have implemented an advanced open data policy with extensive portal features and national coordination mechanisms across domains. IDC found that most granted companies (34) come from *Trend Setter* countries. From the rest, it highlighted the case of Germany as a *Follower* that had many granted companies. We applied the same methodology, but taking also in account the number of applicants per country. Figure 5 shows, for each country considered in the Open Data Maturity benchmark, the number of companies that applied to ODINE (left, in blue), and the number of companies granted by ODINE (right, in orange). For a better visualization of results, we capped the y-axis to 40 applicants, adding on top of the bar corresponding to countries that surpassed that threshold. We highlight the following observations:

1. Consistently with the analysis made by IDC, *Trend Setters* applied more and were more granted than the other clusters. The only country in this category that did not get a granted company was Bulgaria, which also had fewer applicants than the rest.

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[2] https://www.capgemini-consulting.com/resource-file-access/resource/pdf/open_data_maturity_in_europe_2016_final_v1.0_0.pdf

2. Spain had a high number of applicants but a low success rate. The low success rate is surprising, given its Open Data Maturity score (#1). We hypothesize that this might be due to issues on the business side of the ideas.
3. *Fast Trackers* had fewer applications than *Followers*. We believe that this is due to the size of the economies in this category being smaller than the *Followers* one.
4. When considering number of applicants, Italy emerges as an outlier in the *Followers* category. However, its success rate is much lower than the other outlier, Germany.
5. If we remove the outliers from the *Followers* category, there seems to be a much clearer association between the studied variables.
6. As noted in the IDC report, the *Beginner* Latvia appears both as applicant and granted.
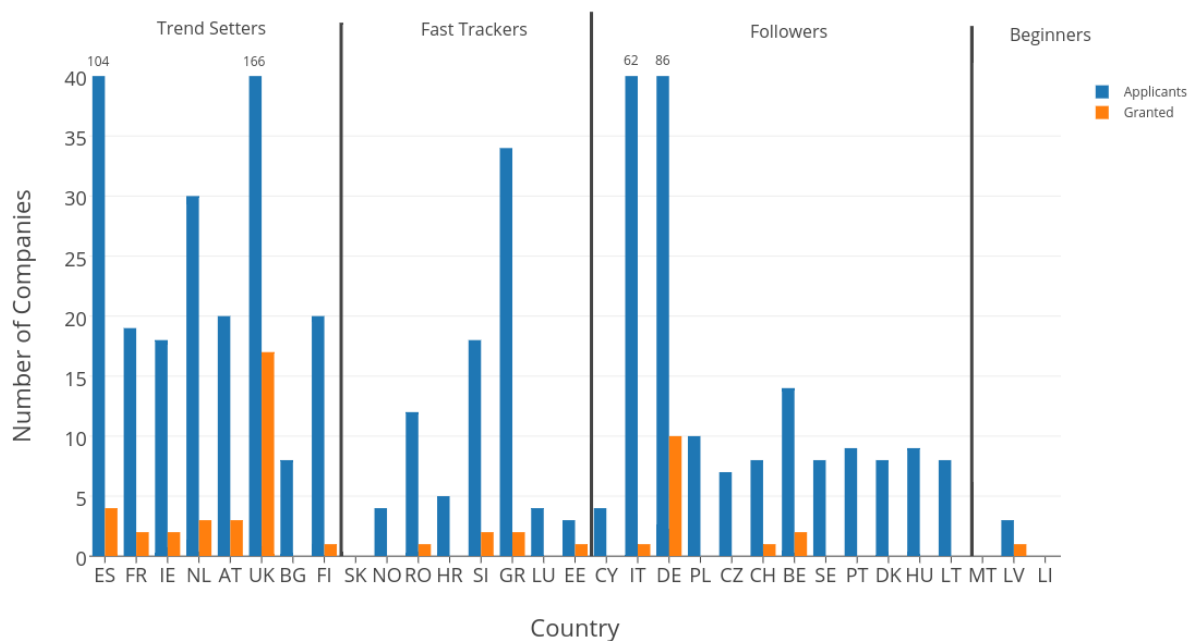

Figure 5: Comparison of number of applicants and grantees with respect to Open Data Maturity score clusters. Note that the Open Data Maturity benchmark applies only to EU28+ countries

3.3 Economic activity

Starting from round 4, we asked applicants to which top class of economic activity of the European Community Statistical Classification they placed themselves. Our intention was to identify the sectors producing more open data business ideas, and which were the most successful, measured as the most granted ones.

From the 539 companies that applied in rounds 4-8, we discarded 42 that declared different classes in re-applications and counted the declared economic activities of the remaining

497. Figure 6 shows the results. 61.9% of the companies classified themselves as *Information and Communication*, that includes notably the subclass *Computer Programming and Consultancy*, and 16.2% as *Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities*, uncovering that a significant majority of ODINE applicants considered themselves inherently technical. The tail of the distribution is rather varied, with *Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing*, and *Education* as the most represented activities.

To provide insight on the success rate of companies per sector, we counted the declared economic activities of companies granted in rounds 4 to 8. Results are shown in Figure 7. Unsurprisingly, granted companies come mostly from the top-2 classes, however, we highlight the very high success rate of companies identifying themselves into the *Real Estate Activities* category.
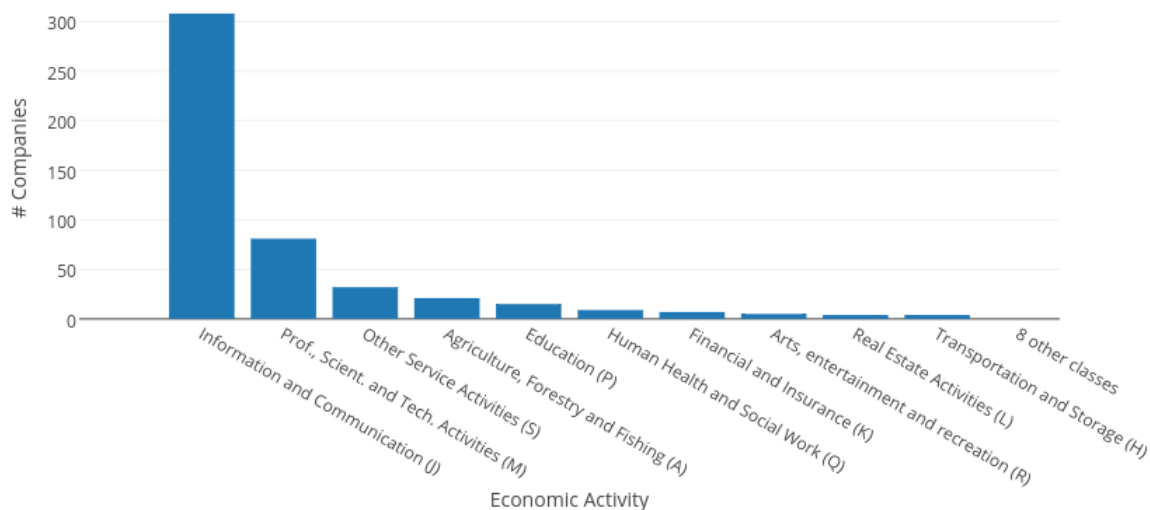

Figure 6: Number of applicants per self-assessed economic activity (rounds 4-8)
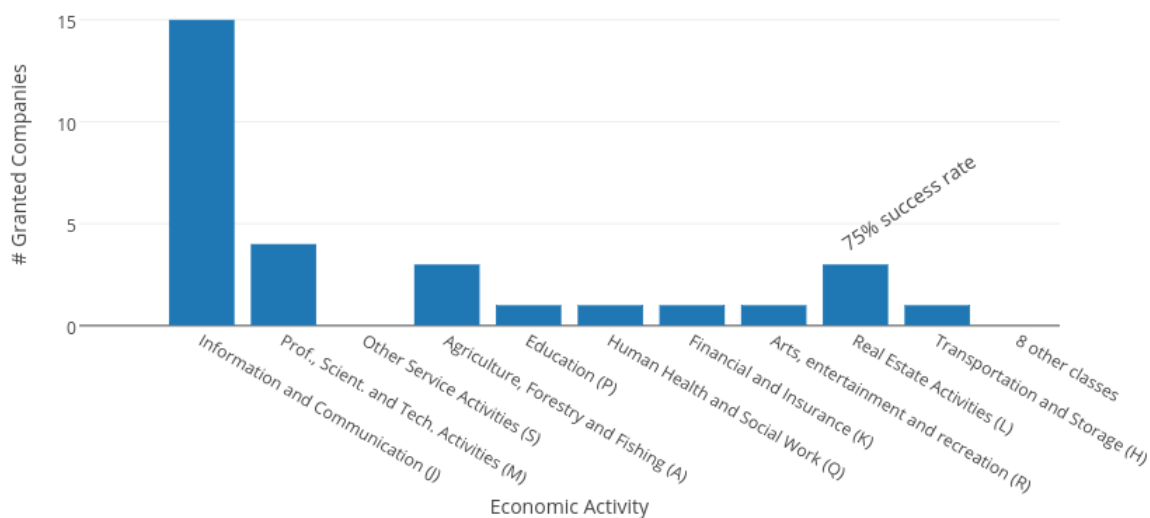
Figure 7: Number of granted applicants per self-assessed economic activity (rounds 4-8)

4. Hot line and support to applicants

Support to applicants is handled through the mailing list call@opendataincubator.eu. We aim at answering pre-application enquiries (eligibility, format, required documents, general clarifications on the Guide for Applicants, questions about datasets) and requests for clarification of the evaluation results (after-application). Due to the additional resources required, we did not provide any pre-application check, and we did not engage in any discussion about the appropriateness of an idea, beyond its eligibility.

Since the start of the project until 01/04/16 we handled 218 questions[3], broken down as follows:
- 146 general questions before application (format, eligibility, dates, etc.)
- 36 questions for support after application (not receiving confirmation message, clarification of dates, request for resending feedback, request for withdrawal)
- 26 requests for clarification about evaluation (disagreement with evaluators, feedback clarification)

From 01/04/16 to 05/05/17 we handled 196 questions (for a total of 414 questions handled), broken down as follows:

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[3] Measured as number of conversations (threads) in the mailing list.

- 143 general questions before application (format, eligibility, dates, clarification of guide for applicants, etc.). After the end of the call, this included questions about if the project ended and if further calls were going to be considered.
- 21 questions for support after application (not receiving confirmation message, clarification of dates, request for resending feedback, request for withdrawal)
- 32 requests for clarification about evaluation (disagreement with evaluators, feedback clarification)

The team at the University of Southampton (2 people until the end of the submission phase of the 8th round, then 1) have been enough to handle most of the queries in a timely manner (1 working day), except in certain cases that require further investigation, e.g., if a certain dataset can be considered as open or eligibility questions that are specific to a certain country.

5. Feedback from Evaluators

After the end of the evaluation of the 8th round, we surveyed evaluators about their general impressions about the overall development of ODINE and how they think it could have been better or improved. This was in addition to the conference calls after each round to discuss minor improvements that could be implemented from one round to the other.
In this document, we focus on a qualitative analysis of their answers about the evaluation process, in response to the following two questions of the survey[4]:
1. What did you particularly like / consider appropriate of ODINE's evaluation process?
2. What did you particularly dislike (or what would you improve) of ODINE's evaluation process?

Fifteen evaluators answered the survey. Eight of them worked in five or more rounds, five in two to four rounds and two in only one round.

Regarding the positive aspects of the evaluation, several evaluators praised the process structured approach and the opportunity of giving feedback to applicants. Some impressions received on the subject were:
- "*I liked the speed of the process and the shortness of applications. Overall I really enjoyed being part of this, saw this as a great opportunity for start-ups and think that overall the process was exemplary.*" (5-or-more evaluator)
- "*I liked the well rounded formal process, which helped a lot to evaluate.*" (1-round evaluator)
- "*The three steps evaluation is a very good idea to filter the best applications.*" (5-or-more evaluator)

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[4] The analysis of the rest of the survey, concerning how they saw the business models of the applicants is treated in Deliverable 6.3

- "*It was a very thorough process, assuring maximum feedback to participants*" (2-to-4 rounds evaluator)
- "*The same proposal passed through a number of people before being selected, which significantly reduced the bias we all have.*" (5-or-more evaluator)
- An evaluator (2-to-4 rounds) that also participated as a reviewer in the final presentation of one cohort commented: "*It's a fairly well structured, multi-stage process. I participated in sieving out early stage applicants as well as in final examination rounds for ODINE participants. The delta between the quality of applications and the selected candidates in their final exam round was quite impressive*".

Two evaluators mentioned the opportunity of re-submitting as positive. However, one of them also listed as an opportunity for improvement that "*Resubmission applications should provide a letter explaining what has been addressed*". A third evaluator, that did not explicitly mentioned re-submission as a positive aspect, commented " *(evaluation) is a quite exhausting process; especially when companies apply multiple times in a row, without really improving their approach. But, to be honest: that's probably really hard to prevent*". A fourth evaluator suggested to "*maybe put the bar higher*" for re-submissions.
A possible action for future projects is to add an explicit enforcement on when an application shouldn't re-apply, or limiting the number

Regarding opportunities for improvement, most comments concerned the proposal template and the evaluation form:
- "*The questions were good but should be improved upon in a next phase based on the experiences*" (sic) (2-to-4 rounds evaluator)
- "*There was a mismatch between the proposal templates and the review templates, which was confusing for me as a reviewer*" (5-or-more rounds evaluator)
- "*Rigid standard templates that didn't adapt to the broad spectrum of SME activity. Too much weight was given to the ability of SMEs to fit into the template rather than understanding what the proposition was about...Templates favoured organisations who where process savvy.*" (5-or-more rounds evaluator)

Along the same lines, two evaluators expressed opposite views about the appropriate weight of the business side of the proposal in the evaluation:

- "*More focus / weight on business model and market analysis.*" (5-or-more rounds evaluator)
- "*Too big focus on the business side, which is tough to evaluate and also mostly made up by the SMEs. We are basically forcing them to make up some numbers*" (1-round evaluator)

Two evaluators would have liked to have a wider overall view of both the evaluation process and the overall project:

- "*We didn't know who was called for an interview. At the same time we never knew what feedback did the SMEs received in many cases, nor when results were communicated to them*" (5-or-more rounds evaluator). In this particular matter, ODINE decided to restrict the identities and evaluations of the companies to the directly concerned evaluators for privacy reasons. Giving a wider snapshot of the evaluation process (for example, for the final shortlist) is an interesting possibility, but it would have required more time and investment.
- "*I often felt hampered by my lack of knowledge about the overall ODINE project... I would have loved to better tailor my reviews to the requirements of ODINE*" (5-or-more rounds evaluator). Here we take the point that our instructions to evaluators were mostly focused on how to interpret the evaluation form.

One evaluator considered "*The time allocated per review (30 minutes) was not enough, it usually took me a lot longer*". Although no other evaluator pointed it out in the survey, we knew from private communication that the general feeling was that 30min should suffice to flag a bad application, but usually, more than that was required to confirm a good impression. Another evaluator considered that the broad range of sectors and business propositions made assessment very hard, suggesting "*Future programmes need to be more adaptive to the types of business that are applying. Would be better if there was more of a portfolio based approach where sectors were identified and these were the topics of each call/round. Would enable assessors to be drawn from specific rather than broad expertise.*"

6. Lessons learned and recommendations

From the experience of the second half of the Open Call, we confirmed all the operational lessons learned and recommendations given in the first version of this document, summarized as:

1. We consider the use of a conference-like workflow with single-blind paper review followed by an interview phase as successful.
2. A proposal template eases the evaluation process, as it leads applicants to keep it short and to the point. However, some evaluators considered somewhat constraining. We believe this sparks a discussion about the questions that are asked and their relative weight.
3. Implement the proposal template as a web form, instead of a pdf, (or alternatively, provide applicants with a tool that makes reducing eligibility check time and smoothing the process of collecting data and generating statistics.

4. Keep the evaluators stable through the call.
5. Avoid "maybes in Yes/No criteria, to precipitate a meaningful decision rather than using the "maybe" as a stopgap measure.

On a more general note, ODINE was tailored towards the very broad theme of using Open Data in any business or sector, representing a challenge for evaluation, as often our team of evaluators did not have the required knowledge on specific sectors or technologies to correctly assess a proposal in the relatively short time allocated. Downstream, the variety of sectors also represented a challenge for the incubation team (cf. D3.3 and D6.3). In a nutshell, a very broad program will attract many applications that, ideally, need to be assessed by a large and varied pool of evaluators. More applications and more evaluators implies either a higher cost, or a limited time for evaluating applications. ODINE chose to limit the time for evaluation and the evaluator's pool in favour of a broader scope. An alternative that might be considered by future programs is to reduce the scope to selected sectors or datasets, naturally reducing the number of applications and allowing the concourse of experts in the sector. A starting point for deciding sectors could stem from the analysis of how many companies of each sector applied and were successful in section 3.3.

If a broad scope is considered an important goal, an alternative is to reduce the number of rounds. ODINE received applications from more than 700 SMEs, achieving its 500 target as early as round 6. Having 5 or 6 rounds instead of 8 makes it possible to have longer evaluation cycles, allowing for example; to arrange sector-specific evaluators for applications that have passed a first check. A longer evaluation cycle also means that more interviews can be conducted. In ODINE, we had to set an operational limit of 24 interviews per round.

Annex 1 - Proposal Template

Below is the final version of the proposal template. It evolved after each round in response to analysis of the applications by the ODINE team and feedback from the external evaluators. The template includes annotation (added from Round 6) to help applicants.

Proposal template

ODINE Open Data Incubator Europe

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General guidelines

We ask applicants to use the template below. It contains all the questions that you need to answer, inline with the evaluation criteria (Annex 7 of the Guide for Applicants). The following rules must be respected:

1. The template cannot be changed. The cell structure must be kept as it is. Do not alter the width of the cells.
2. The proposal must have a **maximum length of 4 pages**.
3. All questions **must** be answered.
4. Font size of at least **11pt for text and at least 9pt for budget and forecast tables, and for any other extra table or chart that you would like to add.**
5. Annexes are **not** allowed. If you feel an extra document is necessary (e.g. a letter from a potential client), state that you have it while answering the question, if evaluators judge it relevant, we will contact you to provide it.
6. Hyperlinks to external documents that answer a question are **not** allowed. Hyperlinks to your website, competitor's' websites or previous work you have carried out, are allowed.
7. Budget **must** be for the 6 months incubation period and for an amount less or equal to €100 000.
8. Visual elements like charts, tables and screenshots are allowed, however, they must comply with the font size restriction (use your common sense).

Proposals not respecting any of the above rules will be declared non-eligible and discarded without further evaluation.

Please be as concise as possible in your application. The clarity of your communication will be a critical factor in the initial assessment. Please **remove** the title page and this guide and submit only the actual proposal (**starting at page 3 in this template with 'Proposal title'**).

When you are finished, generate a PDF file and upload it to the Easychair submission platform. Make sure you have answered all questions and are within the content limit.

Further information:
- The main document containing all the relevant information to apply is the guide for applicants. This document is a copy of Annex 5 in the Guide.
- Consult our frequently asked questions here.
- A guide for better writing: The Day You Became A Better Writer

Proposal title

1. Idea

1.1 Strength and novelty of the idea

*Describe the core idea of your application in **one sentence**.*	*Clearly articulate your business proposal*
How are you different from your competitors?	*Do you know who your competitors are? What is innovative in your proposal that will make you able to win a share of the market?*
Why are you using and/or producing open data?	*Here you must make clear why Open Data is at the core of your business proposal. Remember that ODINE is interested in funding sustainable ventures centered in Open Data, to prove the point that Open Data can generate commercial/industrial value*

1.2 Dataset description and use

What data sets (open and proprietary) will you use and how?	*You can substitute for a table if makes sense. Provide links for the datasets that are available (you can use footnotes if you want), open or not. Part of the purpose of this question is to check that you know what "open" means and what innovative mash-ups wit closed data you are providing.*
Give an example of how open data will be used.	*With the example, you are illustrating why you are using open data and strengthening the case that your proposal has truly Open Data at its core.*
What risks/challenges in using open data in the context of your product/service you envision?	*Latency? Quality? Completeness? Integration difficulties? Show us that you have thought about that justify if you don't see any risk.*

1.3 Open by default

Give an example of how you are contributing to the open data ecosystem.	*Do you give back something to the open data community? Do you publish cleansed versions of the open data you take? Derived versions? How the community could use your service?*
Do you rely on personal data?, if so, how do you deal with it?	*We expect here to see how you protect the privacy of your users' personal data.*

2. Impact

2.1 Value proposition and potential scale

What is the problem you solve? Who are your users? How do you solve it?	*In the previous section, you told us why open data is central, here we want to know about the business side, we expect the story of an user, and how you fit in.*
How will you make money? What are your revenue model and monetisation strategy?	*Here you have a nice reference explaining the difference between revenue model and monetisation. https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-difference-between-a-revenue-model-and-a-monetization-model*
What is the market segment and size you are addressing?	*Show us that you know your market, and that the share you are aiming at is large enough for you to be sustainable. Remember, the EU does not want a share of your company, it wants you to grow so you can contribute to economic growth and create employment.*

2.2 Market opportunity and timing

Why is now a good time? Give an example.	*For already established markets, convince us that it is not saturated and you can make a difference.* *For new markets, convince us that is it not too early for adoption and that you will have enough customers.*
How many users or customers do you already have?	*It can be zero, we are happy to consider ventures at early stages, we leverage with the state of the market and the innovativeness of the idea to evaluate if it makes sense to fund you.*

2.3 What impact will your project have

What impact will your solution have?	*You previously explained us why is Open Data and how a client is benefit from your solution, here we want to know about the general impact, how much money does your product/service save to your customer, your sector and maybe society as a whole? How much time is saved? Are there environmental or social benefits?*
Give a concrete example (where appropriate) of the economic, environmental and/or social impact of your idea.	*Give a concrete example of the what the impact of your idea is for the applicable areas*

3. Team and budget

3.1 Knowledge and skills of the team

List the core members of your team What are their skills?	*We refer to the team that will work in the project. Remember we look for complementary skills in the core team, or at least, willingness to enroll the missing pieces with ODINE funding. Avoid LinkedIn links, evaluators may fear to reveal their identity. List them in bullet points with name, role and relevant experience e.g. John, CTO, 10 yrs experience in backend dev, Ruby, Python, co-founded 1 startup and led a team of 5 developers.*
How many members are working full/part time on the project?	*How many full time? How many part time?*
Why should we back your team?	*Most SMEs fail because they have not the right team in place. What makes your team outstanding and the best mix of people to develop your idea and have a successful business?*

3.2 Capacity to realise the idea

How much short-term funding do you need?	*This may not be the same amount that you ask ODINE. Think one-year ahead.*
What is your current monthly cash burn rate?	*Please indicate your burn rate. If you are submitting a proposal for a side project and not your core business, please indicate the burn-rate for the project (or expected if you haven't started working on it yet), together with the company's burn-rate.*
What is your time-to-market? What is the customer acquisition cost (actual or predicted)?	
Indicate other sources of funding and how likely you are to secure them.	*What other investments (grant, equity) you are looking for? This gives us a glance if you will survive after ODINE's incubation ends.*

Revenue forecasts	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Revenues (€)				
Headcount (#)				

Year 0 = Last Year | Revenue, profits and headcount can be zero.

Please provide a brief justification (1 paragraph) for your revenue forecast (e.g. customers, pricing, and market size).

3.3 Budget for the incubation period (6 months)

Give a breakdown of how you will use ODINE's funding for personnel, subcontracting, travel, equipment, and other goods and services. Respect the following rules. Your application might be declared non-eligible if you fail to do so:

1. *Describe costs only for ODINE's incubation period: 6 months and for a maximum of €100 000.*
2. *Remember that a flat overhead rate of 25% is applied to costs (except subcontracting)*
3. *Remember that due to European regulation, only 15% of purchased equipment can be reimbursed. Consult the Guide for Applicants for more details on eligible and reimbursed costs.*
4. *You may remove this instruction notice.*

	Cost over 6 months	Overhead (25%)	Total in Euro
Personnel			
Travel			
Equipment	*Put here the 15% to be reimbursed*		
Other goods and services			
Subcontracting		n/a	
		Grand total in Euro	

Please provide a brief explanation of in what you are going to spend the funds (e.g. CEO Salary, subcontract legal advice, travel to XYZ conference, etc.). This can be provided inside the cells or as a separate paragraph. You may delete this notice.

Annex 2 - Review form for evaluators

This is a text version of the web form for reviewing applications available to external evaluators through the submission platform. (*) Indicates mandatory fields.

Overall evaluation (*).

3: Yes

2: Maybe

1: No

Invite to interview (*).

3: Yes

2: Maybe

1: No

Idea

Strength or novelty of the idea (1) (*). Can articulate the core idea in a short phrase or sentence

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Strength or novelty of the idea (2) (*). Demonstrate a clear differentiation with competitors

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Strength or novelty of the idea (3) (*). Set open data at the heart of the business proposition; does not feel like a 'bolt-on'

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Use or provision of open data (1) (*). Explain an open dataset in use or generated by the product

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Use or provision of open data (2) (*). Highlight risks and challenges of the open data use or provision in the context of their product/service

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

"Open by default" (1) (*). Demonstrate 'open by default', eg by seeking feedback on released data, or engaging with suppliers to help improve existing data

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

"Open by default" (2) (*). Address personal data and explain how potential issues are managed

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Idea (comments) (*). A brief note justifying your assessment

Free text field.

Impact

Value proposition and potential scale (1) (*). Explain business model in clear and concise terms eg distinguish between commercial and open value proposition

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Value proposition and potential scale (2) (*). Revenue stream is easily scalable egg not relying on team size

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Market opportunity and timing (1) (*). Detail a use case / user story / experience journey

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Market opportunity and timing (2) (*). Describe and quantify the potential size of the market/prize

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Triple bottom line impact (1) (*). Demonstrate economic impact such as save cost or improve decision-making etc.

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Triple bottom line impact (2) (*). Demonstrate social impact such as empowering less privileged groups of society or promoting culture etc.

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Triple bottom line impact (3) (*). Demonstrate environmental impact such as reducing carbon emissions or encouraging reuse etc.

4: Excellent

3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Impact (comments) (*). A brief note justifying your assessment

Free Text Field

Team and budget

Knowledge and skills of the team (1) (*). List a team with at least one technical and one non-technical member
4: Excellent
3: Good
2: Average
1: Poor

Knowledge and skills of the team (2) (*). Demonstrate a track record in business skills egg a previous start-up, a team member with sales experience etc.
4: Excellent
3: Good
2: Average
1: Poor

Capacity to realise the idea (1) (*). Quantify current status of the business, e.g. number of users, number of customers, revenue figures etc.
4: Excellent
3: Good
2: Average
1: Poor

Capacity to realise the idea (2) (*). Give an outline of the financial plan for the next 3 years
4: Excellent
3: Good
2: Average
1: Poor

Capacity to realise the idea (3) (*). Indicate other pursued sources of funding and a likelihood of success
4: Excellent
3: Good
2: Average
1: Poor

Appropriateness of the budget to realise the idea (*). Show that salaries and other cost are in line with local market rates
4: Excellent
3: Good

2: Average

1: Poor

Team and budget (comments) (*). A brief note justifying your assessment

Free text field.