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WENET OPEN CALL CALL FOR INDEPENDENT EXPERTS

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1. WENET PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL

Diversity permeates our everyday life and covers many dimensions, such as competence, culture, gender or economics across humans and social relations. Technology has evolved to a point where humans from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences have an unprecedented ability to connect with each other. Yet technology does not in-and-by-itself provide support for developing and maintaining the social relationships that transcend geographical and cultural backgrounds.

WeNet addresses this gap by providing a diversity-aware, machine-mediated paradigm of social relations. The goal is connecting people that can support each other, and the key is leveraging their diversity. The WeNet paradigm includes a family of computational diversity-aware models supporting human interaction. Learning models construct diversity profiles based on people's past behaviour and interactions.

A diversity-aware search builds upon these profiles to connect the "right" people together. To support people's interactions, a diversity alignment mechanism lifts communication barriers to ensure that messages between humans are interpreted correctly, and a diversity-aware incentive mechanism generates incentives to motivate people to support each other. The entire paradigm is developed following an integrated ethics approach. This means taking into consideration ethical guidance from the start of the design process. The WeNet platform provides the technological infrastructure to set out a series of studies that will be carried out within universities worldwide with diverse student populations, and with the final goal of improving students' quality of life inside and outside the academic environment.

Beyond universities, WeNet's innovative paradigm impacts human interactions in general, especially those that may benefit from a collaborative approach (creative industries, medical diagnosis, ...).

2. KEY WENET OPEN CALL DETAILS

The main objective of the WeNet Open Call is to extend the impact of the WeNet project by involving additional institutions, by increasing the diversity in terms of communities of users and data collected, by collecting further data to feed the WeNet Research Infrastructure (RI), by exposing a larger number of individuals and communities to the WeNet vision and tool, by fostering the creation of a community of innovators around the WeNet platform, by collecting feedback from early adopters on the usability, usefulness, and ethical implications of the WeNet platform and RI.

2.1 OPEN CALL TRACKS

The WeNet Open Call is organised around 3 tracks.

Each track targets a different set of objectives, has a different budget and different project duration as described in the table below.



Track	Description	Requirements	Max duration
A (App)	Develop a new use case, a new app and run an experiment (collect data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a new app/use case (i.e., a use case not already developed and tested within the WeNet project) - Use the WeNet platform for app development - the proposed app must use the WeNet platform APIs to provide its functionality to end users - Bring a community of users (indicatively, for Track A, we do expect at least 50 new users to be brought by the applicant) - Run a pilot experiment with said community of users - Collect experimental data, anonymize it and make it available for inclusion in the WeNet research infrastructure under a CC+ licence which includes the right to adapt, remix, distribute the updated content and to impose additional or different terms or conditions to recipients when the data are distributed through the RI. 	6 months
B (Data)	Re-use an existing WeNet app and run an experiment (collect data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reuse an existing WeNet app and - bring a community of users (indicatively at least 200 for quantitative studies and 20-50 for qualitative studies). - Feed anonymized data into the research infrastructure under a CC+ licence which includes the right to adapt, remix, distribute the updated data and to impose additional or different terms or conditions to recipients when the data are distributed through the RI to other community members (students/researchers) to learn more about diversity and for the WeNet team to improve its algorithms. 	6 months
C (Open Track)	This is a free track, where proposals that do not fit Track A or B, but are relevant for the Open Call scope, can be submitted.	The expected results should be relevant to the scope and goals of the WeNet project. No further requirements are foreseen for this track.	4 months



2.2 FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED

This Open Call will provide a total of € 250.000,00 in funding.

Each application can be funded with:

Track	Maximum financial support
Track A – App	up to € 50,000
Track B – Data	up to € 25,000
Track C – Open Track	up to € 50,000

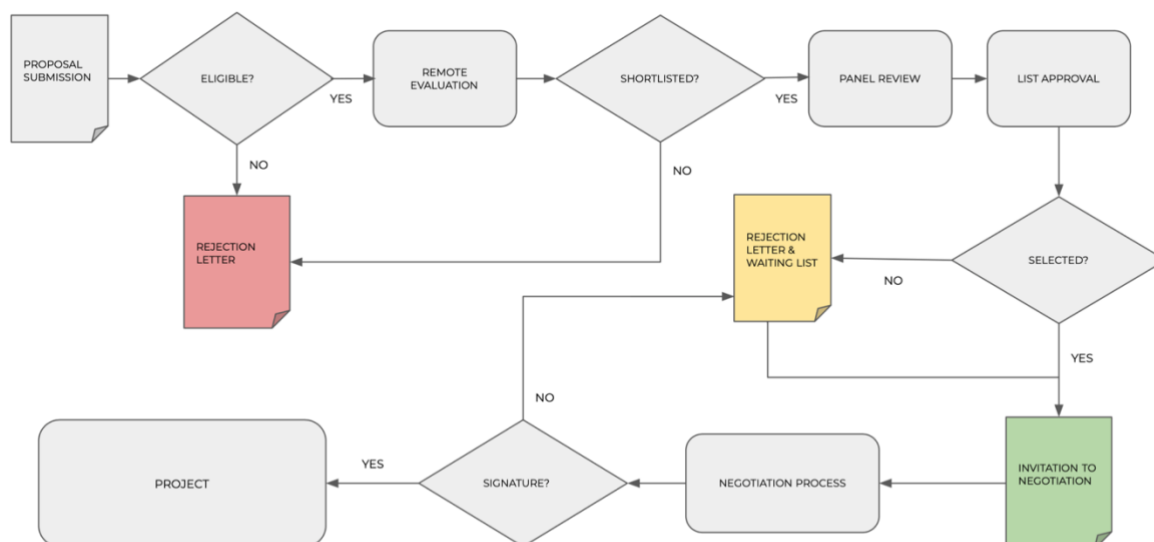
At least five project proposals will be founded within the scope of the WeNet Open Call.

2.3 SCHEDULE

Description	Indicative dates
Call Launch	12 July 2021
Submission Deadline	30 September 2021
End of the evaluation Period	31 December 2021
Signature of Sub-grant Agreement	31 January 2022
Expected project's kick-off	1 February 2022

3. PROPOSAL'S EVALUATION PROCESS

The structure of the evaluation process is represented in the following figure.



To guarantee impartiality and transparency in the selection the proposals will be evaluated by external experts as indicated in Section 4 of the Evaluation Process of the [WeNet Open Call Guide for Applicants](#).

Each eligible proposal will be evaluated/assessed by two Independent Experts.



4. CONDITIONS FOR APPLYING AS INDEPENDENT EXPERTS

The eligibility conditions for applying as Independent Experts are:

- to be an individual
- to be resident in one of the Member States of the European Union, including their overseas departments and outermost regions or in an Associated Countries
- do not be an employee or agent of one of WeNet Consortium Members
- to have no conflict of interest with the companies submitting the proposals. In this regard, the evaluators will sign a declaration of honor before starting the evaluation process.
- experts must be experienced evaluators with expertise and knowledge in the relevant fields.

English is the official language for this Open, hence the experts must be able to effectively communicate and write in English.



5. INDEPENDENT EXPERTS SELECTION'S CRITERIA

The WeNet Consortium will select the external experts based on two criteria, knowledge and competences and previous experience as evaluator. Each criterion will be scored by the WeNet Consortium on a scale from 0 to 5 (half point scores may be given):

0 – The expert fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

1 – Poor. The criterion is inadequately met or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 – Fair. The expert broadly meets the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3 – Good. The expert meets the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

4 – Very good. The expert meets the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5 – Excellent. The expert successfully meets all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

The criteria are defined below:

- **Criterion 1: Knowledge and competences** (Weight 75%) - Pertinence and relevance of the background of the expert. Provable expertise and experience in R&D&I in topics which are relevant to the WeNet open call. Specific knowledge and competences in one or multiple of the following topics: AI, diversity, ethics and privacy, innovation, empirical activities with users. Experience in working in interdisciplinary settings.
- **Criterion 2 Previous experiences as evaluator** (Weight 25%) - Experience in the evaluation of R&D&I initiatives at the national and European level. Experience in the evaluation of Open Call proposals (cascading grants). Specific experience in evaluating proposals on one or multiple of the following topics: AI, diversity, ethics and privacy, innovation, empirical activities with users.

In order to be considered for selection, an expert must achieve a minimum qualifying score of three (3) in both criteria.

In case of a tied score, the EC recommendations regarding gender and regional distribution will be considered.

Once the selection process will be concluded, all the experts will be contacted to be informed whether they have been selected.

6. CONTRACTUAL CONDITIONS

6.1 INDEPENDENT EXPERTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

The selected experts are expected to:

- Sign the Expert contract with U-Hopper srl, the Open Call Manager Partner. The contract will be shared with the Expert once selected.
- Attend the evaluators training webinar (duration 1 hour) organised by the Open Call Manager Partner early November 2021, precise date to be confirmed.
- Immediately inform the Open Call Manager Partner if there is a conflict of interest with the organisation submitting the proposal or any other reason that does not allow him/her to fulfil the obligations in the Expert contract
- Read carefully all existing documentation related to the open call, prior to the start of the evaluation
- Produce an evaluation report for each project evaluated by using the provided templates.
- Assess their assigned proposals in due time: 15 days from the reception of the proposals.

The Expert may be nominated as a member of the Evaluation Panel and be required to participate in the Panel review meetings held during the proposal evaluation process.

6.2 REMUNERATIONS

The Expert is entitled to a fee of €70 per proposal evaluated; the amount is based on the standard EU contract for Experts.

In case of participation in any Panel review Consensus meeting a further payment of €50 is foreseen.

The total number of assigned proposals will vary depending on the total number of proposals received and accepted by the evaluators.

6.3 TIMELINE

It is expected that the contract is signed between Open Call Manager Partner and the Independent Experts by 31st October 2021.

The execution of the evaluations shall not start before the contract has been signed or before the specific date specified in the contract. Work will follow the timetable of the open call schedule, as described above.

6.4 HOW TO APPLY

Expressions of Interest for becoming an independent expert must be notified through opencall@internetofus.eu by 10th October 2021 24:00h (CEST).

Email's subject could be: WeNet Call for Independent Experts_EoI_[candidate's surname]

All candidates are required to send us:

- An updated copy of their CV, in pdf format, highlighting the WeNet Open Call related competences and their experience as evaluators.

6.5 CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

Confidentiality is required for all experts in the performance of tasks following this call for tender, as they might come into contact with confidential information during the course of their work.

Any breach of confidentiality will be treated as professional misconduct and could lead to the termination of the contract.

