

NGI Sargasso

4th Call for evaluators

OPENING: 17/06/2024

CLOSING: 18/07/2024 at 17:00PM Brussels time

Project Website: <https://ngisargasso.eu>

Open Call platform: <https://bit.ly/NGISargasso-evaluatorsOC4>



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1. About NGI Sargasso project

NGI Sargasso focuses on strengthening EU cooperation and strategic partnerships with the USA and Canada in the Next Generation Internet. The project has been organized to support all Internet innovators in the areas of trust and Internet data sovereignty, trusted open search and discovery, and Internet Architecture and Decentralized Technologies. With NGI Sargasso, an international ecosystem will be created with the presence of the USA and Canada in order to promote the values of Europe beyond its borders, such as openness, inclusion, transparency, privacy, cooperation, and data protection. Our mission is to catalyse transatlantic collaboration on the development and experimentation of new ideas, implementation of prototypes, and contribution to standards and open-source communities on technology trends with the potential to reshape tomorrow's Next Generation Internet technologies and services.

2. NGI Sargasso Open Calls

NGI Sargasso aims to revolutionize the Next Generation Internet technologies, services, and standards, and contribute to the evolution of the Internet according to a human-centric approach of the internet commons. For the development of NGI Sargasso, it is crucial that the proposals presented start from close collaboration with entities from the USA and/or Canada.

Through 5 open calls, NGI Sargasso aims **to attract more than 300 applications** (accumulated from the five open calls) and **support up to 96 research initiatives**. To do so, the teams count with **4.8M€ for Financial Support to Third Parties distributed into 5 open calls** for 3 years. The distribution of the budget for each open call is as it follows¹:

TOTAL BUDGET	Open call #1	Open call #2	Open call #3	Open call #4	Open call #5
4.800.000€	800.000€	82.000€	950.000€	1.050.000€	1.175.000€

NGI Sargasso focuses on specific areas of knowledge critical to developing a more **human-centric and sustainable internet**. We believe that the internet should reflect the values and needs of individuals and communities, and that it should be equitable, accessible, and secure for everyone.

To achieve this vision, NGI Sargasso prioritizes the following areas of knowledge:

- ❑ **Trust:** it is focused on improving trust in the online world, by making the internet more secure and protecting users' privacy.
- ❑ **Data sovereignty:** NGI is working towards giving users control over their personal data and ensuring that it is stored and processed in a secure manner.

¹ The budget for each selected project will be allocated based on the length of the projects selected on each of the open calls.



- ❑ **Digital identity:** to create a digital identity framework that is trustworthy, secure, and interoperable, to make it easier for people to interact with the internet.
- ❑ **Internet architecture and renovation:** to renovate the existing internet architecture to make it more efficient, secure, and scalable, while also preserving existing investments and assets.
- ❑ **Decentralised technologies:** the use of decentralised technologies such as blockchain, to improve the security and privacy of the internet.
- ❑ **Interoperability & Standardization:** the NGI initiative aims to promote interoperability and standardisation, enabling seamless communication and data exchange across platforms and devices. This supports innovation, competition, and user empowerment in the digital economy.
- ❑ **New Internet Commons:** the creation of a new Internet Commons, a shared digital space where everyone can participate in the creation and exchange of digital content and services.

NGI Sargasso has identified a set of **challenges** for this fourth cut-off date after conducting a series of interviews and surveys to dozens of experts in Europe, Canada, and the USA. There are 9 concrete challenges and an open one. Proposals should be directed towards one of those (including the open challenge for NGI):

- **CH1 - Sustainable Digital Infrastructure Across Continents**
- **CH2 - Harmonized Cross-Atlantic Digital Governance**
- **CH3 - Inclusive Public Digital Spaces for Global Community Engagement**
- **CH4 - Enhanced Data Security and Privacy in Transcontinental Perspective**
- **CH5 - Interoperability and Standardisation Across Borders**
- **CH6 - Global Implementation of Decentralised Technologies**
- **CH7 - Next-Gen Cybersecurity and Generative AI**
- **CH8 - Next Generation Space Based Internet**
- **CH9- Redefining intelligence in a hyperconnected world**
- **CH10 - Open Challenge**

The evaluators will be in charge of verifying that the applications received in the general call meet the minimum requirements established as thresholds.



3. NGI Sargasso 4th Call for Evaluators

Evaluators profile

NGI Sargasso is looking for independent evaluators who can assess the quality of the received applications within the fourth Open Call shortly after it closes. The evaluators should meet the following criteria:

- ❑ European (EU nationals (Member States (MS) of the European Union (EU), including their outermost regions, as well as Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) linked to an EU Member) as well as nationals of Horizon Europe associated countries, full list [HERE](#)).
- ❑ Specialists - **scientists (technical**, social sciences, etc.) or **business experts**: from academia or industry, researchers or engineers. The evaluator should be motivated by advancing trust, security, and innovation in emerging technologies, while promoting openness, inclusivity, and responsible Internet governance, in order to drive digital transformation and shape a sustainable and human-centric Next Generation Internet.
- ❑ Experts with **experience in evaluating proposals** for the European Commission or similar experience in NGI fields.

An evaluator **must not** work for an organization that aims to participate in the open call of NGI Sargasso or for an organization that is currently involved in the NGI Sargasso consortium.

The evaluators will be responsible for providing a neutral but **technical/scientific and/or commercial review** of the received applications, generally focusing on, but not limited to, the following aspects:

- ❑ Quality and relevance of the proposed project or initiative.
- ❑ Technical feasibility and innovation potential.
- ❑ Alignment with the objectives and focus areas of NGI Sargasso.
- ❑ Potential impact and scalability of the proposed solution.
- ❑ Consideration of ethical, legal, and regulatory aspects.
- ❑ Evaluation of the applicant's expertise, track record, and capacity to execute the project.
- ❑ Financial viability and sustainability of the proposed project.
- ❑ Contribution to fostering collaboration and partnerships within the NGI Sargasso ecosystem.
- ❑ Adherence to the principles of trust, security, inclusivity, and responsible Internet governance.

It is important to note that the number of applications to evaluate per evaluator depends on various factors: the availability of evaluators' time and the number of applications submitted.

3.1 Expression of interest

If you are interested in becoming an evaluator, please create a profile on the [SPLORO platform](#), complete all the necessary fields in the form ([see Annex 1](#)) and upload your CV (**in .pdf format**). The application should not take you more than 5 minutes.

Apply here: <https://bit.ly/NGISargasso-evaluatorsOC4>

If you know someone else who might be qualified for this task and might be interested, please forward this to him or her. By applying to NGI Sargasso Call for Evaluators, the applicant automatically accepts all the rules and conditions described below.



4. Evaluators selection process

Evaluators will be selected by the NGI Sargasso team members based on their competences and needs for the fourth open call.

The selection criteria are:

- ❑ **Technical expertise and Business expertise:** The technical and business knowledge must be commensurate with the applied topics and be well justified.
- ❑ **CV:** The attached CV should contain relevant information and should allow corroboration of the information entered in the form. It should be well structured and aligned with the NGI Sargasso call for applications.
- ❑ **Quality:** This criterion evaluates good and detailed descriptions of all declared areas of expertise. It also takes into account the quality of the evaluator in terms of previous experience.

5. Evaluation procedure

Once selected, evaluators will have to perform the following activities through the [Sploro platform](#):

5.1. Step 1: info-webinar

The evaluation process will start with a brief informational session on August 7th, 2024, at 10:00 (Brussels time) on the evaluation procedure, with special attention to the evaluation criteria. The session will be recorded for further reference.

5.2 Step 2: online evaluation

Each proposal will then be assigned to 2 evaluators, one with technical and one with business profile, and consequently, 2 individual evaluation reports will be prepared for each proposal, which should be based on the assessment of 3 main criteria:

- 1) Alignment
- 2) Excellence
- 3) Impact

Each evaluator will score a proposal without knowing the evaluation of their colleague, thus preventing one evaluator from influencing the other. Therefore, the same application may receive very different scores.

The **normalization** method will be employed to address this issue. This method ensures a more balanced distribution of scores and reduces the possibility of biases and distortions. All proposals will be ranked based on their scores at the end of the evaluation process. This method will be applied by the NGI Sargasso consortium.

5.3 Step 3: Interview

The top-ranked projects of the external remote evaluation shall be duly invited to participate in an online interview between **09.09.24 - 20.09.24**. The primary aim of the interview is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the project's concept, the team's skills and competence, and their capacity and willingness to exploit the results.



At least 2 evaluators will carry out the interviews, one with technical profile and another one with a business profile **(Please note that not all evaluators would participate in the interviews.** Also, due to evaluator's availability, it may be that the evaluator interviews other proposals than the ones evaluated in the first phase).

The evaluation of this stage will be simple, the 2 evaluators will determine individually if the proposal they are interviewing should move forward with a yes/no decision.

The number of interviews per evaluator depends on various factors: the availability of evaluators' time, the evaluator's expertise and the number of applications submitted.

6. Payment conditions

In the case of the NGI Sargasso project, evaluators will receive compensation per evaluation properly completed, with the amount of up to €65 per evaluation.

Action	Amount/Action
Proposal review	40€
Interview	25€

Each evaluator will sign a contract for evaluating the proposals with ESF (European Science Foundation), the coordinator of the project. This contract enters into force from the beginning of the evaluation process and will have a validation of one month after the NGI Sargasso make the evaluation results public.

The evaluator is required to prepare an invoice and forward it to ESF (finance-ngisargasso@esf.org). ESF will pay the invoice through a bank transfer, strictly in Euros. The transfer should be made to the evaluator's personal account within 60 days of receiving the invoice.

It is important to mention that all rates include taxes, and ESF is exempt from VAT. The invoice can only be dispatched once the evaluation submission deadline has passed. Please be aware that the invoice must be sent no later than 1 month following the evaluation submission deadline. In the event that reviewers are employees of a different organization, they should be permitted to submit their reviews and receive payment accordingly.

For the reviewers with a VAT number, they will have to invoice NGI SARGASSO "VAT free".



7. Tentative timeline of activities

Call for evaluators: June 17th – July 19th, 2024.

Selection of evaluators by NGI Sargasso: July 22nd – July 26th, 2024.

Contracting with selected evaluators: July 29th – August 16th, 2024.

Webinar with evaluators: August 07th at 10 (Brussels time) (1 hour)

Evaluation stage: August 07th – August 30th, 2024.

Interviews: The evaluators will have an interview stage only with those applicants who have passed the evaluation stage. Therefore, they will have to be available on the following dates: September 9th, 2024, to September 20th, 2024.

Evaluators who cannot be present on the specified interview dates will not be eligible to receive any compensation as evaluators. This availability during the interview phase is a mandatory requirement to ensure the integrity of the evaluation process.

8. Evaluators' liability

All evaluators must sign a **declaration of no conflict of interest** ([see Annex 2](#)) and a confidentiality agreement with the NGI Sargasso consortium prior to the start of the evaluation.

By applying to the NGI Sargasso evaluator Call and registering on the Sploro platform, the expert:

- understands that submitting an application (registration) does not guarantee selection as an evaluator for any of the open calls.
- understands that they will need to provide a signed Code of Conduct ([see Annex 3](#)) and a Declaration of Honor (DoH), along with any other requested documents, if selected to serve as an evaluator for a specific open call published on the Sploro platform.
- confirms that the team in charge of the fourth open call will inquire about their availability to perform the evaluation within the specified timeframe for the given open call, to attend an informative session (if necessary), and a debriefing session after selection (if necessary).
- confirms interest in being informed about future opportunities to act as an evaluator in ongoing and upcoming open calls.
- ensures that they will only evaluate applications from applicants with whom they have no Conflict of Interest (Col).



9. Admissibility

- ❑ The applicant must be European (citizens of EU Member States, including their outermost regions, as well as countries and territories overseas linked to EU members, as well as nationals of Horizon Europe associated countries, full list [HERE](#)) (Note: if not a citizen of these countries but a resident/taxpayer in one of these countries, you are still eligible to become an evaluator).
- ❑ Applications for the call for Evaluators can be submitted at any time starting from 17/06/2024 to 19/07/2024.
- ❑ Applications for the call for Evaluators must be submitted electronically through the [Sploro platform](#), as indicated in this call, using the provided form on the platform, and a **CV must be attached as a .pdf** file as part of the application. Paper or email submissions are NOT possible.
- ❑ Applications must be complete in all parts, in English, and the CV must be legible, accessible, and printable.

If the eligibility criteria are met, the expert evaluation will be conducted by the NGI Sargasso team members. To formalize the collaboration, unless otherwise specified, selected evaluators will be required to sign a declaration of no conflict of interest ([see Annex 2](#)) and a confidentiality agreement with the project representative (coordinator, treasurer, etc.) prior to the start of the evaluation.

9.1 Conflict of interest

Evaluators must not have a conflict of interest at the time of their appointment and must sign a contract stating that they do not have one. They must also notify the consortium if such a conflict arises in any of the applications to which they have been allocated. When an evaluator reports a potential conflict of interest or it is brought to the project consortium's attention in any way, the project consortium will assess the circumstances and any objective aspects of information available. If the consortium determines that there is a conflict of interest, the evaluator will be removed from the application's evaluation. All potential conflicts of interest will be thoroughly investigated.

9.2 Confidentiality

All information connected to the evaluation process is absolutely confidential, thus evaluators are bound by secrecy. They are not permitted to reveal any information regarding the applications submitted, as well as the outcomes of the assessment and selection, to anyone. They are also not permitted to use the application's concepts for their own purposes.

