

Culture

# **CULTURE PROGRAMME (2007-2013) Guidance Notes for Experts**

### Strand 2

**Version June 2012** 

#### 1. Introduction and General Issues

#### 1.1. Evaluation documentation

The evaluation of proposals under the Culture Programme (2007-2013) is based on this document, which describes the general principles and the procedures which will be used in the evaluation of proposals. It contains the evaluation forms used for each of the strands of the Programme.

Additionally, experts should refer to the Programme Guide that describes in detail the contents which are required in proposals and explains to candidates how their proposals should be prepared and submitted. The Programme Guide may be found on the following web page: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/culture/index en.htm.

#### 1.2. The roles and responsibilities of evaluation participants

The evaluation and selection of proposals are carried out by the Agency with the assistance of independent experts.

After evaluation by the experts, the list of projects proposed for selection is established by an Evaluation Committee, composed of Agency and Commission staff.

All evaluation participants must apply the principle of equal treatment between all proposals, throughout the entire evaluation process.

#### 1.2.1. Independent experts acting as evaluators

Experts perform evaluations on a personal basis, not as representatives of their country, their employer or any other entity. They are expected to be independent, impartial and objective, and to behave throughout the evaluation process in a professional manner. They must sign a confidentiality and conflict of interest declaration (see 1.3.4) prior to beginning their work. It must be adhered to at all times, before, during and after the evaluation.

#### 1.2.2. Agency staff

Agency staff will organize a confidential, fair and equitable evaluation of each proposal according to the criteria applicable, in full respect of the relevant procedures, rules and regulations. They will ensure that the process runs smoothly and fairly, that access to the information pertaining to proposals is strictly controlled and that the most efficient use is made of the time of all concerned.

The work of the experts will be managed and supervised throughout the evaluation by Agency staff. Agency staff will however not attempt to influence the opinion of the independent experts. Even if asked, they may not express any opinion on the merits or otherwise of any proposal. They may, however, provide additional information or assistance on request.

In consensus meetings (see 2.4), Agency staff may act as moderators, seeking consensus between the independent experts, without any prejudice for or against particular proposals or the organizations involved.

#### 1.2.3. Evaluation Committee

See 2.6.

#### 1.3. Before the evaluation

#### 1.3.1. Reception of proposals and checks carried out by Agency staff

An email message acknowledging receipt of the electronic form is automatically sent to the applicant after successful submission of the form with its attachments. Receipt of the mandatory paper versions of the applications is not acknowledged by the Agency.

The eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria are checked by Agency staff before the evaluation begins and proposals which do not fulfill these criteria are excluded.

This document does not cover these preliminary steps.

#### 1.3.2. Database of experts

The Agency establishes a database of experts containing the details of suitable candidates on the basis of the call for expression of interest EACEA/2007<sup>1</sup>.

Experts can submit their application at any time until the end of 2013.

According to this call, candidates must fulfill the following eligibility criteria:

- have at least four years' professional experience relevant to the programme for which they are applying
- be natural persons from:
  - Member States of the European Union,
  - EEA/EFTA States, in accordance with the conditions established under the EEA Agreement,
  - Candidate countries who signed a Memorandum of Understanding to participate in the Culture Programme,
  - Western Balkan countries, insofar as there is a framework agreement providing for their participation in the Culture Programme.

Experts fulfilling these criteria will be included in a database that will be used to draw up panels of experts. It shall be valid for the lifetime of the Culture Programme (until 31 December 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/procurement/eacea 2007 experts/index en.htm

#### 1.3.3. Appointment of experts

Since 01/01/2009, experts are selected from the candidates in the database described in the previous paragraph.

For each evaluation session taking place, the most suitable experts are appointed by the Agency, on the basis of the following criteria:

- A high level of expertise
- the fields of expertise of the experts and their adequacy with the proposals to be assessed
- previous experience in the field of project management or assessment
- appropriate language skills
- a reasonable distribution of geographical origins
- regular rotation of experts
- any relevant conflicts of interest.

The list of experts to be invited for evaluation sessions is decided by the relevant authorizing officer.

In accordance with the principle of transparency, the names of the experts who have worked for the Agency will be published on the website at the end of each calendar year. Please note that only the names of experts will be published without any reference to the projects evaluated or to the strand of the Programme evaluated.

#### 1.3.4. Conflicts of interest and confidentiality

#### 1.3.4.1. Conflicts of interest

Article 52 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities lays down that "all financial actors and any other person involved in budget implementation, management, audit or control shall be prohibited from taking any action which may bring their own interests into conflict with those of the Communities. Should such a case arise, the person in question must refrain from such actions and refer the matter to the competent authority.

There is a conflict of interests where the impartial and objective exercise of the functions of a financial actor or other person is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other shared interest with the beneficiary".

When appointing experts, the Agency must take all necessary steps to ensure that they are not faced with either a direct or indirect conflict of interest in relation to the proposals on which they are required to give an opinion.

To this end, experts are required to sign a declaration (see Annex 1) by which:

- they declare the direct or indirect conflicts of interest they may have, on the basis of the list of proposals they have to evaluate;
- they commit to inform the Agency immediately if they discover in the course of their tasks that they have a conflict of interest.

An expert is deemed to have a conflict of interest when any of the following applies (non exhaustive list): he/she is employed by the same institution or works closely in collaboration with the applicant; he/she was involved in the preparation of the proposal; or is in some other way closely related to the applicant (family relationship) or the work of the applicant (professional relationship) so as to compromise the expert's ability to impartially evaluate the proposal; he/she would directly benefit from the proposal being funded or not funded in the context of his/her own activities; he/she is involved in a contract or collaboration with the applicant; or there is any other relationship with the proposal where the expert may not be able to impartially evaluate the proposal.

In such cases, the expert should not take part in the evaluation of the proposal concerned.

If during the evaluation itself an expert discovers that he/she is in some way connected with a proposal which he/she has been asked to evaluate, or has some other involvement which impairs his/her impartiality, he/she must declare this immediately to the Agency staff, who will then take all necessary actions to remove the conflict of interest.

#### 1.3.4.2. Confidentiality

The evaluation of proposals is a confidential process and experts will be required to sign a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality declaration (see Annex 1) before receiving proposals.

When the evaluation is taking place in the Agency's premises, experts are not allowed to take off the premises any document or electronic data relating to the proposals they are assessing.

In the case of remote evaluation, experts must ensure the confidentiality of the documents or electronic files sent by the Agency.

Experts may ask to Agency staff to be allowed to look for information on the internet or in specialized data bases, in order for example to verify elements of a proposal. Experts should however not base their evaluation on additional information found on a web site and not contained within the proposal.

Experts shall not contact third parties without written authorization by Agency staff.

Under no circumstance may an expert attempt to contact an applicant on his own account, either during the evaluation session or afterwards.

#### 2. THE EVALUATION PROCESS

#### 2.1. Overview of the evaluation process

The evaluation process consists of the following steps.

Step 1: Briefing of the experts

All experts are briefed orally and/or in writing before the evaluation by Agency and Commission staff.

#### Step 2: Individual evaluation of proposals

Each proposal is evaluated against the applicable criteria independently by 2 experts who fill in individual evaluation forms giving marks and providing comments.

#### Step 3: Consensus

For each proposal a consensus is reached and one evaluation summary report is prepared by the experts (see Annex 3). This report will faithfully reflect the common views of the experts referred to in Step 2.

In case of persisting disagreement between the two experts having assessed a proposal, a third expert shall be designated by Agency staff.

#### Step 4: Debriefing of the evaluation session

Experts are asked to give their feedback on the evaluation process and the practical organisation of the session.

#### Step 5: Evaluation Committee

An Evaluation Committee is convened and establishes the list of projects proposed for selection.

#### 2.2. Step 1: Briefing of the experts

Experts will be provided with a briefing orally and/or in writing and/or using electronic media by Agency staff and the Commission before the evaluation begins, covering the evaluation procedure and technical issues involved in the particular strand of the Programme and the practical details concerning the evaluation session. In the case of oral briefing, participation in the briefing is mandatory. Another specific briefing focuses on the consensus sessions (see step 3) and takes place when the consensus process starts.

The key personnel involved in the evaluation will be identified and their roles explained by Agency staff responsible for the activity.

Experienced experts may contribute to the briefing.

#### 2.3. Step 2: Individual evaluation of proposals

Each proposal will be assessed by 2 experts working in remote. Key aspects of the assessment are described below.

#### 2.3.1. Assignment of proposals to experts

The Agency staff assigns the proposals to the experts before the evaluation meeting on the basis of the following criteria:

- Domain covered by the proposal
- Language of the proposal

Experts may be asked to assess a number of interdisciplinary proposals.

Experts may refuse to assess a proposal if they think that it falls out of their field of expertise or if they think they have a conflict of interest. The Agency staff must be informed immediately and take the final decision concerning the assignment of the proposal to a specific domain or another expert.

Experts are not allowed to assess applications coming from their own country.

#### 2.3.2. Evaluation criteria and forms

When examining proposals, experts may only apply the evaluation criteria which are set out in this document and indicated in the evaluation forms (see Annex 2).

At this stage the experts are acting individually and independently; they do not discuss the proposal with each other nor any third party. The experts record their individual opinions on the dedicated on-line form, giving scores and comments on the evaluation criteria.

Each expert will sign his/her own form.

#### 2.3.3. Eligibility criteria addressed during the evaluation

The eligibility criteria defined in the Programme Guide are assessed by Agency staff before the evaluation by the experts. However if an expert feels that a proposal does not meet one of the eligibility criteria, the expert should draw the attention of the Agency staff to this.

The experts should continue to proceed with the evaluation of this proposal. They should explain in their general comments any specific issue which will then be further evaluated by the Evaluation Committee, which will decide accordingly on the eligibility status. Experts should not give a low mark due to the potential ineligibility of a proposal.

#### 2.3.4. Proposal marking

Experts examine the issues to be considered comprising each evaluation criterion and score on a scale from 0 to 5. Half point scores may be given. A weighting system will be applied for the score of each criterion (see Annex 2). For each criterion under examination, score values indicate the following assessments:

- 0- The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1- Very poor. The criterion is addressed in a cursory and unsatisfactory manner.
- 2- Poor. There are serious inherent weaknesses in relation to the criterion in question.
- 3- Fair. While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are weaknesses that would need correcting.
- 4- Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, although certain improvements are possible.
- 5- Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question.

Projects will be ranked according to their merit.

The score should reflect the overall impression of the expert of that proposal for the criterion being considered.

Experts are required to provide a comment for each criterion being assessed. They are encouraged to writetheir comments in a way that clearly reflects their overall opinions and specific strengths and weaknesses of the proposal for each criterion. This will assist in the production of evaluation summary reports later in the evaluation process. The comments must be consistent with the scores awarded (see Annex 2).

#### 2.3.5. Practical guidelines for evaluating proposals

All comments should preferably be made in English. Experts must ensure that all their comments are concise, complete and comprehensible. All comments must make sense without any further need for explanation and must always be directly relevant to both the proposal and the criterion applied. Experts must avoid vague, ambiguous assessments.

- Assess and mark the proposal exactly as it is described and presented. Do not make any assumptions or interpretations about the project in addition to what the proposers themselves have written in their proposal.
- Keep to the evaluation criteria as stated in the forms.
- Give scores and write comments for each criterion.
- Maintain consistency in your scoring throughout your work.

- Provide a brief but explicit justification for each of your scores. Be open but correct, in particular when scores are low. You should use polite and correct language, but do not hide the facts.
- At the start of the evaluation, it is recommended that experts examine a number of proposals before "signing off" their first individual assessment forms. This will help to calibrate their scoring.
- Avoid blow-by-blow accounts but use strong and weak points. You must not use general statements such as "The objectives could have been better described".
- Avoid generalisations "organisation X is weak in this area". Say rather "It has not been demonstrated in the proposal that the applicant has the capacity to run the project".

#### 2.4. Step 3: Consensus

#### 2.4.1. The Consensus process

When the experts for a particular proposal have completed their individual evaluations, they will also be given access to the evaluation comments and scores of the other expert who has been assigned to that particular proposal<sup>2</sup>.

The two experts will meet to prepare the evaluation summary report for a given proposal (see Annex 3) during the sessions organized on site at the Agency. The discussion will continue until a common opinion on the proposal is reached, i.e. a conclusion regarding the marks for each criterion and the accompanying comments with which both experts agree.

Comments must be suitable for feedback to the applicant. Agency staff will check the quality of the experts' comments and shall refuse any unsatisfying comment. In such cases, the experts will be asked to rewrite their comments.

Experts will be asked to fill in, on the basis of their common opinion, a list of keywords for each project assessed by ticking one or more boxes where appropriate. These keywords will be used by the Agency staff to classify the proposals according to their domain, subject etc. and for establishing statistics.

In the event of persistent disagreement, Agency staff will be informed. A third expert will be designated by Agency staff, using the criteria described in chapter 2.3.1.

The third expert examines the proposal and gives a score and comments for each of the evaluation criterion, acting individually and independently and without having access to the evaluations already done.

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In the case of proposals that have been submitted previously to the Culture Programme, Agency staff may give the experts the previous evaluations at the consensus stage, if the previous evaluation took place under comparable conditions. If necessary, the experts will be required to provide a clear justification for their scores and comments should these differ markedly from those awarded to the earlier proposal. Each application is to be assessed nevertheless on its own merits, regardless of previous applications under the Programme (or under other EU Programmes).

The three experts assigned to the proposal meet and reach an agreement on the score and the comments. They prepare the evaluation summary report.

At the end of this process, the evaluation summary report is agreed and signed by the experts for each proposal.

The evaluation summary report, amended by the Agency staff when strictly necessary, will be sent to each applicant (selected or rejected), after the decision on the list of projects selected/rejected. Proposals which failed one or more eligibility criteria, and which were therefore not evaluated, will have received a letter from the Agency informing them of the reasons for exclusion on eligibility grounds before the evaluation session.

#### 2.4.2. Recommendations for negotiation

An expert may recommend that one or more detail(s) of the proposal should be checked, monitored or amended should the proposal be selected for funding. Examples of potential modifications are the scope or timeframe of an application and the coherence between the description of the activities and the timetable.

Such potential modifications should be clearly indicated in the comments section for each relevant proposal as a "recommendation for negotiation".

It should nevertheless be noted that proposals must be evaluated as submitted. Experts should not assume that any recommendation for negotiation will be successfully completed.

#### 2.5. Step 4: Debriefing

Experts will be asked to give their feedback on the evaluation process and the practical organisation of the evaluation session.

They may be asked to answer a specific questionnaire.

#### 2.6. Step 5: Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee is composed of staff members from the Agency and the Commission.

The Evaluation Committee examines the proposals and the experts' evaluations and checks the coherence of the evaluation process.

The Evaluation Committee validates the recommendations for negotiation made by the experts (see 2.4.2).

The Commission then adopts a decision granting support to the best projects. The total budget available for the strand cannot in any case be exceeded at the end of the selection process.

## ANNEX 1: Declaration on absence of conflict of interest and confidentiality

Culture Programme (2007-2013) –Strand ......

_	, having been appointed as expert for the above nat I am aware of Article 52 of the Financial Regulation,
implementation which may	be prohibited from taking any measures of budget bring their own interests into conflict with those of the case arise, the actor in question must refrain from such to the competent authority.
budget or an internal auditor because of family or emotion	where the ability of an actor involved in implementing the to perform his duties impartially and objectively is impaired and ties, political or national affinity, economic interest or nor common interest with the beneficiary."
•	knowledge, I have no conflict of interest with the operators his strand, including persons or members of a consortium, or
I confirm that, if I discover d it immediately.	uring the evaluation that such a conflict exists, I will declare
communicate outside any co	keep all matters entrusted to me confidential. I will not infidential information that is revealed to me or that I have ny adverse use of information given to me.
persons who submitted a pro with them. This list is given a confirm that I will complete	contacts in the past with the following organisations or posal, but that I am not in a situation of conflict of interests in good faith and is complete to the best of my knowledge. I this list if, in the course of the evaluation, I discover that I someone involved in an application even if in my opinion is.
Organisations/Persons	Nature of contact (e.g. purely professional, limited social contact)
Date :	
Name:	
Signed:	

#### **ANNEX 2: Evaluation grids**

#### Support for organisations active at European level in the field of culture – Strand 2

The following questions provide further guidance to experts for assessing proposals. It should be carefully read in conjunction with the Programme Guide and **before** starting filling in the grid on line.

Please note that a weighting system will be applied to the score of each criterion and that the projects will be ranked according to their merit.

Award Criteria	Score	Weighting
1. European added-value	0 to 5	X4

Points to be addressed in the assessment (non-exhaustive list):

The following factors will be assessed:

- The way proposed activities may have a greater effect and their objectives can be better achieved at European level than at national level;
- The extent to which this European dimension is sought by the planned activities.

#### **Specific for Ambassadors:**

- The way the objectives, methodology and nature of the proposed activities demonstrate an outlook that goes beyond local, regional or even national interests to work towards an aim of representing general European interest in the field of culture;
- The extent to which the organisation through the influence of its activities at a European level, fulfils the role of European Cultural 'Ambassador' and, as such, its aptitude to be a real "representative" of European culture;

#### **Specific for Networks:**

- The way the objectives, methodology and nature of the proposed activities demonstrate an outlook that goes beyond local, regional or even national interests to work towards an aim of networking, providing advocacy and establishing structured dialogue in the general European interest in the field of culture;
- The extent to which the proposed activities may have a greater impact and their objectives be better achieved at European level than at national level;
- The extent to which the applicant network represents bodies active in eligible or Third Countries and disseminates information on EU action, more particularly in order to promote European cultural cooperation;

#### **Comments**

You must explain both the strong and the weak points of the proposal which justified your score. You are advised to translate your assessment into a list of explicit "bullet points" (or equivalent) instead of complete sentences in order to win time and facilitate the "consensus" meeting with the other expert. This will allow easy rephrasing of opinions in the consolidated assessment.

Award Criteria	Score	Weighting
2. Relevance to the specific objectives of the Programme	0 to 5	X4

The extent to which the proposed activities contribute to the mobility of people and works/ performances and contribute to intercultural dialogue will be assessed.

#### **Specific for Networks:**

- The extent to which the advocacy and dialogue activities can contribute to structure and nurture debates on the development of a European shared cultural area and give a stronger voice to the cultural field in Europe, both at sector and individual levels.

#### Comments

You must explain both the strong and the weak points of the proposal which justified your score. You are advised to translate your assessment into a list of explicit "bullet points" (or equivalent) instead of complete sentences in order to win time and facilitate the "consensus" meeting with the other expert. This will allow easy rephrasing of opinions in the consolidated assessment.

Award Criteria	Score	Weighting
3. Excellence of the proposed cultural activities	0 to 5	X4

The extent to which the proposed work programme and the subsequent activities are designed and can be carried out successfully with a high level of excellence. Proposals not only have to meet the criteria and the objectives of the Culture Programme, but also have to be carried out successfully with a high quality level of activities. In this respect, the following factors will be assessed:

- The skills and experience of the persons in charge of the management and implementation of activities;
- The relevance of the activities proposed in terms of representing European culture at its highest level, the impact on both the European audience and the general public and the social dimension of the activities;
- The clarity and the consistency between the activities proposed, the budget allocated to each of them (not applicable for Flat-rate based proposals) and the operational and financial capacity of the organisation;
- The quality of application and the proposed budget / Flat-rate calculation: seriousness and completeness of the application, clarity and relevance of proposed methodology, clarity of the action description in terms of objectives and activities;
- Outputs and detailed nature of the budget breakdown / Flat-rate calculation.

#### **Comments**

You must explain both the strong and the weak points of the proposal which justified your score. You are advised to translate your assessment into a list of explicit "bullet points" (or equivalent) instead of complete sentences in order to win time and facilitate the "consensus" meeting with the other expert. This will allow easy rephrasing of opinions in the consolidated assessment.

Award Criteria	Score	Weighting
4. Expected level of output	0 to 5	X3

The following factors will be assessed:

- The number of persons who might benefit directly and indirectly from the results of the activities proposed;
- The number of different European countries that will benefit from the activities proposed including the number of different, countries, places and venues that will host the activities;
- The number of associates and sectors that may be effectively and permanently represented at European level.

#### **Specific for Networks:**

- The number of associates and sectors that may be represented at European level and the expected results of contacts with EU Institutions.

#### **Comments**

You must explain both the strong and the weak points of the proposal which justified your score. You are advised to translate your assessment into a list of explicit "bullet points" (or equivalent) instead of complete sentences in order to win time and facilitate the "consensus" meeting with the other expert. This will allow easy rephrasing of opinions in the consolidated assessment.

Award Criteria	Score	Weighting
5. Communication and promotion of activities	0 to 5	Х3

The results of activities proposed have to be appropriately disseminated and promoted. In this respect, the following factors will be assessed:

- The relevance of the communication plan with respect to the type of the activity and the target audience;
- The relevance and adequacy of the budget3 assigned to the communication / dissemination / promotion plan with respect to the direct and indirect impact expected;
- The methodology used to ensure the visibility of the activities proposed, the detailed communication/dissemination/promotion plan and the various promotional tools (such as website, press, brochures, radio) used.

#### **Comments**

You must explain both the strong and the weak points of the proposal which justified your score. You are advised to translate your assessment into a list of explicit "bullet points" (or equivalent) instead of complete sentences in order to win time and facilitate the "consensus" meeting with the other expert. This will allow easy rephrasing of opinions in the consolidated assessment.

Award Criteria	Score	Weighting
6. Long term impact - Sustainability	0 to 5	X2

The activities of the cultural organisations are supposed to generate the greatest possible long-term results and cooperation, and also to act as multipliers for other possible promoters. In this respect, the following factors will be assessed:

- The extent to which the experience gained by the implementation of past and recent activities ensured a long term sustainability with a real European added value;
- The potential of the proposed activities to result in continued, sustained cooperation, in complementary activities or in permanent benefits at European level, and to contribute on a long-term basis to the development of cooperation between cultures in Europe;
- The potential of the proposed activities to generate other future initiatives which aim to promote trans-national mobility of people working in the cultural sector, to encourage trans-national circulation of cultural and artistic works and products and to encourage dialogue between cultures.

#### Comments

You must explain both the strong and the weak points of the proposal which justified your score. You are advised to translate your assessment into a list of explicit "bullet points" (or equivalent) instead of complete sentences in order to win time and facilitate the "consensus" meeting with the other expert. This will allow easy rephrasing of opinions in the consolidated assessment.

#### **ANNEX 3: Evaluation Summary Report**

#### Support for organisations active at European level in the field of culture - Strand 2

Please note that a weighting system will be applied to the score of each criterion.

Award Criteria	Score	Weighting
1. European added-value	0 to 5	X4

#### **Comments**

You must explain in detail both the strong and the weak points of the proposal which justified your score

Minimum: 700 characters - up to 2,500 characters

Award Criteria	Score	Weighting
2. Relevance to the specific objectives of the Programme	0 to 5	X4

#### **Comments**

You must explain in detail both the strong and the weak points of the proposal which justified your score

Minimum: 700 characters - up to 2,500 characters

Award Criteria	Score	Weighting
3. Excellence of the proposed cultural activities	0 to 5	X4

#### Comments

You must explain in detail both the strong and the weak points of the proposal which justified your score

Minimum: 700 characters - up to 2,500 characters

Award Criteria	Score	Weighting
4. Expected level of output	0 to 5	Х3

#### **Comments**

You must explain in detail both the strong and the weak points of the proposal which justified your score

Minimum: 700 characters - up to 2,500 characters

Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency Avenue du Bourget 1 – 1140 Brussels - Belgium Office: BOUR 4/02, Telephone: direct line (32-2) 2953371.

Award Criteria	Score	Weighting
5. Communication and promotion of activities	0 to 5	Х3

#### **Comments**

You must explain in detail both the strong and the weak points of the proposal which justified your score

Minimum: 700 characters - up to 2,500 characters

Award Criteria	Score	Weighting
6. Long term impact - Sustainability	0 to 5	X2

#### Comments

You must explain in detail both the strong and the weak points of the proposal which justified your score

Minimum: 700 characters - up to 2,500 characters

Total score after weighting: 0 to 100