

Guidance Note 5 Project Selection

The Programme Selection Sub-Committee is responsible for project selection and makes the decision on approving or rejecting projects by assessing the proposal against the selection criteria. Please be aware that the Programme will only support project whose activities have not started prior to the submission of the Application Form.

When the application is submitted it is appraised by the Joint Secretariat (JS) on the basis of a set of Administrative, Eligibility and Quality criteria. These are set out in detail at the end of this Guidance Note.

Firstly, projects will be checked against the Eligibility and Administrative criteria in order to ensure that they fulfil the technical requirements. There are 17 Eligibility and Administrative criteria.

As a general principle, it will not be possible to submit corrected documents after the deadline for submission. However, if there are minor omissions, the JS will notify the Lead Partner and request them to submit the missing elements within 5 working days. This procedure will be used in the following situations; missing signature on the Application Form and/or missing annexes; missing budget information; incorrect dates; and any other issue deemed as technical by the JS.

Only where a project satisfies the Eligibility and Administrative criteria will it undergo a quality assessment. There are 26 quality criteria. The SSC will make a final decision and the LP will be notified of the outcome.

There are 3 possible outcomes from this process:

a) The project is approved:

Approval means that the project has been selected and will be funded.

b) The project is rejected:

If a project is rejected, a decision has been made that the project in its current form is not suitable for the Programme. The SSC will set out the reasons for rejection. This does not stop Partners from submitting a different project to the Programme in the future, or if the application was rejected due to specific issues which can be addressed, submitting a modified proposal.

Partners whose project has been rejected will need to go through the full application procedure for any future project submission or resubmission of a modified proposal.

c) The project is referred back:

Applications may be referred back. A decision to Refer Back the application means that the Application Form does not sufficiently meet the requirements for approval. However, applicants may resubmit a revised application. Projects that are referred back will receive recommendations as to what aspects of the project would need to be improved to meet the criteria for approval in the case of a resubmitted Application.

An application may only be referred back once. If a referred back an application resubmits, the only decisions that can be awarded to the resubmitted application are approval, approval with conditions or rejection.

A decision for the project to be referred back may be taken where the project does not meet the approval criteria in full but where the committee would like to encourage a project resubmission either in part or in its entirety to overcome the identified weaknesses.

Project approval might be conditional or come with recommendations issued by the SSC. These conditions will be built into the Grant Offer Letter. Rejected projects will receive an explanation of the reasons for rejection. .

As soon as the project applicants have received the notification of approval of the Application, the project implementation phase starts. For further information please see Guidance Note on “Project Implementation.”

I. Eligibility and Administrative assessments

Eligibility and Administrative criteria are “minimum requirements,” each of which has to be met for a project to be declared eligible. The answer to any criterion is either yes or no.

Administrative appraisal

The following elements are verified during the Administrative appraisal:

Criteria	Description
Administrative criteria	
The Application Form has been submitted and delivered to the right location by the set deadline	<i>Day, time of the day within a period of ongoing call for proposals. The JS will consider the date of the submission on eMS as the official submission date.</i>
Required number of Application Form versions is submitted.	<i>Application Form is submitted in the required number of signed electronic versions. One scanned copy of the signed submitted Application Form in the language of the Lead Partner (LP) must be received by the JS no later than 5 working days after submission. Electronic signatures are acceptable.</i>
Paper and electronic versions are identical.	<i>The content of the Application Form + annexes is identical. On the signature page projects applicants will be required to declare that the electronic and paper versions are identical.</i>
The Application Form is signed by the authorised signatory.	<i>The Application Form and its annexes are signed where necessary by a duly authorised representative of the organisation i.e. the person authorised to commit the relevant resources for the relevant period of time. On the signature page project applicants will be required to declare that the person signing is a duly authorised representative of the organisation. As a matter of simplification the signed scanned copy of the Application Form needs to be submitted only in the language of the Lead Partner.</i>
Application Form is correctly filled in.	<i>All applicable sections of the Application Form are correctly filled in (no missing information, in both French and English. The LP must ensure the quality of the translation and that the content is the same in both languages. This includes the work plan, the budget, the proposal of reporting periods and the upload of compulsory annexes. The Programme Manual defines the compulsory annexes as well as the technicality of each section of the Application Form (example: maximum of Implementation Work Packages, maximum number of activities per WP, minimum number of deliverables per WP, flat rate option to be selected in the budget, etc.).</i>

All obligatory annexes are submitted.	<i>Obligatory annexes are attached to the Application Form where applicable. Supporting documents are attached where applicable.</i>
Administrative and formal data in the Application Form and annexes is consistent.	<i>Information presented in the annexes is consistent with the Application Form (e.g. co-financing amounts, partner names etc.).</i>

Eligibility appraisal

The following elements constitute the Eligibility appraisal:

Eligibility criteria	Description
The project fulfils minimum requirements for partnership.	<i>At least 1 Partner from each country within the Programme Area</i>
The Lead Partner and Project Partners are eligible organisations.	<i>Legal status, territorial eligibility – area. All Partners are correctly attributed to NUTS3. Partners from outside the area may be accepted if there is a clear added-value for the project, however, the Lead Partner shall be an organisation based within the Programme Area. The territorial eligibility is related to activities not where Partners are located geographically.</i>
Time limits are correct.	<i>Start and end dates (e.g. depending on the closure of the call for proposals or the end of the Programme period) and duration of the project.</i>
Project fits with one of the Programme Priority and its Specific Objective.	<i>The project has selected the correct Programme Priority and Specific Objective.</i>
Minimum and maximum budget requirements are correct.	<i>Total, Programme contribution, maximum ERDF is respected etc.</i>
There is no evidence of double funding of activities.	<i>Lead Partners will be asked to provide a signed declaration stating that the expenditure related to the project activities and funded by the Programme is not funded twice (e.g. by other national or EU programmes).</i>
External match-funding is secured (if applicable).	<i>In case of external match-funding, availability of an external contribution needs to be evidenced by a Letter of Engagement.. The information entered in the Application Form must be consistent with the Letter of Engagement</i>
Partnership Agreement	<i>The LP confirmed that the mutual financial and legal responsibilities of the Project Partners have been defined and will be included in the Partnership Agreement</i>
The project complies with State Aid regulation	<i>Project partners have all filled in the State Aid¹ declaration and they all meet the criteria of the De Minimis rule and/or of the GBER (General Block Exemption Regulation)</i>
The project complies with public procurement requirements	<i>The Project Partners have completed the relevant section(s) of the Application Form explaining how they are going to meet organisational, national and EU procurement requirements.</i>

¹ For further information, please refer to the Guidance Note on “State Aid”

II. Quality Assessment

Project quality will be scored against the strategic and operational criteria listed below.

The main aim is to determine the extent of project's contribution to the achievement of programme objectives (and contribution to programme indicators) by addressing joint or common target group needs through the following strategic criteria; the Project's context; Cooperation character; Project's contribution to programme's objectives; the delivery of expected results and outputs; and Partnership relevance and quality.

Criteria		Description	
Assessment questions		Strategic criteria	
Projects context <i>How well is a need for the project justified?</i>	3.1.1	<i>The project addresses common territorial challenges and opportunities in the Programme Area as defined in the Cooperation Programme. There is a real demand for the project</i>	C.1.1 / C.1.2 / C.2.4
	3.1.2	<i>The project capitalises on available knowledge (EU and other projects or initiative) and builds on existing results and practices. The INTERREG IVA FCE Programme and other EU-funded Programmes have generated significant experience on issues addressed in the current FCE Programme. Projects are encouraged to complement such developments (rather than duplicate them) and explore new grounds on the way paved by earlier Programmes.</i>	C.3.2
	3.1.3	<i>The project demonstrates coordination and complementarity with other European funding programmes. Projects shall demonstrate if and how they dovetail with other funding instruments.</i>	C.3.2
	3.1.4	<i>The project clearly contributes to a wider strategy on EU / national / regional policy levels, in particular those concerning the project or Programme Area.</i>	C.3.1
	3.1.5	<i>The project makes a positive contribution to the Programme horizontal principles :</i> <i>-Sustainable development ;</i> <i>Actions to take into account environmental protection requirements (including addressing soil, water and air pollution), resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management.</i> <i>This criteria takes also into account the ability of the project to address the environmental challenges and take advantage of the opportunities highlighted in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) non-technical summary.</i> <i>Cross-border cooperation in our Programme Area which will clearly impact positively on the environment will be highly encouraged.</i> <i>-Equal opportunities and non-discrimination :</i> <i>Actions to promote equal opportunities and prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation, design and implementation of the project. In particular, in relation to access to funding, taking account of the needs of the various target groups at risk of such discrimination, and the requirements of ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.</i> <i>-Equality between men and women:</i>	C.4

		<i>Promotion of equality between men and women and, where appropriate, the arrangements to ensure the integration of the gender perspective at project level.</i>	
<p>Cooperation character</p> <p><i>What added value does the cooperation bring?</i></p>	3.2.1	<p><i>The added value of the cross-border approach to the topic addressed is clearly demonstrated :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>-the results cannot (or only to some extent) be achieved without cooperation between Partners.</i> <i>-there is a clear benefit from cooperating for the territories of the Programme Area</i> 	C.1.3
	3.2.2	<i>The project demonstrates new solutions (new ways of responding to identified needs) that go beyond existing practice in the sector/programme or adapts and implements already developed solutions.</i>	C.1.2
	3.2.3	<p><i>The 2 following cooperation criteria are fulfilled:</i></p> <p><i>Joint development and joint implementation. Additionally at least one of either joint staffing or joint financing is fulfilled</i></p>	D.1 / E.2
<p>Project's contribution to programme's objectives and delivery of expected results and outputs</p> <p><i>To what extent will the project contribute to the achievement of programme's objectives?</i></p> <p><i>Focus on achieving results for the territories and their population</i></p>	3.3.1	<p><i>-Objectives :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• There is a clear link between the project overall aim and a Programme Specific Objective</i> <i>• There is a clear link between the project specific objective and the project overall aim</i> <p><i>In this section the assessor will appraise the contribution to a Programme Specific Objective</i></p>	C.2.1 C.2.4
	3.3.2	<p><i>-Outputs :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• There is a clear link between the project outputs and at least one programme output indicator</i> <i>• There is a clear link between the project results and the Programme result indicators</i> <p><i>In this section assessor will appraise the contribution to a Programme Result Indicator</i></p>	C.2.3 D.1
	3.3.3	<p><i>Results and main outputs:</i></p> <p><i>-are tangible and measurable, and value for money is demonstrated (i.e. the project will obtain the maximum benefit within the resources available to it)</i></p> <p><i>Tangible results through actions should be guaranteed concrete and on the field interventions. The following examples are considered as tangible outputs :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Jointly designed training, connected to implementing new processes on the ground and where information is going to improve the knowledge of the Partners involved</i> <i>• Cross-border quality labels e.g. establishing an eco-building standard based on the full life cycle of materials.</i> <i>• Transferable working models e.g. to harmonise data systems for monitoring soil and air quality.</i> <p><i>-are realistic (is it possible to achieve them with given resources – i.e. time, Partners, budget - and they are realistic based on the quantification provided)</i></p>	C.1.4 / C.3.1 / D.1 / E.2
	3.3.4	<p><i>There is a strategy that ensures the long-term viability of the project.</i></p> <p><i>The project will apply concrete measures taken during and after project implementation to ensure and/or strengthen the sustainability of the projects outputs and results.</i></p>	C. .2.4 D.1

	3.3.5	<i>Project main outputs are applicable and replicable by other organisations/regions/countries outside of the current partnership (transferability)</i>	C.2.5
	3.3.6	<i>The selected targets are relevant to the Programme</i>	C.2.6
	3.3.7	<i>The selected targets groups are relevant to the Programme</i>	D.2
<p>Partnership relevance and quality</p> <p><i>To what extent is the partnership composition relevant for the proposed project?</i></p>	3.4.1	<i>The project involves the relevant Partners (with the necessary skills) needed to address the territorial challenge/opportunity and the project specific objective. This should preferably involve a mix of experienced and new organisations</i>	B
	3.4.2	<i>The project partnership is balanced (Partners are from different sectors and are based in different geographical areas). Projects are encouraged to have a good sample of organisations /institutions. For instance for a project dealing with employment: Local/regional authorities, association, chamber of commerce, SME, etc. should be considered.</i>	B / D.1
	3.4.3	<i>Partner organisations have proven experience in the thematic field concerned, as well as the necessary capacity to implement the project (financial, human resources, structures, etc.)</i>	B / D.1
	3.4.4	<i>All Partners play a defined role in the partnership and get a real benefit from it</i>	B / D.1

To assess the viability and the feasibility of the proposed project, as well as its value for money in terms of resources for the results delivered the operational criteria are set out below which consist of; Budget; Communication; Work plan; and Management.

Criteria		Description	
Assessment questions		Operational criteria	
<p>Budget</p> <p><i>To what extent does the project budget demonstrate value for money?</i></p>	4.1.1	<p><i>-Sufficient and reasonable resources are planned to ensure project implementation including management, audit and any required training costs.</i></p> <p><i>-Project budget appears proportionate to the proposed work plan and the main outputs and results aimed for</i></p> <p><i>-Total Partner budgets reflect real Partner involvement (are balanced and realistic)</i></p> <p><i>Due attention will be paid to the size of the budget in order to determine if the project as a whole is worth the amount it claims.</i></p>	D.1 Budget
<p><i>To what extent is the budget coherent and proportionate?</i></p>	4.1.2	<p><i>-Financial allocation per budget line is in line with the work plan</i></p> <p><i>-Distribution of the budget per period is in line with the work plan</i></p> <p><i>-Distribution of the budget per WP is in line with the work plan</i></p> <p><i>-The need for engaging external expertise, equipment purchases and/or infrastructure and construction cost is justified and their costs are realistic.</i></p> <p><i>-The costs are in line with the Programme's eligibility criteria</i></p> <p><i>-The budget is clear and realistic</i></p> <p><i>-Budget takes in account audit (including First Level Controller)</i></p> <p><i>-Partners have a clear and mutual understanding of the compulsory expenses (training costs) and audit costs (including First Level Controller).</i></p>	D.1 Budget
<p>Communication</p> <p><i>To what extent are communication activities appropriate to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders?</i></p>	4.2.1	<p><i>-The communication strategy should make use of appropriate communication tools and techniques. It includes joint and bilingual communication activities.</i></p> <p><i>-Communication activities and deliverables are appropriate to reach the relevant target audiences. Assessors will consider the size and the diversity of target audiences</i></p>	WPC

		<i>In addition to the description of the general communication activities, Project Partners must pay particular attention to detailing how they will respect their regulatory obligations with regard to acknowledging and promoting receipt of ERDF and fulfilling the EU communication and information requirements.</i>	
Work plan <i>To what extent is the work plan realistic, consistent and coherent?</i>	4.3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Proposed activities and deliverables are relevant and lead to the planned main outputs and results -Distribution of tasks among Partners is appropriate (e.g. sharing of tasks is clear, logical, in line with Partner roles in the project, etc.) -Time plan is realistic and includes relevant timeframe for procurement -Activities, deliverables and outputs are in a logical time-sequence -Activities outside the Programme Area clearly benefit the Programme Area (if applicable) 	D.1 D.3
	4.3.2	<i>The added value of investments and their cross-border relevance is demonstrated to reach the project specific objective (if applicable)</i>	Annex 4
Management <i>To what extent are management and audit structures and procedures in line with the project size, duration and needs?</i>	4.4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Management and structures (e.g. project committee) are proportionate to the project size and needs and allow Partners' active participation in decision-making -Management and audit procedures (such as reporting and evaluation procedures in the area of finance, project content, communication) are clear, transparent, efficient and effective -Project management includes regular contact between Project Partners and ensures transfer of expertise across the partnership (internal communication within the partnership) -Necessary provisions for unavailability of key players of the partnership and quality management are in place. 	WP M + PA
	4.4.2	<i>The Lead Partner demonstrates competency in managing EU co-financed projects or other international projects, or can ensure adequate measures for management support</i>	WP M

Scheme 1: Application and Selection process

