



Methodology and criteria for selecting operations

in the frame of the

**INTERREG V-A SLOVAKIA-HUNGARY
COOPERATION PROGRAMME**

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Selection process

The aim of the selection process is to select projects, which contribute most to the achievement of programme objectives. The selection process begins with the receiving of project application and finishes with the contracting of selected project. There are four phases within selection process:

- 1) Call for Proposals with received project proposals;
- 2) Assessment process divided in the following steps;
 - a. admissibility check,
 - b. formal and eligibility assessment,
 - c. quality assessment,
- 3) Decision of the Monitoring Committee;
- 4) Contracting of selected projects.

Contracting procedure is described in detail in the Beneficiary Manual.

Assessment steps

Assessing projects is an important step in the selection process as it assures transparency and accountability of EU funds spending. The assessment process begins as soon as the Call for Proposals closes (if the Call is not continuously open) when all project applications are submitted. First, the Joint Secretariat (hereafter JS) checks the fulfilment of the formal and eligibility requirements of submitted projects and only then will the quality assessment start. The project assessment steps comprises of the following phases:

- 1) Admissibility assessment
- 2) Formal and eligibility assessment
- 3) Quality assessment

The assessment criteria for each step of assessment process are specified in the assessment grids approved by the Monitoring Committee (hereafter MC). The Lead Beneficiary is notified about the results of the assessment steps as follows:

- The decision about the result of formal and eligibility assessment signed by the JS is distributed to the Lead Beneficiary after the administrative and eligibility assessment has been closed for all submitted applications.
- The decision about the results of the quality assessment signed by the Managing Authority (hereafter MA) is distributed to the Lead Beneficiary after the respective MC on which the decision has been adopted.

Admissibility assessment

The first key condition that must be met by Lead Beneficiaries upon submitting their applications is that the application has to be submitted online via the Application Module of IMIS 2014-2020 Monitoring and Information System before the closing time (except for continuously open Call) defined in the Call for proposals. Other admissibility criteria may be set by the Call for proposal approved by the MC.

In case the submitted application does not meet the admissibility criteria, there is no possibility to complement or any later resubmit (except when the Call is continuous) the application under the same Call for Proposals therefore the application is automatically rejected under the given Call.

The fulfilment of the admissibility criteria of submitted application will be checked in maximum 15 calendar days from the respective submission deadline. In the cases when the fulfilment of the admissibility criteria is not obvious, the JS can ask for decision of the MA. If needed, the National Authority can also be involved. Only applications fulfilling the admissibility criteria are assessed against the set of the completeness criteria.

After the admissibility criteria of all applications are assessed, the Joint Secretariat informs Lead Beneficiaries via e-mail about the result of the assessment. The notifying e-mail is sent for the e-mail addresses of the legal representative(s) and contact person indicated in the Application form.

Formal and eligibility assessment

The formal and eligibility assessment includes check of completeness and eligibility criteria. The assessment is carried out by the JS based on 4-eye principle. At each stage, the MA may carry out sample checks to satisfy itself about the correctness of the assessments.

The step of formal and eligibility assessment has no scoring. Only applications fulfilling the formal and eligibility assessment criteria are forwarded to the next step of assessment process, which is quality assessment.

After the formal and eligibility criteria of all Applications are assessed, the Joint Secretariat informs the Lead Beneficiaries via e-mail about the result of the assessment. The notifying e-mail is sent for the e-mail addresses of the legal representative(s) and contact person indicated in the Application form.

Completeness criteria

The assessment of the completeness criteria aims on checking whether the application is accompanied with all required annexes. Apart from the above admissibility criteria, this part of the assessment process allows the Lead Beneficiaries to complement missing mandatory annexes within a given deadline. **The option for completion can be used twice.**

Proposals are checked in the shortest possible timeframe. In case the submitted application does not meet the requirements for mandatory documents, the Lead Beneficiary is requested by the JS via e-mail or postal letter to submit the missing mandatory annexes. **The deadline for completing the application form with missing mandatory annexes is 14 calendar days from the day of delivery/receipt of the completion request of JS by Lead Beneficiary** (if the completion request is sent by e-mail the 'Request a read receipt' option is to be activated).

In case missing documents are not submitted to the JS within the stated deadline, or if the application does not meet the criteria, the assessment procedure for the concerned application will be stopped and the project proposal will be rejected. Only applications fulfilling the completeness criteria are assessed against the eligibility criteria.

Eligibility assessment

The aim of the eligibility assessment is to check if the submitted applications fulfil the eligibility criteria, which consist of following parts:

- Cross-border cooperation criteria assessment
- General eligibility criteria assessment

The eligibility assessment shall ensure that only eligible project applications are considered for the further project selection procedure.

Cross-border cooperation criteria

There are four cross-border cooperation criteria set for the each joint project submitted within the Programme:

- joint development;
- joint implementation;
- joint staffing;
- joint financing.

Projects are required to cooperate in at least three of these criteria. The first two fields are obligatory for all projects, while the third one can be either cooperation in the staffing or in the financing of the project.

General eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria will assess the legal as well as territorial eligibility of beneficiaries involved in the project partnership, eligibility of proposed timeframe, objectives and financial resources, etc. Other admissibility criteria may be set by the Call for proposal approved by the MC.

Applications that do not fulfil the general eligibility criteria and at least three cross-border cooperation criteria will be rejected and not evaluated further.

Quality assessment

Applications succeeded in the above steps will be further evaluated in terms of their quality. The quality assessment is divided into three parts according to the competency of different stakeholders. Each application is assessed against a set of criteria laid down in the assessment grids approved by the MC and published as part of the Applicant's Package of each respective Call for proposal.

Strategic assessment (Joint Secretariat)

The first part of the quality assessment is undertaken by the Joint Secretariat. The primary subject of the assessment is whether the project objectives are logically linked to the relevant priority axis and the project activities are in line with the supported activities of the related action. The comprehensive list of the criteria and the maximum points given by the Joint Secretariat is available in the Quality assessment grid as part of the Applicant's package. Each project is assessed by two programme managers representing both Member States. The final score is made up from the average of two assessments.

Territorial assessment (Territorial experts)

The second part of the quality assessment is undertaken by territorial experts delegated by the counties and higher territorial units forming the programme area. The primary subject of the assessment is whether the project objectives are in line with the relevant regional development plans and local initiatives. The comprehensive list of the criteria the maximum points given by the Territorial experts is available in the Quality assessment grid as part of the Applicant's package. Each project is assessed by as many experts as many regions are affected by the project. The final score is made up from the average of the assessments.

If an Application receives less than point set in the Call for proposals after the first and second part of the quality assessment, the project shall be rejected.

Operational assessment (External assessors)

Third part of the quality assessment is performed by external assessors approved by the Managing authority in agreement with the National Authority. The primary subject of the assessment is whether the project objectives are in line with sectoral trends, expected results can be achieved, expenditures are in line with market prices and project outcomes are durable. The comprehensive list of the criteria and maximum points given the External assessors is available in the Quality assessment grid as part of the Application package. Each project is assessed by two external assessors representing both Member States. The final score is made up from the average of two assessments.

The final score is made up from the sum of the average scores from each part. **If an Application receives less than 65 points after the third part of the quality assessment, the project shall be rejected without any consideration.**

The achievement of minimum 65 points threshold doesn't automatically mean co-financing for the project, co-financing depends on the funds available. In case of continuously open Calls,

the assessment of the applications are continuous according to the order of the receipt of the application forms. Projects reaching the threshold of 65 points are selected to be co-financed according to the availability of funds and according the decision of the MC.

Distinguishing criteria

In case the applications receive the same total score and the availability of funds is not sufficient, the sum of scores received on relevance and cross-border cooperation criteria will be used to distinguish between the applications.

Decision of the Monitoring Committee

Based on the results of the quality assessment and thresholds achieved by project proposals, the JS prepares a ranking list of projects grouped into the following categories based on which the MC makes its decision:

- a) projects proposed for approval
- b) projects proposed for approval with condition (condition set by the assessors)
- c) projects proposed for rejection (threshold below 65 points)
- d) reserve list

The MC members will be provided with the results of the assessment process and assessment grids in due time prior to the MC meeting. The ranking list compiled by the JS based on the preceding steps of assessment is the basis for the debate and the decision of the MC on the funding of project proposals.

After the decision of the Monitoring Committee comes into force, the Managing Authority informs Lead Beneficiaries about the result of the quality assessment and the decision of the Monitoring Committee. The notifying letters are sent for the postal address of the Lead Beneficiaries indicated in the Application form.

Rules of the complaint procedure

According to Article 74(3) EU Regulation No. 1303/2013 the Beneficiaries may submit complaint.

Article 1 (Scope of the complaints procedure)

1. These rules define the procedure for a complaint against decisions taken by Programme authorities during the project assessment and selection process. The purpose of the procedure is to ensure effective examination of complaints.
2. The complaint against a decision of the Managing or Certifying Authority of the Programme during project implementation based on the subsidy contract concluded between the Managing Authority (hereinafter also as “MA”) and the Lead Beneficiary follows the rules laid down in the Subsidy contract.
3. Complaints related to First Level Control, Second Level Control and Audit have to be lodged to the responsible national authority according to the applicable national rules.

Article 2 (Right to complain)

1. Only the project’s Lead Beneficiary as the one representing the project partnership affected by the funding decision is entitled to file a complaint.
2. It is therefore the task of the Lead Beneficiary to collect and bring forward the complaint reasons from all project partners.

Article 3 (Complaint against funding decisions)

1. The right to complain against a decision regarding the project selection applies to the Lead Beneficiary whose project application was not selected for the Programme co-financing during the project assessment and selection process. This right also applies to the Lead Beneficiary whose project application was approved for programme co-financing under conditions set by the Monitoring Committee if the disagreement on the conditions cannot be resolved during the contracting process between the MA and Lead Beneficiary.
2. The complaint is to be lodged against the communication issued by the JS or MA.
3. The complaint should be submitted to the MA via Joint Secretariat of the Programme.
4. The complaint shall be written in English and can be lodged only against the following criteria:
 - a) the outcomes of the eligibility or quality assessment of the project application, based on the selection criteria approved by the MC, do not correspond to the information provided by the Lead Beneficiary during the project assessment and selection process; and/or
 - b) the project assessment and selection process failed to comply with specific procedures laid down in the Cooperation Programme, Programme Manual or Call documents that materially affected or could have materially affected the decision.

Article 4 (Lodging the complaint and formal requirements)

1. The complaint should be lodged in writing to the JS of the Programme within 14 calendar days after the Lead Beneficiary had been officially notified by the JS or MA about the results of the project selection process. JS shall inform the MA about the receipt of the complaint without undue delay.
2. The complaint should include:
 - a) name and address of the Lead Beneficiary;
 - b) reference number of the application which is a subject of the complaint;
 - c) clearly indicated reasons for the complaint, including listing of all elements of the assessment which are being complaint and/or failures in adherence with procedures limited to those criteria mentioned in Art. 3(4);
 - d) signature of the legal representative of the Lead Beneficiary;
 - e) any supporting documents.
3. The relevant documentation shall be provided for the sole purpose of supporting the complaint and may not alter the quality or content of the assessed application.
4. No other grounds for the complaint than indicated in this Article 4(2c) will be taken into account during the complaints procedure.

Article 5 (Rejection without examination)

1. A complaint will be rejected without further examination if submitted after the deadline set in Article 4(1) or if the formal requirements set in Article 4(2) are not observed.
2. In case the complaint is rejected under provisions set in this Article 5(1), the MA conveys this information within 10 working days to the Lead Beneficiary and informs the MC.

Article 6 (Handling of the complaint by Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat)

1. The MA, assisted by the JS examines the complaint and prepares its technical examination regarding the merit of the complaint.
2. The complaint will then be examined on the basis of the information brought forward by the Lead Beneficiary in the complaint and the technical examination according to this Article 6(1) by the Complaint Board to be convened for this purpose.

Article 7 (Complaint Board)

1. The Complaint Board is the only body entitled to review a complaint against a decision regarding assessment and selection of projects co-financed by the Programme.
2. The Complaint Board comprises of the MA, JS and National Authorities' members.
3. Impartiality of members of the Complaint Board towards the case under review has to be ensured. If this cannot be provided, the distinct member shall refrain from the distinct case's review and be replaced by another impartial member according to this Art. 7(3).
4. The JS acts as the secretariat for the Complaint Board and provides any assistance necessary for the review of the complaint.

Article 8 (Different steps and duration of complaint examination)

1. The Complaint Board has 30 calendar days to provide a binding decision. The period is counting from the calendar day following the day when the Complaint Board was convened for the first time. The period can be extended once by additional 30 calendar days in case further information is needed.
2. The decision if the complaint is justified or to be rejected is taken by the Complaint Board by consensus. In case it is justified, the case will be forwarded to next step in assessment process, otherwise the project application shall be rejected.
3. The decision of the Complaint Board if the complaint is justified or to be rejected is communicated by the MA in writing to the Lead Beneficiary and the MC within 7 calendar days.
4. The complaints procedure – from the receipt of the complaint according to Art. 4(1) to the communication of the Complaint Board’s decision to the Lead Beneficiary according to this Art. 8(3) – should be resolved within maximum 60 calendar days.

Article 9 (Final Decision)

The decision of the Complaint Board if the complaint is justified or to be rejected is final, binding to all parties and not subject of any further complaint proceedings within the Programme based on the same grounds.