

Methodology and criteria

for selecting operations
for Call for proposals

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 three steps;
3. administrative assessment,
4. eligibility assessment,
5. quality assessment,
6. Decision of the Monitoring Committee;
7. Contracting of selected projects.

The selection process takes approximately 7 months. Contracting procedures are described in detail in the Beneficiary Manual.

## Evaluation 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 JS checks the admissibility and eligibility of projects and only then will the quality assessment start. The project evaluation steps comprises of the following phases:

1. Administrative assessment
	1. Admissibility criteria
	2. Completeness criteria
2. Eligibility assessment
	1. Cross-border cooperation criteria
	2. General eligibility criteria
3. Quality assessment
	1. Strategic evaluation
	2. Operational evaluation

The assessment criteria for each step of evaluation process are specified in the assessment grids approved by the MC. The evaluation grids are available in Annexes of this document. The Lead Beneficiary is notified about the results of the evaluation steps as follows:

* The decision about the result of administrative 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 MA is distributed to the Lead Beneficiary after the respective MC on which the decision has been adopted.

# Administrative assessment

The administrative assessment includes check of admissibility and completeness criteria and is carried out by the JS on the basis of 4-eye principle. At each stage, the MA may carry out sample checks to satisfy itself about the correctness of the assessments. The evaluation grid of eligibility assessment is available as *Annex I of Methodology and criteria for selecting operations*.

## Admissibility criteria

The first key condition that must be met by Lead Beneficiaries upon submitting their applications is that the application has to be submitted in a predefined form in electronic and paper format stamped and signed by legal representative of the Lead Beneficiary before the closing time (expect for continuously open Call).

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. Applications fulfilling the admissibility criteria are forwarded to the next step of administrative assessment.

## Completeness criteria

The next step of the administrative assessment is to check 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 complementing required documents/making corrections **can be used only once**.

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 of the completion request of JS by Lead Beneficiary.**

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. Applications fulfilling the completeness criteria are forwarded to the next step of assessment process which is eligibility assessment.

# Eligibility assessment

As a further assessment step, submitted applications have to fulfil the eligibility assessment 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. This evaluation step has no quality ranking. Eligibility assessment criteria are examined by attributing “fulfilled” (YES) or “not fulfilled” (NO). Applications fulfilling the eligibility assessment criteria are forwarded to the next step of assessment process which is quality assessment. The evaluation grid of eligibility assessment is available as *Annex II of Methodology and criteria for selecting operations*.

## Cross-border cooperation criteria

There are 4 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. Applications that do not fulfil the general eligibility criteria and at least 3 cross-border cooperation criteria will be rejected and not evaluated further.

## 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.

# Quality assessment

Those applications that succeeded in the above steps of the assessment process will be further evaluated in terms of their quality. The quality of each application is assessed against a set of criteria laid down in the quality assessment grid. The evaluation grid of quality assessment is available as *Annex III, IV, V, VI of Methodology and criteria for selecting operations*. The quality assessment criteria are grouped into following two main categories:

**Strategic evaluation**

Strategic evaluation is aimed on assessment of the:

* project environment and coherence,
* relevance of the submitted proposal for the set objectives,
* level of cross-border cooperation,
* added value,
* project partnership and
* sustainability of project results.

**Operational evaluation**

Operational evaluation assesses

* feasibility of project activities,
* management capacities,
* requested financial resources,
* project working schedule as well as
* horizontal principles.

The main categories of quality assessment listed above are further divided into the sub-criteria with pre-defined scores and thresholds. **Each application can receive maximum of 100 points from which 65 points threshold have to be gained by the Lead Beneficiary in order to be proposed for approval.** 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. Projects reaching score below 65 points threshold will be rejected.

#### Special attention will be given to following evaluation criteria:

* Being in line with priorities of the EUSDR;
* Ensuring 50 % in number of women or disadvantaged persons participating in joint education and training activities, events;
* Emphasizing social inclusion of people living in deep poverty and Roma in case of the employment initiatives;
* Continuation of already implemented project in order to capitalize existing results.

## Distinguishing criteria

In case the applications receive same total score and the availability of funds is not sufficient, the total scoring of the following evaluation criteria will be used to distinguish between applications:

* relevance and
* cross-border cooperation criteria.

## Rejection criteria

In case during the quality assessment the application receives negative decision from external assessors for any of the rejection criteria, the application is excluded from any further quality assessment and must be rejected. Rejection criteria may vary by priority axis.

# Decision of the Monitoring Committee

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

1. projects proposed for approval (threshold above 65 points)
2. projects proposed for approval with condition (condition set by the assessors and/or JS and confirmed by MC)
3. projects proposed for rejection (threshold below 65 points)
4. a reserve list

The MC members will be provided with the results of the evaluation process and assessment grids in due time prior to the MC meeting.

# Complaint procedure

According to Article 74(3) EU Regulation No. 1303/2013 the Beneficiaries may submit complaint. Within the Programme terminology, the term “complaint” refers to three different cases:

* Complaints against a decision of the MA/JS during the project implementation are based on the Subsidy Contract concluded between the MA and the Lead Beneficiary and follow the rules laid down in the Subsidy Contract;
* Complaints related to FLC have to be addressed to the responsible National authority (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of SR and Prime Minister’s Office in Hungary) or administrative body according to the setup of the management, financial and control system and applicable national rules.
* Complaints may be raised against the project assessment process and the correctness thereof. The procedure regarding this type of complaint is described below.

## Handling of the complaint

The rules set in this section are providing transparent complaint procedure against decisions taken by Programme bodies during the project assessment and selection process. The Lead Beneficiary is the only one entitled to file a complaint. The right to complain against a decision regarding the project selection applies to the Lead Beneficiary whose project application was not selected for co-financing during the project assessment and selection process.

The complaint is to be lodged against the communication issued by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat as the MA’/JS’ communication is the only legally binding act towards the Lead Applicant during the project assessment and selection process.

The complaint can be lodged only against the outcomes of the eligibility assessment. The complaint should be submitted in writing by postal mail to JS of the Programme within 14 calendar days after the Lead Beneficiary had been officially notified by the MA/JS about the results of the project selection process. The complaint shall be written in English and shall include:

1. Name and address of the Lead Beneficiary
2. Reference number and acronym of the application which is a subject of the complaint
3. 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 eligibility criteria
4. signature of the legal representative of the Lead Beneficiary (scanned signatures are accepted)
5. Any supporting documents (no additional content-related information than the one included in the proposal is allowed).

The relevant documentation shall be provided for the sole purpose of supporting the complaint. No other grounds for the complaint than eligibility assessment will be taken into account during the complaint procedure.

A complaint will be rejected without further examination if submitted after the set deadline or if the formal requirements set above are not observed. In case the complaint is rejected on these reasons, the MA/JS conveys this information within 10 working days to the Lead Beneficiary. After the receipt of the complaint the MA assisted by the Joint Secretariat, examines the complaint and prepares its technical examination regarding the merit of the complaint.

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 prepared by the MA by the Complaint Board.

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. The Complaint Board comprises of three members; MA, NA and JS. 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.

The Complaint Board will have 30 calendar days to provide a binding decision. This can be extended once with an additional 30 calendar days in case further information is needed. 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 project will be forwarded to next step in assessment process.

The decision of the Complaint Board is communicated by the MA/JS in writing to the Lead Beneficiary within 7 calendar days from the receipt of the Complaint Board decision.

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

Proposals rejected after the quality assessment will receive official communication from MA/JS with the reasons for rejection. Further details on the reasons for rejection can be requested on demand from JS and the Lead Beneficiary can have an insight in the evaluation grids within 7 calendar days after the receipt of the notification letter on the rejection.