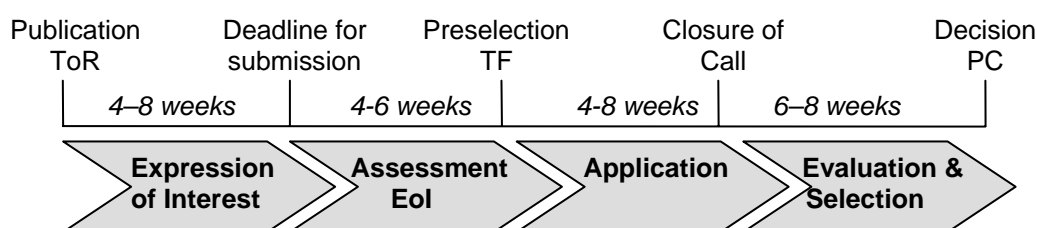


Project assessment, evaluation & selection

➔ Background Information

The Operational Programme (OP) section 4.2.3 sets out a binding framework for the assessment, evaluation and selection of project proposals. All proposal submitted by the closure of a call for project proposals will be assessed following a standardized and transparent procedure approved by the Programme Committee (PC).

The following graph shows the single steps during the application phase.



➔ Guidance

1 Assessment of Expression of Interest (Eol) and pre-selection

After submission of the Eol an email acknowledging the receipt of the application documents is sent to the applicant.

The technical evaluation of the Eol is carried out by the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) with the support of the Alpine Contact Points (ACP), on the basis of the criteria set below.

The evaluation results will be presented to a Task Force (TF) set up by the PC that is responsible for the pre-selection of project ideas. If appropriate the TF will give recommendations to the project applicants on how to further elaborate the project proposal to tailor it to the expectations of the programme. The TF will furthermore decide on the necessity to involve external experts for the evaluation of the project ideas entering the second step of the selection process. These external experts are selected from a pool of experts nominated by the Partner States.

The Managing Authority (MA) informs the institutions that have submitted an EoI on the result of the pre-selection. Only applicants of pre-selected project proposals will be invited to submit the complete application package (step 2). Rejected projects will be informed about the reason for rejection.

For each step of the assessment and evaluation process a standardised set of eligibility and selection criteria is applied. For the first step the selection criteria are the following:

STEP 1: Eligibility criteria

- + Was the EoI submitted within the deadline?
- + Does the project fit into one of the programme's priorities opened for the call?
- + Are the requirements for transnational partnership met (minimum requirement: Project Partners (PPs) from at least 3 countries, of which 2 Member States)?
- + Did the EoI author consult the respective ACP?
- + Specific eligibility criteria linked to the Terms of References (ToR) of a call.

STEP 1: Selection criteria

The project's objectives and strategy

- + Does the project contribute to achieve the objectives of one of the programme's priorities?
- + Are the programme's strategy and guiding principles well considered in the project draft proposal (e.g. innovation, mountain oriented approach, endogenous potentials and coordination with other EU programmes)?
- + Relevance to address the topic at European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) transnational level: Does the project concentrate on a problem having a real transnational dimension (problem not localised in one partner state only nor of mere cross border relevance) asking for transnational solutions?
- + Additional question tailored upon the ToRs.

The project's activities, outputs and results

- + Does the project propose concrete activities to achieve the set objectives?
- + Are the areas of the foreseen pilot activities identified and relevant to the objective of the project?

- + Are the outputs and results relevant to the project's objectives?
- + Are the outputs and results plausible (time-frame, resources, final product...)?
- + Is the transfer of outputs and results to relevant target groups described?
- + Does the cost/benefit relation of the project seem reasonable?
- + If relevant: The project builds on already finished activities, projects of Interreg IIIB or other programmes, or provides additional aspects to the subject. If yes, which ones?
- + Additional question tailored upon the ToRs.

The project's partnership

- + Transnational dimension and coverage of the cooperation area: Is the foreseen partnership well representing the relevant partner states and regions?
- + Is the partnership targeted towards the objective of the project (e.g. relevant public/ scientific or thematic actors involved)?
- + Is the partnership following an integrated approach, seeking to overcome geographical, administrative and thematic barriers?
- + Does the partnership open new ways/forms of cooperation?
- + Additional question tailored upon the ToRs.

The ACP verifications

- + Is the institution of the potential LP reliable and does it have the capacity to follow/ implement international project management?
- + Are the institutions of the PP reliable and have the capacity to follow/ implement international project management?
- + Is the state of involvement of the partners listed confirmed?
- + Is the project embedded in/linked to a national/regional/local development or other relevant strategy?
- + Other relevant information at national level.

2 Evaluation of the project application package and selection (step 2)

After submission of the application package an email acknowledging the receipt of the application documents is sent to the applicant.

The evaluation procedure is performed by the JTS with support of the ACP and is split into two phases: the eligibility check and the evaluation against core selection criteria and priority considerations.

The eligibility check is verifying whether the proposals fulfil the minimum programme requirements. In case of a negative evaluation at this stage the project has to be considered as rejected and will not be

further assessed. The Lead Partner (LP) will receive a letter explaining why the application is considered as ineligible. The reason for this procedure is to make sure that projects presented to the PC meet the basic requirements of the relevant EU regulations and of the Alpine Space Programme.

The second phase is based on the selection criteria which measure the quality of the project proposal. This part of the evaluation is concentrating on content-related and operational respectively strategic aspects. For this evaluation the JTS might be supported by external experts (if the necessity has been highlighted by the TF).

Parallel to the JTS evaluation, the ACP will carry out the national verification of project proposals with regard to partners situated in their country. They will bear the responsibility for bringing in the results of the national assessment of the overall project content.

On the basis of the results of the transnational evaluation and the supplementing information provided by the ACP and, in case, by external experts, the JTS drafts a recommendation for approval or rejection of the project proposal to the PC.

The PC will select the projects to be co-funded by the programme. Projects will be approved or rejected. In some cases the PC might formulate recommendations together with the approval decision.

The project applicants will receive a letter in which the MA informs the LP about the approval or rejection of their project. In case of approval, the Subsidy Contract (SC) already filled in with the project data will be attached to the letter. Rejected projects will be informed about the reason for rejection.

For the second step the selection criteria are the following:

STEP 2: Eligibility criteria

- + Was the application package submitted within the deadline?
- + Is the submitted application package complete?
- + Is the application form properly signed and stamped?
- + Are the requirements for transnational partnership met (minimum requirement: PPs from at least 3 countries, of which 2 Member States)?
- + Does the partnership fulfil at least 2 of the four following criteria: joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing and joint financing)?
- + Is the developed project proposal coherent with the EoI in terms of topic and partnership?
- + Does the project end before the conclusion date of the programme?

- + Did the LP consult the ACP before step 2 to ensure the submission of quality application documents (if relevant to discuss the TF recommendations)?
- + Did each PP have at least one confirmed contact with its ACP?
- + Did each project participant submit the national requirements within the given deadline communicated at national level?
- + Specific eligibility criteria linked to the ToR of a call.

STEP 2: Selection criteria

A. The content check:

Consistency with the ASP and concentration on a transnational problem calling for a transnational solution

- + Does the project contribute to achieve the objectives of one of the programme's priorities?
- + Are the programme's strategy and guiding principles well considered in the project draft proposal (e.g. innovation, mountain oriented approach, endogenous potentials and coordination with other EU programmes)?
- + Relevance to address the topic at European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) transnational level: Does the project concentrate on a problem having a real transnational dimension (problem not localised in one partner state only nor of mere cross border relevance) asking for transnational solutions?

Action plan and activities

- + Is the work packages content clearly contributing to the foreseen projects objectives?
- + Is the project implementation oriented?
- + Are the proposed actions and activities of clear transnational character (no mere addition of local actions)?
- + Are the areas of the foreseen pilot activities identified and relevant to the objective of the project?
Yes/ no criteria- not to be included in scores:
- + In case actions outside the EU are foreseen, are they listed and is the benefit for the cooperation area described?

Results, outputs, synergy and leverage effects

- + Does the project develop creative and innovative tools, methods, techniques or ideas?
- + Are the outputs and results of the project concrete, visible and measurable? Are they quantified and clearly listed?
- + Is the description of contents and results in the WPs detailed and precise?
- + Is it clear for whom, where, when and in which way the results will be used?

- + Does the project strategy ensure leverage effects and long-lasting effects (use of the results after the end of the project) for further activities or investments?
- + Are the outputs and results transferable, replicable and useful beyond the partnership and the transnational boundaries?
- + If relevant: Does the project take results of already implemented interventions into consideration or is it synergetic with previous or ongoing projects carried out under this or other programmes, avoiding any form of duplication?

Methodology and cross sectoral integration

- + Does the project propose appropriate methodologies for relevant aspects?
- + Does the project promote vertical (different administrative levels: national, regional and local) co-operation among authorities for relevant policies?
- + Does the project promote horizontal (different sectors: research, administration, economy or other thematic sectors) co-operation among stakeholders with the capacity to achieve tangible and long term results?
- + Do the activities lay ground for the development of a sound (new) network among the institutional actors beyond the duration of the project?

B. The operational check

Partnership: transnationality and quality

- + Is the representation of partner states appropriate (in terms of activities, geographical representation and financial distribution)?
- + Is the level of involvement of every partner coherent in financial and content terms?
- + Does the project involve the relevant actors for the defined objectives?
- + Is the project matching with the policy making level in the concerned fields?

Yes/ no criteria- not to be included in scores:

- + Did relevant structures (national institutions, international organisations or NGOs) declare officially their commitment to the projects aims, as observer or advisor? (if appropriate).
- + Does the partnership include partners located outside the programme area? If yes, is the added value for the project partnership clearly demonstrated?

Budget and finance

- + Is the value for money well demonstrated? Is the budget requested in reasonable relation with the foreseen activities and the number of partners?
- + Is the budget allocated to management and coordination tasks reasonable?

- + Is there any obvious incoherence between the allocation of resources per WP (every 6 month) and the planned time schedule?
- + Is there any obvious incoherence between the overall budget and the budget allocated to single work package (WP)?
- + Good input-output relation:
 - o Is there coherence between the budget allocated to each cost category and the activities carried out under that category?
 - o Is there coherence between the budget allocated to each WP and the activities carried out within that WP?

Yes/ no criteria- not to be included in scores:

- + If investments are foreseen: is the budget reasonable and does the investment benefit the partnership? Is the corresponding section in the AF filled in?

Management structure

- + Is the management structure clearly described? Are the decision making procedures and the monitoring transparent?
- + Does the transnational project management include regular transnational meetings among project partners, clear responsibilities of the partners involved and a transparent internal communication system?
- + Are the chosen milestones relevant and set at relevant periods of time?

Yes/ no criteria- not to be included in scores:

- + Does the LP have the overall responsibility?

Communication Strategy

- + Does the project have a detailed and clear communication strategy?
- + Has the project identified key deliverables as milestones in the project implementation?
- + Are the targets for I&P measures clearly identified and the different actions and means which will be put into practice to reach each of them in a tailored way described?
- + Does the project consider as targets not only specialised groups but also the relevant decision makers at regional and local level and the civil society?
- + Does the I&P plan cover the entire partnership and match with the specific budget commitments?

The ACP will perform a national technical verification including the following criteria:

- + Eligibility of previous expenditure (Proof of First Written Contact with the national/ regional authorities). Is the FWC inserted in the AF coherent with the effective FWC?

- + Legal capacity of the project participant (i.e. can the entity indicated as PP as such enter into legal obligations such as those arising from partnership agreement and therefore bear rights and duties).
- + Verification of the legal status of the PP i.e. is the indicated legal status of the PP correct?
- + Plausibility check of the national part of the proposed budget and financial reliability of the national partners involved and their capacity to manage resources. Are there obvious incoherence? If yes, which one?
- + Assessment of the quality of partnership by checking the reality of the involvement of the national partner(s) in the project. Are the PPs involved as indicated in the AF?
- + Relevance of state aid regulation. Are the proposed national activities subject to state aid regulations, i.e. would the co-funding of the proposed PP and their activities in the project be a state aid in the meaning of the respective EU-state aid regulations?
- + Is the proposal embedded in/ linked to a national/regional/local development or other relevant strategy?
- + Is the institution of the LP/ PP reliable and has the capacity to follow/ implement international project management?
- + Is the public national co-funding for all PP ensured?
- + Other relevant information at national level.

Additionally further criteria might be assessed, depending on the formulation of the ToR as set out by the PC (e.g. targeted call to specific fields of activities).

➔ Reference Documents

- + Article 19 of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999.
- + Operational Programme "Alpine Space", Chapter 4.2.3.
- + Terms of References

➔ Annexes

- + Model Expression of Interest (EoI) with guidance
- + Model Application Form (AF) with guidance
- + Subsidy Contract