

Factsheet N°5

Project selection: evaluating and selecting projects on the basis of full Application Forms

Version No 6 of 13th July 2016

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I. Eligibility and admissibility assessments

Upon closure of a call, the Joint Secretariat and the Member States assess the compliance of the received Application Forms and their annexes with the formal eligibility and admissibility criteria. These criteria consist of minimum technical requirements which unconditionally apply to all proposals submitted.

The purpose of the eligibility and admissibility assessments is to:

- Verify that the proposal fulfils minimum requirements of the Programme;
- Avoid further assessment of ineligible applications;
- Ensure equal treatment of all proposals to be selected for funding.

A. Eligibility assessment

The eligibility assessment is carried out to assess whether an application complies with the eligibility rules established by the Programme for its projects. For the most part, this verification will be automatically carried out by the [Electronic Exchange Platform \(EEP\)](#) through which applications must be submitted (for more information on the actual application procedure, please refer to the factsheet “Project application”). One remaining point is to be checked by the relevant Member State(s).

The following elements constitute the eligibility assessment.

Verified automatically **by the EEP**:

1. The Application Form has been submitted electronically via the EEP before the deadline set by the Programme.
2. The Application Form is completely filled out.
3. The project fulfils the minimum partnership requirements: at least two partners of two different Member States and of which one is English.
4. Time limits are respected: start and end dates of the project respect the call and Programme requirements (this may vary from call to call).
5. Minimum and maximum budget requirements are respected: if applicable (this may vary from call to call).

Member States are to assess the following criteria for those partners concerned in their area:

6. Compliance with State Aid rules¹.

If not all requirements set out above are complied with, the application will be deemed ineligible and a quality appraisal will not be undertaken. The Lead Applicant will be notified.

B. Admissibility assessment

The admissibility assessment is meant to ensure that all required documents are available by the moment the official decision has to be taken. In other words, it is a completeness check.

This verification will be carried out by the Joint Secretariat.

¹ For detailed information on the applicable State aid rules, please refer to the factsheet on “State aid”.

The following elements are verified during the admissibility assessment²:

1. All obligatory annexes were received: a scan of the signed AF confirmation page; scans of the signed Letters of Support for each partner as well as a scan of the signed De Minimis Aid Forms and of the Observer Letters, if applicable.

In order for a project proposal to be considered as admissible, the required documents mentioned above shall be uploaded in the EEP **by the deadline as indicated in the Terms of Reference of the call for proposal**.

² The required annexes and corresponding procedures to complete the submission of a full AF are described in more detail in the factsheet on "Project application".

II. Quality Assessment

Applications that are fully eligible and admissible will be subject to a quality assessment. This is done on the basis of an evaluation grid applicable to all project bids.

The following elements are under evaluation during the quality assessment:

Strategic assessment (60%)	1. Project's context (relevance and strategy): <i>How well is a need for the project justified?</i>	10%
	2. Cooperation character: <i>What added value does the cooperation bring?</i>	10%
	3. Project's contribution to Programme's objectives, expected results and outputs: <i>To what extent will the project contribute to the achievement of Programme's objectives?</i>	30%
	4. Partnership relevance: <i>To what extent is the partnership composition relevant for the proposed project?</i>	10%
Operational assessment (40%)	5. Management: <i>To what extent are management structures and procedures in line with the project size, duration and needs?</i>	5%
	6. Communication: <i>To what extent are communication activities appropriate and will reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders?</i>	5%
	7. Work plan: <i>To what extent is the work plan realistic, consistent and coherent?</i>	15%
	8. Budget: <i>To what extent does the project budget demonstrate value for money and is coherent and proportionate?</i>	15%

Resulting from the eight criteria, the main objectives of the quality assessment are:

- to assess the relevance of the project;
- to assess the feasibility of the project;
- to use the result of the assessment as a basis for decision making;
- to establish common understanding which is common ground for decision making;
- to ensure transparency;
- to be used in case of complaints.

The **Joint Secretariat (JS)** performs its assessment on the basis of the quality assessment criteria.

The JS assessment is used by the Member States (MS) to inform on a decision on the applications in the **Monitoring Committee**³. A decision is based on the principle of consensus. There are three possible outcomes:

- Rejection;
- Referral-back (for operational and/or strategic shortcomings);
- Approval.

³ A Monitoring Committee is set up by the Programme to perform the following tasks:

- review implementation of the Programme and progress made towards achieving its objectives
- examine all issues that affect the performance of the programme, including the conclusions of the performance reviews
- select projects

As stated above, project applications shall be deemed both eligible and admissible by the time that the Monitoring Committee has to take a decision. In the absence of conformity to the eligibility and admissibility assessments, applications will not be considered for funding by the Monitoring Committee.

The Lead Applicant will be officially notified of the Monitoring Committee decision.

A. Rejected applications

In the case of rejection, a decision has been made that the project is either not suitable for the Programme or would need radical reworking leading to a complete change of the nature of the project proposed. This does not though stop partners from submitting a different project to the Programme in the future.

→ Partners whose project has been rejected will have to go through the full application procedure for any future project submission, i.e. a new Concept Note must be submitted in a future call before a new full Application Form can be developed.

The Lead Applicant can appeal the decision of the Monitoring Committee, for which the legal basis is Article 74 (3) of [Regulation \(EU\) No 1303/2013](#).

B. Referred-back applications

In the case of referral-back, projects can re-submit an improved application in a future call.

→ The re-submission procedure will depend on which elements of the Application Form were deemed weak.

1. The shortcomings were detected in the operational criteria only.

In this case the project is considered as broadly good; however there are aspects of the project that need some reworking before it can be approved by the Programme.

For these projects, the Programme has developed a fast track procedure, as follows:

- a new Concept Note will not be necessary;
- a new full Application Form can be submitted at the earliest deadline, as specified in the call Terms of Reference;

In case a project needs some extra time to rework its Application Form, it can opt for the submission of the revised Application Form by a later deadline, as specified in the call Terms of Reference.

In order to choose which deadline to submit the revised Application form, it is very important to consider that projects that have been referred back **can resubmit a revised Application Form only once. This means that if the Programme does not approve the resubmitted Application Form the project should start the full process at the next available call (see Factsheet n.4).**

2. The shortcomings were detected in the strategic and operational criteria.

In this case the project needs important reworking, which will require more time but will not radically change the nature of the project.

For these projects, the Programme has developed the following procedure:

- A new Concept Note is not required;

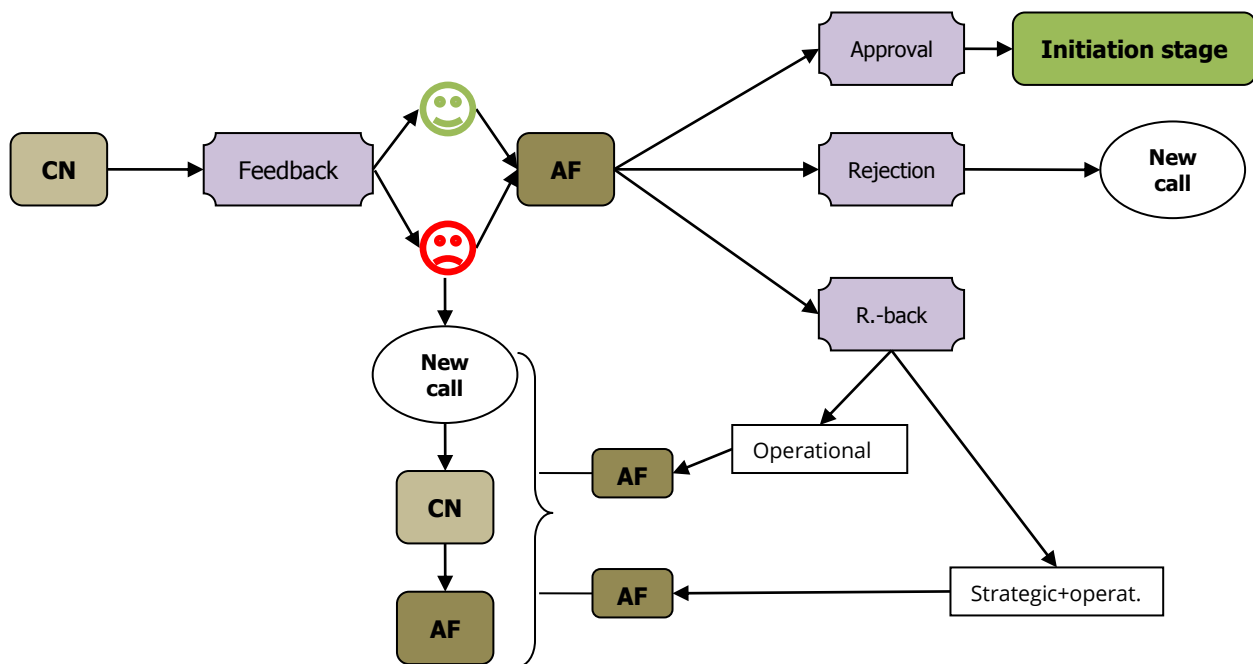
- However, considering the different types and the amount of changes the Programme is asking for, in principle the project cannot submit its reworked Application Form by the same deadline given to projects referred back for operational shortcomings. The project is invited to resubmit a new full Application Form by a later deadline as specified in the Call Terms of Reference.

It is very important to consider that projects that have been referred back **can resubmit a revised Application Form only once. This means that, if the Programme does not approve the resubmitted Application Form, the project should start the full process at the next available call (see Factsheet n.4)**

The Lead Applicant can appeal the decision of the Monitoring Committee, for which the legal basis is Article 74 (3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. In this case, the complaint procedure detailed in section III below shall apply.

C. Approved applications

As soon as the project applicants have received the notification of approval of the application, the project implementation phase starts and ends with the project's closure. This long period, which can last several years, is sub-divided into several stages. For further information please see factsheet "Project Implementation".



The 2 Seas (re-)application process

III. Complaint procedure during project selection

Project Lead Applicants of rejected project proposals are informed in writing about the reasons why an application was not eligible or was not approved. Any questions in relation to the assessments will be examined and answered by the Managing Authority and/or Joint Secretariat.

Projects that have not been selected for funding have the right to file a formal complaint on the decision of the Programme regarding the non-selection of a proposal. However, such a complaint must be well-grounded and follow a specific procedure. Please note that further details and specific complaint forms may be published with each call.

In principle, complaints can only be lodged against the following criteria:

- 1) the assessment does not correspond to the information provided by the Lead Applicant, and/or
- 2) the project assessment and selection process failed to comply with the specific procedures laid down in the call publication and Programme Manual that materially affected or could have materially affected the decision.

Only the project's Lead Applicant can file a complaint. Potential complaints from partners have to be passed through the Lead Applicant. Complaints must be submitted in writing (post or email) to the Joint Secretariat **within 3 weeks** after the official notification of the non-selection of the project by the Programme.

The complaints will be examined and answered by a complaint panel involving the chair of the Monitoring Committee (at the time of the non-selection decision), the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat. If deemed necessary, the complaint panel may decide to refer back a complaint to the Monitoring Committee of the Programme.

This Complaint Procedure is without prejudice to any mechanism or process for legal redress at national level, in particular with regard to unsuccessful applicants.

IV. Where to find assistance during this stage of your project?

Throughout the selection phase, as explained above, the **Joint Secretariat (JS)** is involved in the evaluation (eligibility, admissibility & quality) of the application. Therefore their assistance is limited to the sending out of the **Monitoring Committee** feedback once a decision has been taken.

At this stage, the assistance of the **Territorial Facilitator** is also limited to a role of information:

- He/she can inform you on the procedures and requirements;
- He/she can inform you on the state of play of your submission;
- He/she can clarify feedback from Member States;
- He/she can also help you take into account all the recommendations from the Member States once the assessment has been finalised in order to develop further your final Application Form.