

INTERREG V A Italy – Croatia CBC Programme

Restricted Call for proposals
(IT-HR Clusters)

Factsheet n. 5

Project Selection

Version of 5 October 2021

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A. OVERVIEW

Within the INTERREG V A Italy-Croatia CBC Programme (IT-HR Programme) the selection of project proposals is carried out in compliance with art. 12 of ETC Regulation (No. 1299/2013) by the Monitoring Committee (henceforth “MC”), with the support of the Joint Secretariat (henceforth “JS”), on the basis of the methodology and criteria approved by the MC.

This document illustrates, for the purposes of transparency, the project selection procedures. These procedures are made available to the public in order to allow applicants to be aware of the criteria which are used to assess the proposals and thus develop high quality projects to support the Programme in reaching its objectives.

Project applications shall be submitted in English language via the SIU system within the deadline set in the Call announcement, according to the procedures detailed in factsheet n. 4 “Project Application”. The SIU system performs a number of automatic checks on the data inserted and saved into the system. These checks should be considered a supportive tool for lead applicants. The checks do not substitute in any form the lead applicant’s responsibility to verify the compliance of the submitted proposal with all Programme and Call requirements including the respect of admissibility and eligibility criteria.

All regularly submitted project proposals are duly and officially registered by the Managing Authority through the Regional record system registration, for the subsequent assessment phase.

After the submission, the procedural steps to be carried out shall include:

1. Admissibility check of applications, to be performed by JS with the support of some checks which are done automatically by the SIU system;
2. Eligibility checks on the basis of eligibility criteria, to be carried out by the JS with the support of some checks which are done automatically by the SIU system;
3. Quality check based on the selection criteria and sub-criteria defined by the MC, to be carried out by JS on the basis of the specificity of the project contents and the expertise available within the JS. Minimum quality thresholds will be applied for each group of quality criteria; moreover, an overall quality threshold is set;
4. State Aid assessment only for projects recommended for funding, to be carried out by JS.

Information provided in the application form and related annexes included in the SIU system shall be subject to the assessment.

The following paragraphs illustrate in detail each step of the assessment procedure.

The following annexes to this document are available to the applicants:

- the tables of approved selection criteria;
- some useful information on the Programme, which will be evaluated during the assessment phase.

The MC is in charge of the final decision on the selection of the operations for funding.

B. ADMISSIBILITY CHECK

The first step of the assessment procedure is aimed at verifying the administrative compliance with requirements set in the related Call for proposals. This phase of the assessment is carried out by the JS, supported by some checks done automatically by the SIU system.

In particular, the admissibility check is aimed at confirming that the proposal has been submitted via the SIU system within the set deadline, that the application form is complete, filled-in in English and duly signed.

The admissibility criteria are of a “*knock-out nature*” thus shall be clearly answered by YES or NO. Failure to meet admissibility requirements leads to the rejection of the proposal. In this case Programme authorities shall not bear any responsibility for missing or misleading information causing the rejection of the project (please see also factsheet n. 4 “Project Application”).

For details on admissibility assessment criteria please see “ANNEXES Selection criteria - ANNEX I - Admissibility selection criteria”.

Applications that will not fulfill one of the admissibility criteria will be considered as inadmissible and will not enter the subsequent assessment phase.

Moreover, as a result of this first check, in order to respect the Italian law in force on the transparency of the administrative procedure, the list of validly submitted applications is published on the Programme website, containing some essential information such as:

- Identification (Name and tax number) of the lead applicant with the specification of its location (Country);
- acronym of the project;
- priority axis/specific objective;
- reference of the administration in charge of the procedure;
- the office and the person in charge of the procedure;
- the office where documents related to the procedure are available and can be accessed;
- the date of submission and number of regional record system registration.

Lead applicants (henceforth “LAs”) of inadmissible applications shall be informed by the Managing Authority.

C. ELIGIBILITY CHECK

The second step of the assessment procedure is aimed at verifying the eligibility compliance with the requirements set in the related Call for proposals. Only proposals that successfully passed the admissibility check shall proceed to the eligibility check. This phase of the assessment is carried out by the JS, with the support of some checks which are done automatically by the SIU system.

In particular, the eligibility check is aimed at ensuring the respect of the minimum compulsory requirements as regards to partnership (including project partner minimum and maximum participation and the completeness of LA’s and project partners’ data/documents), duration, budget, horizontal principles and cooperation. The eligibility check includes the verification of additional requirements per Specific Objective aimed at the respect of legislation, plans and Programmes which are thematically relevant.

In case that more than one proposal is submitted by the same lead applicant, all submitted proposals will be rejected. In case a PP organization is involved as LP or PP in more than 1 “cluster”, the PP is excluded. The failure to meet the criteria of the partnership requirements leads to the rejection of the project proposal (see FS5 annexes).

Eligibility criteria are of a “*knock-out nature*” thus shall be clearly answered by YES or NO, if only one of the mentioned eligibility criteria is answered with NO, the project has to be rejected as ineligible and it will not undergo quality assessment, unless the failure of the criteria leads to the rejection of a single project partner and the general partnership requirements are still met by the proposal.

However, at this stage the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat may contact the lead applicant if additional information is needed to clarify or demonstrate the fulfillment of some of the eligibility requirements; to this aim, the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat will give to the lead applicant specific instructions and deadlines.

In order to verify the nationality and legal status of the applicants, the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat shall ask support to Croatian and Italian National Authorities for any evidence supporting the respect of these criteria.

Only the applications that will successfully pass the eligibility check will qualify for the quality check.

For details on eligibility assessment criteria, please see “ANNEXES Selection criteria - Annex II Eligibility assessment criteria”.

In case the content of the application form does not coincide with the content of the Annexes information included in the SIU, the system shall prevail unless it is possible to clearly identify which information is the correct one.

It is the responsibility of the lead applicant to check the uploaded information before finally submitting the proposal. Programme authorities shall not bear any responsibility for missing or misleading information causing the rejection of the project.

Result of the eligibility check shall be communicated to the MC for approval.

All LAs shall be informed about the results of the eligibility check. LAs of ineligible applications shall be informed by the MA.

D. QUALITY CHECK

The third step of the assessment procedure is aimed at evaluating the quality of admitted and eligible proposals. Only those applications which passed the admissibility and eligibility checks shall be assessed from a quality point of view. This phase of the assessment is carried out by the

JS, on the basis of the specificity of the project contents and the expertise available within the JS. The assessment is based on 3 different groups of criteria:

1. Strategic assessment criteria
2. Operational assessment criteria
3. Specific assessment criteria for cluster

The goal of quality check is to provide the MC with an overall picture of all relevant information on each application in order to decide whether it is worthy of being financed or not.

Strategic criteria are the same for all project proposals and their main aim is to assess the contribution of the project proposals to the Cooperation Programme objectives, and expected results. A strong focus is given to the result-oriented approach with clear demand for visible outputs and concrete results. Strategic criteria also assess the cross-border cooperation approach, the quality and relevance of partnership and Programme horizontal principles.

Operational criteria's main aim is to assess the viability and the feasibility of the proposed project, as well as its value for money in terms of resources used vs. foreseen achievements and communication items.

Specific criteria per cluster are specific for each cluster and assess Programme guiding principles, cross-cutting issues and other specific topics.

Each criterion is appraised according to the following scales:
- on a NO/PARTIALLY/YES (0-2-4) and (0-3-6) basis.

For quality assessment criteria and related scoring, please see "ANNEXES Selection criteria - Annex III Quality assessment criteria".

Each score is described as follows:

<i>Value</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Description</i>
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NO	0	Information missing (not filled in or not provided in the text). Information provided but proves the inexistence of the requirements or information provided only for up to a half of the aspects that are being assessed
PARTIALLY	2	Information provided is adequate, however some aspects are not clearly or sufficiently detailed or information provided for more than a half but not for all the aspects that are being assessed
YES	4	Information provided in detail, clearness and coherence and it covers all the aspects that are being assessed

<i>Value</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Description</i>
NO	0	Information missing (not filled in or not provided in the text). Information provided but proves the inexistence of the requirements or information provided only for up to a half of the aspects that are being assessed
PARTIALLY	3	Information provided is adequate, however some aspects are not clearly or sufficiently detailed or information provided for more than a half but not for all the aspects that are being assessed
YES	6	Information provided in detail, clearness and coherence and it covers all the aspects that are being assessed

The maximum total score within the whole quality assessment is 120 points (100%), divided per criteria as highlighted in the table below.

C.1 Strategic assessment criteria	maximum score	% on strategic criteria	overall %
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C.1.1 Project context – relevance and strategy	10	25%	8,3%
C.1.2 Cooperation character	8	20%	6,7%
C.1.3 Project's contribution to Programme's objectives	18	45%	15%
C.1.4 Partnership	4	10%	3,3%
Total score for strategic criteria	40	100%	33,3%
C.2 Operational assessment criteria	maximum score	% on operational criteria	overall %
C.2.1 Management	8	20%	6,7%
C.2.2 Communication	14	35%	11,7%
C.2.3 Work Plan	10	25%	8,3%
C.2.4 Budget	8	20%	6,7%
Total score for operational criteria	40	100%	33,3%
C.3 Specific assessment criteria per cluster	maximum score	% on specific criteria per cluster	overall %
Total score for specific assessment criteria per cluster	40	100%	33,3%
TOTAL OVERALL	120		

There are some minimum quality thresholds to be reached: 65% of the score of the strategic criteria section, which is equal to 26/40 points, 65% of the score of the operational criteria section, which is equal to 26/40 points, and 65% of the score of the Criteria per cluster, which is equal to 26/40.

Although the sum of above-mentioned sub-category thresholds is 78, also an overall minimum quality threshold, equal to 84/120 points (70% of total score), shall be reached in order to be proposed for financing.

The sub-criteria are scored differently, as illustrated in the table below:

C.1 Strategic assessment criteria	Max score for each sub-criterion	Max score for each criterion
C.1.1 Project context		
C.1.1.a	4	10
C.1.1.b	6	
C.1.2 Cooperation character		
C.1.2.a	4	8
C.1.2.b	4	
C.1.3 Project's contribution to Programme's objectives		
C.1.3.a	4	18
C.1.3.b	6	
C.1.3.c	4	
C.1.3.d	4	
C.1.4 Partnership		
C.1.4.a	4	4
Total score for Strategic assessment criteria		40

C.2 Operational assessment criteria	Max score for each sub-criterion	Max score for each criterion
C.2.1 Management		
C.2.1.a	4	8
C.2.1.b	4	
C.2.2 Communication		
C.2.2.a	4	14
C.2.2.b	6	
C.2.2.c	4	
C.2.3 Work Plan		
C.2.3.a	6	

C.2.3.b	4	10
C.2.4 Budget		
C.2.4.a	4	8
C.2.4.b	4	
Total score for operational assessment criteria		40

C.3 Specific assessment criteria per cluster	Max score for each sub-criterion	Max score for each criterion
Total score for specific assessment criteria per cluster		40
TOTAL		120

After the closure of the quality check, each application shall get a final score.

One ranking list will be defined per each cluster and it will be subdivided in:

- applications above the minimum quality threshold and recommended for funding on the basis of the ERDF budget available for each cluster;
- applications reaching the minimum quality threshold but without available funds;
- applications not reaching the minimum threshold for funding and not recommended for selection, unless none of the applications reaches the minimum threshold where the following paragraph is applied.

For each cluster, if none of the submitted proposals reaches the minimum threshold for being proposed for funding, the MC is duly informed about the weaknesses of the best scored proposal and may decide to give the mandate to the Joint Secretariat to set up a number of conditions to be cleared by the concerned lead applicant in a given timeframe. If necessary, the Joint Secretariat will provide technical assistance in order to improve the level of project quality. If clarification and needed improvements are not provided within the set deadline, the project will be proposed for MC decision ranked as application not reaching the minimum threshold for funding.

E. STATE AID ASSESSMENT

In consideration to the types of activities financed by this restricted Call for Proposals, the Programme does not expect any State aid relevant activity, as defined by European legislation and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union governing the matter in Articles 107-108. In order to ensure the compliance with the State aid relevant legislation, the JS will verify the consistency of the actions financed with the requirement of the Call.

The JS shall verify the consistency of the actions financed with the requirement of the Call in order to avoid any State Aid relevant activities.

Should State Aid relevance be confirmed, the INTERREG V A Italy – Croatia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme might ask the project participants to exclude certain activities from the project proposal or to take other measures in order to remove State Aid relevance.

Otherwise, if no counter measures and conditions can be adopted ensuring compliance of the approved project with State Aid rules, the Programme may exclude the concerned partner or reject the proposal.

Additionally, State Aid relevant activities will be regularly checked during the project implementation by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat supported by the Programme bodies and authorities in both Member States (e.g., JS, MC, First Level Control Body, etc.) in order to ensure that the Italy-Croatia projects comply with the applicable State Aid regulations and that the above-mentioned basic principles of the Programme are observed.

F. COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

According to the Article 74(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, the Interreg V A Italy-Croatia Programme sets up a complaint procedure in order to find an amicable and mutually acceptable solution avoiding any form of litigation between the Managing Authority and the lead applicant.

In principle, the complaint procedure must be well grounded and can pertain to formal and administrative aspects and/or quality and State Aid aspects.

Reasons for complaints shall only refer to the following aspects:

- a) The assessment did not take into account the information provided in the application form;
- b) The project assessment procedure did not follow what was reported in the Call for proposals and/or in the Programme documents.

Any complaint related to the assessment and selection of the project proposals shall be addressed by the lead applicant (complaints received by project partners individually shall not be taken into consideration), on behalf of the entire partnership, to the Managing Authority (via certified e-mail or via email).

The complaint procedure is specified for every assessment phase as follows:

a) Admissibility check: lead applicants will be informed in writing about the reasons why an application was not progressed to the eligibility check; no complaint procedure can be activated at this stage, except in case it can be demonstrated that late or incomplete submission are due to SIU system malfunctioning;

b) Eligibility checks: lead applicants will be informed in writing about the reasons why an application did not qualify for the quality assessment. Not later than 10 working days after the receipt of the communication by the Managing Authority on the MC decision, the lead applicant can communicate to the Managing Authority duly justified observations to the reasons for exclusion. The Managing Authority will present the complaint and the provided information for examination to a Complaint Committee composed by representatives designated by the MC and by representatives of the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat. In the absence of valid observations, the Managing Authority will adopt the definitive act of exclusion on the basis of the final decision of the Complaint Committee. In case the complaint is accepted, the project proposal shall be further evaluated in the quality assessment.

c) Quality assessment and State Aid assessment: LAs will receive in writing the notification of the Managing Authority on the results of the selection procedure as decided by the MC. The lead applicant can file a formal complaint under the terms and conditions established in the Managing Authority communication, providing all the information useful for complaint examination. In this case, the Managing Authority will present the case for examination to the Complaint Committee (same as above). The Managing Authority will inform the lead applicant on such a procedure including a provisional timeline for the settlement of the case, where

possible. The lead applicant will finally receive in writing from the Managing Authority the final decision taken by the Complaint Committee.

The complaint should include:

- name and address of the lead partner (or the concerned partner);
- reference number of the application which is a subject of the complaint;
- reasons for the complaint, including list of all elements of the assessment which are being raised and/or failures in adherence with procedures limited to those criteria mentioned previously;
- date, signature and stamp of the legal representative of the claimant;
- any supporting documents.

The decisions taken after each complaint procedures will be final, binding to all parties and not subject to any further complaint proceedings within the Programme if the complaint is based on the same grounds. Against the final decision, at every step of the selection procedure, an official litigation process could start and, in this case, the legal proceedings will take place in Italy. The venue is the Civil County Court in Venice. The Italian laws regulating the statute of limitations (suspension or interruption) shall not be affected by the present complaint procedure.

G. WHERE TO FIND ASSISTANCE

The Joint Secretariat (JS) is based in Venice, with the branch office in Zadar, and can be contacted at any time by LAs for any queries related to project development.

Contact details of the JS are:

INTERREG V A Italy – Croatia CBC Programme Joint Secretariat

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