



# FactSheet

## No. 2.3

### Project selection: procedure and criteria

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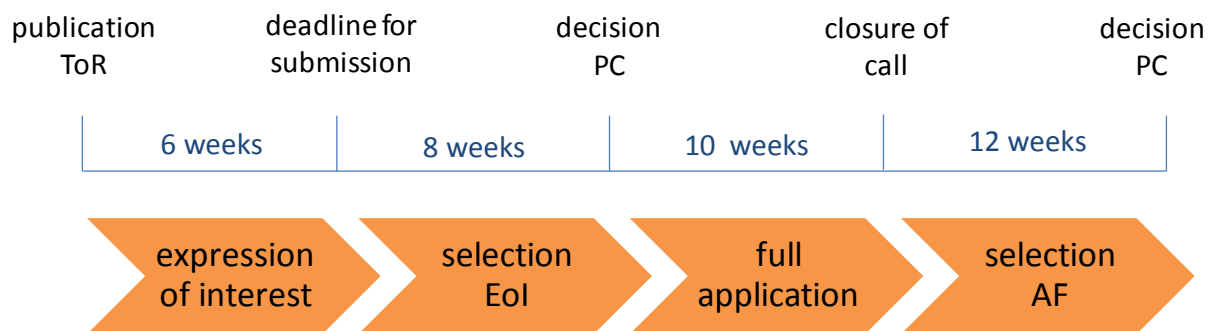
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# 1. Selection procedure

The cooperation programme (CP) section 5.3 sets out a binding framework for the selection of project proposals. All project proposals are evaluated following a standardised and transparent procedure and a set of criteria approved by the programme committee (PC).

Project proposals are normally selected in a two-step application procedure: expressions of interest (Eoi) in step 1 and application forms (AF) plus partnership agreements in step 2 (see details in factsheet “project application”). The following graph shows the single steps and approximate duration of the application and selection procedure.



## Evaluation of proposals

In both steps the evaluation of proposals is carried out by the joint secretariat (JS), with the support of the Alpine contact points (ACP) performing national verifications for the partners situated in their country. The evaluation starts with the eligibility check and (for those successful) is then completed with the assessment. They are performed against specific criteria which are approved by the PC and set out in this factsheet; further criteria might be decided by the PC and included in the relevant terms of reference (ToR) (e.g. targeted call to specific fields of activities).

The **eligibility check** is verifying whether the proposal fulfils the minimum programme requirements. If it fails the eligibility check, the Eoi/AF is considered as rejected and is not further assessed. The **assessment** is appraising the quality of a proposal; it focuses on operational and content-related aspects, in addition to the strategic ones. The assessment of an AF will also take into consideration the compliance with the recommendations given by the PC (see below).



## Selection of proposals

The PC, composed by the Partner States of the programme, is the decision-making body and is therefore responsible for project selection. As soon as the eligibility check is completed, the PC decides on the eligibility of proposals, normally through a written procedure. For the quality assessment, the JS proposes a ranking list to the PC. An assessment report is developed for each project. The selection of Eo/AF is decided by the PC in the context of a specific meeting. In this meeting, national delegations discuss the different proposals and come to a common agreement on their approval or rejection. Decisions are taken by consensus of all Partner States.

### **Expression of interest (step 1)**

In step 1, project proposals that are highly scored and show good quality are invited by the PC to submit a detailed application form (AF) and signed partnership agreement in a second step. If appropriate, the PC gives recommendations to those invited to the second step on how to further elaborate the project proposal to better meet the expectations of the programme.

### **Project applications (step 2)**

In step 2 projects are approved or rejected. The PC selects by consensus the projects that are highly scored and show good quality and that are thus co-financed by the programme. In justified cases the PC might formulate recommendations together with the approval decision. At the latest with the submission of the first progress report the partnership will be asked for explanations on how the recommendations have been considered and integrated in the project.

## Information to applicants

Information is provided to lead applicants in the relevant steps of the application procedure. At the end of the eligibility check, the lead applicants of ineligible Eo/AF are notified by the managing authority/joint secretariat (MA/JS) via email; the communication specifies the eligibility criteria which were not fulfilled. At the end of the selection process, the list of approved projects is published on the programme website together with a news thread. In addition, all lead applicants receive a letter from the MA/JS on the approval or rejection of the project; the communication includes an evaluation report and reasons for approval/rejection. In case of approval, the subsidy contract (SC) is attached to the letter.



## 2. Selection criteria

### Criteria for expression of interest (step 1)

#### Eligibility criteria

- The EoI is completed with the requested information (in part A and C of the EoI all fields are obligatory; in part B of the EoI, the following fields are obligatory: name of the organisation, at least one contact detail (name of the person, telephone and email address), NUTS3 level, legal status, thematic competence/experience relevant for the project).
- The EoI is completed in the required language: English.
- The project fulfils minimum requirements for the partnership: at least 4 partners from 4 different Alpine Space countries are involved.
- Established contact of the applicant with the ACP: the EoI lead partner had at least one written contact with its respective ACP before submission (*input from the ACP verification*). For the projects with EoI LP coming from Switzerland or Liechtenstein, this rule does not apply to the EoI ERDF-LP.

*Further eligibility criteria might be added, depending on the formulation in the relevant ToR as set out by the PC.*

#### Weighting system for the assessment criteria clusters

Assessment criteria clusters	Points
Project's context and cooperation character	350
Project's contribution to programme's objectives, expected results and outputs	380
Partnership relevance	270
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>

#### Assessment criteria

**Cluster criterion: Project's context (relevance and strategy) and cooperation character** (EoI sections A, C)

This criterion refers to the relevance of the project for the programme and its cooperation character. A proposal is scored 0 when, based on the overall judgement of the proposal, serious weaknesses in this assessment criteria cluster are identified. In such a case, the proposal is automatically recommended for rejection; the evaluation report does not contain weaknesses and strengths for all clusters, but a short overall assessment of the proposal as well as information on main reasons why the project reached 0 in this cluster.

*How well is a need for the project justified?*



- The project addresses common territorial challenges of the programme or a joint asset of the programme area - there is a real demand for the project.
- The project demonstrates its contribution to a wider strategy on one or more policy levels (EU/ macro-regional).

*What added value does the cooperation bring?*

- The importance of the transnational approach to the topic addressed is clearly demonstrated and reflected in the planned activities: the results cannot (or can only to some extent) be achieved without transnational cooperation and/or the transnational cooperation has a significant added value for the programme area.
- The project demonstrates new solutions that go beyond the existing practice in the sector/programme area/participating countries or adapts and implements already developed solutions.

**Cluster criterion: Project's contribution to programme's objectives, expected results and outputs**

(EoI section C)

*To what extent will the project contribute to the achievement of programme's objectives?*

- The project's results and outputs are clearly linked to a programme priority and its indicators:
  - *the project overall objective is clearly linked to a programme priority specific objective,*
  - *the project results are clearly linked to a programme result indicator,*
  - *the project specific objectives are clearly linked to the project overall objective,*
  - *the project outputs are clearly linked to the project specific objectives.*
- The project's results and outputs are in accordance with the needs of the selected target groups.

**Cluster criterion: Partnership relevance** (EoI section B)

*To what extent is the partnership composition relevant for the proposed project? Is the partnership coherent with the project objectives?*

- The project involves the relevant institutions needed to address the territorial challenge/joint asset and the objectives specified (e.g. partners with relevant institutional role and policy addressing capacity are involved, partners have proven experience in the thematic field concerned).
- With regards to the project's objectives, the project partnership is balanced with respect to the governance levels, sectors and territory.

*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).*



**The ACP perform national verifications as follows:**

- Legal capacity of the LP (i.e. can the entity indicated as LP as such enter into legal obligations such as those arising from the partnership agreement and therefore bear rights and duties? If not, a LP change will have to be implemented in step 2).
- There are no official records pointing at possible inability in the partners' capacities to fulfil its envisaged role (also in financial terms).

## Criteria for project applications (step 2)

### **Eligibility criteria**

- *The AF is completed with the requested information.*
- *The partnership agreement as obligatory annex is submitted.*
- *The application package is completed in required language: English.*
- *The project fulfils minimum requirements for the partnership: at least 4 partners from 4 different Alpine Space countries are involved.*
- *Established contact of the LP with the ACP and JS: the LP consulted its national ACP and the JS after step 1 to ensure the submission of quality application documents (if relevant, to discuss the PC recommendations) (input from the ACP verification). For the projects with LP coming from Switzerland or Liechtenstein, this rule does not apply to the ERDF-LP.*
- *The overall objective of the submitted proposal is the same as in the EoI.*
- *The indicated LP was already involved in the EoI as LP or PP. For the projects with LP coming from Switzerland or Liechtenstein, this rule does not apply to the EoI ERDF-LP.*
- *The EoI LP is involved in the project partnership as LP or PP. For the projects with EoI LP coming from Switzerland or Liechtenstein, this rule does not apply to the ERDF-LP.*
- *The LP of the submitted proposal is a public or public equivalent body (according to the public procurement law) (input from the ACP verification). For the projects with LP coming from Switzerland or Liechtenstein, this rule applies only to the ERDF-LP.*
- *All project participants (LP and PPs) met the national requirements: each project participant submitted the national requirements within the given deadline (input from the ACP verification).*

Further eligibility criteria might be added, depending on the formulation in the relevant ToR as set out by the PC.



**Weighting system for the assessment criteria clusters**

<i>Assessment criteria clusters</i>	<i>Points</i>
<i>Project's context and cooperation character</i>	<i>170</i>
<i>Project's contribution to programme's objectives, expected results and outputs</i>	<i>280</i>
<i>Partnership relevance</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>Management</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Communication</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Work plan</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Budget</i>	<i>100</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>

**Assessment criteria**

**Were recommendations from the 1st step considered and integrated in AF?**

- *Recommendations given by the PC in the 1st step of application were considered and integrated in the AF.*

**Project's context (relevance and strategy) and cooperation character (AF sections B, C)**

*How well is a need for the project justified?*

- *The project addresses common territorial challenges of the programme or a joint asset of the programme area - there is a real demand for the project.*
- *The project demonstrates its contribution to a wider strategy on one or more policy levels (EU/ macro-regional/ national/ regional) (input from ACP verification for national level).*
- *The project makes use of available knowledge and builds on existing results and practices.*
- *The project makes a positive contribution to the programme horizontal principles: sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women.*

*What added value does the cooperation bring?*

- *The importance of the transnational approach to the topic addressed is clearly demonstrated: the results cannot (or can only to some extent) be achieved without transnational cooperation and/or the transnational cooperation has a significant added value for the programme area.*
- *The project demonstrates new solutions that go beyond the existing practice in the sector/programme area/participating countries or adapts and implements already developed solutions.*



**Project's contribution to programme's objectives, expected results and outputs** (AF section C)

*To what extent will the project contribute to the achievement of programme's objectives?*

- *Through the planned outputs and results, the project demonstrates a clear contribution to the programme priority and indicators:*
  - *the project overall objective is clearly linked to a programme priority specific objective,*
  - *the project results are clearly linked to a programme result indicator,*
  - *the project specific objectives are clearly linked to the project overall objective,*
  - *the project main outputs are clearly linked to the project specific objectives,*
  - *the project main outputs are clearly linked to programme output indicators.*
- *Results and main outputs:*
  - *are in accordance with the needs of relevant target groups,*
  - *are tangible/implementation oriented,*
  - *are clearly defined and realistic (it is possible to achieve them with given resources – i.e. time, partners, budget - and they are realistically based on the quantification provided).*
- *Project outputs are durable: the proposal is expected to provide a significant and durable contribution to solving the challenges targeted (the proposal includes realistic provisions to ensure the durability of the project outputs) – if not, it is justified why.*
- *Project outputs are applicable and replicable by other organisations/regions/countries outside of the current partnership (the proposal includes realistic provisions to ensure transferability) – if not, it is justified why.*

**Partnership relevance** (AF section B)

*To what extent is the partnership composition relevant for the proposed project?*

- *The relevance of the involved project partners is clearly demonstrated with regard to the addressed territorial challenge/joint asset and the objectives specified (e.g. partners with relevant institutional role and policy addressing capacity are involved; partner organisations have proven experience and competence in the thematic field concerned).*
- *With regards to the project's objectives the project partnership is balanced with respect to the governance levels, sectors and territory.*
- *All partners play a defined role in the partnership and are expected to get a real benefit from it.*
- *Organisations listed in the AF as project observers (if applicable) are relevant and their commitment to the project objectives is demonstrated.*





### Management (AF sections B, C)

*To what extent are management structures and procedures in line with the project size, duration and needs?*

- *Management structures (e.g. project steering committee) are proportionate to the project size and needs and allow partners' involvement in decision-making. Project management includes regular contact between project partners and ensures transfer of expertise across the partnership (internal communication within the partnership).*
- *Management procedures (such as reporting and evaluation procedures in the area of finance, project content, communication) are clear, transparent, efficient and effective. Necessary provisions for risk and quality management are in place.*
- *The LP demonstrates competency in managing EU co-financed projects or other international projects or can ensure adequate measures for management support.*

### Communication (AF section C)

*To what extent are communication activities appropriate and forceful to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders?*

- *The communication objectives clearly support the project specific objectives. The approach/tactics chosen are appropriate to reach communication objectives.*
- *Communication activities and deliverables are appropriate to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders.*

### Work plan (AF section C)

*Are the principles of multi-level governance and horizontal integration as well as transnationality considered in project activities?*

- *Activities are of transnational character (organisational aspect).*
- *Through its activities the project promotes vertical (across levels) and horizontal (across sectors) cooperation among stakeholders.*

*To what extent is the work plan realistic, consistent and coherent?*

- *Proposed activities and deliverables are relevant and lead to the planned main outputs and results.*
- *Time plan is realistic (contingency included). Activities, deliverables and outputs are in a logical time-sequence. Distribution of tasks among partners is appropriate (e.g. sharing of tasks is clear, logical, in line with partners' role in the project, etc.).*
- *Activities outside the programme area clearly benefiting the programme area (if applicable).*



### Budget (AF sections C, D, E)

*To what extent does the project budget demonstrate value for money?*

- *Economic use of the proposed budget: the project budget appears proportionate to the proposed work plan and the main outputs and results aimed for.*

*To what extent is the budget coherent and proportionate?*

- *Total partner budgets reflect real partners' involvement (is coherent and realistic).*
- *Distribution of the budget per period, work package and budget line is in line with the work plan.*
- *The need for engaging external expertise is justified and the costs are realistic.*
- *The need for equipment purchases is justified and the costs are realistic. The added value of equipment purchases and small scale investments and their transnational relevance is demonstrated for reaching the project objectives (if applicable).*

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

### **The ACP perform the technical verification on the national level including the following elements:**

- *Legal capacity of the project participant (i.e. can the entity indicated as PP or LP as such enter into legal obligations such as those arising from the partnership agreement and therefore bear rights and duties. This includes a verification of the legal status of PP: public or private entity, according to the public procurement law).*
- *There are no official records pointing at possible inability in the capacities of participants (PP or LP) to fulfil the envisaged role (also in financial terms).*
- *The project contributes/is linked to national/regional policies.*

## Reference documents

- EU Regulation 1303/2013, art. 125 (3)
- Cooperation Programme "Alpine Space", Chapter 5.3. and Guiding principles for selection of operations defined for each Investment Priority, Chapters 2.A.6.2.
- Terms of reference of the relevant call for proposals



## Annexes

- *Guidance for EoI and AF, Two-step calls for proposals*
- *Subsidy contract*