In order to be selected or put on the reserve list, any project passing the administrative and eligibility check must receive the minimum scores set for the eliminatory criteria and the minimum overall score, as provided in the *Guidelines for grant applicants.* Otherwise, it shall be rejected and not considered for further evaluation.

In case situations leading to rejection occur, they must be carefully analyzed by the external assessors and the PSC, and referred to the provisions of the *Guidelines for applicants* and of the Manual. Reasons substantiating the project rejection must be explained in the Evaluation Report. They are to be indicated in the notifications sent to the projects rejected at the end of this step.

In case that full and objective evaluation of a project cannot be performed due to e.g. inconsistencies, incoherencies, unclear information, following PSC decision, letter for request of clarifications may be sent to the applicant, duly considering that such request cannot improve or modify the project content.

Eligibility requirements are checked during all steps of evaluation and, in case they are not met, the project may be rejected at any time.

In case that information lacks consistency in different parts of the application package, data provided in documents signed by the legal representatives shall prevail over the data inserted into the application form. In case of inconsistencies between different parts of the Applicvation Form, information leading to the most favourable decision for the project will be considered.

**Reasons for project rejection**

1. The project does not receive the minimum score required for at least one eliminatory criteria[[1]](#footnote-1)/section, as provided by the *Guidelines for grant applicants* for the respective call.
2. The project does not receive the minimum overall score[[2]](#footnote-2), as required by the call.
3. Clarifications provided at PSC request are not uploaded into EMS-ENI and not sent in hard-copy version until the deadline.
4. The hard-copy version of clarifications is received after the Evaluation Report (step 2) is finalized by PSC.
5. The envelope containing the hard-copy version of clarifications does not bear the Project Registration Number given by EMS-ENI, or the number marked on the envelope cannot be retrieved into EMS-ENI or, after opening the envelope, the Project Registration Number is not mentioned in the submission letter.
6. Clarifications uploaded into EMS-ENI are fully or partially in national language and not in English.
7. Clarifications are not / partially provided when referenced to PSC letter.
8. A project submitted under the call for HARD projects does not have an infrastructure component, or the infrastructure component amounts at less than 1 M€[[3]](#footnote-3). Situation may occur when:

⦁ Ineligible costs have been reduced during evaluation, following the recommendations of the external assessors/PSC at heading 3 *Infrastructure* and the remaining amount becomes less than 1 M€;

⦁ The infrastructure component does not meet the Programme definition, as provided by the *Guidelines for grant applicants* or any corrigenda to it.

1. Ineligible, unnecessary or unjustified costs are cut and consequently, the requested grant is smaller than the minimum grant set per priority for the respective call.
2. The budget of partners located outside core regions of the programme is not appropriately tick-marked in the budget sheet. If tick-marked, the total amount to be spent by the project outside the core regions would be over 10% of the total budget.

**Guidance to the Project Selection Committee**

1. In case of discrepancies between the Manual and the *Guidelines for grant applicants*, or of situations not covered/regulated by the Manual, provisions of the *Guidelines for grant applicants* shall apply. If the Guidelines or the Manual have no provisions for the respective situation, PSC shall decide on a case by case basis, by observing the working principles contained in the Manual.
2. At any point during evaluation, PSC, NA or MA may be consulted through written procedure on specific situations which may arise in the process. In order to keep the pace of evaluation, adequate priroity should be given to such requests.
3. Projects are distributed weekly, as sets, to external assessors by PSC secretary each set comprises at least **3 projects**. Each assessor shall manage his/her own working effort so that, at the end of each week, the set of the projects attributed is fully assessed, meets the quality requirements, and are uploaded into EMS-ENI system. Exception is to be made only in case that the assessor proposes PSC to request for clarifications. The respective project must not fall under the situations listed above.
4. Based on the application packages uploaded into EMS-ENI system, each project is assessed by 2 external assessors and, as result, two Evaluation Grids are compiled. Each evaluation grid uploaded into EMS-ENI system must be fully filled in, and all the criteria from the grid must be scored. Scores given per criterion will be accompanied by comments and references to the project content. Final conclusions and recommendations must be clear and project-specific.
5. In order to be accepted by PSC/JMC and not be subject for revision, any evaluation grid must satisfy the quality requirements:

⦁ Scores are awarded and comments are given for each evaluation criterion and,

⦁ Comments are consistent, project-specific and coherent with the score awarded, references to the project are given. Comments synthesize the professional judgement made by the assessor and,

⦁ The Programme and the Call requirements are met and,

⦁ Final conclusions and recommendations are project-specific, summarize the main strengths and weaknesses of the project, especially those related to project contribution to Programme indicators, or further actions to be taken by the Programme in case the project is to be contracted.

1. In order to early detect such situations, PSC Secretary performs a preliminary quality verification of the evaluation grid, ensures that they are fully filled in, all the criteria are scored, comments are consistent with the scores awarded, references to the project are given and final conclusions/recommendations are made. In case of deficiencies, PSC secretary may ask for revisions. No extra- time shall be given to the assessors in such cases.
2. Revision of the evaluation grid may be requested by PSC in case that:

⦁ The evaluation grid is incomplete or of poor quality e.g. has blank comment boxes, comments, conclusions and recommendations are weak or too general, not supporting the score awarded, they do not reflect the assessor’s opinion on the topic and do not support PSC/JMC in taking an informed decision.

⦁ Discrepancies between scores and the given comments are identified.

⦁ Scarce references to the project content are made.

⦁ The Programme and the call requirements are not met.

1. If full and objective verification cannot be performed due to missing/incorrect information and/or documents, clarifications may be requested. The project must not fall under the situations listed above.
2. If situation from point (i) arises, external assessor may propose PSC to request clarifications from the applicant. Such request can only be accepted if it does not improve or modify the project content.
3. In case request for clarifications is proposed to PSC, the assessor must fill in an Explanatory Note (**Annex g\_5**) and explain, per project and per partner, the reasons for his request.
4. Based on the Explanatory Notes, PSC decides on the appropriateness of the requests, more specifically if they might improve or modify the projects’ content. For efficiency reasons, PSC may use the written procedure. PSC decisions are recorded and substantiated in the Evaluation Report (step 2) (**Annex 4.2**).
5. In case of positive decision, based on the Explanatory Notes compiled by assessors, letters to request for clarifications (**Annex g\_6**) are prepared and sent by PSC secretary to the applicants. (S)He may contact the applicants to ensure that responses will be given in due time. In case of negative decision, assessors finalize their work by using the information and documents available.
6. It is recommended that only **2 letters of clarification per project** to be sent during this evaluation step therefore, the issues to be clarified must be clearly explained, per project and per partner, in the respective Explanatory Note. Deadline fo submitting the clarifications by the applicant cannot be shorter than 2 calendar days and cannot go over **10 calendar days** (per request) from the date following that when PSC letter is sent). The respective period will be set by PSC, by applying the principles of proportionality and equal treatment for all applicants. The applicant has to upload clarifications into EMS-ENI system within the deadline set and send them also in hard-copy version at the JTS headquarters.
7. The PSC will inform in writting the applicants concerned about the issues to be clarified, as well as about the deadlines set for submitting the clarifications. Moreover, in the respective letter, PSC will inform the applicants about the consequences of not complying with the deadline (rejection of the application).
8. In case PSC decides to sent more than 2 letters of clarification to the same project, situation must be explained in the Evaluation Report (step 2), while duly considering the equal treatment principle.
9. Separate deadlines may be set for submitting online and hard-copy clarifications. EMS-ENI system is closed by the MA at the deadline indicated by PSCandafter this, no record can be made into the system. Hard-copies of clarifications must also be delivered until the deadline set by PSC, as shown by the stamp of postal services, tracking number of courier services, or the acknowledgement of receipt in case of hand deliveries.
10. Late entry is accepted proven that the delivery date does not go over more than 30 days after the deadline. In exceptional cases and under the condition that the Evaluation Report (step 2) has not been yet concluded, PSC may accept hard-copies received even later.
11. All hard-copies received are registered by PSC secretary into the Submission Register (**Annex g\_4**). In case they are sent by fax or e-mail, the respective fax or e-mail shall be kept and attached to the register.
12. Envelopes need to bear at least the Project Identification Number as minimum identification data of the project, and under the condition that the respective number can be retrieved into EMS-ENI system. Envelopes containing hard-copies shall be kept in safe location, unopened, except for situations specifically indicated in the Manual, or at the beginning of the contracting phase. Exception is made if the outer envelope containing the hard-copy does not indicate the Project Registration Number. In this case only, PSC secretary opens the envelope and looks for the Project Registration Number indicated by the applicant in the letter of submission.
13. After being informed by PSC secretary that clarifications are uploaded into EMS-ENI system, external assessors have 1 extra-day to resume their work, finalize the evaluation grids and upload them into EMS-ENI. In case clarifications are not or partially sent, the project shall be rejected.
14. Using the evaluation grids compiled by external assessors, PSC prepares one common evaluation grid per project. PSC cannot change the scores given by the assessors.
15. The final score per project is the average of scores awarded by assessors. The score per criterion is the average between scores per criterion given by the assessors. PSC comments must be based on the comments made by assessors and consistent with the resulting score.
16. In case a difference of more than 35 points (in case of HARD projects), or of more than 25 points (in case of SOFT projects) is identified between the overall scores given by assessors, the 3rd assessor shall be called to re-perform evaluation[[4]](#footnote-4).
17. In such case, the final score per project is the average of scores awarded by the assessors having the two nearest total scores. The score per criterion is the average between scores per criterion given by the assessors having the two nearest total scores. If particular situations arise, PSC will address them case by case.
18. PSC decision on the projects to be selected, put on the reserve list or rejected will be taken by consensus. Ranking is done by using the methodology described in the *Guidelines for grant applicants.*
19. At the end of step 2, with the support of the secretary, based on the evaluation grids, PSC prepares the Evaluation Report (**Annex 4.2**). The report is signed by all PSC members and is accompanied by evidence necessary to document this step, such as:

⦁ attendance lists

⦁ minutes of the meetings, any written correspondence with the applicants/MA/NA etc.

⦁ Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality

⦁ Declarations regarding the conflict of interest

⦁ results of the work done by the evaluation team (evaluation grids)

⦁ requests of clarification proposed/approved/answered

⦁ lists of projects selected/put on the reserve list/rejected (from further evaluation)

1. The Evaluation Report is sent to JMC for approval. JMC cannot change the scores or the ranking proposed by PSC, but may request revision of the evaluation grids in case the quality requirements are not met.
2. Following JMC’s decision on the list of projects selected, put on the reserve list and rejected (from further evaluation), PSC secretary send notifications on the outcomes of evaluation to all the applicants. Evidence of such communications is kept by PSC secretary.

**Appeals to the outcomes of evaluation**

1. PSC secretary registers all the appeals submitted within **10 calendar days** from the date when PSC notifications on the outcomes of evaluation have been sent.
2. PSC meets in session and decides if the appeals received are admissible or not, based on the provisions of the *Guidelines for grant applicants.* Decision on admissibility of the appeals must be reflected in PSC documents e.g. minutes, amended Evaluation Report.
3. In case of an admissible appeal, PSC requires the two assessors who have performed technical and financial evaluation of the project to review their work. If they maintain their opinion, PSC calls for a 3rd assessor to re-perform evaluation. In such situation, a revised common evaluation grid shall be prepared.
4. The final score per project is the average of scores awarded by the assessors having the two nearest total scores. The score per criterion is the average between scores per criterion given by the assessors having the two nearest total scores. If particular situations arise, PSC will address them case by case.
5. No clarification requests will be made to the applicants at this step.
6. PSC decision on the appeals is final and cannot be changed. If the case may be, PSC prepare an amended Evaluation Report. The report must be signed by all PSC members.
7. The amended Evaluation Report, including revised lists of projets selected, projects put on the reserve list and project rejected, are sent to JMC for approval.
8. All the applicants submitting an appeal are notified by PSC secretary (**Annex 4.3**). Evidence of such communications is kept by PSC secretary.
9. Notifications are also sent to applicants having their position in the ranking modified due to revision of the Evaluation Report.
10. If following verification of appeals, projects’ position on the ranking lists is modified and their status changes e.g. from “selected” to “put on the reserve list”, after JMC decision, the applicants concerned are notified by PSC acordingly.

1. In case of calls for HARD and SOFT projects, the eliminatory criteria are: the cross border impact, contribution to programme Results, contribution to programme (common) Output(s) and relevance of the project partnership. In future calls, JMC may decide to establish other eliminatory criteria. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In case of the 1st call for HARD projects, the minimum overall score is set at 99 points, and in case of the 2nd call for SOFT projects, the minimum overall score is set at 65 points. In future calls, JMC may decide to establish other minimum for the overall score. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Budget at heading 3. Infrastructure is less than 1 M€ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Thresholds may differ in the calls launched by the programme. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)