ASSESSMENT MANUAL

FOR EVALUATION OF REGULAR PROJECTS

2018

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## **ACRONYMS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| JMC | Joint Monitoring Committee |
| JTS | Joint Technical Secretariat |
| MA | Managing Authority |
| NA | National Authority |
| PSC | Project Selection Committee |

## **Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Joint Operational Programme Romania – Ukraine 2014 – 2020**

The Joint Operational Programme Romania- Ukraine 2014-2020 contributes to the European Neighbourhood Instrument strategic objectives, and focuses its intervention on four thematic objectives:

1. Support to education, research, technological development and innovation

2. Promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage

3. Improvement of accessibility to the regions, development of transport and communication networks and systems

4. Common challenges in the field of safety and security

The **General Objective of the Joint Operational Programme Romania- Ukraine 2014- 2020** is to enhance the economic development and to improve the quality of life of the people in the Programme area through joint investments in education, economic development, culture, infrastructure and health while ensuring the safety and security of the citizens in the two countries.

In order to achieve the general objective of the Programme and the thematic objectives chosen by the participating countries, **seven priorities** were developed:

**Priority 1.1** Institutional cooperation in the educational field for increasing access to education and quality of education

**Priority 1.2** Promotion and support to research and innovation

**Priority 2.1** Preservation and promotion of the cultural and historical heritage

**Priority 3.1** Development of cross border transport infrastructure and ICT tools

**Priority 4.1** Support to the development of health services and access to health

**Priority 4.2** Support to joint activities for the prevention of natural and man-made disasters as well as joint actions during emergency situations

**Priority 4.3** Prevention and fight against organised crime and police cooperation

The contribution of the European Union to the Programme is of 60 MEUR, while the participanting countries must ensure a co-financing of at least 6 MEUR.

The core regions of the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine 2014-2020 cover:

* **Romania** (5 counties) Suceava, Botoșani, Satu-Mare, Maramureș, Tulcea
* **Ukraine** (4 oblasts) Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Odessa, Chernivtsi

Type of projects, Programme expected results, Programme result and (common) output indicators for each priority, including description, baseline and target values are shown in the table below:

| **Priority** | **Type of projects** | **Programme expected result** | **Result indicator[[1]](#footnote-1)** | **Indicator value** | **Output indicator[[2]](#footnote-2)** | | **Indicator value** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **(1.1) Institutional cooperation in the educational field for increasing access to education and quality of education** | **SOFT** | Enhanced cooperation between educational institutions leading to an increase in quality of the education programs available in the eligible area, as well as improving accessibility to education and ensuring appropriate, labour market relevant skills of the graduates. | **RI 111** Percent of tertiary education students from eligible area from total no. of students  **RI 112** Employment rate in the eligible area | Increase from 14 % to 16%  Increase from 57.77 % to 59% | **COI 111** | Number of institutions using Programme support for cooperation in education, R&D and innovation | 15 |
| **OI 112** | Number of people benefitting from all types of activities that received funding within the CBC Programme | 5,000 |
| **OI 113** | Number of rehabilitated / modernized educational institutions | 5 |
| **(1.2) Promotion and support to research and innovation** | **SOFT** | Improved pre-conditions for sustained cooperation in the field of research and innovation contributing to economic development of the region | **RI 121** Number of employees in research & development activity | Increase of about 2%  (from 4380 to 4468 employees) | **OI 121** | Number of institutions using Programme support for cooperation in R&D and support of innovation | 5 |
| **(2.1) Preservation and promotion of the cultural and historical heritage** | **SOFT** | Restored cultural and historical sites that enhance the cross – border touristic potential of the eligible area. | **RI 211** Number of overnight stays in the eligible area | Increase of about 5% (from 1,820,017 to 1,912,000) | **COI 211** | Number of institutions using Programme support for promoting local culture and preserving historical heritage | 10 |
| **COI 212** | Number of improved cultural and historical sites | 5 |
| **(3.1) Development of cross border transport infrastructure and ICT tools** | **SOFT and HARD** | 1.Increased mobility of persons and goods in the eligible area through a modernized transport network  2. Improved integrated ICT tools to support the cross –border connections. | **RI 311** Cross border traffic volume (by rail, road) | Increase 5% of crossings on cross points (auto and rail) | **COI 311** | Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads | 10 |
| **OI 312** | Number of joint mechanisms to support improvement of cross-border infrastructure (joint planning documents including: strategies, plans, action plans; as well as multi-modal facilitation mechanisms) developed | 3 |
| **OI 313** | Number of additional ICT based tools developed supporting cross-border cooperation | 3 |
| **OI 314** | Number of environmentally friendly (carbon-proofed) cross-border transport initiatives developed | 3 |
| **(4.1) Support to the development of health services and access to health** | **SOFT and HARD** | Improved health condition of citizens in the eligible area and reduced risks for human epidemiology hazards. | **RI 411** Number of newly registered cases of illness[[3]](#footnote-3) | Decrease of ~ 20% of cases of illness | **COI 411** | Population covered by improved health services as a direct consequence of Programme support | 150,000 |
| **OI 412** | Number of medical service infrastructure units improved | 3 |
| **(4.2) Support to joint activities for the prevention of natural and man- made disasters as well as joint actions during emergency situations** | **SOFT** | Reduced risks for natural or man-made disasters and improved cross-border joint emergency situation systems. | **RI 421** Average response time for emergency situations in the eligible area | Targets for 2023:  - 13´50”  in 2023 for Romania;  - 22´23’’ in 2023 for Ukraine (3% decrease) | **COI 421** | Population benefiting from flood protection measures | 10,000 |
| **OI 422** | Number of joint actions, including soft operations, as well as joint infrastructure investments in the field of emergency situations and the prevention of man-made disasters. | 20 |
| **(4.3) Prevention and fight against organized crime and police cooperation** | **SOFT and HARD** | Increased efficiency of the police, border police and custom services in coping with cross border organized crime, increased level of trust and confidence of the citizens in these structures | **RI 431** Increase of the ratio of annual number of persons crossing the border to the number of customs personnel directly employed at the border crossing points  **RI 432** Level of trust of citizens in the police | Increase 15%  Increase:  3% - RO  8% UA | **OI 431** | Number of participants involved in joint capacity building activities (exchanges of experience, study visits, trainings etc.) | 200 |
| **OI 432** | Number of modernized facilities of police, border police and custom services | 10 |

### **1.2 The calls for proposals**

Distinct calls for proposals are lauched for SOFT and HARD projects and have specific requirements, as detailed in the *Guidelines for grant applicants* approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee.

Information about the calls, the application package, actions and events by which the Programme supports the potential applicants to participate in the respective calls, are widely disseminated, especially by posting the related documents and information on the Programme webpage [www.ro-ua.net](http://www.ro-ua.net)

### **1.3 The Project Selection Committee (PSC)**

The Project Selection Committee is a temporary structure set by the Programme for a call for proposals, and is assigned to evaluate and select the projects to be financed by the Programme.The Joint Monitoring Committee approves composition of the team involved in evaluation.

Each Project Selection Committee consists of one **coordinator** (proposed by the Managing Authority), one **secretary** (proposed by the Joint Technical Secretariat) and four voting **members** (two members per country, proposed by the Joint Monitoring Committee).

Project Selection Committee is entrusted to:

* coordinate the internal and external assessors, and perform quality check of their work;
* draw up Evaluation Reports at the end of each evaluation stage;
* maintain the written correspondence with the Joint Monitoring Committee;
* analyse and decide on the appeals to the outcomes of evaluation received

More specifically:

* **PSC coordinator** is responsible for the overall management of PSC proceedings, ensures compliance with the Programme rules and requirements and implementation of PSC decisions.
* **PSC secretary** carries out administrative tasks and performs preliminary quality check of the work performed by internal/external assessors.
* **Project Selection Committee** checks the quality of work done by assessors, and if justified, may request revisions or suplimentary assessment of projects if situations specified in the Manual arise. PSC decides on the appropriatness of the requests for clarifications proposed by the assessors’ by duly considering if, as a result, the respective projects may be altered or improved, prepares the Evaluation Reports at the end of each evaluation stage and any revision of them, if so decided by the JMC.

Provided that JMC is informed beforehand, representatives of the Managing Authority, the European Commission and the EU Delegation to Ukraine may participate at PSC meetings, as observers.

Before participating in any quality to the evaluation process, any person must fill in, sign and forward to PSC Secretary, a Declaration of impartiality and confidentiality (**Annex g\_1**), and a Declaration regarding the conflict of interest (**Annex g\_2**) which are to be annexed to the corresponding Evaluation Report.

Any person who has a potential conflict of interest with any applicant or partner must declare it and immediately withdraw from the Project Selection Committee. (S)He will be excluded from participating further in any capacity to the evaluation process.

### **1.3 Programme Structures. Other actors involved in the process**

Selection of projects to be financed by the Programme requires involvement of different Programme structures and actors having clear roles and responsibilities, as presented bellow. During the process, no structure or person can go beyond their respective duties.

**▶ Joint Monitoring Committee**

The Joint Monitoring Committee approves the criteria for projects’ selection, provides guidance from the legal perspective for requirements and further evaluation, nominates, with the National Authorities’ support, the PSC members and approves composition of the team involved in evaluation (coordinator, secretary, internal assessors), may require revision of the evaluation grids in case they do not comply with the specified quality requirements and, in duly justified cases, thoroughly substantiated in writing, may require a 3rd assessor to re-perform evaluation (e.g. in case the difference between the overall scores awarded by the assessors goes over the threshold set for the respective call[[4]](#footnote-4)), approves the Evaluation Reports prepared at the end of each evaluation stage, approves terms of reference for the external assessors. The JMC is not allowed to change the scores given by the external assessors.

The JMC may decide not to award all the funds available per priority, but redirect them to other priorities or calls if the quality of the projects submitted is not satisfactory.

**▶ Managing Authority**

The Managing Authority with the support of JTS and NAs prepares the documentation related to the calls for proposals, nominates the PSC coordinator, and takes measures for avoiding any double funding of project activities.

MA representatives may also participate as observers to the evaluation process, without decision rights. In this capacity, the MA may offer independent advice to PSC on the correctness and equity of the evaluation process, on the potential improvement of the procedures or on how to apply the Programme rules.

**▶ National Authorities**

National Authorities (Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, Romania, and the Ministry of Economy and Trade, Ukraine) support the MA in preparation of the evaluation and selection procedures, including the contract template, ensuring compliance with the national legislation, and support the PSC in performing the eligibility check. Proceedings of NAs during this step are given in **Annex AS\_1**.

Based on the assessment done by internal assessors, NAs check eligibility of the organizations from the country concerned and are the sole responsible for deciding upon the eligibility of an applicant or partner located on their national territory.

The NAs are free to take all the necessary steps to get a substantiated opinion over any analysed case, including by consultation with other relevant national institutions, while keeping the confidentiality over the evaluation process, and taking measures to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

They also support MA in undertaking any verifications deemed necessary to avoid double founding of project activities.

**▶ External assessors**

The external assessors work under the supervision of PSC coordinator. Proceedings of the external assessors during evaluation are described in **Annex AS\_2** (for SOFT and HARD projects) and **Annex\_AS\_3** (only for HARD projects).

The external assessors perform technical and financial assessment of projects, evaluation of additional documents (in case of HARD projects), and evaluation of appeals declared admissible by the PSC. They must fill in individual evaluation grids for each of the projects attributed to them, by using only the templates provided by the *Guidelines for grant applicants* for the respective call and according to the instructions provided by the Manual, upload them into the Programme electronic system EMS-ENI. If justified, they may propose PSC to request clarifications from the applicants. External assessors must formulate clear conclusions and recommendations for each project assessed, and revise their work in case the quality requirements of the Programme are not met.

They must act in highly professional manner, in full compliance with the Programme and call requirements, and avoid by any means delays and poor quality performance. They may be invited to PSC meetings to present the results of the assessment done, provide clarifications or, in case of appeals declared admissible by the PSC, review their assessment.

**▶ Internal assessors**

Internal assessors are nominated from the staff of JTS and Branch Offices in Ukraine, and work under the supervision of PSC coordinator. Proceedings of the internal assessors during evaluation are described in **Annex AS\_1.**

They perform the administrative and eligibility check of projects, and fill in individual checklists by using only the templates provided by the *Guidelines for grant applicants* for the respective call and according to the instructions provided by the Manual. If justified, they may propose PSC to request clarifications from the applicants. The internal assessors must formulate clear conclusions for each project assessed, and revise their work if so required.

They must act in highly professional manner, in full compliance with the Programme and call requirements, and avoid by any means delays and poor quality performance. They may be invited to PSC meetings to present the results of the assessment done, provide clarifications or, in case of appeals declared admissible by the PSC, review their assessment.

**▶ Observers**

Under the condition that JMC is informed beforehand, MA, EC and EU Delegation to Ukraine may participate to the evaluation process as observers, in order to enable a better synergy between bilateral and regional assistance provided to the country by the EU, on one hand, and the assistance provided through the Programme, on the other hand. They do not have decision power and cannot express their point of view on the projects evaluated/under evaluation or on the PSC decisions.

**▶ The European Commission**

European Commission supports the MA in verifying double funding of project activities.

## **Chapter 2 GENERAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Legal and procedural framework**

**EU Regulations[[5]](#footnote-5)**

* Regulation (EU) no. 232/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument;
* Regulation (EU) no. 236/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union’s instruments for financing external actions;
* Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) no. 897/2014 laying down specific provisions for the implementation of cross border cooperation Programmes financed under Regulation (EU) no. 232/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument;
* Commission Decision no. C(2015) 9143/17.12.2015 approving the Joint Operational Programme Romania – Ukraine 2014-2020

**Documents of the Joint Operational Programme Romania – Ukraine 2014-2020[[6]](#footnote-6)**

* Joint Operational Programme Romania – Ukraine 2014-2020, including any annex to it
* *Guidelines for grant applicants* in force for the respective call for proposals and any corrigenda to it, approved by the JMC
* Assessment Manual and any corrigenda to it, approved by the JMC
* Joint Monitoring Committee’s Rules of procedure
* Other decisions or instructions issued by the Joint Monitoring Committee and/or the Managing Authority with regard to the evaluation process

### **2.2 Working principles**

The working principles shall be thoroughly followed by the Programme structures and persons involved or participating to the evaluation process, as they are the basis for actions and decision making.

**▶ Objectivity, impartiality and equality of treatment**

All projects have to be assessed alike and treated impartially, based on their merits and following a review strictly based upon the information contained therein. They are assessed against the checklists and evaluation grids provided by the *Guidelines for grant applicants* for the respective call, regardless of where the applicant or partners originate, or their identity.

Evaluation and selection of projects must be completely impartial. This means notably that projects must be evaluated by assessors and selected by PSC by using only the published *Guidelines for grant applicants,* instructions provided by the Manual or by the MA, and JMC decisions. In case situations not covered by the *Guidelines for grant applicants* or by the Manual arise, the MA and, ultimately, the JMC will be required for support/clarifications.

The evaluation and selection methodology must not be changed, except in duly justified cases and following the JMC approval, by means of corrigenda published on the Programme website.

**▶ Confidentiality and secrecy**

Proceedings of the JMC or PSC in regard of projects’ evaluation are confidential. As such, attendance at PSC/JMC meetings held in this respect is strictly limited to their members, internal or external assessors and to authorised persons.

The Programme electronic system EMS-ENI shall be used during the evaluation process, as it gives specific access rights, in accordance with underlying responsibilities of each type of user. Assessors will have access to the application packages through EMS-ENI. In case of EMS-ENI malfunction, specific procedure is to be followed as described at section 3.11 of the Manual.

The hard-copies of projects must not leave the room/building where JTS has received them. Access and use of the hard-copies is to be done in exceptional circumstances, as described at section 3.11 of the Manual.

In any stage of the process, including analysis of appeals on the outcomes of evaluation, all information and documents must remain confidential and secret. Any person, involved or participating in any way to the evaluation process is bound to confidentiality.

Projects, appeals, outcomes of evaluation, recommendations to award or reject a project, PSC/JMC decisions and their deliberations are not to be disclosed to third parties, be it physical or legal persons, or to the media. PSC notifications sent to the applicants make exception to this rule.

The following shall be considered:

* Communication with applicants and/or their partners is prohibited during evaluation, except for the situations explicitly mentioned in the Manual.
* Copying, multiplying or distributing to third parties whatever related information or documents related to the process (e.g. projects, evaluation grids, Evaluation Reports), in paper or in electronic form, is prohibited.
* Any person involved or participating to the process (PSC, observers, internal/external assessors, JMC, representatives of the Managing Authority, National Authorities, Joint Technical Secretariat and Branch Offices in Ukraine) must sign beforehand a Declaration of impartiality and confidentiality ([**Annex g\_1**](#_Annex_E_1_1)). PSC secretary is responsible to check the declarations, and attach them to the respective Evaluation Report.
* Any attempt by an applicant to influence the process in any way (whether by making contact with PSC, JMC, MA, NA, JTS, branch offices or otherwise) will result in immediate exclusion of the respective project from further consideration. In such case, all persons facing this situation must immediately inform the PSC coordinator.

**▶ Avoiding the conflicts of interest**

Any person involved or participating to evaluation (PSC, observers, internal/external assessors, JMC, representatives of the Managing Authority, National Authorities, Joint Technical Secretariat and Branch Offices in Ukraine), who has a potential conflict of interest[[7]](#footnote-7) with an applicant or partner must declare it and immediately withdraw.

To this purpose, any person must sign beforehand a Declaration regarding the conflict of interest (**Annex g\_2**). PSC secretary is responsible to check the declarations, and attach them to the respective Evaluation Report.

Acts likely to be affected by a conflict of interest may, *inter alia*, take one of the following forms:

* granting oneself or others unjustified direct or indirect advantages;
* refusing to grant an applicant or partner the rights or advantages to which he is entitled;
* committing undue or wrongful acts or failing to carry out acts that are mandatory

Should the conflict of interest be proven, the respective person will be excluded from participating further in any capacity to the evaluation process. The PSC coordinator decides whether the evaluation process must be restarted. The decision and underlying reasons must be recorded in the Evaluation Report.

**▶ Transparency and clarity**

*Guidelines for grant applicants* and any related corrigenda, the Assesment Manual are subject to JMC approval and their provisions must not be changed whatsoever. They shall be made available on the Programme webpage at <http://www.ro-ua.net> .

The methodology of scoring and ranking the projects is detailed in the *Guidelines for grant applicants* for the respective call and must be strictly followed. The evaluation grids must not be changed whatsoever.

Scores, comments and recommendations given by assessors in the checklists/evaluation grids, the common evaluation grids and PSC decisions, as reflected in the Evaluation Reports, should be clear, grounded on the Programme and call requirements, project-specific and explaining its strengths and weaknesses, justifying the score and the decision taken, so as to support JMC in taking the final decisions and giving feedback to the applicants on the outcomes of evaluation.

**▶ Quality assurance**

The Programme is seeking to finance projects that envisage clear cross border impact and support achievement of expected results, outputs and the related indicators, fulfil clear quality criteria, and demonstrate technical and financial viability.

Quality criteria ensure that projects are relevant to the Programme, have strong and consistent internal logic, and the main pre-requisites for their successful implementation are in place. Technical and financial viability give assurance that projects can be successfully implemented and continue after the end of EU financing.

Each project selected or put on the reserve list shall demonstrate its contribution to the Programme expected result(s) and (common) output(s) specific for the priority chosen. Contribution to the Programme must be clear, effective, quantifiable and verifiable.

A range of eliminatory criteria are mentioned in the *Guidelines for grant applicants* and cannot be changed. The eliminatory criteria and the overall score require minimum thresholds to be met, as pre-conditions to place the project on the list of selected projects or on the reserve list.

On the other hand, the evaluation grids compiled by the assessors must satisfy several quality criteria in order to be accepted by PSC/JMC, respectively:

* Answers and scores with comments are given for each evaluation question or criterion and,
* Comments are consistent, project-specific and coherent with the score awarded; references to the project are made. Comments synthesize the professional judgement of the assessor and,
* The Programme and call requirements are fully met and,
* Final conclusions and recommendations are project-specific, especially in respect of the eliminatory criteria/sections; summarize the main strengths and weaknesses of the project, with focus on the project contribution to Programme indicators.

In case quality requirements are not satisfied, PSC/JMC cannot change the scores awarded by assessors, instead MA ITy require revision of the respective evaluation grids.

If the difference between the overall scores awarded by assessors goes over the threshold set by the call, a 3rd assessor may be called to re-perform evaluation.

**▶ Efficiency and speed**

Evaluation should be as swift as possible and clearly focused on the quality and compliance of projects with the Programme and call requirements. The structures involved or participating to the process should give adequate priority to their underlying responsibilities, keep the pace and support by any means delivery of the best results. The work should take place in a reasonable timeframe and any delays should be avoided.

**▶ Traceability**

The evaluation process should be documented, including PSC/JMC decisions or any communication with the applicants. The respective evidence must be properly archived and kept for further controls.

EMS-ENI provides a log of interventions in the electronic system, thus ensuring their traceability.

**▶ Proportionality**

Any PSC/JMC action or decision shall not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the Programme’s objectives, outputs and results. Therefore, decisions should always be objective, based on the Programme and call rules and documents, compliant with the working principles and by avoiding an excessive effect on the applicants’ interest.

When using their power of action or decision, PSC/JMC must also take into account the gravity of the infringement or error identified, and determine whether there are grounded reasons to exclude a project from further evaluation. Application of the principle of proportionality should be always accompanied by application of the principle of equal treatment.

**▶ Consensus**

Decisions of PSC/JMC need to be based only on the agreed upon procedures, in compliance with the Programme and call documents and requirements, and following consensus.

Consensus implies agreement and commitment of the persons appointed in the PSC/JMC, and represents a collective decision.

**2.4 Publicity rules**

Information on the calls, *Guidelines for grant applicants* and any corrigenda, the Assessment Manual, the list of grants awarded etc. are to be published by the Programme at [www.ro-ua.net](http://www.ro-ua.net)

## **Chapter 3 THE EVALUATION PROCESS**

### **3.1 Process overview**

For each evaluation stage, the reader has a synopsis of its purpose and focus, main tasks to be performed and the actors involved, the expected results and documents to be produced and available at completion.

The application packages are submitted online into EMS-ENI electronic system and in hard-copy version, and have different content according to their type, SOFT or HARD, as detailed in the respective *Guidelines for grant applicants*.

The evaluation process begins when the call for proposals is closed. The working language is English. The duration depends on the number of projects submitted, their quality, and also on other factors outside the PSC control (eg. decisions of the structures involved in the process).

Overview of the evaluation process is shown below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **➊Submission of proposals** | * online submission * hard-copy submission |
| **➋Administrative and eligibility check** | * administrative and eligibility checklists * requests of clarification (if the case) * 1st evaluation report * JMC decision & list of selected and rejected projects * notifications to applicants |
| **➌Technical and financial assessment** | * evaluation grids * requests of clarifications (if the case) * 2nd evaluation report * JMC decision & provisional ranking (for HARD), or final ranking (for SOFT) projects selected and put on the reserve list, list of projects rejected * notifications to applicants |
| **➍Submission of additional documents (HARD projects)** | * online submission * hard-copy submission |
| **➎Assessment of additional documents** | * evaluation grids * requests of clarifications (if the case) * 3rd evaluation report * JMC decision & final ranking of projects selected and put on the reserve list, list of projects rejected * notifications to applicants |

HARD projects selected or included on the reserve list, have to prepare and submit additional documents within 6 months from the date of PSC notification. A third evaluation step is then performed to assess the additional documents and deliver the final ranking of projects.

### **3.2 Preparatory activities**

**🗹** **Purpose of the stage** is to set the framework for the structures and persons involved and participating to evaluation, and also to get them acquainted with the process.

| ACTORS | MAIN TASKS |
| --- | --- |
| Managing Authority and Joint Technical Secretariat (incl.Branch Offices) | * Prepare the Assessment Manual * (MA) proposes PSC coordinator and secretary * (MA) requests JMC to appoint evaluators and substitutes for PSC * (JTS&BO) provide internal assessors for administrative and eligibility check * (MA) manages EMS-ENI system at Programme level * (PSC secretary) manages EMS-ENI system at the level of projects’ evaluation * PSC secretary prepares a database of projects, applicants and partners participating in the respective call and ensures back-up of the projects submitted (to be used in case of EMS-Eni system malfunction) * (JTS&MA) ensure training of internal/external assessors, and of evaluators * (MA&JTS) sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest |
| National Authorities | * Support JMC in appointing country PSC members and substitutes * Appoint one representative per country to issue the final opinion on the eligibility of entities located on the national territory, provide her/him with the necessary logistics (IT equipment, internet connection etc) * sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest |
| Joint Monitoring Committee | * Approves the Assessment Manual * Proposes 2 evaluators and 2 substitutes per PSC per country * Approves composition of the evaluation team * sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest |
| Project Selection Committee | * Participate to the training sessions organized by the Programme * sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest |
| Internal and external assessors | * Participate to the training sessions organized by the Programme * sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest |

**🗹** **Results expected**

* Assessment Manual approved by JMC
* PSC operational and available to start the evaluation work
* Internal/external assessors and evaluators trained

**🗹** **Documents produced during this step**

* Assessment Manual
* JMC decisions (approving the Assessment Manual, the PSC composition etc.)
* Training materials
* Signed Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, Declarations regarding the conflict of interest (**Annex g\_1** and **Annex g\_2**)

### **3.3 Submission of project proposals, receipt and registration**

**🗹** **Purpose of the stage** is to keep evidence on the application packages submitted online and in hard-copy version at the moment of closing the call for proposals.

During this stage, the following shall be considered:

* The application package must be uploaded into EMS-ENI and also delivered in hard-copy version at JTS headquarters.
* No project shall be rejected at this stage, whether it complies or not with the requirements of the call.
* No clarification will be requested from the applicants at this stage.

| ACTORS | MAIN TASKS |
| --- | --- |
| Applicants | * Submit online and hard-copy application packages within the deadlines set by the call |
| Managing Authority | * Opens and closes calls for proposals into EMS-ENI system |
| PSC secretary | * Issues acknowledgements of receipt for hand-deliveries * Receives, registers and *keeps* unopened, in safe location, the envelopes containing the hard-copies, irrespective they are sent via courier, postal services, hand-delivered, by fax or e-mail * Collects and checks for compliance the Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest signed by PSC coordinator and secretary |

**🗹** **Results expected**

* Calls for proposals opened and closed by MA
* Application packages uploaded by applicants into EMS-ENI and and sent in hard-copy version
* Envelopes containing hard-copies registered and archived in safe location, unopened

**🗹** **Documents produced during this step**

* Acknowledgements of receipt (for hand-delivered proposals) – **Annex g\_3**
* Submission Register (**Annex g\_4**)
* Signed Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest (**Annex g\_1** and **Annex g\_2**)

### **3.4 Administrative and eligibility check (step 1)**

**🗹** **Purpose of the stage** is to assess the projects against the administrative and eligibility criteria set in the *Guidelines for grant applicants*. These criteria refer, on one hand, to deadlines, use of templates, existence of the supporting documents and compliance with the formal requirements of the call, and to eligibility of the applicant/partners, of the cross border partnership and the project itself, on the other hand.

During this stage, the following shall be considered:

* Each proposal is checked by 2 internal assessors, following the “4 eyes” principle, and one checklist is compiled per project by each assessor. In order to keep the pace of evaluation, **5 projects per day** shall be fully checked.
* Checklists provided by the *Guidelines for grant applicants* and the application packages are to be used.
* Using the checklists, National Authorities issue the final opinion on the eligibility on each entity located on their national territory and participating to the call. Eligibility of an entity is to be checked only once per call, irrespective the number of projects in which the respective entity is either applicant, or partner.
* If necessary, NAs may consult other national institutions in case opinion on the eligibility of an applicant/partner cannot be given on the basis of the documents available while ensuring confidentiality and avoiding any conflict of interest.
* A project is “**administratively compliant**” and “**eligibile**” if receives “**YES**” to all the questions/criteria from the checklist.
* A project shall only be rejected if is found in the situations listed in **Annex EV\_1**. Even so, the respective checklists must be fully filled in.
* If the project does not fall under the situations listed in **Annex EV\_1**, internal assessors 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. Missing or uncompliant supporting documents are not considered improvements to the project.
* Based on the checklists and through written procedure, if so agreed, PSC decides on the appropriateness of the requests of clarification proposed by assessors. If positive, letters are sent to the applicants in this respect. PSC secretary may contact the applicants to ensure that response will be given in due time.
* The internal assessors and the PSC members should be aware that it is advisable to issue no more than **1 letter** **of request for clarifications** per project. Deadline for submitting the clarifications by the applicant cannot be shorter than **2 calendar days** and cannot go over **10 calendar days** (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 applicants concerned by the request for clarification will be informed in writting about issues to be clarified, as well as about the deadline set for submitting clarifications. Moreover, in the respective letter, PSC will inform the applicants about the consequences of not complying with the deadline.
* Work of internal assessors shall be carried out in line with the instructions in **Annex AS\_1**, and PSC work in line with the guidance in **Annex EV\_1**.

| ACTORS | MAIN TASKS |
| --- | --- |
| Applicants | * Provide clarifications, as required, within the deadlines indicated in PSC letter, uploaded into EMS-ENI and in hard-copy version |
| PSC secretary | * Collects and checks Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest, signed by PSC, internal assessors, and any observer * Distributes projects to internal assessors (2 assessors per project) * Performs preliminary quality verification of the checklists, requires revision, if the case * If approved by PSC, prepares and sends letters to request for clarifications to the applicants (also by fax/e-mail) and may contact them to ensure that responses will be sent in due time   **🕓**Min = 2 and Max = 10 calendar days from the day following that when PSC letter is sent   * Receives, registers and keeps in safe location, unopened, the envelopes containing the hard-copies, irrespective they are sent via courier, postal services, hand-delivered, by fax or e-mail * Using the checklists compiled by the internal assessors, prepares one preliminary Eligibility Report per entity. Preliminary reports are forwarded to NA for the final conclusion on the eligibility of the respective entity. * Supports PSC in preparing the Evaluation Report * Notifies the applicants on the outcomes of evaluation (step 1), keeps evidence of such communications (fax, e-mail) |
| PSC coordinator | * Ensures the overall management of PSC proceedings * Coordinates the activity of internal assessors * Endorses letters to request for clarificationsand notifications sent to the applicants, on behalf of PSC |
| Internal assessors | * Sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest * Perform administrative and eligibility check of the projects attributed, compile one checklist per project, revise the checklists, if so required * May propose PSC to request clarifications from the applicants * Participate to PSC/JMC meetings, as required |
| National Authorities  (the appointed representatives) | * Sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest * Give the final opinion on the eligibility of entities located on their national territory, complete and sign each Eligibility Report * May consult other national institutions in case opinion on the eligibility of an entity cannot be given on the basis of the documents available |
| Project Selection Committee | * Sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest * If the case, may request revisions of the checklists * Decides on the appropriateness of the requests of clarification proposed by assessors * Based on the administrative and eligibility checklists and the Eligibility Reports, prepares the Evaluation Report (step 1) and the list of projects selected and projects rejected from further evaluation |
| Joint Monitoring Committee | * Sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest * Analyzes the Evaluation Report (step 1), issues decision approving the report * Takes final decision on the list of projects selected and projects rejected from further evaluation |
| Managing Authority | * Provides procedural support, if requested * Allows the access of registered applicants into EMS-ENI system to upload clarifications if requested by PSC |
| Observers | * Sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest * Participate to PSC/JMC meetings |

**🗹** **Results expected**

* JMC decision approving the Evaluation Report (step 1)
* List of projects selected and projects rejected from further evaluation
* Applicants notified on the outcomes of evaluation (step 1)
* EMS-ENI system updated

**🗹** **Documents produced during this step**

* Signed Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest
* Checklists on administrative and eligibility check
* Eligibility Reports
* Letters of clarification to the applicants
* Submission Register updated
* Evaluation Report (step 1)
* Notifications to the applicants on the outcomes of evaluation step 1 (**Annex 4.3**)

### **3.5 Technical and financial evaluation (step 2)**

**🗹** **Purpose of the stage** is, on one hand, to evaluate eligibile and administratively compliant projects against the objectives, priorities, and contribution they bring to programme Results and Outputs and, on the other hand, to select proposals which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call and clearly contribute to achievement of programme Results and Outputs indicators.

During this stage, the following shall be considered:

* Regularly, each project is evaluated by 2 external assessors following the “4 eyes” principle. Each assessor shall compile one evaluation grid per project. In order to keep the pace of evaluation, minimum **3 projects per week** must be fully evaluated by each assessor.
* The evaluation grid for step 2 provided in the *Guidelines for grant applicants* and the application packages uploaded into EMS-ENI system are to be used. In case of EMS-ENI malfunction, provisions at section 3.11 of the present Manual shall apply.
* 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 made. Comments synthesize the professional judgement of the assessor **and**,
* The Programme and call requirements are fully met **and**,
* Final conclusions and recommendations are project-specific, with special attention to the eliminatory criteria/sections; summarize the main strengths and weaknesses, and focus on the contribution that the project brings to Programme indicators.
* If the evaluation grids are accepted by PSC, the final score per project is the average of scores awarded by the respective assessors.
* PSC /JMC cannot change the scores awarded by external assessors, instead they may request revision of any evaluation grid in case that:
* The grid is incomplete or of poor quality e.g. it 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 the scores awarded and the comments given are identified,
* Scarce references to the project content are made,
* The Programme and call requirements are not met
* In case the difference between the overall scores awarded by assessors goes over the threshold set by the call, PSC may require for a 3rd assessor to re-perform evaluation. In such case, the final score per project is the average between scores awarded by the assessors having the 2 nearest overall scores.
* Using the evaluation grids uploaded by assessors into EMS-ENI, PSC prepares one common evaluation grid per project.
* A project shall only be rejected if is found in the situations listed in **Annex EV\_2**. Even so, the evaluation grid must be fully filled in.
* If the project does not fall under the situations listed in **Annex EV\_2** and information provided is unclear or inconsistent thus preventing from an objective evaluation, the assessor may propose PSC to request clarifications from the applicant. The request can only be accepted if it does not improve or modify the project content.
* Based on the Explanatory Notes and through written procedure, if so agreed, PSC decides on the appropriateness of the requests of clarification proposed by assessors. If positive, letters are sent to the applicants in this respect. PSC secretary may contact the applicants to ensure that responses will be given in due time.
* The external assessors and the PSC members should be aware that it is advisable to have **max**. **2 letters to requests for clarifications per project**, not tackling the same project issues. Deadline for submitting clarifications 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 specific period will be set by PSC, by applying the principles of proportionality and equal treatment for all applicants.
* The applicants concerned by the request for clarification will be informed in writting about the issues to be clarified, as well as about the deadline set for submitting the clarifications. Moreover, in the respective letter, PSC will inform the applicants about the consequences of not complying with the deadline.
* Work of external assessors shall be carried out in line with the instructions in **Annex AS\_2**, and PSC work in line with the guidance in **Annex EV\_2**.

| ACTORS | MAIN TASKS |
| --- | --- |
| Applicants | * Provide clarifications, as required, within the deadlines indicated in PSC letter, uploaded into EMS-ENI system and in hard-copy version |
| PSC secretary | * Collects and checks Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest, signed by external assessors, and any observer * Distributes projects to external assessors (2 assessors per project) * Performs preliminary quality verification of the evaluation grids, requires revision, if the case * If approved by PSC, prepares and sends letters to request for clarifications to the applicants (also by fax/e-mail) and may contact them to ensure that responses will be sent in due time   **🕓** Min = 2 and Max = 10 calendar days from the date following that when PSC letter is sent   * Receives, registers and keeps hard-copy versions of clarifications in safe location, unopened, except for situations specifically mentioned in the Manual * Supports PSC in preparing one common evaluation grid per project * Supports PSC in preparing the Evaluation Report (step 2) * Notifies the applicants on the outcomes of evaluation (step 2), keeps evidence of such communications (fax, e-mail) |
| PSC coordinator | * Ensures the overall management of the PSC proceedings * Coordinates the activity of external assessors * Endorses letters of clarification and notifications to the applicants, on behalf of PSC |
| External assessors | * Sign Declarations of impartialiy and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest * Perform technical and financial evaluation of the projects attributed, compile one evaluation grid per project and upload it into EMS-ENI * May propose PSC to request clarifications from the applicants * Participate to PSC/JMC meetings, as required |
| Project Selection Committee | * Decides on the appropriateness of the requests of clarification * If the case, may request revision of the evaluations grids * Calls for a 3rd assessor to re-perform evaluation in case the difference between the total scores awarded by assessors goes over the threshold set by the call * Using the individual evaluation grids uploaded into EMS-ENI, compiles one common evaluation grid per project * Based on the common evaluation grids, prepares the Evaluation Report (step 2) * Using the ranking factors detailed in the *Guidelines for grant applicants*, prepares the list of selected projects, projects put on the reserve list and projects rejected (from further evaluation) |
| Joint Monitoring Committee | * If the case, may request revision of the evaluations grids * Calls for a 3rd assessor to re-perform evaluation in case the difference between the total scores awarded by assessors goes over the threshold set by the call * Analyzes the Evaluation Report (step 2), issues decision approving the report * Takes final decision on the list of projects selected, projects put on the reserve list and projects rejected (from further evaluation)[[8]](#footnote-8) |
| Managing Authority | * Provides procedural support, if requested * Allows the access of registered applicants into EMS-ENI system to upload clarifications if requested by PSC |
| Observers | * Participate to PSC/JMC meetings |

**🗹** **Results expected**

* JMC decision approving the Evaluation Report (step 2)
* Lists of projects selected, projects put on the reserve list and projects rejected (from further evaluation)
* Applicants notified on the outcomes of evaluation (step 2)
* EMS-ENI system updated

**🗹** **Documents produced during this step**

* Explanatory Notes
* Letters of clarification to the applicants
* Submission Register updated
* Evaluation Report (step 2)
* Notifications to the applicants on the outcomes of evaluation (step 2) (**Annex 4.3**)
* Signed Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest (**Annex g\_1** and **Annex g\_2**)

### **3.6 Preparation of additional documents (only for HARD projects)**

**🗹** **Purpose of the stage** is to allow the HARD projects selected and those put on the reserve list following step 2 of evaluation to prepare and submit the additional documents required by the call. They have 6 months at their disposal, starting from the date following that when PSC notification on the outcomes of evaluation was sent.

During this stage, the following shall be considered:

* Deadline for submitting the additional documents is mentioned in PSC notification
* JTS provides helpdesk to the applicants during the preparation period
* The additional documents must be uploaded into EMS-ENI system and also sent as hard-copies, in sealed envelopes, at the JTS headquarters.

| ACTORS | MAIN TASKS |
| --- | --- |
| Applicants | * Prepare the additional documents, as required by the call |
| Joint Technical Secretariat incl. Branch Offices | * Provides helpdesk to applicants and partners   **🕓** Questions may be received from the applicants/partners with 21 calendar days before the deadline set for the online submission  **🕓** Answers may be given by JTS with 11 calendar days before the deadline set for the online submission |

**🗹** **Results expected**

* Additional documents prepared
* Helpdesk provided to applicants

**🗹** **Documents produced during this step**

* Programme webpage updated

### **3.7 Submission of additional documents, receipt and registration**

**🗹** **Purpose of the stage** is to collect the additional documents submitted by the applicants following PSC notification.

During this stage, the following shall be considered:

* Additional documents must be uploaded into EMS-ENI system and also delivered as hard-copies at JTS headquarters within the deadline indicated in PSC notification.
* No project shall be rejected at this stage, whether it complies or not with the requirements of the call.
* No clarification will be requested from the applicants at this stage.

| ACTORS | MAIN TASKS |
| --- | --- |
| Applicants | * Submit the additional documents required by the call, uploaded into EMS-ENI system and in hard-copy version, within the deadlines specified in PSC notification |
| Managing Authority | * Temporarily opens the call for proposals for the applicants selected and those put on the reserve list in the previous step, to upload the additional documents. |
| PSC secretary | * Issues acknowledgements of receipt for hand-deliveries * Receives, registers and keeps in safe location, unopened, the envelopes containing the hard-copies, irrespective they are received via courier, postal services, hand-delivered, by fax or e-mail |

**🗹** **Results expected**

* Additional documents uploaded by the applicants into EMS-ENI and sent in hard-copy version
* Envelopes containing hard-copies registered and archived in safe location, unopened

**🗹** **Documents produced during this step**

* Acknowledgements of receipt (for hand-delivered proposals) – **Annex g\_3**
* Submission Register updated (**Annex g\_4**)

### **Evaluation of the additional documents (step 3, only for HARD projects)**

**🗹** **Purpose of the stage** is to obtain the final ranking of HARD projects to be financed by the Programme or put on the reserve list, per priority, following evaluation of their coherence and maturity.

During this stage, the following shall be considered:

* Each project shall be assessed by the same 2 external assessors who have performed evaluation in the previous stage, following the “4 eyes” principle. Each assessor shall compile one evaluation grid per project. In order to keep the pace of evaluation, minimum 3 projects per week must be evaluated by each assessor.
* The evaluation grid for step 3 provided in the *Guidelines for grant applicants* and the application packages uploaded into EMS-ENI system are to be used. In case of EMS-ENI malfunction, provisions at section 3.11 of the present Manual shall apply.
* In order to be accepted by PSC/JMC and not subject for revision, any evaluation grid must satisfy the quality requirements:
* Answers/scores and comments are given for each evaluation question/criteria **and**,
* Comments are consistent, project-specific and coherent with the score awarded, references to the additional documents are given. Comments synthesize the assessor’s professional judgement **and**,
* The Programme and the call requirements are fully met **and**,
* Final conclusions and recommendations are project-specific and support the Programme in case the project is to be financed.
* PSC/ JMC cannot change the scores awarded by the external assessors, instead they may request revision of the evaluation grid in case that:
* The grid is incomplete or of poor quality e.g. it 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 the scores awarded and the comments given are identified,
* Scarce references to the project content are made,
* The Programme and call requirements are not met
* In case the difference between the overall scores awarded by the assessors goes over the threshold set by the call, PSC may require for a 3rd assessor to re-perform evaluation. In such case, the final score is the average between scores awarded by the assessors having the 2 nearest overall scores.
* Using the evaluation grids uploaded EMS-ENI, PSC prepares one common evaluation grid per project.
* A project shall only be rejected if is found in the situations listed in **Annex EV\_3**. Even so, the evaluation grid must be fully filled in.
* If the project does not fall under the situations listed in **Annex EV\_3** and information provided is unclear or inconsistent thus preventing an objective evaluation, the assessor may propose PSC to request clarifications from the applicant. The request can only be accepted if it does not improve or modify the project content.
* Based on the Explanatory Notes and through written procedure, if so agreed, PSC decides on the appropriateness of the request of clarifications. If positive, letters are sent to the applicants in this respect. PSC secretary may contact the the applicants to ensure that responses will be given in due time.
* The external assessors and the PSC members should be aware that it is advisable to have no more than **1 letter for request of clarifications** per project. Deadline to submit the clarifications cannot be shorter than **2 days** or go over **10 calendar days** (from the date following that when PSC letter is sent). PSC letter shall indicate the issues to be clarified and the deadline set for submission of the respective clarifications.
* Work of the external assessors shall be carried out in line with the instructions in **Annex AS\_3**, and PSC work shall in line with the guidance in **Annex EV\_3**.

| ACTORS | MAIN TASKS |
| --- | --- |
| Applicants | * Provide clarifications, as required, within the deadlines indicated in PSC letter, uploaded into EMS-ENI and in hard-copy version |
| PSC secretary | * Distributes projects to external assessors (same 2 external assessors who performed evaluation in step 2) * Performs preliminary quality check of the evaluation grids, requires revision, if the case * If approved by PSC, prepares and sends letters to request for clarifications to the applicants (also by fax/e-mail) and may contact them to ensure that responses will be given in due time   **🕓** Min = 2 days and Max = 10 calendar days from the date following that when PSC letter is sent   * Receives, registers and keeps envelopes containing the hard-copies in safe location, unopened, except for situations specifically mentioned in the Manual * Supports PSC in preparing one common evaluation grid per project * Supports PSC in preparing the Evaluation Report * Notifies the applicants on the outcomes of evaluation (step 3), keeps evidence of such communications (fax, e-mail) |
| PSC coordinator | * Ensures the overall management of PSC proceedings * Coordinates the activity of external assessors * Endorses letters of clarification and notifications to the applicants, on behalf of PSC |
| External assessors | * Perform evaluation of the additional documents for the projects attributed, compile one evaluation grid per project, revise them, if so required, and upload them into EMS-ENI * May propose PSC to request clarifications from the applicants * Participate to PSC/JMC meetings, as required |
| Project Selection Committee | * Decides on the appropriateness of the requests of clarification * If the case, may request revision of the evaluations grids * Calls for a 3rd assessor to re-perform evaluation in case the difference between the total scores awarded by assessors goes over the threshold set by the call * Using the individual evaluation grids uploaded into EMS-ENI, compiles one common evaluation grid per project * Based on the common evaluation grids, prepares the Evaluation Report (step 3) * Using the ranking factors detailed in the *Guidelines for grant applicants*, prepares the list of selected projects, projects put on the reserve list and projects rejected[[9]](#footnote-9) |
| Joint Monitoring Committee | * If the case, may request revision of the evaluations grids * Calls for a 3rd assessor to re-perform evaluation in case the difference between the total scores awarded by assessors goes over the threshold set by the call * Analyzes the Evaluation Report (step 3), issues decision approving the report * Takes final decision on the list of projects selected, projects put on the reserve list and projects rejected |
| Managing Authority | * Provides procedural support, as requested * Allows the access of registered applicants into EMS-ENI system to upload clarifications if requested by PSC |
| Observers | * Participate to PSC/JMC meetings |

**🗹** **Results expected**

* JMC decision approving the Evaluation Report (step 3)
* List of projects selected, list of projects rejected, list of projects put on the reserve list
* Applicants notified on the outcomes of evaluation (step 3)
* EMS-ENI system updated

**🗹** **Documents produced during this step**

* Explanatory Notes
* Letters of clarification to the applicants
* Submission Register updated
* Evaluation Report (step 3)
* Notifications to the applicants on the outcomes of evaluation step 3 (**Annex 4.3**)

### **3.9. The appeal procedure**

**🗹** **Purpose of the stage** is to analyse the appeals received, decide whether they are admissible or not, and re-perform evaluation in case compliance with the provisions of the *Guidelines for grant applicants* is ensured.

An appeal is considered legitimate and, as such, admissible, if the applicant can substantiate that JMC decision clearly infringes the provisions of the *Guidelines for grant applicants* for the respective call for proposals. Only the applicant may submit an appeal. The appeals submitted by a partner or by a 3rd party (including NAs, JMC members etc.) shall not be considered. It is the responsibility of the applicant to collect and bring forward the complaint reasons from any project partner.

Any appeal must satisfy the formal requirements of submission, as described in the *Guidelines for grant applicants.* Appeals that do not observe them will be rejected without any further consideration.

In respect of the principle of equal treatment of all the applicants, additional project information provided by means of an appeal will not be considered and cannot be a reason for increasing the score. The only legal source of information that can be invoked in any appeal is the PSC notification. Other sources of information indicated in the appeal will not be considered.

During this stage, the following shall be considered:

* Based on the provisions of the *Guidelines for grant applicants*, PSC decides on their admissibility of the appeals received. Appeals falling outside the formal conditions specified in the *Guidelines for grant applicants* shall not be considered.
* If admissible, PSC re-checks the evaluation grids for material errors and, if the case, requests assessors to review their work.
* In case the assessors maintain their opinion, 3rd assessor is called to re-perform evaluation. The revised final score per project is the average between the scores awarded by assessors having the 2 nearest overall scores.
* If the case, PSC amends the respective Evaluation Report.
* PSC decision on any appeal is final, and no other supplementary complaint shall be considered.
* When following verification of appeals, position of projects on the ranking lists is modified and their status changed e.g. from “**selected**” a project may become “**put on the reserve list**”, the applicants concerned are notified by PSC on the respective change.

| ACTORS | MAIN TASKS |
| --- | --- |
| Applicants | * May submit appeals in the conditions described in the *Guidelines for grant applicants*   **🕓** For submission,max = 10 calendar days from the day following that when PSC notification is sent  **🕓** For receipt, max = 20 calendar days from the day following that when PSC notification is sent |
| PSC secretary | * Collects and registers appeals on the outcomes of evaluation, provides them to PSC * Following PSC decision, distributes projects to 3rd assessors * Performs preliminary quality verification of the evaluation grids, requires revision, if the case * If the case, supports PSC in preparing revised common evaluation grids * If the case, supports PSC in preparing an amended Evaluation Report * Sends notifications to the respective applicants * Updates information into EMS-ENI system |
| PSC coordinator | * Ensures the overall management of the PSC proceedings * Coordinates the activity of external assessors * Endorses notifications to the applicants on behalf of PSC |
| External assessors | * Perform 3rd assessment of the projects attributed, compile one evaluation grid per project, revise it, if so required, and upload it into EMS-ENI * Participate to PSC/JMC meetings, as required |
| Project Selection Committee | * Analyzes the appeals and takes decision if they are admissible or not * If admissible, analyzes the evaluation grids for material errors and if the case, requests assessors to review their evaluation * If assessors maintain their opinion, the 3rd assessor is called * Using the individual grids uploaded into EMS-ENI, compiles a revised common evaluation grid (per project) * If the case, prepares an amended Evaluation Report and revised lists of projects selected, projects put on the reserve list or projects rejected (from further evaluation) |
| Joint Monitoring Committee | * Analyzes the amended Evaluation Report, issues decision for approving the report * Takes final decision on the revised lists of projects selected, projects put on the reserve list or projects rejected projects (from further evaluation) |
| Managing Authority | * Provides procedural support, if requested |
| Observers | * Participate to PSC/JMC meetings |

**🗹** **Results expected**

* If the case, JMC decision approving the amended Evaluation Report
* If the case, revised lists of projects selected, projects put on the reserve list or projects rejected (from further evaluation)
* Applicants informed about PSC decision on the appeals submitted
* EMS-ENI system updated

**🗹** **Documents produced during this step**

* Amended Evaluation Report
* Notifications to the applicants submitting an appeal (**Annex 4.3**)

### **3.10 Communication with the Joint Monitoring Committee and the National Authorities during evaluation**

### **▶ Joint Monitoring Committe**

The JMC have to approve the evaluation reports at the end of each step. In order to have access to the evaluation documents and also into EMS-ENI system, each JMC member must sign the Declaration of confidentiality and impartiality (**Annex g\_1**) and the Declaration regarding the conflict of interest (**Annex g\_2**). Only those members who are not in conflict of interest will be allowed to participate in the decision–making process, and to visualise the evaluation documentation. To this purpose, respective declarations shall be signed after duly checking the applicants and partners registered by PSC secretary in the call of proposals’ database.

PSC secretary checks if declarations are duly filled in and signed. For the purpose of the evaluation process, only those who are not in a conflict of interest are referred to as JMC members.

The Evaluation Reports will be made available to the JMC members via the MA cloud. During the decision-making process, JMC members will also have access into the EMS-ENI system and user accounts are to be available to this purpose. They are bound to secrecy and confidentiality concerning the evaluation related information and they will only have permission to visualize the information, without altering it in any way. For security reasons, any intervention in the system by whoever is logged into EMS-ENI, is recorded and may be tracked down through the log of actions, available also if required by further controls.

Joint decision of members of each national delegation on the evaluation reports shall be communicated to PSC secretary through the heads of delegation, by duly observing provisions of the JMC Rules of procedures in respect of the written procedures.

JMC decisions on the evaluation reports are to be taken, primarly, through written procedure. Provided that JMC consensus cannot be reached through the written procedure, PSC coordinator will submitt to MA a request for organising an ad-hoc meeting of the JMC together with the justifications provided by the national delegation which raised objections to approving the respective Evaluation Report.

### **▶ National Authorities**

The National Authorities have the responsibility to give the final opinion on the eligibility of the entities located on their national territory. The NA is free to take all the steps it considers necessary, in order to get a substantiated opinion over the analysed case, including by consultation of other relevant national institutions. In this process the NA will take the necessary measures to keep the confidentiality over the evaluation process, and to avoid potential conflict of interest. The NA will base its own eligibility assessment on the assessment done by internal assessors. To this purpose, they must fill in and sign an Eligibility Report per call for each entity. In order to have access to the evaluation documents, the person appointed by each NA to perform the eligibility check must sign the Declaration of confidentiality and impartiality (**Annex g\_1**) and the Declaration regarding the conflict of interest (**Annex g\_2**). Only those persons who are not in conflict of interest will be allowed to participate in the evaluation process and to visualise the evaluation documentation. To this purpose, respective declarations shall be signed after duly checking the applicants and partners registered by PSC secretary in the call of proposals’ database.

PSC secretary checks if declarations are duly filled in and signed. For the purpose of the evaluation process, only those who are not in a conflict of interest are referred to as NAs.

The supporting documents provided by the entities participating in the call to prove their eligibility, as well as the preliminary Eligibility Reports drafted by PSC Secretary, will be available to the NAs via the MA cloud. To this purpose, the NAs must provide the MA administrator with a valid e-mail address where links to the documents to be visualized are sent.

After checking the eligibility, the NAs will fill in and sign each Eligibility Report. A scanned copy of each Eligibility Report must be forwarded to PSC Secretary by e-mail. The Eligibility Reports in original will be sent to PSC secretary until the end of the evaluation process, by courier, postal services or hand delivery, in order to be archived together with the Evaluation Report (step 1).

### **3.11 Procedures in case of EMS-ENI malfunction**

In case of EMS-ENI malfunction and if the cause lies in minor deficiencies that can be easily and rapidly solved, the programme structures may decide to temporary suspend evaluation until they are resolved.

In case of severe deficiencies affecting the EMS-ENI system on the long term, the JMC may decide to use hard-copy versions of the documents sent by the applicants (i.e. application packages, additional documents in case of HARD projects, clarifications). For the same purpose, the evaluation products uploaded into EMS-ENI (e.g. the evaluation grids completed by assessors in step 2 and 3) will be safeguarded through back-up copies.

RO CBC Suceava shall provide the programme a distinct and safe partition for each call on its own servers. Existing RO CBC Suceava IT infrastructure already meets the mandatory security and confidentiality requirements for the storage of documents and programme related information. In order to support future controls, facility to monitorize all the actions on the respective partition is to be ensured through a log of actions.

The Secretary will upload on the respective partition the documents needing to be shared, organized in distinct folders according to the responsibilities of each authorized user e.g. external assessors, NAs, JMC, observers. Access rights to the respective partition will only be granted to PSC secretary who is the only person entitled to manage the documents uploaded therein.

MA shall ensure a distinct and secured location on its cloud space that meets the mandatory security and confidentiality requirements. At the request of PSC secretary, the MA IT administrator shall transfer evaluation related information from the folders located on RO CBC servers to the distinct links created on the MA cloud space and corresponding to each authorized user.

**Actors involved and responsibilities**

* **JTS IT administrator**

The JTS IT administrator only intervenes in case of functionality issues related to RO CBC IT infrastructure and has specific IP address, username and password. The IT administrator shall sign the same Declaration of confidentiality and impartiality as the PSC members. The declaration is checked by PSC Secretary and kept together with the evaluation documents.

* **PSC Secretary**

PSC secretary has also specific IP address, username and password, and is the only person entitled to manage the evaluation documents and information stored on the partition created on RO CBC Suceava servers. The Secretary constantly uploads therein the evaluation documents e.g. evaluation grids, evaluation reports etc. that might need to be shared with the authorised users (external assessors, NAs, observers or JMC).

PSC Secretary creates distinct folders for the authorised users, and uploads them with documents that will be transmitted to the users. The PSC Secretary notifies by email the MA IT administrator about the users needing to access to the respective folders in order to make the information available to them through the personalized links. Following the transfer of information onto the MA cloud, PSC secretary informs the concerned authorised users, accordingly. Evidence on such communications (including hard copies of all the e-mails) is to be kept for further controls, together with the evaluation documents.

PSC secretary informs the users about the personalized links where documents can be visualized. In order to ensure confidentiality, the respective link will be provided at the beginning of evaluation in sealed envelope, by courier, postal services or hand-delivery with acknowledgement of receipt.

* **MA IT administrator**

The MA IT administrator is identified through the IP address, username and password.

The MA IT administrator creates personalized links for each authorised user, before the start of evaluation, and communicates them to PSC secretary, in order to inform them accordingly.

The MA IT administrator will have access to RO CBC Suceava servers in order to retreive, at the request of PSC Secretary, the evaluation related information to be transfered to the personalised links created on the MA cloud for each authorised user.

**Steps and actions during EMS-ENI malfunction**

In case of severe EMS-ENI malfunction, the following steps will be taken:

* If situation requires, PSC secretary opens the envelopes containing hard-copy versions of the application packages/ additional documents/ clarifications, extracts the DVDs and uploads the information on RO CBC Suceava specific server partition.
* Each project is to be identified through the Project Registration Number, and each document through its content e.g. evaluation grid, clarifications step 1 etc.
* PSC secretary prepares written communications to the MA IT administrator and indicates which information is to be visualised and by whom, depending on the user’s role and the evaluation stage.
* MA IT administrator takes over the information uploaded on RO CBC server and transfers it onto the MA cloud.
* Following the instructions given by PSC secretary, the MA IT administrator gives links to the authorized users allowing the information to be visualised.
* If situation requires, external assessors will use the Word format of the evaluation grids for step 2 and step 3 (in case of HARD projects) as the case may be. After completion, any grid must be signed by the author, scanned and forwarded to PSC secretary using the electronic mail, in word format and also as scanned copy. The original evaluation grids shall be sent afterwards to the JTS headquarters in sealed envelopes, within the set deadlines, by courier, postal services or by hand-delivery.
* With the view to protect confidentiality of information, before scanning and forwarding the evaluation grids to PSC secretary, the assessor must make visible only the Project Registration Number, and blur the name of the applicant and the project title visible on the grid.
* In case EMS-ENI restarts functioning, the work done must be transferred into the electronic system.

## **Chapter 4 LIST OF ANNEXES AND TEMPLATES**

### **General templates (g)**

**Annex g\_1** Declaration of impartiality and confidentiality

**Annex g\_2** Declaration regarding the conflict of interest

**Annex g\_3** Acknowledgement of receipt (for hand delivered proposals)

**Annex g\_4** Submission Register

**Annex g\_5** Explanatory Note (justifying the request for clarifications)

**Annex g\_6** PSC letter for request of clarifications

### **Evaluation related templates**

**Annex 4.1** Eligibility Report

**Annex 4.2** Evaluation Report (irrespective the evaluation stage)

**Annex 4.3** PSC notification to applicants (irrespective the content)

### **Instructions for National Authorities & Internal and External Assessors (AS)**

**Annex AS\_1** Instructions to internal assessors during step 1 – Instructions to National Authorities – Administrative and eligibility Checklist (guidance)

**Annex AS\_2** Instructions to external assessors during step 2 – Technical and Financial evaluation grid for HARD and SOFT projects (guidance)

**Annex AS\_3** Instructions to external assessors during step 3 – Additional Documents evaluation grid for HARD projects (guidance)

### **Guidance for the Project Selection Committee (EV)**

**Annex EV\_1** Reasons for project rejection during step 1 – Guidance for PSC – Appeals on the outcomes of evaluation

**Annex EV\_2** Reasons for project rejection during step 2 – Guidance for PSC – Appeals on the outcomes of evaluation

**Annex EV\_3** Reasons for project rejection during step 3 – Guidance for PSC – Appeals on the outcomes of evaluation

## **TERMINOLOGY**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *APPLICANT* | A legal entity who submits the Application Form on behalf of all the project Partners and is the only direct contact with the Project Selection Committee during the evaluation process. Provided that the project is selected and a grant contract is signed, the applicant becomes the “Lead Beneficiary”. |
| *ASSESSMENT MANUAL* | Working document approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee that provides an overview of the entire process, including templates to be used. |
| *CALL FOR PROPOSALS* | A public invitation addressed to legal entities which may propose projects within the framework of a specific Programme. |
| *(EMS-ENI) PROGRAMME ELECTRONIC SYSTEM* | Electronic system developed for the purpose of recording and storing information related to programme and project implementation, supporting monitoring, evaluation, financial management, control and audit activities. |
| *EVALUATION GRID* | Standardized document based on which the extent to which a project meets the programme requirements is assessed (eg. contribution to programme results and outputs, quality criteria, technical and financial viability).  Evaluation grids are specific to each stage of the evaluation process and to each type of projects: SOFT or HARD. |
| *GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS* | Document explaining the rules of a Call for proposals regarding who may apply, the types of projects and costs which may be financed, and the evaluation process, including the evaluation criteria. It also provides practical information on how to complete the Application Form, what documents must be Annexed, the rules and procedures for applying. |
| *HARD project* | Projects submitted within the 1st Call for proposals, having an infrastructure component with a value of at least 1 million euro at project level. |
| *INFRASTRUCTURE COMPONENT* | Permanent works and/or permanent installation of equipment which contribute to at least one Programme (common) output that is specifically addressed by the project. Infrastructure must be entirely described in the Feasibility studies. |
| *joint monitoring committee* | Structure composed of representatives of the participating countries in the programme, without legal personality, being the main joint decision – making structure. It follows the programme implementation and progress towards its priorities; examines all issues affecting the programme performance. |
| *JOINT TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT* | Joint operational body assisting the Managing Authority, the Joint Monitoring Committee and the Audit Authority, in carrying out their respective duties within the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine 2014-2020. |
| *Managing Authority* | Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration from Romania bearing the overall responsibility for the management and implementation of the Programme. |
| *National AUTHORITY* | Programme national structure representing the Partner State in relations with the other State participating in a programme, responsible for coordinating the state's contribution and for supporting the Managing Authority in the implementation of the programme on its own territory, in accordance with the principle of sound financial management. The national authorities designated by the programme are: in Romania, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration and in Ukraine, the Ministry of Economy and Commerce. |
| *Partner* | Entity acting in partnership to implement a project. Provided that the project is selected and a grant contract is signed, the Partner become a “Beneficiary” and shall be responsible for the implementation of its share of project’s activities. |
| *Project* | A set of activities addressing the Programme objectives and aiming at achieving specific results, in a limited period of time and using a determined budget. |
| *Project SELECTION COMMITTEE* | Structure temporary set at Programme level and approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee and assigned to evaluate and select the projects submitted within the calls for proposals. |
| *SOFT project* | Project submitted within the 2nd Call for proposals, not having an infrastructure component or with an infrastructure component of less than 1 million euro at project level. |

1. Definition of Programme result indicators, sources of data, measuring units and, indication on measurement and targets are provided in Annex IV to the Joint Operational Programme Romania – Ukraine 2014-2020 (Report on indicators). During evaluation, this will be the only reference to decide on the correctness of the indicators chosen by the projects. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Definition of Programme output indicators, sources of data, measuring units and, indication on measurement and targets are provided in Annex IV to the Joint Operational Programme Romania – Ukraine 2014-2020 (Report on indicators). During evaluation, this will be the only reference to decide on the correctness of the indicators chosen by the projects. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The indicator only counts the newly registered diseases, as reported by the medical staff of each country. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For instance, the threshold is set at 35 points in step 2 for the 1st call for proposals (HARD projects), at 25 points in step 2 for the 2nd call for proposals (SOFT projects), and at 5 points in step 3 for the 1st call for proposals (HARD projects). Thresholds are indicated in the respective *Guidelines for grant applicants*. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Available online at [www.ro-ua.net](http://www.ro-ua.net) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Available online at [www.ro-ua.net](http://www.ro-ua.net) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. There is a conflict of interests where the impartial and objective exercise of the functions of a financial actor or other person involved or participating to the evaluation process is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any shared interest with the applicants/partners. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Following Step 2 of evaluation*,* a list of applications ranked according to their score and within the financial envelope will be set.

   Moreover, those projects having an overall score of **at least 99 points** will be included on a reserve list.

   If several proposals will be awarded the same overall score at the end of Step 2, in order to determine the final ranking on the list of provisionally selected projects and on the reserve list, the following supplementary criteria are to be taken into account in the following sequence:

   the score awarded at section 1.2 Contribution to the Programme

   the score awarded at section 1.1 Relevance

   the score awarded at section 3.1 Technical feasibility [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Following Step 3, projects shall be ranked according to the total score resulted after summing up the score received at the end of Step 2 and the score received at the end of Step 3.

   If several projects obtain the same total score, the final ranking shall be made following this sequence:

   the score obtained at the Step 3 and,

   the ranking resulted at the end of Step 2

   The list of provisionally selected projects shall be done within the financial envelope available per priority. The remaining projects shall be put on the reserve list, which will be valid until the 31st of December, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)