

Harmonised implementation tools

Quality assessment criteria

(Final version 1.1 - November 2021)

Criteria for assessing the relevance and feasibility of project proposals on which a judgment or decision as to whether the project should be funded will be based.

The main objectives of this document are:

* to assess the relevance and the feasibility of the project,
* to use the result of the assessment as a basis for decision-making,
* to establish common understanding which is common ground for decision-making,
* to ensure transparency.

Further assessment methods, tools and procedures are not part of this template and should be decided by the programme.

Quality assessment criteria are divided into two categories:

* Strategic assessment criteria - The main aim is to determine the extent of the project's contribution to the achievement of programme objectives (including contribution to programme indicators), by addressing joint or common needs of the target group.
* Operational assessment criteria - The main aim is to assess the viability and the feasibility of the proposed project, as well as its value for money in terms of resources used versus results delivered.

Both categories have several assessment questions with sub-questions (guiding principles). The programme can give scores on the question or sub-question level. If needed, it is also possible to re-group criteria and add programme-specific criteria.

Two questions were taken out of core criteria because they are linked to eligibility and not quality of the proposal. These are questions about cooperation criteria and horizontal principles. They are still part of this template because they can only be checked when reading the whole application.

##### Project identification

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Project ID number |  | *Pre-filled from AF* |
|  |  |  |
| Project acronym |  | *Pre-filled from AF* |
|  |  |  |
| Name of the lead partner organisation (original language or English language) |  | *Pre-filled from AF* |
|  |  |  |

##### Strategic assessment criteria

Project relevance

How well is the need for the project justified?

* The project addresses common territorial challenges of the programme or a joint asset of the programme area - there is a real need for the project (well justified, reasonable, well explained). – AF C.2.1 and C.2.2
* The project clearly contributes to a wider strategy on one or more policy levels (EU / national / regional). – AF C.2.5

To what extent will the project contribute to the achievement of programme’s objectives and indicators?

* The project overall objective clearly contributes to the achievement of the programme priority specific objective. – AF C.1
* The project outputs clearly link to programme output indicators and their contribution to programme targets is sufficient. – AF C.4 Output tables in work packages
* Project’s contribution to programme result indicators is realistic and sufficient. – AF C.5

How does the project build on existing practices?

* The project makes use of available knowledge and builds on existing results and practices. – AF C.2.7
* The project tries to avoid overlaps and replications; there is evolution of ideas. – AF C.2.2
* The project demonstrates new solutions that go beyond the existing practice in the sector/programme area/participating countries or adapts and implements already developed solutions. – AF C.2.2

Cooperation character

What added-value does the cooperation bring?

* The importance of cooperation beyond borders for the topic addressed is clearly demonstrated. – AF C.2.3
* The results cannot/only to some extent be achieved without cooperation. – AF C.2.3
* There is a clear benefit from cooperating for the project partners / target groups / project area / programme area. – AF C.2.3

Project intervention logic

To what extent is project intervention logic plausible?

* Project specific objectives are specific, realistic and achievable. – AF C.4 Specific objectives in work packages
* Proposed project outputs are needed to achieve project specific objectives. – AF C.4 Output tables in work packages
* Project outputs and results that contribute to programme indicators are realistic (it is possible to achieve them with given resources – i.e., time, partners, budget - and they are realistic based on the quantification provided). – AF C.4, C.5, C.6, D

To what extent will project outputs have an impact beyond project lifetime?

* Project outputs are durable (the proposal is expected to provide a significant and durable contribution to solving the challenges targeted) – if not, it is justified. – AF C.8.2
* Project main outputs are applicable and replicable by other organisations/regions/countries outside of the current partnership (transferability) – if not, it is justified. – AF C.8.3

Partnership relevance

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

* The project involves the relevant actors needed to address the territorial challenge/joint asset and the objectives specified. – AF C.3
* With respect to the project’s objectives, the project partnership: – AF C.3
	+ is balanced with respect to the levels, sectors, territory
	+ consists of partners that complement each other.
* Partner organisations have proven experience and competence in the thematic field concerned, as well as the necessary capacity to implement the project (financial, human resources, etc.) – AF B.1.6
* All partners play a defined role in the partnership and the territory benefits from this cooperation. – AF C.3

##### Operational assessment criteria

Work plan

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

* Proposed activities and deliverables are relevant and lead to planned outputs and results. – AF C.4, C.5
* Distribution of tasks among partners is appropriate (e.g., sharing of tasks is clear, logical, in line with partners’ role in the project, etc.). – AF C.4 Activities in work packages
* Time plan is realistic. – AF C.6
* Activities, deliverables and outputs are in a logical time-sequence. – AF C.6
* The importance of investments and their transnational/cross-border relevance is demonstrated to reach project objectives (if applicable). – AF C.4 Investments

Communication

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

* The communication objectives are relevant and are expected to contribute to project specific objectives. – AF C.4 Objectives in work packages
* Communication activities (and deliverables) are appropriate to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders. – AF C.4 Activities and deliverables in work packages

Budget

To what extent is the project budget used in accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness?

* The principle of economy concerns minimising the costs of resources. The resources used by the project partnership for its activities should be made available in due time, in appropriate quantity and quality, and at the best price.
* The budget allocated to staff and external expertise is in line with the project content and the costs are realistic. – AF D.2 & E.3
* Sufficient and reasonable resources are planned to ensure project implementation. – AF D.2 & E.3
* The principle of efficiency concerns getting the most from the available resources. It is concerned with the relationship between resources employed and outputs delivered in terms of quantity, quality and timing.
* The need for engaging external expertise is justified and the costs seem realistic. – AF E.3
* Financial allocation per cost category is in line with the work plan. – AF D.2 & E.3
* If applicable, the distribution of the budget per period is in line with the work plan. – AF D.4
* The application of lump sums and unit costs is appropriate and in line with the programme rules. – AF D.2 & E.3
* The principle of effectiveness concerns meeting the objectives and achieving the intended results.
* The available information in the budget is transparent and sufficient. On that basis, the project budget appears proportionate to the proposed work plan, project outputs and project's contribution to programme indicators aimed for. – AF D.2 & E.3
* Sufficient and reasonable resources are planned for investments and equipment purchases (if applicable) and their costs are realistic. – AF D.2 & E.3

##### Additional criteria

The project needs to fulfil the following criteria to be eligible:

* Mandatory cooperation criteria (joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing, joint financing) are fulfilled. (In the case of OCT programmes, at least two cooperation criteria are fulfilled).
* Additional cooperation criteria (joint staffing, joint financing): at least one of these two criteria is fulfilled. – AF C.7.5

The programme can decide to link the following criteria to their eligibility rules:

* The project makes a positive contribution to programme horizontal principle equal opportunities and non-discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. – AF C.7.6
* The project makes a positive contribution to programme horizontal principle equality between men and women, gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective. – AF C.7.6
* The project makes a positive contribution to programme horizontal principle sustainable development as set out in Article 11 TFEU, taking into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the "Do No Signficant Harm" principle. – AF C.7.6