

**Interreg**



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**Meuse – Rhine** (NL – BE – DE)

# **Assessment criteria for assessing applications (step 1 and 2)**

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## Introduction

Interreg Meuse-Rhine uses a two-step system for approving projects. This document describes the assessment criteria, for both steps 1 and 2. In the assessment process, a distinction has to be made between assessing the **grant eligibility requirements** (administrative check by MA/JS) and assessing the **selection criteria**. The selection criteria are there to assess the quality of applications.

These requirements and criteria will be checked in both steps 1 and 2, but the actual criteria differ for both steps. This is because step 1 is only a short application, to test the fit of a project idea in the Interreg Meuse-Rhine (NL-BE-DE) programme, without having a view on the full application yet. Therefore and logically, additional requirements and criteria apply to the full application in step 2.

## Step 1: Short application

### Action 1: Checking grant eligibility requirements (MA/JS)

	Requirement	Explanation
1	The application has been submitted within the defined call for proposals period in JEMS.	Only allowed to digitally submit applications via JEMS.
2	The application has been formulated in the three programme languages (FR, DE, NL) and in English.	
3	All mandatory fields for the step 1 application in JEMS have been properly filled in.	
4	The project involves at least two partners from two different Member States within the programme area, or at least one cross-border organisation (e.g. an EGTC).	The assessment of this requirement is only about organisations named as partners in the application form. Organisations listed only in the text fields will not be counted.
5	All partners have a legal personality.	
6	The project does not start before 1 January 2021 and does not end after 31 December 2029	The implementation period has to be within the indicated time range.

When a step 1 application does not meet all of the above grant eligibility requirements, MA/JS will quickly (within two weeks) after receiving the application conclude the concerning application cannot be considered further and inform the Steering Committee members about this. Or stated in other words, that particular application does not proceed to the assessment on the selection criteria. This is expected to occur infrequently, as in step 1 it is only a first sketch of the project.

### Action 2: Assessing selection criteria (Steering Committee)

Both MA/JS and the programme partners represented in the Steering Committee assess the step 1 applications on the pre-established assessment criteria. The purpose of the assessment by MA/JS is to provide initial scores per selection criterion per project (non-binding). It is up to the Steering Committee to discuss and collectively determine the eventual score for each individual project, supported by factual arguments. The sub-questions are helpful in determining the final score per criterion.

For step 1, the selection criteria are listed in table 1:

<b>Selection criterion</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>1: Contribution to the objectives of the programme/cross-border character</b>	<b>40%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How well is the cross-border problem or challenge that the project addresses justified (C 1.1)?</li> <li>b. Does the project's overall objective contribute to the programme goals (C 1.2)?</li> <li>c. Does the project contribute to at least one of the defined grand societal challenges (C 1.3)?</li> <li>d. Does the project fit under the chosen specific objective (A.1)?</li> <li>e. Has sufficiently made clear why cross-border cooperation is needed to address the problem or challenge (C 2.1)?</li> <li>f. What is new / of added value compared to the already existing situation (A.2)?</li> <li>g. Does the expected impact contribute to the envisaged objectives of the programme (C 2.3)?</li> </ul>	
<b>2: Partnership</b>	<b>40%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Is the partnership composition relevant for the proposed project (B and C.3)?</li> <li>b. Is the partnership able and competent to let the described target group(s) benefit from the project outputs and results (C 2.2)?</li> <li>c. Is the partnership able and competent to deliver the envisaged deliverables (C.3)?</li> </ul>	
<b>3: Feasibility</b>	<b>0% (not applicable to step 1)</b>
<b>4: Budget &amp; value for money</b>	<b>20%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What about the estimated total budget? Is this reasonable compared with the (number of) partners involved, the planned basic structure of the project and the project duration (A.2, B and C)?</li> <li>b. For overall judgement, is the expected impact of the project in line with the estimated budget (value for money) (C 2.3)?</li> </ul>	

Table 1: Selection criteria and weights for step 1 assessment

The information into brackets behind every sub-aspect relates to the step 1 application form.

The degree to which applications meet each selection criterion, including the sub-aspects included, will be evaluated based on the score table below:

<b>Quality assessment</b>	<b>Score</b>
Outstanding	5
Good	4
Adequate	3
Weak	2
Insufficient	1

The quality assessment for step 1 goes as follows:

- Every applicable selection criterion (1, 2 and 4) will be rewarded a single score.
- The points per selection criteria are totaled and weighted in order to arrive at a total score.
- In order to proceed to step 2 (“go”), applications have to score at least 3 points (unweighted) per applicable selection criterion, and thus also 3 points overall (weighted). Applications which do not meet that requirement, will be rejected and cannot proceed to step 2 (“no go”).

The Steering Committee’s selection decision is binding and will be confirmed by the MA, including any additional criteria or requirements imposed by the Steering Committee.

## Step 2: Full application

### Action 1: Checking grant eligibility requirements (MA/JS)

	Requirement	Explanation
1	The application has been submitted within the defined call for proposals period in JEMS.	Only allowed to digitally submit applications via JEMS.
2	The application has been formulated in the three programme languages (FR, DE, NL) and in English.	
3	All mandatory fields for the step 2 application in JEMS have been properly filled in.	
4	The project involves at least two partners from two different Member States within the programme area, or at least one cross-border organisation (e.g. an EGTC).	The assessment of this requirement is only about organisations named as partners in the application form. Organisations listed only in the text fields will not be counted.
5	All partners have a legal personality.	
6	The project does not start before 1 January 2021 and does not end after 31 December 2029	The implementation period has to be within the indicated time range.
7	The application is sufficiently similar in content to the short application that was positively assessed in step 1.	Sufficiently similar concerns to the objective, the cross-border idea/problem addressed, and the majority of the partnership (50% of the partnership and at least 2 partners remain unchanged).
8	The project is in accordance with one of the priorities and specific objectives as defined in the programme document	
9	The project may be assigned to one of the intervention types for the specific objective concerned, as defined in the programme document and in accordance with Annex 1 to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.	
10	The maximum ERDF co-financing rate as stated in the text of the call for proposal has not been exceeded.	
11	For infrastructural projects or productive investments: The partners applying for ERDF funds have the necessary financial resources and instruments to cover operating and maintenance costs, to ensure their financial sustainability.	
12	For infrastructure investments with an expected life span of at least five years: The project includes an assessment of expected climate change impacts.	

When a step 2 application does not meet all of the above grant eligibility requirements, MAJS will conclude (within three weeks after application) the concerning application cannot be considered further. Or stated in other words, that particular application does not proceed to the assessment on the selection criteria.

## Action 2: Assessing selection criteria (Steering Committee)

Both MAJS and the programme partners represented in the Steering Committee assess the step 2 applications on the pre-established assessment criteria. The purpose of the assessment by MAJS is to provide initial scores per selection criterion per project and a preliminary ranking (non-binding). It is up to the Steering Committee to discuss and collectively determine the eventual score for each individual project (supported by factual arguments) and to make a final ranking. The sub-questions are helpful in determining the final score per criterion.

For step 2, the selection criteria are listed in table 2:

<b>Selection criterion</b>	<b>Weight</b>
<b>1: Contribution to the objectives of the programme/cross-border character</b>	<b>25%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How well is the cross-border problem or challenge that the project addresses justified (C 1.1)?</li> <li>b. Does the project's overall objective contribute to the programme goals (C 1.2)?</li> <li>c. Does the project contribute to at least one of the defined grand societal challenges (C 1.3)?</li> <li>d. Does the project fit under the chosen specific objective (A.1)?</li> <li>e. Has sufficiently made clear why cross-border cooperation is needed to address the problem or challenge (C 2.1)?</li> <li>f. Is the project's approach to tackle the identified cross-border problem or challenge plausible and new (new for the partnership, new for the region, or new at all) (C 2.2)?</li> <li>g. What is new / of added value compared to the already existing situation (A.2 and C 2.2)?</li> <li>h. Does the expected impact contribute to the envisaged objectives of the programme (C 2.4)?</li> <li>i. In how far does the project contribute to other relevant strategies and policies (C 2.5)?</li> <li>j. Are there synergies with other EU- or public-funded projects or initiatives, and to what extent does this project build on them (C 2.6)?</li> <li>k. In how far does the project go beyond the current situation and build on available knowledge (C 2.7)?</li> <li>l. Has the project work plan been built around cross-border activities (C.4)?</li> <li>m. What about the contribution of the project to the programme's output and result indicators (C.5)?</li> </ul>	
<b>Selection criterion</b>	<b>Weight</b>

<b>2: Partnership</b>	<b>25%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Is the partnership composition relevant for the proposed project (B and C.3)?</li> <li>b. Is the partnership able and competent to deliver the envisaged actions (C.3 and C.4)?</li> <li>c. Has the added value of cross-border cooperation within the partnership been described sufficiently (C 2.1)?</li> <li>d. If the partnership contains one or more partners from outside the programme area, do they bring an added value and impact on the programme area (B.1 / B.2 and C 2.1)?</li> <li>e. Is the partnership able to serve the described target group (B and C 2.3)?</li> </ul>	
<b>3: Feasibility</b>	<b>25%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Has the consortium presented a realistic project that can be executed within the financial limits and time plan (C.4, C.6 and D)?</li> <li>b. Is the work plan in relation to the budget coherent and realistic (C.4 and D)?</li> <li>c. Are the project management arrangements clear, realistic and appropriate (C 7.1, C 7.2 and C 7.4)?</li> <li>d. Are the project's communication strategy and activities (per work package) sufficiently elaborated (C 4.1.3 and C 7.3)?</li> <li>e. Are the envisaged project outputs and results (translated into indicators) measurable, realistic and achievable (C.5)?</li> <li>f. Is the project in line with the EU horizontal principles (sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women, climate and biodiversity) (C.8)?</li> <li>g. Have the long term plans (ownership, durability, transferability) been sufficiently clear described (C.9)?</li> <li>h. For projects with investments: how risky is the project? Is a risk management strategy in place and has the partnership identified the main risks and relevant mitigation measures (C 4.2)?</li> </ul>	
<b>4: Budget &amp; value for money</b>	<b>25%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Is the budget sufficiently attributed to activities specifically oriented on cross-border cooperation (D)?</li> <li>b. Is the overall budget reasonable compared with the planned activities / deliverables / outputs and the project duration (C.4, C.6 and D)?</li> <li>c. Does the budget breakdown include sufficient detail (D)?</li> <li>d. Are the budgeted costs in line with the Cost Catalogue?</li> <li>e. Based on the requested budget, does the project contribute proportionately to the achievement of the output and result indicators (value for money) (C.5 and D)?</li> <li>f. Do the partners involved have enough budget available to do the things they propose and to maintain the results?</li> </ul>	

Table 2: Selection criteria and weights for step 2 assessment



The information into brackets behind every sub-aspect (if applicable) relates to the step 2 application form.

The degree to which applications meet each selection criterion, including the sub-aspects included, will be evaluated based on the score table below:

<b>Quality assessment</b>	<b>Score</b>
Outstanding	5
Good	4
Adequate	3
Weak	2
Insufficient	1

The quality assessment for step 2 goes as follows:

- Every applicable selection criterion (1, 2, 3 and 4) will be rewarded a single score.
- The points per selection criteria are totaled and weighted in order to arrive at a total score.
- Applications have to score at least 3 points (unweighted) per selection criterion, and thus also 3 points overall (weighted)
- Any project meeting the requirement in the third bullet point, will be ranked in a ranking based on its score (from high to low). The score determines the position in the ranking, which will be the basis for taking the grant decision, taking into account the available ERDF budget for the specific call for proposal.

The Steering Committee’s selection decision is binding. Afterwards, the MA translates the selection decision into a legal decision on the application, unless there are open issues to be solved.